Satire, Modernity, Transculturality in late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century North India

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Introduction

The present study is an attempt to unravel the historical dynamics in the making and function of satire as a distinct literary-artistic mode of social expression in the Indian subcontinent. It deals with a historical period which witnessed the triumph and consolidation of British colonial power – an age which connected the Indian subcontinent more directly to the global system of economic and cultural exchange within the asymmetrical matrix of power and, consequently, was indelibly marked by the restructuring and reconfiguration of almost all facets of the subcontinent's society and culture.[1] More precisely, this study explores a much neglected but historically rich material, namely, modern Hindi literary and visual satire (popularly called cartoon) in the newly configured vernacular public sphere of late nineteenth and early twentieth century colonial North India. [2]

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[1] Historians like Sanjay Subrahmanyam and others, who have been working on the period from the sixteenth century onwards, have convincingly argued the case for a 'connected history' long before the arrival of colonialism. They have demonstrated that the Indian subcontinent was very much part of the global economic and cultural exchange network without being subservient to one or any European power in pre-colonial period. These globally connected historical processes effectively shaped the subcontinent's politico-cultural formations. See Sanjay Subrahmanayam, "Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia" *Modern Asian Studies*, 31, 3 (1997): 735-782 and Sanjay Subrahmanayam, *Penumbral Visions: Making Polities in Early Modern South Asia* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001). This is a good corrective to the dominant strand within earlier historiography (both imperialist and nationalist), which put too much emphasis on British colonialism's role in connecting India to the world economic and cultural system and assumed pre-colonial India to be largely a closed society. In line with this revisionist scholarship on pre-colonial India, we argue that India was directly connected to the modern imperialist-capitalist system dominated by Western European power under British colonial rule. Under the new historical condition of colonialism, existing socio-cultural formations and sensibilities were not radically destroyed or simply displaced. They were altered and reconfigured; some institutions and forms slowly became redundant, some were rechanneled in a different and new direction. Sugata Bose's work, which focuses on the history of the Indian Ocean as an 'interregional arena', also argues the same. Sugata Bose, *Hundred Horizons: Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

[2] Unlike the Habermasian ideal public sphere, this is not an open dialogic space of rational debate where the private individual citizen, shorn of (pre-modern) community ties and equipped with the persuasive power of reason, works to arrive at a consensus on the matters of common public good. The Hindi public sphere in colonial India was a deeply segmented space where all forms of hierarchy – linguistic, class, caste, and gender – were at play. It was an open space, but regulated by the colonial regime. It was a space where individuals participated as representatives of the 'community public'. These representative individuals discussed matters internal to and pertaining to the private realm, addressing their own community public, yet open to the gaze of a wider and differential community public. They

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Situating Hindi Satire

As we know through pioneering scholarly works,[3] the colonial state, under the imperatives of governmentality –guided by the ideology of what Trautmann calls 'Mosaic ethnology' in conjunction with a strong tradition of Indian linguistic scholarship –classified and demarcated many shared and fluid spoken and literary languages in collaboration with 'native' informants.[4]

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spoke in the language of tradition, which was duly marked by the language of (colonial) modernity. In such open spaces participation in the debates did not ensure acceptance of all critical positions. The debate or a critical dialogue could start with a closure by adoption of a singular normative premise and rejection or refusal to engage with of all other premises as deviation from the norm, and hence unacceptable. It did not necessarily lead to a consensus through a reasoned argument and could be open to violent fractures. For the best overview of conceptualizations of the public sphere in colonial India and the critical appraisal of the Habermasian public sphere in general see Neeladri Bhattacharya, "Notes Towards a Conception of the Colonial Public" in *Civil Society, Public Sphere and Citizenship: Dialogue and Perspective*, eds. Rajeev Bhargava and Helmut Reifeld (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005), 130-157.

[3] See Bernard Cohn, "The Command of Language and Language of Command" in *Subaltern Studies IV*, ed. Ranajit Guha (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), 276-329; Thomas R. Trautmann, *Aryans and British India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Thomas R. Trautmann, *Languages and Nations: The Dravidian Proof in Colonial Madras* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Vasudha Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions: Bhāratendu Hariśchandra and Nineteenth-Century Banaras* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997); Christopher King, *One Language Two Script* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994); Alok Rai, *Hindi Nationalism*, Tracts For the Times, 13 (Delhi: Orient Longman, 2001); Francesca Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere: Language and Literature in the Age of nationalism 1920-1940* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002); Sumit Sarkar, '"Middle-class" Consciousness and Patriotic Literature in South Asia' in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, eds. Henry Schwartz and Sangeeta Ray (Maldon: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2007), 252-268.

[4] Increasing centrality of the state in the Indian social order is a phenomenon that starts with colonialism and has no precedence in India. See Sudipta Kaviraj, "On the Enchantment of the State: Indian thought on the role of the state in the narrative of modernity" *European Journal of Sociology*, 46, 2 (2005): 263-96. Also see chapter 2 "The Mosaic Ethnology of Asiatick Jones" in Trautmann, *Aryan and British India*, 28-61. Trautmann's work is a very significant intervention. It effectively answers why and how the 'language-nation' project found its legitimacy through linguistic-philological scholarship not anywhere else but in India. This was so because India had a very sophisticated and living tradition of linguistic-philological scholarship; it provided the much-needed methodological *causus belli*, which in collaboration with native scholars, could be appropriated to realise what this project otherwise wished to prove but failed to substantiate with scholarly rigour. Also see, Chapter 1 "Explosion in Grammar factory" and Chapter 2 "Pāṇini and Tolkāppiyam" in Trautmann, *Languages and Nations*, 1-41; 42-72, and Gita Dharampal-Frick, *Interrogating the Historical Discourse on Caste and Race in India. NMML Occasional Paper, History and Society.* New Series 28 (Delhi: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 2013), p. 8. To get a brief idea of the dynamics of living multilingual culture in North India before the colonial intervention and the new methodological tool through which it

One of the historical outcomes of this ideologically charged project in North India was the creation of a Sanskrit-laden Hindi in Devanagari script against a Persian-laden Urdu in Nastalik, and the branding of other living spoken literary languages as 'dialects'. Moreover, these two new languages were simultaneously mapped on the hitherto fuzzy but now homogenised and neatly categorised religious communities of Hindus and Muslims. Under the same ideological frame, nationalist leaders and middle class Hindu intellectuals (as also Muslim intellectuals), who had emerged as a result of the political economy of colonialism, intensified the (upper class-caste) Hindu-Hindi, Muslim-Urdu identity-politics within the colonial institutional spaces as well as in the public sphere. The vernacular Hindi public sphere also emerged against this political backdrop of contestation, conflict and linguistic segmentation wherein matters related to language, literature, religion, culture and politics were discussed and shaped under the overarching frame of the nation/community's reform and consolidation, which was said to be of historical urgency in the 'new' era. Here, this distinctiveness of the new era effectively referred to the historical presence of colonialism that had, among other things, ushered in new ideas and institutional forms of modernity and the consequent precipitation of a process of contestation, negotiation and transformation on myriad issues.

In such a historical context new linguistic idioms and narrative forms were gradually created out of the collusion between European and Indian literary-artistic forms. Each one of them – novels, poetry, essays, stories, travelogues, skits, textbooks, journals or pamphlets with moral-religious discourses, etc., communicated new questions and created new sensibilities. Literary and visual narratives of satire, as we shall see, also emerged and proliferated in the same historical condition. They were constituted through a transcultural negotiation and reconfiguration of Indian and European literary-

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should be studied, see Francesca Orsini, "How to do multilingual literary history? Lessons from fifteenth and sixteenth century north India", *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 49, 2 (2012): 225-46. Also see introductory chapter of Francesca Orsini and Samira Sheikh, eds., *After Timur Left: Culture and Circulation in Fifteenth Century North India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014).

artistic forms. They articulated and communicated contemporary cultural and societal questions and addressed the new sensibilities which had emerged through the superimposition of ideas and institutions related to western modernity brought to India under the aegis of British colonialism. [5]

In this connection a couple of key points, which inform the premise of the present study and are implicitly or explicitly referred to throughout the following pages, will be in order. First, modern Hindi satire is inextricably linked with the question of modernity in colonial North India. Modernity and Hindi satire are, *ipso facto*, constitutive of each other. Satire is one of the most significant literary-artistic modes/sites that have hosted the process of negotiation with western modernity. However, modern Hindi satire is not something which pre-existed or preceded the unfolding of the project of modernity; nor is modernity a project which was already formed and concretised, which is then to be consumed and disseminated through literary-artistic forms like literary and visual satire. On the one hand, satire evolved simultaneously in interaction with and as a result of modernity under the historically contingent condition of colonialism; on the other, through satiric negotiation modernity was itself reconfigured, transformed in a variety of ways and for various political purposes.

Second, if we closely examine the above-mentioned simultaneous and interlinked processes (i.e. the making of a modern satirical narrative and its negotiation with the ideas and institutions of modernity in colonial north India), it becomes apparent that they underline the significance of circulation and interaction between ideas and institutions of the two asymmetrically situated cultures (European and Indian), and the consequent emergence of a new set of cultural norms, ideas and objects. These new formations are not simple replications of the 'original' – they are complex reproductions with their own distinct characteristics irreducible to their cultural 'roots'. Moreover, these transcultural materials are appropriated and made intelligible in the new setting through a variety of framing devices, which map, make connections, and establish a kind of cognitive bridge between two different cultures. In this sense, satirical formats like cartoon and satirical journals, it is argued, are transculturally constituted and strategically framed to popularise them in North India.[6]

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[5] Sharadadevi Vedalankar discusses the role of Christian missionaries' literature in the making of modern Hindi prose. Sharadadevi Vedalankar, *The Development of Hindi Prose in early Nineteenth Century, AD 1800-56* (Allahabad: Lokbharati Publication, 1969). Vasudha Dalmia discusses the origins of some of these genres and indicates that the constitutive process of new literary forms has been transcultural. See chapter 5 of Dalmia, *The Nationalisation of Hindu Tradition*, 222-324. Her later articles on the first Hindi novel *Parīkśā gurū* underline this aspect quite clearly. See her essay in *Narrative Strategies: Essays on South Asian Literature and Films*, ed. Vasudha Dalmia and Theo Damsteegt (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 169-184.

This work is obviously interdisciplinary in nature. It is historical but deals with literature. Literature, however, is not reduced to the level of source material; rather it is the subject matter of history itself. We have taken into account the linguistic and stylistic feature of literary sources and have used insights from literary studies. We examine the constitutive, formal, contextual, textual and, not least, political dimensions of satirical narratives in an interconnected manner. In other words, the present study is simultaneously a work in history of the (marginalised) literature of satire, as well as, a work of history based on satirical literature (marginalised source).

The following chapters have been arranged with a view to foreground the historical context and format of satirical productions. The chapters themselves reveal the inter-permeability of content and form. In the subsequent chapters we build upon the information, analysis and insight received from the existing historiography of satire in consonance with new concepts and approaches, which we consider relevant for providing fresh historical insights. Needless to say, the separation of the individual chapters is informed by the logic of the questions we emphasise and want to ask.

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[6] We focus only on the transcultural constitution of modern satirical prose and cartoon. The transcultural constitution of Indian modernity *per se* is too obvious. The scholars of 'our modernity/colonial modernity' have argued for the same in varying degrees and different ways. We shall elaborate this point at length in the next chapter.

Organisation of chapters

In Chapter 1 we shall address conceptual and historiographical questions around three key terms: 'transculturality', 'modernity' and 'satire'; terms which we have been using frequently and will continue to do so throughout this work. Chapter 2 and 3 discuss modernity as a transcultural phenomenon and underscore the various ways in which it was negotiated and articulated through satirical texts in India. Chapter 4 and 5 examine the making of modern literary and visual narratives of satire (which hosted the process of the negotiation with modernity); in due course these chapters map the historical process of transcultural transaction between local and English satirical forms and the consequent emergence of modern Hindi satire and cartoon. Let us now introduce each chapter briefly.

Chapter 1: Delineating Satire, Modernity and Transculturality provides a survey of existing theoretical and historiographical literature pertaining to our key concepts: 'transculturality', 'modernity' and 'satire'. In existing scholarly works the concept of transculturality has been theorised to understand the dynamics of cultural interaction, its processes and consequences between two or more asymmetrically situated and different cultures. Modernity, likewise, refers to a set of 'new' practices in major spheres of social life: new practices of production, governance, scientific cognition, education, artistic and cultural creativity. Satire is understood as a literary mode of expression which, through its technique of descriptive excess, imitates a pre-existing formalised literary or speech genre of representation, as well as mocks the discourse of its object of representation (for instance, colonial modernity). In this chapter we shall present a critical review of theoretical literature on these key concepts and foreground our own argumentative position. This discussion is followed by a critical survey of the existing historiographical and literary-critical literature of satire with a focus on Hindi literature.

Chapter 2: Modernity, Colonialism and Satire in the Late 19th Century delineates differential social perception of a transcultural phenomenon, namely modernity, as well as its articulation in the satirical literature in colonial North India. It is argued that late nineteenth century satire deployed a variety of literary forms to mock different targets, and was inextricably entangled with the question of colonial modernity. Satire functioned as a potent literary tool to tackle the perceived multiple social asymmetries produced by colonial modernity in its various immanent forms. Yet satiric condemnation of modernity is strategic and selective from the vantage point of the male upper caste Hindu middle class. In explicating and disentangling the complexity of the political agenda of satire, we argue that modern Hindi satire is a literary mode of expression which, through its own specific textual organisation and communicative technique, imitates a pre-existing literary or speech genre of representation (pre-modern and/or modern with its transcultural lineages). The imitative representation and reproduction markedly transforms its characteristics against the imitated basic genres of representation while retaining some of their distinctive features. More importantly, this act of generic imitation enables such satire to mock/parody the discourse/language of its object of representation (colonial modernity in its myriad forms), thereby exposing the contradiction between the commonsensical claims of colonial discourse and the deeper reality around it. Further, in the wider arena of the emerging Hindi public sphere of the late nineteenth century a new literary-cultural idiom and form of social expression is constituted in the narrative of satire.

Chapter 3: Modernity, Scientific Rationality and Satire and in the Early 20th Century attempts to unravel the cultural politics of a highly ambitious piece of reformist satire called *Mudgarānand'caritāvalī* (1912-14) by juxtaposing its textual analysis within the context of the intellectual-political life and times of its author Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Ramavatar Sharma – a cosmopolitan Pandit, public intellectual and Sanskrit scholar *par excellence*. This chapter focuses on the constitution and articulation of a political subjectivity under colonialism that moves beyond an explicit upper caste Hindu frame (discussed in chapter 2). Through a case study of a very long but interesting satirical text of more than 60 pages, which was serialized between 1912 and 1913 in the *Nāgˈrī pracārinī patrikā* of Banaras, it unravels an alternative political subjectivity. It is argued that this astonishing piece of satire emanates from an intellectual stance that calls for a critical reconfiguration of modernity in Indian society by negotiating with modern forms of scientific knowledge and critical reason, which, arguably, are not western in any absolute sense but are culturally neutral and universal. From this vantage point, the satirical text assesses and attacks the present and past of Indian culture and society, and argues for a transcultural conception of modernity that tames the Eurocentric narrative of western superiority without falling prey to nationalist indigenism.

Chapter 4: Transculturality and Satirical Journalism, 1870-1930 maps a history of the literary format and social function of satirical journals in the Hindi literary sphere. Against the existing historiography of Indian journalism, which argues that satirical journalism in the country was modelled on the nineteenth century *Punch or The London Charivari*, this chapter problematizes and questions the simplistic schema of the 'impact' of metropolitan literary cultural forms shaping the 'response' in the colony. It delineates the main characteristic features of the London *Punch* and maps its transcultural life, without prejudging Hindi periodicals as derivative of the former. This chapter frames and answers questions such as: How popular indeed was the *Punch* or satirical journalism within the Hindi literary sphere? How did contemporary practitioners receive *Punch* and/or its literary format? What kind of changes did it undergo? Whether and how was it informed by and re-inscribed with new social meaning in the Hindi literary sphere? What kind of social and cultural mediation did it perform in order to be relevant in the new context?

Chapter 5: Framing Transculturality, Cartoon and Visual Culture, 1900-1940 goes beyond the concern of the preceding chapter, which focus on the literary format of satirical periodicals. Instead this chapter concentrates exclusively on the cartoon as a new art form. Cartoons were published and circulated beyond the format of satirical journals not only in monthly and weekly publications but also as independent visual prints and albums after 1920. This chapter narrates and explains the story of cartoon as a transcultural art form in the Hindi literary sphere where the historical trajectory of the development of illustrated journals unfolded differently from other regions. Given the cartoon's self-evident transcultural roots, this chapter underlines the ways in which this new cultural product was made historically intelligible and tangible to its consumers in a different cultural milieu. The chapter outlines the ways in which the form of cartoon or *vyaṃgya-citra* (visual/graphic satire) became integral to literary journals. It examines cartoon in the interstices of literary and the visual, for the appearance of cartoons is intimately connected with the new emphasis on visual illustration, colour and appearance of literary periodicals. The chapter locates the reception, proliferation and status of cartoon in the aesthetic, commercial and reformist politics of the twentieth century. It argues that the cartoon made itself historically relevant because it could be entertaining and attract popular readership. It could also sharply intervene on contemporary public issues as the bearer of reformist polemics. Finally, the chapter gleans and highlights major representational *topoi* in the early twentieth century cartooning practice in North India.

The *Conclusion* provides a brief summary of the present work along with some remarks on the constraints involved in the writing a history of readership and reception of satire in India.

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A note on primary sources

This work is based primarily on the late nineteenth and early twentieth century literary and visual satire, which appeared in contemporary Hindi periodicals and/or (re)printed in independent booklets as selections. Selected volumes of Annual Newspaper Reports, Home and Political Department files are also used to estimate the circulation figures of periodicals and understand the general attitude of colonial government towards satire and, in some cases, author-editor of the satire. Private letters of literary figures are also consulted to comprehend the professional milieu of literary worlds in the towns where a constellation of author-editor worked. These sources we consulted and collected mainly from Bihar Rashtrabhasha Parishad Library and Bihar State Archives in Patna, Nehru Memorial and Museum and Library, Marwari Library and Central Reference Library (Delhi University) in Delhi, India Institute Library, Oxford, and British Library, London. Reprints of selected primary works now unavailable in the market we consulted either from the rich collection of South Asia Institute Library at Heidelberg, or from the personal collection of Dr. Karmendu Shishir.

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Acknowledgements and dedication

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Chapter 1

Delineating Satire, Modernity and Transculturality

This chapter is primarily an attempt to conceptually situate late nineteenth and early twentieth century Hindi satirical literature amidst the vast body of related theoretical and historiographical literature. As mentioned in the introduction, the present work deals with the co-constitution of modernity and satire, which involved transcultural processes of interaction between two asymmetrically situated literary cultures, Indian and European, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.[1] In this light the present chapter intends to clarify key concepts and approaches briefly referred to in the introduction and deployed in the following chapters. To elucidate: what do we mean by 'transcultural'? What does 'modernity' refer to? And, how do we characterise 'satire' in this study? In the course of answering these questions we shall review relevant theoretical writings and foreground our own argumentative position on these key concepts. The review will be followed by a critical survey of existing historiographical and literary-critical literature of satire with a focus on Hindi literature.

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[1] There are a number of terms that are in use to explain the processes and results of cultural encounters. Transculturality/transculturation (which we have chosen) and hybridization are currently much in favour, although they have different profiles. Broadly speaking, these terms have all been used to refer to processes of cultural mixing and the resulting effects, but they are asymmetrical in their terminological range. Transculturation in studies on Latin America describes a process of mixing which we shall analyse at length. By contrast, while hybridization, popularized globally by Homi K. Bhabha, covers that same process it is also linked with hybridity as a general concept or as a description of a state and with hybrid as a label for the product, which is a new outcome of a mixing process. He provides an insightful critique of the concept that the degree to which hybridity and hybrid are seen as static and hybridization as dynamic needs to be explored carefully: given that objects are in use; it is unlikely that a hybrid object is ever simply static. There is yet another problem with the term hybridization. It is connected with biological processes insinuating what went into cultural mixing was in some way pure or not already mixed. Mark Millington, "Transculturation: Contrapuntal Notes to Critical Orthodoxy", *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 26, 2 (2007): 256-278.

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Transculturality[2]

Transculturality/transculturation as a conceptual category has been in use in anthropology, social science and literary studies since the 1940s. Although it has been deployed broadly to study the process of the making of a new culture or cultural forms by the mixing of two or more different pre-existing cultures or cultural forms,[3] it has been conceived and applied in more than one way. Its usage began in the 1940s with a quest to understand the process of cultural formation in the era of heightened global movement of people and political power during and since the emergence of the modern colonial order under western dominance in Latin America, Africa and Asia.[4] Its usage acquired further relevance in Europe due to an increase in the movement and inflow of people from non-European countries as a result of the Second World War and decolonisation.[5] Most recently, challenged by postcolonial studies and especially its attacks on the Eurocentricity embedded in the cognitive and explanatory categories deployed by the 'mainstream' (western) academia in writing about the world/global history and culture, it has been used as a corrective to map a connected but non-singular global history and culture without falling prey to Eurocentric universalism.[6] What follows is a brief summary of its many usages in some seminal works.

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[2] We start with *transculturality* for it is used as an analytical concept, which pervades the process of emergence and making of *modernity* and *satire* in modern South Asia. Since we shall be using this concept to understand the introduction and unfolding of *modernity* and its various forms, *satire* being one, in colonial South Asia, it shall be in order to engage first with *transculturality*.

[3] As Diana Taylor points out, culture is generally understood in two interrelated ways. One, culture is, as Geertz says in his *Local knowledge*, "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which [people] communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life." Two, it is about the conscious politicization of culture, the strategic use of cultural symbols, and the recognition that "cultural identity becomes a political resource" in group action. The theory of transculturation involves both. Cf. Diana Taylor, "Transculturating Transculturation", *Performing Arts Journal*, 13, 2 (1991): 91.

[4] *Transculturation* predominantly has been used in the study of Latin American colonial societies, which had faced relatively more violent uprooting, and displacement of people and culture. Cuban anthropologist Fernando Oritz's classical work *Cuban Counterpoints: Tobacco and Sugar* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995) provided initial intellectual-political impetus, which was further developed and used by literary and cultural critic and historians like Angel Rama. Rama's works are not easily available in English. My assessment of Rama is based on secondary works on his intellectual-political career.

[5] German philosopher like Wolfgang Welsch started theorising this phenomenon in the 1990s in a series of lectures and writings on the concept of *transculturality*. Wolfgang Welsch, "Transculturality - the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today" in *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*, eds. Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash (London: Sage, 1999), 194-213; "Rethinking Identity in the Age of Globalization - A Transcultural Perspective" in *Taiwan Association of Aesthetics and Art*

Fermando Oritz, the Cuban anthropologist, used the term 'transculturation' for the first time in 1940 to understand the making of Cuban culture and society through the study of the colonial plantation system focusing on sugar and tobacco. He endeavoured to explore and understand contemporary Cuban social life and culture as one, which, although it had Spanish, African and Indian elements, also had a completely new and different formation. It has, arguably, emerged out of a long asymmetrical interaction in history between these social groups. Oritz did not attempt to theorise the term systematically[7] but his usage of the term gives us some indication about what he meant. According to Mark Millington,[8] Oritz's justification for the new term is as follows: "[Transculturality] expresses the highly varied phenomena that came about in Cuba as a result of complex *trans*mutations of cultures, without appreciating which it is impossible to understand the evolution of the Cuban people in key areas of social life."[9] At a more general level, as Diana Taylor sums up, Oritz used this term to denominate "the transformative process undergone by a society in

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Science, 1 (2002): 85-94; "Philosophy: specific origin and universal aspirations (traditional, modern, future)" Roundtable Lecture Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy, Boston, 10 August 1998. These and other articles and lectures are available on his Jena University's webpage < http://www2.uni-jena.de/welsch/>.

[6] A recent multivolume series on literary history of the world *Transcultural Literary History* (2006), which is an outcome of a long symposium and scholarly discussion held amongst literary-cultural critics and historians from Europe Asia and Africa, is a good case in point. See footnote 20 below.

[7] In a book of more than 600 pages his attempts to deal with the theory of *transculturation* covers a little more than 6 pages. See second part of chapter 2, in Oritz, *Cuban Counterpoints*.

[8] Mark Millington, "Transculturation", 256-278.

[9] Millington, "Transculturation", 260-61. Millington also mentions that Oritz also underlines the cultural diversity of both Spaniards and Africans coming to Cuba and intends to argue that there are different intensities of transculturation according to social status. Millington, "Transculturation", 261.

the acquisition of foreign cultural material – the loss or displacement of a society's culture due to the acquisition or imposition of foreign material, and the fusion of the indigenous and the foreign to create a new, original cultural product."[10]

While this relatively loose definition is capable of addressing and accommodating a variety of historical instances of cultural interaction and intermixing, nonetheless, as recent critics of the theory of transculturation like

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[10] In his immediate scholarly context Oritz sought to distinguish *transculturation* by pitting it against the term *acculturation* which was introduced by the US anthropologists in 1936 and denoted the process of cultural mixing amongst the vanquished societies from the vantage point of the dominant and the victorious. Oritz mentions that "the term transculturation better expresses the different phases in the transitive process from one culture to another, because this process does not only imply the acquisition of culture, as connoted by the Anglo-American term *acculturation*, but it also necessarily involves the loss or uprooting of one's preceding culture, what one could call a partial *disculturation*. Moreover, it signifies the subsequent creation of new cultural phenomena that one could call *neoculturation*." Cf. Taylor, "Transculturating Transculturation", 91-92. Peruvian novelist-ethnographer Jose Maria Arguedas and Uruguayan literary critic Angel Rama further expanded the theory of transculturation. They went beyond Oritz to map out the progressive or expanding nature of transculturation over time and space. According to Taylor, "Arguedas stressed the survival of an indigenous culture "differentiated from western culture" not in that it was unadulterated or unaffected by its contact with the west, but rather in that it was precisely a product of that contact, the "result of the long process of evolution and change experienced by the ancient Peruvian culture since the moment it suffered the impact of the Spanish invasion." The Peruvian culture Arguedas studied, like most of the inhabitants of Peru themselves, was neither "pure" Indian nor "pure" Spanish, but a mixture of both and, hence, differentiated from both." Explaining the developments from 1950s onwards Arguedas suggests, "The areas which most directly experienced the impact of foreign culture were the ports of entry and large cultural centers like Mexico City, Buenos Aires, and Lima. The upper classes, mostly based in the cities, were more closely allied with the foreign metropolis, historically and ideologically, than were the lower ones. Gradually, however, both the foreign and the partially assimilated versions of the foreign spread to rural areas, by which time they were partially diluted by their contact with native elements. The "transcultured" people of indigenous communities, the mestizos, for example, were often anxious to leave traditional indigenous societies of which they no longer felt a part. Beginning in the 1950s and 1960s and up to the present, they left the rural areas to try their luck in the large cities. As these groups moved to the cities, sometimes in numbers exceeding thousands a day, the urban culture too underwent profound change as it assimilated the rural subgroups." Cf. Tailor, "Transculturating Transculturation", 92-93. Arguedas sought to explain and use 'transculturation' as a process of cultural-mixing, which has been the bearer or at least facilitator of modernisation of society and evolution of modern national culture in the Latin Americas. Such political inclination also lurks in Oritz's work. See Fernando Coronil's Introduction "Transculturation and the Politics of Theory: Countering the Center" in Fernando Oritz, *Cuban Counterpoints: Tobacco and Sugar* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), ix-lvi.

Silvia Spitta,[11] along with Mark Millington, have rightly pointed out, "there are problematic elements in both Ortiz's theorisation and his linking up of the theory with historical realities: a certain lack of specificity, at times a sketchiness about cultural processes and at others a less than clear fit between theory and circumstance."[12] To be fair to Oritz, he may oscillate between explaining the human experience and mapping the broad process of complex cultural interaction; he, however, seems to have a sharp political sense of why the concept of transculturation is required in Latin America. As Millington puts it, "Latin America's lengthy colonial history of exploitation and manipulation and its simultaneous, sustained assimilation to Iberian modes of thought and governance mean that it has been engaged in a search for resistance and independence that may be accounted a cultural constant."[13] Transculturation, in other words, provided a theoretical tool; it provided a conceptual armoury that was more than a superficial embrace for the innocuous idea of heterogeneity. It resisted imperialist categories like 'acculturation' and provided the much-needed self-respect and autonomy. It demonstrated that the Latin American culture is not just a pastiche or derivation but it is one that is uniquely formed out of a complex historical process of cultural mixing and mutation.

Notwithstanding the above-mentioned political context and usage of the concept, the analysis of Latin American cultural formations by Oritz (more so in the case of people like Angel Rama) remains trapped within the overarching teleological narrative of nation-state and Eurocentric modernisation. As John Beverley puts it, "[f]or both Rama and Ortiz transculturation functions as a teleology, not without marks of violence and loss, but *necessary* in the last instance for the formation of the modern nation-state and a national (or continental) identity that would be something other than the sum of its parts, since the original identities are sublated in the process of transculturation itself. [Moreover], for Rama, transculturation is above all an instrument for achieving Latin American cultural and economic modernity in the face of the obstacles to that modernity created by colonial and then neo-colonial forms of dependency."[14] Also, Oritz's idea of culture silently shares the premise that a culture, at least in its originary moments (African or Spanish culture prior to their mutual interaction), is largely self-contained or internally bound and singular.

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[11] S. Spitta, *Between Two Waters: Narratives of Transculturation in Latin America* (Houston: Rice University Press, 1995).

[12] Millington, "Transculturation", 263.

[13] Millington, "Transculturation", 264.

In sum, Oritz's transculturation is a useful conceptual category to understand the historical process of cultural interaction and inter-mixing, provided it is used to explore its actual historical process rather than narrowing its focus only on the outcome. More importantly, it is a useful category if the analysis of culture remains free from the teleology of the nation-state and the master narrative of global modernization. Also, the concept of culture in moments prior to the encounter is not assumed to be singular and bounded to a community and territory impervious to other formative entanglements and influences.

Keeping in mind the above-mentioned intervention made by Oritz and his subsequent followers and critics in the Latin American context, we find attempts to theorise the concept of transculturality by Wolfgang Welsch addressing and illuminating some of these problems.[15] Welsch intends to theorise transculturality in the contemporary political and social scenario that is marked by high connectivity, circulation and mobility of people, ideas, institutions and cultures across the globe. He intends to develop a concept of culture or the process of making of culture which is constitutively plural, analytically free from the overburdening category of the nation-state and descriptively suitable to understand the dynamics of contemporary [western] societies. He questions and rejects what he sees essentially a Herderian premise of culture characterised "by social homogenization, ethnic consolidation and intercultural delimitation."[16] He argues that even the newer conceptual articulations like 'interculturality' and 'multiculturality' share the original Herderian notion of culture. The scholarship on intercultural relationship and multiculturalism, he says, may try to explain conflicts as one cultural community encroaching upon the rights of the other, and advocate a peaceful coexistence of different cultures. However, they start from a premise, which assumes that one group or a set of people has one single culture that has been formed in isolation without any interaction with the other, and carries its [uncontaminated] cultural forms everywhere.

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[14] J. Beverley, *Subalternity and Representation: Arguments in Cultural Theory* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999), 45.

[15] "Transculturality - the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today" in *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*, eds. Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash (London: Sage, 1999), 194-213. I have consulted the same article, which is available on Jena University's webpage < http://www2.uni-jena.de/welsch/> accessed on 11.05.2009. Pp. 1-16. All citations are from the article downloaded from this webpage.

In other words, Welsch's concept of transculturality incorporates the idea that any cultural formation is constituted through interaction and dialogue with other cultures. In effect, he intends to establish (what we have seen as one of the weakest links in Oritz's formulation) that all cultural forms are transculturally constituted in varying degrees since their very inception. In the event of one culture crossing or encountering another, it leads to the constitution of a new hybrid culture, which again remains open for further mixing and hybridization (irrespective of the will of nation-state or other regimes of power). [17]

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[16] Welsch writes: "The concept is characterized by three elements: by social homogenization, ethnic consolidation and intercultural delimitation. Firstly, every culture is supposed to mould the whole life of the people concerned and of its individuals, making every act and every object an unmistakable instance of precisely *this* culture. The concept is unificatory. Secondly, culture is always to be the "*culture of a folk*", representing, as Herder said, "the flower" of a folk's existence. The concept is folk-bound. Thirdly, a decided *delimitation* towards the outside ensues: Every culture is, as the culture of one folk, to be distinguished and to remain separated from other folks' cultures. The concept is separatory." Welsch, "Transculturality", 1-2.

[17] Welsch explains: "Consider how these transcultural formations come about. Different groups or individuals who give shape to new transcultural patterns draw upon different sources for this purpose. Hence the transcultural networks will vary already in their inventory, and even more so in their structure (because even the same elements, when put together differently, result in different structures). The transcultural webs are, in short, woven with different threads, and in different manner. Therefore, on the level of transculturality, a high degree of cultural manifoldness results again – it is certainly no smaller than that which was found between traditional single cultures. It's just that now the differences no longer come about through a juxtaposition of clearly delineated cultures (like in a mosaic), but result between transcultural

Anticipating the charge of falling into the trap of globalisation's homogenizing imperative, he distinguishes the concept of transculturality as a process, which descriptively does not and prescriptively should not lead to what he calls 'uniformisation' of the world but to the "production of diversity". To him, "[a]s transculturality pushes forward, the modes of diversity is [further] altered.[18]

The merits of Welsch's formulation of transculturality are too obvious to counter, not only in underlining the transcultural constitution of any cultural formation and its human agents but more so in the context of his engagement with the transformations within contemporary western societies. Yet unlike Oritz, Welsch's formulation underplays the question of power involved in the constitution of transculturality.[19] After all, when two sets of people bearing their

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networks, which have some things in common while differing in others, showing overlaps and distinctions at the same time. The mechanics of differentiation has become more complex but *it has also become genuinely cultural* for the very first time, no longer complying with geographical or national stipulations, but *following pure cultural interchange processes*." Italics mine. This shall be commented upon in the footnote no. 19. Welsch, "Transculturality", 9-10.

[18] Welsch argues that "the advantage of the transculturality concept over competing concepts that it explains uniformization and intermixing processes on the one side and the emergence of new diversity on the other side at the same time and by means of the same formula." He further elaborates: "the concept of globalization assumes that cultures are becoming the same the world over […] The champions of globalization would have a hard time ignoring the complementary resurgence of particularisms worldwide. Their concept, however, is by its very structure incapable of developing an adequate understanding of these countertendencies. From the viewpoint of globalization, particularisms are just phenomena which are retrograde and whose destiny it is to vanish. The rise of particularisms is a reaction to globalization processes […] People obviously feel compelled to defend themselves against being merged into globalized uniformity. They don't want just to be universal or global, but also specific and of their own. […] This desire is legitimate, and forms in which it can be satisfied without danger are to be determined and promoted. Future cultural forms will have to be such that they also cater for the demand for specificity. The concept of transculturality goes beyond these seemingly hard alternatives. It is able to cover both, global and local, universalistic and particularistic aspects, and it does so quite naturally, from the logic of transcultural processes themselves. The globalizing tendencies as well as the desire for specificity and particularity can be fulfilled *within* transculturality." Welsch, "Transculturality", 11-12.

[19] I suspect that his eagerness to establish the openness and interactive aspect of any cultural formation leads to underplaying the limits of dialogicity at political level. In his emphases on *cultural* as against *political* in transcultural interaction he only intends every now and then (for example, see italicised parts in footnote number 17) the political entities like state and its institutions. He underlines the limits of the regime of nation-state in controlling the growing transcultural make up of people and cultures, and to our understanding rightly so. Yet, his category of *cultural* does not explicitly take into account *political* in the sense of power relations

already transcultured cultures interact, the two may not be equally positioned in the political or social realm (historically speaking, at least, neither in Oritz's Latin American nor in South Asian colonial context has there been a case of cultural encounter that escaped the condition of deep inequality). The result of this asymmetry may then lead to the process of the making of a new culture that is transcultural but is also deeply asymmetrical – a fact that Oritz takes care by refusing to equate the sufferings and pain of Africans and Spaniards in Cuba. Combining the theoretical merits of Oritz (asymmetrical cultural intermixing) and Welsch (unbounded, non-singular, interactively constituted culture), however, cancels out each other's major lacuna at the level of theorisation. Broadly speaking, a challenge that their combined endeavours still leave out is that of its application and testing by mapping it on the actual historical processes of intercultural or cross cultural interaction which enquires as much into the dynamics of the process of transculturality *per se* as it looks into transculturally constituted material objects or its end product.

The concept of transculturality has been theorised, as we have seen above, to understand the dynamics of cultural interaction, its processes and consequences between two or more asymmetrically situated and different cultures. Recently, it has also been expanded slightly differently but with largely similar aim. It has been deployed, for instance, to write a world history of literature in the aftermath of theoretical demolition of the meta-narratives and Eurocentricity by poststructuralist and postcolonial scholars as a new heuristic device to write a global history in a politically self-conscious way so as to understand the connected and interlinked history of the world on a larger canvas without falling prey to cultural biases informed by conceptual lopsidedness. In other words, it has been developed in a historical situation of an asymmetrically connected world which witnesses the circulation and flow of ideas in multiple

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existing between two different cultures no matter howsoever already transcultural in its initial make up.

directions. In such a situation, we may then ask, how histories, or to be more specific in terms of example, of literary concepts or forms, across different cultures, are to be written.

In this connection the recent enterprise in the domain of literary history, namely, "Transcultural Literary History" is worth discussing. [20] In this collaborative work, which aims to write literary history from a global perspective in the wake of the postcolonial turn in literary cultural studies, one of the editors and contributor Anders Pettersson discusses what he and his collective means by transcultural literary history. He writes, ''by transcultural literary studies I mean […] literary studies which transcend the boarders of a single culture in their choice of topic."[21] To demonstrate through example he takes the case of literature and elucidates how it should be approached in historical and transcultural studies without falling prey to Eurocentrism. He insinuates that the category of 'literature' should be approached as a kind of empty concept and should be mapped on to resembling cognitive concepts across time and cultures in order to understand the variety of approaches and theorisation of and about 'literature'; how and why it differs or resembles across cultures and history and so forth.[22] Here 'transcultural' equals 'cross-cultural' history in a single but reflexive frame, which refuses to give primacy to one concept of literature over another, thereby negating the dangers of a Eurocentric or nationalist-indigenist history. Margareta Petersson,[23] likewise, suggests a similar approach to the concept of modernity in literature. What is appealingly suggested but not argued is that such transcultural history can accommodate the 'question of difference' in the articulation of a specific concept or theory *per se* across cultures.

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[20] See Gunilla Lindberg-Wada ed., *Studying Transcultural Literary History* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), which includes the collection of papers read by literary critics and historians working on different regions of the world at symposium organised in Sweden. This book was followed by four volume series *Literary History: Towards a Global Perspective* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006).

[21] See Anders Pettersson, "Introduction: Concepts of Literature and Transcultural" in Anders Pettersson ed. *Notions of Literature Across Time and Cultures, Literary History: Towards a Global Perspective*, Vol. I, series editor, Gunilla Lindberg-Wada (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 1-36. Also see his article "Transcultural Literary History: Beyond Constricting Notions of World Literature", *New Literary History*, 39, 3 (2008): 463-479.

[22] With the same effect but without using the concept of transculturality Sudipta Kaviraj explained why and how the concept of *public* in South Asia is different from its western counterpart. He explores the concept of *common* in the discourse of western political theory around the notion of *public*. He does the same with the concept of *common* in South Asian context. He looks into the ways in which the notion of *common* is articulated, then why the concept of *public* is connotatively different in South Asia. Sudipta Kaviraj, "Filth and the Public Sphere: Concepts and Practices about Space in Calcutta", *Public Culture*, 10, 1 (1993): 83-113.

Both scholars offer a good practical methodological suggestion for writing histories in general and a history of ideas in particular which criss-crosses cultures, time and space. However, there are some shortcomings in their approach. In the formation of a 'literary culture' or in mapping the concept of 'literature', the role and the process of cultural interaction are side-lined. In other words, they ignore the fact that a concept (in this case the constituent of literature) is not formed *a priori*. Instead it is (re)configured in a historical context in the process of interaction between differently configured and located concepts. This is a problematic which has not been sufficiently reflected upon, failing to acknowledge that transculturality is not about the study of a concept or material object across cultures only.[24] Transculturality, as we shall see in the course of our study, is about the dynamics of interaction as a process, which determines the nature and characteristics of a cultural formation or its material object. Herein lies the distinction between our approach and in the usage of the concept of the transcultural.[25]

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[23] Margareta Petersson, "Introduction: Cultural Encounters between Literary Cultures. The Example of the Novel" in Margareta Petersson ed. *Literary Interaction in the Modern World 1*, *Literary History: Towards a Global Perspective*, Vol. III, series editor Gunilla Lindberg-Wada (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 1-29.

[24] For a good critical overview of the methodology used by comparative history and those who do the history of cultural transfer, see Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, "Beyond Comparison: History Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity", *History and theory*, 45 (February, 2000): 30-50. I have used their insight in critically assessing the existing formulations of transculturality/transculturation.

[25] This approach of the present work should not be considered of the author in absolutely unique sense; many works that are coming out from *Asia Europe*, Cluster of Excellence, Heidelberg (of which this work is also a part) seem to have adopted a largely similar approach when they deploy the term *transculturality*. For a good overview of the approach see issues of the *Cluster*'s

Our approach does, however, bear resemblance to emerging literature in the field of South Asian literary cultural history.[26] We argue along with Allison Busch and Thomas De Brujin, the editors of *Culture and Circulation: Literature in Motion in Early Modern India*, who suggest that the modern(ist) political and cultural boundaries erected around languages and texts, which pervade academic interpretative categories through nationalism, need to be discarded in order to understand the dynamics of cross-cultural circulation of literary forms and texts.[27] Circulation, or what we call transcultural interaction, is always multidirectional; it is not only a physical and geographical phenomenon, but also 'an engine of conceptual change.'[28] For the study of making of a literary-cultural tradition, as the book arguably seeks to highlight, merely the acknowledgement of the fact of trans-regional cultural interaction is not adequate. The focus of such study, as the book proposes, should be on the historical moments and points of contact/encounter between different traditions.[29] In other words, as we have

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publication, online journal *Transcultural Studies* and other edited books. Also, independently, but with broadly similar thrust and concern, Stephen Greenblatt and his collaborators have recently come up with an edited volume on 'cultural mobility'. They use the concept of *mobility* to capture the same phenomenon when they assert that mobility (as opposed to stability/fixity) is *constitutive* element of *culture*. See Stephen Greenblatt, ed. *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[26] See Allison Busch and Thomas De Brujin eds., *Culture and Circulation: Literature in Motion in Early Modern India* (Leiden: Brill, 2014) and Francesca Orsini and Samira Sheikh, eds., *After Timur Left: Culture and Circulation in Fifteenth Century North India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014). However, both these works take their conceptual insight from the editorial introduction of seminal book *Society and Circulation*, a 2003 book that interestingly prefigures the central arguments of Stephen Greenblatt (2010). *Society and Circulation* takes mobility (of goods, people and culture) as their starting point and suggests that mobility (and the consequent cultural encounters) leads to adaptation of ideas, which spurs cultural change. See Claude Markovits, Jacques Pouchepadass and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, eds. *Society and Circulation: Mobile people Itinerant Cultures in South Asia, 1750-1950* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003).

[27] Busch and De Brujin argue with rhetorical flourish: "Although not generally highlighted in Indian literary history, there too circulation was the norm rather than exception in everything from the movement of literati to the dissemination of texts to the cross-pollination of poetic forms. How could circulation not, in fact, have been the norm endemic to a region that boasts more than two dozen major literary traditions?" Allison Busch and Thomas De Brujin, eds., *Culture and Circulation*, 3.

[28] Allison Busch and Thomas De Brujin, eds., *Culture and Circulation*, 8.

[29] Although not the central thrust of the book, circulation or interactional flow between Indian aesthetic paradigm and those brought by colonial modernity is also touched upon in this book. It intends to demonstrate, as we show in subsequent chapters, that transcultural encounter between

already pointed out, the focus should be on the historical context and processes of transcultural interaction. The product of literary-cultural encounter should not be seen as a deviation from an original form or 'a monolithic norm'. To put it differently, the literary-cultural traditions are transculturally constituted and are always marked by dialogue and exchange in multiple directions.

Arguing in line with Satya P. Mohanty,[30] studying literature from a transcultural perspective in our context itself is of additional significance. Our chapters suggest a non-ethnocentric or non-chauvinist way of approaching literary cultural history. Many nationalist scholars in India assumed till a half a century ago (some cultural nationalists still do) that the rationale for literary analysis and history was the construction of national or regional literary histories. We try to dismantle this teleology of cultural nationalism. We show how transcultural connections can be the key to both greater specification and a more expansive understanding of the contexts of a particular literary artistic form. In this connection one clarification is in order. It is true that there are very few cultures, which are not mixed, or transculturally constituted. Frequently the discussions are so general that key local factors and differentiations fail to be considered. If so, one may ask, what is the specific value of these concepts? While political value against cultural indigenism is understandable, can it then be assumed to have any explanatory power? The answer could be in the affirmative if we go for precise works with specific case studies. Therefore, our study is significant not only because we study transculturality as such but also because we examine the way it has functioned as a process in the making of particular cultural forms or, to be more specific, how literary artistic modes of communication in colonial societies are inextricably connected with developments in global or English literary cultural history. On a theoretical plane

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the pre-modern and the colonial-modern involved the reuse, rereading and reinterpretation of older literary-cultural forms and texts.

[30] Satya P. Mohanty, "Introduction: Viewing Colonialism and Modernity through Indian Literature" in *Colonialism, Modernity, and Literature: A view from India*, ed. Satya P. Mohanty (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 1-21.

this justification can be seen as a plea for the case of 'historical-particular' that exists legitimately and simultaneously in connection with and alongside a 'global-universal', which is theoretically plural and heterogeneous.[31] It is from this argumentative position that our idea of modernity is also informed, which we elaborate in the next section with the assistance of existing literature on this much-written but confusing concept.

2

Modernity

The literature on modernity is vast and ideologically fraught.[32] However, there is a minimum general consensus that what we call modernity in shorthand is a set of 'new' practices in major spheres of social life: new practices of production, governance, scientific cognition, education, artistic and cultural creativity. It refers to several processes of social change such as capitalist industrialisation, the increasing centrality of the state in the social order (Foucault's 'governmentality'), urbanisation, sociological individuation, secularisation in politics and ethics, the creation of a new order of knowledge, vast changes in the organisation of family and intimacy, and changes in the fields of artistic and literary culture. In this sense modernity was first experienced in

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[31] This statement is informed by my understanding of Dipesh Chakrabarty's political point against universalising logic of capital and its history that subjugates the question of historical difference and diversity of experience. While his engagement is at the level of Marxian theory of capital and labour, his arguments can be taken to make a case for historical difference against universalising tendency of dominant strand of Enlightenment thought which either subsumes the experiences of non-European historical-particular or seeks to render them as deviations. In this sense the idea of global history should be informed by a conception of universality, which is not totalising and singular but plural, and, moreover, which can accommodate alternative forms of universality and diversity of historical experience. See Chapter 2 "The Two Histories of Capital" in Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincialising Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 47-71.

[32] For a good summary and critique see Sudipta Kaviraj, "An Outline of a Revisionist Theory of Modernity", *European Journal of Sociology*, 46, 3 (2005): 497-526; Frederick Cooper, "Modernity" in his book *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 114-149.

Europe and was soon encountered in other regions of the world entangled in a deeply asymmetrical web of capitalism. The scholarly consensus ends here. In what we may call the Eurocentric narrative of its history, modernity is a singular and homogeneous process of social change central to the history of western Europe. It is claimed to have originated and fully experienced in the west, then spread to other parts of the world through the imperial web of capitalist expansion. The rest, according to the logic of this narrative, only partially experience it and perpetually strive to catch up with the original and singular project of modernity and its concomitant developments- industrialisation, democracy, urbanisation, secularism, advancement of science and technology, reason and rationality in collective life, bourgeois individuation, new aesthetics of art and literature and so forth.[33]

Timothy Mitchell[34] provides us with a powerful critic of this narrative of singular modernity questioning the assumed spatial fixture of modernity and its association with a certain place, namely the west. He questions the historical veracity of the idea that modernization as a process began and finished in

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[33] This narrative is explicitly or implicitly shared by early and neo-imperialist as well as nationalist and left scholarship, which viewed British rule in India as harbinger of social transformation. While disputing the volume, intensity and direction of its effects because of regime's coloniality or otherwise, all accept modernity as essentially singular project which is not fully realised but has to be aspired for and fulfilled in future. The power of modernisation narrative remained dominant till the disenchantment with the post-colonial developmentalist Indian state came to the fore from late 1970s and early 1980s. To cite one example of its continuing presence, even as astute a scholar as the sociologist Dipankar Gupta in his book *Mistaken Modernity* betrays the same premise. That there was an original modernity and what we see in India is *mistaken* one that falls short of the original. The problematic with this kind of approach is that while it may point out pressing problems of Indian society faces today, its diagnosis remains trapped in a faulty premise. At best it remains a kind of deficit analysis – so and so is and should be the parameter of 'ideal' (read western) democracy or social collective but democratic and social behaviour in India is marred by 'primordial' ties like casteism or communalism, hence Indian society is yet to modernise, its modernisation is mistaken or on wrong feet! On the global-civilisational level, scholars like Samuel P. Huntington pose this kind of narrative at its arrogant best. In these writings, as Frederic Cooper sums up succinctly, "modernity is still singular; it is indeed a European project and a European accomplishment, to be defended against others who may knock at the gate but whose cultural baggage renders the mastery of modernity unattainable." Cooper, "Modernity", 114.

[34] Timothy Mitchell, "The Stage of Modernity" in *Questions of Modernity*, ed. Timothy Mitchell (Minneapolis London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 1-34.

Europe, from where it has been exported across ever-expanding regions of the non-west. Citing the examples of early phase of colonial expansion in the regions beyond Europe he argues that more global pictures on the origins of capitalist modernity suggest a less Eurocentric picture of the formation of the European modern; its origins lay in reticulations of exchange and production encircling the world. It was a creation not of the west but of an interaction between west and non-west.[35] In other words, modernity (and its various manifest institutional forms through which it is recognised) is not the sole property of the west. However, even such a view is not without a problem. It assumes the existence of the west and its exterior long before the world's identities had been divided into this neat, Europe-centred dualism.[36] Relocating the question of modernity beyond the limits of the west, he warns, involves a dangerous trap – instead of decentering the categories and certainties of modernity, one might produce a more expansive, inclusive, and inevitably homogenous account of the genealogy of modernity. He calls for a way to theorise the question of modernity in such a way that relocates it within a global context and, at the same time, enables that context to complicate, rather than simply reverse, the narrative logic of modernization. To achieve this, he says, it is not enough to question simply modernity's location but one also has to question its temporality. Conjoining Walter Benjamin and Benedict Anderson's idea of homogeneous empty time with Henri Bergson's formulation that this homogeneous empty time rests on giving temporality a spatial expression Mitchell argues that the social expression of modernity can be characterized, among other ways, by a sense of presence or contemporaneity created by the spatialization of time.

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[35] Mitchell shows how institutional forms of modernity associated exclusively with the west has evolved outside the geographical boundary of Europe in contact zones of the colonies on the basis of the works like Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1985); Arthur L. Stinchcombe, *Sugar Island Slavery in the Age of Enlightenment: The Political Economy of the Caribbean World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993). Cf. Mitchell, "The Stage of Modernity", 8-9.

[36] Rather, the neat divisions like west and non-west, White or non-White, European and non-European were often elaborated abroad during the process of interaction outside the geography of Europe and then brought to Europe. Mitchell, therefore, emphasizes the role of the 'periphery' in the genealogy of modernity. Mitchell, "The Stage of Modernity", 4.

Mitchell further underlines the way in which the historical developments outside "the west" in the early phase of colonialism are reorganised as part of its own history, arguing that the discipline of historical time reorganises discordant geographies into a universal modernity.[37] Differences are only conceived of as different in relation to an underlying uniformity. In such a formulation their presentation as variations establishes the concept of a universal history, in relation to which all local histories—delayed, displaced, blocked, or rearranged—receive their meaning. The concept of historical time recaptures histories happening overseas and returns them to the historical home of the west. Such representations construct the capitalist modern as a temporal object as much as a spatial one, giving it yet again the coherence of a single parentage and unique abode. Uncovering the plural genealogy and ecology of what we unify under names such as capitalism or modernity puts this coherence in question. In other words, by putting empire back into the history of Europe, he suggests, we can reverse the narrative of modernization and see the west itself as the product of modernity, produced *as* the west through the spatialization of time.[38] To disrupt this powerful narrative we need to expose the way in which the European-modern is "staged as representation"– a technology which is crucial to sustain the narrative.[39] We shall not go into the details of this argumentation. To us what is of immediate relevance is Mitchell's critique of the projection of modernity *as the west*, i.e., as essentially singular and European, against the historical evidence which suggests instead its production through complex asymmetrical transcultural processes of interaction. More importantly, by disentangling the process of interaction and the technology of its representation we get a clue to understand and expose not only how modernity is produced as exclusively western, but also how the west (the category) is itself a product of modernity; how dichotomous ideological categories like the west and the rest, first and third world are constructed, and how the non-west is condemned to remaining in 'catching up' position.

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[37] According to Mitchell, historical time, the time of the west, is what gives modern geography its order, an order centered upon Europe. Historical time, in such an account, is singular, moving from one stage of development to another. There is no possibility of more than one history, of a non-singular capitalism. For example, Caribbean agro-industry was not capitalism, in other words, for the meaning of capitalism is defined by the factory system of nineteenth-century England; but it can have a place in modern history, because it nourished the formation of that system. The conception of historical time renders history singular by organising the multiplicity of global events into a single narrative. The narrative is structured by the progression of a principle, be it the principle of human reason or enlightenment, technical rationality or power over nature. Even when discovered acting precociously overseas, these powers of production, technology, or reason constitute a single story of unfolding potential. Mitchell, "The Stage of Modernity", 7.

[38] The "now" of modernity, its culture of contemporaneity, the particular sense of simultaneity that is taken as modernity's experience, depends upon the representation of a homogenous space. The inhabitants of this space, almost all of whom never meet one another, can be conceived as living the same empty moment, as occupying the same time-space. This effect of simultaneity makes it possible to construct the idea of historical time: history is the story of a civilization, culture, or people whose diverse lives are imagined to share a singular epoch and to progress as a unit from one contemporaneous moment to the next. Mitchell, "The Stage of Modernity", 15

While Mitchell's is mainly a postcolonial stance on Eurocentric narrative of modernity, others like Sudipta Kaviraj have put forth deeply historical arguments in challenging the overt and covert perpetuation of the same orthodoxy.[40] Kaviraj makes a case for a revisionist theory of modernity against the dominant but fallacious academic practice which takes modernity as an already completed western project which is and has to remain singular and universal even when it travels across cultures. He questions the mapping of institutional and social practice outside Europe in accordance with the scale of an 'already-formed' modernity as experienced in western societies, as also the academic exercise of, what we may call, 'deficit analysis' which is based less on research and more on expectation concerning the experiences of modernity in non-European societies. Like Mitchell, he too calls for accommodating the historical reality of multiple or differential modernities.[41] Modernity, for Kaviraj too, is a historically contingent combination of its constituent elements that tend to produce different histories of the modern under different historical circumstances, a product of the structurally diverse *a priori* conditions within which modernity has unfolded across cultures.[42] These structures constitute the ''initial'' or prior conditions from which and over which modern institutions begin to arise. Elucidates through Gadamar's argument about indelibility of historical consciousness he writes: "In his discussions on history of art, Hans Georg Gadamer uses a concept which might capture the meaning of initial condition more vividly. Gadamer suggests that historical consciousness is always 'effective historical' This means that a particular interpretation of a text or cultural object remains active *through its effects*, that is, the effect of a particular historical reading is not really erased when it is replaced by a succeeding interpretation. The subsequent reading, which is really different from the previous one, works on the material of the earlier reading, and is still determined by the first as its pre-condition in both senses of the term. Although apparently inaccessible externally, closer analysis would always show that the effectuality of the earlier reading is never really effaced. It determines and shapes the character of the second reading and, in a sense, continues to exist precisely through what has replaced or suppressed it. In other words, initial historical conditions in which processes of modernity begin to work would impart to those processes and institutions specific qualities and forms, which would become conditions for their further evolution. Initial conditions, to use Gadamer's terminology, remain 'effective-historical'."[43] Modernity in India, thus, was certainly not the same as in Europe but was reconfigured and completely transformed in fundamental ways in its interaction with initial or local historical conditions.

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[39] By this he means that modernity since early nineteenth century (or colonial-modern) involves creating an effect we recognize as reality, by organizing the world endlessly to represent it. He explains that the orchestrating of image and imagination, managing of the place of meaning in the social world and the experience of personhood, the manipulating of populations and ecologies by their reduction to technical schemes and disciplinary programs, were already characteristic features of modernity in the colonial period. All the novel institutional forms and political practice of late nineteenth-century were organized around the simulation, diagramming, and replication of the real. Representation refers to forms of social practice that set up in the social architecture and lived experience of the world what seems an absolute distinction between image (or meaning, or structure) and reality, and thus a distinctive imagination of the real. Mitchell, "The Stage of Modernity", 17-18.

[40] Sudipta Kaviraj, "An Outline of a Revisionist Theory of Modernity", 497-526.

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[41] See S. N. Eisenstadt, ed., ''Multiple Modernities'', *Daedalus*, 129, 1(2000): 1-29. For an analysis of the common features of theories of modernity and the particularities of the modern in the Indian context from an interpretative position in order to make a case for alternative modernity in Indian political culture see Rajeev Bhargava, ''Are there alternative modernities?'' in *Culture, Democracy and Development in South Asia*, ed. N. N. Vohara (India International Centre/Shipra, Delhi, 2001), 9-26.

[42] Kaviraj, "An Outline of a Revisionist Theory of Modernity", 15. In his review of recent spate of writings on early/alternative modernities – special issues on "Early Modernities" *Daedalus*, 127, 3 (1998) and "Multiple Modernities" *Daedalus*, 129, 1 (2000); Velchuri Narayana Rao, David Shulman, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time: writing History in South India 100-1800* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001); Gurujada Venkata Apparao, *Girls for Sale: A Play from Colonial India, Kanyasulkam*, tr., Velcheru Narayana Rao (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007) – Satya P. Mohanty also remarks that they have challenged the view that the modernity colonialism brought with it is the only viable or genuine modernity that exists, and that what was destroyed, both good and bad, was incompatible not only with capitalism as an economic system but also with such cherished modern values as egalitarianism, democratic individuality, and rational social organization. Mohanty succinctly sums up implicit view of theorists of alternative modernity, "that the crucial features of the concept of modernity can be disaggregated; they can even be recombined in a number of different ways, shaped by differences in socio-cultural context. So if we can find modern values and ideas articulated in socio-economic systems very different from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European capitalism, part of the challenge for us as scholars is to trace the provenance of such values and ideas in these non-European contexts and to examine the alternative institutions and cultural forms that supported them. Literary and cultural texts, both high canonical and popular or "folk," can play a major role in this revisionary analysis, revealing the alternative and non-dominant layers of modernity to which scholars have remained blind." Satya P. Mohanty, "Introduction", 3.

Hence, to make our point stronger, we can derive from Kaviraj's plea the argument that the nature and forms of modernity in India during the period of British colonial rule should be examined and assessed by taking into account the transcultural processes which mediated the interaction between the European and the erstwhile living cultural and institutional forms of India. Each of the new social, institutional or cultural and aesthetic forms and practices that we refer to as modern has been produced through such transcultural process of interactive negotiation. In this sense modernity in general and modern Hindi literary and visual satire in particular bears the mark of transculturality. Any historically informed study is bound to negate the claim of singular modernity as an unalloyed western product; it has to be different and its differential trajectory is constituted in the specific transcultural process of the colonial encounter where it has been negotiated and reconfigured accordingly.[44]

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[43] Hans G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1975). Cf. Kaviraj, "An Outline of a Revisionist Theory of Modernity", 15-16.

Partha Chatterjee helps us further in explicating the uniqueness of modernity in colonial India. Apart from raising questions like whether modernity *is* singular or plural, what is also significant is to ask how the concept is *used* in the making of claims.[45] Chatterjee lays bare the internal structure of modernity in the dominant self-representation of enlightenment and connects its fissures to its subsequent trajectory in colonial India, which was marked by asymmetrical power relations between India and Britain. With the help of Foucault, he underlines a deep fissure in the western project of modernity. According to him, modernity in the dominant self-representation of the Enlightenment meant an unrestricted and universal field for the exercise of reason, but it came with an important caveat. Its universality was restricted by building an intricately differentiated structure of authority, which specified who had the right to speak on which subjects, and could be used for the exercise of power. Chatterjee goes on to argue that history of modernity in India, which has been intertwined with history of colonialism, played upon this imbedded inequality. Only the colonial masters had the right and access to universal field of freedom and power to exercise reason. Modernity was invoked to justify colonialism as making India enlightened. It is the perception of this inequality that led to its qualification, criticism and negotiation by the Indian intelligentsia, and was reflected in their cultural project of nationalism in the fields of literature, art and sciences where they tried to articulate a different modernity or a national modernity. [46]

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[44] In the contemporary accounts the singularity of modernity is questioned and qualified. Citing the perception of late 19th century Bengali middle class intelligentsia Chatterjee articulates the contemporary take on the forms of English modernity: "there cannot be just one modernity irrespective of geography, time, environment or social condition […] true modernity consists in determining the particular forms of modernity that are suitable in particular circumstances; that is, applying the methods of reason to identify or invent the specific technologies of modernity that are appropriate for our purposes. Or, to put this in another way, if there is any universally acceptable definition of modernity, it is this: that by teaching us to employ the methods of reason, universal modernity enables us to identify the forms of our own particular modernity." Partha Chatterjee, *Our Modernity*, *The Srijan Halder Memorial Lecture*, 1994 (Rotterdam/Dakar: SHEFIS and CODERSIA, 1997), 8-9. V. N. Rao similarly shows how Telagu playwright Apparao self-consciously with his deep knowledge of indigenous and western traditions negotiates colonial modern. Velcheru N. Rao, "The Play in Context: A Second look at Apparao's Kanyasulkam" in *Girls for* Sale, 159-89; 224-226. Aihwa Ong in her study of modernity in China also reemphasizes "how non-western societies themselves make modernities *after their own fashion,* in the remaking of the *[sic]* rationality, capitalism and the nation in ways that borrow from but also transform western universalizing forms." Her argument rejects the contention that modernity must be singular and global; it emphasizes that not only the responses but also, more importantly, the *making* of modernity is plural. Cf. Cooper, "Modernity", 127.

[45] Fred Cooper articulates this insight in his review essay on the historiography of modernity. However, this line of enquiry is only implicit in Chatterjee's reasoning.

Let us extend Chatterjee's argument further. The nationalist negotiation with modernity also played upon the differentiated structure of authority, it also redefined who had the right to speak on which subject to exclude and silence the caste and gender subalterns, as we shall show in Chapter 2.[47] In the nationalist narrative the caste system and patriarchy were intertwined with modernity's differentiated structure of authority. The upper caste male nationalist intelligentsia argued for and justified their social domination over lower castes and women, while opposing their own colonial subjugation in a single breath. Some lower caste intellectuals and women in response argued for a modernity that questioned the upper caste male domination and their claim to speak for all.[48] In other words, differential articulation of and varying negotiations with modernity has been a continuing process and it has undergone marked changes in various phases of colonial history. As Chapter 3 will show, a Sanskrit scholar Pandit Ramavatar Sharma who was ambidextrous in indigenous and colonial tradition of learning coped with question of being modern in ways which were far different from those of nineteenth century intelligentsia. In making claims for a new scientific knowledge and epistemology, for example, he began from a premise that historicised modern science and reason as transcultural and universal rather than as European or Indian. Any individual or social group would claim to speak for it provided the arguments were arising from such critical-rational scientific vantage point.

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[46] Chatterjee, *Our Modernity*, 9-14, 18.

[47] Chatterjee does not extend his argument to this level in this particular essay. He underlines the contradiction between colonialism and nationalism. He does not address the contradiction within nationalism on the question of modernity. But his awareness (albeit limited) is explicit in Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

[48] See, for example, M. S. S. Pandian, "One Step Outside Modernity: Caste, Identity Politics and Public Sphere", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 37, 18, (2002): 1735-41.

The point of making a case for modernity in colonial India as *differentia specifica* is to reemphasise the historical argument that modernity is not a singular trans-historical phenomenon which was originally produced and exclusively experienced by the west while the rest of the world lagged behind or remained insufficiently modern. Modernity in the west was not only produced in the process of a transcultural interaction as Mitchell and others have shown, modernity in other regions too, as Kaviraj has forcefully argued, was and is the product of specific historical circumstances, mediated by a variety of strategies during the course of asymmetrical transcultural transactions. When we say 'specific historical circumstance' we also mean that within the history of India's colonial encounter a variety of questions were framed as the question of modernity;[49] different strategies of deflection, appropriation and negotiations were deployed by historical agents in making and shaping the new social, cultural and institutional form, practice and language, which were summarily called modernity. In this sense the emergence of Hindi satire as one of the modern cultural forms of expression is the subject of this thesis. Now we turn to the elucidation of third keyword – satire – in the next section.

3

What is Satire?

In an interview the noted film personality Akira Kurosawa was asked, what is cinema? In reply Kurosawa gives this anecdotal answer.

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[49] Focus on specific historical circumstances and differential usage of modernity in colonial India is not only more productive exercise in understanding historical processes it also enables us to move away from the obsessive concern and question of *origin* in history, which to my mind leads to political and interpretative bottleneck.

> Long ago the Japanese novelist Shiga Naoya presented an essay written by his grandchild as one of the most remarkable prose pieces of his time. He had it published in a literary magazine. It was entitled "My Dog", and ran as follows: "My dog resembles a bear; he also resembles a badger; he also resembles a fox...." It proceeded to enumerate the dog's special characteristics, comparing each one to yet another animal, developing into a full list of the animal kingdom. However, the essay closed with, "But since he's a dog, he most resembles a dog." I remember bursting out laughing when I read this essay, but it makes a serious point. Cinema resembles so many other arts. If cinema has very literary characteristics, it also has theatrical qualities, a philosophical side, attributes of painting and sculpture and musical elements. *But cinema is, in the final analysis, cinema*.
>
> (Akira Kurosawa)[50]

What Kurosawa underlines above through reference to the essay's motley dog (about the uniqueness of cinematic art) can also be said about our question: what is satire? We only have to replace the word cinema with satire! That satire with all its resemblances and overlaps with other literary-artistic forms and genres, in the final analysis, is a distinct artistic form of expression. However, the distinctiveness of satire is both obvious and vague. This is the impression that one receives from the body of work on satire. How and in what ways is satire distinct is not directly addressed. Existing works do provide some valuable insights; but they, save some exceptions, do not easily work for the advantage of clarity and lead to confusion in this regard. We, therefore, begin with a survey of some propositions regarding the nature and property of satire in the existing literature with an aim of arriving at a working model for our purpose.

According to Meyer H. Abrams, "satire is the literary art of diminishing a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking towards it attitudes of amusement, contempt, or scorn. […] It uses laughter as a weapon, and against a butt [target] existing outside the work itself. That butt may be individual, or a type of person, a class, a nation or even the whole race of man [a collective]." [51] This is the commonly acceptable elementary explication on nature of satire. What if we want to move ahead?

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[50] See Appendix "Some Random Notes on Film Making" in Akira Kurosawa, *Something Like an Autobiography*, tr., Audie E. Bock (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), 191.

Robert C. Elliot[52] explains the problem of an all-encompassing definition of satire. After making a survey of the usage of the term in literary studies Elliot comments, "I can compare hundreds of different responsible uses of the term *satire*, trying to find common properties among them; but after my search I will be forced to conclude that there are no properties common to all of the uses; or if I could find an essential property, it would be so general as to be useless for purposes of definition." Approaching the problem through the Wittgensteinian frame, Elliot calls for "an exhaustive comparison [of various satires which] would produce not a residuum of necessary and sufficient properties by which one could define the concept but 'a small complicated nature of similarities overlapping and crisscrossing' –an elaborate set of 'family resemblances'." *Satire*, which has been used to denote a form of art and a spirit, a purpose and a tone, and specific works of innumerable variety, is, Elliott says after Wittgenstein, a concept of 'blurred edges'. He refuses to provide a *final* and universally applicable definition of satire and concludes: "To the man who wants to know what satire is, we can point to paradigm examples and describe them; we can say, 'these and other works like them, works having family resemblance, are called satires.' We cannot properly say, 'Satire is defined by the following characteristics, which must be present in any work called satire.' Language simply does not work that way."[53] He underlines the difficulties in the face of divergent kinds of satirical works and only warns against making a universally valid *a priori* definition to include or exclude a piece of literature from being or not being called a satire. He suggests instead that scholars should analyse and strive for a heuristic model of understanding satire through case studies.

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[51] Meyer H. Abrams, "Satire" in *Satire: Theory and Practice*, Eds. Charles A. Allen and George D. Stephens (California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1962), 43. This was originally published in Dan S. Norton and Peters Rushton, ed., *A Glossary of Literary Terms* in 1941.

[52] Robert C. Elliott, "The definition of Satire: A Note on Method", *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, 11 (1962): 19-23.

[53] Elliott, "The Definition of Satire", 22-23.

Leonard Feinberg also grapples with the same problem of inadequacy of recent definitions. Like Elliott, he too warns against any neat and fixed definition of satire.[54] But in issuing his warning he also gives us a clue to understand satire, "[s]atire is not a pure genre or mode and it cannot be forced into any precise category. Satire often mixes materials and forms. Its distinguishing characteristics are that it always criticises, it always distorts, and it always entertains. Trying to classify it more neatly than that leads to arbitrarily refusing to admit that some satires are satires [and others are not]."[55] He insinuates that satire is not a genre and is not restricted to any one of them and pervades any of them, but that should not stop us, and admittedly Fienberg does not stop us, from arriving at a general heuristic model of a better understanding of the way it works, the thing it does with other genres and why it does so with other genres.

However, some scholars like R. Paulson and Leon Guilhamet have argued that satire is a distinct literary genre that has its own specific form of textual organisation. Paulson states categorically that satire is "a real genre, regarded as such by writers, and with particular conventions"[56] Leon Guilhamet's study has tried to identify the characteristic features of satire on the basis of a close study of the classical Geek, Roman and English satirical texts, and has made several arguments in favour of approaching satire as a genre.[57] Here he also makes a distinction between modal and generic satire. By modal satire he means any text that contains a satirical element as a form of comic or humour.[58] Generic satire, to him, is a text, which not only contains elements of satiric humour, but also has a complex rhetorical and generic structure;[59] containing a mixture of rhetorical, stylistic features and genres. Generic or complex satires, to elaborate, borrow and imitate more than one existing rhetorical and generic feature, but within the new textual setting they cumulatively function as a new 'genre', which is different from all its individual components.[60] What the author actually does is that through his close reading of the 'high' satirical literature he finds a pattern of generic mixture within the body of Greek Roman and classical English satire. On the basis of a synchronic reading of these texts he comes to the conclusion that the mixing of genre had a definitively identifiable rhetorical and stylistic pattern within complex satires. This generic mixing is a feature internal to and characteristic of the high corpus of satirical literature. That is to say, each satirical text borrows, shares and builds upon more than one already existing genre or generic features. Once a pre-established genre is used in a new composition, it may retain its individual characteristic to a certain level but essentially loses the dominant and defining relationship (which it previously had) to the overall literary structure of the new text. Cumulatively, the new mixture of several generic properties supports a new literary structure, i.e. a satirical text, which is a novel artistic form and serves a different function in carrying out a mediation of social reality.[61] This feature of satirical text, in turn, itself clears the ground to validate the claim of satire as a genre.

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[54] Leonard Feinberg, "Satire: The Inadequacy of Recent Definitions," *Genre*, 1 (1968): 31-37.

[55] Feinberg, "Satire", 36.

[56] R. Paulson, "Introduction" in *Satire: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. R. Paulson (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1971), x–xv.

[57] Leon Guilhamet, *Satire and the Transformation of* Genre (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987)

[58] "Although modal satire, which can be found in virtually any genre, is a necessary condition for satire, it is not a sufficient one." Guilhamet, *Satire and the Transformation of* Genre, 11.

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[59] "The essential integrants of generic satire are a combination of modal satire and variable rhetorical and generic structures which are borrowed and de-formed. The dynamic of satire transforms these components into a new generic identity." Guilhamet, *Satire and the Transformation of* Genre, 11.

[60] "A key point in our understanding of satire is its role as a borrower of forms [;] this appropriation of other forms is unique to satire and is one of its chief identifying characteristics." Guilhamet, *Satire and the Transformation of* Genre, 13.

[61] Drawing from Levi-Strauss's concept of *bricolage* in the construction of *myth* to explain the distinctive feature of satire Guilhamet concludes, "Levi-Strauss's concept of *bricolage* may help us understand the structure of satire. In La Pensee Sauvage, Levi-Strauss defines the art of the *bricoleur* as consisting of odds and ends or whatever is available. What is produced, i.e. *bricolage*, is analogous to myth. Among the genres of traditional literary theory, satire is most like this form of art. Both employ fragments of an earlier civilization or culture to construct a contemporary pattern or system of signs. Satire adapts elements of other genres to create a form not far removed from pastiche in its outward appearance and method of composition. The essential meaning of

Guilhamet's fundamental observations about what he calls generic or complex satire that builds upon existing genres, while creating a different literary structure of its own which mediates social reality in a distinguished way, are acceptable. What remains questionable is his insistence on considering satirical texts as a new genre. Perhaps he feels that one might be able to assign some 'literary value and respect' to the much-neglected pieces of satire in the canon of literature by 'raising' them to the status of genre! One wonders what extra explanatory powers we could gain if we were to consider satirical text as a different genre. Guilhamet himself is unable to put forth any such reasons for this. Also, his insistence on satire as a 'literary genre' does not leave much room for accommodating the satirical works which lay outside the corpus of 'high literature' or canon, especially modern satirical texts which appeared in 'popular' periodicals and newspapers on topical issues and events. So, inspite of the confidence that he has in this position, closer examination betrays some apprehension that the label "genre" – in the specifically literary-critical sense[62] – is an inadequate ascription for satire.

Study of satire by scholars like Charles A. Knight and Paul Simpson are helpful in this context and the present work is mostly informed by their theoretical and interpretative insights. Knight starts where Guilhamet stops, and notes that: "satire is essentially 'a borrower of forms', which it 'de-forms' and transforms into 'a new generic identity' by disruptive, fictive techniques."[63] He

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this structure inheres in this method of composition or bricolage. By piecing together what is left over from a disintegrating past, the satirist forms a prism through which the present can be refracted. Just as the latest mythmaker uses outworn structures to construct his new perspectives, the satirist employs what is left over from a great literary tradition to reflect on contemporary shortcomings." Guilhamet, *Satire and the Transformation of* Genre, 166.

[62] To put it simply, as Paul Simpson says, genre is a form of language that is used to accomplish culturally determined goals. It is an abstract realisation of a linguistically-achieved activity type, derived out of configurations of register but transcending register by giving shape to patterns of interaction that are adaptable to many different contexts of situation. Paul Simpson, *On the Discourse of Satire: Towards a Stylistic model of Satirical Humor* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2003), 74.

[63] Charles A. Knight, "Satire, Speech, Genre", *Comparative Literature*, 44, 1 (1992): 22-41. For extension of his theoretical arguments with a study of satire in English literature and periodicals

explores the difference between mimetic and imitative techniques of satirical and non-satirical literature following the model of literary communication evinced by Roman Jakobson (*Linguistics and Poetics*). He suggests that satire is a linguistic discourse, which is far different from that of a genre. A satirical text imitates/mocks a pre-existing stabilised/formalised literary or speech genre. The imitative representation markedly transforms its characteristic against the imitated basic genre while simultaneously retaining some of its distinctive features. More importantly, this act of generic imitation enables satire to simultaneously achieve two things. First, it parodies the literary structure of the imitated genre. Second, it mocks the object of imitative representation (thereby exposing the contradiction between commonsensical claims of that discourse and the deeper reality around it).

Knight's convincing but complex theoretical argument that satire is not a genre but a discourse which mocks and builds upon other genres, is independently argued and lucidly developed by Paul Simpson by combining theoretical insights of literary studies and the anthropology of humour. Alongside Knight's, Simpson's work is the most comprehensive and convincing, especially his arguments about the general nature and property of a satirical text. He explores "the discourse of satire" and approaches it as a variety of verbal (and pictorial) humour.[64] He argues that satire is not a genre but is a discursive practice that does things to and with genres of discourse. He postulates that "satire has itself the capacity to subsume and recontextualise other classes of discourse, other registers and genres from the broad system of language."[65] He also evinces that "satire functions as a higher-order discourse, higher than what systemic-functional and other linguists classify as genre or register, and certainly

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also see his book *The Literature of Satire* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004). Knight, "Satire, Speech, Genre", 1.

[64] He explains, "Discourse is understood here in the first instance as a level of language organisation that supersedes that of the sentence and in the second as a type of meaning potential that arises out of the interaction between text and context." Simpson, *On the Discourse of Satire*, 2

[65] Simpson, *On the Discourse of Satire*, 148.

higher than what literary-critics traditionally mean by the term 'genre of literature'. Satire requires a genus,[66] which is a derivation in a particular culture, in a system of institutions and in the framework of belief and knowledge that envelop and embrace these institutions. It also requires an impetus,[67] which emanates from a perceived disapprobation by the satirist, of some aspect of a potential satirical target."[68] Simpson further contends that "satire is configured as a triad embodying three discursive subject positions: the satirist (the producer of the text), the satiree (an addressee, whether reader, viewer or listener) and the satirised (the target attacked or critiqued in the satirical discourse). The satirist and the satiree are ratified within the discursive event. The third entity, the target, is ex-colluded and is not normally an "invited participant" in the discourse exchange, even though the target is what provides the initial impetus for satire."[69]

Regarding the function of satire, he observes: "satire performs 'multifunctionality'. Satire clearly has an aggressive function. It singles out an object of attack; in fact, it cannot, strictly speaking, be satire unless it demonstrates this capacity. Satire also has a social function, because [for example, inter or intra-] group bonds […] are consolidated [or alternatively fractured] in a 'successful' satire. It also has, perhaps in greater or lesser degree depending on the particular satire, an intellectual function because it relies upon linguistic creativity which extends the full resources of the system of language."[70]

More importantly, Simpson expounds on the linguistic technique of satire. In his formulation, the place of irony is central to the constitution of a satirical text and explains the method through which satire is mobilized and activated.[71] Through close reading of a variety of satirical texts he postulates that satirical discourse is comprised of minimum "two qualitatively different ironic phases [irony-in-prime and irony-in-dialectic]; phases which act in tandem with one another but which nonetheless carry out very different discourse functions. Whereas the irony-in-prime variant engenders the 'spoof' element in satire, the irony-in-dialectic variant engenders, as it were, the 'twist in the spoof' element."[72] He elucidated further that the "*prime* element is a stage which is characterised by irony in its echoic mode, which construes a particular discourse domain and establishes or invokes a mediated intertext; crucially, this involves a repositioning in discourse of the originator of the text via the mediated discourse. The *prime* is also accessed by text processors largely through world knowledge. The *dialectic* element of structure, on the other hand, is a stage that is characterised by irony in its oppositional mode, created as a discursive manipulation within the text through a range of potential operations. The *dialectic*, which encompasses the concept of incongruity in the broad humorological sense, functions as a contra-expectation in discourse and tends more to be accessed by recourse to knowledge about typical text structures. Both *prime* and *dialectic* elements are mutually interdependent, and in a way which is intrinsic to the operation of a satirical discourse. […] The amount of conceptual space between prime and dialectic – that is to say, the degree of transformation, distortion or opposition – is an important determining factor in the process of uptake of a satirical text."[73] The conceptual space between prime and dialectic is the space for satirical deformation. He explains how the effects of satirical discourse are achieved by altering the texture or the pressure of the liminal space around its target, whether through inflation of the target as saturation, or through deflation as attenuation. He articulates this method of satirical deformation and debasement by using the concepts of metaphor and metonymy as heuristic devices.[74] The basic principle of the satiric deformation of the target is explained through metonymy and metaphor, along with irony that, according to Simpson, can act as useful framing devices to organise and classify palpable techniques of textual organisation.

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[66] By genus he means a commonly shared linguistic cultural repertoire, organised through genre, register, lexico-grammar, etc.

[67] By impetus he means a topical event that is perceived by satirist as morally-politically unacceptable.

[68] Simpson, *On the Discourse of Satire*, 2.

[69] Simpson, *On the Discourse of Satire*, 8. Charles A. Knight argues on similar lines when he uses Roman Jakobson's model of linguistic communication involving the basic triad of addresser, message, and addressee on horizontal and vertical axis. Knight, "Satire, Speech, Genre", 31.

[70] Simpson, *On the Discourse of Satire*, 3.

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[71] For the sake of brevity, it would be pertinent to mention what we mean by irony. Irony is a mode of speech in which the implied attitude or evaluation are opposed to those literally expressed. See Abrams, "From a Glossary of Literary Terms", 41; or, irony is the space between what is meant and what is asserted, so a thumbnail definition might run. See Simpson, *On the Discourse of Satire*, 90.

[72] Simpson, *On the Discourse of Satire*, 94.

[73] Simpson, *On the Discourse of Satire*, 95-96.

Lets us exemplify and examine Simpson's jargonised exposition on the linguistics and pragmatics of satire through probably the smallest satirical textsin Hindi which appeared in a satirical weekly *Matˡvālā* in 1924:

> The *māsik* of Jabalpur's *Śrīśārˡdā* has gone awry! What else could be the result of being *anekˡpatigāminī*.[75]

This brief satirical text, in the language of Simpson, invokes both of the stylistic ingredients, prime and dialectic. The prime element is activated through a particular commonsensical [of course gendered] register of discourse: The *māsik* (menstruation cycle) of a woman named *Śrīśārˡdā* from the city of Jabalpur is not regular anymore; [she is sick] as she has been *anekˡpatigāminī* – or, sleeping with any number of men. Working against this prime and establishing oppositional mode of irony is the dialectic component, which is activated through a specific news report which is linked with the discourse on the state of Hindi publication: a Hindi monthly (*māsik*) named *Śrīśārˡdā*, published from the city of Jabalpur, is periodically irregular. The health of the journal is in bad shape as it has been subjected to so many different owners (editor/publisher). This dialectic component injects into this statement something, which is at odds with the prime or what, in the humorogical sense, is called incongruity. The two registers of discourses –of *Śrīśārˈdā* the woman's and the Hindi periodical's health– collide through a lexical-linguistic pun generated by double-meanings (like *māsik* and *anekˈpatigāminī*). The overall mediation of the two registers or genres is, thus, achieved by a technique of satiric deformation which maps two distinct narrative discourses (Simpson would call it metaphoric satiric composition)– gynaecological and literary- thereby inflating/exaggerating (or altering the liminal space around its object of attack) the pitiable condition of the literary periodical. The conjoining of the two frames of references thus invites a new perspective to the projected object of attack i.e. the general condition of Hindi periodicals. In terms of the overall effect, this brief satirical text has a particular resonance in the current political context of Hindi literary sphere where Hindi periodicals' publication (itself putatively a nationalist political act) is subjected to a number of limitations, including the lack of (nationalist) a reading public and consequent financial support, the colonial state's proscription and other factors, which caused frequent changes in editorship and frequent delays in publication.

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[74] "Metaphor involves the mapping between conceptually distinct domains, comprising a source domain for features of the metaphorical construction and a target domain onto which these features are projected. [...] By contrast the concept of metonymy is commonly accepted as an operation which involves a transposition within the same conceptual domain. Whereas a metaphor assumes a certain distance between the concepts it embodies, between its topic and vehicle, a metonymy upgrades certain salient characteristics from a single domain to represent that domain as a whole. […] Certain techniques used in the formation of a dialectic component in satirical discourse can be classified as metonymic because the oppositional irony they yield comes from operations performed within same conceptual domain. By contrast, other techniques fall into the metaphoric category as they involve cross-domain mapping and merging." Simpson, *On the Discourse of Satire*, 126-128.

[75] *Matˡvālā*, March 15, 1924. Unless otherwise cited, all translations are mine.

Informed by the above-mentioned arguments of Knight and Simpson (but without deploying their jargonised linguistic idioms) on the nature and property of satire, we shall approach modern Hindi satire in a similar way in the chapters that follow.[76] In the light of our concepts and questions, however, we also need to do a survey of the historiography of satirical literature with a focus on satire in colonial context.

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[76] In the context of the study of satire in the nineteenth and early twentieth century colonial India Hans Harder's brief remark regarding the definition of satire comes very close to our approach. On the basis of his qualified reading of Guilhamet and Simpson, Harder expresses his scepticism in considering satire as a *genre* and states that: "satire as such cannot be called a literary genre. It is rather a *mode* of expression that somewhat parasitically builds up on established literary genres" [...] If satire can thus be defined as a mode, it has to be qualified further as an oblique, "as if" mode of literary expression. See Hans Harder "Towards a Concept of Satire in South Asian Literatures" in *Indian Satire in the Period of first Modernity*, eds. Monika Horstmann and Heidi Rika Maria Pouwels (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag: 2012), 165-183.

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Historiography of satire

A survey of existing works (with few exceptions) reveals a striking number of shortcomings. In the first set of critical commentaries (mostly pertaining to the pre-independence period), there are expositions which claim to provide a heuristic frame to assess and understand satirical texts but these frames are guided by (mostly a nationalist) moral-normative stance and expectation rather than being based on the actual satirical texts. Either implicitly or explicitly they use a moral criterion (sometimes strategically citing Sanskrit poetics on humour) to disavow most of the satirical productions as 'vulgar' or lacking 'civility'. All of them (somewhat paradoxically) refer to the Sanskrit literary oeuvre as containing the best and civilised farces; yet all of them also lament that there is not enough of humorous literature in Sanskrit. In the second set of works, there are those which try to use the western theory of humour ('incongruity theory') in combination with the Indian theory of laughter (read *hāsya* rasa of Sanskrit) in elaborating and judging satirical texts as, arguably, there is not enough theorisation in Sanskrit poetics. These accounts (falling somewhere in the period between the second decade of the twentieth century down to the contemporary period), however, remain inadequate and find it difficult to unravel the historicity and the textual organisation of satirical literature. In the third set of works one could put together the literary critic-historians' treatment of satirical literature. Theirs, at best, has been limited to content analysis, neglecting the nature and specificity of its form, despite occasional hints and interventions made by satirists. Although the shortcomings pointed out in three different sets of work overlap with each other in various degrees and combinations, we shall illustrate at length each one of the problems in the following paragraphs.

It would be pertinent to illustrate our first point with reference to some leading figures of Hindi literary sphere in the first half of twentieth century when nationalism was a reigning ideological creed. Ramchandra Shukla, the doyen of Hindi literary history and criticism, has made some stray but significant comments on humour and satire. While lamenting the state of humorous Hindi short stories till 1940s, he remarks that: "Making any distorted aspect of vibrant social life or outrageous quality of individuals belonging to one class the subject of laughter [or, satire] is not in the sight."[77] He then goes on to comment on the state of humorous literature, irrespective of forms in Hindi, and comments: "[I am] obliged to say that the evolution of *śiṣta* and *pariṣkrit* (decent and refined) *hās* (humour/laughter), as it has happened in western literature, is not in sight in our place. However, the kind of humour we find in Sanskrit drama and stray verses is very up to date, scientific and in sync with literary principles."[78] His judgement is clearly informed by a very modernist and normative idea of humour – loaded with middle class norms of civility (as the qualifying words *śiṣta* and *pariṣkrit* evince) – which he wants to map on to the body of the existing literature. He further espouses, "The best humorous literature is the one which generates feeling of affection towards the subject [of laughter]." [79] To him, the only exception is (or probably has to be) Sanskrit literature! He insinuates that satire (*parihās*) is an inferior variety of humour that, instead of affection, generates jealousy, hate or insult. In other words, Shukla, the canon-maker of Hindi literature, puts a cap on a vast oeuvre of satirical literature ever being eligible to be called literature!

Premchand, the doyen of twentieth century Urdu-Hindi literature, voices what lurks behind Shukla's normative idea of humour in no uncertain terms.

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[77] Rāmcandra Śukla, *Hindī sāhitya kā itihās* (Banāras: Kāśī nāgarī pracāriṇī sabhā, 1940), 522.
[78] Śukla, *Hindī sāhitya kā itihās*, 522.
[79] Śukla, *Hindī sāhitya kā itihās*, 523.

Premchand had written a short introductory essay on humour/laughter titled *Haṃsī.*[80] In this essay he makes a clear association between different styles humour and their expressive gesture, laughter, and their relationship to the level of cultural civility on the civilizational scale.[81] Further, he, like Shukla, subscribes to a normative idea of what a humorous literature should be like. Unlike Shukla, however, he does not deny the significance of humorous literature per se, for it is very popular. However, he clearly underlines the inability of humorous literature to be ever eligible to find any place in the canon of national literature on following grounds:

> Literature of every country or nation is the collection its best of emotions and ideas. However, humour and laughter shall not be accorded the status in the [corpus of] national literature that it deserves because of its currency amongst the common people; and love, which is a bounded emotion, is given higher status.[82]

In other words, humorous literature might be popular but it cannot be accorded a space in the nationalist canon for it reflects unruly emotions that defy the grammar of the middle class norms of civility and control.

Banarasidas Chaturvedi, the influential editor of nationalist Hindi journal *Viśāl Bhārat* (Calcutta, 1928) has the same attitude which we have noticed the previous two cases. This can be exemplified in his famous campaign (1928-29) against one of the most successful Hindi satirical weeklies *Matˈvālā* (Calcutta, 1923).[83]

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[80] *Zamānā*, February 1916. Cf. *Premcand: vividh prasaṃg*, Ed. and Tr. Amrit Rāi (Ilāhābād: Haṃs prakāśan, 1962), 228-33. This essay was translated from Marathi into Urdu and then published by Premchand as his own write up without acknowledgement of the existence of the Marathi essay. Hence, we can safely ascribe the opinion expressed in the essay to Premchand. Interestingly, this issue, however, led to a controversy touching upon the question of authorship and plagiarism. See Avinash Kumar, "Debates around Authorship and Originality: Hindi during the Colonial Period", *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLVII, 28 (July 14, 2012): 50-57.

[81] The essay, interestingly, was written in 1916 from social Darwinist viewpoint. It discusses the possibility of laughter in animals like dogs, cats and monkeys and wonders about the similarity between soundless laughter of babies and playfulness of animals. It then finds similarity between the uninhibited laughter of children and of barbarian community (*Vah'śī kaum*) contrasting these with the controlled laughter of the civilized folk (*Sabhya log*). The essay goes even further. It finds the (medieval) tradition of theatre and clown as uncivilised and judges the marriage rituals of billingsgate in North India from the same viewpoint. The essay, then, illustrates several situations that generate laughter and concludes that incongruity is the basis of laughter and ends with some humorous anecdotes/epigrams from Sanskrit literature.

[82] *Premcand: vividh prasaṃg*, 230.

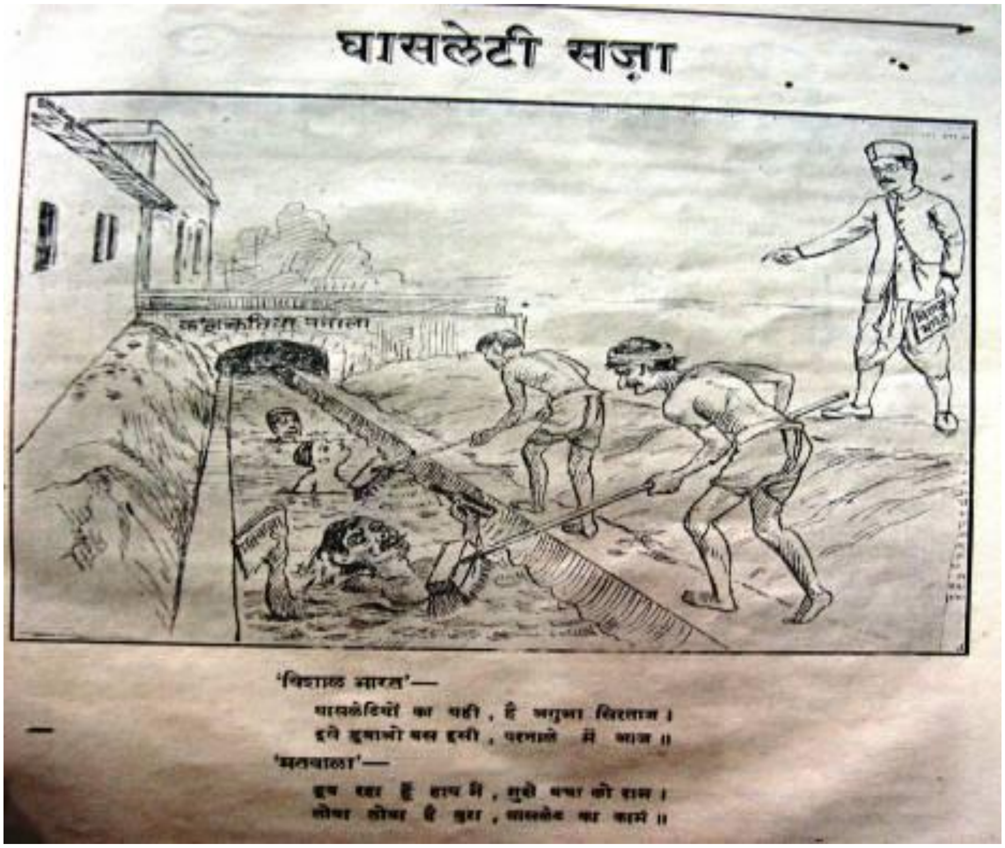
घासलेटी सज़ा
'विशाल भारत'—
घासलेटियों का यही, है अगुआ सिरताज।
इसे डुबाओ बस इसी, परनाले में आज॥
'मतवाला'—
डूब रहा हूँ हाय मैं, मुझे बचा लो राम।
सोचा सोचा है बुरा, घासलेट का काम॥

Figure 1: *Ghāsletī sajā*, *Bhāratendu*, December 1928[84]

The magazine, it was alleged, was instigating irreverent attacks on respectable literary personalities and propagating vulgar and obscene literature (or what he called *ghāsletī sāhitya*) that potentially harmed the moral health of the Indian nation. A cartoon entitled *Ghāsletī sajā or Dirty punishment* illustrates the same episode very vividly. *Viśāl Bhārat,* personified as an educated Gandhian Hindu man,[85] is instructing the sweepers to throw *Matˈvālā*, or 'dirty literature' personified as a drunken rowdy man, into the *Kalkatiyā panālā* (gutter of Calcutta). Few years later, again in his assessment of the state of satirical journalism, Chaturvedi similarly remarked in a morally patronising tone: "Hindi journal readers' taste for *hāsya* rasa has been progressively refined, but there is scope of further improvement. Slapstick humour like *Latˈkhorīlāl* no longer enjoys respect in the *śiṣta samāj*; nor does the *Matˈvālā* variety of humour enjoy popularity anymore […] A periodical named *Rangīlā* tried to revive [*Matˈvālā*'s] vulgar humour, but did not succeed [...] Writing high quality humour is not a joke, it requires talent… if [the reader] finds out that a writer is trying to demean someone through his humour, s/he will soon be bored."[86] Clearly, Chaturvedi also subscribes to the same normative idea of humour in his assessment of satirical pieces (which appeared either in general periodicals or in self-professed satirical periodicals) and debunks the work of the popular satirists like G. P. Shrivastava (*Latˈkhorīlāl's* author) and satirical magazines like *Matˈvālā* as being

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[83] This satirical weekly is discussed at length in the fourth chapter.

[84] The caption is a dialogue between the two periodicals, *Viśāl Bhārat and Matˈvālā*. *Viśāl Bhārat* orders the sweeper to push *Matˈvālā* is the gutter, for the magazine is the leader of stinky dirty literary publication. Admitting the crime *Matˈvālā* is begging for his life.

[85] Banarasidas Chaturvedi claimed to be a disciple of Gandhi and used his alleged personal proximity with Mahatma Gandhi to bolster his authority in this campaign against the weekly which started with an initial issue of publication of stories on problem of same-sex love. On this particular issue Chaturvedi apparently wrote a brief to Gandhi complaining about the

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propagation of vulgar literature. Gandhi wrote him back saying such sad things should not happen. However, he wished to read the *Matˈvālā* story on homosexual love before making his final opinion. Chaturvedi disingenuously cited only Gandhi's objection without mentioning his qualifier. Later Gandhi read the story and conveyed his opinion to Chaturvedi that he had not found the literature vulgar. Chaturvedi of course did not divulge this in public at that time. Rāmbilas Śarmā, *Nirālā kī sāhitya sādhanā*, Vol. 1 (Delhi: Rājkamal prakāśan, 1972). However, Chaturvedi and others had always despised irreverent humour of Matˈvālā against established literary doyens. Once a concerned Premchand, who was working with the editorial team of *Mādhurī* (Lucknow) wrote an angry letter to Shivpujan Sahay, who was working with the editorial team of *Matˈvālā*. He warned that the magazine should mend its ways and refrain from personalised satirical attacks as the owner, Dularelal Bhargava is planning to take the matter to the court. See Letter to Shivpūjan Sahāy from Premchand, dated 9.03.1925, *Śivpūjan Sahāy Papers*, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi. To have a feel of the moralist anxiety and desperation of the middle class nationalist oozing out in the anti-*ghāsletī* campaign see in *Viśāl Bhārat* "*Sampādkīya vicār*" (Editorial) January, 1929; a cartoon entitled "*Hindī sāhitya kī vartamān dasā*", February 1929; "*Ghāslet-carcā*" (A discussion on *ghāslet*) March, 1929; an interesting article on the same issue accounted by a Fijian Hindi activist in the context of Hindi "*Phijī me ghāsletī sāhitya kā duṣparināṃ*" July 1929; and Candragupta Vidyālankār's "*Ghāsletī sāhitya*", September 1929.

[86] See "*Hāsya ras ka durupayog*", not dated, in *Śivpūjan Sahāy Papers*, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

vulgar and worthy of neglect when seen against the greater cause of national morality and the cultivation of civility.[87]

In this connection, it shall be pertinent to provide a critique of such nationalist-moralist attitude through a contemporary contending voice. G. P. Srivastava, the contemporary popular satirist, commented extensively in his lectures and wrote a couple of farces on the scepticism and prejudice of literary historians and critics who treated *hāsya* as the evil child of Hindi literature as 'non-serious', 'popular' and 'vulgar', and refrained from a serious engagement with them.[88] What is remarkable is that he adequately captures the contemporary mood and scepticism of the nationalist critics. Srivastava first of all justified the literary pursuit in the realm of humour and satire because, in his opinion, it served not only the cause of the 'national' language Hindi by attracting a large readership through its simplicity and entertaining quality, but also effectively targeted the message of social reform.[89] He then wittingly attacked people like

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[87] See a cartoon entitled *Hāsya-ras kā kacūmar* (Mincing *hāsya rasa*) that depicts G.P. Shrivastava hitting at the head of a man reading *Cā̃d* (the magazine in which *lat'khorilāl* was serialised). *Viśāl Bhārat*, May, 1929.

[88] See Gangā Prasād Śrīvāstava, *Hāsya ras*. ed. Dulārelāl Bhārgava (Lakhnau: Gangā pustak mālā, 1934) According to Dularelal Bhargava, originally it was written and delivered as presidential address in *Kāvya-prihās-sammelan* (poetry-satire-conference) at the Dvivedī-melā (a literary festival organised in honour of the influential editor-essayist Mahavir Prasad Dvivedi) on 5th May 1933. In response to the self-styled champions of 'serious' literature organising a tirade against the alleged vulgarity of 'cheap' and 'popular' satirical productions in the Hindi literary sphere, Shrivastava wrote two satirical plays-- *Sāhitya kā sapūt* and *Patra-patrikā sammelan*. These two plays provide interesting internal evidence for the fact that the dominant attitude of neglect or denouncement of satirical writing in literary criticism and history did not go unchallenged. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, the organising principle of the counter-critique provided by the play is equally nationalist –developing and enriching Hindi's claim as the national language. This is an interesting case that seeks to reclaim the satirists as better nationalists, who serve the cause of the nation to a greater extent than those who criticise them for harming its national moral fabric. In both plays the figures of literature are personified. Dominant literary attitudes and personalities are also caricatured; their shortcomings are exposed, ridiculed and attacked. Full version of *Sāhitya kā sapūt* was published from Cā̃d Press, Allahabad in 1934. I am using its shorter version that was part of his 1933 lecture mentioned above. I have consulted *Patra-patrikā sammelan*'s reprint, which was published in a collection of Shrivastava's five plays titled *Dumdār ādmī* (second edition). Gangā Prasād Śrīvāstava, *Dumdār ādmī* (Calcutta: Hindi pustak ejensī, 1927), 97-127.

[89] He intends to attack the burdensome artificial language used by high priests of serious literature and their boring moralisation. They, according to Shrivastava, hardly attracted any

Chaturvedi who abhorred satire and satirists on unfounded moralist grounds. He criticised them for underestimating the moral prudence and power of the ethical judgement of Indian readers.[90] Even more importantly, Shrivastava intelligently touches upon the fact that the normative moralist attitude of the nationalist literary historians and critics emanated from a mentality that was inextricably connected with the colonial order of things. This is illuminatingly portrayed in *Patra-patrikā sammelan*[91] (Periodical's conference)- a farce on the sorry state of Hindi literature, which was arguably under the custody of elite air-head self-styled reformer-critics, who policed its boundaries from intrusion by the so-called vulgar and popular forms, including humour and satire. It projected humour as the most significant literary mode that could grasp and expose problems within the literary domain in particular and within society in general. It exposed those who debunked satire and satirist as vulgar and immoral; because arguably, they were under the evil influence of colonialist educational ideology, which had blinkered their outlook.

Patra-patrikā sammelan dramatizes the prevailing literary scenario. The protagonist of the play is personified as Hāsya, who is an aggressive and muscular man. He speaks obliquely but fearlessly. He has the habit of laughing at grave problems and is proud of exposing (social) evils. He is the husband of

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reader, not to mention their futile attempts to communicate reform. Śrīvāstava, *Hāsya ras*, 25-26. Quite similar was the central concern of the farce *Sāhitya kā sapūt* mentioned above.

[90] He confronted moralist patriarchal anxieties head on. Arguing against the charge that satire promoted libido he argued: if libido is the fundamental element that "anchors courage, power, masculinity and manliness, then why such hostility against it? [...] Wherein lies vulgarity – in bed, toilet or the bathroom? A literary piece has the right to go anywhere except these places. Prohibition in the name of libido and vulgarity is tantamount to closing the door of knowledge on literature; it is equivalent to strangling psychology, enslaving art, killing the nation and, above all, stigmatising the moral power of our respectable (women)folk." Śrīvāstava, *Hāsya ras*, 25-26. On the discourse of nationalist body-politics and construction of moral-sexual regime in Hindi print see Charu Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community: Women, Muslim and the Hindu Public in Colonial India* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001); Charu Gupta, "Redefining Obscenity and Aesthetics in Print" in *The Indian Public Sphere*, ed. Arvind Rajagopal (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009) 101-120.

[91] I have consulted *Patra-patrikā sammelan*'s reprint that was published in a collection of Shrivastava's five plays. Gangā Prasād Śrīvāstava, *Dumdār ādmī* (Calcutta: Hindī pustak ejensī, 1927), 97-127.

Prakr̥ti (Nature), which immediately underscores the significance of Hāsya in the literary cosmos.[92] The other important characters in the play are Kalā (Art), Śikṣā (Modern education) Svabhāvikˈtā (Originality/innateness), Bhāv (Feeling/sentiment), Sāhitya (Literature) and Samāj (Literary association/society).[93] They are related to each other through familial ties. Kalā and Svabhāvikˈtā are younger sisters of Prakr̥ti. Svabhāvikˈtā is Bhāv's wife. Mature and pious Kalā is the neglected first wife of Sāhitya because he is under the spell of his young and evil wife Śikṣā. While Sāhitya has an estranged relationship with his relatives Hāsya and Prakr̥ti, Svabhāvikˈtā and Bhāv are only reluctantly associated with him. Against this backdrop the central plot of the play unfolds. On the eve of a literary summit called 'Periodicals' Conference', the inevitable happens in a dramatic fashion. Śikṣā chops Kalā's nose and Sāhitya kicks the injured and ugly Kalā from his house. After this incident the already disenchanted Svabhāvikˈtā and Bhāv also threaten to leave Sāhitya. The onus then lies on Hāsya to manage the critical situation at the dais of the literary summit. Hāsya, in his typical style does not solve the problem, but lays it bare before the public in a spectacular way. He exposes the dumb and slumbering Sāhitya, who, under the control of the lumpen Samāj, is blinkered in his love for Śikṣā at the cost Kalā and other virtuous relatives. The other sub-plot of the play touches upon subjects like the neglect/criticism of Hāsya by the leading literary periodicals like Sarasvatī, the lack of solidarity and organised defence on the part of the satirical and political journals so that they could restore the dignity of Kalā in Sāhitya's house, their general apathy towards the belligerent Samāj (literary association), who is not only controlling Sāhitya and is hostile to Hāsya, but also forcefully resists radical reformists character (periodical) such as Cā̃d.

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[92] In the Sā̃khya philosophy, for example, universe consists of two realities Prakr̥ti (Phenomenal realm of the matter) and Puruṣa (Consciousness). Prakr̥ti is material nature in its germinal state, eternal and beyond perception. When it comes into contact with the soul or self (puruṣa), it starts a process of evolution that leads through several stages to the creation of the existing material world.

[93] Rests of the characters are personified after the periodicals –*Matˈvālā*, *Pratāp*, *Sarasvatī*, *Madhurī*, etc.–and literary genres –novel and drama– personified as minor characters.

In other words, the dramatisation and personification of literary matters, of actors in the literary field, and of terms and classificatory categories, tells us that the contemporary state of [Hindi] literature was highly unsatisfactory and fundamentally wrong. As the characterisation suggests, (Hindi) Sāhitya is literature only in name. Arguably, it had no *raison d'étre*; for it was unable to go along with human feelings and natural sentiments (Bhāv and Swabhāvik'ta); it had lost its fundamental quality of having any connection with art (Kalā), which was valued for its affinity with and understanding of nature or the cosmos (Prakr̥ti). Not to mention the fact that it had already, for quite long, neglected laughter (Hāsya), which gave justification to literature not only as an important worldly medium to understand mundane social problems, but, arguably, also had connections with the cosmic truth (Nature). Hindi literature, thus, fell short of being literature –a mimetic art form that uniquely articulates and communicates an innate and inchoate human sentiment and provides an alternative language to understand and fathom reality and by extension nature or cosmic truth.

More importantly, the reason for this crisis of Hindi literature was said to be two. One, under the evil influence of modern education (Śikṣā), Hindi literature was compromising its fundamental requirement of being an art form. It insinuated that the moral tirade against the so-called vulgarity of Hāsya and the general attitude of scepticism and neglect of satirical literature arose from a modernist notion of morality, which was too limited to understand the nature and purpose of literature.[94] Two, it was the literary societies (Samāj) which were responsible for the perpetuation of such an uncritical attitude to literature. Under the bad influence of Śikṣā the simpleton, the brute Samāj (representing the uncritical critics and custodians of Sāhitya) –which had no sense of respect or concern for the well being of the mother [national language][95] – had become the executioner of the miserable Hindi literature. Obliquely, Shrivastava's play thus underlined the limits and fallacies inherent in the normative idea of humour championed by the likes of Shukla and Chaturvedi; it also pointed a finger at the derivative nature of their nationalist project under the hegemonic influence of colonial education.

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[94] Apart from his farces, Shrivastava's personal correspondences also reveal his general scepticism towards the merits of Śikṣā or modern education under colonial rule. He underlines its limits not only in its epistemological inability to provide a holistic understanding of Indian literature as is reflected in this and other farces. He refuses to accept the fact that colonial education was the ultimate solutions to all the ills of Indian economy and society. When asked by Shivpujan Sahay to contribute on the issue of reform amongst the Mārvāri community inspiring them to pursue colonial education, Shrivastava disagreed. He said: "This community is prosperous and expert in its profession. [...] Making them *gentleman* and [pushing them] to desert their business is not a good idea." See Letter to Shivpūjan Sahāy from Gangā Prasād Śrīvāstava dated 29.12.1920, in *Shivpūjan Sahāy Papers*, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

We will now look at the second set of works that share a general but related problem of understanding satire through a framework which reconciles western theory of humour with its Indian counterpart (sometimes reinvented).[96] Generally speaking, such secondary works also often lament the lack of a humorous tradition in Indian (read Sanskrit) literary tradition. This assumed paucity in Sanskrit literature and poetics arguably propels these works towards such reconciliation of western and Indian theories. Here let us first counter this ahistoric assumption that Sanskrit literary tradition did not contain enough literature on humour and satire.

There is a history and politics behind the perception, even among scholars, that humour hardly existed in ancient India. There are a number of reasons for this: Firstly, much of early Indian humour was scatological and erotic in nature. Michel Clasquin's observation on literary works in the romanised versions and the western-language translations of ancient Indian works on humour (still being reprinted today) is very pertinent.[97] He points out that most of these works were (re)produced by Victorian and Edwardian scholars and Indologists since the late eighteenth century. Scatological and erotic as they were, these passages, then, were either omitted entirely or were rendered only in a heavily latinised form.[98] The second reason, he points out, is an almost "concerted effort among believers and scholars to theologise the relevant passages until nothing funny remains. This has been particularly true of those passages that might otherwise have been cut because of their raunchiness, but that are too central to the story to be deleted."[99] A similar tendency, Clasquin observes, can be found among Indian literary theorists. Jan Gonda, for example, consistently denied any comic intent among the authors of the Samhita and Brahmana sections of the Vedas. In his case, it was not theological concerns that usurped the place of humour, but technical linguistic and literary matters. Still, the message was the same: Indian literature was 'serious', not humorous. [100]

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[95] There is a small scene in the play where Samāj is asking Bhāratmatā for money because he wants to organise a literary summit. He hurls abuses at the pauper Bhāratmatā and drags her by her hair on her inability to provide money. This can be read as a satire on the general tendency amongst Hindi activists who used to curse the (Hindi speaking) masses for lack of moral and financial support to the cause of Hindi nationalism.

[96] Peter Gaeffke, "Rāmcandra Śukla and the Ninth Rasa", *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens*, 28 (1984): 105-114.

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[97] Michel Clasquin, "Real Buddhas Don't Laugh: Attitude towards Humour and Laughter in Ancient India and China", *Social Identities*, 7, 1 (2001): 97-116.

[98] Clasquin, "Real Buddhas Don't Laugh", 101. For example, Lee Siegal gives us the following example from Nalinika Jataka: a naive ascetic seeing a naked woman for the first time wonders what happened to her penis. She explains that it had been torn off by a bear and invites him to inspect the wound and 'kiss it and make it better'. Lee Siegel, *Laughing Matters: Comic Tradition in* India (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987), 82. In the standard English translation of this Jataka from the Pali Text Society, this passage is simply glossed over and we are told in a footnote that Nalinika 'practises' on the simplicity of the ascetic youth with much the same guile as Venus employs to win Adonis'. H. T. Francis, *The Jatakas, or the Stories of Buddha's Former Births Vol.5* (London: Pali Text Society, 1981), 102. This edition was first published in 1895. The dominance of such 'puritan' attitude is clearly underlined by Romila Thapar's significant work on the early translation and editing of *Śakuntalā* narratives in several versions of the ancient tales by the Orientalist and colonialist scholars. She shows how the protagonist's image was constructed from a contemporary patriarchal vantage point by sidelining erotic, desirous, confident traits from Śakuntalā's character, and how influential this reconfigured Śakuntalā remained in the imagination of middle class nationalist patriarchy. Romila Thapar, *Śakuntalā: Texts, Readings, Histories* (Delhi: Kali for Women, 1999), 197-256.

[99] For example, in a passage in Jayadeva's *Gitagovinda*, Krishna and his lover Radha are found to be wearing each other's clothes, to the merriment of Radha's companions. Dressing in darkness after lovemaking, each of the lovers also put on the other's clothes by mistake. In later Vaishnava devotional literature, Radha and Krishna intentionally dress in each other's clothes and the comic incident is transformed into a symbol of the ultimate unity of Radha and Krishna. A joke became a doxology. Siegel, *Laughing Matters*, 31.

Moreover, there are works which acknowledge the existence of humour and satire in ancient India but due to their own normative idea of humour, they often provide a contradictory picture –enough traces of wit, humour and satire exist, but they are not up to the mark or of a good standard. S.K. De's work[101] is a good example of this historiographical trend. Unlike early Indologists and scholars manoeuvring through translations or allegoric theologisation, De, in his survey of ancient Indian literature (read Sanskrit), shows ample evidence of social farces and burlesque compositions; but sadly to him, they are marked with vulgarity and lack sophistication and subtlety. We often come across (ambivalent/contradictory) assessments like the following: "The failure, with rare exceptions, to achieve real comedy even in satirical and farcical sketches by a class of erotico-comic compositions, namely the monologue play or *bhāna* and the professed farce *prahasana*, both of which, closely allied in certain characteristics, represents direct attempts at raising laughter."[102] To his discomfort, however, "the prevailing erotic atmosphere even of earlier *bhānas* spoils much of their decided leaning towards satiric and comic portraiture, but one scarcely finds elsewhere their greater freedom of natural humour and polite irony, their power of shrewd observation and presentation of motley group of amusing characters."[103] In his final analysis De remarks, "the Sanskrit farce, as a whole, suffers from poverty of invention and lack of taste. It has all the point that is in ribaldry and all the humour that is an extravagance. [...] Apart from the inevitable eroticism that, however, is open and not insinuating like that of Wycherley or Congreve, the whole atmosphere is low and depressing. [...] No doubt, the theme of tricks and quarrels of low characters is allowed by Sanskrit theory, but the prescription is taken too literally. The characters in *prahasana* are low, not in social position, but as irredeemably base and carnal; and there being credit for no other quality, they are hardly humans. The procession of unmitigated rogues and their rougher pastimes need not be without interest; but there is no merit in attempting to raise laughter by deliberately vulgar exhibitions and expressions."[104] De certainly has his expectations regarding how and of what nature and subtlety Sanskrit or any ideal literature of humour should be. This comes out in the following poetic expressions in his essay: "If Sanskrit poetic theory insists upon impersonalised enjoyment of personal emotions, this cultured attitude of artistic aloofness is shown by the way in which the poet lifts his tyrannical passion into a passive mood of delectation, whereby even the darkening sorrows of love dissolve into sparkling tints of laughter."[105]

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[100] Jan Gonda, *A History of Indian Literature: Volume I, Fasc I: Vedic Literature (Samhitas and Brahmanas)*, (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1975), 168; 200; 226; 246–47. Cf. Clasquin, "Real Buddhas Don't Laugh", 101.

[101] De's work mentions *Dhurtakhyan* (Tales of Rogues) written by Swetambara Haribhadra Suri in the mid 8th century which, 'with a Decamerone-like framework, satirises the incredibility of absurd Epic and Puranic tales by means of equally fantastic tales narrated by the assembled rogues'. Sushil Kumar De, "Wit, Humour and Satire in Ancient Indian Literature" in *Aspects of Sanskrit Literature* (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyaya Publishers, 1959), 257-289.

[102] De, "Wit, Humour and Satire", 271.

[103] De, "Wit, Humour and Satire", 273.

However, contrary to De's assertion, Sanskrit poetics do provide insights into what satire is. De, it seems, was too blinkered by his purist prejudice to decipher it. By contrast Lee Siegel in his magisterial study of ancient literature on humour explains the allegorical tale that immaculately talks about satire. Siegel cites a mytho-allegorical account from Bharata's *Nāṭyaśastra* which reflects on the origins of satire: "Once they had mastered the *Scripture of Dramatic Arts*, my sons began to ridicule everyone in the entire universe with farces [...] and soon they performed a satire of the Divine Sages, a play full of vulgarities."[106] In other words, what can be gleaned from this account is a definition that satire is an aesthetic mode of attack directed against culturally esteemed objects. Through an adherence to literary-aesthetic norms and conventions, primordial abusiveness and aggression are transformed into comedy, characterised by degrading vulgarities in which comic laughter arises out of a sudden perception of incongruity in what has traditionally been idealised and venerated. Where is, then, the scope for an obsessive hatred for vulgarity?

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[104] De, "Wit, Humour and Satire", 276.
[105] De, "Wit, Humour and Satire", 283.
[106] Cf. Siegel, *Laughing Matters*, 57.

Siegel, thus, provides a good corrective to the bowdlerised perception of ancient Indian literary tradition. Apart from citing innumerable evidences from a variety of sources from ancient and early medieval literature, he provides an interesting insight that helps us realize the significance of a particular linguistic style of composition to create humour.[107] There was a tradition of dexterity of composition, he suggests, it was possible to narrate and enjoy the sacred and erotic at the same time. This tradition was a living one till the modernist sensibility that developed under colonialism, gradually suppressed it, to an extent that it was entirely lost from mainstream literary practice.[108]

Having refuted the myth of paucity of humour in pre-modern literary traditions, let us now tackle the problem of its theorisation. The question is as vexed as the historical one. Indian literary theory sees laughter as falling into two main types. Bharata and his commentator Abhinavagupta saw them as 1) laughter at the perception of ludicrous incongruities and improprieties, and 2) as laughter caused simply by the laughter of others. Later commentators construed these categories as 'laughter at oneself' (*ātmastha*) and 'laughter at another' (*parastha*), which Siegel understands as being roughly equivalent to the contemporary western concepts *humour* and *satire*.[109] Laughing at others' is used to explain satire in combination with the 'incongruity' theory of western scholarship on humour.[110] In fact, on the face of it, the problem of understanding satirical text in such works appears to be methodological.[111] However, a closer analysis reveals that it is much more than merely methodological. It starts from an approach that remains trapped within a nationalist project (sometimes overt, sometimes covert) – a project that tries to inflate classical Indian aesthetics on performing arts as an adequate (and at all times superior) theory to understand any art form. Within this conception modern Hindi satirical text is just one amongst many art forms. It is from this nationalist premise that people like Shukla implicitly invoke the superiority of Sanskrit humour and assesses contemporary Hindi satire as inferior and liable to be neglected. It is from this premise again that the astutely critical voice of G. P. Shrivastava has to take the pain of 'establishing' *hāsya* as the most significant of all rasas and bring it on par with discussions of laughter within western discourse.[112] One can contextualise (and probably rationalise depending on one's political stance) this interpretative laxity as the burden of a nationalist during times of colonial domination. However, many works till date continue to carry the past relic of nationalist

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[107] As paraphrased by Clasquin, "in written Sanskrit, there is no space between two words if the first ends on a consonant and the second begins with a vowel [...] A skilful writer can render entire lines without any sign of spacing or punctuation. This creates the possibility, especially in poetry, of composing sentences that can be divided up in different ways, leading to at least one serious, highbrow interpretation and at least one comic version. Even if the comic interpretation itself is not particularly funny, the humour lies in the juxtaposition between the two, something that would be immediately obvious to the ancient Indian reader. Clasquin, "Real Buddhas Don't Laugh", 102. Siegel, for example, gives a demonstrative example renders in English a verse categorized as "*Rasikaranjana*". See Siegel, *Laughing Matters*, 382.

[108] Sudipta Kaviraj also observes this in passing. See Kaviraj, "Laughter and Subjectivity", *Modern Asian Studies*, 34, 2 (2000): 387.

[109] As cited in Clasquin, "Real Buddhas Don't Laugh", 110. But these concepts do not seem to have been taken up within general Indian philosophical discourse from their origins in literary

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theory, as it had happened in the west. This can only be put as a statement; why this has not happened is a kind of counterfactual question, which cannot be answered here.

[110] According to Clasquin, there are three main strands of thought in western philosophy of humour. *Superiority theory*: It maintains that people laugh because of feelings of superiority over other people or of superiority over our own former position. *Relief theory*: It enquires into the physiological basis of laughter and attempts to place the ancient idea of catharsis in a modern scientific setting. Underlying idea is that laughter (and the humorous writings which causes laughter) is a socially acceptable and healthy outlet for an excessive amount of nervous 'pressure'. *Incongruity theory*: It places the source of amusement in a perceived incongruity or inconsistency between the world as it exists and the world as we expect it to be. Combinations of these three approaches are of course possible and are applied in the study of satire. Clasquin, "Real Buddhas Don't Laugh", 110-111.

[111] It is methodological in the sense that it can at best provide a formulaic understanding of how a particular text attacks by laughing at its target without looking at its specific textuality and historicity. It neither adequately explains satire as a variety of *hāsya* as humorous discourse, nor does it address how a satirical text is constituted and its meaning communicated.

[112] Tragically, even Shrivastava's exercise adds nothing to the armoury of explanatory tools. He has to take recourse to Henri Bergson's theory of laughter and explicate basically superiority, relief and incongruity theories to explain his pursuit. See first and second lectures in the booklet that deals with the theories of humour. Gangā Prasād Śrīvāstava, *Hāsya ras*, ed. Dulārelāl Bhārgava (Lakhnau: Gangā pustak mālā, 1934), 1-27.

burden, albeit differently. They mention Sanskrit poetics almost like a ritual, and then look at western theories and typologies of humour.[113]

Within the third set of works we can group together several nationalist-leftist studies during the post-independence period, which directly deal with the material that we are engaging with. These include, for example, studies on late nineteenth century Hindi intellectuals (popularly designated as the "Bhāratendu circle") in general or their satirical compositions in particular.[114] They carry out a simplistic political reading of the content of these satirical texts by citing selective passages as an anti-colonial (sometimes anti-caste and pro-woman) attack on oppressive political, social and religious authorities. Without delineating the specificity of its formal features, they underline satire as the key medium for carrying out social transformations, thereby mapping satirical humour directly on to the nationalist reading public. Some detailed accounts of Hindi satire, otherwise important for their documentary value, also suffer from the same lacuna. For example, Rameshvar Nath Bhargava's monograph *Hindī prahasan ke sau varṣ* is a very useful reference book. It documents and summarises the content of modern Hindi satirical plays up to 1972.[115] Through plot summary and direct citations, the author appreciates satirists as progressive nationalists and satirical texts (albeit sometimes 'obscene'!), as the necessary literary medium to serve the cause of social-political awareness and change. Similarly, Sureshkant's book *Hindī gadya lekhan meṃ vyaṃgya aur vichār* on Hindi prose satire since late nineteenth century provides a summary of well-known satirical works and paraphrases statements from established satirists' regarding their literary pursuit in relation to various social-political problems; it also paraphrases statements from them that legitimise of satire as one of the most effective tools of societal transformation.[116] In *Sadī kā vyaṃgya vimarś*, Malay provides not only summary of 'well known' satire but also excerpts from a variety of satirical texts – jokes, conundrums, fake news, etc. – so far neglected in the historiography of satire.[117] In addition, unlike others, Sureshkant and Malay attempt to delineate a typology of satirical texts. However, both of them reproduce the same confusing account. Several typologies – wit, sarcasm, joke, etc. – are tentatively defined as varieties of satire in relation to their capacities to generate various degrees of laughter and their ability to communicate social problem. In their accounts, all typologies confusingly overlap with each other. Typological difference, in effect, remains a matter of degree to be perceived by intelligent literary critics! They certainly do not attempt or engage with the linguistic, generic and discursive features of satirical texts.

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[113] See Malay's work on poetics of satire. We shall discuss them with the third set of works.

[114] To cite a few examples, see Rāmbilas Śarmā, *Bhāratendu yug aur hindī navjāgraṇ kī samasyāeṃ* (Dillī: Rājkamal prakāśan, 1975); Karmendu Śiśir, "*Matˈvālā maṇḍal: sāhityik patrakāritā kā ek anūṭhā adhyāya*," *Pahal*, Special Issue (1988) and also see his preface in Karmendu Śiśir, *Bhārˈtendu maṇḍal ke pramukh racˈnākar rādhācaraṇ gosvāmī kī cunī huī racˈnāyeṃ* (Ilāhābād: Parimal prakāśan, 1990).

[115] Dr. Rāmeśvar Nāth Bhārgava, *Hindī prahasan ke sau varṣ* (Dillī, Bhāvˈna prakāśan, 1980).

All the works mentioned above either do not bother to define satire or deliberately leave it intangible or self-evident (for example, Sharma and Shishir), or they try to explain it using the inadequate tools of humour theory (for instance, Malay and Sureshkant). They hardly delve into linguistics and stylistics of satirical forms, which have been elaborated by many Hindi satirists.[118] After all, as Krystyna Pomorska points out in her reading of Bakhtin, literary modes and forms, though which a social critique is articulated in literature, are closely linked to each other. Social critique is not merely a thematic aspect of satire, for instance; it is encoded in the way in which it is conceived and executed. Bakhtin carefully insisted that art is oriented towards communication. "Form" in art, thus conceived, is particularly active in expressing and conveying a system of values.[119]

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[116] Sureśkānt, *Hindī gadya lekhan meṃ vyaṃgya aur vicār* (Dillī: Rādhākr̥ṣṇa, 2004)

[117] Malay, *Sadī kā vyaṃgya vimarś* (Dillī: Śilpāyan, 2008) Malay has written two monographs. Another is *Vyaṃgya kā saudaryaśātra* (Dillī: Śabdˈśr̥iṣti, 2008) in which he tries to reach at a definition of satire. Malay's analyses his citations individually in line with his own typology of satire in relation to generating laughter as well as their immediate political context.

[118] One of the most famous Hindi satirists of post-independence times Harishankar Parsai says: "Vyaṃgya cannot be a genre because it does not have a structure of its own. It is like a *spirit*, which is found in any genre. [Parsai uses the English term spirit.] It is a *bhāv* [spirit] which chooses its form as per the suitability of its subject matter." Mahāvīr Agravāl, *Vyaṃgyasaptak ek* (Durg: Śrī prakāśan, 1999), 45. Similar expositions have been made and extended by Shrilal Shukla and Prem Janmejay also. They add: "That is why Vyaṃgya is not straight [but oblique]; maximum expressive art-forms (abhivyakti-śilpa) are experimented with as its career." Śrilal Śukla and Prem Janmejay, eds., *Hindi hāsya-vyaṃgya saṃkalan* (Delhi: National Book Trust, 1997), eight.

Both who neglect or only partially try to examine the formal nature and property of satirical texts, insinuate the following general points about satirical literature in colonial India.[120] Satirical text is a moralist intervention against perceived social disapprobation of the time: nationalist attack against colonial political and social order. The satirical texts are open and accessible to all their readers and, in doing so, contribute to the cause of social transformation. They assume an ideologically compact and homogeneous reader who would share the dose of nationalism injected through satire. There is little disagreement across the work cited above about the existence of "golden age" periods of satirical production. For example, the age of Bharatendu or the late nineteenth century was the best period [in terms of 'good' quality satire]. Above all, these works also underline the fact that satirical texts attack prevalent moral-social approbation but do not fail to mention in passing that many are largely 'tasteless' or of 'low quality'.

Many of these points may sound unproblematic but the story is not so straightforward. Contradiction between the nationalist and the colonialist, as presented in their works, is too simplistic to be historically accurate. For instance, anti-colonial satire did not necessarily translate into radical disagreement with the contemporary political establishment, or for that matter, it did not lead to a radical social critique of Indian social order. On the contrary, it led to the reinforcing of old normative idea of society organised on principles of caste hierarchy, as we shall see in the following chapters. Similarly, the approach of mapping the concept of the humour community on to satirical writing is interesting but, linguistically speaking, a satirical text defies any such teleology. It does not pay attention to the constitutive and assumed audience, which is limited by the author through preconditions of specific linguistic and stylistic codes. An explanation that emphasises the fact that satire appears to thrive in one era while being relatively scarce in another is based on a misplaced presumption, such explanations often being couched in terms of the assumptions about that era's prevalent social and political conditions. We argue that conditions of uncertainty, repression and upheaval (or alternatively of stability and confidence depending on the viewpoint a critic subscribes to) are precisely the factors that engender prolific satirical output. There are two reasons why such opinions about 'golden' or 'dark' ages continue to exist despite the fact that satirical productions are to be found in every age, golden or otherwise. One, entry to a literary canon, as we all know, is a highly selective affair. Another reason, which also intersects with the problem of canon formation, is to do with the difficulty of establishing precisely who is a satirist and who is not. The designated satirists, whose reputations are founded on finite *oeuvres* are relatively easy to target. This approach, needless to say, ignores non-designated satirists or includes only those who are otherwise established poets, novelists or painters. Hence, satirical compositions, for instance of Nirala, dispersed in the pages of various journals, shall hardly be heeded, for he is more a poet than a satirist!

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[119] Pomorska further writes that Bakhtin recognises the duality of every sign in art, where all content is formal and every form exists because of its content. In other words, "form" is active in any structure as a specific aspect of a message. See his Foreword in Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, Tr. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), viii.

[120] It can be safely argued that the problems which we underline about the study of literary satire is quite apparent in the cases of existing works on visual satire or cartoons as well which hardly pay any attention to the form and stylistic feature of cartoon. See, for example, Mushirul Hasan, *Wit and Humour in Colonial India* (Delhi: Niyogi Books, 2007) and *Wit and Wisdom: Pickings from the Parsee Punch* (Delhi: Niyogi Books, 2012); A. R. Venkatachalapathy, "Caricaturing the Political: The Cartoon and Pre-independence Tamil Journalism" in *In Those Days When There Was No Coffee: Writings in Cultural History* (Delhi: Yoda Press, 2006), 42-58; Gita Dharampal-Frick, *Gandhi´s Satyagraha: Revisioning Its Cultural Roots, Dynamic Force and Global Impact* (Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 2010); Partha Mitter, "Cartoon and the Raj", *History Today*, 47, 9 (1997), page numbers not found. Only exception is Dilip M. Menon's paper on Shankar's cartoon which engages with the question of 'national modern' by looking at the stylistic and formal features which unearth the cultural repertoire mobilised in Shankar's drawings. Dilip M. Menon, "Don't spare me Shankar": Shankar's Weekly and Political Cartooning in the Nehruvian Fifties, 1947-1964", Paper presented in a conference "*The 'Long' 1950s*", 18-20 March 2008 at CSSS, Calcutta.

Apart from the works reviewed above, we also have some very significant and insightful articles by Sudipta Kaviraj, Hans Harder, Baidik Bhattacharya and

Vasudha Dalmia on literary satire, and a recent book on the culture of cartooning in India by Ritu Khanduri. Essays on literary satire study the texts by giving due consideration to both their form as well as content alongside their communicative features. Vasudha Dalmia, in a short section in her book, explores the evolution of satirical skits that emerged out of interaction between indigenous and English forms in nineteenth century periodicals and the new social function it served in carving out an ideological space for the Hindu middle class.[121] Similarly, in his first essay on Bengali satire Hans Harder examines the making of early narrative satirical prose, its communicative mechanism and the new social-critical function it served at the turn of nineteenth century in negotiating with the rapid changes brought about by colonial modernity in Bengal.[122] More importantly, Harder's very recent essay, which surveys the satirical productions in Bengali, Hindi, Urdu and Marathi in colonial South Asia, is a crucial preliminary step towards a holistic understanding of colonial satirical productions. His second essay on South Asian satires provides a working typology of colonial satire by unearthing different layers of coloniality (which, arguably, pervades all satires of this period in different ways) in relation to their textual-representational forms and narrative organisation.[123] Sudipta Kaviraj studies a couple of mid-nineteenth century satirical texts to unravel the centrality of the discourse of humour in reflecting upon the constitution of middle class subjectivity under the moral and material 'prison' of colonial reality; and how irony is used to underscore the 'discourse of subalternity' in colonial Bengal.[124] Baidik Bhattacharya, through his close reading of one twentieth century Bengali satirical text, which involves unearthing its internal textual organisation vis-a-vis parodic representation of the discursive context of the Orientalist narrative, claims to revisit the unresolved relationship between Orientalism and colonial regime; and shows how the satirical text exposes the moment where Orientalist knowledge and colonial governmentality join each other.[125]

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[121] Dalmia, *The Nationalisation of Hindu Tradition*, 251-60.

[122] See Hans Harder, "The Modern Babu and the Metropolis: Reassessing Early Bengali Narrative Prose (1821-1862)" in *India's Literary History*, eds. Vasudha Dalmia and Stuart Blackburn (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), 358-401.

[123] See Hans Harder "Towards a Concept of Satire in South Asian Literatures" in *Indian Satire in the Period of first Modernity*, eds. Monika Horstmann and Heidi Rika Maria Pouwels (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag: 2012), 165-183.

[124] Kaviraj, "Laughter and Subjectivity", *Modern Asian Studies*, 34, 2 (2000): 379-406;

Ritu Khanduri's book is a comprehensive study of cartooning practice in India covering a long period, from mid nineteenth century to the contemporary times.[126] Primarily anthropological in nature, the book discusses, briefly but intensely, some aspects of history of cartoons in pre-Independence India. The book turns away from the stylistic and formal study of cartoons and focuses more on the history of reception by focussing on some 'moments' in the history of cartooning practices involving well known figures and controversies. Although lacking thick description of sources and contexts, as it relies mainly on reprints of famous cartoons as *caricature-albums* or *selections* not the periodicals, the book offers valuable insight into the limits of India's modernity and liberalism through 'cartoon talk' or discussion around cartoons gleaned from periodicals, private conversations and government reports. All of these recent works provide practical insights into approaching a satirical text in new ways. In the following chapters we build upon the informative, interpretative and analytical insight received from existing historiography of satire in consonance with the concepts and questions we have reviewed in the present chapter.

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[125] Baidik Bhattacharya, "Jokes Apart: Orientalism, (Post)colonial Parody and the Moment of Laughter", *Interventions* 8, 2, (2006): 276-294.

[126] Ritu Kahnduri, *Caricaturing Culture in India: Cartoons and History in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 20.

Chapter 2

Modernity, Colonialism and Satire in the Late 19th Century

> Historically, therefore, satire has for thousands of years, up to Voltaire's age, preferred to side with the stronger party which could be relied on, with authority. Usually it acted on behalf of older strata threatened by more recent stages of enlightenment, which sought to support their traditionalism with enlightened means: its inexhaustible theme was the decay of morals. [...] The yardstick applied [by the satirist], however, is that of whatever is endangered by progress, [...] is condemned without being done the justice of rational debate.
>
> (Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia*.)[1]

This chapter delineates an aspect of the social perception of modernity, as reflected in Hindi satirical texts, in late nineteenth century colonial India by focusing on five selected satirical pieces written by two nineteenth century Khari Boli authors, Bharatendu Harishchandra (1850-1884) and Radhacharan Goswami (1858-1925).[2] Satirical writings in Hindi of this period mocks a range of targets – from religious reform(er)s, the colonial judiciary (or rule of law), caste associations, the railways, etc. – and alludes to social groups and movements, state and civil institutions, and cultural values. All these are associated with, and largely located in urban spaces – a principal site for the unfolding of colonial modernity. The subject matter of satire in a variety of literary forms, it is argued, is inextricably entangled with the question of colonial modernity. Although the trope of modernity as chaotic and deprived of ethical and moral values appears to have been a rather universal feature in modernising societies, yet its connotative meaning was delimited by respective historical-particular literary context. As the existing scholarship shows us, modernity in its myriad forms has been linked to the global phenomenon of capitalism and has been experienced and articulated differentially throughout the world. It is the particularity of historical experience of modernity mediated by colonialism in North India that gives specificity to its articulation by the Hindi litterateurs in colonial North India.[3]

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[1] Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, tr. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 2005), 210.

[2] Given that a large corpus of late nineteenth-century Hindi satirical texts is available, I have selected those texts which deal relatively more directly with the question of colonialism and modernity and have overt intertextual references to pre-established literary and oral narrative genres in contemporary circulation.

Taking Vasudha Dalmia's important insight about the political function of *Punch* skits in nineteenth century literary periodicals of Bharatendu Harishchandra (1850-85) as a starting point,[4] it is argued that this satirical inflection of modernity commences from the ideological vantage point of an emerging upper caste Hindu/Hindi middle class – a new social group which emerged during the colonial period.[5] Satire functioned as a potent literary tool to tackle the perceived multiple asymmetries produced by colonialism in its various immanent forms. In this view, colonialism had not only led to the obvious political-cultural subordination of the country, it had also precipitated a violent cultural change, which was threatening to erode Indian/Hindu moral-social order. In other words, repercussions of colonial modernity were said to be visible in at least two ways: one, in the emergence and activities of a new group of self-appointed social reformers, who along with their British masters were derisive of Hindu culture, and two, in the increasing assertions of the hitherto socially subordinate lower castes and women, which was facilitated by colonial institutions theoretically accessible to all and thereby threatening the traditional social supremacy of male caste Hindus. Satire can, thus, be seen as a *literary* response to the complexities of colonial modernity from within the subjectivities of the contemporary Hindi intelligentsia of the time.[6]

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[3] Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Shulman and Sanjay Subrahmanyam have provided a very bold and convincing argument regarding the rise of literary forms compatible with modernity in the pre-colonial India. Velcheru N. Rao, David Shulman and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time: Writing History in South India 100-1800* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001). The logic of such indigenous development of modernity, to my mind, was altered by colonial intervention and resulted in a different trajectory of change in literature and society. For instance, see Vasudha Dalmia, "Merchant Tales and the Emergence of Novel" *Economic and Political Weekly*, 43, 34 (2008): 44-60, which looks into the question of continuity and rupture in the emergence of the Hindi novel in nineteenth century India in relation with the early seventeenth century autobiography.

[4] Vasudha Dalmia, *The Nationalisation of Hindu Tradition: Bharatendu Harishchandra and Nineteenth Century Benaras* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 251-261.

[5] See Dalmia, *The Nationalisation of Hindu Tradition*; Francesca Orsini, *Hindi Public Sphere 1920-1940: Language and Literature in the Age of nationalism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002); Sanjay Joshi, *Fractured Modernity: Making of a Middle Class in Colonial North India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005); Markus Daechsel, *The Politics of Self Expression: The Urdu Middleclass Milieu in Mid-Twentieth Century India and Pakistan* (London: Routledge, 2009). For a historiographical summary on the nature of regionally variegated middle class in colonial India see Sumit Sarkar, *Modern Times: India, 1880s-1950s* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2014), 310-326.

Hindi satire is viewed here as a literary mode of expression which, through its technique of descriptive excess (exaggeration, deformation), imitates a pre-existing formalised literary or speech genre of representation. The imitative reproduction markedly transforms the respective basic genres of representation while retaining some of their distinctive features. More importantly, this act of generic imitation simultaneously enables satire to mock the language and also the object of representation (for instance, colonial modernity in its myriad forms), thereby exposing the contradiction between the commonsensical claim of that discourse and the more complex reality around it.[7]

Further, this characteristic of satire makes it an interventionist mode of literary communication in the emerging Hindi public sphere of the late nineteenth century. It is interventionist in the sense that satirical texts are marked by topicality of their subject matter and are always explicitly directed at certain target(s). Their subject matter is built upon an already known and widely circulated news and events, which are discussed and debated at length in contemporary periodicals – an important institutional site of the public sphere. Hindi satirical texts simultaneously attempt to constitute and address a reading community public putatively sharing a common ideological agenda by its intervention in those debates. But this intervention is not articulated through positive and sustained argumentation with the opponent whose discourse is the object of representation; rather the latter remains muted in the background. Satirical texts put a closure on dialogue with their opponent. While they start from the premise from which such debates emerge, they strategically avoid the discursive demands of sustained argumentation by taking recourse to a more or less direct attack. By deploying literary techniques of deformation, exaggeration and creation of the absurd and the grotesque, satire imitates and manipulates the premises of thought characteristic to their objects of representation in an effort to drive their arguments towards their illogical and unreasoned extremity. Unwilling to participate in the game of persuasive reasoning and arguments, Hindi satire attempts to evoke, through a series of negative gestures, a traditional hierarchical Brahmanic ideal that perhaps no longer seems rationally defensible but has become necessary to contain the threat posed by the forces of colonial modernity.[8] We shall start our investigation with a piece of satire which takes up the question of colonialism head on and then discuss similar representative pieces of nineteenth century Hindi satire to substantiate the claims.

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[6] See pages 24-26 of the last chapter where we have discussed the differential usage of modernity in relation to Partha Chatterjee's arguments.

[7] Charles A. Knight, "Satire, Speech, Genre", *Comparative Literature*, 44, 1 (1992): 22-41. More importantly in South Asian context also see the introductory remark on the nature and definition of satire as *mode* rather than a *genre* which characteristically deforms and dislocates the topic or its target by Hans Harder in his essay "Towards a Concept of Satire in South Asian Literatures" in *Indian Satire in the Period of first Modernity*, eds. Monika Horstmann and Heidi Rika Maria Pouwels (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag: 2012), 165-183. For a detailed discussion around the nature and form of satire see Chapter 1, section 3 of the present work.

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[8] It is interesting to note that satire often reserves for itself the most trenchant observation on lower social order, while other literary forms often comments in a calm and sombre voice! This articulation owes a great deal to Christian Thorne, "Thumbing Our Nose at the Public Sphere: Satire, the Market, and the Invention of Literature" *PMLA*, 116, 3 (2001): 531- 544. Also see Chapter 7 "Scepticism and the Public Sphere" in Christian Thorne, *Dialectics of Counter-Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 225-261.

1

Confronting the order of colonialism

The piece we shall start with, *Pãcˡveṃ paigambar*[9] (The Fifth Prophet), was written in 1873 by the Bharatendu Harishchandra (1850-1884), often referred as 'father of modern Hindi'. Harishchandra belonged to a noted Hindu merchant family of Banaras. Apart from being an insider to the Indian literary traditions (Sanskrit, Persian, Braj, etc.), he had learnt English and was familiar with the English literary tradition too. In his short life span he emerged as a public personality, poet-playwright-journalist and socio-religious reformer. [10] Harishchandra's *Pãcˡveṃ paigambar* is representative in its take on colonialism and modernity in nineteenth century British India. Written in Persian-laden Hindi, *Pãcˡveṃ paigambar* imitates and debases the literary precept of revelation literature. In the text under discussion the narrator speaks in the first person. He begins with his claim of being a prophet named *cūsā*, but later turns out to be an embodiment of colonialism. The text replaces the divine and godly saint by one 'sucking prophet' (*cūsā paigambar*) who claims to be in continuum with the holy Prophets:

> "Folks, come to me! I am the fifth Prophet. David, Jesus, Moses and Muhammad have been the previous four. My name is the Sucking Prophet."[11]

The first person satiric narrator, namely the Fifth or Sucking Prophet, then reveals with descriptive excess the quality and character of his own self and the faith and values he stands for; he does so in a self-annihilating tone, which results in the perpetual undermining of the text, as we shall see.

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[9] This satirical piece first appeared in his journal *Harischandra's Magazine* (hereafter *HM*) in 1873. I have used its facsimile edition, which contains the reprint of the journal from October 1873 to May 1874. *Harischandra's Magazine*, Fascimile edition, ed. Satyaprakāś Miśra. Ilāhābād: Hindī sāhitya sammelan, 2002), 84-86.

[10] For an exhaustive study of his historical role in the literary, cultural, political and religious realm see Dalmia, *The Nationalisation of Hindu Tradition*.

[11] All citations unless otherwise cited are translated by me. See *HM*, 84.

The text starts off, in its very first passage, with a satiric deformation. The *Paigambar* introduces himself as fifth in the line of holy prophets with a strong self-deprecation by calling himself the sucking prophet born of the illegitimate consummation of his widow mother. On the one hand, this assumes that a widow, if she is a virtuous woman, cannot give birth to a child and hence an illegitimate consort must have engendered a child. On the other, the impossibility of a legitimate birth in the absence of a husband obliquely satirises the virginity of Jesus's mother. Also, contrary to the putatively compassionate language of a prophet, he is arrogant and fearsome towards his potential followers:

> "Born of a widow's womb and sent hither by none other than God Almighty Himself, I command you to have faith in me or to be ready to face His divine wrath!"[12]

This text has several layers of referentiality. It blurs the distinction between colonial rule and its manifest cultural forms, which in the dominant perception were entangled with Christianity. The satiric self-proclamation of divinity in the beginning obliquely refers to one of the widely spread discourses of legitimation of colonial rule as 'divine dispensation', redeeming a declining Hindu civilization from the shackles of medieval Muslim despotism, which was shared by the colonialists and Indian liberals alike.[13] On the one hand, *Pā̃cˡveṃ paigambar*'s oblique reference to this colonialist discourse, functions as a deformative imitation of a pre-established narrative of revelation. On the other hand, it mocks its object of representation, i.e. the legitimacy of the colonialist discourse of divine dispensation, which is in this logic just as illegitimate as the son of a widow! The sucking prophet of colonialism is further disparaged as he has had an uncivilized and plundering past, but ironically has 'recently' been empowered by God himself to redeem his subjects:

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[12] See *HM*, 84.

[13] As K. N. Panikkar has pointed out, Indian intellectual community in nineteenth century colonial India functioned within the parameters of bourgeois-liberal ideology, and their political perspectives and activities in colonial India were based on the ideal of gradual realisation of a bourgeois democratic order. The character of pre-colonial political institutions and of the colonial state was understood and assessed within this parameter. Hence the early critique of the pre-colonial political system and the acceptance of British rule as divine dispensation. Panikkar cites Dosabhoy Framjee's views in a pamphlet entitled "The British Raj Contrasted with its Predecessors" as a source which is quite representative of this understanding: 'The steady expansion of English dominion has been followed by the establishment of peace in all the borders of the land; by a firm and upright administration of the laws, and by a security of life and

> "I have lived on this earth for ages, but kept mum as the Almighty did not grant me permission to speak. Forget speaking, I used to prey like a wild animal and people had named me variously as an ape, an uncivil, a soldier in the army of the Kingdom of Demons [*laṃkā*], and a barbarian [*mleccha*]. But now I am the Guru, because it's His commandment to people that they have faith in me."[14]

The prophet is shown to have revealed his multiple protean selves. His self-expository nomenclatures playfully associate his characteristics with the image of colonial government as articulated by several nationalist critics. The exposition of his first name, one who sucks wealth, draws on the already familiar economic nationalist criticism of colonial rule, namely the 'drain of wealth' theory, which would soon become institutionalised in the nationalist discourse.[15] The drain theory is legitimized by an inverted invocation of the religious doctrine of the

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property to which India had been unhappily a stranger from the remotest times. The children have forgotten the adversities of their fathers – the true character of that bloody and lawless tyranny from which England has emancipated the people of India.' The object of the author, Panikkar argues, was to recall fading memories of an unhappy past and to contrast them with the peaceful experience of British rule. This stark contrast between the conditions that prevailed in the two systems reflected the differences in the nature of polity – one as despotic, arbitrary and tyrannous and the other that was liberal and democratic. K. N. Panikkar, "Culture and Ideology: Contradictions in Intellectual Transformation of Colonial Society in India". *Economic and Political Weekly*, 22, 49 (1987): 2118.

[14] See *HM*, 84.

[15] The critique of colonial rule draining India's national wealth, though still dispersed, came into being long before the coherently argued works of Dadabhai Naoroji's *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India* (1891) and Romesh Chandra Dutt's *Economic History of India* (1902 and 1905). The 'drain theory' since then has been a subject of polemic in economic historiography of colonial India. For a condensed critique and summary see Sumit Sarkar, *Modern Times: India, 1880s-1950s* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2014), 168-178.

rulers, Christianity: that excessive wealth is sinful, and hence, draining the wealth from India is tantamount to the enhancement of its spiritual merit:

> "Like Muhammad and others I, too, am called by many names: 1) the Sucking Prophet, 2) the Double, 3) the White; but my full name is Shri Hazrat Hon. Mr. Double White Sucking Prophet, the Destroyer of the Universe[16] […] My name is the Sucking Prophet because I suck everyone's unholy wealth, because the Almighty himself decreed to me that His children tread on the path of crime due to the presence of excessive wealth. It's therefore He who instructed me to suck away all your money so that you have no incentive left for crime […]."[17]

The second name is again a differential articulation of the same characteristic as the greedy squeezer of wealth, while the third name makes the racial underpinnings and the supremacist rhetoric of the civilizing mission of colonialism explicit:

> "My second name is **Ḍabal**[18] because it refers to money in Hindi, means *dunā* [double] in English, and signifies a container for extracting *ghee* or cereals in west[ern India]. My third name is the White because I enlighten the world – my heart is as white and sweet as sugar, my skin is fair, and I shall also cleanse people in the light of my religion."[19]

The mockery of colonialist discourse and the consequent exposure of its contradiction continue throughout the text: the claim of British rule as being based on a superior moral political ideology and rule of law heralding a new dawn of moral and material progress, goes against its actual operationalisation and impact. The contradiction is highlighted through satiric exaggeration of the supremacist rhetoric and its juxtaposition against the 'reality' of it. Mutually antagonistic and irreconcilable values reigning under the colonial condition are constantly pitted against a politically subordinate, but presumably 'superior' Hindu moral order.

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[16] *Śrīmān ānˈrebal hazˈrat ḍabal saphaid cūsā alaihussalām paigambar ākhir kun jamāñ.*

[17] See *HM*, 84.

[18] Words in bold font in the quotation are English words, which have been used by the author in Devanagari script.

[19] See *HM,* 84.

In the course of the narration the self of the *Paigambar* transforms itself into the British ruling elite in India. He claims to have been bestowed with the power to civilize the world and speaks in the language of Anglicists and Evangelicals[20] vouching for eradicating the barbaric practice of idol-worship. He pitches non-Hindu forms of sociality – food, drink, behaviour towards women, etc. – as morally permissible and superior to their Hindu counterpart, which must be forbidden and discarded. Continuing in the same vein the prophet claims even to have the liberty to speak and argue the untruth in religious matters because he enjoys the power to do so:

> "[The Almighty says], Listen up! Disband idolatry from society, for I have left the entire world half-civilized, but civilized you thoroughly. Alcohol, which is *harām* [forbidden] for others prophets, is *halāl* [permissible] for you. Indeed, it's the hallmark of your religion and shall flourish on earth even after you yourself have left for heaven. So, although you may not yourself rule forever, your sect will forever remain intact. [… The Almighty says], I have declared cows, pigs, frogs, dogs, etc. as *halāl*, all of which are otherwise *harām*. I allow you to lie about religious matters; and authorise you to honour womenfolk and treat them as equals, indeed, I permit you to allow them to flirt with their male friend [...]. Believe me folks; even God is fearful of me because I have been such a staunch atheist. It was only due to the dread of the Prophetess that I have become a believer. Even so, the Almighty still remains anxious about His own existence, such has been the great power of my arguments. If He himself is afraid of me, imagine how I'll make you quake in your boots!"[21]

However, the colonialist discourse of a civilizing mission is exposed. It is made to look contradictory from the tacit vantage point of a Brahmanic Hindu reader. The prophet of a civilizing mission actively promotes a culture of alcohol consumption and taboo food and thus creates a dietary regime, which is incongruous with that of Hindus. His supposedly superior moral-religious values and civility, which were among the most significant parameters used by the colonialists to assess Hindu civilization,[22] are contradictorily premised on crookedness in matters of religious faith and on sexual licentiousness in the case of gender equality. Above all, the relationship between God and the prophet is shown not to be based on piety and faith, but on opportunist anti-religious rationality: he can discard the existence of God, yet refrains from doing so because his wife is a believer and cannot annoy her. He solicits the faith of his followers by generating fear: "I'll make you quake in your boots." Liberal respect and freedom of women is shown to be grounded in male sexual lust and enslavement by the sexual desire for women.

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[20] To know more about different ideological constellations within British regime and their views on Indian society and history see Bernard Cohn, "Notes on the History of the Study of Indian Society and Culture" in *Structure and Change in Indian Society*, eds. Milton Singer and Bernard Cohn (Delhi: Rawat Publications, 1996), 3-28.

[21] See *HM* 2002, 85.

Continuing in the same vein, the satiric narrator again transforms himself into the form of colonial state and robustly voices its discriminatory policies in contradiction to its claim to be based on the rule of law. He goes on to proclaim racial partiality towards British nationals at the cost of the rhetoric of equality before the law. Moreover, he lauds the colonial state's appeasement of the 'aggressive' Muslims and promises to take care of their educational advancement.

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[22] Two major premises of their criticisms centered on the unscientific practice of polytheism and position of women in Hindu society since the early 19th century. Hindu socio-religious reformers and intellectuals like Rammohan Ray, Dayanand Saraswati and others consequently focused on these two issues through their engagements with the traditionalists within Hindu society as well as with the Anglicists and Evangelicals. See Sumit Sarkar, "Rammohun Roy and the Break with the Past" in *Rammohun Roy and the Process of Modernisation in India*, ed. V. C. Joshi (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1975). Kenneth W Jones, *Arya Dharma: Hindi Consciousness in 19th Century Punjab*, (Berkeley: California University Press, 1976). K. N. Panikkar, *Culture, Ideology, Hegemony: Intellectuals and Social Consciousness in Nineteenth Century India*, (New Delhi: Tulika Publishers, 1995). The popularization of J. S. Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869) from 1870s onwards formed the strong and legitimate idea that women's status in a society is the marker of progress of any civilization. For nineteenth century Indian Intellectuals' primacy to the 'women's question' in the context of colonialist arguments see Tanika Sarkar, "The Feminine Discourse. A Candid Look at the Past and Present" in *Making a Difference*, ed. Rukmini Sekhar (New Delhi: Spic Macay, 1998), 25-41.

Not surprisingly, the Hindus are condemned as the doomed race of cowards who must suffer and get destroyed under his regime:

> "My English friends, you don't need to worry yourselves though! I shall acquit you of every single crime, for **nationality**[23], I believe, is a huge thing. Also, the Prophetess is of the same colour as you, so I have an added incentive to overlook your crimes!
>
> Dear Muslims! I am slightly fearful of you, because I know that killing, for you, is not a big deal. So, for your betterment, I shall not forget to write in my Holy Scripture that all my **successors** should not only respect you, but […] will bewail your educational backwardness and try to dispel it by establishing schools and colleges for you.
>
> But my beloved, cowardly Hindu brethrens, it's you that I look down upon in every conceivable way! This country is burning and shall continue to burn in the fire of God's wrath. And in his wrath, the divine lord has decreed that you shall be called half-civilized, rude, *kāfir*s, idolaters, the doomed, barbarous, and shall thoroughly deserve to be destroyed." [24]

The claim of colonialism as the precursor of a liberal democratic order to enable the gradual realisation of the rule of law in India is obviously made absurd by underlining the superior status accorded to the nationality of the ruling elite, which has a primordial basis rather than being based upon the impersonal rule of law. Play with social stereotypes like 'aggressive' Muslims and 'docile' Hindus is combined and overloaded with arbitrary and discriminatory policies and attitudes of the new order established by the fifth prophet of colonialism. Thus, the new order is made self-evidently arbitrary and partial in its treatment of different communities and especially antithetical to the community of Hindus.

This new sucking order, arguably, entertains only those Hindus who are stripped of their dignity and have been ready to be the stooges of the establishment. More importantly, it is the believers in the faith of the sucking prophet, i.e. the colonised anglophile Indians devoid of a Hindu cultural ethos, arguing for programmes of social and religious reforms while mimicking the social practices of their masters for reasons of appeasement rather than because of their moral conviction and commitment, who merit satirical address:

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[23] The term 'nationality' is used in the text in a very specific sense. It refers primarily to the British in India. It also refers to colonialism as a racially organized white rule.

[24] See *HM*, 85.

> "And hear me, you Hindus! Only those who have sincere faith in me shall be rescued […]. So have faith in me, worship me, take your shoes and turbans off before entering my shrines, and get shaken and stupefied by my Priests who will be the true vehicles of salvation […]. So listen to me, ye believers! Drink alcohol, encourage widow remarriage and female education, abolish child marriage and the caste system, destroy the purity of aristocratic descent, dine out in restaurants, learn the art of **love**,[25] deliver **speeches**,[26] play cricket, reduce marriage expenses, become a member of societies, visit durbars regularly, be clever and sly, speak with an English accent,[27] wear rounded caps or keep your head uncovered but always remember to wear skin-tight dresses, visit dance clubs, **ball rooms**, theatre and privy houses, because these acts will make me and the Almighty happier."[28]

In other words, the new cultural order established by the fifth prophet and practiced as per his dictates by his followers – the self-styled modern liberal reformers who advocated social reform measures like widow remarriage, modern education for Hindu women, the abolition of the system of marriage of girls before the attainment of puberty, and simultaneously indulged in the modern forms of sociality by rejecting caste Hindu norms of purity, sexuality and conjugality –is shown as hypocritical and contradictory. It consists of acts rooted in self-aggrandizement by the culturally enslaved, and is visibly manifested in the sites and forms of their activities within this new cultural regime.

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[25] 'Love' refers specifically to the practice of non-marital physical-sexual intimacy and this word is mentioned in English.

[26] This seems to refer to the new forms of public associational spaces, which emerged as a result of colonialism and the enthusiasm of English educated middle class to participate and talk endlessly without taking any action.

[27] *ham nahīṃ jān'te ko ham nahīṃ jān'tā kaho.*

[28] See *HM*, 85.

At the end of his dictum the prophet prescribes what is *harām* or forbidden, and *halāl* or permissible. All disparate cultural stereotypes, in matters of food, lack of cleanliness, sociality, goods, commodities, technology, sexual morals, etc., identified with the British are clubbed together as permissible and hence to be consumable. They are then juxtaposed with a list of the forbidden, which not only includes Hindu virtues, manners, religious rituals and practices but also universal liberal values like the spirit of critical inquiry, platonic love, and magnanimity:

> "[The faith I preach then is one] where the Lord Almighty himself permits and encourages alcohol, **beef**, **mutton**, **buggy**, conceit, crop, **nationality**, lantern, **coat**, **boot**, stick, pocket-watch, **rail**, cigarette, widow, spinster, others' women, hunting, cigar, rotten fish, rotten cheese, rotten pickle, bad breath, pubic hair, toilet paper, handkerchief, mother's sister, father's sister, maternal aunt, paternal aunt, self-[abuse], [sleeping with] daughter, granddaughter, cousin, daughter-in-law, male and female cook, *hukkā*, abuse, wailing and freedom. But He forbids honesty, truthfulness, justice, *dhotī*, anointing, beads, bathing, brushing teeth, free-spiritedness and liberality, fearlessness, mythology, caste system, child marriage, joint family, idol worship, **orthodoxy**, true love, mutual magnanimity, unity and **prejudice**."[29]

Pā̃cʰveṃ paigambar, thus, imitates a pre-established revelation genre. It is a travestied deformation as a result of an unconventional change in its object of representation, i.e. a 'sucking'and terrifying progenitor of the new colonial order instead of a conventional enlightened and benevolent prophet heralding a new moral order. This travesty of a sacred genre is heightened by further satiric deformation to make the contradiction between the claims and the actual impact self-evident. The narrator's description of his own divinity is deliberately made fake. Self-praise is turned into self-deprecation by the attributes given, as part of a rhetorical strategy that exaggerates the cultural attributes of the new colonial order or manifest forms of colonial modernity in implicit opposition to the putatively superior Hindu order.

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[29] See *HM*, 86. Terms like 'orthodoxy' and 'prejudice' are used in the sense of honest conformity with the established religious practice of Hinduism, not in pejorative sense.

The construction of a binary opposition between colonial modernity and the existing Hindu order, and the satiric rejection of the former, however, is not complete, but strategic and selective. This is especially clear when modernised social behaviour of the urban educated middle class is made the subject of satiric ridicule. It is not so much reform as such that is rejected (child marriage passes without condemnation and widow-remarriage remains unsanctioned), but rather the opportunist reformist slogans of a spineless and servile middle class.[30] Similarly, while easily identifiable modern cultural mores and objects associated with colonial order are made *halāl* in the satire, qualities like rationalist free-spiritedness and liberality, fearlessness, mutual magnanimity, etc. are made antithetical to the new ethics propounded by the cavaliers of colonial modernity. This satiric vision dissociates this class from universally cherished modern values and attributes them to the Hindu society instead. As we shall discuss at length in the next section, the satiric indictment of the objects, institutions, social practices, etc., which are always associated with colonial modernity and usually located in the 'degenerated' urban space,[31] is not linier and uniform. The unfolding of modernity in colonial urban social spaces is accepted not only by the authorial voice but also by the satiric narrator. However, this acceptance is accompanied with an essential qualifier, a caveat that remained rooted in Brahmanic Hindu ideology to counter the threats of modernity reconfiguring asymmetries of social power in colonial society.

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[30] The reason behind such attacks on the reformists taking social reform, a matter of the private domain which was believed to be a realm of national sovereignty, to the public sphere of the colonial state, has been spelt out by Partha Chatterjee. "The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question" in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, eds. *Recasting Women: Essays on Colonial History* (Delhi: Kali for Woman, 1990), 233-253.

[31] The followers of the fifth prophet, i.e. the English educated middle class, and the upholders of this new order, i.e. British rulers and administrators, are shown to be active in newly formed public spaces (clubs, town hall, court room ball room, etc.) located in urban centres. The punch skits, jokes and conundrums, which appeared in the periodicals of the time, also had their locus in the city. Similarly, satires like *Nāpit'stotra*, *Rel'vestotra*, *Yam'lok kī yātrā*, *Kalirāj kī sabhā*, *Sabe jāti gopāl kī*, *Andher nag'rī*, *Ṭhagī kī capeṭ meṃ bagī kī rapeṭ meṃ*, which appeared in the late 19th century and some of which are discussed below, allude to institutions and events located in the colonial city-space.

2

Countering the threats of modernity

One of the most frequently repeated themes of colonial Hindi satire is the articulation of a deep-seated ambivalence of the contemporary Hindi intelligentsia towards the project of colonial modernity, and especially towards its rhetoric of liberalism. Like their counterparts in Bengal or Maharashtra, they appreciated and appropriated the benefits of liberal education, rule of law, etc. for their class, and critiqued the colonial government for discriminatory policies[32]as falling short of its own liberal promise.[33] Simultaneously, they were averse to any subaltern self-assertion powered by the same rhetoric of liberalism. This resistance to low caste assertion, it appears, is comparatively more pronounced and explicit amongst nineteenth century Hindi intelligentsia than their Bengali counterparts.[34] Radhacharan Goswami's satires *Yam'lok kī yātrā* and

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[32] The Ilbert Bill controversy in 1883 was a famous case in this regard. The Bill proposed that Indian judges would have the legal authority to try White or European accused. This Bill was staunchly opposed by the British staying in India and finally was not passed in the British Parliament. The controversy united middle classes of every Indian region against the local British opposition to the Bill.

[33] Dadabhai Naoroji, one of the most respected nationalist leaders in the nineteenth century, wrote a book in 1891 titled *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India*. It gave a systematic liberal nationalist critique of economic condition of British India and argued that the colony's government was not following the principle of British liberalism. British government in India was not adequately British, in other words liberal and benevolent, as it is in Britain or other colonies like Australia.

[34] A skit *Pañc kā prapañc* in *Kavivacan'sudhā* edited by Harishchandra appeared in August 17, 1873. This skit reprimands a scavenger woman who was dreaming of getting liberal education by

Nāpitˈstotra of the 1880s are emblematic of this aversion; and they will be dealt with in this section in some detail.

A Gauriya Brahmin of Vrindavan, Radhacharan Goswami belonged to the so-called *Bhārˈtendu maṇḍal*, the circle of writers inspired by the works and personality of Bharatendu Harishchandra.[35] His *Yamˈlok kī yātrā* (1880) is a strong attack on the Kāyasthas' upward social mobility. It is a telling example of the fact that even this comparatively high-ranking caste group could not skip the wrath of Brahmanic condemnation.[36] *Yamˈlok kī yātrā*, 'A Journey to the kingdom of Yama', is written in the form of a fantasy travelogue narrated by a Vaishnava Brahmin who is mistakenly taken to the city of Yama, the god of death, by the god's henchmen. *Yamˈlok kī yātrā* also bears the subtitle *Naye nāsiket*, which provides an intertextual reference to the *Nāsiketopākhyāna* of the *Kaṭhopaniṣad*.[37] The Hindi *Nāsiketopākhyān*, sometimes also titled as *Candrāvati athˈvānāsiketopākhyān*, was one of the earliest translations from Sanskrit into Khari Boli by Pandit Sadal Mishra of Fort William College in the first decade of nineteenth century. *Nāsiketopākhyān*, like many traditional mythological

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defying Brahmanic proscriptions. See Dalmia, *The Nationalisation of Hindu Tradition*, 254-255. Also see Harishchandra's testimony to the Hunter Commission on education for a strong objection to extension of liberal education to the lower castes. Vir Bharat Talwar mentions this and provides its Hindi translation. Vīr Bhārat Talˈvār, *Rassākˈśī: unnīsˈvīṃ śatābdi kā navajāgaraṇ aur paścimottar prānt* (Delhi: Sārāṃs pablikesan, 2003).

[35] Radhacharan Goswami was the son of Goswami Galloji Maharaj, the head priest of Vrindavan's *Rādhāramaṇ* temple and a Vaishnava *ācārya*. He mastered Sanskrit language and literature at a very early age and learnt Persian and English also. See Rādhācaraṇ Gosvāmī's autobiography *Merā saṅkṣipt jīvan paricay* (1895) Karmendu Śiśir, *Bhārˈtendu maṇḍal ke pramukh racˈnākār rādhācaraṇ gosvāmī kī cunī huī racˈnāyeṃ* (Ilāhābād: Parimal prakāśan, 1990), 17-25.

[36] According to Karmendu Shishir, editor of Goswami's selected works, this piece remains incomplete because its serialization in the weekly *Sārˈsudhānidhi* (Calcutta) was abruptly stopped due to strong protest from the conservative Kayasthas. Śiśir, *Bhārˈtendu maṇḍal*, 32. For a general idea about caste associations claiming higher ritual status with a focus on the Kayastha in the late nineteenth century, see Lucy Carrol, "Colonial Perceptions of Indian Society and the Emergence of Caste(s) Associations", *Journal of Asian* Studies, 37, 2, (1978): 233-250.

[37] *Nāsiketopākhyān* was republished from Kāśī Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā through the intervention of Babu Shyamsundar Das in 1901. Sadal Miśra, *Nāsiketopākhyān* (Kāśī: Nāgˈrī pracāriṇī sabhā, 1901), 1. For a more detailed version of the narrative in translation see Amos Nevo, *The Nāsiketa Story: Nāsiketopākhyāna* (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidās, 2010).

narratives, has stories within stories.[38] Of its two main plots, the second is about the protagonist Nāsiketa and his trip to the city of death god Yama.[39] His father sage Uddālaka, a practitioner of Vedic sacrifices, asks Nāsiketa, a great young practitioner of yoga, to bring some material required for the preparation of the *yajña*. Nāsiketa enters the woods in order to obey his father but goes into deep yoga meditation in between and thereupon comes back only after one hundred years. After being reprimanded by his father for his failure to return on time and the consequent delay in holding the *yajña*, Nāsiketa argues for the spiritual superiority of yogic meditation over sacrifices. Annoyed by the rudeness of his argumentative son, Uddālaka curses him to visit the kingdom of the god of death. The young pious yogī, equipped with the irresistible power of yoga, not only successfully reaches *yam'lok* but also pleases the lord of death with his extraordinary intelligence and spiritual merit. Yama allows him to travel freely in his city. Nāsiketa then meets the minister of Yama, Citragupta, who provides him guides to assist his travel to various parts of the city – garden, river, assembly, heaven, hell, etc. After the completion of his trip Nāsiketa comes back to earth. Surrounded by sages and monks of all hues, he reveals his knowledge about the city of death where all creatures are subjected to a final judgement in accordance with their deeds and achievements on earth. Nāsiketa elaborates in grotesque detail the punishment meted out to those who violate the Brahmanic moral-social order and summarises the pleasure enjoyed by those who righteously uphold the order.[40]

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[38] For a crisp overview of Puranic narrative and its structure see Velcheru N. Rao, "Purana" in *The Hindu World*, ed. Sushil Mittal and Gene Thursby (London: Routledge, 2004), 97- 115.

[39] The first story is about the merits of non-celibate spiritual life. It emphasizes the significance of conjugal life for reproduction: Nāsiketa is born without sexual intercourse from the nose of a beautiful and pious princess Candrāvatī, who conceived as a result of inhaling a lotus carrying sperm of a celibate sage Uddālaka.

[40] The summary presented above is based on Sadal Mishra's book. It does not differ substantially from the upaniṣadic account.

Yamˈlok kī yātrā, as we shall see in the following detailed synopsis, imitates and debases the *Nāsiketopākhyāna*. Its complex narrative displays several levels of referentiality. It begins with the description of the narrator, a proxy-Nāsiketa who is suffering from an extreme attack of pneumonia whose symptoms he compares with the semi-divine acts of ancient sages: “I was so thirsty that I would have drunk the entire ocean in one gulp.” [41] The accounts of his hallucinatory experiences that follow are allegorical descriptions of colonial urban institutional spaces as well as oblique comments on contemporary society and politics.

In the unconscious state he finds himself surrounded by the henchmen of the death god, who alternately look like Muslims, demons and the colonial police. He soon realises that he has been arrested by them and is being taken to the city of the death god. Then abruptly the narrator switches to a colonial time frame and laments:

> “Oh! I am dying so early! Only twenty-five years did I live in the nineteenth century! Neither did I see the spread of Nāgarī and the Hindi language in Hindustan! Nor widow-remarriage! Nor Indians as civil servants! Neither could I see the end of the Press Act, nor the restrictions on sea-voyage! Nor could I know the result of the Afghan War!”[42]

He wants to turn back but is hit with a whip and then kicked by the constable with such force that he reaches the *Vaitaranī* river, a mythic chronotope that serves as passage to *Yamˈlok*. There he confronts an Indian colonial office that apparently allots vehicles to cross the river. When asked whether he has ever donated a cow to a Brahmin, he retorts in the rational language of the urban middle class: If one can cross the river by holding the tail of a cow, he asks, can’t he go for a bullock, or for that matter, a dog? He recalls having donated a dog to the wife of a British Magistrate and hence gets the dog to cross over the river.[43]

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[41] See Śiśir, *Bhārˈtendu maṇḍal*, 26.

[42] Śiśir, *Bhārˈtendu maṇḍal*, 27.

[43] Śiśir, *Bhārˈtendu maṇḍal*, 28.

He reaches *Yamˈlok* and finds its streets as dirty as Benaras and its buildings as magnificent as those of Delhi and American cities. His description alludes to the towns of colonial India. On feeling hunger, the narrator tries to forcibly take food from the shop in like manner to the famine stricken hungry crowd. After strolling through the town, he visits the big gardens outside the city that resemble urban spaces: Calcutta's Eden Garden, Delhi's Company Bagh, Lahore's Shalimar Bagh, in which commoners are discriminated and the gardeners are unashamedly commercial. When he comes to a pond resembling the ghats of Banaras, he breaks his chains, takes a dip into the water and assumes the form of a devout Vaishnava.[44] He, then, enters into the court of the death-god. The interior of the court where ex-officio head Citragupta sits, like the high court, is peopled with hundreds of peons, clerks and *vyavasthā* pundits.[45] The office rooms are furnished with electric light, fan and telephone. The police narrator charges the narrator of being an imposter in the guise of a Vaishnava and the *vyavasthā*-giver sentences him to hell. Consequently, he makes a hue and cry and defends his Vaishnava identity in a changed context of colonial modernity. He pleads:

> "Birth after birth I have been a Vaishnava […]. I did everything without an iota of pride […]. Yes, I acquired some English manners, customs and education, but I did this only for the sake of the country's betterment. So, I undoubtedly deserve to be in heaven."[46]

Impressed by his defence, the judge forwards his case to the office of Citragupta. While waiting, the narrator observes the ongoing proceedings of the court, applauds the speedy trial and prosecution of the sinners even when they are socially privileged, and caustically comments upon the slow and inefficient court on earth. In the end Citragupta acquits him, for he has been brought here mistakenly. He thanks Citragupta for upholding justice and speaks with the cultural authority of a Brahmin:

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[44] Śiśir, *Bhārˈtendu maṇḍal*, 28-29.

[45] Brahmins dealing with Hindu jurisprudence.

[46] Śiśir, *Bhārˈtendu maṇḍal*, 29.

> "May the almighty bestow peace upon you; may the Kāyasthas, who are from your lineage and are important bureaucrats in India, be prosperous. As they became Kṣatriyas from the position of Śūdras, may they soon be Brahmins and may your temples and idols be established and worshipped everywhere."[47]

Citragupta smiles wryly and denies any connection with the Kāyasthas in the language of legal rationality: "When did I visit the earth to produce children and when did I become a Śūdra? See, what are the evidences?"[48] He, then, quips:

> "Had the Kāyasthas been of my lineage, all employees in the offices here would have been Kayasthas. Because Kāyasthas, like crows, always flock together! On the contrary, I punish them more severely. As far as becoming Kṣatriya is concerned, will this ever help in fetching a place in heaven? And idolization and worship is against sacred law, I am not going to be happy about this."[49]

After listening to Citragupta's sermons, he expresses the desire to visit the assembly of the death-god and hell so that he could publish the entire report in the newspapers in India.[50]

Yamˡlok kī yātrā, thus, plays upon the literary form of the *Nāsiketopākhyāna* and achieves satiric grotesqueness through the descriptive excess of fantasy. Intertextual referents to the Upaniṣadic narrative let the first person satiric narrator attain a semi-divine status. Like the proverbial divine sage, the satiric narrator's extreme suffering is followed by the acquisition of the power – a power to visualize and judge (in the latter case) the mundane colonial urban culture from an outsider's distance. The narrator thus covertly manages to blur the distinction between historical and mythic times and spaces. The historical reality of contemporary society is transposed into the fantastic world of mythical hell in the beginning and then they are clearly juxtaposed to each other. This equips him to criticize obliquely the events, institutions and socio-political processes unfolding in the colonial urban space. The blurring of distinction implicitly enables him to articulate his political self, a cunning member of the Hindi middle class.

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[47] Śiśir, *Bhārˡtendu maṇḍal*, 32.

[48] Śiśir, *Bhārˡtendu maṇḍal*, 32.

[49] Śiśir, *Bhārˡtendu maṇḍal*, 32

[50] The last section of the text was not published in the periodical but came out in the form of a booklet, which, according to Sudhir Chandra, described the sinners of colonial India burning in the fire of hell including the 1857 rebels. This part is not available in the edition used and I have not been able to find that booklet so far. Sudhir Chandra, *The Oppressive Present: Literature and Social Consciousness in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), 37.

In brief, the narrative may be interpreted as follows: A section of educated upper caste male Hindus, who claim to be rooted in Hindu moral-religious world, negotiate with new cultural mores and adapt to the new languages of political argumentation for a larger 'national' cause, but are frustrated at their own subjection and threatened by the potential erosion of Indian/Hindu civilization. One of the cornerstones of Hindu civilization, of which the narrator claims to be a representative, is understood to be the hierarchical caste system for maintaining internal social equilibrium and preventing disintegration.[51] Hence, acts of symbolic transgression by materially powerful social groups like the Kāyasthas, which were facilitated by the institutions of the colonial state, are shown as threatening outcomes of colonial modernity and made the target of satiric indictment. In the case of materially deprived social groups seeking to defy caste order, the attack becomes even more blatant and crude, as we shall see in the following section.[52]

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[51] For instance, see the views of nineteenth century "Indian social theorists" like Bhudev Mukhopadhyay on Hindu society. Sudipta Kaviraj, "The Reversal of Orientalism: Bhudev Mukhopadhyay and the Project of Indigenist Social Theory" in *Representing Hinduism*, eds. Vasudha Dalmia and Heinrich von Stietencron (New Delhi: Sage Publishers, 1995), 253- 281.

[52] In this regard also see "Pañc kā nyāy" in *Hindī pradīp*, June-July 1899 and *"Pañc kā prapañc*," *Hindī pradīp*, July-August 1903.

3

Silencing the recalcitrance of the modern

Nāpitˈstotra, or the ‘Barber’s hymn’, deals with Radhacharan Goswami’s take on the rise of the social power and ‘liberty’ of the *Nāpit* or barber caste which, according to the text, is reflected in their ‘cunning’ and assertive activities, particularly in the cities of colonial India.[53] According to Radhacharan,

> “Although *Nāpitˈstotra* is primarily humorous, it will be fruitful. First, the power and independence of barbers, which has been on the rise in our *Ārya* nation, should decline; second, educated barbers should improve their character; third, amongst our [Aryan] fraternity they should be despised; fourth, humour should increase interest in reading of Hindi books and hence shall be a service to the nation”.[54]

The recalcitrant community of barbers, he writes, who, instead of serving their caste superiors and performing their traditionally assigned duties in the Aryan nation of *homo hierarchicus* have started subverting them, should be taken to task. The educated few of their community should reform themselves and help their community in mending their ways according to the caste Hindu order.

This piece of satire is a travesty of the traditional panegyric hymn called the *stotra*.[55] As Sudipta Kaviraj has rightly pointed out, to be a *stotra*, a composition must conform to some purely formal properties of style.

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[53] *Kṣatriya patrikā*, July 1881. *Nāpitˈstotra* was also published by the owners of *Kṣatriya patrikā* in the form of a tract from their Khaḍgavilās Press, Bankipore (Patna) in 1882. The image of cunning and multifaceted barber (as they not only cut hair but also had important medical expertise of local surgeon, who is indispensible for the rich and the poor alike) as the subject of satire has precedents in the history of South Asian literary and oral narrative. For example, a seventeenth century Kashmiri poet Mullā Tāhir Ghanī Kashmīrī (d. 1668-69) wrote “A masnavi satirizing barber” (Masnavī-i avval dar hajv-i hajjām), which extolls a certain barber for his simultaneously erotic, political, and medical powers. See, Prashant Keshavmurthy’s note and translation of the masnavi in the web magazine, *The Brookline Rail*,November 2014 <http://intranslation.brooklynrail.org/archive/kashmir>

[54] Citations are from Śiśir, *Bhārˈtendu maṇḍal*,36.

[55] For the similar case of *Iṃrājˈstotra* written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee see Sudipta Kaviraj, “Laughter and Subjectivity”, *Modern Asian Studies*, 34, 2 (2000): 389-92 Bharatendu Harishchandra also wrote its Hindi version *Aṅgrejˈstotra* in the 1870s.

Incomparability of the deity to whom the *stotra* is offered is conveyed by the mannerisms of descriptive excess. *Stotra*s also exhibit a usually circular, repetitive movement, coming back, after each cycle of excessive praise, to the signature phrase describing the essential attributes of the object of worship.[56] In the course of incantation each and every attribute is conveyed and, consequently, the object is familiarised. Radhacharan's travesty of the *stotra* betrays intimate knowledge of its formal requirements even as he deliberately debases its form.

> "O Barber, the cooler of our hot head! I salute you. If you are unavailable, we are in great distress; we become he-goats with long beards, and the hair transforms into dreadlocks and we become indistinguishable from ghosts. Those who do not believe should look at the history of 1877 when barbers had a quarrel with the ironsmiths of Banaras. Therefore, O Gardener of Lord Brahmas's hair-garden, you are great!
> O Sir Barber! Government servants and the princes invariably worship you on Sundays and Wednesdays. Therefore, O midweekly enlightening periodical of Sun [day] and Mars [Wednesday] you are great! […]
> You have beheaded [tonsured] innumerable girl children; you have forced innumerable daughters of the rich into the drudgery of impoverished family; you have thrusted so many youthful spinsters on the head of young boys; [you] have made so many girls the wood of old men's funeral pyres; destroyed so many people with your cunningness and treachery. Therefore, O Father of the law court's Urdu documents! O Elder Brother of Mahmud of Ghazni, Aurangzeb, Nadir Shah and other destroyers of India! You are great […]
> You are the one who decided in unison to charge not less than one anna for shaving. Poor Brahmins were compelled to shave each other. Therefore, O Outcaste(r)! O Minister of the *kali* age! You are great! [...]
> Like other castes trying to claim higher caste status, you have claimed yourself to be a *Nyāyī* or a *Kṣatriya* who does justice. Therefore, O progressive of the nineteenth century, O reformer! You are great!"[57]

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[56] Kaviraj, "Laughter and Subjectivity", 389-92; for a more detailed study see Gudrun Bühnemann, "Some Remarks on the Structure and Application of Hindu Sanskrit Stotra" *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens*,28 (1984): 73-104; Jan Gonda, *Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit AHistory of Indian Literature* Vol. 2, Fasc. 1 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1977), 232-270.
[57] Śiśir, *Bhār'tendu maṇḍal*, 36-39.

Thus, Radhacharan debases the literary form by replacing the sacred with the profane and substituting for the deity a low caste group who is said to be defying the Hindu moral-social order. Within the formal structure of the *stotra*, essential social attributes and functions of a barber in the Hindu social order are negatively described as his subversive acts. This enables *Nāpitˡstotra* to perform a two-fold task. On the one hand, the barber's importance in the erstwhile jajmani system[58] is conveyed and underlined. On the other, the representation of his subversive acts as his praised qualities produces an obvious incongruity to a reader who implicitly shares the Brahmanic ideological premises of the satirist and turns the panegyric hymn into a grotesque condemnation. Thus, the barber, traditionally a Śūdra, is condemned for breaking the Hindu social order. The symptoms of its breakdown are overloaded by satirical exaggeration as the sole result of his (mis-)deeds; his acts are allegedly as evil and gruesome as those of Muslim plunderers. Moreover, his subversive acts are facilitated and precipitated under conditions of colonial modernity. Not surprisingly then, the site of his subversive activities is the city space. They take place in the dystopian times (*kali* age) of colonialism, and are assisted by the modern state as well as public institutions manifested in the politics of social and caste reform movements among the lower castes.[59]

The satiric condemnation of a recalcitrant social group defying the normative order of the caste system, addresses the 'undesired' effects of social-intellectual churning which has been occasioned by colonial modernity and threatened the social privilege and norms of respectability of male upper caste Hindus. Liberal education and rule of law, which conceptualised every individual as theoretically equal, are envisaged as threats to customary privilege and social supremacy of the upper caste Hindu middle class by putting them on equal footing with the lower classes. This aspect of colonial modernity came under the severest attack in satirical works such as the one discussed here. Satire, thus, was used to silence and dispel the subversive threats coming from the lower order.

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[58] See the section on the *jajˡmānī* system in Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1980), 57-106.

[59] For example, the reform movements led by the Kāyastha association, the Gopˡjātīya Mahāsabhā, etc. Proliferation in the act of claiming higher social status by lower castes also came from the impetus provided by the intense ideological propagation and activities of the Ārya Samājīs.

4

Mocking the absurdity of equality

The most programmatic attribution of colonial space witnessing the free play of modernity is to be found in Harishchandra's satirical play *Andher nagˡrī* ('Dark city', 1881)[60]. The title alludes to a city or a city-state of blind excess and injustice. The play is based on one of the very popular pre-modern folk-tales of the region that had also found their way into the print world as part of a commercially successful genre of entertainment literature in the nineteenth century.[61] For example, one of the leading publishing houses of north India, Naval Kishore Press of Lucknow[62], brought out a cheap edition of one hundred copies of *Manohar kahānī* in 1880, 'which contain[ed] a total of hundred didactic and highly entertaining tales'[63] in the Nāgˡrī script.[64]

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[60] I have used its 2009 reprint. Bhārˡtendu Hariścandra, *Andher nagˡrī* (Naī Dillī: Rājˡkamal prakāśan, 2009).

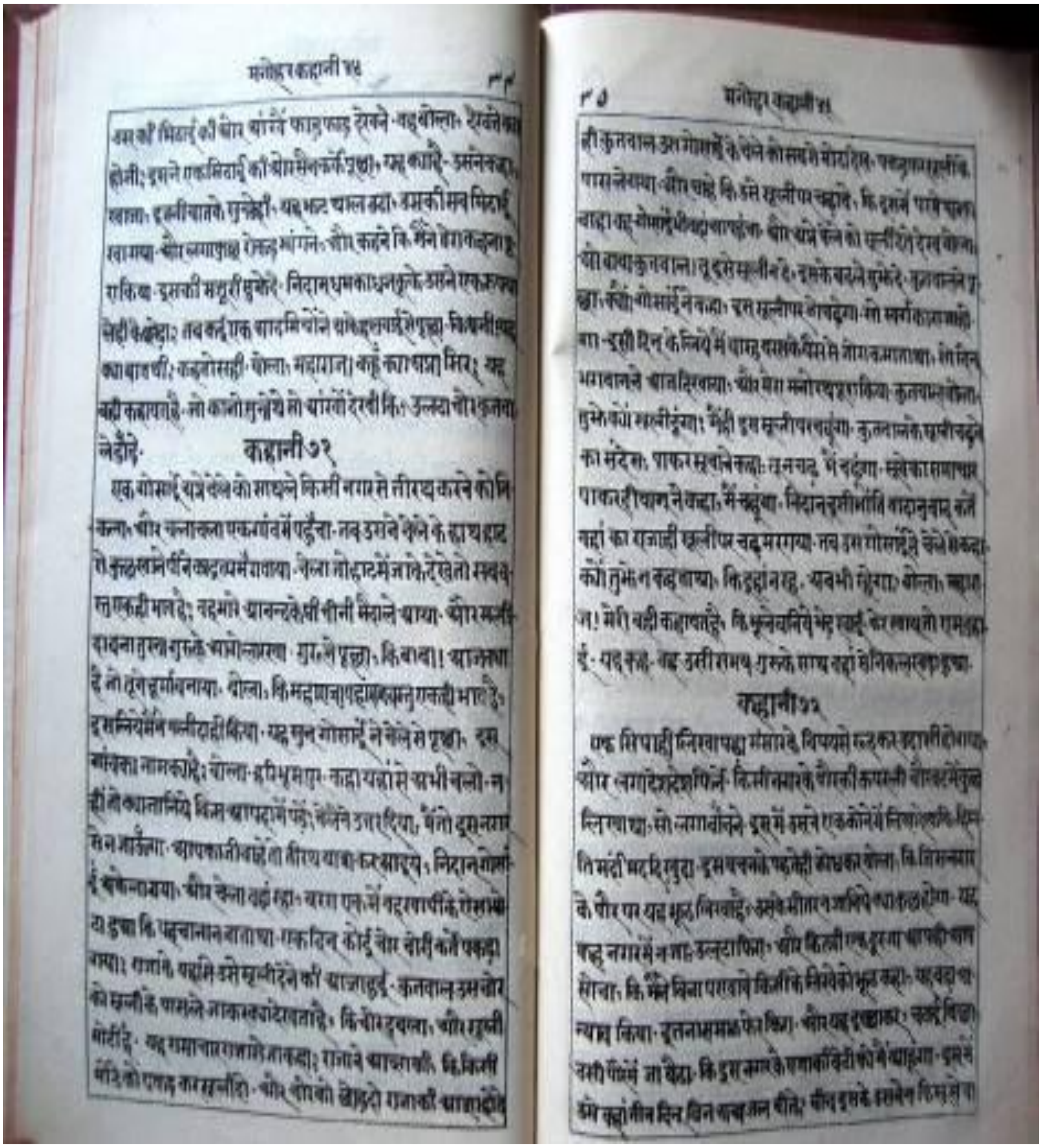
[61] Francesca Orsini, *Print and Pleasure: Popular Literature and Entertaining Fictions in Colonial North India* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2009).

[62] For an exhaustive study of Naval Kishore Press in the nineteenth century see Ulrike Stark, *An Empire of Books: Naval Kishore Press and the Diffusion of the Printed World in Colonial India* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2008).

[63] The cover page describes the book as follows in Hindi: *Manohar kahānī jisˡmeṃsab ek sau alāhidah alāhidah nihāyat dilˡcasp kisah darj haiṃ.*

[64] However, the title of the book is written in both Nāgˡrī and Nastāliq scripts.

Figure 1: *Manohar kahānī*



Tale 71 of *Manohar kahānī* (see Fig. 1) which, like the other tales, bears no title, is given below in translation:

> "A *Gosā̃ī* [saint] along with his disciple went on pilgrimage from some city, and after a long walk reached a village. Then he asked his disciple to bring some food-grain. When the disciple found that all goods were of equal price, he brought ghee, sugar and *maidā* [finely processed flour] home

> ecstatically, and cooked *malīdā* [bread fried in ghee and soaked in sugar] and offered it to his Guru. The Guru asked, 'Hey! What is up today that you have cooked this?' 'Here every commodity is of equal value', he replied. 'So I made *malīdā*.' Listening to this the *Gosā̃ī* asked, 'What is the name of the village?' He replied, 'Haribhūmˡpur [City of the land of Hari or of the monkey respectively].' The Guru said, 'Leave now. Who knows which disaster is impending?' The disciple replied, 'I am not going to leave this village, if you wish you can go on pilgrimage.' Consequently, the *Gosā̃ī* left alone and the disciple stayed there. Within a year he became so fat of eating that he was unrecognisable. Once some thief was caught stealing; he was ordered by the king to be hanged. What the *Kutˡvāl* [sentinel] found[65] after putting the thief on the gallows is that the thief was thin and the rope was thick. The king ordered, 'Hang a fat man and free the thief.' On the king's order the *Kutˡvāl* took that fat disciple of the *Gosā̃ī* to the gallows. God willing, before he could hang [the disciple] the *Gosā̃ī* suddenly appeared. Finding his disciple being hanged he spoke, 'Hey *Kutˡvāl*! Do not hang him, hang me instead.' The *Kutˡvāl* asked, 'Why?' The *Gosā̃ī* said, 'Whosoever will be hanged now will become the king of heaven. The day for which I was earning spiritual merits has arrived now and my quest is over.' The *Kutˡvāl* said, 'Why shall I hang you? I myself will be on the gallows.' Getting the news of the *Kutˡvāl* being ready to hang himself, the *Subā* [head of the province] said [to the *Kutˡvāl*], 'Not you, I shall.' Receiving the news of the *Subā*'s [decision], the *Dīvān* [prime minister] spoke [that] he would [volunteer to be hung]. Finally, after such kind of discussion the king decided to hang himself. Then the *Gosā̃ī* said to his disciple, 'Didn't I tell you not to stay here? [Do you] want to stay even now?' [The disciple] replied, 'By mistake a Hindu merchant ate mutton, god forbid if he eats again'.[66] He left soon after uttering this [verse]."[67]

The moral of this widely known and circulated humorous folktale is that judging every individual or commodity with the same yardstick without taking into cognizance its individual merit is catastrophic. *Andher nagˡrī*, to be written and published a year later in 1881 by Harishchandra, subjected the internal structure of this tale to a creative alteration and by "overwriting" it developed the story into a farcical play.[68]

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[65] *kyā dekhˡtā hai* ('What does he see/find?'): the tense of narration changes into the present in this sentence to convey immediacy.

[66] Proverb: *bhūle baniyā bheṃṛ khāī, pher khāe to rāmˡduhāī*.

[67] *Manohar kahānī* (Lucknow: Naval Kishore Press, 1880), 34-35.

In the opening scene of *Andher nagˡrī*, a Hindu monk and his two disciples, Narayan Dās and Gobardhan Dās, are walking and singing a sacred hymn and they stop at the outer frontier of a nearby city. The guru and his disciples discuss that the city leaves the impression of being elegant and opulent from outside. While the disciples optimistically enter the city, the guru stays back, preaching refrain from avarice.[69]

The second scene is spatially situated in the marketplace inside the city. The vendors advertise their commodities in rhythmic verse. Apart from appreciating the benefits of consuming available commodities, each verse includes acerbic comments on the contemporary state of socio-political affairs under the colonial dispensation and its collaborators. Gobardhan Dās, the wandering mendicant, observes to his pleasant surprise that the vendors and shopkeepers are selling almost everything, from *kabāb*, *pācak* (digestive powder), orange, dry fruits, vegetable and grocery to caste (!) and sweets, for one *ṭākā* a *ser*. Ghasirām, the vendor of *canā* (roasted gram), advertises:

> "Rosted gram made by Ghasirām, who carries his store in his handbag […]. Very high officials eat roasted gram, and impose double taxes on us all […]."[70]

A *pācakˡvālā* sings:

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[68] Bakhtin argues on similar lines in the context of usage of a pre-established poetic genre like the sonnet within the new genre of novel and contends that when a formal genre has itself been made an object of representation its literary value is completely transformed and fulfils a different purpose. M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, tr. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988), 43-51.

[69] Hariścandra, *Andher nagˡrī*, 39-40.

[70] Hariścandra, *Andher nagˡrī*, 41-42.

> “This is known as *cūraṇ* [powder] of Hind and it is for *vilāyat*’s [England’s] fulfilment […]. Civil servants who eat *cūraṇ* digest double amount of bribe […]. Money lenders who eat *cūraṇ* consume all previous deposits […]. Editors who eat *cūraṇ* cannot absorb any secret. Sahibs who eat *cūraṇ* can digest all of Hind. Policemen who eat *cūraṇ* can digest all legislations [...]. Buy a heap of *cūraṇ* for one *ṭākā* a *ser*.”[71]

A Brahmin selling caste shouts:

> “Take away caste, one *ṭākā* a *ser* of caste. For money’s sake I become a washerman and make the washerman a Brahmin, for money I give you the desired *vyavasthā*. For money become a Muslim, for money turn from Hindu to Christian. For money [I] make a low caste [my] grandfather; *Veda*, *dharma*, family prestige, everything one *ṭākā* a *ser*!”[72]

Finally, Gobardhan Dās decides to buy seven *ser*s of sweets and goes back to meet his preceptor, appreciating and chanting the name of the city and its ruler: “In a city of blind excess, the ruler is a buffoon. Be it vegetable or sweets, all are equal."[73]

The third scene is located outside the city in the forest where the guru, chanting Lord Rama’s name, meets Gobardhan Dās who is singing the praise of Andher Nagˡrī. Gobardhan Dās opens the pack of sweets and happily narrates the tale of the city where everything is of equal value. The guru refrains from eating and plans to leave immediately a city which does not have a system of discrimination based on merit.

> “Where camphor and cotton are equal for each of them is white […], where cuckoo and crow are equal [and] pundit and fool are equivalent […], even if it rains gold there, one should avoid being a resident.”[74]

However, Gobardhan Dās stays back appreciating the easy life of the city while the other two mendicants leave.

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[71] Hariścandra, *Andher nagˡrī*, 44-45.
[72] Hariścandra, *Andher nagˡrī*, 45-46.
[73] Hariścandra, *Andher nagˡrī*, 48.
[74] Hariścandra, *Andher nagˡrī*, 50.

The fourth scene is set in the court of the ruler. Instead of dispensing justice, the king and his sycophants, ministers and other officials are insanely drunk. A complainant enters seeking justice for his she-goat which died under the rubbles of a fallen wall. The judge first asks to arrest the wall; on the advice of his assistants he issues orders to bring the owner of the wall to the court. The owner of the wall puts the blame on the mason, the mason on the limestone maker, the limestone maker on the waterman. This latter accuses the leather worker for making an oversized water-pot; the leather worker blames the shepherd for selling an oversized sheep, and the shepherd in his turn accuses the *kotˈvāl*'s inspection tour in the city which made him so nervous that he sold a big instead of a small sheep. The king accordingly orders to hang the *kotˈvāl.*

The fifth scene is situated in the symbolic space of the forest/countryside, outside the city where Gobardhan Dās is singing:

> "In a city of blind excess, the ruler is stupid. Vegetable or sweets, [...], high and low, [...], pimp or pundit, all are equal. Nobody asks about caste or sect, chanting god's name makes equal all and sundry. The wife is equivalent to the prostitute; the she-goat is at par with the cow [...]. Right or wrong is hardly distinct; the king's deed is an act of law. Dark from within and clean from without, stooges and pawns [*pyāde*] rule the town. Chaos is spread all around, as if the ruler stayed in a foreign land. No respect for the cow, *dvijā*s [twice-born caste Hindus] and the scriptures, as if the ruler were an infidel. High and low all are equal, as if there were enlightenment all around."[75]

Gobardhan Dās enjoys tasty sweets and appreciates the kingdom. But suddenly he realizes that the royal guards have come to arrest him to be hanged. On his plea of innocence, they clarify that as a matter of fact the *kotˈvāl* [sentinel] was sentenced to be hanged, but his neck was too thin to be hanged as the rope was oversized. The king, then, ordered to hang someone fat; for in the interest of justice, someone must be punished and it is safe to hang an innocent mendicant. Gobardhan Dās cries and invokes his guru to rescue him.

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[75] Hariścandra, *Andher nagˈrī*, 58-59.

The last scene of the play is located at the gallows on the cremation ground. Gobardhan Dās relentlessly cries for justice but to no avail. He chants his guru's name. Suddenly, his guru appears and expresses his wish to be executed himself for, as it were, whosoever dies at that time will go to heaven directly. This declaration results in chaos and everybody wants to die for a place in heaven. But, finally, the king exercises his privilege to be the first to go to heaven and is executed. The play ends with a couplet recited by the monk:

> "Where there is no morality, wisdom and ethics, nor a society of nobles, the people will destroy themselves like this stupid king."[76]

As this synopsis of *Andher nagˈrī* reveals, the monks are ideal reflectors for the narrative to be told since they are located outside the city – and, by extension, outside colonial modernity – but due to their regular contact nevertheless are well-acquainted with it. It is through their perspective that the second scene is narrativised, and here we enter a world of colonial police, revenue officials, moneylenders, magistrates, and Brahmins in the service of the British law court. While all come under the oblique attack of satire, the Brahmin, the traditional custodian of Hindu (Indian) moral-legal system, is attacked most grotesquely. The marketplace in the 'Dark City' is shown to be a place of absolute equality where everything is of equal value. What we see in the advertisements at the marketplace is that the distinction between exchangeable (like food item) and non-exchangeable (socio-religious rank or status) is made fluid. The usual quality of each edible commodity is exaggerated and deformed by the attribution of political-cultural virtue or vice to it. Alternatively, social-religious markers of status are attributed with qualities of exchangeable goods. The ascription of singular price value – one *ṭākā* a *ser* – to both the edible and the social goods, deforms and mocks at the idea of equality itself and renders indiscriminate social and political equality as absurd in the theatre of the marketplace. Hence, foregrounding caste or community identity as exchangeable and at par with obviously incongruous things like edibles makes any such act promoting the liquidation of a rigid social structure look ridiculous and illegitimate. The act of the Brahmin – selling *vyavastā*s like grocery and legitimizing the process of upward social mobility – is presented as the most grotesque effect of equality. By the end of the first scene absurdity of the idea of equality, oblivious of the hierarchy of merit, is established, at least in the projected realm of commodities.

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[76] Hariścandra, *Andher nagˈrī*, 64.

The third scene, symbolically situated in an 'authentic' space untainted by colonial modernity, makes the guiding political overtone of the play more pronounced. The allegorical parity in values of commodities is translated into the social realm through the *caupāī*. It is axiomatically asserted that the place where ideology of equality prevails over the system of discrimination based on obvious social quality or merit is essentially dangerous and non-inhabitable. In other words, the colonial urban space governed by the impersonal liberal ideology of the 'rule of law' assigning equal status to everyone is unacceptably dangerous. But this can hardly be defended without being blatantly crude. Here the literary strategy of satire comes to the rescue in pushing the Brahmanical ideology of hierarchy. It cannot defend itself through positive argumentation against the liberal idea of equality, but it can attack its opponent through a series of negative argumentations. So the satire dissociates the principles of liberal equality from their rhetoric of ratiocination.

While the 'absurd' value of equality is already made unreasonable in the realm of the commodities, in the realm of justice it is put to test. The fourth and the fifth scenes make this clearer. The song in the fifth scene further alludes to the colonial legal political system based on such an 'absurd' ideology of equality.[77] The theatre of the marketplace is governed by the 'absurd' value of equality too and is shown to be in a continuum with the theatre of the courtroom in the fourth scene. The grotesque error of judgment in the courtroom relies on the satiric exaggeration of court proceedings, pushing it to ridiculous extremes. Crucial to this, again, is the caricatured deployment of the same 'absurd' value of equality. It does not distinguish between a human being and the wall, makes unreasonable causal relations between the crime and the potential accused and the actually sentenced. After all, everything is equal; be it a goat, a wall, a *kotˈvāl* or a mendicant. The final scene is the logical culmination of this descriptive excess imposed on the city-state governed by the 'absurd' value of equality. It is shown that this 'absurd' value of equality is chaotic, disorderly and emblematic of the blind excesses and injustices, and thus bound to meet its logical end in a solemn chaos. The salvager is, of course, the chief mendicant, who is unpolluted by colonial modernity and the champion of traditional hierarchical values of *adhikāra-bhed*, the differentiation of rights according to *varṇa* and *āśrama*, as the bases of social harmony.

Again, though, this satire against the liberal idea of equality which seeks to replace the value of traditional social privilege and norms of respectability should not lead us to conclude that all forms and aspects of modernity were despised by its author or his audience. Perceptions of a more concrete and widely acknowledged symbol of modernity, the railways, will make this amply clear in the following section.

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[77] Collaborators of the ruling order, too, are shown to be precariously positioned in the system, and manipulating it for personal benefits.

5

Satirising technology

Written as a 'mock' stotra in twenty-nine stanzas, Radhacharan Goswami's *Relˈvestotra* is about the railways' impact on the political economy and culture.[78] The technology of railways was one of the most prominent symbols of modernity all over the world and consequently had generated a variety of responses. Satirical attack on railways is a common theme in the periodicals of the nineteenth century both in England (especially in its early years between 1830 and 1870) and in north India, but because of divergent historical and cultural experience the same technology generated different responses.[79]

As historians of the English satirical press have pointed out, literary responses to railway technology in England were linked to anxieties of an expanding middle class public who were not only potential travellers but also aspiring investors in the private joint stock companies in the 1840s and after.[80] Initial responses in 1830s were a mixture of awe and terror. For example, reflecting on the contemporary picture gallery flooded with the images of railways technology, William Makepeace Thackeray summed up the reaction as follows: "There comes a train down upon you, really moving at the rate of fifty miles an hour, and which the reader had best make haste to see, lest it should dash out of the picture, and be away up Charing Cross through the wall opposite."[81] The novelty of railway travel also bred a degree of antipathy and suspicion, and commentators were often sceptical. The ambitions of the proponents of steam travel were easily satirized, and cartoons of the 1820s and 1830s focused on the apparent absurdity of the 'progress of steam' and the 'march of intellect'. Within a decade this innocent initial reaction gave way to caustic and biting attack. The 'railway mania', which preoccupied almost every middle class man who could aspire to be rich by investing in joint stock companies, was one of the main subjects of English satirical press of the time. For example, see Figure 2 Railway Juggernaut of 1845 below.

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[78] It was first published in *Bhārˈtendu*, August 18, 1883.

[79] A few of these periodicals were also circulated in India and were well known in the burgeoning Hindi literary sphere. For instance, the contents of British *Punch* were not only reprinted in Indian periodicals but the Indian litterateur enthusiastically received its format in the nineteenth century. See Hans Harder and Barbara Mittler ed. *Asian Punches: A Transcultural Affair* (Heidelberg and Berlin: Springer, 2013)

[80] Richard D. Altick *Punch: The Lively Youth of a British Institution, 1831-51* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1997).

[81] This is cited from James Taylor, "Business in Pictures: Representation of Railways Enterprise in the Satirical Press in Britain 1845-1870", *Past and Present*, 189 (2005): 112.

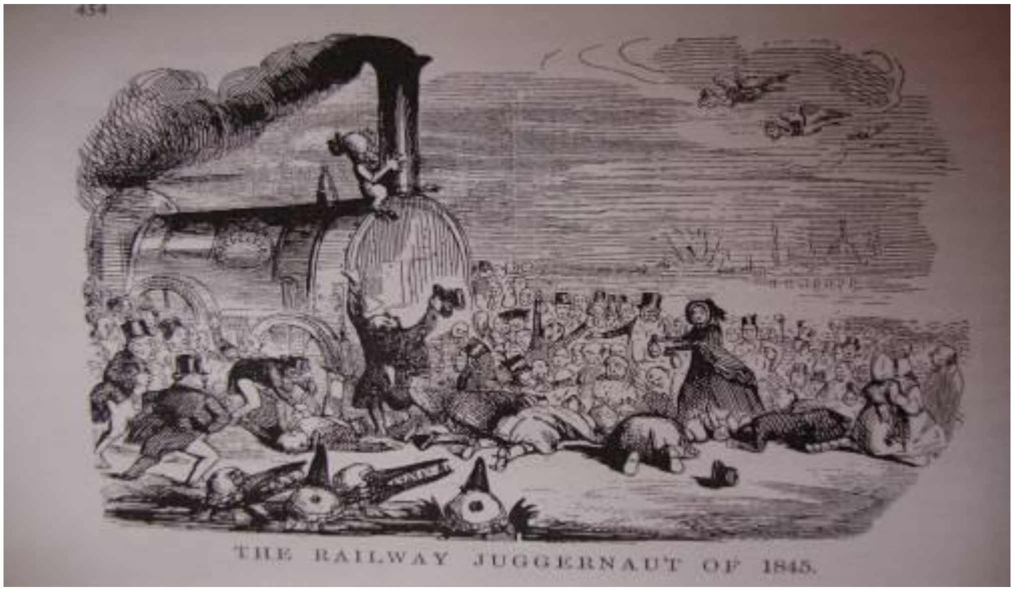

Figure 2: *The Railway Jaggernaut*

The cartoon was published in the British satirical weekly *Punch* in 1845. It depicted a dramatic scene in which the locomotive *Speculation*, an imp clinging to its smoke stack, ploughed into a crowd of ordinary women, children and men, some of the latter prostrate on the ground as if praying to the Almighty. The design was completed by several vultures with human faces flying overhead and alligators waiting with open jaws. It attacked middle class greed and loss in speculative business, the corruption and lack of accountability of mushrooming joint stock companies (often owned by men of low social origin) and its management for neglecting the comfort and security of the passengers for the sake of profit.[82] Cartoons of this period stressed the dynamic and destructive power of the engines as a means of conveying the devastation wrought by speculation in railway shares. The railway was depicted as a monster, a serpent, or a demon, ruining the lives of investors. See Figure 3 “The Great Land Serpent” below.

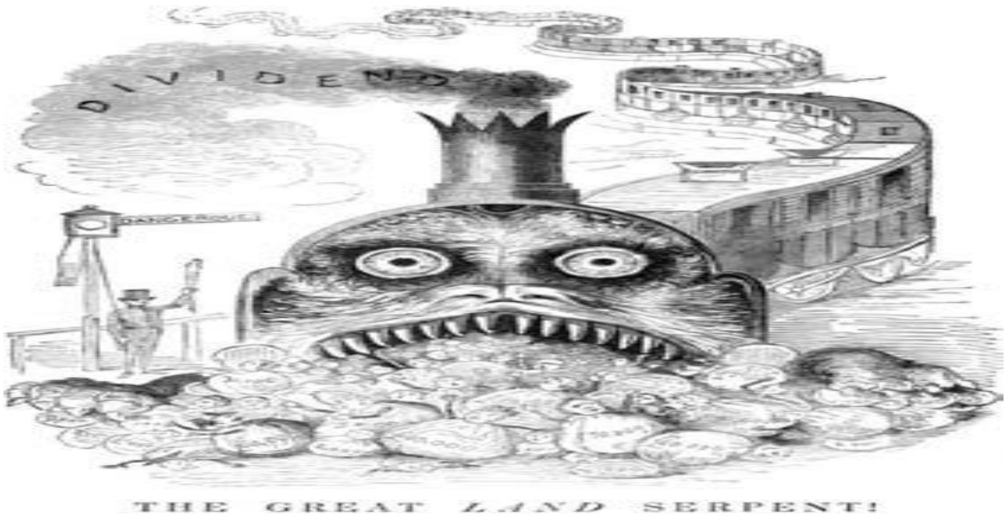

Figure 3: *The Great Land Serpent*

The illustration above which was published in the satirical journal *Puppet-Show* portrays the railway as an anthropomorphized land serpent, which is gobbling up its investors, depicted as plump and helpless moneybags. The accompanying text explains that the ‘greedy’ and ‘brazen’ monster consumes “every kind of man [...] from the dullest lord of thousands, to the poorest scamp on town”. However, soon the focus shifted from the speculative mania of the middle class to the directors of the companies who for the sake of profit risked the lives of customers.[83]

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[82] This example is taken from Altick, *Punch*, 453-454.Also see Taylor, “Business in Pictures”, 111-145; Michael Freeman, *Railways and the Victorian Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); Simmons, Jack. “A Powerful Critic of Railways: John Tenniel in *Punch*” in *The Express Train and Other Railway Studies* (Nairn: David St John Thomas, 1994), 133-157.

While this was the range of railway perceptions in nineteenth century Britain, the picture for India was significantly different. Here, the arrival of railways was inextricably linked with the political economy of colonialism. In the official discourse it was conceived as a civilizing technology that would secure material welfare for the people, dissolve entrenched social prejudices and enable the production of an industrious and disciplined body.[84] It would produce an abstract space of production and circulation, and act as incubator of the modern subject liberated from primordial customs and prejudices. As one chief consulting engineer for railways in India, George Macgeorge, observed:

> "The strong barriers of one of the most rigid and exclusive caste systems in the world have been penetrated on every side by the power of steam. In India for many years past, caste prejudices have been practically extinguished within the fences of a line of railway, and the most sacred Brahmin will now contentedly ignore them rather than forgo the luxury and economy of journey."[85]

Despite such claims, the application of this technology in the Indian subcontinent was guided by the needs of the political economy of colonialism and duly marked by the racial economy of difference in its spatial organisation.[86] The response of Indian intelligentsia in the second half of the nineteenth century, as the following examples will show, was therefore heavily centred on these two significant points, though not confined to them.

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[83] Cf. Taylor, "Business in Picture", 119-120.

[84] Ian J. Kerr, *Building the Railways, 1850-1900* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995); Ravi Ahuja, ""The Bridge-Builders" Some Notes on Railways, Pilgrimage and the British "Civilising Mission" in Colonial India" in *Colonialism as Civilizing Mission: The Case of British India*, eds. Harald Fischer-Tiné and Michael Mann (London: Anthem Press, 2003), 195-216. Manu Goswami, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 105-106.

[85] Cf. Goswami, *Producing India*, 106.

[86] Goswami, *Producing India*, 103-131.

In *Relˈvestotra*, which we will now look at in detail, railways was perceived as an unavoidable quasi-divine, techno-industrial, urban monster, which was a gift of colonial rule to India.[87] The onward march of this modern technology of communication was represented as a threat not only to pre-modern technologies of communication but also to the concurrent political order.

> "O rail! Victory to you, victory to you! And death to cart, *ikkā*, boat, and vessel! Death to them! Let the Hindustani Kings be afraid of your entry in their kingdom! And the end to our sorrows [when receiving the] blessings of the precious dust of your wheels on our head!"[88]

The enthusiasm generated by the seductive power of this technology was presented with a deep sense of irony, produced by the underlying ambivalence of enchantment with progress, on the one hand, and the exploitative aspects of the 'drain of wealth' caused by the technology, on the other:

> "O enchantress of the world! O temptress! People of the country unblessed by the touch of your expiating feet, incessantly pray for your *darśan*; do picketing at the government's doorstep; donate thousands of rupees; and then feel blessed by your arrival in the country. But when you steal the profit of their trade by your sublime light, they name you *Rer* [hassle]! Therefore, O rail, your beginning as well as end are full of sorrow!"[89]

The expansiveness of the railways project and its essential megalomania is allegorically embodied as and equated with a mythological demon in line with the descriptive excess of the panegyric hymn:

> "O beloved of god and demon! You are the lady of the dynasty of monsters. Your head is in Howrah. Your feet are in Delhi and Karachi. Your hands are Awadh-Ruhelkhand railways and Rajputana railways. Your tail is the great India peninsula railways; and all others are your

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[87] Interestingly, as we saw through the example of British satirical press, the depiction of the railways as modern techno-urban monster is to be found in India as well as Britain.

[88] Śiśir, *Bhārˈtendu maṇḍal*, 40.

[89] Śiśir, *Bhārˈtendu maṇḍal*, 40.

> body hair. You are lying upon the whole of India. The day you do not get the moneybag you eat up India like the proverbial demon *Gayāsura.*"[90]

Relˡvestotra critiques railways as constitutive of colonial space marked by racial and class difference and outlines the travel experiences of the colonized within this space from a 'nationalist' position.[91]

> "O light of European heredity! You are the embodiment of English lineage; therefore, full of *sajātīya pakṣˡpāt* [racial discrimination]. The very same train at the same moment is heaven for the Englishmen and hell for the Indians. Therefore, 'Heaven and hell is on the earth' – a proposition of the atheists – is true for you."[92]

This *stotra* and other literary pieces of the time highlight common Indian travellers as victims of class discrimination, insult and harassment at the hand of railway staff at each and every moment of travel – in getting access to railways platforms, buying a ticket at the counter, boarding the train, inside the train compartment, alighting from the train, and so forth. The railways' space is perceived quintessentially as a modern colonial urban space stifling under the immoral and corrupt control of colonial officials.[93] A less known farcical play by Harishchandra Kulashrestha *Ṭhagī kī capeṭ meṃ bagī kī rapeṭ meṃ*[94] (*Looted by*

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[90] Śiśir, *Bhārˡtendu maṇḍal*, 41. We know at least two versions of the tale about *Gayāsura*, one purāṇic and the other a folk tale. In both versions he is unusually huge and the entire divinity has to sit on his body to control his movement. In the purāṇic version the pilgrimage centre of Gaya is associated with the name of the same demon. See R. E. Ethoven, *Folklores of Konkan*, Vol. II. (Delhi: Asian Educational Service, (1915) 1989), 12; Ann Grodzins Gold, *Fruitful Journeys* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 217.

[91] For the articulation of railway space as the colonial state-space, see Goswami, *Producing India*. For railways travel experience and imagination of novel national space see Harriet Bury, "Novel Spaces, Transitional Moments: Negotiating Text and Travel Accounts in 19th Century Hindi Travel Accounts" in *27 Down: New Departures in Indian Railway Studies*, ed. Ian J. Kerr (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2008), 1-39.

[92] See Śiśir, *Bhārˡtendu maṇḍal*, 43.

[93] The common representation of colonial urban space in nineteenth century Hindi satire has a remarkable similarity with the railways' space.

[94] The literary style and quality of the play does not resemble Bharatendu Harishchandra's works. This author Harishchandra Kulashrestha seems to be a different person coincidentally or

robbers chased by tyrants), as well as *Rel kā vikaṭ khel*[95] (*The perilous play of the railways*), can be cited. *Ṭhagī* opens with the arrival at the station of an educated rural north Indian young man accompanied by his mother and a male and a female domestic from a village. It graphically illustrates his problems as a native waiting at the platform and his unsuccessful attempts of getting the ticket on time. The short span between the opening of the ticket counter and the arrival of the train proves insufficient because of the stampede-like situation orchestrated by the police constable whose props in the crowd were hurling at the ticket counter. Finally, he bribes the police constable to fetch a ticket for him and boards the train.[96]*Rel kā vikaṭ khel* deals with a similar theme: A rustic adult along with his beautiful young wife are shown to be struggling to get a ticket and boarding the train. He finally gets the ticket after being cheated, looted and humiliated by the railway peon, constable and ticket-*bābū*, and manages to board the train at the last moment with the help of a push (actually coming from the kick in his butt) by the railway guard. The guiding idea of such farces is that the colonial urban space of railways, which is apparently under the rule of law, is actually controlled by the railway officials and comprises nothing but a network of class

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deliberately having a similar name. See Hariścandra Kulˈśreṣṭh,*Ṭhagī kī capeṭ meṃ bagī kī rapeṭ meṃ* (Banāras: Bhāratˈjīvan pres, 1884)

[95] "*Rel kā vikaṭ khel*", *prathamāṅk* [first scene] first appeared in May 15, 1874 issue of *Harischandra's Magazine*. See *HM*, 202-204. It was written by Kartik Prasad Khatri in 1873 and performed at Harishchandra's house in Benaras.

[96] In the second scene, the family along with the servant reaches his friend's place where the play makes sarcastic comments about an illiterate Brahmin chatting with the protagonist's urbane friend. In the next scene, the domestic visits the riverbank to fetch drinking water for the womenfolk. He is soon befriended by a group of city thugs who invite him to smoke marijuana, and thereby gather information about him and the womenfolk. In the last scene one of the thugs arrives as a salesman of ornaments and takes money from the women who apparently purchase a necklace. Suddenly, a police constable drops in and catches the thug for selling stolen goods. He kicks the domestic and abuses and threatens the womenfolk for being guilty of buying stolen goods. Both of them leave the place with the money and the necklace. In the end the urbane gentleman laments the foolishness of the womenfolk for not recognizing the thug's plan and the constable, who was a thug in disguise. He also underlines the futility of going to the police station. Kulˈśreṣṭh,*Ṭhagī kī capeṭ meṃ*, 6-18.

discrimination and injustice. *Relˈvestotra* also describes the railway station as follows:

> "O You with dreadful tickets! Bless me so that I shall not be looted by the ticket-babu; O Crowd Filler! Bless me for I shall not be trampled in the stampede! O Beloved of blue monkeys [guards]! Bless me so that I shall not be teased by them. O Verisimilar of prison! Bless me for I shall not be incarcerated for hours. O Constrainer of nature's call! Bless me so that I shall be able to defecate freely."[97]

This 'nationalist' critique of the railways as a colonial space of racial and class discrimination is, however, not unconditional. The tacit middle class claim to articulate the grievances of the entire populace of the colonized, and hence to represent the entire nation, gets punctured along the fault lines of community, caste and gender. The critique comes with a simultaneous advocacy for the reconstitution of social markers of difference, which are increasingly levelled by the railways. The Brahmanic Hindu disgust at the erasure of socio-spatial marker of difference is spelt out clearly, not only against Muslims and Christians, but also against lower castes. Railway spaces, especially the interiors of railway compartments which are devoid of caste and community markers and hence oblivious of the social privilege of upper caste Hindus, are compared with the non-discriminatory space of a brothel:

> "O multifaceted lady of the world! At your bottom is the *nīl-cakra*[98] ['blue wheel'] and at the top is the *bhairavī-cakra*[99] ['dark wheel']. Because sitting on the precious throne inside your temple, Hindu, Muslim and Christian become equal and dine together. Therefore, threatened by the *kali* age, the following two proverbs – 'The entire world begs for the Supreme Being's alms' and 'Under the shadow of *bhairavī cakra* all castes are twice-born'[100] –

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[97] Śiśir, *Bhārˈtendu maṇḍal*, 45.

[98] A metaphoric expression signifying lord Vishnu.

[99] A metaphoric expression signifying goddess Kali. It is also a Tantric drinking ritual, which does not discriminate on the basis of the caste provenance of the participant.

[100] The proverbs are: '*Jagannāth ke bhāt ko jagat pasāre hāth*' and '*pravr̥te bhairavīcakre sarve varṇāḥ dvijāyatāḥ*'. For the origin and earlier satirical use of this *śloka* in Bhabanicharan Bandyopadhyaya's Bengali satire *Nababābubilās* (1825) see Hans Harder, "The Babu and the

> have found refuge in you […]. O Embodiment of the world! How should I go on praising you? You are the prostitute. You welcome everybody. You are the shelter of the shelter-less […]. O You who causes a chaste Hindu to fast! [...] O Rail! [Please] manage segregation of Hindus and Muslims [...] O dreadful play of the almighty God! Rail! May you always be in consonance with me! Hail rail! Hail congenial rail! Hail heavenly rail! Hail!! Hail!!"[101]

This Brahmanic anxiety is more pronounced in another satire *Relˈve Dokaṭ* on the farcicality of the railways' legal regulations and their implementation. Mocking the legal system, it says in the beginning that 'everywhere else it is *ekaṭ*' (we can discern wordplay with English term 'act': it is used here in the sense of one common standard) but 'in the railways it is *dokaṭ*' (double standard). *Relˈve-dokaṭ*, ironically, demands the removal of spatial segregation of the 'untouchables':

> "The Hindu and the Muslim hate the *Bhaṅgī* [scavenger caste], [so] the latter should be forced to sit beside the formers."[102]

Within the patriarchal discourse of satire, the railways were also perceived as an insecure, unprotected and morally volatile space for respectable (Hindu) women, who were not only exposed to the gaze of 'lecherous' railway officials and lower class male passengers, but to morally corrupting spatial proximity with lower class women.[103] This anxiety is conspicuous in the above mentioned farce *Rel kā*

Metropolis" in *India's Literary History: Essays on the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Stuart Blackburn and Vasudha Dalmia (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), 358-401.

[101] The last lines in the original are: *bol relˈgāṛī kī jay! bol melˈgāṛī kī jay! Bol indravimān kī jay! jay!! Jay*. Śiśir, *Bhārˈtendu maṇḍal*, 45.

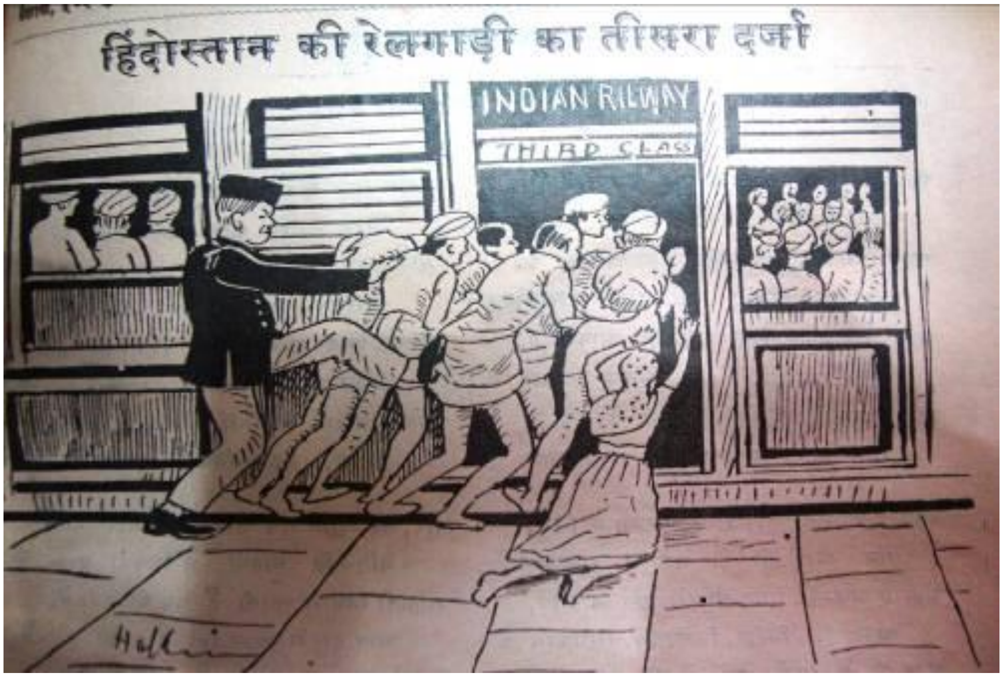
[102] It was first published in *Bhārˈtendu*, July 27, 1884. See Śiśir, *Bhārˈtendu maṇḍal*, 49-50.

[103] Laura Bear points out similar anxiety amongst the British officials about the racial intermix between white men unguarded by their wives and members of another race in the railway colonies in India. Laura G. Bear, "Miscegenation of Modernity: Constructing European respectability and race in the Indian railway colony, 1857-1931", *Women's History Review*, 3, 4 (1994): 531-548. There were innumerable petitions given by the 'native gentlemen' to the railways authorities for making special arrangements for their womenfolk at railway stations in matters of waiting at the platform, boarding the train and seating arrangements inside railway compartments, in order to protect them from the male gaze and proximity with lower class women.

vikaṭ khel and was there to stay, as the following cartoons from the 1920s demonstrate.

Figure 4 ‘*Hindustānī rel*^{l}*gaṛī ka tīs*^{l}*rā darjā*’ (Third class of Indian railways) depicts the general hardship of travelling with women and also inconvenience faced by women. It shows a railway guard kicking the Indian passengers inside the crowded third class train compartment. While men are managing to get inside the train, the woman has fallen down on the platform as a result of the stampede. Hence, the ‘insecure’ space of the railways is depicted as hostile to ‘delicate’ and ‘weak’ women where they are even physically prone to accident and danger apart from moral humiliation.

Figure 4: ‘*Hindustānī rel*^{l}*gaṛī ka tīs*^{l}*rā darjā*’, *Sudhā*, May 1928[104]



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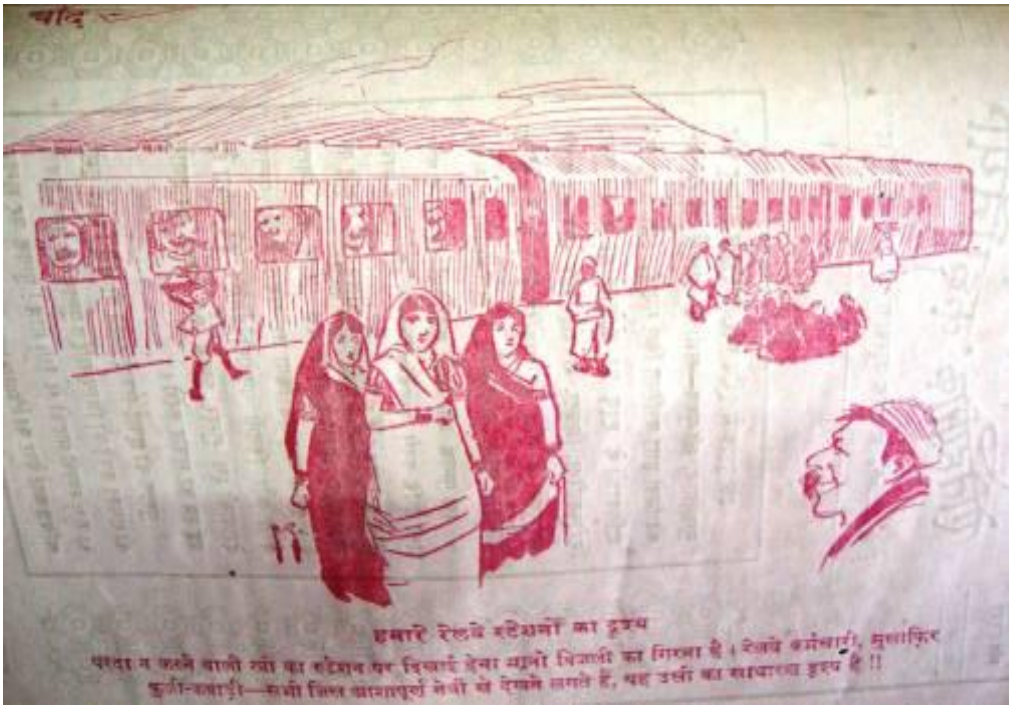
[104] This cartoon illustrates the mistreatment of third class Indian passengers articulated in nineteenth century satires mentioned above. The condition remained almost similar in many respects even in the early twentieth century as the production of cartoons in the 1920s testifies. However, I have used these pictures above only to visually illustrate my 19th century literary examples.

Likewise, Figure 5 ‘*Hamāre relᵇve steśᵇnoṃ ka dṛiśya*’ (A scene at our railway stations) depicts Hindu women from a ‘respectable’ middle class family standing at the railway station while the men travelling in the train, standing at the platform, are lecherously staring at them. The caption below makes the patriarchal anxiety amply clear: “The appearing of women without veil at the station is like a thunderbolt. Here is a common depiction of how full of hope they all – railway officials, passengers, coolies and vendors – gaze [at them]!!”

Figure 5: ‘*Hamāre relᵇve steśᵇnoṃ ka dṛiśya*’, *Cā̃d*, April 1928


हमारे रेलवे स्टेशनों का दृश्य

Such satirical attacks on railways from a Brahmanic male perspective in India, however, should once again not lead us to conclude that the Indian response was against this technology per se. Generally, all the litterateurs satirizing railways cited above showed deep appreciation not only for the development of the railways under British rule,[105] but towards modern technology and scientific knowledge as a potential basis for national progress.[106] Typically for nineteenth century liberal intelligentsia, they also had faith in the modern liberal discourse of progress under colonial dispensation.[107] Hindi intelligentsia's enchantment with modern science and technology as vehicles of national progress is reflected in *Relˈvestotra* too. In fact, through the obliqueness of the literary technique of satire *Relˈvestotra* performs a function beyond the criticisms and mockery explicated above. At the cost of repetition, it should be emphasised again that a *stotra*, among many other things, also describes the essential attributes of the object of worship. In the course of this narrative movement each and every attribute is conveyed and, consequently, the object is familiarised. *Relˈvestotra*, too, conveys essential qualities and functions of the railways in India.[108] So in addition to its criticism, it performs the additional task of familiarizing the alien-modern technology by using the Hindu mythical register. Moreover, *Relˈvestotra* records the Indian enchantment with railways. For example, the *stotra* constantly invokes the railways' qualities and substantiates them by drawing upon imageries from a Hindu cultural universe.[109] Apart from making sense of the power and magnitude of this modern technology, which is compared with the attributes of Hindu deities, it also describes the enchantment of Indians[110] by railways just as with any divine incarnation.[111]

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[105] See, for instance, the travelogue ("Vaidyanāth yātrā", 1871) by Harishchandra and the autobiographical memoir (*Maiṃ vahī hū̃*, 1886) by his friend and contemporary Damodar Shastri. See *Bhārˈtendu samagra*, ed. Hemant Śarmā (Vārāṇasi: Pracārak granthāvalī pariyojanā, 2000), 1036; Dāmodar Śāstrī, *Maiṃ vahī hū̃* (Baṅkīpur: Khaḍgavilās pres, 1886).

[106] See, for example, Harishchandra's Ballia Lecture on how India will make progress and his description of Roorkee, a site of the new engineering college founded in 1847, in his travelogue on Haridwar in *Bhārˈtendu samagra*,1009-13, 1031. Contemporary Hindi periodicals published columns of modern science and technology. To cite one example, May 15, 1874 issue of *Harischandra's Magazine* published two long articles. See *HM*,204-207; 212-214.

[107] For instance, Radhacharan Goswami drew and published a cartoon titled '*Unnati kī gāṛī*' ('The cart of progress') in the same periodical in which *Relˈvestotra* was published. It depicts the 'cart of progress', which symbolically stood for the Indian nation, driven by an Englishman carrying whips named *śāsan* (governance) and *anuśāsan* (discipline). This cart is pushed forward by Bengali, Marathi and Punjabi gentlemen, while a Hindustani (north Indian) is left behind, ensnared by *avidyā* (ignorance) and *ālasya* (idleness). (See Parimalendu 2007: 21) Also see Harishchandra's '*Īśvar baṛā vilakṣaṇ hai*' ('God is great') in *Bhārˈtendu samagra*, 993-95.

[108] Another work of Radhacharan in the same style, *Muśakˈstotra* ('Hymn to the rats'), is a humorous description of the problems caused by rats. It may have been written in the wake of the plague outbreak and was published in *Bhārˈtendu*, 22 November, 1885. See Śiśir, *Bhārˈtendu maṇḍal*, 58-60.

Thus, this critique of the technology of railways in India in terms of a 'drain of wealth', reinforcement of racial difference and threat to the privileged class is different from criticisms in Britain sketched at the beginning of this section. This is due to the distinctive historical conditions under which railway made its presence felt in the metropolis and the colony. While it was the symbol of modernity and progress in both the regions, in colonial India the rhetoric of the civilizing mission was appended to it. Not surprisingly, in Britain satire was limited to the criticism of middle class pre-occupation with investment speculation and the attack on the railway company and its directorate for neglecting the plight and convenience of passengers. In India, by contrast, satire focused on the colonialist political economy and the social and cultural implications of modern technology from an upper caste male Hindu perspective.

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[109] "O You [who art] unattainable to gods! Brahmā and Viśvakarmā both are mesmerized by your unprecedented invention and forgo their pride [...]. O [You with a] magnificent face! You are as magnificent and huge as lord Viṣnu [...]. You are lord Kārtik, because you split and move across many mountains. You are Ganeśa, because you have your breakfast with your trunk at every station. You are the forty-nine Maruts, because like them, more than forty-nine vehicles of yours move simultaneously!" See Śiśir, *Bhārˈtendu maṇḍal*, 41. In this connection it would be pertinent to recall David Gosling's argument that the introduction of western science in nineteenth century India did not lead to any direct confrontation with theological knowledge as in Europe. For instance, according to David Gosling, Darwin's theory of evolution based on a common ancestry of human beings and animals could be made intelligible by its referentiality to the familiar pre-existing theory of incarnation. Cf. Dhruv Raina and S. Irfan Habib, "Cultural Foundations of a Nineteenth Century Mathematical Project", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 24, 37(1989): 2085.

[110] This is also recorded in English language by nationalist leaders like Bhola Nath Chunder and Bipin Chandra Pal in their travel memoirs. See Goswami, *Producing India*, 103-131.

[111] "O Durgā! O dissipater of distress! Many of your rustic devotees perceive you as incarnation of [goddess] Durgā and prostrate before you. Therefore, O goddess incarnate omnipresent Rail! Salute to her, salute to her!" Śiśir, *Bhārˈtendu maṇḍal*, 43.

Summary

I have argued that nineteenth century Hindi satire represents colonial cultural encounters as chaotic. The sites of the encounters are articulated either as urban with explicit markers of colonial modernity or as colonial state-space in the case of railways. Most were delineated as institutional spaces[112]– colonial law court, civil association, railways, etc. –and had become important and indispensible in the life of the emerging middle class. The literary imaginary of satire sought to purge out the socio-cultural chaos emanating from the new colonial order by counterposing a programmatic reordering of society on the basis of a reified (Brahmanic) Hindu tradition. Our reading of representative satirical pieces has shown that the satirical inflection of colonial modernity originates from the definite ideological vantage point of the emerging Hindi middle class. Satire is deployed as a literary tool to tackle the perceived cultural asymmetries produced by colonialism. It becomes a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it targets and exposes colonial institutions and authorities of power. On the other, it silences the self-assertions of lower castes, empowered by the limited opportunities available under the new colonial order, which, it was feared, would destabilise Indian/Hindu social equilibrium. In this sense nineteenth century Hindi satire, as Theodore Adorno's remark on early modern European satire in the beginning of the chapter shows, can be seen as an 'enlightened means' to defend 'traditionalism' of the privileged Indian class against the threats and challenges ('its inexhaustible theme was the decay of morals') wrought by modernity.

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[112] Significantly, this satirical imaginary hardly touches upon sites beyond colonial institutional spaces. This suggests that the rhythm of the contemporary everyday life in north Indian cities is not so much under rupture as a result of colonial modernity as e.g. Calcutta. Cf. Ranajit Guha's work on *Hutom pyāñcār nakˈśā*. Ranajit Guha, "A Colonial City and its Time(s)," *Indian Economic Social History Review*, 45, 3 (2008): 329-51.

In sum, in the complex process of negotiation with novel forms of modernity, Hindi litterateurs reconfigured pre-existing literary-cultural forms and constructed a new satirical mode of communication. The negotiation process entailed appropriation and domestication of the forces of modernity in its own terms: rejection of the *rule of colonial difference*[113] but reassertion of *adhikar-bhed* or indigenous social hierarchy. However, the terms of engagement with modernity in general and modern scientific knowledge in particular, as we shall see in the following chapter, underwent a marked shift in the twentieth century.

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[113] For colonialism as 'rule of difference', See Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

Chapter 3

Modernity, Scientific Rationality and Satire in Early Twentieth Century

> New year of 1912 has begun… I did not leave Banaras this summer also. Then a new icon visited Assī. Entire groups of students and even Pandits were in turmoil. A profound scholar, a big poet, a philosopher, [and] a great atheist Ramāvatar Śarmā has come. He does not believe in the *Vedas*, he does not believe in god, he does not believe in *punya-pāp*. Like hundreds of others I felt it very strange…Panḍit Ramāvatarjī's assembly was open to all, so we used to visit him unhesitatingly…He had just bought some fine mangoes for home from a hawker–yes, I had heard that Panditjī had two wives. He was joking asking some young celibate Brahmins –Brother! Even after weeklong fasting, it appears, I am unable to control my [sexual] desire (*iṃdriya*), and you people [have vowed to stay in] lifelong celibacy! Impossible! One day, the talk of Swāmī Mudgarānanda started. One, who sneezes elephants [through his nostrils] and so on. Śarmājī told such stories ridiculing *Puranic* hyperboles. (Rāhul Sāṃkrityāyana, *Merī jīvan yatra-I*)[1]

This chapter is an attempt to disentangle the cultural politics of a highly ambitious piece of reformist satire *Mudgarānand'caritāvalī* (1912-13).[2] The satirical text is analysed against the backdrop of the intellectual-political life and times of its author Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Ramavatar Sharma – a public intellectual[3], an 'aspirational cosmopolitan',[4] and Sanskrit scholar *par*

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[1] Rāhul Sāṃkr̥ityāyana, *Merī jīvan yatra-I* in *Rāhul vañgmay*, khaṇḍ ek, jild 1 (Dillī: Rādhākr̥ṣna, 1994), 117.

[2] The reason for our selection of this text is twofold. One, it is distinguished for the subject matter it deals with. Two, from the intellectual standpoint of satire and the satirist, its varying take on the question of modernity makes it distinctive. It is a significant departure from the general political tenor of late nineteenth century satire (discussed in the last chapter).

[3] I am using the term public intellectual in a limited sense as one who communicates the theoretical base for resolving public problems. Generally, scholars remain in their areas of expertise, whereas intellectuals apply academic knowledge and abstraction to public problems.

[4] According to Stuart Hall, cosmopolitanism is 'the ability to stand outside of having one's life written and scripted by any one community, whether that is a faith or tradition or religion or culture'. Cf. Kathryn Hansen, "Who wants to be a cosmopolitan?: Readings from the composite culture" *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 47, 3 (2010): 297–299. Martha Nussbaum defines cosmopolitanism as opposite of 'bad' particularism, such as patriotism towards a national community. Contesting Nussbaum, Hillary Putman defines cosmopolitanism-as-pluralism, in which multiple particular traditions co-exist with each other with their own system of values and remain open to insight and criticism from outside. My usage tries to incorporate the critical question of cosmopolitan consciousness raised by

excellence. Sharma was part of that intellectual creed of North India, which was embedded not only in old Sanskrit learning and scholarship but had also mastered modern knowledge system and its language. His ambitious intellectual project was committed simultaneously to the popularisation of scholarly knowledge and critical temperament in the vernacular public sphere as well as to the resurrection of the 'dead' world of traditional Sanskrit knowledge system with critical doses of modern scientific knowledge.[5]

Historically, the subject of this chapter--Sharma and his satirical text--falls between the 1890s and 1910s.[6] A period of fertile intellectual-cultural regeneration marked by anti-colonial cosmopolitanism, institutional expansion of proto-nationalist orientation, and above all of intense international intellectual and cultural circulation in what has been recently called the 'age of entanglement', which proved to be crucial for the coming decades of the nationalist upsurge.[7] Within this broad historical context the

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Pnina Werbner and anti-colonial 'aspirational cosmopolitanism' pointed out by Kris Manjapra. Cosmopolitan consciousness "would need to include elements of self-doubt and reflexive self-distantiation, an awareness of the existence and equal validity of other cultures, other values, and other mores." Pnina Werbner, "Vernacular Cosmopolitan", *Theory, Culture and Society*, 23, 2-3 (2006): 498. 'Aspirational cosmopolitanism' means "the pursuit of conversation across line of difference, between disparate socio-cultural, political and linguistic groups, that provisionally created shared public world." These shared public spaces created as a result of trans-regional flows and circulation ideas, knowledge and experiences are, however, doubly marked by asymmetries of power and incongruity of cultural values. Kris Manjapra, "Introduction" in *Cosmopolitan Thought Zones: South Asia and the Global Circulation of Ideas*, eds., Sugata Bose and Kris Manjapra (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 1.

[5] Sheldon Pollock, "The Death of Sanskrit", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 43, 2 (2001): 392-426.

[6] This time span includes his intellectually formative and productive years as a student, scholar and public intellectual. Most of his intellectual output in Hindi, Sanskrit and English belong to the period between 1901 and 1914. See Sharma's intellectual-biographical profile below.

[7] Constructive engagement and productive criticism with less nostalgia for ancient glory is visible in the field of scholarship on sciences for example. For a cultural redefinition of modern science in Indian contexts, see Dhruv Raina and S. Irfan Habib, "The Moral Legitimation of Modern Science: Bhadralok Reflections on Theories of Evolution", *Social Studies of Science*, 26 (1996): 9-42. Dhruv Raina, "Exact and Positive: Conceptions of the Past of the Sciences in India" in Lecture Series on *Global Concepts: Art/Science*, January 13, 2011. Karl Jaspers Centre for Advance Transcultural Studies, Heidelberg. For a survey of anti-colonial cosmopolitan ideas see selected essays in *Cosmopolitan Thought Zones: South Asia and the Global Circulation of Ideas*, Eds. Sugata Bose and Kris Manjapra (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). For the study of self-help groups and voluntary associations with a focus on social service and reform see Carey A. Watt, *Serving the Nation: Culture of Service Association and Citizenship* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005).For an interesting study of the appropriation of the theosophical society's institutional network, which developed in the first

study of the aforesaid satirical text explores a political subjectivity, aimed at an unapologetic critical evaluation and reconstitution of the Indian intellectual-philosophical-cultural tradition on the principles of reason and ratiocination, in the realm of scholarship as well as the wider public domain. It is argued that this astonishing piece of satire emanates from an intellectual stance that calls for a critical reconfiguration of modernity in Indian society by negotiating with modern forms of scientific knowledge and critical reason--arguably, not western in any absolute sense but culturally neutral and universal. From this vantage point, the satirical text assesses and attacks the present and past of Indian culture and society, and vouches for a transcultural conception of modernity that tames the Eurocentric narrative of western superiority without falling prey to nationalist indigenism. It is argued that the complexities of the satirical narrative also suggestively underline the limits of such an intellectual-political project and its viability.

The satirical text is marked by a high degree of narrative incoherence and complexity. To be fair to Sharma, satirical narratives in general are notorious for non-linearity with multiplicity of meanings adding to their complexity. In this case, however, the problem of complexity gets aggravated due to an additional reason. Unlike the satirical texts discussed in the last chapter, *Mudgarānand'caritāvalī*, builds neither upon a pre-familiarised subject nor on a dominant discourse in contemporary Hindi public sphere. The reception and understanding of the text is contingent upon its intertextuality with contending marginal discourse and the lesser-known premise of the debate which has been articulated by the author in a variety of genres and forums.[8] In other words, the intellectual-political stance of Sharma is marginal

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two decades of the twentieth century, by Indian National Congress in the 1920s see Gilbert Mcdonald, *Bihar Polity, 1908-37: The Bihar Congress and the Political development of a Region* (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Western Australia, 1978). For circulation of ideas and 'revolutionaries' across the globe See, Kris Manjapra, *Age of Entanglement: German and Indian Intellectuals Across Empire* (Cambridge: Harward University Press, 2013), Harald Fischer-Tiné, *Shyamji Krishnavarma: Sanskrit, Sociology and Anti-Imperialism* (London-New Delhi: Routledge India) 2014. Benjamin Zacharia, "A Long, Strange Trip: The Lives in Exile of Har Dayal" *South Asian History and Culture*, 4, 4 (2013): 574-92.

[8] See the introductory remarks on the nature of late nineteenth century Hindi satire in the last chapter.

and is at best a dissenting voice in the twentieth century Hindi public sphere, and hence, it has also evaded the attention of historical research so far. For this means *Mudgarānand'caritāvalī* needs to be studied in juxtaposition with the author's intellectual biography in order that we may illustrate the synchronic relation between the text and its context.

1

Ramavatar Sharma: intellectual portrait of an author

> My main literary work has been done in the English language. [...] Ever since my boyhood I had noticed that those scholars who have written their works in English had received better and larger appreciation than those who did it in an Indian language. This idea of mine had been fully confirmed in my own experience. [...] In my own case, my old friend Mahamahopadhyaya Pt. Ramavatara Sharma of Chhapra and Patna was a very much sounder scholar of Sanskrit and very much equipped even in modern scholarship than myself, and yet he did not become as well known [...] as I am, and only reason for this was that while I worked in English, he worked in Hindi.
>
> (Sir Ganganath Jha, *Autobiographical Notes*.)[9]

There is a dearth of material on the life and works of Ramavatar Sharma. The reason for this might lie in the fact that he is less known and acknowledged in the world of international scholarship. The primary reason for this, it seems, was his decision to write and publish preferably in Sanskrit and Hindi as his more famous contemporary, Sir Ganganath Jha, explains in his memoir quoted above. Further, the major corpuses of available written sources that contain biographical details of Ramavatar Sharma are mostly hagiographical writings and anecdotes. They frame him in the image of a great Pandit scholar of traditional hue. However, a contextualised examination of his own diverse writings, the institutional environment in which he studied and taught, alongside available anecdotal and panegyric biographical information give us a very different picture of him – the picture of a modern cosmopolitan scholar.[10] Let us first reconstruct Sharma's brief intellectual biography.

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[9] Ganganath Jha was a noted Sanskrit scholar. He became the Vice-chancellor of Allahabad University and was also given knighthood. Hetukar Jha, ed., *Autobigraphical Notes of Mm. Dr. Sir Ganganath Jha* (Allahabad: Ganganath Jha Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha, 1976), 125-126.

Educational and professional profile

Ramavatar Sharma was born on 6 March 1877 in a Saryupari Brahmin family in the district town of Chhapra, Bihar. His grandfather and then his father were in charge of a *tol* or Sanskrit school in the same town. His father, Pandit Devnarayan Sharma, taught him in their house, after which he went on to study in the family school. Later on he was sent to a *pāthśālā*, one of the old style schools in the Sanskrit education system, run by Pandit Ramdvar Ojha.[11] Not much else is known about his childhood. He was first married at the age of nine in 1886. At the age of 12, in 1889, he passed the *parathamā*, and then cleared the *madhyamā* in Sanskrit in 1890. Between 1890 and 1897 he studied in Banaras, always financed by one scholarship or the other. Initially under the tutelage of one of the four most noted Sanskrit Pandits of the time in Banaras, Pandit Gangadhar Shashtri,[12] he became a student at Queens College, Banaras. While studying in Banaras he passed the examination of *Kāvyatīrtha* from Calcutta Sanskrit College in 1893. In 1895 he cleared the Entrance test for Allahabad University with a first division and a scholarship. In 1897 he was awarded the degree of *Sāhityācārya*. In 1898 he passed F.A. from Punjab University, in 1900 B.A. and in 1901 M.A. from Calcutta University, all in first division, and was awarded gold medals for his achievements. In 1919 he was awarded the title of *Mahāmahopādhyāya*.[13]

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[10] It is not a coincidence that, as one of these interesting anecdotes reveals, Sharma was fascinated by the personality of Samuel Johnson – the eighteenth century English intellectual, literary scholar, poet, lexicographer and essayist – with whom Sharma shared so much at least in terms of intellectual vocation. He even wished to have his biography written in the same way as James Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson*. See Sharma's daughter Indumati Tiwari's recollection about her father in Mahathā Sukhdev Narāyan Siṃh, ed. *Rāmāvatār'gāthā* (Chap'rā: Bhāratīya śastra samādar samiti, 1978), 90.

[11] Difference between the old and the new education system is explained in Vasudha Dalmia, "Sanskrit Scholars and Pandits of Old school: The Benares Sanskrit College and the Constitution of Authority in the Late Nineteenth Century", *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 24 (1996): 321-337; Nita Kumar, *Lessons from Schools: The History of Education in Banaras*, (Delhi: Sage Publications, 2000), 39-67; Mahadev M. Deshpande, "Pundit and Professor: Transformation in the late 19th century Maharashtra" in Axel Michaels (ed.) *The Pandit: Traditional Scholarship in India* (Delhi: Manohar, 2001), 119-154. For transformation of the school system of pre-colonial India in general, see Kazi Shahidullah, "The Purpose and Impact of Government Policy on *Pathsala* and *Gurumohashoys* in Nineteenth Century Bengal" and Nita Kumar, "Religion and Rituals in Indian Schools: Banaras from the 1880s to 1940s" in *The Transmission of Knowledge in South Asia*, ed. Nigel Crook (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 119-134; 135-154.

[12] For a short biographical introduction to Gangadhar Shashtri, see Baldev Upādhyāya, *Kāśī kī pāṇḍitya paraṃparā* (Banāras: Viśvavidyālaya prakāśan, 1985), 236-64.

Between 1901 and 1905 Sharma was employed as a lecturer of Sanskrit at the Central Hindu College, Banaras. From 1906 till his death in 1929 he remained a Professor at Patna College. During his 23-year long tenure at Patna College he went on leave only twice. In between, he held the prestigious Basu-Mallik fellowship in Calcutta University between 1907 and 1908, during which he wrote a critical treatise on ancient Indian philosophical systems, titled *Vedantism*.[14] Between 1919 and 1922 he held the position of the principal of Oriental college, Banaras Hindu University. He presided over the annual session of the Indian National Social Conference at Patna in 1912 and the annual session of *Akhil Bhārtiya Hindī Sāhitya Sammelan* (All India Hindi literary conference) at Jabalpur in 1916. He was also member of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society, Patna as evidenced in the list of members printed in the 1928 volume of the journal.

In his scholarly career he published seminal research papers in English,[15] Sanskrit and Hindi on Indian philosophy, history, and critical philology while also writing popular but critical essays and treatises in Hindi periodicals on a variety of issues ranging from scientific and philosophical traditions in India and Europe,[16] critical historicist reading of Hindu mythology and Sanskrit literary works,[17] to the modern sciences,[18] and parodies and satire in Hindi and Sanskrit. Within the world of Sanskrit scholarship, he is especially regarded for his two lasting contributions. Firstly, he wrote *Paramārthādhikaraṇˡratnamālā* (1912),[19] arguably a highly ambitious book in Sanskrit to establish an alternative critical philosophical system vis-à-vis the six Indian school of philosophy. Secondly, by the end of his life he managed to complete the project closest to his heart –an Encyclopaedia in Sanskrit, *Vāṅmayārṇavāḥ* along the lines of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. There now follows a brief evaluation of the politics concerning his critical scholarship with the help of selected but representative works.[20]

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[13] Unless otherwise cited the information provided in this section is based on Rāmavatar Sharma's introduction provided in the posthumous publication of his Sanskrit Encyclopaedia *Vāṇmayārṇavāh*. Mahāmahopādhyāya Pāṇḍeya Rāmāvatār Śarmā, *Vāṇmayārṇavāh* (Vārānasi: Jñāmaṇḍal limiṭeḍ, 1961), 11-12.

[14] Sahityācārya Pāṇḍeya Rāmāvatār Śarmā, *Vedantism: Shreegopal Basu Mallik Fellowship Lectures 1907-1908* (Calcutta: Wilkins Press, College Square, 1909). Before this fellowship and publication of lectures in *Vedantism* Sharma had already published allegedly the first Hindi textbook on European philosophy (from Plato to Hegel). Pāṇḍeya Rāmāvatār Śarmā, *Yuropīa darśan* (Kāśī: Nāgarī pracariṇī sabhā, 1905). He had also published a series of articles on modern geology, astronomy, geography, anthropology and the exact sciences in Hindi periodicals from 1900 onwards.

[15] Sharma had almost stopped writing in English after 1909. By this time his reputation as a scholar had been established amongst the bilingual intelligentsia. I could find only two pieces of his writing in English written after this year. Mm. Ramavatar Sharma, "Sanskrit Lexicography", *Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society* (hereafter *JBORS*), 9, Part 1, 3&4 (1923): 40-48 and 294-299; Mm. Ramavatar Sharma, "Book Review: P. V. Kane, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*", *JBORS*, 14, Part-II (June 1928): page numbers not found.

Politics of critical scholarship

One of the major political agendas of Sharma's scholarly works was to question unreasonable beliefs and practices which allegedly received their spurious legitimacy from the world of Sanskrit. To him, Sanskrit knowledge system was misused due to an uncritical and ahistorical understanding of the texts and, consequently, marred the everyday life of literate and illiterate people alike. Sharma, through a deeper commitment to critical historical philology, exposed the alleged false readings of ancient texts and misinterpretations embedded in a cultural past. According to his own understanding, he propagated a correct reading in order to enable the growth of critical reasoning and freedom in Indian social life. Thus, in his essays like *Purāṇ-tattva*,[21] Sharma's entire philological-lexicographical exercise is directed at critiquing irrational religious practice of believing in the spurious magical power of sacred texts or hymns while simultaneously appreciating their (secular) literary-historical merit.

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[16] Most of his early essays on modern science were published in the Hindi Monthly *Sarasvatī* (Allahabad, 1900). Śarmā, *Vāñmayārṇavāh*, 14. Interestingly, *Sarasvatī* came under the scanner of the colonial government in connection with Sharma's involvement in preparing an 'objectionable' question paper for the Matriculation students of Sanskrit in 1912. See footnote 29 below.

[17] See, for example, his essay "*Purāṇ-tatva*" in Mahāmahopādhyāya Pandit Rāmavātār Śarmā, *Śrīrāmāvatārśarmanibaṃdhāvalī* (Patˡnā: Bihār rāṣṭrabhāṣā pariṣad, 1954), 114 -119.

[18] Most of them are available in Śarmā, *Śrīrāmāvatārśarmanibaṃdhāvalī*.

[19] This text is venerated as an attempt in the direction of the seventh school of Indian philosophy by pupils and friends of Sharma. See editor's preface in Rāmavatar Śarmā, *Paramārthˡdarśan: ek saṃkśipt paricay*, Bhāṣyakār, Harimohan Jhā (Patˡnā: Bihār rāṣṭrabhāṣā pariṣad, 1986).

[20] Śarmā, *Vāṇmayārṇavāh*.

A modern scholar of tradition or a traditional scholar of the modern?

The same concern for critical scientific evaluation and interpretation of ancient texts and traditions is visible in his pedantic treatise entitled *Vedantism* on ancient Indian philosophy. *Vedantism*,[22] additionally, is an exercise in secular rationalist reconfiguration of ancient Indian philosophy. What is significant to note in *Vedantism* is a clear rejection (through a critical historicist method of textual analysis) of the very philosophical foundation of religious and social beliefs and practices which defy rational scientific principle. Sharma thus carves out his own version of (advaita) Vedantism or, by extension, his own intellectual-philosophical position, which is legitimised by the reinvention of the (Vedanta) tradition and is consistent with modern scientific rationality and the latter's worldview.[23] Sharma seeks to achieve the same task of critically enriching and, more importantly, bringing the oeuvre of

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[21] The essay *Purāṇ-tatva*, it seems, was first written as 'Philosophy of the *Puranas*' in English and it was apparently awarded with Buch Metaphysics prize in 1902. Siṃh, ed., *Rāmavatārˈgāthā*, 398. The essay in English is not available. The actual publication date of its popular Hindi version *Purāṇ-tatva* is also not known. References below are from Mahāmahopādhyāya Pandit Rāmavātār Śarmā, *Śrīrāmāvatārśarmanibaṃdhāvalī* (Patˈnā: Bihār rāṣṭrabhāṣā pariṣad, 1954), 114 -119.

[22] It was published in 1909, and, arguably, was a scholarly response to the eminent German Indologist Paul Deussen's work (1880s), which had appeared in English translation in 1906. Paul Deussen, *The Philosophy of the Upanishada* (Edinburgh: T. & T Clark, 1906). However, two points should be noted. Sharma knew the German language quite well, and his published lecture does not mention Deussen's work.

[23] Advait Vedantism has been debated and constantly reformulated since its very beginning. It acquired a central focus in nationalist imagination and has been interpreted variously by a range of nationalist intellectual-reformist-scholars. For a historical study of Advait Vedanta and its changing social-intellectual context till early modern period (15th-17th century) see Christopher Minkowsky, "Advait Vedānta in Early Modern History", *South Asian History and Culture*, 2, 2 (2011): 205-231. A similar detailed and focussed study on this subject in colonial India is still awaited.

Sanskrit tradition in dialogue with modern scholarship through his Sanskrit works like *Paramārthādhikaraṇ'ratnamālā,*[24] written in the idiom of *sūtra* texts.

Such an endeavour was not exceptionally novel. For instance, in the field of astronomy this kind of intervention started in the early nineteenth century under the aegis of Lancelot Wilkinson and his coterie of Sanskrit pandits,.[25] Sharma's project, although not entirely similar, should be placed within this larger intellectual historical context. On the other hand, the articulation of his intellectual yearnings departs from the nineteenth century usage in at least one significant manner –unlike the nineteenth century pandits, Sharma did not hesitate to reject a basic faith in the sacredness of

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[24] While his lectures at Calcutta University and the publication of these lectures might have earned him recognition amidst English speaking scholar-academics, his next intellectual task was to extend and disseminate his ideas within his very own circle of Sanskrit pandits who generally frowned upon English scholars of Sanskrit by labelling them *angrejiyā paṇḍit* (Anglophone scholars). Ganganath Jha, who wrote in English mostly, mentions this tension and he indeed sought acknowledgement from the Sanskrit pundits. Jha, *Autobigraphical Notes*, 125.

[25] According to Christopher Z. Minkowsky, Lancelot Wilkinson was appointed as British Political Agent to the court of Bhopal around 1829, and continued there until his death in 1841. The Agent's residence was located in the nearby town of Sihore, and attached to the residence was a school, which Wilkinson made into a Sanskrit school with a special emphasis on the study of the astronomical Siddhantas. Wilkinson was interested in the Siddhantas, whose serious study, he felt, had largely vanished by the beginning of the 19th Century. In addition to learning Sanskrit and Jyotishashastra himself, he promoted the study, edition and publication of various Indian astronomical texts. Wilkinson believed that the best way to introduce the modern Copernican system of astronomy to learned Indians, especially to the whole class of Indian astronomer /astrologers, was through the medium of Sanskrit, and in particular through the instrumentality of the Siddhantic model of the cosmos. Since the Siddhantas already rejected much of the *Puranic* cosmology, Wilkinson reasoned, and since they already made use of many of the necessary principles of geometry, trigonometry, and arithmetic, it would be a short step to move from the Siddhantic to Copernican scientific models, which could be presented in a way that would not alarm the whole class of Jyotisha pundits. One of Wilkinson's chief protégé, Bapudeva Shastri went on to teach both Indian and European astronomy at Benares Sanskrit College beginning in 1841. Bapudeva published voluminously in Sanskrit and English, promoted modernization of Indian astronomy and the knowledge of European astronomy in India. It was his pupils and intellectual descendants, who dominated the intellectual scene in Benares for at least the rest of the century. Christopher Z. Minkowsky, "The Pandit as Public Intellectual: The controversy over virodha or Inconsistency in the Astronomical Sciences" in Axel Michaels (ed.) *The Pandit: Traditional Scholarship in India* (Delhi: Manohar, 2001), 79-98. It can be conjectured that Sharma, given his appetite for diverse reading when he was studying in Banaras, must have come into contact with such intellectual currents. Bapudeva Shastri died the same year when Sharma came to Banaras. But Shastri's pupils like Sudhakar Dvivedi were senior contemporaries of Sharma in Banaras. Upādhyāya, *Kāśī kī pāṇḍitya paraṃparā*, 289-307. This conjecture can be emboldened by another minor but significant evidence. *Mudgarānand'charitāvalī* mentions Bapudeva Shastri and Sudhakar Dvivedi as rare pundits working for scientific astrology. Śarmā, *Śrīrāmāvatārśarmanibaṃdhāvalī*, 153.

Vedic and *Puranic* knowledge.[26]His take on cosmology was Copernican, his view on the evolution of life was Darwinian, and his exposition on processes of (inductive) logical validation was Baconian in spirit. In essence, he rejected the fundamental bases of theistic doctrines of Hindu Philosophy.[27]

Adopting a critical-scientific attitude to bring the traditional world of Sanskrit into a dialogue with modern scientific scholarship articulated in *Paramārthādhikaraṇˈratnamālā* is an ideal that remains a guiding principle in Sharma's framing of modern scientific knowledge in the register of traditional Sanskrit scholarship. He attempted to do the same, for example, with an archaic but living popular narrative of *vrata kathā*. In *Atha śrisatyadeva kathā*, for instance, Sharma uses this traditional genre to tell the story of Satyadeva, or the scientific truth of cosmology: a tale of civilization from the origins of the universe untill contemporary times that also prescribes rational ways and means to attain freedom from the contemporary misfortunes of (Indian) society.[28]

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[26]Minkowsky argues that the nineteenth century pandits working for the popularization of Copernican astronomy in harmony with Siddhantic cosmology 'did not reject their basic faith in Vedic and *Puranic* theology', although their works gave 'high valuation that they give to reasoning from direct observation, especially as aided by technologically advanced instruments, and the corresponding devaluation, within the sphere of what is observable, of textual authority'. Minkowsky, "The Pandit as Public Intellectual", 87.

[27] Sharma is almost obsessed with this particular subject and it keeps on recurring not only in his essays and books but also in the satirical text to be analysed. The last episode of the satirical text, which depicts argumentation on the divinity of a godman like figure in the colonial courtroom, is a wonderful parody of (mis)use of the pramana theory. As one Hindi commentator of the Sanskrit text, Harimohan Jha, has rightly pointed out, the central thrust of Sharma's argument in this book is directed towards demolishing the four conceptual pillars of theistic doctrines – *ātman, punarjanma, karma and mokśa*. See Śarmā, *Paramārthˈdarśan*, VIII.

[28]*Vrata kathās* are didactic texts that were meant to teach the devotees not only about how to observe ritual fasts and worship individual deities, but also narrated the *mahātamya* or great story of the beginning of the universe and the role of the deity in maintaining it. These were generic texts that contained detailed instructions and also provided a *kathā*, or story, whose message was explained by the priest to his religious clientele as to why the deity should be worshipped and what boons he or she can give or withhold. The glory of the deity is narrated so that he can get rid of material and spiritual anomalies. See Śarmā, "*Atha śrīsatyadeva kathā*" in Śarmā, *Śrīrāmāvatārśarmanibaṃdhāvalī*, 120-47. The author may have written it earlier, but it was first serialised in the weekly *Hindū Pañc* (Calcutta) soon after his death in January-February 1930. I could find its third and fourth part in the issues dated August 23 and 6 February 1930. For a good study of the *vrata kathā* in a different context of medieval Orissa see Satya P. Mohanty, "Alternative Modernities and the Medieval Indian Literature: The Oriya *Laksmi Purana* as Radical Pedagogy", *Diacritics*, 38, 3 (2008): 3-21.

Anti-colonial cosmopolitanism and public intervention

This almost obsessive critical engagement with Indian (Hindu) tradition, however, was based on an equally critical understanding of modern scientific knowledge. Sharma problematized modernity and its forms of knowledge, especially its much-hyped colonial provenance, from a deeply cosmopolitan predicament: a position, which approached critical scientific knowledge not in the language of ethno-cultural particularism but in the universal language of freedom from social and cultural stasis. More precisely, the word Europe for Sharma was not monolithic, nor was it a substitute for Britain and colonialism. Rather, to Sharma, the sources and models of European modernity, such as science and social progress could be located in Germany, France and Turkey; in fact, these models could be better than the ones espoused by England.[29] Moreover, the quest for scientific knowledge or turning away from it, in Sharma's understanding, was tantamount to freedom and human progress or cultural decline. This is how he explained the backwardness of non-European civilizations including India.[30] An eclectic intellectual stance informed his appreciation of modernity, which he tried to extend in his endeavours to rejuvenate Indian society and the traditional world of Sanskrit scholarship, a fact reflected in his ambitious project of creating Sanskrit's *Britannica*, namely Vāṅmayārṇavaḥ.[31] Ramavatar Sharma's cosmopolitanism refused to bow to the unquestioned superiority of modernity as a colonial project. His effort to bring traditional Indian knowledge system into a dialogue with its modern counterpart, interestingly enough, resisted holding the conversation within the existing norms of cultural translation marked by power and hierarchy. He wished to reorganise the grammar of cultural conversation so as to do away with the embedded bipolarity and inequality between the traditional (Indian) and the modern (western).[32] Interestingly, these views were also explicit in Sharma's personal sartorial style, which was a matter of curiosity, if not ridicule, for his contemporaries.[33]

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[29] For instance, Sharma set a translation paper for the matriculation examination of Sanskrit students of Patna College in March 1914 which got him into trouble with the colonial officials. The content of the first translation passage clearly foregrounded the importance of modern education, especially of science and technology, and sternly rejected the tendency of equating new western knowledge of arts and sciences with English or England. The power of England is made diminutive by a deliberate privileging of German and other European centres of learning and scholarship and the requirement of learning a foreign language is attached with the acquisition of scientific knowledge, no matter where it comes from. The second passage mentioned with unflinching lucidity that the perfect example of the ideal of modern education as the source of empowerment and liberation of women was Turkey rather than England. The reformist endeavour of modernist Turkey and the freedom and rights enjoyed by its women is said to be better than any other society, including western ones. The passage insinuated that a non-western country could also be raised as the model to be emulated just like any other western counterpart. See, File no. 110/1914, Home Political Special, *Bihar State Archives*, Patna.

[30] Explaining, what Kenneth Pomeranz has called 'the great divergence' between Europe and other parts of the World including India, Sharma argued in his historical essay that Europe and other civilizations were at par with each other till Europe took a great leap in the domain of scientific knowledge from sixteenth century onwards, while countries like India witnessed a decline in scientific thinking and temper, reasoned action and industriousness. See "Sabhyatā kā vikās" in Śarmā, *Śrīrāmāvatārśarmanibaṃdhāvalī*, 70-75. Contrary to the dominant trend in the Hindi public sphere Sharma does not blame Islam or the Muslim invasion for this. In fact in Sharma's scheme Islam or Muslim does not figure as a religious-political denomination. However, the impact of Swadeshi movement and congruence with the intellectual activity led by people like Prafulla Chandra Ray can be hardly ignored. See David Arnold, "A time for Science: Past and Present in the Reconstruction of Hindu science, 1860-

In sum, a brief analysis of Sharma's life and work suggests the following: his primary socialisation and education in a traditional Brahminical milieu at his village (and, later under the auspices of his guru Gangadhar Shastri of Banaras) was overwritten by the new pedagogy of liberal arts and science in the intellectual milieu of the university. He took advantage of his ambidexterity in traditional scholarship as well as in liberal scientific

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1920" in *Invoking the Past: The Uses of History in South Asia*, ed. Daud Ali (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 156-177; *section* 2 *Science and Nationalism* in Dhruv Raina, 'Evolving perspectives on Science and History: A chronicle of Modern India's Scientific Enchantment and Disenchantment (1850-1980)', *Social Epistemology*, 1997, Vol. 2, No. 1, Pp. 5-8. Also see David L. Gosling, *Science and the Indian Tradition: When Einstein met Tagore* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 86-88.

[31] According to Hazari Prasad Dvivedi, the Sanskrit lexicon was produced in verse; however, the alphabetical arrangement was uncommon. Some lexicons of early eras did try to arrange the words alphabetically, but it remained limited to the first letter of the word. Sharma's lexicon follows alphabetical arrangement like the modern European lexicon. Siṃh, ed., *Rāmāvatārgāthā*, 175.

[32] He invented new Sanskrit terms for commodities like kerosene oil and even proper nouns like the names of European towns as well as terms used in the natural sciences and then incorporated them in the lexicon. We shall discuss this point in the next section

[33] Sharma's sense of dressing was fashioned after what he thought as useful, no matter whether it was Indian or western. For going to college he normally wore dhoti, kurta, coat, slippers and sola hat. He justified his hat as useful in saving him from the heat and strong sun. In other words, he updated the traditional dressing repertoire with useful western apparels like coats and hats.

knowledge and directed his intellectual energy towards improving the existing order. Without accepting the infallibility of tradition, he wished to reconfigure traditional (Indian knowledge system) through critical dialogue with the modern (scientific knowledge system). He tried to promote a culture and knowledge tradition which was *avyāhata* (non-contradictory) or consistent with the principles of critical and scientific inquiry. His acceptance of modern forms of knowledge was premised in the belief that the modern was not synonymous with the colonial or even the western; for him, knowledge was culturally neutral and universal. According to Sharma, all civilizations or the entire humanity has historically contributed to science and scientific knowledge. All societies should be scrutinised, analysed and organised on this reasoned premise. Traditions or traditional knowledge systems should be critically questioned and updated. Indians, needless to say, must forsake their enchantment with the past and discontinue their unreasonable social and cultural practices. They need to critically update their tradition and actively cultivate science and scientific temper in their own cultural idioms and languages. It is this intellectual-political position that is integral to his scholarly and popular writings on science, grammar, linguistics, anthropology, geography, astronomy, history, etc. or explicit in his polemical intervention as a public intellectual arguing against godmen, occultism and eschatology.[34] His writings were valorised in the nationalist Hindi press implicitly as traditional Indian/oriental bulwark against modern western science. It is within this overall context of Sharma's intellectual-political moorings that we shall approach his *Mudgarānand'caritāvalī*.

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***Mudgarānand'caritāvalī*: analysis of a text**

Mudgarānand'caritāvalī ((Auto)biography of Saint Macejoy), serialised between 1912 and 1913 in the *Nāg'rī Pracāriṇī Patrikā*, Banaras, is a long text divided into nineteen chapters.[35] This long (auto)biography starts as a parody of the pre-established *Puranic* narrative of sacred hagiography of divine figures describing the protagonist's extraordinary supernatural personality. The text is narrated in the first person by the protagonist Mudgarānanda, literally Saint Mace-joy.[36] In conventional terms a saint's name starts with a word denoting positive adjectives like *satya*, *vivek*, *dayā* and *śraddhā* (truth, knowledge, pity and devotion), combined with *ananda* (spiritual joy). But Sharma uses the term Mudgar or a mace – an instrument of brute power with no sublime sophistication – for inversion of a saintly character.[37] Given the fact that the absurd name of the farce's protagonist was very common to Sanskrit literary tradition,[38] where the technique of direct inversion was deployed to produce incongruity in the ideal type and the actual character, Sharma deliberately chose such a name to heighten the satirical effect.[39] Saint Mudgarānanda undoubtedly then is a parodic rendition of a divine sage. It is the story of his life, his travels and his travail that constitutes the plot of *Mudgarānandˈcaritāvalī*.

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[34] See his articles "*Khulī ciṭṭhī*" (An open letter to the editor) originally published in *Sudhā*, January 1928 and "*Paramārtha siddhāṃt*" in Śarmā, *Śrīrāmāvatārśarmanibaṃdhāvalī*, 214-228.

Introducing the satiric narrator: Mudgarānanda and his world

Mudgar introduces himself as 'His Holiness Sri Swamī Mudgarānanda'[40] on the tiny planet earth, but notes that he originally hails from another planet called Varuṇa, also known to the inhabitants of this earth as Neptune. Varuṇa reportedly contains everything not to be found on earth

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[35] I have used its reprint collected in Sharma, *Śrīrāmāvatārśarmanibaṃdhāvalī*, 147-199.

[36] A saint in the South Asian context is a preceptor of spiritual and worldly knowledge, who is also bestowed semi-divine status by the followers.

[37] Sharma frequently used this term Mudgarānanda as a common noun to refer to self-styled godmen who proclaimed to have magical powers. Sharma also wrote a Sanskrit farce entitled *Mudgaradūtam* (Mudgar, the ambassador) in 1914 and its protagonist has a similar name. According to Devendra Nath Sharma, *Mudgaradūtam* was published in *Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society* in 1914. Siṃh, ed., *Rāmāvatārgāthā*, 250.

[38] See Lee Siegel, *Laughing Matters: Comic Tradition in India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

[39] This can also be substantiated by the fact that his *Mudgaradūtam* is a self-conscious parody of the generic style of *Meghadūtam* and its protagonist. Unlike *Megha*, the messenger cloud of *Meghadūtam*, the protagonist of *Mudgaradūtam* is a typical clown or fool who has killed his father because of his foolishness and is the embodiment of all obvious typical vices. He is a miser and a jealous being and is so brainless that he calls his father impotent. Rāmˈnagīnā Ojhā, "Mudgaradūtam aur Meghdūtam kī tulˈnātmak samīkśā" in *Rāmāvatārgāthā*, 286.

[40] The author writes 'His Holiness Swamī Mudgarānanda' in roman script.

[but could be found in the nationalist Hindu utopian times, or in heaven!]: buildings made of diamond bricks, planned residential areas with mansions, milk-sea, combs made of rabbit's horn, and so on. Exorcism there is an everyday sport and the prime technology that moves Varuna society is based on the power of hymn. Its inhabitants use the *trikāldarśī* mirror (capable of showing the past, present and future) and planchette; in case these fail, they use the technology of the *divya-dr̥ṣṭi* (divine eye). Socially, it is mentioned that sexual discrimination does not exist on this planet. Not because the planet has a gender-just society but because male and female are not distinct biological categories: a male can transform himself into female and vice-versa through the power of hymns. The capital city, Nirvāṇˈpur (Nirvana city) marked by density of monks and monasteries has a temple of lord Bhūtˈnāth (Lord of the ghosts or Śiva) in the city-centre. The lingam inside the pantheon has the power to transform objects into gold; its magnetic power sucks disease from the patient-devotees' body.

Hailing from such a place, Mudgar, not surprisingly, is born asexually of a barren woman on the clouds above Varuṇa, 10,000 years before the last 'death epoch' (*śav varṣa*). At the time of his birth he was an adult of 20 years and has remained of the same age till now, for the last 11832 years. For many years he has played [like Hindu gods, viz. child Hanuman or Kr̥ṣna!] with rainbows, balls of thunderbolt, and handkerchiefs of ice on the clouds of different planets. Mudgar claims to have inherited divine powers, which enable him to go into spiritual hibernation for thousands of years and criss-cross time and space at will. The sources of his divine power are his celibate father and virgin mother (like the heroes and heroines of *Mahābhārata*) and a spiritual-preceptor and deity called lord Bandhyāputra (barren woman's son). Because of such power bestowed upon him, he claims, his body and soul are not singular; he has a celestial body (*tārāśarīr*) and a corporeal body (*sthūlˈśarīr*). One of his souls is all-encompassing like the Supreme Being's (*paramātmā*) while his other soul is of a limited nature, similar to that of a normal being. When his celestial body travels across time and space with the

Supreme Being, Mudgar asserts, his corporeal body can rest at another place. Mudgar's assertion about his extraordinary power and the peculiarity of his planet Varuṇa, arguably, are unbounded by the imagined spatio-temporal logic of Kantian philosophy, or for that matter, by the imaginary rules of gravitation propounded by Newton. These baser laws, according to him, are only applicable to members of the lowly planet earth, though some great souls of earth can also break such laws nullifying Newtonian and Kantian rules.[41] Nonetheless, acquisition of such power, Mudgar further claims, enables him to witness the emergence of planets in the universe, the geological evolution of the planet earth, and the emergence of a climatic condition facilitating the beginning of biological lives. He challenges rustics and atheists who doubt his words that they may verify his claims by consulting many honoured living beings, ranging from a retired government servant of Arrah to members of an association in Banaras, or the *siddhas* in pilgrimage centres like Prayāga,[42] or a few great men in America using the planchette to uncover divine mysteries. After introducing himself and his world, the satiric narrator appears on earth, arguably, because of the abundance of his felicitators out there who would render the atmosphere for his arrival on earth conducive. They would also establish *Bandhyāputrānveṣiṇī sabhā* (Council of Researchers on Barren-woman's Son) and utilise the existing branches of *Avaṣkar samprāday* (Filth Society). People would, as a result, easily believe in the miracle and superhuman power of Mudgar and his planet.[43] In any case, in the midst of the unfolding of events, both miraculous and transcendental, he leaves Neptune for the planet earth.

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[41] Mudgar claims that according to the *Puranas* and even present council members, Kr̥ṣna could simultaneously be present in his mother's room and under the Banyan tree beside river Yamuna; according to *Bhojaprabandha*, all poets, Kālīdāsa, Bhavabhūti and Māgha – belonging to a temporal stretch of a thousand years – could be arguing with each other in the court of king Bhoja; according to the Rāmāyaṇa and Gītā, the dead son of sage Sandīpan and other Brahmans were brought back to life; according to Greek mythology, a man brought his dead wife to life by playing a miraculous music. Śarmā, *Śrīrāmāvatārśarmanibaṃdhāvalī*, 151-52.

[42] Arrah was a district town in colonial Bihar. Prayāg is the holy name of Allahabad.

[43] Śarmā, *Śrīrāmāvatārśarmanibaṃdhāvalī*, 151-52.

Mudgarānand'caritāvalī, evidently, begins as a discursive satirical text, which at the level of its formal features imitates or mocks the pre-established genre of *Purana*, especially, the *Mahātamya* or the tale of the emergence of the deity and his universe full of sacred-spiritual merits and wonders.[44] On the one hand, the narrator-protagonist Mudgar and his world are saturated with hyper-real claims (parallel to Hindu mythology) in the *Puranic* language of descriptive excess. On the other, these (scientifically untenable) claims are shot through with references to the contemporary religious universe of Hindu believers. The wonder tales (all powerful hymns, birth without copulation, eternal youth, immortality, retention of virginity after the delivery of baby, divine speech of the cloud, opulence of the heaven, and scriptural sanction of such qualities) that are spatially located on Varuṇa, are narrativised in continuum with Hindu mythology. This continuum is invariably punctured by inverted references to contemporary ideas and institutions. Unmistakably, these references are to those intellectuals and institutions that explicitly or implicitly rationalise them, either by positing them to be in congruence with science (occultism, transcendentalism, theosophy) or by taking recourse to abstract philosophical discussion. Effectively, the satirical cross-referencing collapses the distinction between the fantasy of the imaginary world of Varuṇa and the 'real' world of India by constant (in fact, repetitive) assertion of contemporary people and episodes. It unveils the target of attack quite starkly.[45]

If we take a cue from the author's biography and his times, it becomes abundantly clear that the target of satire are those people and organisations which propagated occultist ideas in direct or indirect collaboration with Hindu revivalist organisations such as the Ārya Samāj, Bhāratdharmamahāmaṇḍal, etc. The theosophists and their ilk appropriated and glorified Hindu religion, including its ritualistic, hierarchical, transcendental and eschatological dimensions against western modernity. Moreover, they justified their ideas with 'pseudo-scientific' explanations.[46] The circulation and acceptance of such ideas among the educated middle class of the time in India was alarming for a rationalist person like Sharma who chose to rebut through scholarly works like *Vedantism* and *Paramārthādhikaraṇ'ratnamālā*,[47] as well as through polemical journalistic writings.[48] It is the circulation of such ideas by sections of the educated Hindu middle class in the Hindi public sphere that forms the context of the satirical intervention and rebuttal by the author. While it is relatively easy to discern the initial context and target of the satirical attack in *Mudgarānand'caritāvalī* by historicising the narrator-figure Mudgar and his world introduced in the beginning by the author, the text becomes increasingly difficult and complex once Mudgar travels to earth. We shall narrate and unravel the layered narrative and political significance of the seemingly disjointed tale of Mudgar's account on earth. First, we shall dwell on the narrative strategy and its implications for Mudgar's travelogue.

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[44] On the nature of *Purana* narrative and its generic feature see Velcheru N. Rao, "*Purana*" in *The Hindu World*, ed. Sushil Mittal and Gene Thursby (London: Routledge, 2004), 97- 115. The rationalist tradition of satirising the *Puranic* narrative in Indian literary tradition is quite old and established, if not mainstream. The narrative of Sharma's satire and the rationalist attack on *Puranic* hyperbole is conspicuously similar to eighth century Sanskrit text *Dhūrtākhyana* written by a Jaina monk-scholar Haribhadra Sūri. It can be reasonably speculated that Sharma was well aware of this text and the tradition. See Śrī Jina Vijaya Muni ed., *Dhūrtākhyana of Haribhadra Sūri*, With an Elaborate, Critical Essay on the *Dhūrtākhyana* by Dr. A. N. Upadhye, M.A., D.Litt. (Bombay: Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, 1944).

[45] See the last sentence of the opening quotation of this chapter cited from Rahul Sankrityayan's autobiography: "Śarmājī told such stories ridiculing *Puranic* hyperboles."

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[46] Ganganath Jha mentions the influential circle of intellectuals inspired by theosophical ideas in Banaras in his autobiography. On the history of theosophical ideas, the role of Hindu religious philosophy in theosophists' arguments, the reasons of its appeal among the educated Hindu middle class and initial collaboration between Ārya Samājīs and Theosophists in colonial India, see Bruce F. Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980) and Anne Taylor, *Anne Besant: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). Also see Amiya P. Sen, *Hindu Revivalism in Bengal, 1872-1905* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993) for understanding the activities of individuals like Pandit Shashdar Tarakchuramani, Hindu missionary-preacher polemicists who aggressively defended Hindu rituals and customs in the wake of the Age of Consent controversy.

[47] Hence his *Vedanta* is absolutely monist, atheistic and this worldly. Also see Harimohan Jha's perceptive remark on Sharma's intellectual position in *Paramārthādhikaraṇ'ratnamālā*: "the central thrust of Sharma's argument in this book is directed towards demolishing the four conceptual pillars of theistic doctrines – *ātman, punarjanma, karma* and *mokṣa*. Sharma lays bare all of them as logically interdependent and hence the fallacy of one leading to the other." Śarmā, *Paramārth'darśan*, VIII;Siṃh, ed., *Rāmāvatārgāthā*, 197.

[48] For instance, Sharma later wrote an article directly referring to several people including Sir Oliver Lodge – the physicist who turned in the direction of eschatology; Sampurnanada of Banaras – a young theosophist who also became a prominent UP Congress politician and remained deeply interested in the revival of traditional Hindu astrology; Ramdas Gaud – a teacher of chemistry who had written textbooks of science but believed in life after death, and other educated middle class men arguing for belief in Hindu eschatology or occultism and the magical power of *tantra* and *yoga*. See "*Paramārtha-siddhāṃta*", not dated in Śarmā, *Śrīrāmāvatārśarmanibaṃdhāvalī*, 225-228. Moreover, *Mudgarānand'caritāvalī* itself obliquely refers to and mocks one saint Bibi Basanti (who was under trial in the Madras High court) in a footnote at the beginning of chapter eleven. She is none other than Annie Besant who, according to Sharma's daughter, he used to ridicule and call (in his own style of translating non-Indian words) Mem Basant in his informal communication. Siṃh, ed., *Rāmāvatārgāthā*, 97. Taylor, *Annie Besant: A Biography*, 296-299. Sharma's "*Khulī Ciṭṭhī*" or an open letter to the editor of *Sudhā* is also directed against such beliefs, practices, and claims. In footnote 8 of this essay, he mentions the noted lawyer and theosophist of Patna Purnendunarayan Sinha, who had invited a person reputed to be able to play and move the piano from a distance with his occult power. He also mentions how the eminent anthropologist S. C. Ghosh challenged this person. Similarly, footnote 10 of *Mudgarānand'caritāvalī* mentions and ridicules the foolishness of his colleague at the Oriental College of the Banaras Hindu University, who was inspired by Annie Besant and believed in her ideas. Śarmā, *Śrīrāmāvatārśarmanibaṃdhāvalī*, 218.

Dynamics of Mudgar's power: the narrator and narrative

Neptunian Mudgar is bestowed with all the powers that are inversely proportional to the disenchanting rationale and power of science and technology. The eternal Mudgar (like any other divine being hailing from a world of Hindu imagination), as the reader is told, defies Kantian rationality and Newtonian physics. The Neptunian, by the grace of his parents and his guru,[49] can traverse the whole universe and be present at multiple places and moments simultaneously with his dual (but at the same time unified) bodies and souls.[50] Because of such power the narrator-protagonist Mudgar and his narrative move in mythical and historical time-space with meandering fluidity.

In other words, the projection of the narrator Mudgar as a divine non-terrestrial being serves a crucial function in the constitution of the satiric narrative. After all, Mudgar is a divine being; he is an intimate outsider to earth who, unbounded by the modern scientific rules of space, time, causality and purpose (*dik*, *kāl*, *kāraṇ*, *kārya*), can traverse time and space, see the unseen, and speak the unspeakable. While this is a common attribute of the satiric narrator,[51] this superhuman and mythical-magical power of Mudgar is additionally significant. His ability to witness and report events across time and space from a location above the sites of the events of the past –be it mythical or historical– also equips Mudgar to be an ideal objective historian of an interesting transcultural history of the world.

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[49] Mudgar, the reader is told, has acquired his power from his celibate-virgin parents and his lord named Bandhyāputra. Sharma also uses the term, Bandhyāputra, in his philosophical treatises referring to pure untruth, as the term itself denotes a phenomenon scientifically impossible to exist – a woman is barren because she does not have reproductive power, so the possibility of her having a child is an absolute untruth. Hence, the fundamental source of Mudgar's power is turned upside down and declared fake.

[50] The projection of Mudgar having a dual body and soul ridicules not only the unreasoned ludicrousness of a grossly false phenomenon but also, given the author's philosophical position as an absolute monist rejecting any possibility of occult and eschatological speculation, mocks non-monist theistic Hindu philosophy and polytheism.

Travel and travails of Mudgarānanda

In his sojourn on earth Mudgar locates himself (to be precise, his body, at times corporeal and at others celestial) and his narrative at three disparate spatio-temporal zones: 1) at Hemkūt on Mount Kailāśa (sacred place of lord Shiva in the Himalayas), 2) in the Mediterranean, 3) at Prayāg's Kumbh melā (Hindu religious fair organised every twelve years in Allahabad).

First location: Hemkūt, Mount Kailāśa[52]

From Hemkūt Mudgar narrates the story of *Satya*, *Tretā* and *Dvāpar* yuga, selectively speaking about the events of the *Rāmāyana*, *Mahābhārata*, *Skandapurāna* etc., extolling [in effect mocking] the *Puranic* Hindu geography, time, causality, technology, ethical, social and sexual values. The 'glory' of the three *yuga* is spread out through randomly selected miraculous deeds of legendary mythical characters, and these descriptions are invariably shot through with references to contemporary social reality.

To cite a few examples, during one of his many raids Rāvaṇa ('like the Mahāmoda' [Mahmud of Gazni]), impelled by his love for lord Śiva, raised the mount Kailāśa on his hand. Lord Śiva reacted and pushed Kailāśa back down. While it threw Rāvaṇa into the netherworld, Mudgar's Hemkūt disappeared along with sage Kaśyap's university and his ten thousand students. Mudgar with his divine power stayed in the sky but the university, he says, allegedly would take rebirth as Nalandā in Magadh at Huen-Tsang's time or would appear as the university run by Bhāratdharmamahāmaṇḍal [a Hindu organisation which believed in unflinching glory of Brahmanic Hindu past and its scientific achievements].

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[51] This characteristic of the narrator in satire is discussed in further detail in section 2 of the following chapter, especially when we discuss the nature of the narrator-figure *Matˈvālā*.

[52] Śarmā, *Śrīrāmāvatārśarmanibaṃdhāvalī*, 155-164.

Likewise, after narrating episodes from *Satya yuga*, Mudgar starts counting events of *Tretā yuga*. He mentions in passing fascinating technologies – Rāma's *Puṣpak vimān*, the flying chariot of king Daśˈratha, and his wife's [Kaikeyī] mechanical skills as she replaced the chariot's axle with her finger. He makes quick observations on social change and comments: "in a single generation great changes occurred. Daśˈratha was young after sixty thousand years; Rāma was married at the age of sixteen. Sīta was only eight, yet felt the tremor of love in her heart. It was not like today when boys are married at the age of 6 or 8 and girls feel ashamed at the talk of their marriage even after 18."[53] Similarly, because of such changes, Mudgar further says, killing a śudra sage, which was a sin during Daśarath's time, became a pious act for Rāma and the murder of sage Śambuka by Rāma brought back life into the body of a dead Brahman boy.

Continuing in a similar vein Mudgar enters into *Dvāpar yuga* and mentions that this time was so *enlightened* that the great sage Vyāsa (to whom the authorship of the epic *Mahābhārata* is attributed) was born as a result of an unmarried consummation of Satyavatī with Parāśar, and that Bhīṣma was born of the river Ganges. He goes on to the story of lord Kr̥ṣna and mentions his playfulness with young women, episodes depicting him as the slayer of demons as a child, his confrontation with lord Indra, and the episode where he saves Draupadī's honour by travelling within seconds from one city to another. While for Jayadeva, Mudgar says, Kr̥ṣna was an adult, for some English educated devotees he was always a child, but for some others he was a simple reformer like Luther. Mudgar, then, quickly reaches the end of *Dvāpar*, or should we say, the beginning of *Kali* yuga.[54]

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[53] Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine. Śarmā, *Śrīrāmāvatārśarmanibaṃdhāvalī*, 162.

[54] Śarmā, *Śrīrāmāvatārśarmanibaṃdhāvalī*, 163-164.

Mudgar and India's glorious (Un) scientific past

From Hemkūt, Mudgar thus tells us an interlaced story of the past and present of earth, a tale that dwells on the narrative capacity of the *Puranas* to allow cohabitation of fact with fiction and linear with circular time.[55] Using the narrative device of *Puranic* time and geography and thereby placing himself at Hemkūt, Mudgar subversively recounts the legendary tales of divine characters and their alleged moral superiority and scientific power. However, the recounting soon turns subversive because these tales are invariably shot through the satirical cross-references to the contemporary. Hence, episodes like Rāvana's lifting of Mount Kailāsa, Rāma killing a Śudra sage or Sīta being a child-bride, child Kr̥ṣna's dalliance with young maidens and so forth, mocks the Hindu mythological universe as fantastic and devoid of any scientific-moral-pedagogic values. To reiterate, it ridicules the likes of Bhāratˈdharmamahāmaṇḍal and Ārya samaji preachers, who believed in such fantasies as rebirth, asexual reproduction, flying technology, divine play, and transmigration of soul. Soon after the reader is told that he is sad and bored and so he (to be precise, his celestial body) and his narrative move westward– from the Himalayas to the Mediterranean.

Second location: above the Mediterranean[56]

With his celestial body located in the Mediterranean, Mudgar resumes his story. At times he travels; at moments he simply places himself 'above' the Mediterranean region like a flying balloon in the sky. His hugely spread out and meandering narrative encompasses selective events from ancient Egypt, Assyria, Greece, Rome and India followed by medieval and modern Europe and Asia till the dawn of 20th century. These descriptions are occasionally shot through with oblique comments on contemporary (Indian) society.[57] There now follows the summary of the excruciatingly long narrative of Mudgar, which deals with the global historical past in marvellously enchanting ways.

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[55] In the ancient *Puranic* reckoning of the past, notion of time is circular-spiral, divided into four *yugas* (age) *Satya*, *Tretā*, *Dvāpar* and *Kali* in temporally and morally descending order. However, this circular-spiral time of each yuga also simultaneously incorporates linear-straight time. See, Romila Thapar, *Time as a Metaphor of History* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996). Using the linearity of the last age *Kali* for the purpose of narrating the historical past in the *yuga* frame during colonial times started as early as 1808 with pandit scholars like Mrityunjay Vidyalankar in his *Rājābali* (Chronicle of Kings, Serampur, 1808). See Sumit Sarkar, "The Many Worlds of Indian History" in his *Writing Social History* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 6-10.

[56] Śarmā, *Śrīrāmāvatārśarmanibaṃdhāvalī*, 164-190

Mudgar travels to the land of *Ajaputras* [Egyptians], passes the *Asuras* [Assyrians] and mentions their rich and fertile soil. He then describes the peculiar features of the Egyptian hieroglyphic script; mentions the pyramids and the Egyptian belief (resembling contemporary beliefs) that the dead go to heaven, and then mocks their cult of the dead and their extravagant death rituals. Egyptians, he says, had a system of three varṇas – brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas and vaiśyas, and were excellent in art, craft, architecture and mathematics. Pandit Ukleda's [Euclid] 47th principle of the first book of geometry finds special mention proving that yavan maharṣi Pr̥ithugauṛ's [Greek scholar Pythagoras] theorem was originally taken from Egyptians. He next passes the Assyrians and mentions that the great cities of *Ninhavpur* [Niniveh] and *Bhavyalūnpur* [Babylon] surpassed in size even modern *Nandan* [London]. Mudgar then turns to the *Phaṇīś* [Phoenicians], and the *Jāruṣī* [Jews] who, along with the Egytians and the Assyrians would be defeated by the Pārasīs [Persians], Alīkˈcandra [Alexander], and the Romans. Phoenicians are lauded as traders and literate people establishing many colonies in North Africa and Mediterranean Europe. On the other hand, Jews are mentioned as non-industrious moneylenders noted for their hyper-religious fantasies, the myth of Moses' enlightenment, the crossing of the Red Sea by his followers is obliquely criticized comparing them to the myths about lord Kr̥ṣna. Mudgar then mentions, in passing, the recent discovery of the civilization of Kr̥īta-dvīpa [Crete Island] by archaeologists and then jumps on to pour sarcasm on simpleton Sanskrit Pandits and *devˈbuddhivādī aṃgrejīdā* (supernaturalist-anglophone) Indians, who lack interest in the archaeological sciences.[58]

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[57] In this section, all non-Indian proper nouns are rendered in Sanskrit without explanation and, mostly, without even mentioning the original in brackets. Proper nouns are rendered in English by me and are put in large brackets.

[58] Sharma is referring to cases like those of the Asokan pillar discovered at Basarh (ancient territorial state of Vaiśali). The local pandits and intelligentsia, as recorded by Alexander

Next, Mudgar briefly describes the Mediterranean political geography and visits the ancient Greek Civilisation with its prominent cities of *Arthanā* [Athens] and *Suvratā* [Sparta], its great hero Harikul [Hercules] who reminds him of the monkey-god Hanumāna and *Mahābhārata*'s hero Bhīma, its Rāmāyaṇa as composed by the poet Sumer [Homer], and the philosophers Sukratu, Pratanu and Ariṣṭattar [Socrates, Plato and Aristotle]. After a very brief discussion of the decline of Greek city-states caused by internal feud and intellectual decline, Mudgar comments on the intellectual attempt to dispel the cognitive fallacy (*bhram*) by philosopher Socrates, but sadly he was poisoned to death and declared nāstik [believer in non-being]. He talks about the *Mag^{l}dron* [Macedonian] destruction of the freedom of Greek citizenry and denounces Plato and Aristotle for supporting monarchy. Alīk^{l}candra [Alexander] finds mention as a terrifying ghost who destroyed all freedom of the Greeks and conquered lands up to Sindh. Alexander wanted to conquer India too but, according to Mudgar's caustic explanation, he was affected by the wonderful character of India and drowned his army in lethargy and laziness. Roots of Indian idleness lay, arguably, in the philosophy of non-violence and otherworldliness [propagated by Jains and Buddhists]. Mudgar exclaims the redundancy of such extreme non-violence, which has hindered even touching the flesh for medical research and practice. He, then, jumps on to the story of the Nandas' destruction and the ousting of the Greek ruler Śalayak [Seleucid] by a rare hero Chandragupta Maurya.

Mudgar's story takes a quick leap here. He literally reaches the sky above the Mediterranean like a balloon in order to see India, Greece, Rome and Spain simultaneously. He witnesses the coming of the legendary Rāma and Raumil [Remus and Romulus], talks about the beginning of *prajārājya* [Roman democracy] and the continuing strife between *dvijas* and *śudras* (patricians and plebeians). Mudgar goes on to talk about Hanuman's reincarnation Hanubal [Hannibal] and his conquest, the fall of Carthage,

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Cunningham, attributed this pillar to the epic hero Bhīma of the *Mahābhārata*. The pillar was said to be the mace possessed by Bhīma. Upinder Singh, *The Discovery of Ancient India: Early Archaeologists and the Beginning of Archaeology* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), 64-65.

Roman Kesarī [Caeser] taking control over the territories beyond the Alps and also *Śvetadvipa* and *Śarmanya* [England and France], the rule of Agastya [Augustus] and the ensuing moral decline and revolts after him. Post-Augustus Rome is explained by references to the condition of Kashmir after king Avantivarmaṇ. Chaos and decline of Rome causes revulsion in Mudgar's celestial soul, and (like the mythological apocalypse) the earth starts spitting fire, drowning Harikul and Pampiya [Herculaneum and Pompeii] in smoke and dust. Mudgar uses his skill, acquired from a disciple of sage Sandīpan [teacher of lord Kr̥ṣna], and swallows the fire of the mount *Viśuviya* [Vesuvio]; he puts the earth into deep meditation and continues witnessing the misdeeds of the Romans. The social and moral decline of the once great Romans is then compared with the decline of the Mauryan and the Gupta empires; the general causes of imperial decline being identified as the growth of fake (unscientific) scholarship, absurd poetical fancies, and the culture of indulgence. The consequence, as Mudgar sees it, was Rome succumbing to Huns, Tartars, Karmuks and other *vanya-jatiyāñ* (wild tribes), and its bifurcation into Rome and *Kaṃstantupurī* [Constantinople].

And so Mudgar continues with his 'global history'. He mentions the origins of Christianity, ridicules the biblical myth of Resurrection, criticises Papacy, talks about the origin and spread of Islam, discusses the European Middle Ages, mentions the religious frenzy and violence of the crusade, describes the expansion of the Islamic empire and its destruction by Charlemagne, comments on the tyranny and unworthiness of medieval European knights by citing the story of Don Dīn kutsit and Sakᑊpañj [Quixotte and Sancho Panza] alongside their Indian counterparts. He laments that like other regions India also witnessed a lack of initiative on the part of ruling classes in bringing about national-religious churning since the reign of the last powerful Gupta emperor Skandagupta. He then sums up other events and personalities of world history by dropping names of personalities like Cromwell, Columbus, Vasco de Gama, and of events like Russo-Japanese war, the 1911 Revolution in China, and the sad state of Muslims in Egypt, Persia and Turkey. And soon after this, Mudgar's narrative about the historical past of the world ends rather abruptly.

Mudgar and an 'Indian' history of the world(?)

Continuing with the *Puranic* narrative device (but now dwelling on the linear time of *Kali* age available within the circular temporality of *yuga*) Mudgar locates himself in the historical geography of the Mediterranean. From this point he recounts world history from the beginning of historical time. There are, however, both similarities and differences between his two descriptions – Hemkūt and the Mediterranean. Like the recounting of the episodes from Hindu mythological past, the story of historical past of the world is subversively retold. Old and New Testament stories regarding Moses and Jesus, ancient Egyptian rituals of death, transmigration of life, religious-social anomaly, etc. are made targets of satiric attack through satirical cross-referencing. Yet, what is different and also perplexing is the meandering and linguistically convoluted description of historical episodes, personalities and places from the history of the entire world. Why is Sharma so keen on incorporating the historical past of the world, which pushes the text towards an exercise in (mock?) historiography laden with excruciating detail?[59]

To answer this we need to probe at a deeper level and ask - what could be the implied agenda and, above all, what could be the political repercussion of such a narrative?[60] The narrative of Mudgar's world travel, which covers the historical past and encompasses the globe, is not without significance. It attempts to construct, if we may call it so, a mock Indian history of the world in the *Puranic* frame. It tells us a history of the world in 'Indian' terms through the deployment of a variety of linguistic cognitive and narrative strategies. It puts non-Indian past and society under the same rigorous test of reasoning without according superiority to the West. It poses significant intellectual and cognitive questions to the act of *description*. How to describe and why to describe the *world* in one's own terms? What political repercussions could it ensue in the descriptive regime of the time?

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[59] For the sake of narrative ease Sharma could have brought down Mudgar directly from Hemkūt to North India after chapter two or could have prevented Mudgar from going on a world travel after chapter seven. This, at least, could have saved the text from being a reader-unfriendly narrative. However, for Sharma this does not appear to be a primary concern. We should not be detained by what he did not do, but explain what he did.

[60] The easiest plausible answer could be the following: As illustrated in the first section, Sharma's unflinching quest to propagate critical reason and scientific knowledge (and alternatively to attack the unscientific and unreasonable) in each and every discursive space possibly allures him here as well. In fact, Sharma would later attempt to write a brief history of the human civilization since the beginning of life on earth to the modern age as the story of *Satyadeva* (Truth-god). He proposed to do this in the most unusual narrative frame of *vrata kathā* for the same pedagogic purpose. Through Mudgar's world travel Sharma inserts a pedagogic agenda of familiarising the reader with the knowledge of the historical past even into the satirical text This aspect of the satirical text has also been argued in the last chapter in

Contingent on the *Puranic* narrative frame Mudgar's magical-mythical power to remain unbounded by spatio-temporal constraints of history is of great significance. This extraordinary power of the narrator is mobilised to tell an 'impartial' and unified global history in a single frame. For example, his power to position himself in the sky above the Mediterranean as a balloon and hence, both literally and symbolically, over and above the time and space within which historical developments unfold, is dependent on this frame. To put it differently, Mudgar's location above the Mediterranean from where he could see both India and Europe enables him to narrate an 'impartial', connected and unified global history in which the pasts of the West and non-West are neither disjointed nor radically different; they are connected and unified on the same temporal and spatial scale.[61] Thus, against the 'spatio-temporal regime' of the Orientalist narrative, which notoriously puts the past of the non-west on different and unequal scales, Mudgar brings all pasts at the same level and unites them as a single one. Sharma, through the deployment of a *Puranic* narrative frame, equips Mudgar to question the 'spatio-temporal regime' of the Orientalist-colonialist historiography, which produces an asymmetrical history of the west and the non-west, and constructs a singular

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the context of the satire *rel'stotra*. However, this answer seems too simple and not quite adequate.

[61] This is in congruence with the logical imperatives of Sharma's take on the historical development of world civilization discussed in his historical essay *Sabhyatā kā vikās*.

global past in which the non-west is perpetually reduced as peripheral to and as exterior of the west.[62]

As we have also noticed within this narrative, Sharma uses phonetically similar Indian (read Sanskrit) words to represent non-Indian proper nouns. Alexander the great is written as Alīkˈcandra, Mahmud (of Gazni) as Mahāmoda, Cyrus the great (in old Persian Kurus) as Kāruvīr, Abraham as Abrahma, London as Nandan, and so forth. Thus, he uses his linguistic ability to invent such Indian terms for non-Indian names retaining phonetic similarity.[63] Sometimes he transposes some aspects of their connotative meaning in Indian rendering. At other times, he alters them to his own version of the person or the place. For example, Cyrus the great is rendered as Kāru the great. It resembles phonetically his Persian name Kurus, which was used by the Greeks and later referred to by the European scholars as Cyrus. In Hindi it also means 'the great builder'.[64] Likewise, Nandan, Mahāmoda, Abrahma and Alīkˈcandra are phonetically similar renderings, but at a deeper level they are also injected with additional meanings in the process of translation. For example, in Hindi Nandan also refers to a landscape of pleasure and indulgence.[65] Mahamoda means cheerful the great or, it means a great offspring of Kśatriya and Śudra parentage.[66] Abrahma means one who lacks devotion or, one who is not the universal soul.[67] Alīkˈcandra literally means the infamous moon.[68] This satiric inversion and deformation in rendering selected names is especially pronounced when

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[62] For a good contemporary postcolonial critique of this orientalist-colonialist regime of representation see Timothy Mitchell, "The Stage of Modernity" in *Questions of Modernity*, ed. Timothy Mitchell (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 1-34.

[63] This is clearly in congruence with his larger political agenda visible in his Sanskrit lexicon.

[64] According to Shyamsundar Das, *kāru* also means Vishvakarma, a great builder of craft and architecture. Śyāmsundar Dās, *Hindī śabdˈsāgar, navīn saṃskaraṇ* (Kāśī: Nāgˈrī pracārinī sabhā, 1965), 919.

[65] *nandan* is the mythical garden owned by the king of gods Indra and noted for pleasure and indulgence.

[66] *mahā* is a prefix which means great. *moda*, according to Macdonell's means joy, delight, gladness, *a mixed caste (offspring of a Kshatriya and Sûdrâ)*. Arthur Antony Macdonell, *A Practical Sanskrit Dictionary* (London: Oxford University Press, 1929), 236.

[67] *abrahma*, according to Macdonel, also means "no Brāhman; lacking devotion; lacking Brāhmans". Macdonel, *A Practical Sanskrit Dictionary*, 22.

[68] *alīk*, according to Shyamsundar Das, means unlikable, untrue, lacking dignity or prestige. Dās, *Hindī śabdˈsāgar*, 332.

Sharma has to pass his judgement on those historical personalities. Sharma's act of satiric violence in rendering certain names in a demeaning way can be understood by the fact that he has also otherwise shown his personal irreverence for all of them during the course of their description in *Mudgarānanda* and/or in his other writings. But why, in general, does he render all proper nouns into Sanskrit/Hindi? On a lighter note, it appears as a satirical riposte to the British deformation of Indian proper nouns and names. However, given Sharma's consistency in rendering proper nouns in this and other writings it becomes clear that it is a serious political act. In fact, the sheer act of rendering non-Indian terms in Indianised forms, whether with or without satiric inflection, is politically charged and tantamount to subversion of, if one may say so, the 'quotative regime' operational in Orientalist/European scholarship describing Indian society. 'Indian history of the world', in other words, inverts the 'philological asymmetry' and makes an audacious attempt to render the non-Indian word (and, by extension, world!) cognizable to its readers through an Indian semantic frame.

What is more, in this narration of the historical past of the globe, India –its heroes, events, social and cultural categories – is the mainstay or axis of reference to describe, identify and classify non-Indian persons and phenomena. Unlike the prevalent Eurocentric comparisons, like Kalidāsa as the Shakespeare of India or Samudragupta as Napoleon, here Homer is the Vālmīki of Greece who has written the second Rāmayana. Hercules is a replica of Bhīma. Crossing of the Red sea by Moses is compared with Vāsudeva crossing Yamuna with baby Kr̥ṣna. Social stratification of Roman and Egyptian societies is described through the Hindu social schema of *varna.* Chaotic situation in imperial Rome after Augustus is described as the same as what would happen in Kashmir after the Varmans. The Indo-centric narrative, I suggest, reverses the order of comparison of dominant historiography in which India has so far been reduced to the replica/extension of European history. This reversal in the predominant schema of analysis is tantamount to a call for, if we may mention so, a new 'comparative regime'.

Sharma, thus, through the deployment of a *Puranic* narrative frame, equips Mudgar to be located above the Mediterranean. From this locational advantage he constructs a single global past and challenge the historiographical asymmetry between the west and the non-west by subverting and reconfiguring modern 'quotative', 'comparative' and 'spatio-temporal regimes' of the Orientalist-colonialist historiography. In brief, Mudgar narrates an *'Indian historiography of the world'*[69] that refuses to be framed by Eurocentric history's descriptive and analytical regimes and, in fact, threatens to 'provincialize Europe' much before the recent calls given by the postcolonial scholarship.[70] The inversion of the 'quotative', 'comparative' and 'spatio-temporal regimes', however, does not necessarily vitiate the 'Indian historiography of the world' towards an avowedly indigenist position, a position that might easily have been reduced to be derivative of the colonialist-orientalist project. Mudgar's narrative subverts the colonialist-orientalist regimes of description but not from the position of a cultural supremacist who follows the same *rule of difference.*[71] For, although the historical past of the globe is brought on the same spatio-temporal scale, and narrativised from an Indian semantic-social frame; the yardstick of assessment is not different but identical –action and achievement based on scientific knowledge and reason. The yardstick is conceptualised as universal and without any cultural-geographical markers; it remains similar for India and beyond.[72] Hence, satirical cross-referencing as a corrective to the historical past is deployed against the 'wrong' practices and beliefs of any society.[73]

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[69] This phrase is altered from its original usage by Ranajit Guha in the context of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's nationalist call for an "Indian historiography of India". Ranajit Guha, *An Indian Historiography of India: A Nineteenth Century Agenda and Its Implications* (Calcutta: Bagchi, 1988).

[70] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincialising Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[71] The argument about colonialism as 'rule of difference' is developed in Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

[72] If we recall, for instance, his universal-general aim to promote *udyoga* or industriousness and self-reliance in contemporary society and remove fatalism and belief in the supernatural and unscientific, or his assessment of the causes for the rise and fall of civilizations in history

After the recounting of 'Indian historiography of the world', however, Mudgar shifts his spatio-temporal location and immerses his celestial body and soul into the corporeal, re-appearing at the third location near BNW Railways at Allahabad.[74] What happens to Mudgar in contemporary colonial north India is as much about the destiny of what he represents, i.e. Indian tradition, as it is the possibility of its knowledge forms and practices, i.e. the possibility of resuscitation of traditional knowledge forms in the light of scientific modernity.

Third location: Prayāg's Kumbh melā[75]

Mudgar's entire overture on earth (before the story ends with his suggestive retreat to Varuna) remains confined to two places. First, he is in the middle of the crowded traditional space of a pilgrimage centre marked by din and commotion and second, in the noisy colonial courtroom. At both sites he is surrounded, to his surprise, by a crowd peopled by members of middle classes including self-styled champions of Hinduism. The satiric narrator and the narrative, resultantly, switch to the contemporary North Indian city also famous as 'holy' city of Prayāg. Mudgar's initial enthusiasm and hope to visit earth (expressed at the beginning of his journey), which was to be facilitated by the cult of modern deities and godmen, fall flat. A long and twisted narrative of Mudgar's travails in contemporary north India, however as we shall see below, is provocatively amusing.

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in terms of universal values – reasoned action and industriousness, scientific quest and achievement, it becomes abundantly clear that Sharma's political agenda is consistent.

[73] For example, decline in the field of sciences and commerce, collective social inaction and cultural indulgence are satirised and depicted as the general cause of the downfall of all empires and civilizations whether Greco-Roman, Egyptian or Indian.

[74] The political turmoil of nineteenth and the contemporary century confuses Mudgar and he retreats to Mount Hemkūt. In the story Mudgar is shown to be in deep meditation on Hemkūt during which his head starts releasing fire and smoke. The vice chancellor of the University of Hemkūt, like the political speeches of the lecturers in the university premises, fears that this will cause disturbance amongst students and decides to throw Mudgar down to the earth for this. Here, through an awkward insertion of a new subplot, the author is obliquely referring to the colonial administration's paranoiac vigilance on teachers and students. Sharma as a teacher in Patna University was subjected to such surveillance when he would be reprimanded for the similar charge of spreading and fomenting seditious ideas amongst his students a year later.

[75] Śarmā, *Śrīrāmāvatārśarmanibaṃdhāvalī*, 191-199

Mudgar's deep meditation breaks due to the cacophony created by the Ārya Samājī and Sanātanī preachers, and resultantly he finds himself in real time and space at the *Kumbh melā*[76] in contemporary colonial North India. At *Kumbh* Mudgar is bewildered and inspired by *nāgā* (naked) monks, so he also shuns all his clothes except his blanket for he seems to have realised *brahma*! Soon, to his surprise, huge crowds of Hindu (also, some Muslim and Christian) men, women, and children from all over India hurl for his *darśana* bearing presents – vegetarian and non-vegetarian edibles, alcohol, bathing soap, Indian and foreign cloths, and ornaments – to worship Mudgar as a new incarnation. In the middle of this confusion he feels hungry and thirsty. He eats whichever food is close to his hands, drinks a bottle of alcohol confusing it with water, and falls asleep amidst the chants of the devotees. Mudgar wakes up with a hangover at midnight as a result of indigestion. He throws away his blanket [which makes him nude] on the floor and becomes restless in the dark night, thinking of going out to relieve himself. The devotees take his restlessness as his foray into spiritual ecstasy. They, as a result, encircle him and start dancing as well. Suddenly, one Miss Gobarikā (Cow-dung) comes to perform *āratī*. In the dim light of its flame Mudgar's naked body is exposed. Before the crowd could be embarrassed by Mudgar's nudity, it is philosophised and justified by one Mr. Vidyāˈandhˈkūp Khakhanˈdev Śarmā (Ignorant-darkwell-beseecher Sharma), who claims not to believe in myths but only in one God and one scripture, i.e. Veda. The restless Mudgar starts singing nonsensical verses in Persian, Sanskrit and English. He feels uncontrollable pain in his stomach and runs to the riverside and vanishes in the dark behind a hut of a *dusādhin* (an untouchable caste woman). His disappearance causes panic amongst the devotees; they follow him. The *āratī* disc slips away from Miss Cow-dung's hand and causes fire in the hut, killing two children and a cow. The police come in after the fire breaks out, and the devotees run away.

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[76] A sacred pilgrimage centre on the confluence of Gangā, Yamunā and the mythical Saraswatī rivers organised after every twelve years. It is one of the most significant Hindu pilgrimage centres where arguably almost all monks and heads of different sectarian orders camp beside the confluence. Monks and priests as well as pious Hindu men and women all take a dip in the sacred river and worship the Sun-god in the month around mid December-January.

The last scene is located in the courtroom, which almost turns into a theatre of the absurd. In the morning the police inspector Laṅgˈṛū Siṃh (Lame lion) records the statements of eyewitnesses, including Miss Cowdung's. She testifies that "Śrījī (i.e. Mudgar) went for *gaṇeś-kriyā* (to defecate) inside the *kuñj* (hut); flame of fire came from inside."[77] Mudgar is immediately brought under preventive custody and produced in the court. The case is put before the magistrate who is said to be a Hindu but *vilāyat*[foreign]-*returned*. The prosecution argues that according to the investigation report filed by the inspector of police, the accused has defecated fire, causing damage to property and human life as well as death of a holy cow; hence, the crime is not only a legal offence but also a religious one. The magistrate ridicules the inspector Lame lion for being under the influence of theosophy and mesmerism while preparing such a report.

In the meantime, a hungry and exhausted Mudgar faints. The magistrate orders for some bread and brandy to feed him. The audience in the court object to this as their Svāmījī, arguably, has gone into meditation. The inspector, however, objects to the feeding as it might cause defecation, leading to a fire in the courtroom. The magistrate himself sprinkles water on Mudgar's face, gives him bread to eat and some alcohol to drink. In between Mudgar gets drunk and starts dancing and singing, uttering simultaneously in Sanskrit and English:

"I am a Neptunian and come to see *poor earth*,
How *she is hypnotised in gay occult myth*,
Clairvoyance, and planchets and telepathy,
Why telegraphy, why allopathy, why homeopathy."[78] [sic]

This causes considerable mirth in the courtroom. However, the public prosecutors – educated middle class Indians both Hindu and Muslim– continue to use rational legal arguments to prove that Mudgar is guilty. They provide a two-pronged argument: one, it is a clear case of homicide and arson; two, rejection of the possibility of defecating fire questions the validity of religious scriptures and interferes in the matter of religion. Alternatively, they wish to prove that Mudgar can emit fire from his anus, which would ultimately establish the divinity of the godman and, by extension, supremacy of an oriental religion--Hinduism. The barristers continue to argue for the conviction of Mudgar by (mis)using the category of *pramāṇas – śabda*, *anumāna*, *upamāna* and *pratyakśa* –to validate their arguments.[79]

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[77] Śarmā, *Śrīrāmāvatārśarmanibaṃdhāvalī*, 196.
[78] Śarmā, *Śrīrāmāvatārśarmanibaṃdhāvalī*, 198.

As this is going on Mudgar feels pain in his abdomen and becomes restless again indicating he may have to defecate. On this Inspector Lame Lion happily shouts, "May *Śrījī* excrete by the will of God! *Hākim* [Majistrate] will be, then, forced to believe in the power of the *Mahātmās*."[80] The magistrate irritatingly orders his peon to oust the inspector and Mudgar from his courtroom. The Inspector, however, requests Mudgar to sit down on the pile of straw and defecate when the magistrate is on his way home, hoping this would make the magistrate realise his blunder. This is where the *Mudgarānand'caritāvalī* ends abruptly.

Mudgarānanda and the "poor earth [...] hypnotised in gay occult myth"[81]

In Mudgar's representation, thus, Prayāg is not only a sacred site of confluence of holy rivers and *kumbha* pilgrimage, it is also a space of conglomeration of all the old and new Hindu religious sects and orders (*nāgā*, *ārya samājī*, *sanātanī*), a place marked by the convergence of all segments of Indian society (man and woman, urban and rustic, *zamindar*, *raiyat* and so on).

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[79] The barristers invoke *śabda pramāṇa* by citing an episode from the *Mahābhārata*; they argue that if one sage Uttanka could compel a horse to release fire from its anus, is it not possible for a seer like *Mudgarānanda* to release fire? Similarly, they argue on the basis of *anumāna* also. They contend that in many countries people use toilet paper but Hindus use water. If the Hindus do not fear the possibility of fire, they would have also been using toilet paper. Hence, it can be inferred that Hindus never rule out the possibility of fire during morning rites. They, then, argue on the basis of *upamāna* (analogy), noting that recently, one king of Majhaulī died because of fire in his bathroom. Thus, analogy also validates the possibility of defecating fire. Finally, the barristers argue that the accused should be fed *julāb* (a diuretic/purgative medicine); this would offer the court a *pratyakśa* or demonstrative evidence proving the fact that a Hindustani can eject fire. Śarmā, *Śrīrāmāvatārśarmanibaṃdhāvalī*, 199.

[80] Śarmā, *Śrīrāmāvatārśarmanibaṃdhāvalī*, 199.

[81] Intoxicated Mudgar utters this phrase in English. Śarmā, *Śrīrāmāvatārśarmanibaṃdhāvalī*, 198.

In this symbolically charged space signifying a microcosm of Indian society Mudgar's narrative turns out to be a strong satirical indictment on the state of socio-religious affairs, especially scathing towards the prevailing intellectual-critical bankruptcy amongst the vanguard of Indian society, the educated middle class.

Mudgar's tale appreciates their obvious fallacies in double entendre. It exposes and attacks the moral and intellectual bankruptcy of the educated and wealthy middle classes, which consume modern luxurious commodities but are oblivious of modern critical-scientific reasoning; they believe in the reincarnation of god, worship godmen, accept the existence of occult and magical powers to disappear or to emit fire, philosophise and rationalise such practices and beliefs through uncritical and non-ratiocinated argumentation. Although Mudgar mainly talks about the Hindu middle class, his passing references to the configuration of such middle class devotees cutting across all religious denominations or to the unified voice of Hindu and Muslim barristers to prove Mudgar's culpability indicates that such intellectual-critical poverty expands beyond any single religious community.

Mudgar's description of the courtroom also exposes the callousness and the intellectual-philosophical poverty amongst the educated middle class. Ideally, a court is the place to uphold justice on the grounds of critical legal rationality and reasoned argumentation. Instead, it threatens to be turned into a theatre of injustice because of prejudiced reasoning and lack of ratiocination on the part of the Indian police officer and public prosecutors. We need to recall Sharma's agenda written by him in the beginning of *Paramārthˈdarśan*.[82] He had argued that *viveka* and *vyavasthā* are necessary for maintenance of a just and reasonable political social order. By *viveka* he meant the critical faculty of judgment which is able to distinguish rationally between what is logical and what is illogical, what is to be followed and what is to be rejected, what is proven by demonstrative evidence and what is unproven. On the basis of such *viveka*, he argued, the establishment of a rational and just moral and legal order or *vyavasthā* in the society is possible. Thus, the scene in the courtroom is a parodic inversion of the fundamental elements indispensible to dispense justice and, by extension, to uphold a just political-social order. It is shown that the police officer, barrister, reformist and counter-reformist leaders, and other devotees, or in sum, the Indian middle classes lack *viveka* or critical scientific reasoning in matters of personal faith and beliefs (reflected in the case of the *kumbh-melā* camp). But the effect of their poverty of reason and ratiocination is not limited to and dangerous for civil society only. More importantly, they are bound to enter into the domain of state institutions (as reflected in the proceedings of the courtroom trial). It is also indicated that the framing of arguments from such unreasonable and false premise leads to the false categorisation of a crime as a secular offence versus a religious offence. Evidently, for people like the inspector, the prosecutor or the revivalist leader, the rejection of the idea that Mudgar can emit fire was the rejection of the power of Hindu mythology in which they believed. Hence, to them, what was at stake in the judicial institution was their (unreasonable) faith, which must be defended even at the cost of gross miscarriage of reasoning and justice! Since any unreasonable phenomenon cannot be defended reasonably, it is bound to lead to further fallacy and corruption, Sharma would seem to suggest.

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[82] Rāmavatar Śarmā, *Paramārthˈdarśan*, 1-3.

In Mudgar's narrativisation of his trial, with the sole exception of the Magistrate, everyone is guilty of having an uncritical faith in the unreasoned and impossible phenomena that a human can emit fire.[83] The premise of their arguments, i.e. Mudgar excreted fire, is itself wrong; there is a fallacious deployment of reasoning and an absurd interpretation of evidence, leading to the collapse of rational-legal argumentation and the consequent threat to justice, law and order. This is what Mudgar's narrative intends to communicate about the state of Indian society, especially its vanguard the

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[83] Sharma has warned and advocated time and again that why and how to reject such outlandish statements or phenomenon without insinuating any fallacious debate from such a premise. See, for example, chapter on *pramāṇa* in *Vedantism* and *Paramārth'darśan*.

Indian middle class, which consumes modernity selectively and conveniently ignores its other aspect – critical reasoning and ratiocination. In such chaos of unreason and brazen fallacy even a divine being, or should we say a pristine representative of Brahmanical tradition and power, like Mudgar, who claimed to be supra rational and beyond reason, is helpless. In the face of his acquittal by the magistrate, symptomatically read, he prefers to retreat to his planet Varuṇa.

3

Mudgarānanda and the 'impossibility of a political agenda'

What does Mudgar's helplessness and retreat from amidst his counterparts and followers on earth symbolise? What does the abrupt end of the traditional recounting of the global past, from the beginning of *yuga* to contemporary times, suggest? What is its implication for the attempt at resuscitating a traditional knowledge form (*Itihas-Purana*) in order to tackle the asymmetry of its modern counterpart? By dwelling a little longer with Mudgar, the narrator figure, we shall try and answer these questions. Mudgar represents, after all, the ultimate divinity of Brahmanic Hindu imagination; he personifies the entire Brahmanical complex, including the much coveted Indian knowledge forms and practices, which the author Sharma otherwise wanted to rejuvenate. In Hans Harder's illuminating reading of this text the retreat symbolises the dismantling of the entire Brahmanical complex including the unconscious attempt to banish Sharma's own Brahmanical self, showcasing what colonialism has done to the Brahmanical tradition.[84] Our reading, however, problematizes Harder's arguments and extends it further.

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[84] Hans Harder's insightful reading of the text, however, fails to take into account the nuances of intellectual-political context of Sharma's endeavour. More importantly, his text-centric study misses the larger context of Sharma's project that is multi-edged: a critical reconfiguration of modernity that is universal not western. With the help of such a modern knowledge form it attempted to purge the unscientific and archaic part of Indian tradition on the one hand, it sought to regenerate and reconfigure the same in correspondence with universal forms of modern knowledge and subvert the vanity of otherwise scientific but west

We should see Mudgar's retreat both in the causal explanation in the narrative as well as in connection with the author's intellectual-political project outlined in his biography, as narrated above. Yes, Mudgar's retreat represents the banishment of the Brahmanical knowledge complex, but what is the cause of his departure? Mudgar was, in the end, a victim of the frenzy generated by his unreasonable followers in colonial India. Mudgar or the traditional Indian knowledge system may have passed the critical trail of modernity, if it was humanised and brought down to the book of reason and ratiocination. After all, Mudgar could have defended himself as a human in the courtroom by pleading not guilty! His retreat also ironically symbolises that Sharma's own intellectual project of critical reorganisation of traditional knowledge forms was destined to fail as the educated middle classes, the agents of modernity and its critical epistemology, were irredeemably ignorant.[85]

To put it more generally, Mudgarānanda stands for Indian/Sanskrit tradition and its obsoleteness. His exaggerated claims obliquely attack this tradition as well as the followers of such obsolescence. In the light of Sharma's intellectual stance, the satirical text seems to underscore a more significant point about knowledge forms and practices. Is it possible to update tradition or traditional knowledge systems? Can they be useful for rational modern subjects? Can we conduct a rational conversation about global history or indeed possess a universal scientific knowledge, in the idiom of (*Puranic*)

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centred narratives of modernity, in this case history. Hans Harder, "Transcultural Mock History from India?: Ramavatar Sharma's puzzling *Mudgarānand'caritāvalī* of 1912-13", unpublished paper presented in Panel 2: "Heavenly Bodies" of the Annual Conference titled *Flows of Images and Media* at the Cluster of Excellence "Asia and Europe in a Global Context", 7-9 October 2009.

[85] Sharma had neither hope in the educated and intellectual vanguards of India, nor could he invest in the emancipatory potential of the lower order. In Sharma's vision, it was the class of intellectual-philosophers who were the prime movers of historical and civilizational change. The gatekeeper of Sharma's modernity and its critical epistemology was education; this premium was too high to be accessible to the lower classes. This was obviously in contrast to the likes of Bhartendu Harishchandra and Radhacharan Goswami, who responded to the lower order, emboldened by the promise of modernity, by shouting them down for their recalcitrance. The rationalist project of Sharma, ironically, shifted the goalpost of modernity itself too far away to be accessible to traditionally underprivileged social groups. In any case, these classes could hardly have been interested in the rejuvenation of a knowledge tradition which carried the indelible marks of their oppression and exclusion.

tradition? The tradition and its possibilities in colonial India is epitomised by Mudgar's Indian sojourn and his consequent retreat caused by the treatment meted out to him by his devotees – middle class Indians. Mudgar's retreat symbolises that any such intellectual-political project was destined to fail, for the middle classes, the putative vanguards of India, who could rejuvenate India's intellectual tradition, were hopelessly unreasonable and incompetent. Neither did they have the capability of fathoming the language of tradition, nor could they truly appreciate critical aspects of modernity. It is the impossibility of such an agenda that is underlined in Mudgar's banishment. Even the possibility of an '*Indian* historiography of the world', which sought to tackle colonialist asymmetries and imagine an alternative, impartial and universal past of the globe deploying uniformly rationalist paradigm of assessment, also gets banished in colonial India. Such a history could perhaps only be the subject of a satire.

Summary

The initial and prime object of the satire in *Mudgarānand'caritāvalī* is the Indian middle class, who speaks for the greatness of Indian tradition and society rejecting any appeal to science, reason and ratiocination. The intent of the satire in Sharma's text is to instead vouch for a reconfigured modernity based on science and reason, a modernity that is universal, not partial to any and critical of all including the west. It reconfigures a modernity that is sufficiently reasonable and adequately anti-colonial, which can discard the unreasonable and dead parts of Indian tradition, rejuvenate the best of it, as well as refuse to be framed by the agenda of the politically dominant: the *rule of colonial difference*. However, such an agenda of intellectual modernity is fraught with the impossibility of finding a suitable agent, for the Indian middle class, the vanguard of Indian culture and tradition, is unfit to carry it forward. Hence, the much-needed project for critical reconfiguration of India's (knowledge) tradition is vulnerable and liable to fail. This constitutes a complex set of messages that the text under discussion tries to convey.

Mudgarānand'caritāvalī is, thus, primarily an engagement with the complex question of modernity as a transcultural phenomenon in colonial India. It is a literary response to troubling questions arising out of the cultural encounter between two asymmetrically placed political entities: India and Europe in the overarching historical context of colonialism. In the given bipolarity of the discursive context in the second half of the nineteenth century, modernity and its ideational and institutional forms were considered to be western or colonial. Consequently, an anti-western and anti-colonial stance was often construed as traditional, which invariably included a deeply modernist but uncritical justification and reinvention of the past and present social, intellectual and political formations. To break this impasse (where modernity is equated with colonialism and colonialism with the western) a new intellectual-political stance was configured from the turn of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. The new intellectual stance, or what has been also called 'anti-colonial cosmopolitanism', did not necessarily articulate anti-colonialism by reifying tradition and demonising the colonial and the western. Instead it sought to reconfigure modernity as universal and transcultural rather than narrowly colonial; it envisioned the west, too, as plural rather than reducing it to the British Empire. The ideational and institutional forms of this transculturally constituted modernity, in the new anti-colonial cosmopolitan intellectual stance, could at the same time be critical of tradition and its custodians (modernist or otherwise) as well as of the Empire and its cultural domination. It aspired for a critical reorganisation of tradition and its knowledge forms by domesticating new scientific ideas, but the aspiration was undergirded by its own political impossibility.

Chapter 4

Transculturality and Satirical Journalism, 1870-1930

This chapter deals with the question of transculturality in relation to the making of the Hindi satirical periodicals. The historiography of Indian journalism suggests that satirical journals, first in English and then in the Indian languages, began to appear from the late nineteenth century onwards. The style and format of satirical periodicals were borrowed from the famous English satirical weekly, *Punch* or *The London Charivari* of Britain.[1] However, the existing historical works only make statements and refrain from probing the dynamics of the cultural transaction which may have taken place between the English and Hindi satirical traditions and resulted in the emergence of satirical magazines in South Asia. This chapter attempts to map *Punch*'s transcultural trajectory in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Hindi literary sphere.[2] In order to facilitate the discussion on the circulation and impact of *Punch* in the Hindi print world and, more importantly, to understand the form and makeup of Hindi satirical journalism, I shall begin by delineating the characteristic features of *Punch*. At the risk of simplification they can be summarised as follows:[3]

> 1. It publicised the carefully cultivated personalised self of Mr Punch in the role of an irreverent iconoclast and a slayer of privileges, corruption and deceit.

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[1] I use the plural form 'lives' because Punch inspired any number of periodicals in the nineteenth century, cutting across literary cultures in South Asia, China, Japan, Egypt, and Turkey, not to mention Europe. In South Asia its reverberations were felt not only in English-language periodicals owned by Europeans, as well as Indians, but in Marathi, Bengali, Gujarati, Urdu, Hindi, etc., as well. For an elementary survey in South Asia see Partha Mitter, "Cartoon and the Raj," *History Today*, 47, 9 (1997): non-paginated. For a general survey see Bellary Shamanna Kesavan, *History of Indian Journalism* (Delhi: Publication Division, 1955).

[2] For the general understanding of Hindi literary sphere see Francesca Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere: Language and Literature in the Age of nationalism 1920-1940* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002) and also Vasudha Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions: Bhāratendu Hariścandra and Nineteenth-Century Banaras* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[3] Richard D. Altick, *Punch: The Lively Youth of a British Institution 1841-1851* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1997).

2. It also constituted a parody of newspapers in its own right. It had all the features of a typical periodical and consisted of editorials and other news columns and reports on subjects such as politics, society, art and literature. But unlike typical newspapers, it expected its readers to maintain an active sense of participation in public life and an a priori knowledge of news and events, which were selected and commented upon using the tool of satirical deformation and presented in the familiar forms of lampoon, joke, hoax, gossip, etc.
3. It exploited the flexibility of language by employing puns, conundrums, and by playing with the multiple meanings of individual words.
4. Its verbal and comic art had a remarkable penchant for uncovering connections—not only in figurative/metaphoric forms but also through parallels, analogies and echoes, wherever likeness or contrast could be used for what amounted to a kind of continuous performance on the printed page, either for its own sake or to convey a message. Where resemblances did not exist they were manufactured in the form of parodies of literary texts and graphic burlesques of high and popular art.
5. It combined two representational registers of comic distortion: literary parody and visual caricature in the form of cartoons.
6. It dipped into streams of popular and elite culture and indulged in street slang, as well as sophisticated canonical vocabulary.
7. Politically, it remained bourgeois and patriarchal. Though it poked fun at the culture of the English middle class, its humour ultimately reasserted the patriarchal ethos of the bourgeoisie.

After delineating the *Punch*'s salient literary features to map its transcultural life in the Hindi literary sphere, it is important to introduce a note of caution here. Writing a history of transcultural circulation of an idea or a cultural commodity—in this case a literary form— involves serious risks: there is, on the one hand, the chance of falling prey to a simplistic 'derivative discourse',[4] thereby pre-judging *Punch*'s colonial avatar as originating from, but falling short of, or deviating from the original;[5] on the other hand, there is the danger of succumbing to the telos of nationalist 'indigenism', which holds that all such ideas had pre-colonial indigenous, and more often 'classical', roots.[6] To avoid both these traps we need to ask a few questions such as: How popular was *Punch* or satirical journalism within the Hindi literary sphere? How did contemporary Hindi litterateurs receive *Punch* and/or its literary format? What kind of deflections did Punch, the narrator figure as well as the literary format, undergo as a result of its interaction with the local literary and/or oral repertoire of satire? Were they informed by and re-inscribed with new social meaning in the Hindi literary sphere? And if so, how? What kind of political and cultural mediation did *Punch* perform to be relevant in the new context?[7]

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[4] See Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (London: Zed Books, 1986).

[5] For a critique of this approach in the context of early novels in India see Meenakshi Mukherjee, "Epic and Novel in India," in *The Novel, vol. 1, History, Geography and Culture*, ed. Franco Moretti (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 596-631.

The existing scholarship on the history of Hindi journalism[8] suggests that a full-fledged satirical periodical of some significance was *Matˈvālā* (the intoxicated), which was published in Calcutta in 1923. *Matˈvālā*, indeed, had most of the aforementioned characteristics of *Punch*. Its circulation figures were fairly high.[9] What needs to be asserted in this context, however, is that in order to assign novelty to *Matˈvālā* scholars underplay the richness of the early satirical oeuvre of nineteenth century Hindi literary culture. So as to understand the broader currents and to contextualise our prime concern, this chapter is divided into three parts. In the first section the circulation and popularity of *Punch* in the late nineteenth century is gauged by foregrounding the reproduction of its content, as well as internal literary references and acknowledgements. The contemporary reception and adaptation of Mr. Punch as a satirical narrator is elucidated by unravelling the rich semantics of the word punch. The communicative mechanisms and political function of the satirical mode, which appeared in a number of periodicals as *Punch* or *Punch*-like columns, and in a variety of other literary forms, is examined in the wider context of the nascent but vibrant Hindi public sphere before 1920. In the second section the distinction of *Mat'vālā* is made salient and is contextualised in the changed historical circumstances of the post-1920 Hindi public sphere. Literary format of *Mat'vālā* is mapped in relation to the characteristic features of *Punch* as outlined at the beginning. An analysis of the magazine's cultivated self-persona and consolidated public identity is followed by the examination of the structure and political functions of literary and visual satire. The chapter ends with a remark on mutations of *Punch* and the indiscernible trajectory of its transcultural genealogy in the twentieth century.

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[6] This has been the problem of nationalist literary historiography, as well as of left historiography informed by anti-imperialist position. See Vasudha Dalmia, *Poetics, Plays, and Performance: The Politics of Modern Indian Theatre* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004) and also chapter 5 of Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions*, 222-324. For a general overview of the politics of entanglement between nationalist ideology and literary historiography in South Asian literary cultures see Hans Harder, ed., *Literature and Nationalist Ideology: Writing Histories of Modern Indian Languages* (Delhi: Social Science Press, 2010). For a critique of the residual nationalist frame in modern Indian historiography see the "Introduction" by Benjamin Zachariah, *Playing the Nation Game* (Delhi: Yoda Press, 2012).

[7] Borrowing from Michael McKeon's idea of 'generic instability' from his work *The Origins of the English Novel: 1600-1740* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1987), Francesca Orsini makes a very important point in the context of the analysis of early Hindi-Urdu novels. She argues that the idea of some pure or authentic model of a genre (such as the novel), which was available in Europe and then imported into the colony, is deeply flawed and redundant. A genre should be examined so as to explain the particular social and cultural functions it performs and the dialectical relationship it has with other genres at any given point in history. Francesca Orsini, *Print and Pleasure: Popular Literature and Entertaining Fictions in Colonial North India* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2009), 164.

[8] Ram Ratan Bhatnagar, *The Rise and Growth of Hindi Journalism* (Varāṇasī: Viśvavidyālay prakaśan, 2003); Kṛśṇa Bihārī Miśra, *Hindī patrakāritā*. (Dillī: Bhārˈtīya jñānˈpīṭh, 1985).

[9] This and other aspects are discussed in greater detail in the next section.

1

Punch: circulation, reception and reincarnation

Punch or The London Charivari not only struck the imagination of the English-reading public in Europe and North America,[10] but also of Indian[11] as well as the British readers in Indian subcontinent.[12] It was accessible to the Indian intelligentsia, which was always eager to know about metropolitan culture and politics, and was also in search of new idioms and forms of self-articulation and assertion within the emerging colonial public sphere. *Punch* acquired a legendary status as a periodical amongst the contemporary editor-journalists. One of the earliest references to its popularity can be found in Bharatendu Harishchandra's satirical composition *Muśāyˈrā*[13](Assembly of Poets). In one of the paragraphs of the *Muśāyˈrā* a nouveau-riche merchant, who pretends to be a poet, mentions the superiority and popularity of the *Punch* in India:[14]

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[10] Altick, *Punch*.

[11] *Punch* had individual subscribers in India. An Indian cartoonist, born in 1924, when recalling his young days, mentions that his father had a collection of old volumes of Punch. Rasipuram K. Laxman, *The Tunnel of Time: An Autobiography* (Delhi: Penguin India, 1998), 8-9. Ritu Khanduri has highlighted not only the availability and popularity of British Punch in India, but also noted that its commercial potential was clear to its owners as well, who were seriously considering bringing out overseas editions of the periodical, including an edition from India. See Ritu

> No paper so far could supersede the Pañc
> That it has established its dominance is a matter of fact.[15]

In another paragraph the socially aspiring wife of this rich merchant, who is educated by a white tutor-governess, wishes to publish her poem in the *Punch*.

> I pray to you my mischievous husband
> Why don't you get it published in the *Pañc*?[16]

Khanduri, "Vernacular Punches: Cartoon and Politics in Colonial India," *History and Anthropology*, 20, 4 (2009): 459-486.

[12] Sidney Laman Blanchard in his essay "Punch in India" mentions the popularity of *Punch* amongst the British men, especially soldiers, staying in Delhi. Moreover, he gives an account of pre-1857 days and mentions how the *Punch* inspired a satirical magazine "*Delhi Sketch Book*", which, according to him, was an amazing Indian version of the *Punch*. This essay was republished in 1867. See Sidney Laman Blanchard, *Yesterday and Today in India* (London: W. H. Allen & Co., 1867), 239-268. I am thankful to Amelia Bonea for drawing my attention to this book.

[13] All translations, unless otherwise mentioned, are mine. Bharatendu Harishchandra wrote *Muśāyˈrā* in the early 1870s. See Bābū Rāmˈdīn Siṃh, ed., *Śrīhariścandrakalā athˈvā golokˈvāsī bhāratˈbhūṣaṇ bhārˈtendu hariścandra kā jīvan sarvasva*, vol. 6, part 1 (Baṅkīpur: Khaḍgavilās pres, 1889), 62.

[14] In all probability, according to the compilers of Harishchandra's work, this poem was published in the early years of the 1870s, which means before the beginning of *Avadh Punch*, an Urdu satirical periodical published from Lucknow, in January 1877. Even if this speculation is untrue, it nevertheless makes the point of the popularity of *Punch*, albeit via *Avadh Punch*. For a brief idea about the nature of *Avadh Punch*'s content see Mushirul Hasan, *Wit and Humour in Colonial India* (Delhi: Niyogi Books, 2007).

[15] I use the spelling Pañc rather than Punch when it is used in Hindi. Siṃh, *Śrīhariścandrakalā*, 62. For the sake of clarity we use *Punch* (in italics) to refer to the magazine; Punch (without italics) to refer to the narrator figure of the London magazine. Similarly, we use *Pañc* (in italics) and Pañc (without italics) to refer to the Hindi magazines and its narrator figures respectively.

Interestingly, we find mutual acknowledgement of their individual existences within the pages of the British *Punch* and one of the Indian versions, namely the *Hindi Punch* (1878), which was published from Bombay. The owner of the *Hindi Punch*, for example, published a selection of cartoons from the year 1903 in the form of a handbook with Gujarati and English subtitles. In its fourth edition the handbook carried a reprint of press reviews of its previous edition. One of the reviews in this handbook, dated 2 March 1903, was from the British *Punch*, and contained *Punch*'s wishes to the *Hindi Punch* in a somewhat patronising tone, noting that:

> The Baron begs to acknowledge the fourth edition of *Hindi Punch* [italic mine], just received from Bombay. Mr. Punch, who traces his own origin back to prehistoric times when the pharaohs and such like moderns were neither born nor thought of, when all the world was young, as Mr. Punch himself ever remains, is delighted to find his family so well represented and so highly popular in India as from this volume of *Hindi Punch* [italics mine] is evidently the case. It is brought right up to date, and shows clearly how thoroughly The Hind and Brahmin *Panchoba* agree, and what useful service, wherever reform is needed, our cousin is always ready and willing to render. In some instances, he appears to be a very hot Punch, steaming in fact, but that is a matter of climate. The Baron tenders congratulations on the present volume, and on behalf of Mr. Punch himself, wishes Hindi Punch continued success in future.[17] [sic].

Moreover, the 15 November 1873 issue of *Harischandra's Magazine*, which started as a bilingual literary supplement to *Kavivacan'sudhā* (1868),[18] reprinted an article from the British *Punch*. The title of the article was "*From "Punch"—The Mussulman Platform*".[19] This was an article that made a nuanced satirical attack on the Permissive Prohibitory Bill (PPB). Punch, in consonance with the Victorian middle-class mores, appeared to be in no disagreement with the prohibition of

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[16] Siṃh, *Śrīhariścandrakalā*, 62.

[17] *Fifth Album of Cartoons*, Hindi Punch Office, Bombay, 1904.

[18] It was Harishchandra's first journal.

[19] See *Harischandra's Magazine*, Facsimile edition (hereafter *HM*), ed. Satyaprakāś Miśra (Ilāhābād: Hindī sāhitya sammelan, 2002), 70-71.

the sale of liquor, which apparently caused social crime and loss of economic and moral wealth. However, it strongly opposed the indiscriminate ban on the sale of "infernal drug[s]" including wine "which intoxicates those who abuse it, and does those who use it good [sic]."[20] It made caustic comments on the members of the British House of Commons representing an organisation for the temperance movement called the United Kingdom Alliance.[21] For, according to Punch, they spoke in an evangelical language in favour of the PPB, as if they were in a religious council. Punch argued that the orthodox idea of a blanket prohibition, which calls wine an infernal drug, fell short of the liberal British ideal and could not be but inspired by an ideal of its other, i.e., the Turk/Muslim.[22] For, according to the tacit premise of this argument, which played upon the stereotype of authoritarian Islam, it was only a state governed by Islamic ideology that could go for such a law. The platform hosting such discussion was, thus, of the "Mussulman".

This example adds to the evidence of *Punch*'s familiarity and popularity amongst the avant-garde of Hindi intelligentsia, like Bharatendu Harishchandra, who was experimenting with the format of a literary periodical for a projected national language and its community of readers.[23] It would be pertinent to examine the contemporary relevance of the reproduction of this particular piece. Considering *Harischandra's Magazine's* format along with its larger intellectual, political engagement with contemporary intelligentsia as reflected within its pages, some plausible explanation can be offered. Firstly, it was part of a larger editorial agenda of attracting and making its bilingual readers –the emerging middle classes who were still a primarily English and Urdu reading public– familiar with the topical issues of Britain and Britain's engagements as an empire in the rest of the world including India. The humorous political items added to its catholicity. Secondly, this piece highlighted the problem of alcoholism and differing opinions on how to deal with it. This was synchronous with the literary engagement with this issue, especially within contemporary Hindi satirical literature.[24] The practice of alcohol-drinking was perceived as a menacing social vice brought about by colonial culture. The very next issue of *Harischandra's Magazine*, for instance, carried the satirical piece '*Pā̃cˈveṃ paigambar*' (the fifth prophet).[25] The subject matter of this satire, as we have seen in Chapter 2, was very complex. Suffice to say that alcohol was identified as the favourite drink of the first person satiric narrator, namely, the Fifth Prophet, who was the embodiment of colonialism in its various political and cultural forms.[26] Finally, this stereotype of Muslims/Islam was in consonance with the dominant attitude of the contemporary Hindu intelligentsia.[27]

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[20] *HM*, 70-71.

[21] Brian Harrison, "The British Prohibitionists 1853-1872: A Biographical Study," *International Review of Social History* 15, 3 (1970): 375-467.

[22] The denominations Turk and Muslim are used interchangeably.

[23] Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions*, 222-324.

Punch as Pañc: Problematising the transculturality

Punch as *Pañc*, by which I mean its transmuted life in the Hindi literary sphere, subsumed all connotations available in the existing linguistic register. Yet within the formats of the Hindi periodicals the presence of the British Weekly

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[24] Although the temperance movement in India is said to have begun in the late 1880s and acquired some prominence in the 1890s, its expression in Hindi literature preceded it by at least a decade. For a general overview of the temperance movement in colonial India and its British linkages see Lucy Carroll, "The Temperance Movement in India: Politics and Social Reform," *Modern Asian Studies*, 10, 3 (1976): 417-447, and Lucy Carroll, "Origins of the Kayastha Temperance Movement," *Indian Economic Social History Review*, 11, 4 (1974): 432-447.

[25] We have discussed about this in detail in Chapter 2. See, Bhārˈtendu Hariścandra, "*Pā̃cˈveṃ paigambar*," 15 December 1873. *HM*, 84-86. Examples can be multiplied. '*Kalirāj kī sabhā*' (assembly of the Lord of Fallen Times) was serialised between 15 October (one issue before the publication of Mussulman Platform) and February, 1874. See *HM*, 38-39; 138-142.

[26] In the farce and skits we also find negative depictions of characters, for instance, English-educated, westernised and zealous 'anti-Hindu' social reformers, often Bengalis, who are fond of alcohol. In some cases the corrupt king, an allegorical representation of the colonial ruling elite, and his collaborators, like debauched priests, are represented as eating meat and being intoxicated with alcohol. See, for example, *Vaidikī hiṃsā hiṃsā na bhavati* (Vedic violence is no violence), first published in *Kavivacanˈsudhā*, June 21, 1872. It was also published as an independent booklet from Medical Hall Press in 1873. Hemant Śarmā, ed. *Bhārˈtendu samagra* (Vārāṇasī: Hindī pracārak saṃsthān, 1989), 309-318.

[27] For instance, "*Pā̃cˈveṃ paigambar*" mentioned above, can also be cited as one of the many examples. For greater detail see Sudhir Chandra, *The Oppressive Present: Literature and Social Consciousness in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992)

Punch remains discernible in the overarching literary usage of the term. From *Kavivacan'sudhā* onwards, the term *Pañc* within the format of literary periodicals stood for satire.[28]

In its early years *Kavivacan'sudhā* carried a column entitled *Pañc kā prapañc* (the tangles of Pañc). In its usual form the column consisted of a dialogue, which was prompted by contemporary discussions on modes of gossip between Pañc and one or two other characters about town.[29] Following the example of *Kavivacan'sudhā*, we can find similar characters and columns in periodicals like *Hindī pradīp* (light of Hindi, [Allahabad, 1877]), *Brāhmaṇ* (Brahmin [Kanpur, 1883]) and *Bhārat jīvan* (life of India [Benares, 1888]).[30] Interestingly, periodicals with an avowedly Brahmanic agenda like *Dvija Patrikā* (twice-born's magazine [Patna, 1890]) also had a section for humour and satire titled *Pañc prapañc*. Its cover page advertised that it aims at reforming Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas, and would be publishing

> "[…]on Knowledge, Religion [dharma], Morality, Manners, Duty, History, Ancient System, Translation, Poetry, Drama, Satire, Literature, Philosophy, Women's Education, *Pañc prapañc* [my italics], Letters to the Editor and miscellanea."[31]

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[28] I use *Punch* to denote the English journal, *Pañc* to denote Hindi ones. Similarly, I use non-italicised *Punch* and Pañc to refer to the satiric narrators in English and Hindi respectively.

[29] In some cases, it could be gossip between characters with different names but still carried out in the same style. For instance, see "*Do mitroṃ kā vārtālāp: kul'pālak aur viśvabandhu kā samāgam*" (Dialogue between two friends: Rendezvous of a noble patron and a universal brother), *Harischandra Magazine*, October 1873 in *HM*, 19-22.

[30] A full-fledged Hindi satirical monthly *Rasik Pañc* began to be published from Lucknow in April 1884. It lasted for less than two years and, according to Pratap Narayan Mishra, it was shut down due to acute financial constraints. *Brāhmaṇ* vol. 4, no. 9, 15 April, 1887(?), Cf. Candrikā Prasād Śarmā, ed., *Pratāp nārāyaṇ miśra rac'nāvalī*, vol. 3 (Dillī: Bhār'tīya prakāśan saṃsthān, 2001), 115. I could find only one of its (incomplete) issues after I completed the present work. However, its available content fits quite well with the overall arguments built upon a range of other sources below. It will be cited only if it enables us to enrich and develop new arguments, as it has been done in the next chapter.

[31] See the cover page of *Dvija Patrikā* 1, no. 1, Phālgun (February-March) 1890.

A literary periodical *Sarasvatī* (goddess of learning [Allahabad, 1900]) started under the aegis of the *Nāgˈrī Pracāriṇī Sabhā* (society for the propagation of Hindi) advertised in its first issue:

> And what topics will this journal cover—one should guess this from the very fact that its title is Sarasvatī. It will include prose, verse, poetry, plays, novels, […] history, biographies, *pañc, hāsya, parihās* [my italics], jest, ancient history, science, handicrafts, arts, and as many other topics of literature as space permits, and it will review, as appropriate, forthcoming books.[32]

The usage of the term *hāsya* and *parihās* that can be translated as humour and satire, alongside *pañc* is suggestive of the popularity and establishment of satirical skits as a distinct literary style, which had been initiated by Bharatendu Harishchandra with overt inspiration from the British *Punch*.

How did Punch mutate into Pañc? What did the term mean? Tracing the literary genealogy of Pañc columns in *Kavivacanˈsudhā*, Vasudha Dalmia points out that the British Punch has a lineage that goes far back to the European tradition of *commedia dell' arte's* Pulcinella, which was to be reproduced in England in the form of the rowdy Mr Punch in the Punch-and-Judy puppet show.[33] In the Indian context, Punch was fused yet again with the *vidūṣaka* (clown) tradition of Sanskrit drama and, by virtue of the similarity of names in many Indian languages, with Pañc —the arbiter of the village judiciary, whose authority is legitimised by his folkloric juxtaposition with God as Pañc Parameśvar.[34] This Pañc, then, had both the irreverence of the clown and the sacred authority of the village judge.[35]

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[32] *Sarasvatī* would become the most influential literary periodical in Hindi.

[33] Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions*, 252-53.

[34] *Parameśvar*: the highest god.

[35] Besides the satirical columns containing the figure of Pañc and other homologous narrators, as we have seen in previous chapters, there are many satirical pieces like "*Pā̃cˈveṃ paigambar*" by Bharatendu, "*Yamˈlok kī yātrā*" by Radhacharan Goswami, wherein the satirical narrator is created by the author as a literary strategy. This fictional narrator and his narrative style are invested with the attributes of a quasi-divine, liminal outsider who could state the unstated, visualise the

According to Syamsundar Das, a leading Hindi activist, intellectual, linguist and lexicographer, *pañc* stood for a collective of people, common folk and a pioneer simultaneously.[36] Pratap Narayan Mishra in his essay "Pañc parameśvar" gives the best exposition on contemporary elaborations of the contextual meaning of pañc.[37] The essay was written to establish the moral legitimacy of the educated middle class as the cultural vanguard of the Indian nation. What is useful to us is that Mishra develops his point by deploying the concept of *pañc* in north India. He plays with the semantics of this word, underlines its polysemy, delves deeper into its etymology and then assigns a contemporary relevance to it. This essay illuminates the semantic richness of the term, as expressed in the following quotation:

> With *pañcˈtattva* [five elements] the *Parameśvar* [Highest God] creates the cosmos; […] Control over the lord of *pañcendriya* [five senses] facilitates proximity with Parameśvar; given the centrality of *pañcˈsaṃskār* [five moral-religious rituals] in *dharma*, of *pañcˈgaṅgā* [another name for river Ganges at the holy city of Benaras] amongst pilgrimage sites, of *pañcˈpavitrātmā* [five holy spirits] in Islam, one has reasons to believe that Pañc is intimately associated with *Parameśvar*.
>
> On this basis our learned forefathers made those proverbs popular in which ordinary, humble, this-worldly folks (if they have faith in *Parameśvar*) accept Pañc, meaning a collective of people, a representative of *Parameśvar*. He is shapeless and spotless, hence not visible to anyone with external eyes, nor has anyone ever seen him doing any work; therefore, it is the proposition of many thinking men that whatever Pañc [a collective of people] decides or does is in many ways the truth.

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concealed and potentially break what Sudipta Kaviraj calls, the 'grammar of reality'. Sudipta Kaviraj, *The Unhappy Consciousness: Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and the Formation of Nationalist Discourse in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), 29. In the case of satirical journalism, this is quite clear also from at least two examples of the twentieth century. For instance, a column titled *Śivˈśambhu ke ciṭṭhe* (Letters from Lord Śiva) the narrator of which has the name and attributes of Lord Śiva, and also in the character of Matˈvālā who saw himself as god personified, or at least as an emissary and reporter of Lord Śiva on earth.

[36] Śyāmˈsundar Dās, *Hindī śabdˈsāgar* (Kāśī: Nāgˈarī pracāriṇī sabhā, 1929), 2729.

[37] Pratap Narayan Mishra was one of the leading Hindi intellectuals of the late nineteenth century and a member of the Hindi literary circle named *Bhāratendu maṇḍal*. He was the editor of *Brāhmaṇ* (Kanpur) and coined the emblematic slogan 'Hindi-Hindu-Hindustan', which summarised the dominant political agenda of Hindi nationalism.

> That is why *'5 pañc mil kije kāj hare jīte hoe na lāj'* [action taken in unison by people is beyond victory and defeat], […] and other similar proverbs are expounded by the learned and it is often noted by commoners that *'5 pañc ki bhāṣā amit hotī hai'* [statement of a collective is incontestable]. No matter how powerful, rich, or learned you are, if you go against Pañc's opinion, […] it would be very difficult, if not impossible, for you to survive in this world […].
>
> Going against the majority practice [even for a very noble cause] is tantamount to making your life hell. Those who are determined to sacrifice everything to redeem others are hailed, but when? Only if they are accepted by the Pañc! However, as long as they live, they are unable to even breathe conveniently, because going against the Pañc is like going against the *Parameśvar*, for which there is no escape from penalisation. Greatness hardly comes to your defence […].
>
> O readers! By the grace of *Parameśvar* and your forefathers you do not lack knowledge. Therefore open your eyes wide and look at the direction in which the educated Pañc are moving and see how bravely, firmly and naturally they are marching without being discouraged from fear of abuse, threat and the might of small but strong opposition; they are ready to be an example by forsaking not only their wives, sons, wealth and family but by sacrificing themselves.[38]

In the first paragraph, Pañc's semantic identity with the sacred numerology of Hinduism and Islam is established by emphasising its centrality in the overall relationship with god so that its quasi-divine status is underlined. In the second paragraph, through mobilisation of the semantic resources of popular idiomatic expressions and by extension popular opinion, Pañc is explicated as the collective of people. The acts of Pañc then are legitimised and made unassailable as the will of the divine by a virtual negation of God's interventionist presence in the everyday life of the society. In the next paragraphs, the Pañc, as a collective of people, is described as the representative of majority opinion, and consequently as the embodiment of the public at large. Once Pañc is designated as the embodiment of a public with quasi-divine status, his authority is made unassailable. Finally, in the concluding paragraph, Pañc is equated with the contemporary, educated middle class that is dedicated to social and moral reform. In other words, Pañc is the metaphor of the educated urban middle class speaking in the register of reform on behalf of Indian nation, and hence, to be followed by the people.

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[38] It needs to be emphasised here that the Pañc and/or Parameśvar are quintessentially male. This essay was first published in *Brāhmaṇ* vol. 6, no. 12, 15 July, 1888. The citation is from Śarmā, *Pratāp nārāyaṇ miśra racˈnāvalī*, vol. 2, 114-116.

2

Pañc: Literary forms and political contents

Skits

Let us examine a skit's literary form and political content with some examples. They were light, lively, biting and sparkling. The Pañc of these columns is a fascinating mixture of characters who are raucous, impious and clowning men-about-town usually at odds with authority. On the one hand, he stands outside events; on the other hand, he, as a judge, is involved in events. Pañc, time and again, goes into the messy world, becomes a participant observer, and then retreats. For example, a skit appeared in the June 1873 issue of *Kavivacan'sudhā,*[39] wherein Pañc turns his sharp wit on much more personal, and for all their apparent slightness, heavily symbolic topics, such as the controversy over British judges stopping Indians from entering law courts with their shoes on. This was contrary to a law, which had been passed in the previous decade legalising wearing shoes while attending court proceedings.[40] The setting of the skit is the city of Benaras. The periodical noted that:

> We are in the year 1872, and Pañc is listening to the conversation of two friends, Munshi Bhairoprasad, a *kāyastha*, and a *mahājan*, Babu Ramnath, who makes gentle fun of his bookish friend, the Munshi. The Munshi has been perusing the papers earnestly as usual and has come across a

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[39] *Kavivacan'sudhā*, June 1873. The following information on Pañc in this paragraph is based on Dalmia, *Nationalization of Hindu Traditions*, 254-255.

[40] For an interesting insight into cultural politics behind the shoe controversy see K. N. Panikkar, "The Great Shoe Question: Legitimacy and Power in Colonial India," *Studies in History* 14, 1 (1998): 21-36.

significant piece of news. The news has to do with an object whose identity he does not disclose, apart from the fact that it goes in pairs, has to do with leather and is expensive, for millions have been affected by ventures connected with it. Babu Ramnath is unable to guess what this is.

Babu: What does it look like?

Munshi: It's rather long in appearance. In effect it looks like the country it comes from.

Babu: Hmm, the *vilāyat*[41] of the English. What does the thing look like there?

Munshi: In the *vilāyat* of the English the thing is smooth and greasy and often of black colour and it is considered the purest amongst them. They carry it with them wherever they go.

Babu: Brother mine, I haven't really understood what it is. What does it look like in Hindustan?

Munshi: Here it has a sort of beak.

Babu: Is it some fantastic pair of birds?

Munshi: Oh no, it is a very useful thing, it protects from the sun, from dirt and slime, from heat and cold, from all these things.

Babu: Quick tell me its name, I'm getting quite agitated.

Munshi: It is called the shoe.

Babu: Come, what weighty matter have you touched on there. What on earth does the shoe have to do with the newspaper?

Munshi: No, really, of late the Honourable Shoe has been hot news.

Babu: Well, what new news of it?

Munshi: There is an order saying you have to take off your shoes before you enter court.

Babu: And why this?

Munshi: How do I know?

Babu: And who could bear to part with his shoes?

Pañc (coming forward): This isn't true. It's years ago, since Lord Lawrence's day, that it was decided that anyone could enter government offices and courts or other public places in English shoes (though they had to be polished to shine like a mirror). Then why all this ado?

Munshi: Well sirs, your thinking is simple-minded. I agree that there was an order once, but there are so many who pay no heed to it. Didn't you go to Mughal Sarai to see the new Governor General? Even if the world obeys the order, in Banaras it was never heeded to nor will it ever be.

Pañc: What, you mean that even the Government Gazette won't be obeyed?

Munshi: Yes, it won't be obeyed. What do you think you can do about it?

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[41] *vilāyat* (Urdu/Hindi) literally means "province", "foreign country"; common appellation of England in colonial times.

Pañc responds by making the most impotent of gestures. He runs to the concerned authorities and asks them what they mean by all this. Yet Pañc's insistence on the letter of the law is double-edged. If, on the one hand, it makes mockery of the bureaucracy that thinks that such matters can be dealt with by passing laws and regulations, it also seeks to make these very authorities abide by their own laws. After all, it was humiliating forms of social interaction with the 'ruling race' that injured the ego of the Indian middle classes the most. This skit, like many others, was based on widely-circulated news items already known to potential readers. There is an interesting historical background to the plot of this skit: After the sensational case of defiance of this racist custom in 1862 by a certain Manockjee Cowasjee Entee in a criminal court in Surat, the colonial government passed a law that Indians could enter the court room with their shoes on. But British judges continued to insist on the custom in lower courts, thereby causing uproar in the newspapers.[42]

The Pañc skits are also consistently directed against the debauched practices of the rich, who include the native chiefs, the rich *mahājans* (merchants) and the priestly class,[43] in short, the socially privileged. In one of the columns titled '*Melā-thelā*' (marketplace), Pañc watches the activities of these social types in a marketplace and assumes the role of a judge in disguise.[44] In another column entitled '*Pañc kā nyāy*' (the justice of Pañc), he is actually a judge and makes a mockery of himself; while acting as the presiding officer of a meeting of an association of lower castes called kurmī, he mocks the entire state of affairs. This association of newly educated, lower caste youths is apparently resisting their traditional place in the Hindu social hierarchy by claiming higher social status. They bolster their claim by tracing a pseudo-historical lineage to a mythical

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[42] This incidence was first reported in the Pioneer. For a detailed report of this incident, see the appendix of Panikkar, "The Great Shoe Question". This issue kept on recurring in various courts throughout colonial India. For a 19th century imperialist viewpoint of this issue see "The Great Shoe Question" in Sidney Laman Blanchard, *Yesterday and Today in India* (London: W. H. Allen & Co., 1867), 85-101.

[43] Hindī pradīp, February-March 1892.

[44] Hindī pradīp, April 1906.

Hindu god called *Kurmāvatāra*, the turtle incarnation among Lord Vishnu's ten *avatāras*, building on the phonetic similarity with their caste name.[45]

'*Pañc kā nyāy*' is a satire on the growing process of Sanskritisation amongst lower castes[46] in the colonial context. As a result of the economic and social change under the new colonial dispensation, the social groups that earned upward economic mobility, but had a lower status in the Hindu social hierarchy, started redefining their social positions in the wake of the colonial census operation and the consequent objectification of caste. The census department, under the influence of H. H. Risley's theory of social precedence, had started classifying all social and occupational groups under the broader textual Hindu Brahmanic schema of the *varṇa* system.[47] By adopting and consequently subverting social rituals and customs of the upper caste Hindus these social groups began to rewrite their mytho-historical origin.[48] On these bases they put forth their claims to the high ritual and social status in a new forum—the census department of the colonial government. They argued that they should be accorded a higher place in Hindu social hierarchy. The satire mocks not only the assertion of a lower caste from a Brahmanic perspective, but also the absurdity of the modern institution of caste associations.

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[45] *Hindī pradīp*, June-July 1899. Also see "*Pañc kā ek prapañc*" *Hindī pradīp*, July-August 1903.

[46] Mysore N. Shrinivas, Social Change in Modern India (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966).

[47] Bernard Cohn, "The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia," in *The Bernard Cohn Omnibus* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008), 224-254.

[48] In this process of sanskritisation, the role of Ārya Samāj, a Hindu reformist organisation which questioned the prevalent notion of birth based social status and advocated its determination on the basis of one's present vocation and moral standing, was very crucial. M.S.A. Rao's study of the Shri Narayan Dharmapala movement in Kerala and the Yadava movement in north India is a good early work of historical sociology on the social and political transformation with a focus on lower caste associations, See Madhugiri S.A. Rao, *Social Movements and Social Transformation: A Study of two Backward Classes Movements in India* (Delhi: MacMillan, 1979). For an overview of the role of caste associations amongst the Kāyasthas of Bihar Bengal and the United Province and their claim to a higher social status, see Lucy Carroll, "Colonial Perceptions of Indian Society and the Emergence of Caste(s) Associations," *Journal of Asian Studies* 37, 2 (1978): 233-250. For an overview of Indian nationalists taking on the question of caste, see also Susan Bayly, "Hindu Modernisers and the Public Arena: Indigenous Critiques of Caste in Colonial India," in *Swami Vivekananda and the Modernisation of Hinduism*, ed. William Radice (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 93-137. For an overview of the role of lower caste associations in accumulating political power in Bihar and north India from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth century see Prasanna Kumār Caudharī aur Śrīkānt, *Bihār meṃ sāmājik parivartan ke kuch āyam* (Dillī: Vāṇī prakāśan, 2001).

Pañc did not always play the judge; he could be raucous and turbulent, could chase after young and comely women with a thirst for education, and make a thorough nuisance of himself. His opinions, however, for all the tomfoolery, carried the weight of public opinion. One of the *Pañc* columns dealt precisely with this theme. When a young and beautiful *meh'tarānī* (sweeper-woman) set out to reach for the sky through education, Pañc not only sought to make indecent advances towards her, thus demeaning her moral standing and subverting her claims to a higher status, but also reprimanded her severely for entertaining false ambitions.[49]

Jokes and Conundrums

In some of the issues of *Kavivacan'sudhā*, under the title *Pañc kā prapañc*, we find a poem written with light but piercing satire in the pre-modern *lāvanī* or *dohā* form. Occasionally this space was filled with jokes and conundrums which had a politico-ethnic subtext. For example, there was a joke titled '*Very Well*', targeting the foolishness of the cuckolded English official who is unaware of the adulterous relationship between his wife and the domestic:

> A domestic became very intimate with the wife of a British Officer. Once it so happened that when he was smooching the *Memsāhib*, the *Sāhib* saw him. Memsahib also saw the Sahib coming and anxiously told the servant in her accented Hindi that her husband had seen them kissing, and that she was in trouble now. The domestic asked her calmly not to worry, and when the Sahib came he put his turban at the Sahib's feet and said: I am going to quit my job; Memsahib has accused me of stealing ghee [purified butter] and has gone so far as to smell my mouth! Hearing this, the Sahib turned to his wife and said—Yes I saw you smelling his mouth, but he is very honest and can never indulge in such an act. Then he turned to the

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[49] *Kavivacan'sudhā*, 17 August 1872. Cf. Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions*, 259-260.

> domestic and said, dear chef! I'll double your pay, but please don't leave this job; to which the latter replied—*Very well Sir*![50]

The joke cited above has a striking structural resemblance with the pre-modern misogynistic jokes on cuckoldry and female adultery.[51] In fact, this joke on a husband unable to control his hypersexual wife in liaison with the domestic is slightly modified by replacing generic characters with contemporary racial identities: the white master, his wife and an Indian domestic. In the colonial context, then, the joke becomes politically charged for Hindi reading public. It plays on the stereotype of the sexually licentious white woman. It underlines the patriarchal anxiety about the dangers of a nuclear family, without family elders keeping vigil over potentially licentious household women, who are exposed to the proximity of other sexually threatening males, such as domestics. Finally, it establishes the supremacy of an Indian male subaltern who wittingly dupes his colonial master and wins money and the body of a white woman.

Nearly all periodicals mentioned so far published columns variously titled '*Hãsī-dillagī kī bāteṃ*' (wit and humor), '*Cuṭ'kule*' (jokes), '*Bujhavval*' (conundrum) at regular intervals that contained racy popular jokes with a direct or indirect political subtext. For example, a joke published in *Kṣatriya Patrikā* (warrior-caste's magazine, 1882) touched upon issues, such as child marriage, which were at the centre of public controversy. The joke went something like this:

> Once, a priest was married to a child bride. With his child bride on his shoulder he was crossing a marketplace. A rowdy *jaj'mān* [religious client]

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[50] This is a literal translation of a nineteenth century Hindi joke, which has been made at the cost of the rules of English grammar in order to be faithful to the original. See Siṃh, *Śrīhariścandrakalā*, 34.

[51] Jokes about cuckoldry were already in circulation through oral and their printed versions. *Pañcatantra*, for instance, has many similar stories. See Franklin Edgerston, *The Panchatantra Reconsidered*, vol. 2, *Introduction and Translation* (New Heavens Connecticut: American Oriental Society, 1924), 289-91, 378-79. Lee Siegel also cites many jokes from the *Pañcatantra*, *Kathāsaritsāgara*, *Śukasaptati* and other folktales. Lee Siegel, *Laughing Matters: Comic Tradition in India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 62-63, 126-36, 197-98, 204, 206.

> quipped—is it your daughter Chaubeju? The priest replied: both my son and daughter are into her only.[52]

Significantly, many of these jokes as the one cited above on cuckoldry, which were part of the north Indian oral repertoire, were reprinted without any changes or with only minor contextual changes, while retaining the original structure of the plot. To cite just one example, a joke on caste-based favouritism of the *kāyasthas*[53] appeared in *Kavivacanˈsudhā* and *Kṣatriya Patrikā* bearing the title of '*Jātīya pakṣapāt*' in the 1880s. It had already been published without a title in Lallujilal's *Latīfa-i Hind* in 1810 under the aegis of the Calcutta Fort William College. The joke was as follows:

> Once, a Kaith [*kāyastha*] of high administrative rank was going somewhere. On his way there he found a Kaith tree [*acacia catechu*]. Pointing towards the tree he asked his servants, who is it? They replied: Lala Sahib, this is Kaith. Listening to this he joyously said, Oho, he is my caste-fellow! Ask him why he is standing in my way. The servants wittily replied: it is saying I am unclothed and suffering from cold. Upon hearing this, the *kāyastha* ordered his servants to grant twenty five bundles of silk from his storehouse to his caste-fellow.[54]

The text of this joke is complex. It adopts the genealogy of caste myths as a rhetorical form. It draws from the structure of a traditional story of a social group's totemic genealogy and the consequent justification of kinship ties. The narrator of this joke mocks the partisan behaviour of a caste group member and, simultaneously, the textual form of the myth. A purely semantic similarity between two completely unrelated objects, a botanic and human entity, and the consequent favouritism underline the absurdity of caste-based sociality. Given the context of its print when hitherto dispersed and socially unconnected

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[52] The priest meant to say that both his son and daughter would come out of his child-bride's womb. This joke is in Braj dialect and hence very difficult to render into English. I have provided an approximate rendition here. *Kṣatriya Patrikā*, Jyeṣṭha-Āṣāṛh 1939 / June-July 1882).

[53] A traditional clerical caste with administrative clout since pre-colonial times.

[54] *Kṣatriya Patrikā*, Kārtik (October) 1890, Siṃh, *Śrīhariśchandrakalā*, 38, Lallujilal, *Latifa-e-Hind* Or *The New Encyclopedia Hindoostanica of Wit* (Calcutta: Indian Gazette Press, 1810), 13.

*kāyastha*s of different regions—Bengal, Bihar and the United Province—were uniting under one caste association,[55] the absurdity of an unrelated and coincidental similarity of terms referred to in the joke acquires a contemporaneous allegorical referentiality. Jokes on *kāyasthas* may have been in circulation for a long time but acquired new meanings in the time of their reproduction. Jokes and satires targeting them with clear references to late nineteenth century historical processes can be found aplenty. A joke book carried an epigrammatic comment on the inability of a *kāyastha* to ride a horse around the same time when, erstwhile considered as śudras, the *kāyasthas* started claiming themselves to be kśatriyas (warriors).

> A novice *kāyath*, awkwardly sitting on horseback, was going to the marketplace, a cavalier saw him sitting behind the saddle and asked, O brother, sit a little ahead. The *kāyath* asked, why? He clarified, your saddle is empty. The *kāyath* replied, why should I follow you? I sit in a position in which my horse keeper put me.[56]

Essays

Like the British *Punch*, satirical essays, not uncommon in Pratap Narayan Mishra's *Brāhmaṇ*, endlessly played with words, made false linguistic connections and teased new meanings out of them. In 1888 an editorial titled "Ṭ" was published.[57] It questioned the British imperialist character through a mock exercise in social linguistics obliquely communicating the pressing political anger of a Hindi intellectual crushed under the asymmetries of colonialism:

> This letter neither has the loveliness of L, nor the difficulty of D, nor the motherly touch of M. Think a little: you will find it filled with selfishness. If observed minutely, Arabs and Persians are not unalloyed forms of

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[55] Carrol, "Colonial Perceptions of Indian Society".

[56] Anon., *Manohar kahānī* (Lakhˡnaū: Navalˡkiśor pres, 1880), 6. Horse riding is traditionally associated with military prowess of upper caste landed elite.

[57] First published in *Brāhmaṇ*, 4, 11, June 15, 1888. Cited from Candrikā Prasād Śarmā, ed., *Pratāpˡnārāyaṇ miśra racˡnāvalī* (2001), 59-61. In South Asian languages, the English *t* sound is usually realised as a retroflex *ṭ*, and this rule underlies this whole passage.

> deceit and cunning—they know how to kill or get killed, how to oppress the weak being the mightier, and how to help against all odds when pleased. And where calculation doesn't work, they simply fawn; but taking care of their public image and greasing others to further self-interest, which is indeed so essential, are absolutely alien to them. Look into the characters of all the Kings in history. You won't find a single one whose good or bad character could remain undercover for long. That's why they don't have *Ṭ* in their alphabet! Ask a Persian to pronounce *ṭaṭṭī*, he will make more than twenty attempts but ultimately utter *tattī*! Never ever hunted from behind a *ṭaṭṭī* [veil], how could they have this word? On the other hand, see our White-lord, *haiṭ* [<hat>] on his head, *pyeṃṭ* [<pant>] and *būṭ* [<boot>] on his legs. The name of the God, *ālmāiṭī* [<almighty>];[58] the name of the Preceptor *ṭiuṭar* [<tutor>] or *māsṭar* [<master>], […] or *ṭīcar* [<teacher>]; the title of the beloved, *misṭres*; the name of work, *ṭreḍ* [<trade>]; word for profit, *benīphiṭ* [<benefit>]; the word for the poet, *poyaṭ*; the word for idiot, *sṭupiḍ*; they eat on a *ṭebil* [<table>] and earn by *ṭeks*. How far should I stretch this *ṭiṭil ṭeṭil* [chattering]; take any of the big dictionaries, you'll hardly find a word without Ṭ. […] He is the crown of the world because of this Ṭ. Leave aside the issue of comprehending his policy, common educated people can't articulate the meaning of a single word of this policy […] Your selfishness is great! Came here as a merchant but became king of the kings! Why not, with whom everything is full of Ṭ, is it at all surprising that he should digesṬ anything and everything of others?[59] This is called moraliṬy.

The author assigns essential wickedness to the letter *Ṭ* and offers a historical assessment of the moral character of the ruling classes of India by illustrating the lack or preponderance of this letter in their languages. A deficiency of this letter in Persian, the official language of the state in pre-British India, is serves as evidence of a better state of affairs in medieval times. Likewise, preponderance of this letter in English is turned into an explanation for the political reality and nature of the British colonial rule.

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[58] The terms in brackets are the English equivalents of the respective English terms in Devanagari script.

[59] Ṭ is given as ṭakār, and the rhyming word to that is ḍakār from ḍakār'nā, literally not 'to digest' but 'to burp' (after sumptuous meal).

Another good example of parody was the use of 'mock' lexicographies and dictionaries. *Punch* had this variety of satire aplenty.[60] It is difficult to assume a linear connection between this kind of satire published in *Punch* and that published in *Brāhmaṇ* or *Hindī pradīp*. In colonial Northern India it sought to describe the colonial cultural condition by using pseudo-lexicographical keywords of Indian society and politics. This was achieved with a deliberate (mis)application of grammatical methods to elaborate on contemporary cultural meaning of everyday social and political parlance. And, by extension, it turns out to be a compressed articulation of multiple asymmetries in a colonial society perceived as, what Sudhir Chandra has called, the 'oppressive present' of colonialism.[61] For instance, Mishra's *Kalikoś* (encyclopaedia of fallen times) describes the following groups:

> *Brāhmaṇ*—"*Bāṃbhan*", one who sounds *bā*, meaning an ox—an animal without education.
> *Gurū*—Shameless, scoundrel, crazy, etc., evident by the [living] encyclopedia of Benares.
> […]
> *Paṃḍit*—*P* for *pāpī* [sinner], *Ḍ* for *ḍākū* [robber], T for *taskar* [smuggler].
> […]
> *Chatrī* [Warrior]—One who does not even walk to the urinal without a *chat'rī* [umbrella], in other words the embodiment of feminine delicateness.
> […]
> *Vaiśya* [Trader]—Seems to be the masculine counterpart of *veśyā* [prostitute] because, for the sake of money (s)he is ready to forsake self-esteem and be a slave. But they are so envious that this prostitute is expert

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[60] Altick, *Punch* cites such examples. A parody of Olivian Lore was serialised in the year 1843. Written by Percival Leigh and illustrated by H. G. Haine, it cast Hercules as Punch's surrogate who deals with his numerous antagonists until 1843:
"The Nemean Lion = war
The Hydra = the law ("the offspring of necessity by wickedness")
The Buck of the Brazen Countenance = swindlers typified by "Jew bill-discounters"
The Great Boer = quackery (in medicine)
The Augean Stables = parliament, bureaucracy, and courts to be cleaned by the force of public opinion
The Harpies = vultures of a certain "persuasion", who batten on debtors." Altick, *Punch*, 100.

[61] Chandra, *The Oppressive Present*.

> in stealing others' wealth and conscience and they earn for the Englishmen.
> […]
> *Agnihotra* [Fire sacrifice]—One who spoils the atmosphere by spending thousands of rupees on firecrackers for a marriage celebration.
> Hospitality—Serving food to the British, honouring sacred thread, *coṭī* and *tilak* with eggs and chicken.
> *Dharma*—Abusing followers of another sect.
> *Veda*—Seed of division between Ārya Samāj and Dharma Sabhā.
> […]
> *Śivālay* [Temple of Lord Shiva]—The place of *śivā* or the jackal […]
> […]
> *Nāstik* [Atheist]—One who follows the dicta of each and every sect except our own […].
> *Kacahˈrī* [Law court]—*kac* means hair and *harī* means remover […]
> *Darbār*—*darb* means wealth, *ari* means enemy […]
> *Hākim* [Government officer]—The oppressed says *hā* [shouts in pain] and his highness says *kim*, meaning why the hell or are you shouting?
> *Bakīl* (Advocate)—*buḥ* + *kil*, one who nails your heart, or in another language, *voḥ* + *kī*, What (is with you)? Give it to me […]
> […]
> *Mard* [Man]—One who has been trampled […].
> […]
> *Santān* [Son]—One who is born after the visit of a *sant* or characterless monk![62]

From the title onwards this piece can be read symptomatically. The author uses the trope of the Age of kali[63]—an age of all-pervasive moral and cultural downfall. As a parodying encyclopaedia of colonial ethnography[64] and scholarly register of Sanskrit lexicography, the content of this essay satirises the general socio-cultural condition under colonialism. The Brahmans, a traditional social group with scholarly pursuits, are no more than the proverbial ignorant oxen, the spiritual preceptors are thugs, the warrior or ruling class wallows in pleasure and is emasculated, the merchant class is unethical and collaborates with the colonial masters, the epitome of the educated service class, *agnihotra*, are far from being austere. The culture of hospitality is deeply colonised, the philosophical tradition of religious debate has been debased, the philosophers of atheism have become deeply opportunistic and superficial, and finally the colonial institutions of justice and welfare are misnomers and exploitative to their core.

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[62] It was first serialised in Brahman between 1884 and 1886. Cf. Miśra, Pratāpˈnārāyaṇ miśra racˈnāvalī, 27-31. Similar writings by Radhacharan Goswami can be found in Hindī pradīp, July 1882.

[63] The Kali age is the last temporal phase in the moral-circular time of Hindu cosmology. See Romila Thapar, *Time as a Metaphor of History*, Krishna Bhardwaj Memorial Lecture, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996). For the cultural politics of the invocation of the Kali age in the colonial period, see Sumit Sarkar, "'Kaliyuga', 'Chakri' and 'Bhakti': Ramakrishna and His Times," *Economic and Political Weekly* 27, 29 (1992): 1543-1566.

[64] Goswami suggestively entitled his piece as 'Mimicry of a new encyclopedia by Mr. W'. Here Mr W stands for none other than the orientalist scholar/administrator H. H. Wilson.

Cartoon

Another significant development in the late nineteenth century Hindi periodicals was the incorporation of illustrations. In this context, what is significant is the beginning of illustrations in the satirical columns. Cartoons in the sense of the British Punch were very much in vogue in Urdu, Bengali, Gujarati, and Marathi language periodicals from the second half of the 1870s. In Hindi they made their presence felt a little later. In the next chapter we shall discuss this issue at length. Beginning in the 1880s, a few attempts by the writer-editors themselves could be observed. For instance, Radhacharan Goswami drew and published a cartoon titled '*Unnati kī gāṛī*' (the cart of progress). As mentioned in Chapter 2, it shows the cart of progress driven by a whip-carrying Englishman named *śāsan* (governance) and *anuśāsan* (discipline). This cart is pushed forward by Bengali, Marathi and Punjabi gentlemen, while a Hindustani (north Indian) is left behind, ensnared by *avidyā* (ignorance) and *ālasya* (idleness).[65] Similarly, at the turn of the century Mahavir Prasad Dvivedi, who was the editor of the influential literary monthly *Sarasvatī* for seventeen years and regarded as a moderniser of Hindi language, made cartoons a regular feature in the initial years of *Sarasvatī*.[66] Commissioned artists usually drew them and the themes remained limited to literary polemics.[67] *Sarasvatī*, for instance, published a cartoon titled '*Khaḍī bolī kā padya*' (Khari Boli poetry) in September 1902.[68] (See Figure 1).

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[65] See Rāmˈnirañjan Parimalendu, *Mohanˈlāl mahˈto viyogī* (Dillī: Sāhitya akādˈmī, 2007), 21.

[66] Dvivedi was its editor between 1903 and 1920.

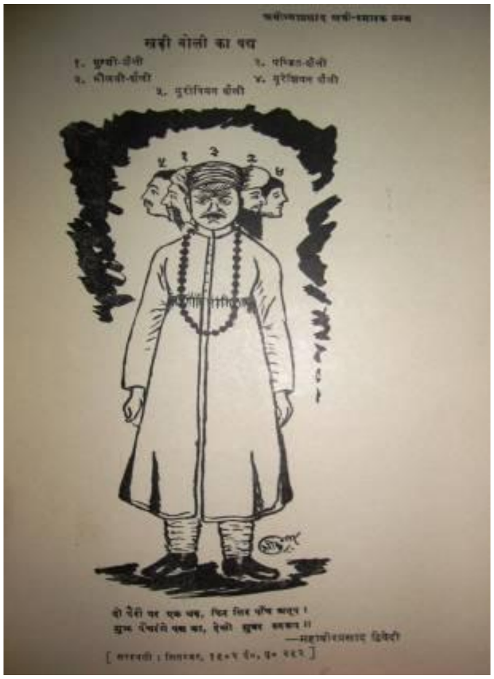

Figure 1: *Khaḍī bolī kā padya*', *Sarasvatī*, September 1902.

The cartoon targeted Ayodhya Prasad Khatri, who had been leading a literary movement for Khari Boli[69] to replace Brajbhasha[70] as the language of modern Hindi poetry.[71] He wrote a book, *Khaḍī bolī kā padya*, to highlight the variety of poetic compositions in the language to justify its potential viability to convey poetic sensibility. The cartoon mocked Khatri's linguistic and ethnographic classification of Khari Boli poetry as ridiculous and, borrowing from the imagery of Hindu mythology, graphically represented it as a man with five heads: 1. Court or clerk style, 2. Muslim style, 3. Pandit style, 4. Eurasian style and 5. European style. Interestingly, the head representing a Pandit (read Brahmin) style is in the middle and hence the chief amongst them. An epigrammatic comment below this illustration says:

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[67] It cannot be established whether Dvivedi himself drew these cartoons. What can be argued with conviction is that he conceptualised the themes of the cartoons, which were largely on literary polemics, and gave detailed instruction to draw accordingly.

[68] This cartoon is reprinted in Sivˈpūjan Sahāy, ed., *Ayodhyā prasād khatrī smārak granth* (Paṭˈnā: Bihār rāṣṭrabhāṣā pariṣad, 1960), 101.

[69] Khari Boli was a dialect spoken in the Delhi-Agra region, and language of communication in the north Indian cities. It was made the principal base of modern standard Hindi.

[70] Brajbhasa was also a dialect in the Mathura area and had been the language of poetry since early medieval times.

[71] Ayodhya Prasad Khatri was a Hindi nationalist who was of the opinion that if Khari Boli Hindi wished to be a language of literature its poetic oeuvre should not be in Brajbhasa but in Khari Boli. See Alok Rai, *Hindi Nationalism* Tracts For the Times, 13 (Delhi: Orient Longman, 2001).

> A torso on two legs with stunning five heads over them,
> Lo behold the beautiful symmetry of my penta-colour poetry.

Dvivedi's cartoon did not oppose the necessity of poetic composition in Khari Boli but, through graphic exaggeration, he underlined the absurdity of the internal diversity of Khari Boli as strange and demonic. It gave a clear hint at his future agenda of purging Khari Boli of its diversity, which he would do as the editor of *Sarasvatī* after a few months.[72]

Bhārat'jīvan published a skit titled '*Pañcānan kī peśi*' (the court of Panchanan). The pictures of an owl and a donkey are inserted in the satirical column (see Figure 2). At the court of Panchanan, two 'strange species enter—an owl named 'the Ocean of Wisdom' and an ass that is afraid of education. The first introduces himself as a representative of a literary critic. He writes favourable or damning reviews and commentaries on monetary considerations.[73] The second introduces himself as a young man from the class of newly rich merchants with no interest in modern education. They then leave. One need to recall the tradition of popular Indian fables, *Pañcatantra*, to trace one genealogical line of the usage of visual imagery: Animals typecast with human attributes of a social class. Significantly, this example also displays the initial attempts by the editors to incorporate illustrations in satirical columns. However, after 1920, with the proliferation in print and readership, the cartoon became an essential feature of most of the periodicals, and professional artists and cartoonists started to be employed.

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[72] Exercising the authority of the editor of the monthly, which was affiliated with the powerful cultural institution Nāg'rī pracāriṇī sabhā (society for the propagation of Hindi), Dvivedi shaped a homogenous and standard style of literary prose and poetry in Khari Boli, borrowing heavily from Sanskrit register and simultaneously discouraging use of 'dialects' or rustic Hindi and words of Perso-Arabic roots.

[73] The figure of a corrupt literary critic under satiric attack is an interesting case, which points towards a broader development in the Hindi literary sphere. In 1900, what Alok Rai calls 'The MacDonnell Moment', the battle to establish Nagari/Hindi as the court language, was won. Rai, *Hindi Nationalism*, 17-49. With this, the process to reorganise, institutionalise, standardise and expand the literary world of Hindi was intensified further. Consequently, the question of moral and institutional authority as an arbiter in the literary field also becomes prominent.

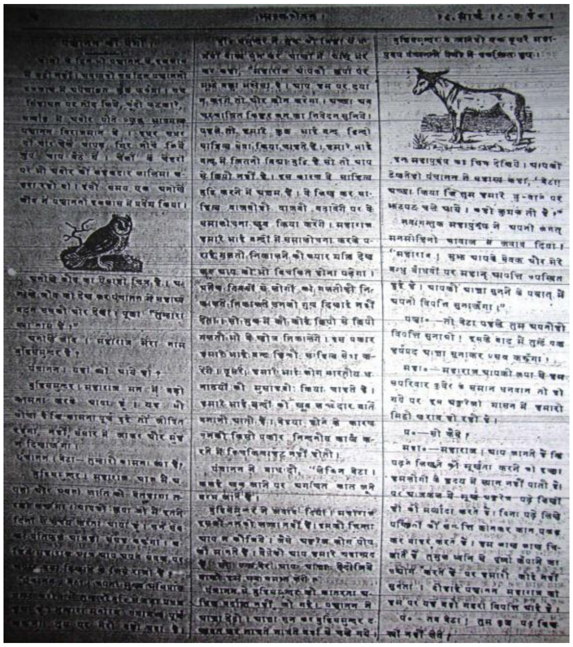

Figure 2: '*Pañcānan kī peśī*', *Bhārat jīvan*, 16 March 1903.

Characteristic features of late nineteenth century satirical journalism

Using several examples, I have shown that there existed a literary space and style of satirical journalism of the *Punch* variety within the Hindi literary sphere prior to 1920. This tradition of satirical journalism was informed as much by the British *Punch* as by the existing pre-colonial oral or literary narratives. The literary format of the periodical experimented with familiar but disparate literary and oral cultural repertoires of humour. It contributed towards attracting and training a readership with diverse tastes, new to the world of Hindi print, and in the process of self-constitution. The satirical columns using parody, farce, jokes, etc., were structurally familiar to readers from their lives before and beyond the printed word.[74] Their inclusion in literary periodicals added entertainment and pleasure value to the otherwise morally overloaded, dry nationalist messages.[75] For example, in the introduction to his *Nāpitˡstotra*[76] Goswami, one of the key Hindi literary figures of the time, clearly underlined the entertainment aspect of satire and its prospective role in attracting a greater readership:

> Although the Nāpitˡstotra is primarily humorous, yet it will be fruitful […] Humour should increase interest in reading Hindi books and hence shall be a national service.

Compared to other genres and modes of writings authored by the same set of people in the same periodicals on the same question of colonialism and its wider politico-cultural implications in Indian society, the examples above show another stark peculiarity of the satirical mode of writing. The general ambivalence of the intelligentsia towards colonial rule is less apparent in the satirical modes.[77] Instead, the satirical attack is full-fledged and hardly spares any aspect of colonialism. Finally, to reassert the point made in Chapter 2, the colonial intelligentsia, a product of the colonial encounter, uses satire as a potent means to tackle the perceived cultural asymmetries which colonialism produced through the general political subordination of the country. It consequently paved the way for what was considered to be a destabilisation of the Indian/Hindu social equilibrium visible in the assertions of the lower castes and women.

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[74] For the interface between oral and printed literature of entertainment in Hindi and Urdu, see Francesca Orsini, "Barahmasas in Hindi and Urdu," in Before the Divide: Hindi and Urdu Literary Cultures, ed. Francesca Orsini (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2010), 142-177.

[75] Orsini makes a very important point about the publication of cheap tracts of entertainment literature in connection with the success of commercial printing in Hindi and Urdu. The success of the printer lay in tapping the proto-literate readership, which was trained to read already familiar modes of entertainment such as popular song and theatre. Drawing from the work on children's literature by the Italian scholar Ermanno Detti, she argues that, though often frowned upon by educationists, a deeply pleasurable experience of, what Detti calls, 'sensuous reading' is necessary to develop a habit of reading, which is an essential pre-requisite for the development of a reading practice in general. These texts of pleasure, in which we can also include printed jokes, conundrums, skits, epigrammatic comments on politics and society, etc., can be seen as absolutely necessary in order to win people over to the printed page. Orsini, *Print and Pleasure*, 22-23.

[76] Rādhācaraṇ Gosvāmī, *Nāpitˡstotra* (Baṃkīpur: Khaḍgavilās pres, 1882). Also published in *Kṣatriya Patrikā*, July 1881. We have discussed it in chapter 2.

[77] For example, pages of the *HM* clearly reflect that non-satirical columns hardly ever attack the colonial government or colonialism as such. On the question of ambivalence to colonial rule see Chandra, *Oppressive Present*; K.N. Panikkar, *Culture, Ideology, Hegemony: Intellectuals and Social Consciousness in Colonial India* (Delhi: Tulika, 1998).

3

From Punch to *Matˈvālā*: a satirical journal in the age of nationalism

Matˈvālā carries forward the late nineteenth century literary experiments with its own novelty in the changed historical circumstances of the 1920s. With the rise of anti-colonial mobilisation under middle-class leadership[78] in the aftermath of the First World War, the publication and circulation of periodicals rose substantially in each and every district town, targeting and shaping the literate and semi-literate, potentially nationalistic, Hindi reading public.[79] The Hindi language had been deemed to be the most appropriate language of nationalist politics by none other than Mahatma Gandhi himself.[80] Hindu-Muslim identity politics had acquired a new dimension. In the nineteenth century, community identity was articulated by the Hindi intelligentsia largely within the dominant nationalist logic as a different but constituent part of one Indian body politic. This articulation was progressively giving way to violent and mutually hostile communal identity formations during this period.[81]

In literary gossip, as well as factual accounts in the memoirs of the Hindi literati, or in books on the history of Hindi journalism in general, the story of the publication of *Matˡvālā* from Calcutta is described as a momentous event.[82] *The Annual Report on Newspaper and Periodical published from Bengal* shows that it had 200 annual subscribers and a circulation of approximately 2000.[83] A leading member of its editorial team, however, wrote in his memoirs that it reached the unprecedented mark of ten thousand within a year.[84] There were many articles and cartoons on *Matˡvālā* in contemporary periodicals, which could also be taken as an index of its popularity.[85]

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[78] Gyanendra Pandey, *The Ascendancy of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh 1926-34: A Study in Imperfect Mobilization* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978).

[79] Its background had been set in the late nineteenth century. The programmatic political attempts of the pioneers of Hindi nationalism of the late nineteenth century and the consequent politics of Hindi-Hindu-Hindustan have been largely successful in transforming the linguistic choice of north India, and consequently, in winning over a large number of Hindu readers from Urdu to Hindi.

[80] Orsini, *Hindi Public Sphere.*

[81] Pradip Kumar Datta, *Carving Blocs: Communal Ideology in the Early Twentieth Century Bengal* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999); William Gould, *Hindu Nationalism and Language of Politics in Late Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Matˡvālā was a self-proclaimed humorous weekly with a judicious mixture of heterodoxy and commercialism. A young nationalist literary connoisseur and essayist, Mahadev Prasad Seth, who belonged to a rich merchant family of Mirzapur, owned the press and the paper.[86] He successfully channelled the unrestrained, youthful literary talents of diverse, unique and path-breaking individuals like Suryakant Tripathi 'Nirala' and Pandey Bechan Sharma 'Ugra' on the one hand, and dedicated and disciplined ones like Munshi Navjadiklal Shrivastav and Shivpujan Sahay on the other.[87] In the moralist-rationalist Hindi world, dominated by hegemonic figures such as Mahavir Prasad Dvivedi,[88] this weekly produced a refreshing change. Its scathing attacks on the orthodoxies of the Hindi literary sphere can be gleaned from its appearance (see Figure 3).

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[82] Usually downplayed in the history of Bengal/Calcutta since the inception of the printing industry, it has been one of the major centres of Hindi printing. Apart from the first Hindi periodical *Uddaṇḍ mārtaṇḍ*, Calcutta always had more than one long lasting Hindi periodical, like *Sārˡsudhānidhi*, *Bhāratˡmitra*, *Ucitˡvaktā*, which had circulation figures between 500 and 1500. See, for instance, "Report on Newspaper and Periodical in Bengal for the Week Ending 22 December 1882" in *Indian Newspaper Reports, c1868-1942, from the British Library, London [microform]*, part 1: *Bengal, 1874-1903* (Marlborough: Adam Matthew Publications Ltd., 2005). Besides a sizable Hindi readership in Bara Bazar area, entire Bihar, north of the river Ganges, was a potential sphere of circulation. Calcutta was better connected than Allahabad, Benaras or even Patna.

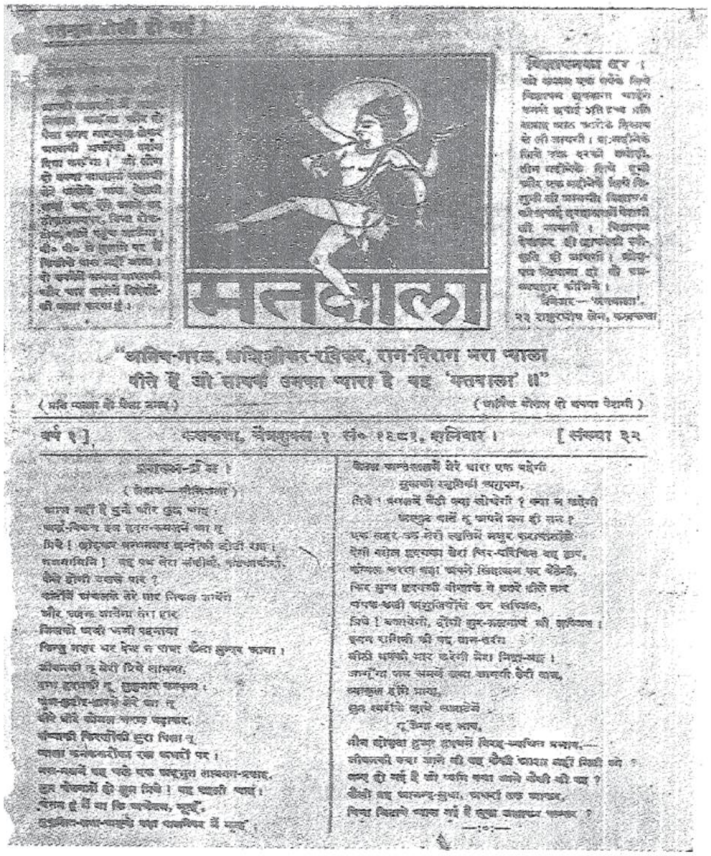
[83] *Statement of Newspapers and Periodicals Published or Printed in Bengal—Revised Upto 31st December 1925* (Calcutta: Bengal Government Press, 1926).

[84] Śivˡpūjan Sahāy, *Merā jīvan* (Paṭˡnā: Parijāt prakāśan, 1985), 101.

[85] To cite just one example here, see a cartoon on *Matˡvālā* in the monthly *Bhārˡtendu* (Allahabad), December 1928. While publishing each other's appreciation and reviews was common in the fraternity of the periodical, *Matˡvālā*'s case was different. *Matˡvālā* attracted extra attention of the literary public as well as the government for its bold and provocative moral, political and literary stance. Finally, it succumbed to the dual pressure of the dominant, modernist, patriarchal moral orthodoxy of Hindi public sphere for promoting 'low-brow' literature, and the colonial clampdown for writing inflammatory political articles within six years of its inauguration.

[86] *Statement of Newspapers and Periodicals Published or Printed in Bengal—Revised Upto 31st December 1925*.

[87] For general information on the story of the first year of Matˡvālā maṇḍal or the Matˡvālā literary circle, there exist some (hagiographic) accounts. Sahāy, Merā jīvan; Karmendu Śiśir, "Matˡvālā maṇḍal: sāhityik patrakāritā kā ek anūṭhā adhyāy," *Pahal*, Special Issue (1988). For a more critical



मतवाला

'मतवाला' मुखपृष्ठ : वर्ष १, संख्या ३२, संवत् १९८१

Figure 3: Cover page of *Matˈvālā* 32, 1 *Caitra śukla* (March-April) 1925.

The name of the weekly itself celebrated liquor, *Matˈvālā* literally means one who is intoxicated. It was in marked contrast with other publications like *Sarasvatī* (goddess of learning), *Abhyuday* (dawn), *Maryādā* (dignity), *Bhāratˈmitra* (friend of India), *Cā̃d* (moon), Viśāl bhārat (sublime India), which symbolised lofty moralism. The image of an intoxicated Shiva dancing on the front page is accompanied by a couplet celebrating the theme of intoxication as a symbol of

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account of its early period until the great poet Nirala was associated with it, see Rāmˈbilās Śarmā, *Nirālā kī sāhitya sādhanā*, Vol. 1 (Dillī: Rājˈkamal prakāśan, 1972).

[88] Rāmˈbilās Śarmā, *Mahāvīr prasād dvivedī aur hindī navˈjāgaran* (Dillī: Rājˈkamal prakāśan, 1989).

pleasure and detachment, and it continues in this vein stating its price: 'One anna per cup, three rupees in advance for an annual bottle'. The periodical and its writers were either loved or hated, but could not be ignored. They remained at the centre of public controversy whether for Nirala's experiments in Hindi poetry and his acerbic criticism of orthodoxy in Hindi literary culture,[89] or for Ugra's bold and realist short stories on homosexual and cross-community love affairs.[90]

Matˡvālā: The satiric narrator

In the closing years of the nineteenth and the early years of the twentieth century an interesting phenomenon occurred. Apart from the Punch columns, the most famous and popular satirical columns began to appear under the title of *Śivˡśambhu ke ciṭṭhe* (Letters from Śivˡśambhu), which became famous for their biting attacks on government policies in the *Bhāratˡmitra* (Friend of India) of Calcutta. In a way, a process of gradual transformation in the self-image of the satiric narrator is observed—irreverent, quasi-divine and an articulator of public opinion—from *Pañc*'s heterogeneous lineages to his Hindu origins, perhaps culminating in *Matˡvālā*.[91]

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[89] Śarmā, *Nirālā kī sāhitya sādhanā*, Vol. 1; David Rubin, "Nirala and the Renaissance of Hindi Poetry," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 31, 1 (1971): 111-126; Heidi Pauwels, "Diptych in Verse: Gender Hybridity, Language Consciousness, and National Identity in Nirālā's 'Jāgo Phir Ek Bār'," Journal of the American Oriental Society 121, 3 (2001): 449-481.

[90] Pandeya Bechan Sharma 'Ugra', *Chocolate, and Other Writings on Male-Male Desire*, trans., intr. Ruth Vanita (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006). Also, see Francesca Orsini, "Reading a Social Romance: 'Chand hasino ke khatoot'," in *Narrative Strategies: Essays on South Asian Literature and Films*, ed. Vasudha Dalmia and Theo Damsteegt (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 185-210.

[91] According to Shivpujan Sahay, *Matˡvālā* took its immediate inspiration from a Bengali satirical weekly, *Abatār*, which had been started just a couple of months before in 1923. Sahāy, *Merā jīvan*, 99. *Abatār* was a cheap, full-scape weekly. Its title page carried an illustration of an Indian youth simultaneously clad in a *dhotī* (a long piece of cotton clothing to be tied around the waist, worn by traditional Hindus) and trousers, with a hat on his head. It was edited by Amulyacharan Sen of Dakshineshvar. Its language was racy, rustic and contained a ruthlessly critical editorial. I am thankful to Chaiti Basu for this information on *Abatār*. This *Abatār* issue raises some significant questions. Can we map *Punch*'s influence on *Matˡvālā*? Given the evidence that the nineteenth century traditions of Bengali satirical journalism (*Basantak*, *Pañcā-nanda*, *Harˡbolā bhāṛ*, etc.) were very much modelled on *Punch*, *Punch*'s formative influence can be linked to *Abatār* and then to *Matˡvālā*. See essays by Chaiti Basu in Hans Harder and Barbara Mittler, eds. *Asian Punches: A*

The first issue of *Matˈvālā* talked about the self-image of the periodical in a long satirical essay.[92] The persona of *Matˈvālā* is described as the opium, weed-smoking henchman of Lord Shiva, named Vīrˈbhadra (noble-brave). On the insistence of his consort, Parvati, who had overheard some hue and cry coming from the direction of *Bhāratˈvarś* (India), he was sent to earth by the Lord himself to observe political and social affairs. The Lord asked him to throw his trident with full force and follow its direction to its landing place. In a state of intoxication, he heard a loud echo of a human cry coming from the east and confused this with the roar of a demon. He threw his trident to kill him, but the demon was nowhere to be seen. Looking for his trident in order to decide the location of his headquarter as per his master's instruction, he arrived in the land of the Goddess Kali, *Kali-kāntā* [Calcutta], and finally chose to stay in the street named after his master, i.e., Shankar Ghosh Lane. Yet he kept wondering about his inability to find the demon [colonialism] at whom he had thrown his trident. He could clearly see the demon's *māyā* (vicious effects) but not the *māyāvī* (demon).

In other words, the reporter Matˈvālā is God's emissary, hence invested with quasi-divine authority and answerable to his Lord. He is an impartial outsider, but stays inside society. He is a celestial being and therefore not bound by any social norms. He is always intoxicated and, in this state of drunkenness, is not restricted by reason, hence has the liberty to see beyond reality. He can

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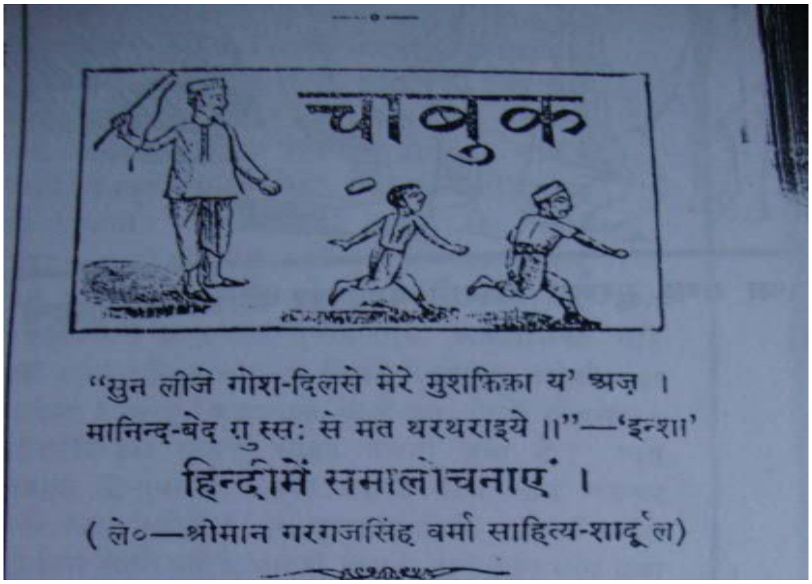
Transcultural Affair (Heidelberg, Berlin: Springer, 2013). After all, in the literary cultures of South Asia, many western literary forms travelled indirectly via another, neighbouring literary culture, in this case in Hindi via Bengali or Urdu. Early historical, social or detective novels were introduced via Bengali. Orsini mentions, for instance, the circulation and translation of detective novels from English to Bengali and then to Hindi. Francesca Orsini, "Detective Novels: A Commercial Genre in Nineteenth-century North India," in *India's Literary History: Essays on the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Stuart Blackburn and Vasudha Dalmia (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), 435-482.

[92] It was written by Shivpujan Sahay after his discussion with other members of the team. Sahāy, *Merā jīvan*, 100.

articulate the unarticulated and can feel the mood of people being crushed by harsh reality.[93]

Matˈvālā as a brand

Like the British Punch, the satirical weekly Matˈvālā not only cultivated a self-persona, but also functioned as an internally cohesive editorial team leading to the consolidation of a strong literary identity amongst the reading public.[94] Most of the columns were titled accordingly and signed by the kind of pseudonyms that went well with the overall aura of *Matˈvālā* as aggressive, virile, irreverent, and iconoclastic. One of the characteristic features of *Matˈvālā*, for instance, was the short epigrammatic satirical comments in columns like *'Calˈtī cakkī'* (the unstoppable grinder), or *'Cābuk'* (the whip) (see Figure 4 and 5). 'Cābuk' commented on literary affairs. It was written under the pseudonym of Śrīmān Garˈgajˈsimh Varmā Sāhitya-Śārdūl or Mr Great Lion Armoured Literary Roc.[95]



“सुन लीजे गोशा-दिलसे मेरे मुशफ़िक़ा य’ अर्ज़ ।
मानिन्द-बेद ग़ुस्स: से मत थरथराइये ।।”—‘इन्शा’

हिन्दीमें समालोचनाएं ।

(ले०—श्रीमान गरगजसिंह वर्मा साहित्य-शार्दूल)

Figure 4: *'Cābuk'*, *Matˈvālā*, undated.

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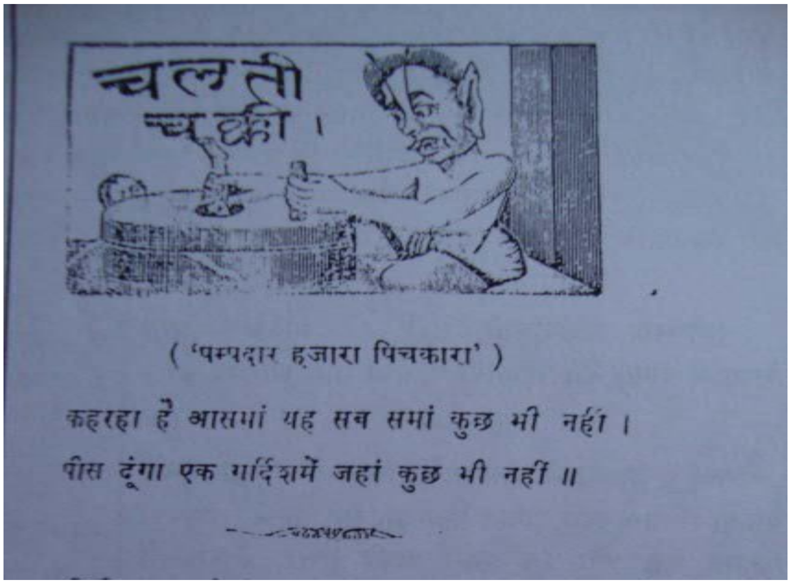
[93] *Matˈvālā*, August 26, 1923.

[94] For the case of Punch, see "Chapter 2: Mr Punch and His Men" in Altick, Punch, 41-66.

[95] A young litterateur born in the Unnav district of the present day Uttar Pradesh and brought up in Bengal Suryakant Tripathi, who wrote poems in a new style under the penname *Nirala,* was the main contributor to this column.

The illustration in the column depicts two north Indians fearfully running away from a giant with a whip. The caption below is a poem by Urdu poet Insha. It appealed to the audience/reader to listen to his affectionate plea to stop trembling in anger.



('पम्पदार हज़ारा पिचकारा')

कहरहा है आसमां यह सब समां कुछ भी नहीं ।
पीस दूंगा एक गर्दिशमें जहां कुछ भी नहीं ॥

Figure 5: '*Cal'tī cakkī*', *Mat'vālā*, undated.

Likewise '*Ca'ltī cakkī*', a column on political affairs, portrayed Mat'vālā as a devil who grinds a man in his grinder[96] and the verse below explains that he is determined to indiscriminately grind everything beneath the sky.

The young members of the *Mat'vālā* literary circle stayed as bachelors in one house, working and indulging in leisure together. In the case of a public debate over literary or political issues, which often arose from the pages of *Mat'vālā* and involved other periodicals and litterateurs, the responses were written under the collective moderation of the team, at least in the early years.[97] Litterateurs of *Mat'vālā* maintained an everlasting friendship. Even when they left for different periodicals later, they defended each other’s writings from the attacks of opponents.

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[96] This imagery of Mat'vālā puts him closer to the proverbial henchman of the death god, who is entrusted with dispensing justice in the hell of Hindu mythology

[97] See Śarmā, Nirālā kī sāhitya sādhanā, especially the chapter on Mat'vālā circle, which discusses the controversy over the originality of Nirala's poetry and Nirala's arrogant comments on the language of the periodical Sarasvatī and the consequent polemics

3

Matˡvālā: literary forms and political satire

Epigrammatic Political Comments

The short epigrammatic satirical comments in columns like ‘*Calˡtī cakkī*’ (unstoppable grinder), ‘*Matˡvāle kī bahak*’ (intoxicant’s fluttering), ‘*Cābuk*’ (whip), ‘*Āṃye bāṃye sāṃye*’ (nonsense), ‘*Canḍūkhāne kī gapp*’ (gossips of the opium tavern) contained burning social, political, and literary issues, real or imagined, and remarked on public figures at the helm of affairs. These epigrammatic comments, like those of *Punch*, required a prior knowledge of their core issues, which were already in the centre of public discourse either through newspapers and/or other oral sources. These comments were opinions, often had biting effects, and used literary strategies of satire such as incongruity, deformation or decontextualisation. I hereby quote a few of them to illustrate my points:

> It seems the ghost of Lenin is ruling over Kemal Pasha’s head. Muhammad Ali [Indian leader of the pro-caliphate movement] should look for an exorcist to cure him.[98]

A strong similarity with *Punch*’s penchant for hoaxing and rumour mongering can be noticed here.[99] In the first sentence, two forms of communication, news and rumour are intermeshed.[100] News and rumour are both acts of communication from one source to another. While the original source of news is theoretically verifiable, the source of rumour is not.[101] 'Lenin has died' is news; his turning out to be a ghost is a deformation of news into rumour. 'A ghost has entered Kemal Pasha's body' is a statement. This statement, then, either makes a conjectural connection between Lenin's death and Pasha's decision to abolish the caliphate, thus insinuating that a spirit has occupied Pasha hence is not able to make rational decisions. Or, it is an allegorical statement about an overlap between the two leaders' ideologies, at least for those who knew that Lenin had welcomed Atatürk's revolution and that Lenin and revolutionary Russia were anti-religious. The first sentence reproduces news in the form of an allegory and/or rumour. Thus, it brings down the seriousness of major political events. It was juxtaposed with the second statement prescribing magi treatment for the political dilemma the Indian Muslim leader faces, and thus decontextualises it from its local dynamics.

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[98] *Matˡvālā*, 15 March 1924.

[99] Altick, Punch, 71-72.

[100] I have shown the tradition of printing jokes and gossip in the periodicals. Reporting political rumour also has strong roots in the Hindi newspapers, at least during the anti-colonial mass movement in the twentieth century. See appendix of Shahid Amin, “Gandhi as Mahatma: Gorakhpur District, Eastern UP, 1921-2,” in *Subaltern Studies*, vol. 3, ed. Ranajit Guha (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984), 1-61.

> At a recently held convention in Allahabad priests of Hindu pilgrimage centres have taken a vow to do away with the custom of dakṣiṇā [offering to the priest], provided young and comely women of their Hindu clientele visit the shrines in a libertarian way [*svacchandatā pūrvak*].[102]

This statement invokes two malpractices associated with the priestly class of Hindus, which are widely criticised by the male Hindi middle class: first, monetary exploitation of the believers by the clergy and, second, sexual exploitation of women, who move outside their patriarchal households to visit holy shrines. The satiric grotesqueness is achieved by making the culprits bargain, in a mock democratic forum of a convention, for the sanction of the second and more serious malpractice to quit the first.

> The *māsik* [meaning both 'monthly' and 'menstruation cycle'] of Jabalpur's *Śrīśāradā* [a monthly periodical with irregular issues] has gone awry! What

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[101] See chapter 6 "Transmission" in Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), 220-277.

[102] *Matˈvālā*, 7 March 1925.

> else could be the result of being *anek^lpatigāminī* or going around with so many men [editors].[103]

Here is the case of a gendered description of literary news in which two seemingly incongruous objects are paralleled—an unfortunate literary periodical with a woman. It derives pleasure from invoking the hidden sexual meaning of words.

> It is heard that few *meh^ltars* [scavenger caste] also read newspapers. Therefore upper caste Hindus should quit this practice; after all, caste Hindus must refrain from following untouchables.[104]

Here we see the satiric inversion of the logic of Brahmanic social ideology. The (ir)rationality of Brahmanic ideology is extended to the point of absurdity through the logic of mathematical rationality. It is Brahmanic axiom that caste Hindus should not do what untouchables do. Hence, they should not read newspapers.

> Some low-caste Hindus eat pork; therefore, Muslims consider them impure. Muslims eat beef, so Hindus consider them impure. Englishmen eat both; hence they are considered pious and are worshipped by both.[105]

Here, the rationale of dietary regime and its mutual social manifestation amongst (upper caste) Hindus and Muslims is made incongruous by juxtaposing it with their contradictory behaviour vis-à-vis the ruling elite.

Editorial Essays

The periodical always carried an editorial. It moved between satire and lampoon and was, at times, invective. It appropriated each and every spectacular public event like Hindu festivals, such as *Holī*, *Dīvālī*, or *Vijayādaśamī*, and even communal riots,[106] as an occasion to satirise 'dormant' and 'emasculated' Indian/Hindus suffering under British oppression. The language of the acerbic prose was highly aggressive, virile and masculine. One example is produced below –an excerpt from an editorial titled "*Cūṛī sāṛī kī jay bolo*" (victory to bangle and petticoat).

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[103] *Mat^lvālā*, 15 March 1924.
[104] *Mat^lvālā*, 22 April 1923.
[105] *Mat^lvālā*, 10 May 1924.

> The distance between an eye and an ear is four fingers, but the difference between the acts of seeing and listening is like that between the sky and earth. I am sick of hearing repeatedly that Lord Ramchandra had his great victory march on the day of *Vijayādaśamī,* […] that the entire *Bhāratvarṣ* [India] gets bedazzled every year by the shine and sound of arms and ammunitions on the day of *Vijayādaśamī* […] But my eyes are not willing to accept the truth of these words that fall upon my ears. These poor eyes can see that Lord Rāma is no more, that the victory march, arms worship, warrior's instinct and the sound of armoury are to be found no more; that the breast of the nation is pulverised, the forehead of bravery is smashed and that self-pride is demolished. What then is the use of *Vijayādaśamī* and its sacred memory? That's why I say 'Victory to Bangle and Petticoat' […] Instead of the musical sound of arms, the cry for councils is there; instead of justice, unbearable oppression, instead of peace, great hue and cry. See the joys of *Vijayā*? Well, close your eyes now or you'll be blinded; keep your mouth shut, or your tongue will be plucked out; don't pen down

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[106] Spectacular public events, such as communal riots in Calcutta in 1926, provided another occasion for publishing sensational articles and satirical comments with gory details of real or imagined violence. A government report said that: "The Hindi papers underwent marked deterioration during the year under review. They devoted much of their energies towards promoting communal antagonism […] Sanction was given in May 1926 to the prosecution of the editor, printer and publisher (Mahadeb Prasad Seth) of the *Matvala* newspaper for the publication of objectionable articles entitled 1) "Lalkar svikar", 2) "Tum Dardar ham Patpat" and 3) "Upvas cikitsa" [lalˈkār svīkār, tum ḍār ḍār ham pāt pāt, upˈvās cikitsā] in its issues of the 27, 28 and 29 April 1926 respectively. The editor was convicted and sentenced to four months' 'simple imprisonment'." *Annual Report on Indian Papers Printed or Published in the Bengal Presidency for the Year 1926* (Calcutta: Bengal Government Press, 1927). Interestingly, even when the editor of the paper underwent prosecution and the trial was going on in court, the publication of such articles continued. The judgment on the prosecution of *Matˈvālā* under section 153 A of the Indian Penal Code for publishing objectionable article inciting communal riots noted: "They are the most dangerous and poisonous description […] There was clearly a malicious intension on the part of the writer and he had no shred of an honest view to remove matters which were causing ill-feeling between the communities […] The learned Public Prosecutor draws my attention to the facts that the accused has continued to write in the similar strain." In the annual assessment of the press and its role during communal riots the government noted that the popularity and circulation of communal papers went up. File no. 236, Political Department (Political), West Bengal State Archive, Calcutta.

> your feelings, or your heart will be squeezed […]. Beware! Tolerate the shower of abuse, listen to the sound of arms, and even fall prey to arms; but never utter a word, lower your gaze, if mother earth gives you refuge, bury yourself… When all directions approach you with sympathy, shout at your loudest the immortal words: Victory to Bangle and Petticoat […] When they ask: Who are you? Reply immediately and boldly: I am Indian. They'll ask: Why this new slogan of victory? Then, out of ten directions, speak pointing towards the white-complexioned, blood eyed, 'westward direction', in a dim shy voice: Please ask this possessor of sword and skull, garlanded with human head, the great White goddess![107]

This quotation is typical of *Matˈvālā*'s masculinist invocations of a glorious mythical Hindu past and its juxtaposition with the emasculated colonial present to awaken the 'dormant' members of Hindu nation. The narration of valour and chivalry of Hindu gods and goddesses and their acts of violent subjugation of the treacherous ruling authorities of the mythical past is debased by contrasting that narration's continuum with the oppressive present of their emasculated and enslaved descendants under colonialism. This literary strategy of satirical debasement creates a self-irony for the Hindu present.

Cartoons in Matˈvālā

Matˈvālā was one of the leading Hindi periodicals that published cartoons on a large scale. Before *Matˈvālā*, *Prabhā* (Kanpur, 1920) published cartoons regularly.[108] They were usually independent in themselves, but sometimes functioned as illustrations of juxtaposed written columns. These cartoons were equally direct and blatant in their attack and multiplied the journal's aggressive approach. Cartoons exemplify *Matˈvālā*'s endeavour to grapple with multiple asymmetries of contemporary colonial India, from a Hindu nationalist vantage point.[109] This is reflected in the cartoons about the question of forms of anti-colonial politics, caste, gender and community relations.

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[107] *Matˈvālā*, 20 October 1923.

[108] Annual Report on Indian Papers, noted in its report on the Hindi press that the appearance of the few illustrated magazines (Matˈvālā and then Hindu Punch) with improved sales was noteworthy in this section of the Press. Annual Report on Indian Papers Printed or Published in the Bengal Presidency for the Year 1925 (Bengal Govererrnment Press: Calcutta, 1926).

Matˈvālā was a staunch admirer of Gandhi because he was anti-British. Cartoons like *Paśubal kā ullās'* (the joy of brute power) highlighted the asymmetries of power between the colonial state and the nationalist opposition by depicting the government's brute suppression of the Gandhian movement (see Figure 6).

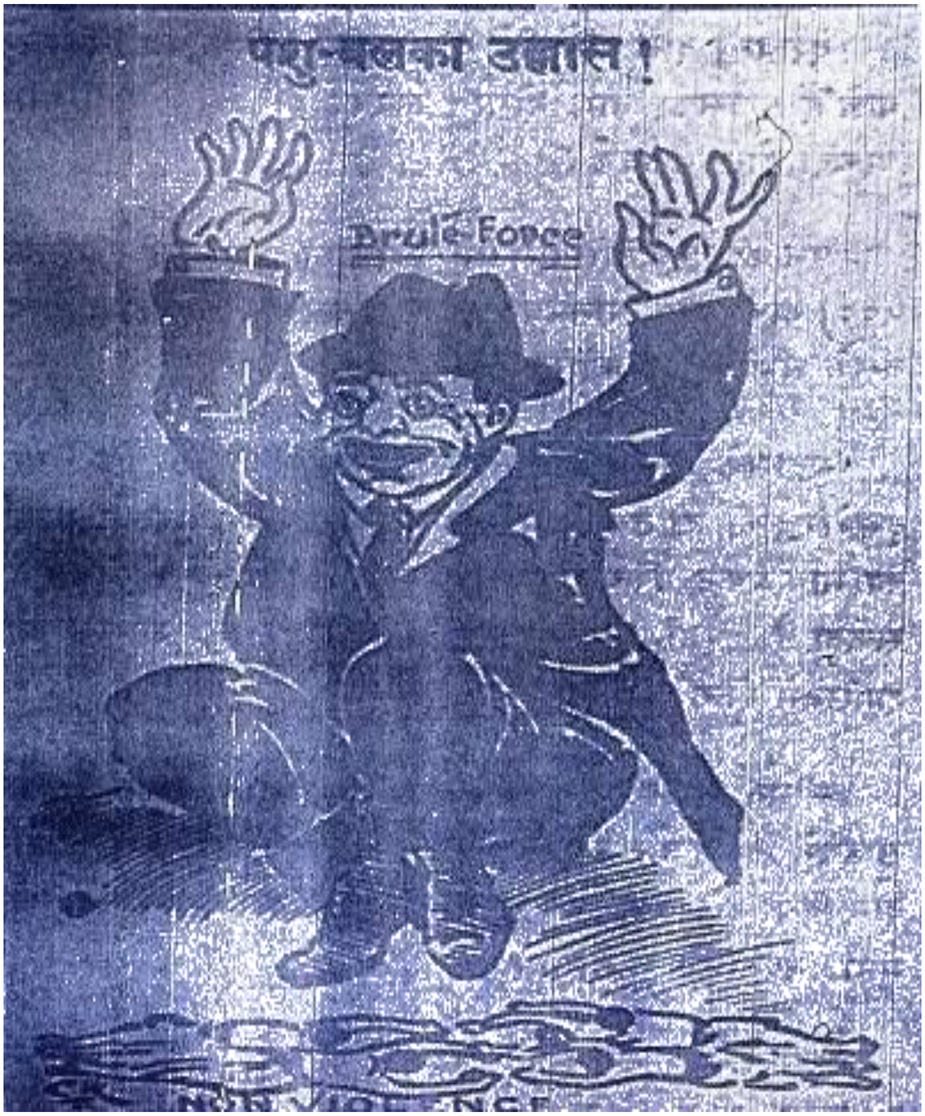

Figure 6: *Paśubal kā ullās'*, *Matˈvālā*, 29 September 1923.

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[109] With a belief in the foundation myth of India as a Hindu civilisation at its core, Hindu nationalism could take the form of an exclusivist and supremacist to moderately assimilative stance. See Gould, *Hindu Nationalism*.

The picture shows a laughing fat man in western apparel, named *Brute Force,* jumping on the flattened *dhotī*-clad human bodies named *Non-violence* with full force. Clearly, the jumping man in coat, trousers and boots with a stick in his hands is emblematic of the colonial power. The flattened human bodies are the faceless masses of India, who are following Mahatma Gandhi's principle of non-violence during the non-cooperation movement against the colonial government at that time.[110] However, it did not hesitate to poke fun at Gandhi's conservative views on female sexuality.[111]

Matᵊvālā virulently attacked liberal constitutionalists that showed faith in colonial political institutions. The cartoon entitled '*Adbhut unnati*' (unprecedented progress) can be cited as representing *Matᵊvālā's* strong opposition to them (see Figure 7). In the aftermath of the non-cooperation movement, the Indian National Congress was divided over the approach to the colonial government's limited political reforms, aiming at sharing some legislative power with the Indian political parties. The Swarajists or 'Pro-changers' in the Congress argued that the Indians should enter into the legislative council and oppose and expose the government from within. The 'No-changers' rejected this idea as a measure to co-opt Indians by the government. In this picture, the Swarajists favouring the entry of the Congress into the legislative councils are shown as pushing the boulder of the Congress into a gorge. The gorge is symbolic of the deep and dangerous entrapment of colonial political institutions. The ‘No-changers’ are depicted as trying to save the Congress party by stopping the boulder of Congress from falling down.

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[110] For the study of representation of Gandhi and his satagraha in cartoons see, Gita Dharampal-Frick, *Gandhi´s Satyagraha: Revisioning Its Cultural Roots, Dynamic Force and Global Impact* (Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 2010).

[111] 'According to Mahātmājī [Gandhi], those widows should be remarried who hardly encountered their husband. But what to do with those child widows, who died two-four months after consummating with their husbands? It would be better if the Mahatma articulates the internal logic of widow remarriage!' This epigrammatic comment is published after Gandhi subscribed to the patriarchal idea of limited social reform allowing only those widows to be remarried who did not have sexual intercourse with their husbands and hence had their virginity intact. The last sentence of the comment is directed at the absurdity of this patriarchal logic. For a general positive idea, see Madhu Kishwar, "Gandhi on Women," *Economic and political Weekly*, 20, 40 (1985): 1691-1702.

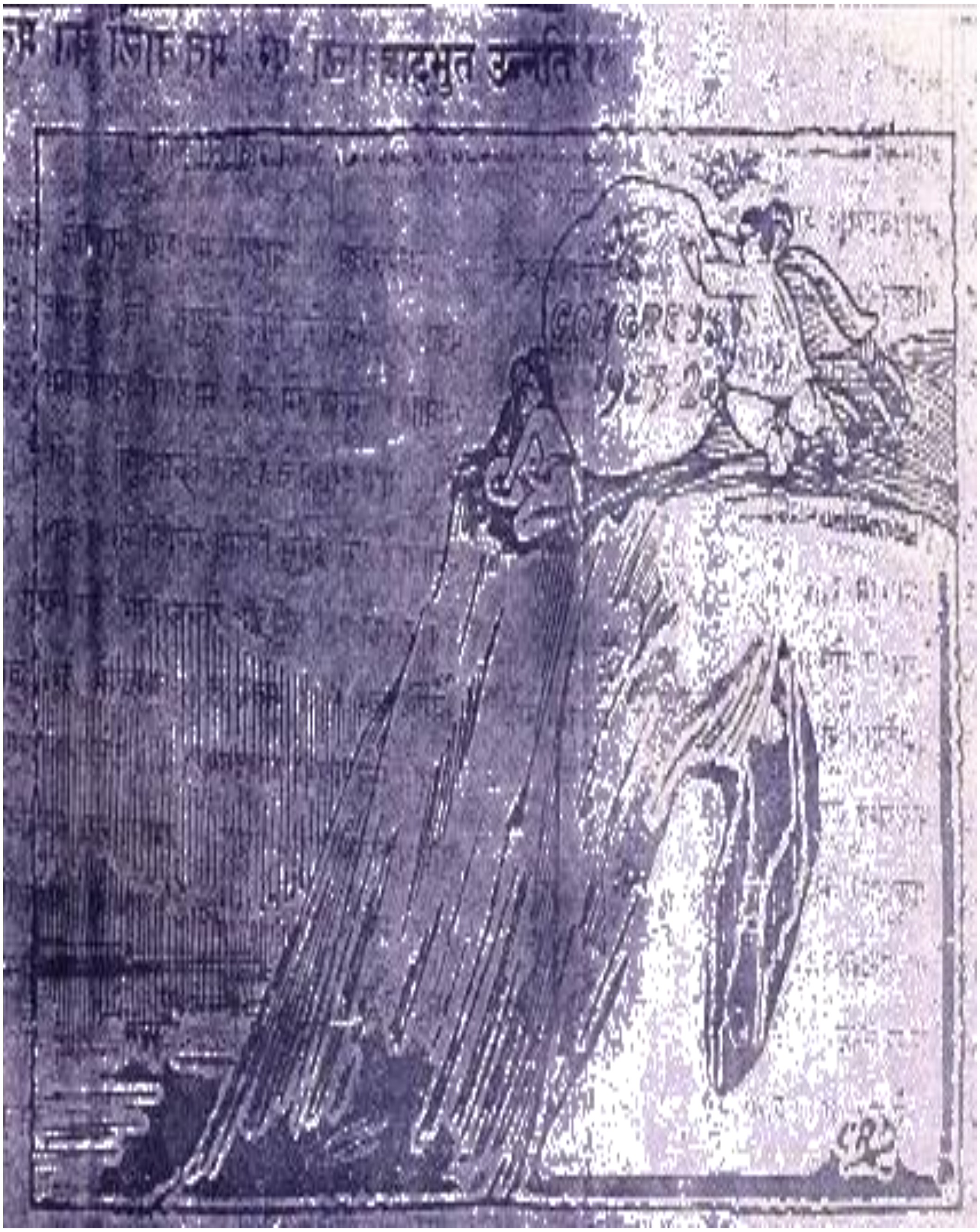

Figure 7: ‘*Adbhut unnati*’, *Matˈvālā*, 5 January 1924.

Matˈvālā belaboured the Congress for turning a deaf ear to the question of the Hindu victims of communal riots and the insecurity of women. This is quite well illustrated in a cartoon entitled '*Anveṣaṇ*!' (discovery) (see Figure 8). At the door of a makeshift tent of the 1925 Annual Conference of the Indian National Congress, malnourished Hindu poor, recognisable by their braided hair,[112] and *dhotī*, are waiting with young Hindu women clad in sari. The leaders of the Congress are apparently inside, busy 'discovering' the solution through futile deliberation.

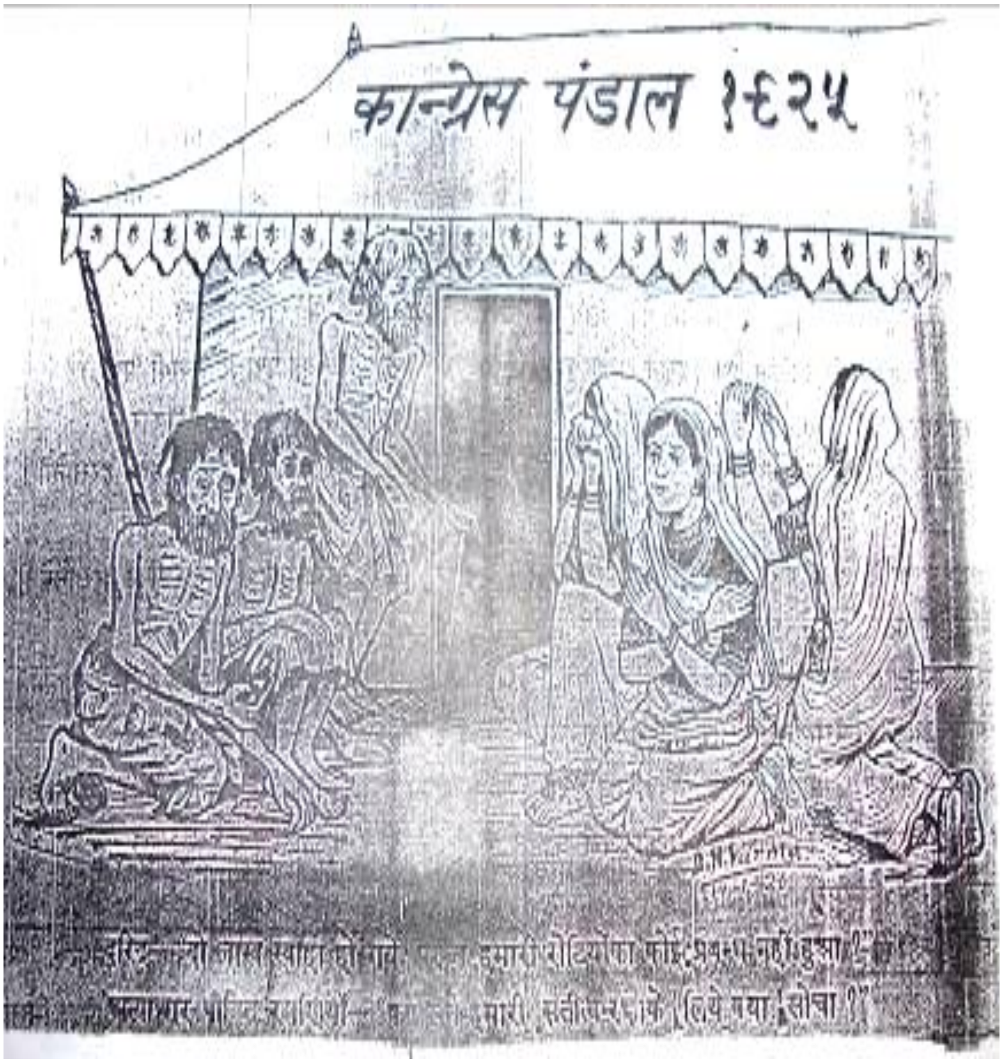

Figure 8: '*Anveṣaṇ*!', *Matˈvālā*, 16 January 1926.

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[112] A tuft of never-cut hair kept on the back of the head by caste Hindus.

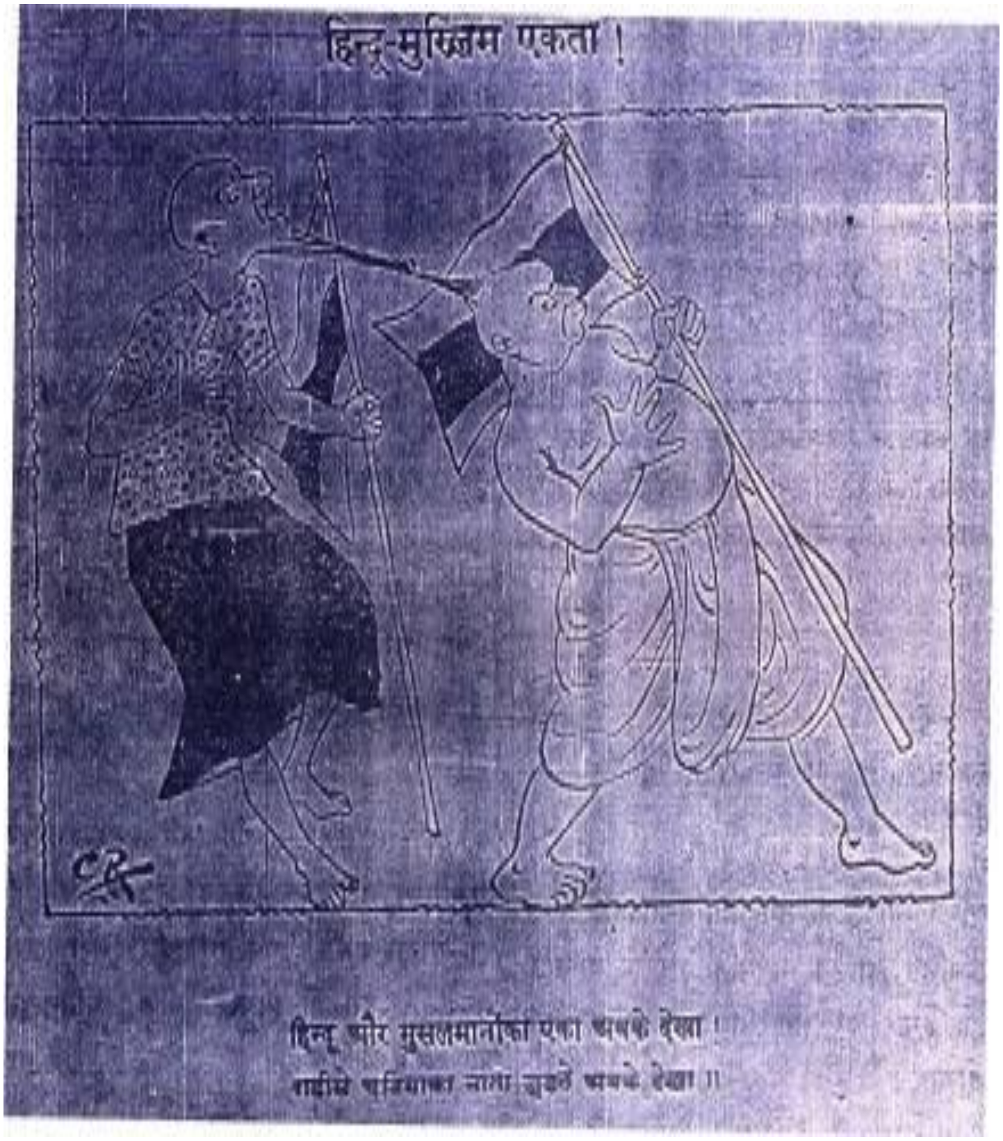
हिन्दू-मुस्लिम एकता !
CR
हिन्दू और मुसलमानोंका एका अबके देखा !
दाढ़ीसे चुटियाका नाता जुड़ते अबके देखा ॥

Figure 9: ‘*Hindū-musˈlim ekˈtā*’, *Matˈvālā*, 15 March 1924.

The next cartoon, entitled ‘*Hindū-musˈlim ekˈtā*’ (unity of Hindus and Muslims), can be viewed in conjunction with the cartoon ‘*Anveṣaṇ!*’. It ridiculed the attempt to unite Hindus and Muslims after the spate of communal violence in the 1920s. It showed the inconvenience of the ‘forced’ cooperation between the traditional leaders of the two communities. A Brahman priest’s coṭī (hair lock) is tied to the beard of his Muslim counterpart. (See Figure 9)

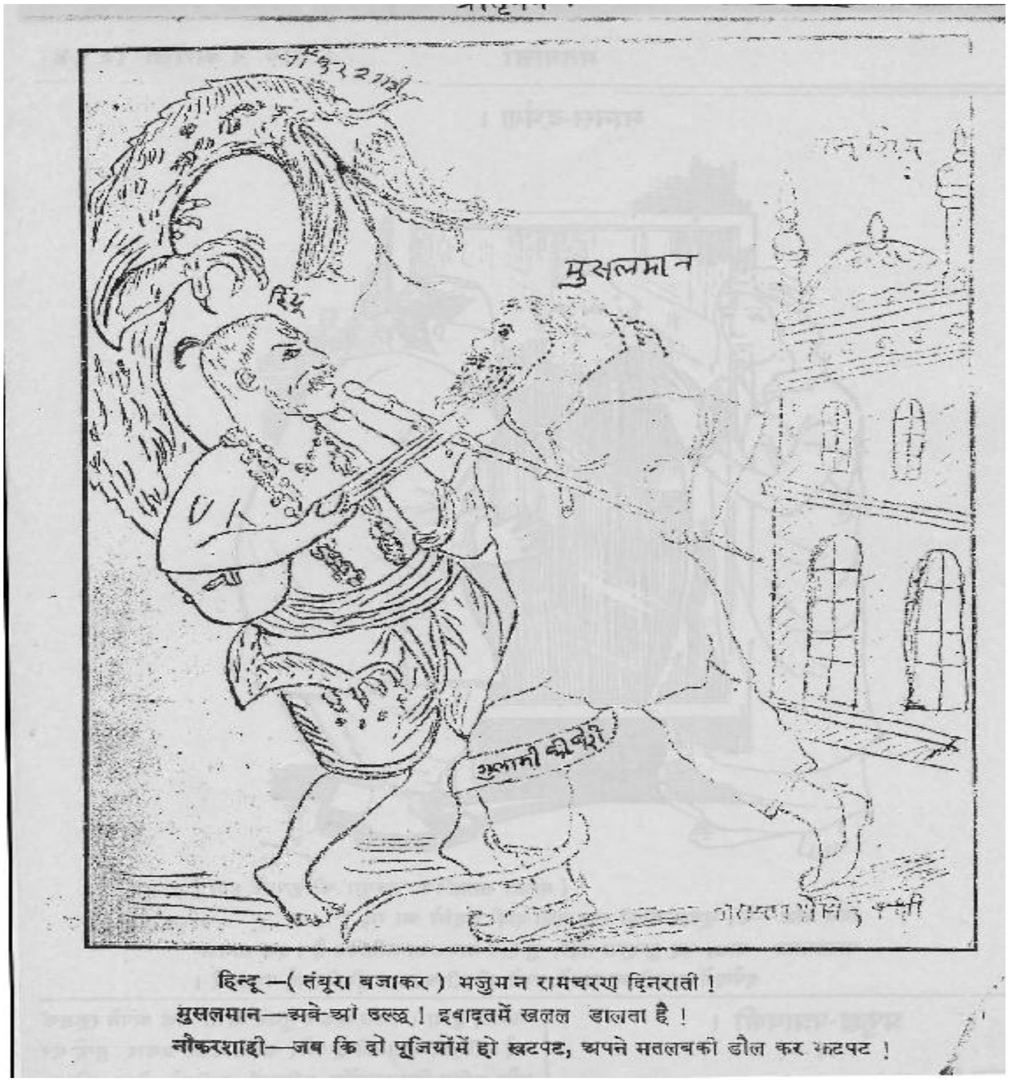
नौकरशाही
मुसलमान
हिंदू
गुलामी की बेड़ी
हिन्दू —(तंबूरा बजाकर) भजु मन रामचरण दिनराती !
मुसलमान—अबे-ओ उल्लू ! इबादतमें खलल डालता है !
नौकरशाही—जब कि दो पूजियोंमें हो खटपट, अपने मतलबकी डौल कर झटपट !

Figure 10: ‘*Bhrātr̥prem*’

Matˈvālā, simultaneously, underlined the irony of a superficial unity in the wake of communal conflicts. For instance, the cartoons entitled ‘*Bhrātr̥prem*’ (brotherhood) showed that the beneficiary of their mutual antagonism (which is always instigated by Muslims!) was the colonial government. It portrayed an aggressive Muslim attacking a Hindu monk, who was passing by a mosque singing an innocent religious song. The dragon of colonial bureaucracy ensnares both.[113] (See Figure 10)

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[113] *Matˈvālā*, 9 August 1924. The spectre of communal violence in the public arena of South Asia over the often repeated issues of music in front of the mosque, and the role of colonial state in this

Matˈvālā's cartoons and editorials derived from and contributed to the Hindu nationalist discourse on communitarian and communal politics. It spat fire at the imagined Muslim tyranny against the Hindus. It echoed the idea of a dying Hindu race—a result of the abduction and conversion of Hindu women by the Muslim (and British/Christian) goons,[114] and the conversion of untouchables by the *Tablīġī Jamāt* and Christian missionaries. But it also found faults with the negligent attitude of the orthodox custodians of Hinduism and the 'dormant' Hindu middle class. Hence, it brazenly ridiculed the *Sanātanī Hindu* organisations opposing the anti-untouchability movement. Sometimes, *Matˈvālā* gave space to writers with a proto-feminist and socialist agenda speaking in the language of human rights.[115] They can be read as an attempt to include the dissenting voices—providing space to radical opinions within the periodical, but not engaging with their political agenda.

The cartoon entitled '*Dharm-sā̃ṇṛ*' (bull of religion) shows a creature with the torso of a Brahman priest and the head of a bull making advances towards a young Hindu woman, who is frightened and runs away (see Figure 11).

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communal discourse, has been studied by Sandria Freitag and Gyan Pandey. Sandria Freitag, *Collective Action and Community: Public Arenas and the Emergence of Communalism in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992)

[114] *Matˈvālā* along with two other Hindi periodicals published from Calcutta, *Hindū Pañc* and *Viśvamitra* were classified as fiercely communal by the colonial government. They drew from the Hindu nationalist discourse of the dying Hindu race, which was widespread especially in Calcutta. See Datta, *Carving Blocs*.

[115] "Aurat-mard kā jhagˈṛā yā rāmˈnareś satyavādī saṃvād", *Matˈvālā*, November 29, 1924. This was an excerpt from a polemic over the question of women's rights between a patriarch, Pandit Ramnaresh Tripathi, and a rights-conscious woman, Satyavati Arya, published in *Strī darpaṇ* (women's mirror) of Kanpur. Veer Bharat Talwar discusses the political-ideological significance of articles which started appearing in Hindi in the 1910s and 1920s in periodicals like *Strī darpaṇ*. Veer Bharat Talwar, "Feminist Consciousness in Hindi Journals," in *Recasting Women*, eds. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (Delhi: Kali for Woman, 1990), 204-32.

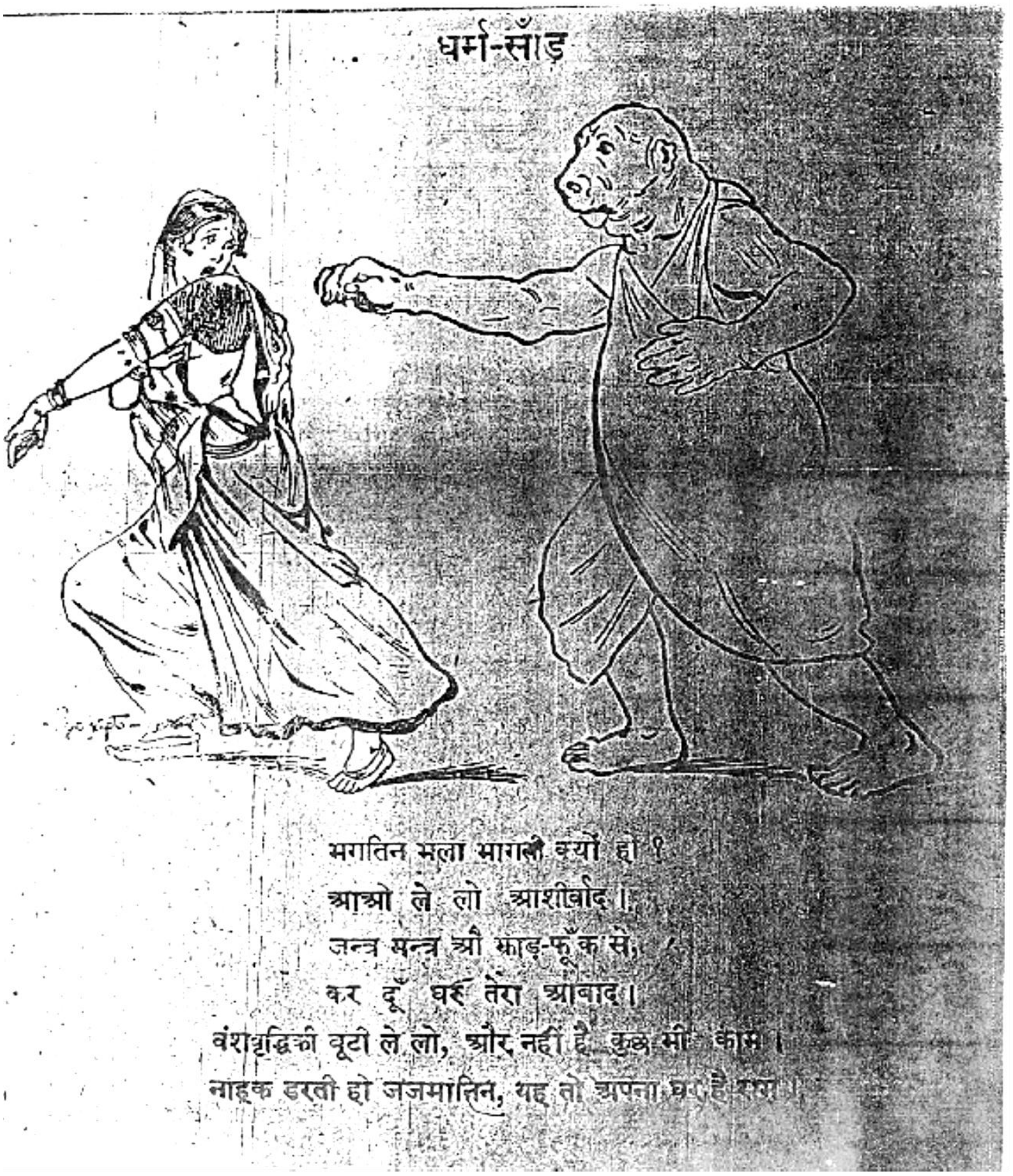
धर्म-साँड़
भगतिन भला भागती क्यों हो ?
आओ ले लो आशीर्वाद ।
जन्त्र मन्त्र औ झाड़-फूँक से,
कर दूँ घर तेरा आबाद ।
वंशवृद्धिकी बूटी ले लो, और नहीं है कुछ भी काम ।
नाहक डरती हो जजमानिन, यह तो अपना घर है राम ।

Figure 11: '*Dharm-sā̃ṇṛ*', *Matˡvālā*, 20 February 1926.

The next cartoon entitled '*Hā hindū!*' (o Hindu, shame on you) portrays sari-clad (Hindu) women being abducted by Muslim and British goons, while the Hindu gentleman stands unmoved in the centre (see Figure 12). (The British and Muslim men lifting a Hindu woman remind one of the Ramayana episode and its popular visual depicting the demon king Ravana abducting the goddess Sita).

The woman is shouting for help by dragging Hindu man's cloth. However, the 'meek'/ 'coward' Hindu gentleman stands still looking on the ground like a fool (symbolized by an owl, which is sitting on the ground beside him).

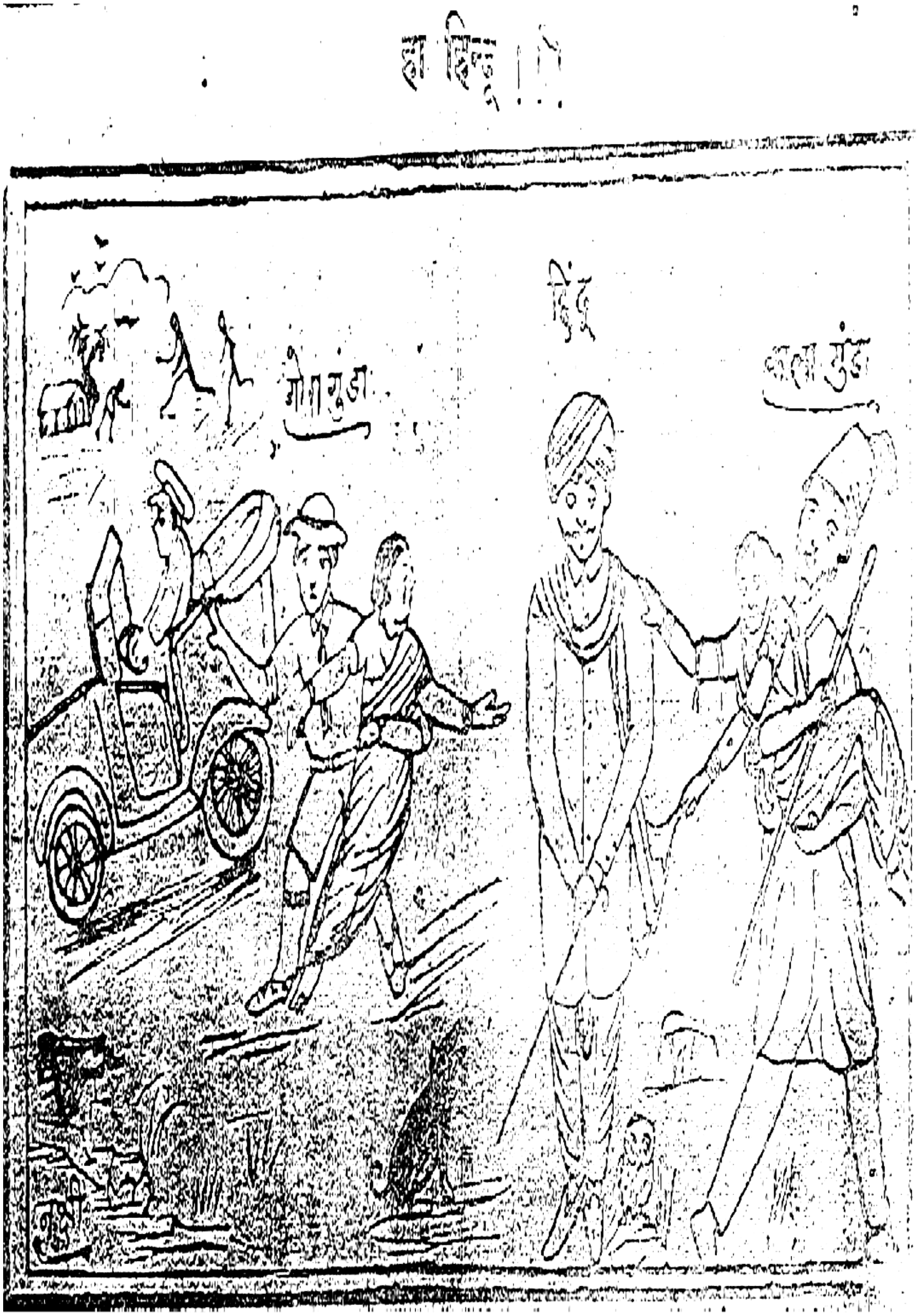

Figure 12: '*Hā hindū!*', *Matᶦvālā*, 29 November 1924.

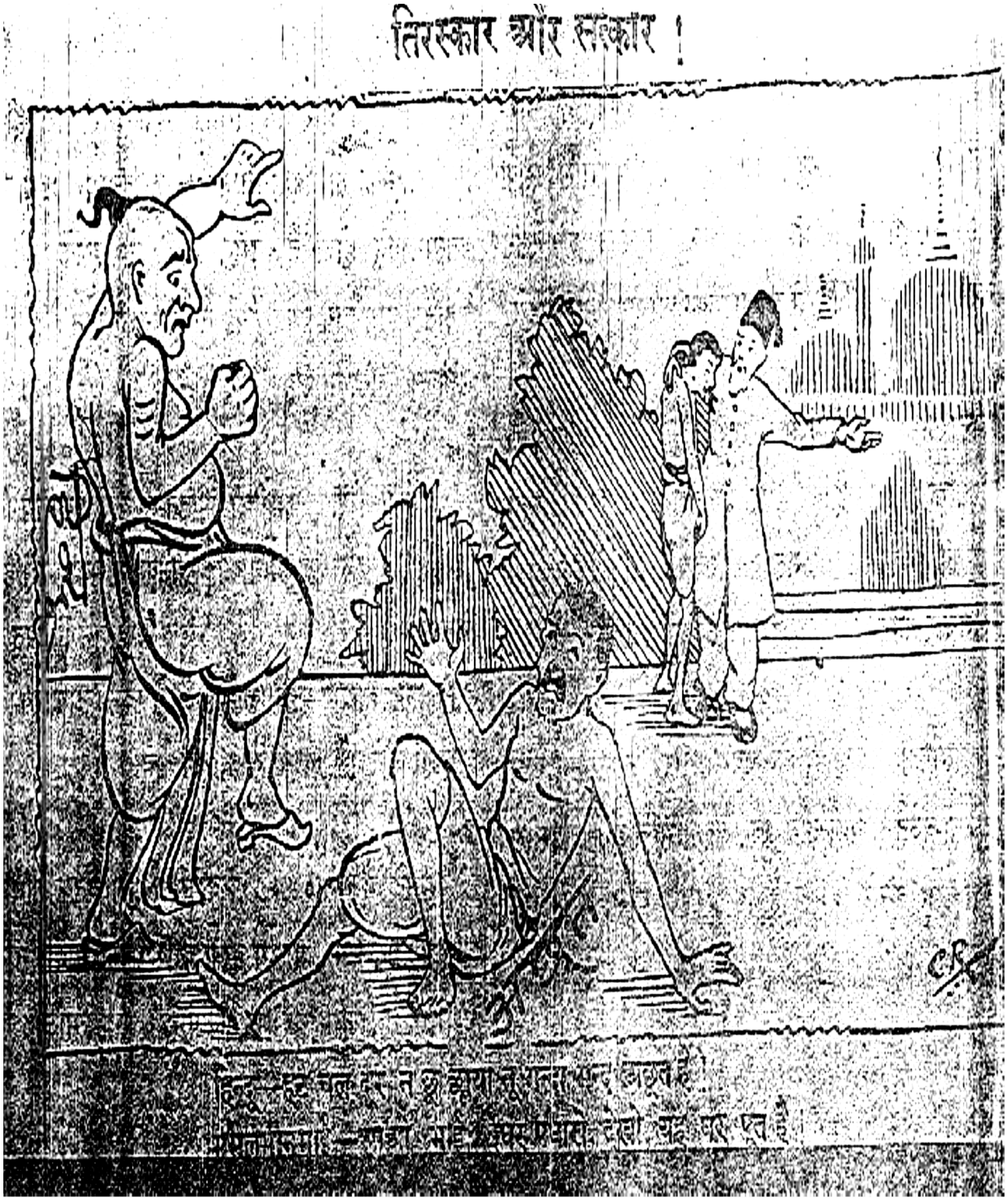
तिरस्कार और सत्कार !

Figure 13: *'Tiraskār aur satkār'*, *Matˈvālā*, February 16, 1924.

The following cartoon entitled *'Tiraskār aur satkār'* (insult and respect) shows that a Brahman is kicking an untouchable. In the background, he is caressed by a Muslim priest who points towards the mosque, and by extension, towards Islam (see Figure 13).

Likewise, the cartoon entitled *'Pad-vicched'* (the cutting of feet) depicts Muslim and Christian missionaries cutting the feet of a Hindu monk with a rat on his body. The monk eaten by a rat symbolises decomposing Hinduism. His feet symbolise the Shudras, as per the mythology of the traditional body-politic of the Hindu social hierarchy. The chopping of the monk's feet symbolises further disintegration of Hinduism hastened by the conversion of untouchable castes into the folds of Christianity and Islam (see Figure 14).

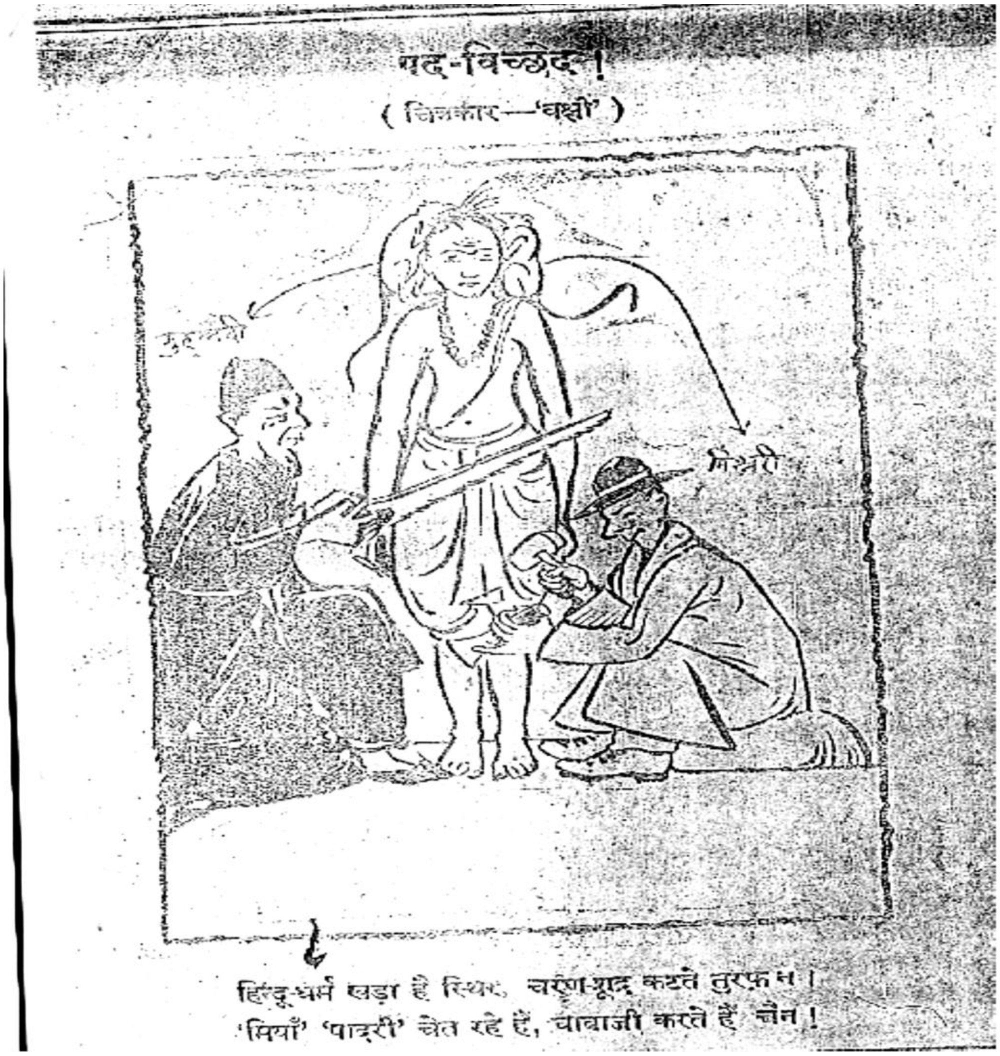
पद-विच्छेद!
(चित्रकार—'बक्षी')
मिश्नरी
हिंदू-धर्म खड़ा है स्थिर, चरण-शूद्र कटते तुरफ़ स !
'मियाँ' 'पादरी' चेत रहे हैं, बाबाजी करते हैं चैन !

Figure 14: '*Pad-vicched*', *Matˡvālā*, 7 March 1925.

All the cartoons cited here fed on widely known themes and drew from the dominant rhetorical forms of modern and pre-modern registers of representation.[116] The iconography of social groups was based on their essentialised social markers with a satiric deflection achieved through caricatured exaggeration. I shall dwell more on the discussion of the constitutive and communicative aspect of cartoon in the next chapter. Let us summarise here the characteristic feature of *Matˡvālā* before concluding the present chapter.

Characteristic feature of Matˡvālā

The satirical weekly *Matˡvālā* was a discursive, literary-visual space that spoke in the political language of Hindu nationalism, with an occasional incorporation of contending voices on a variety of issues, in the contemporary Hindi public sphere of the 1920s. It was simultaneously a supporter of Gandhi's anti-government stance, sympathetic to revolutionary terrorists, and virulently anti-Muslim. It dared to raise taboo questions by publishing stories on homosexuality and Hindu-Muslim love affairs in a titillating language, but mutilated its radical potential by arriving at conservative resolutions asserting heteronormative Hindu patriarchal values. It gave space to proto-feminists and women's reform initiatives, yet the language is sexist and gendered,[117] and the patriarchal idea of woman as a repository of the community's honour was asserted. It supported the 'uplift' of 'untouchable' castes, but was guided by concerns of the perceived weakening of the majoritarian power of the Hindu community. Politically, the magazine remained Hindu nationalist with its multiple contradictions.

Finally, inheriting the legacy of its nineteenth century predecessors, *Matˡvālā* transformed the older style to such an extent that the elements of transcultural influences, which were visible until the beginning of the twentieth century, become difficult to grasp. Only a broader similarity in the characteristic features of satirical journalism remains. In this light one example will be suffice. Three years after the publication of *Matˈvālā*, a weekly named *Hindū Pañc*[118] was started in Calcutta. Unlike *Matˈvālā,* which was registered as a satirical weekly and politically "pro-Congress and anti-Muslim", by the *Statement of Newspapers and Periodicals Published or Printed in Bengal for the year 1927*, the same government document classified *Hindu Pañc* not as satirical weekly but as "*an illustrated weekly*" with an overtly "anti-Muslim" and "politically extremist" attitude.[119] Let us see the cover page of *Hindu Pañc*.

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[116] The following analysis draws heavily from Martin J. Medhurst and Michael A. DeSousa, "Political Cartoons as Rhetorical Form: A Taxonomy of Graphic Discourse," Communication Monographs 48, 3 (1981): 197-236; 204.

[117] Interestingly, the linguistic and visual space of Punch were also gendered and remained almost misogynist. See Julie Codell, "Imperial Differences and Culture Clashes in Victorian Periodicals' Visuals: The Case of Punch", *Victorian Periodical Review*, 39, 4 (2006): 410-428.

The cover page of the periodical (see Figure 15) had an illustration depicting five types of male Hindus: an elderly Brahmin priest in his traditional apparel, and a topless young man with modern hairstyle, without any overt marker of community on the left; and a probable Ārya Samājī preacher in action, along with an educated Hindu gentleman with anointed forehead on the right, while the clumsy-looking *Pañc* is shouting in the middle, stretching his hands over the shoulders of the young man and the preacher. The motto of the paper, printed below the illustration, made its political agenda very clear.[120]

> To protect the honour of Hindus, to save the fame of Hindus;
> *Hindū Pañc* has appeared in *Hind*, in order to awaken the Hindus.

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[118] It was edited by Pandit Ishvari Prasad Sharma, and published and printed by Babu Ramlal Varma.

[119] *Statement of Newspapers and Periodicals Published or Printed in Bengal—Revised up to 31st December 1927* (Bengal Government Press: Calcutta, 1928).

[120] It was an unapologetically militant Hindu nationalist/communalist paper with equal antagonism towards the Muslims and the British. Its selected articles and cartoons targeting Muslims, and special issues like *Balidān aṃk* (Martyr Issue), were proscribed many times. "Martyr Issue" celebrated death as the cause of the nation and included short biographies of Indian heroes, ranging from early medieval Hindu icons to the then Ārya Samājī Hindus apparently killed by Muslims.

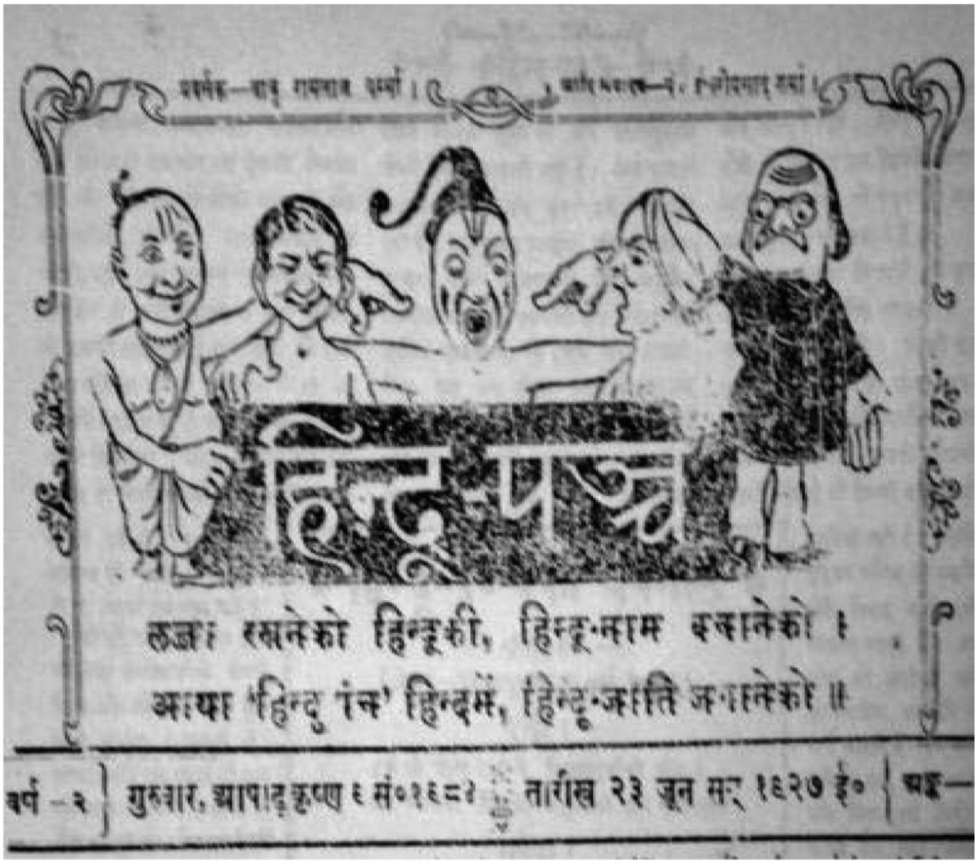
हिन्दू-पञ्च
लज्जा रखनेको हिन्दूकी, हिन्दू-नाम बचानेको ।
आया 'हिन्दू पंच' हिन्दमें, हिन्दू-जाति जगानेको ॥
वर्ष - २
गुरुवार, आषाढ़ कृष्ण ९ सं० १९८४
तारीख २३ जून सन् १९२७ ई०

Figure 15: Cover page of *Hindū Pañc*, 23 June 1927.

Hindu Pañc for all practical purposes remained an illustrated political weekly with only two elements of *Punch*'s literary format cited in the beginning, namely cartoons and short epigrammatic comments on news in columns like '*Pañc'rāj kī kacah'r'ī*' (the court of *Pañc'rāj*). The latter became less satirical and oblique, blunter and direct in their condemning. The term *pañc* itself, as noted above, had been soiled; it was loaded with local meanings obscuring its transcultural genealogy; and cartoons, as the next chapter will display, no longer remained a monopoly of satirical periodicals but spread to all varieties of journals. So, ironically, it is a *pañc* that can be cited as another example, which seems to have an erased legacy of *Punch* and its transcultural genealogy in Hindi satirical periodicals.

Summary

In sum, this chapter has exemplified that the modern Hindi satirical periodicals took their shape in close transcultural interaction between the format of the English satirical weekly *Punch* and the pre-modern oral and literary narratives. As a result of this interaction over a period of half a century, which involved nationalist appropriation of the format of British magazine, the originary markers of 'Englishness' gets blurred beyond easy recognition. This emergent tradition of satirical journalism, however, performed a new political function and disseminated a novel cultural sensibility in the changing contexts of colonial north Indian society and politics in the Hindi public sphere. Transculturally reconfigured satire and satirical journals of late nineteenth and early twentieth century colonial India predominantly voiced the changing concerns and contradictions of the Hindu middle class male. In the next chapter I shall pursue the question of transculturality further through the process of vernacularisation of cartoon as a modern art form in Hindi periodicals and will deliberate on questions related to its appropriation and communicative mechanism.

Chapter 5

Transculturality, Cartoon and Visual Culture, 1900-1940

> Just over a century ago, the art of cartooning came here from England and struck roots. Although other forms of art like sculpture, carving, poetry, painting and drawing had been flourishing in India for centuries, the art of graphic satire and humour was unknown. Of course satire and humour did exist in folklore and poetry, poking fun at the follies of men and monarchs, but the funny antics and humorous articles of the classical court-jester were really satirical comments used to gently bring a wayward king and his band of courtiers back on the track.
>
> ---R.K. Laxman[1]

Unlike the last chapter, which focussed on the question of transculturality in relation to the literary format of satirical periodicals, this chapter is concerned exclusively with cartoon as an art form.[2] Cartoon, which is an indispensible part of a variety of journalistic production in India –from film and fashion to politics and business, is a development less than one-and-a-half centuries old. As R. K. Laxman, one of India's leading cartoonists in the last century, mentions in the quotation cited above, cartoon as a literary-artistic genre was introduced and popularised in the late nineteenth century colonial India. It happened, firstly, through English language satirical periodicals like the *Punch,* which were published in England, and subsequently by British owned Indian satirical journals like the *Delhi Sketch Book*. Very soon cartoons also became a significant part of not only English as well as vernacular language satirical journals owned by Indians (viz. *Hindi Punch*, *Avadh Pañc*, *Basantak*, *Hindū Pañc*, etc.),[3] as also of non-satirical magazines. From the first decade of the twentieth century onwards, they started appearing regularly in most Indian language periodicals – literary or political – and were assigned a fixed space within their pages. This chapter deals with a part of this history –the story of the cartoon as a transcultural art form in the newly constituted Hindi literary sphere, where the historical trajectory of the development of illustrated journals, in general, and cartoons, in particular, unfolded differently when compared with trends in other languages. Given the evident transcultural roots of Indian cartoons, this chapter accounts for the ways

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[1] R. K. Laxman, *The Best of Laxman* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1990), 1.

[2] Much has been written on the overlapping meaning of caricature and cartoon in Europe. Suffice it to quote W. A. Coupe, a historian of German cartoon, who sums up lucidly: "[In the west] ever since John Leech in 1843 described as 'cartoons' the parodies he drew of the cartoons (in the true meaning of the term as a preparatory design for a large drawing or painting) for the frescoes of the houses of Parliament, popular usage has not differentiated between 'cartoon' and 'caricature', but has applied both indiscriminately to almost any drawing which refers to the social or political situation. Historically, the term 'caricature', in the sense of a 'portrait' in which characteristic features of the sitter were exaggerated to the point of distortion, is considerably older, the first usage recorded by the New English Dictionary occurring in a letter of Walpole dated 1748. It does not follow from this that the cartoon in the sense of a drawing intended for publication and commenting on political, social, or religious conditions arose subsequent to the establishment of caricature as a minor art form in the seventeenth century in Europe. The printed picture as a didactic or polemical vehicle is almost as old as printing itself, and the English fathers of what is called political caricature, from Townshend to Gilray, simply fused two distinct historical traditions, [i.e. caricature as exaggerated portrait and cartoon as a drawing commenting on socio-political issues] pouring, as it were, the new wine of Italian portrait caricature into the old bottle of the emblematic or symbolical print. The latter had currency in Western Europe since the German Reformation and had recently been re-invigorated in England as a result of the Anglo-Dutch alliance, the Dutch in the late seventeenth century having cultivated the tradition in the course of their quarrels with France." W. A. Coupe, "Observation on a Theory of Political Caricature", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 11, 1 (1969): 84-85. There is scholarly consensus now that the cartoon, in its present form, is a medium that combines a visual and a written commentary in a single or multiple frames, and that it was popularised by the famous

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Punch or London Charivari (1843). Lawrence H. Streicher, "On a Theory of Political Caricature", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 9, 4 (1967): 427-45; Mark Bills, *The Art of Satire: London in Caricature* (London: Museum of London), 170; Isabel Simeral Johnson, "Cartoons", *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1, 3 (1937): 21-44; Jane E. Brown and Richard Samuel West, "William Newman (1817-1870): Victorian Cartoonist in London and New York" *American Periodicals*, 17, 2 (2007): 143-183; and Marjolein 'T Hart, "Humour and Social Protest: An Introduction". *International Review of Social History*, 52 (2007), 1-20.

[3] For a brief survey of the art of cartooning in nineteenth century India see Partha Mitter, "Cartoon and the Raj", *History Today*, 47, 9 (1997): non-paginated. Also see Partha Mitter "*Punch* and Indian Cartoons: The reception of a transnational phenomenon", in Hans Harder and Barbara Mittler eds. *Asian Punches: A Transcultural Affair* (Heidelberg and Berlin: Springer, 2013), 47-64. Ritu Khanduri highlights the popular appeal of cartoon in North India, which inspired the owners of *Punch* to considering the feasibility of publishing an Indian edition. Ritu Khanduri, "Vernacular Punches: Cartoon and Politics in Colonial India," *History and Anthropology*, 20, 4 (2009): 459-486 Also see Ritu Khanduri, "Punch in India: Another History of Colonial Politics?", in Harder and Mittler eds., *Asian Punches*, 165-186.

in which this new cultural product was made intelligible and tangible to its consumers in a different cultural milieu. We shall sketch the ways in which the form of cartoon or *vyaṃgya-citra* (visual/graphic satire) became integral to the production of literary journals. We shall also examine the place of cartoon in the interstices of the literary and the visual, for the appearance of cartoons is intimately connected with the new emphasis on visual illustration, colour and the appearance of periodicals: they are not only to be read but also be seen and felt. Further, we shall locate the reception, proliferation and status of the new art form of cartoon in the intersecting realms of aesthetics, commercial practices and reformist politics of twentieth century Hindi journalism. Cartoon, arguably, made itself relevant, for it could be entertaining and attract popular readership on the one hand, and because it could sharply intervene in contemporary public issues as the bearer of reformist polemics by highlighting the anomaly of the subject, on the other. We shall also argue that the chronological inventory of Hindi cartoons reveals that literary themes appear to have preceded political and social subjects. Finally, we shall highlight some major representational *topoi* in early twentieth century cartooning practice in North India.

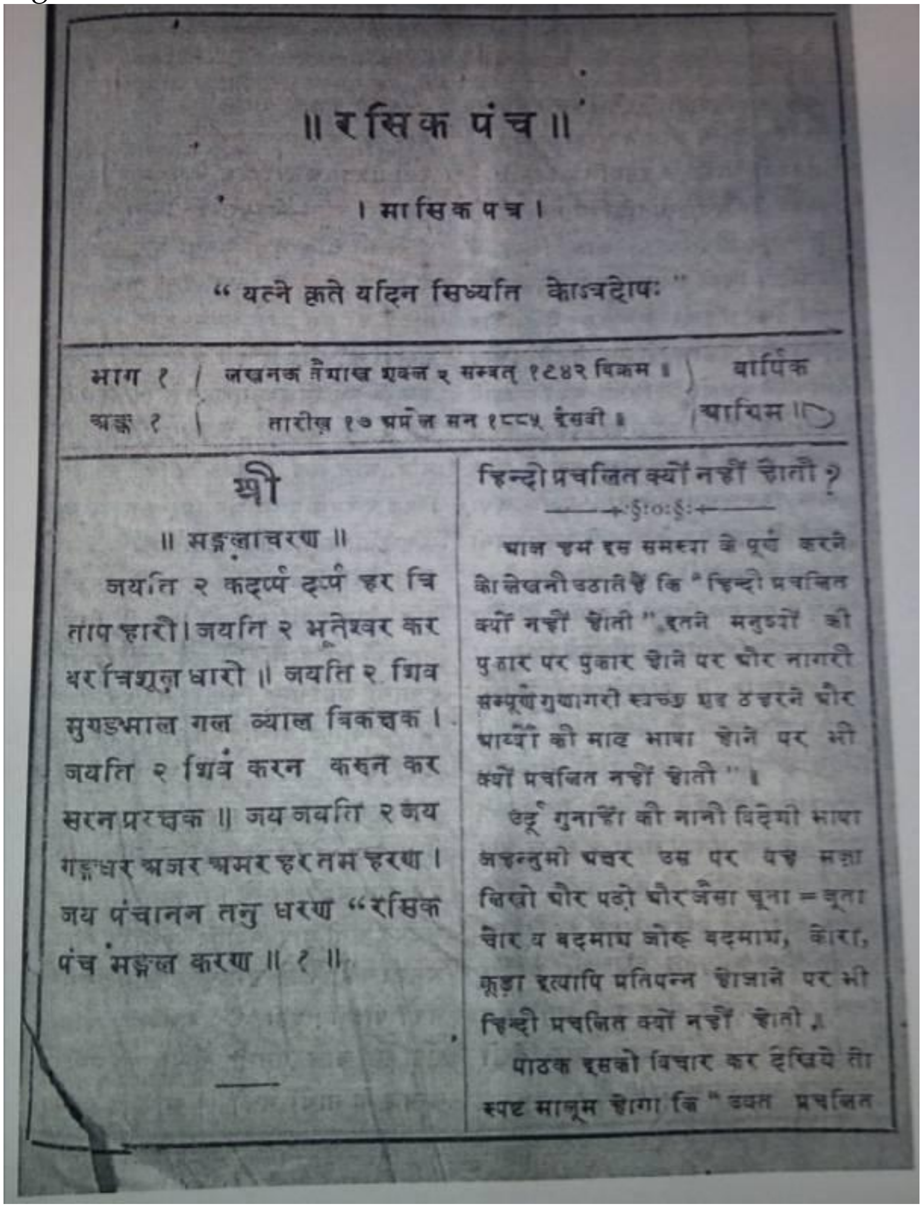
1

Visual culture and literary periodicals

Unlike literary satire, cartoon, or for that matter any visual illustration, appears relatively late (not before 1880s) in Hindi periodicals. Modern Hindi prose in the nineteenth century was only in its formative stage, attempting to distinguish, define and develop itself against the rich literary tradition of Urdu. Hindi periodicals were also in a nascent stage and lagged far behind their Urdu and Bengali counterparts in terms of appearance and attractiveness of format.

While most Indian satirical journals carried graphic materials the Hindi ones did not. The contrast could be seen below between the cover pages of Hindi *Rasik Pañc*,[4] on the one hand and its counterparts – Urdu *Avadh Pañc*, Bengali *Basantak* and Marathi *Hindū Pañc*, on the other.

Figure 1: *Rasik Pañc*



॥ रसिक पंच ॥

। मासिक पत्र ।

"यत्ने कृते यदि न सिध्यति कोऽत्र दोषः"

भाग १	लखनऊ बैशाख शुक्ल २ सम्वत् १९४२ विक्रम ॥	वार्षिक
अङ्क १	तारीख़ १७ अप्रैल सन १८८५ ईसवी ॥	अग्रिम ।॥)

श्री

॥ मङ्गलाचरण ॥

जयति २ कन्दर्प दर्प हर चितापहारी। जयति २ भूतेश्वर कर धर त्रिशूल धारी ॥ जयति २ शिव मुण्डमाल गल व्याल विकचक। जयति २ शिवं करन करुन कर सरन प्ररचक ॥ जय जयति २ जय गङ्गाधर अजर अमर हर तम हरण। जय पंचानन तनु धरण "रसिक पंच मङ्गल करण ॥ १ ॥

हिन्दी प्रचलित क्यों नहीं होती ?

आज हम इस समस्या के पूर्ण करने को लेखनी उठाते हैं कि "हिन्दी प्रचलित क्यों नहीं होती", इतने मनुष्यों की पुकार पर पुकार होने पर और नागरी सम्पूर्ण गुणागरी स्वच्छ शुद्ध ठहरने और आर्य्यों की मातृ भाषा होने पर भी क्यों प्रचलित नहीं होती"।

उर्दू गुनाहों की नानी विदेशी भाषा अहन्तुमी अक्षर उस पर यह मज़ा लिखो और पढ़ो और जैसा जूता = जूता चोर व बदमाश जोरू बदमाश, कोरा, कूड़ा इत्यादि प्रतिपन्न होजाने पर भी हिन्दी प्रचलित क्यों नहीं होती।

पाठक इसको विचार कर देखिये तो स्पष्ट मालूम होगा कि "उक्त प्रचलित

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[4] As mentioned in chapter 4, the publication of *Rasik Pañc,* one of the earliest Hindi punch magazines started in early 1885 from Lucknow but was soon discontinued due to financial constraints.

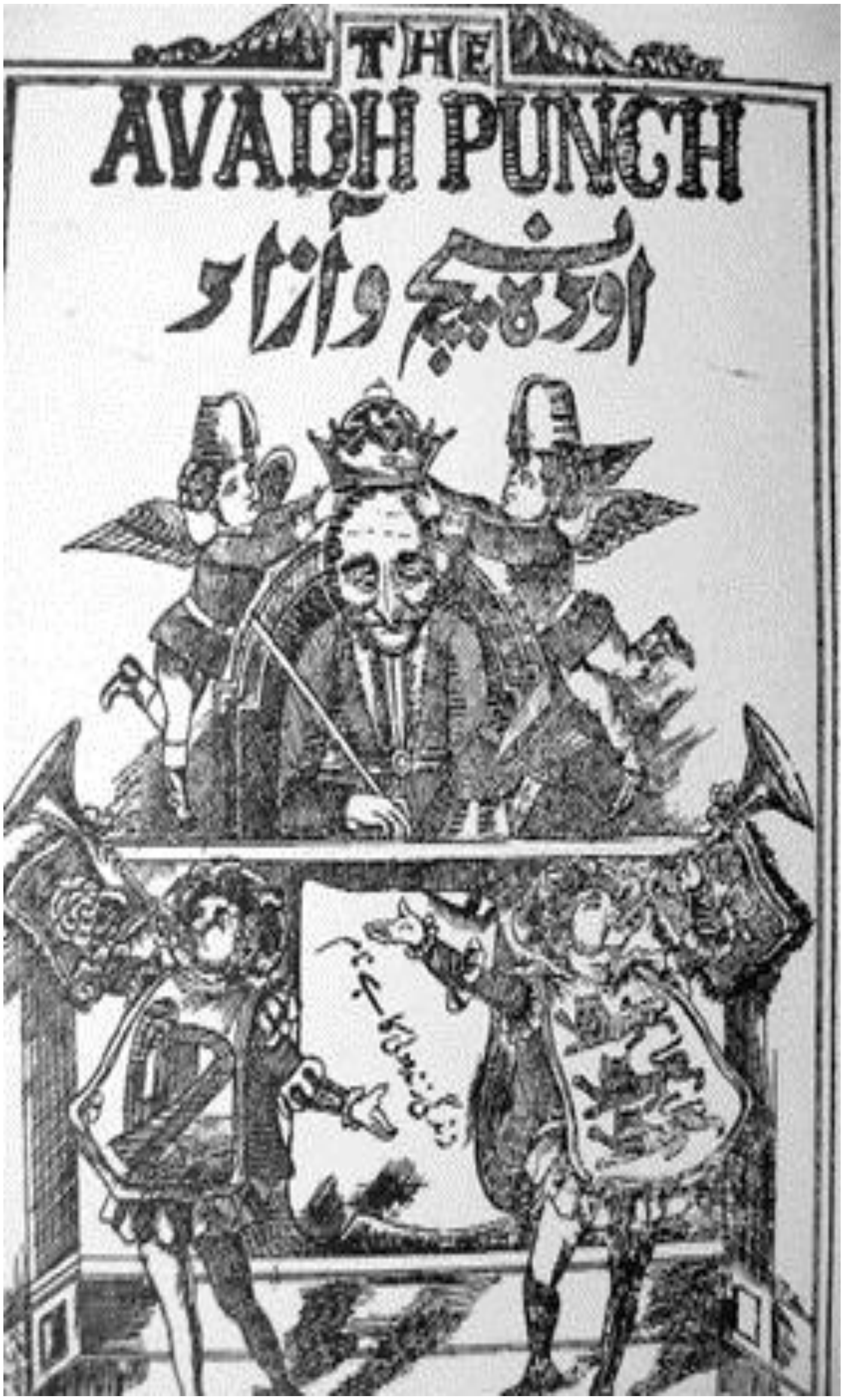
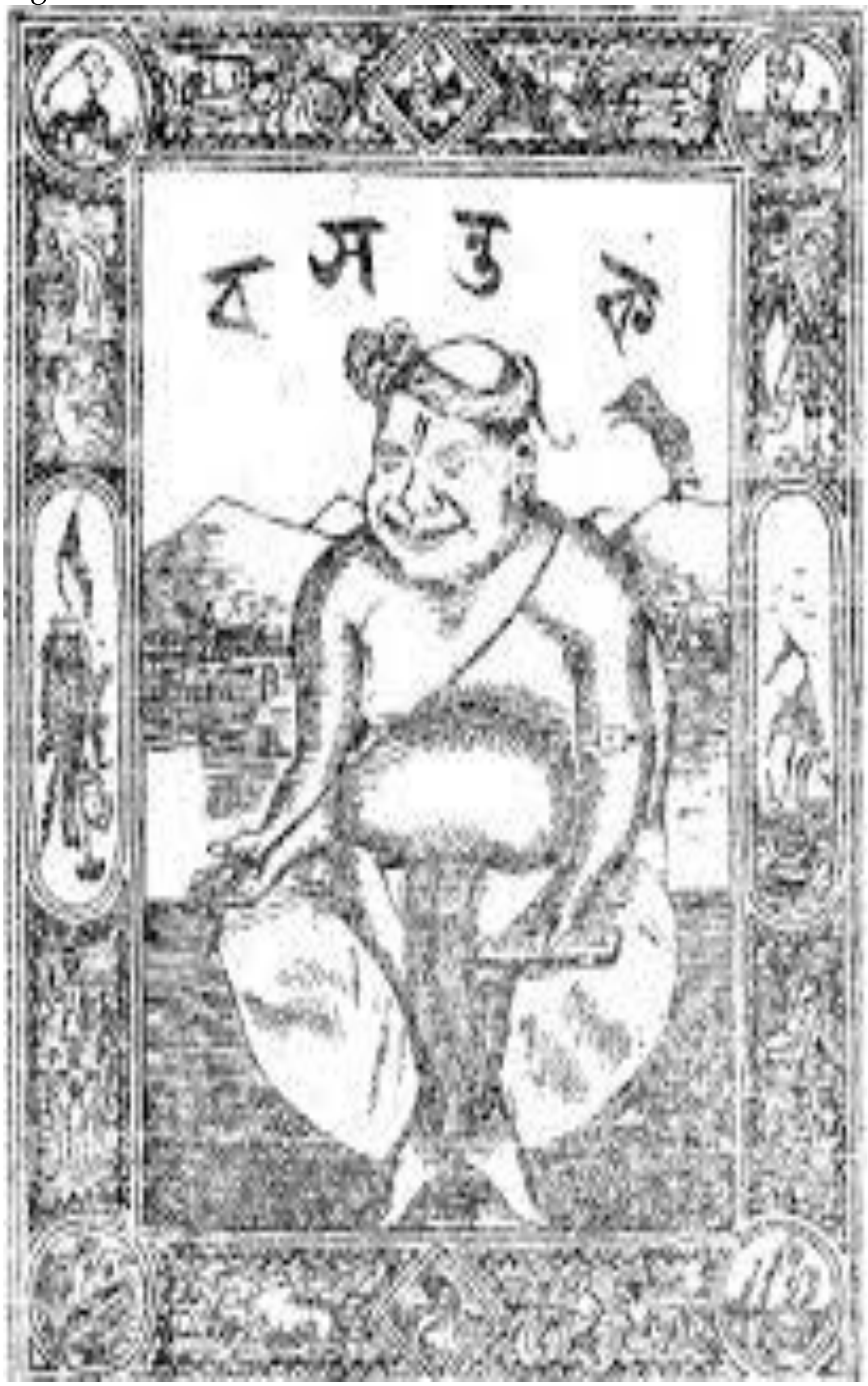

THE
AVADH PUNCH
اودھ پنچ و آزاد

Figure 2: *Avadh Pañc*

Figure 3: *Basantak*



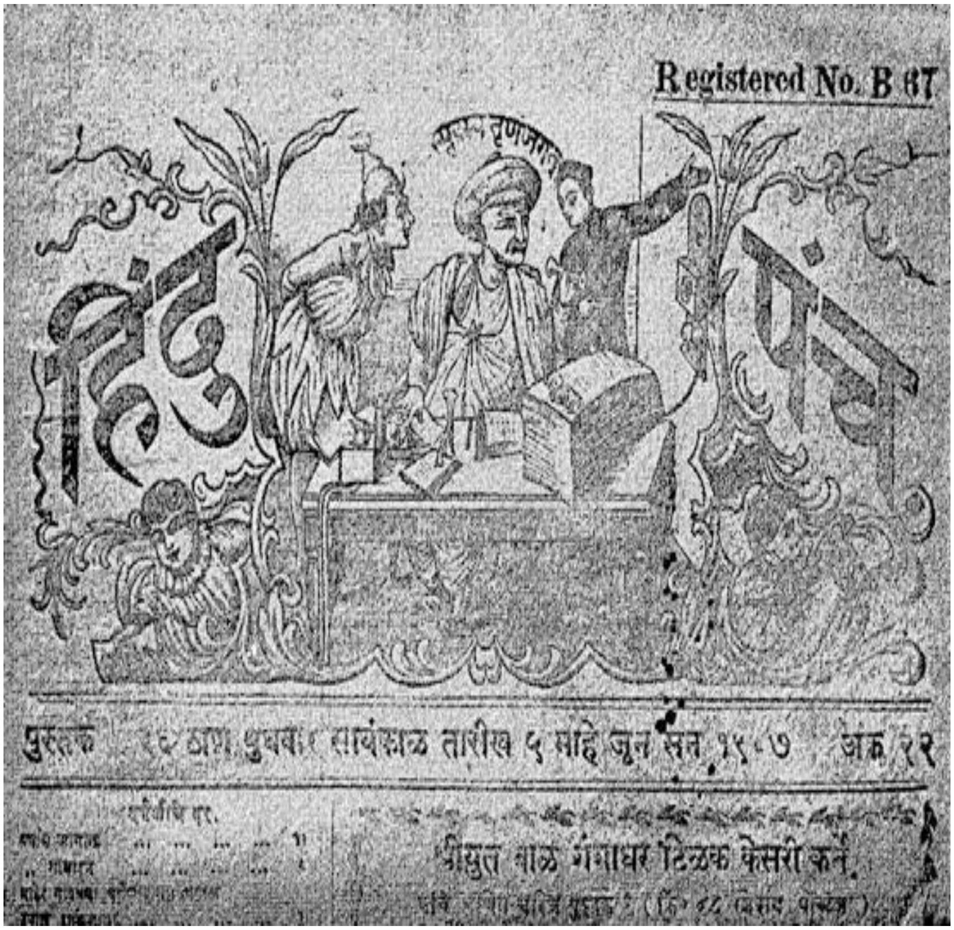


Figure 4: *Hindū Pañc*

Possibly, there were good economic reasons behind the differences noted above. The lack of readership, the slow expansion of the Hindi middle class, and the slow growth of concomitant literary and political institutions (which were yet to be expanded through the politics of Hindi nationalism), put great economic constraint on Hindi publicists. For instance, Pratap Narayan Mishra's Hindi journal, *Brāhmaṇ*, which he published from his native Kanpur, could never attain a large circulation. As Alok Rai rightly observes, issue after issue was replete with appeals in various modes — pleading, demanding, reproaching — appeals made to absent and desperately needed subscribers who were, by definition, *not* reading them.[5]He sometimes addressed his readers abusively:

> All the [affluent-seeming ones] in their flamboyant yellow turbans, with their red cheeks and well-fed paunches, are not always honest. People who are sincere in their conduct do not [need to] put up appearances. But what do I care, [I have suffered some small loss but at least] I have learnt a valuable lesson [about such people] — who have revealed themselves, (like the) dog which broke the utensil in trying to steal the food.[6]

Visual illustrations in the periodicals, in general, demanded the mobilization of a large editorial team and greater financial backing to employ specialist illustrators. Hence, visuals remained a rarity in early years.[7] This situation changed from 1900 onwards, as voluntary associations loosely connected with each other and working to establish Hindi libraries in small and big towns of North India began to create another public space for the consumption of Hindi journals.[8] Along with a substantial increase in the number of educated middle class Hindus as a result of the expansion of the colonial education system, literary institutions also strive to educate and serve the Hindi nation (often defined in opposition to Urdu/Muslims) through periodicals.

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[5] Alok Rai, "The Possibility of Satire: Reading Pratap Narain Mishra's *Brāhmaṇ*, 1883-1890", in Harder and Mittler, *Asian Punches*, 70.

[6] Cf. Rai, "The Possibility of Satire", 70.

[7] Stray attempts by the editors to draw and publish cartoons can be noticed from the 1890s. See Chapter 4, which mentions Radhacharan Goswami's cartoons. Similarly, Amritlal Chakravarti, the editor of *Hindī-baṃgavāsī*, mentions in his memoir serialised in *Viśāl Bhārat* that his periodical used to publish cartoons targeting Congress politicians. Amr̥tlāl Cakravartī, "Ātma-saṃsmaraṇ - 10", *Viśāl Bhārat*, December, 1935. These early cartoons were, however, preceded by woodblock prints of advertisement visuals like aphrodisiac, watch and other modern gadgets, and photos of gods.

[8] Most of the Hindi public libraries in mufassil, small towns and big cities like Bharti Bhavan Pustakalay, Lalganj, Hajipur; Hanuman Pustakalay, Salkiya, Calcutta; and Marwari Library, Chandani Chawk, Delhi were established during the 1910s under the patronage of Hindu landed magnets or caste/community associations as acts of philanthropy to serve their community-language-nation. The colonial government took due notice of the increase in the number of libraries and kept vigil on the transformation of libraries into associational and political space. This is a highly interesting topic, which requires separate research project. Some aspects of the politics of voluntary associations like *sevā samiti* and the historical reasons of their rise during the first two decades of the twentieth century have been addressed by Carry A. Watt, *Serving the Nation*: *Cultures of Service, Association and Citizenship* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Furthermore, the period between 1920 and 1940 (to which most of the cartoons and periodicals cited in this chapter belong) witnessed the rise of anti-colonial mobilization under middle class leadership. Subsequently, there was a massive increase in the number and circulation of periodicals, [9] which could now afford to be relatively independent of institutional patronage (of state and/or community) and rely on the expanded literate and semi-literate nationalist public.

Against such a backdrop it is not a coincidence that the first journal to publish cartoons as its regular feature, although only for two years, was *Sarasvatī* (1900). It was published by the Indian Press, Allahabad (1884), which was owned by the Press magnate Chintamani Ghosh[10] and started under the aegis of Nāgˈrī Pracāriṇī Sabhā of Kāśī.[11] Other journals like *Prabhā*, *Cā̃d*, *Mādhurī*, *Sudhā*, *Viśāl Bhārat*, etc. soon followed – most of them published and marketed by noted commercial publishers and subscribed by nationalist reading public, which could afford them to be illustrated monthlies. In fact, almost all journals after 1920 became illustrated, producing visuals in large numbers. The editors also constantly endeavoured to make the appearance of their periodicals colourful to attract readers. In other words, there was a visible transformation in the world of Hindi journalistic production; a new visual culture was taking shape.[12]

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[9] A cursory survey of the circulation figures of Hindi periodicals provided by *Native Newspaper Report* on Bengal, for example, make it quite clear. While the average circulation of Hindi periodicals was between 300 to 500 in the late nineteenth century, in the 1920s and 1930s the average figure went up to somewhere between 500 and 1500.

[10] Muśtāq Alī, *Iṇḍiyan pres monogrāph*, (Ilāhābād: Ilāhābād sangrahālay, 2007).

[11] The Sabhā was a key institution in the forefront of the agitation to make Hindi in Nagari script the language of administration in UP and devoted itself to inventing and carving out a new language and literature for Hindi-Hindus against Urdu-Muslims. In the two decades of its publication under the editorship of Mahavir Prasad Dvivedi (1902-1920), *Sarasvatī* proved to be decisive in shaping the Hindi literary field. The editor, Mahavir Prasad Dvivedi, belongs to a phase when the institutionalisation and professionalization of the discipline of literary criticism was yet to happen. The journal editor acted as the main arbiter on literary cultural issues in the literary sphere. He nurtured, promoted and alternatively discouraged writers, poets and essayists. He cultivated and erected a new linguistic style and sensibility through his journal. For his detailed intellectual-political biography see Rāmˈbilās Śarmā, *Mahāvīr prasād dvivedī aur hindī navajāgaraṇ* (Dillī: Rājˈkamal prakāśan, 1989). Also see Sujata Mody, *Literature, Language, and Nation Formation: The Story of a Modern Hindi Journal (1900–1920)* (Berkeley: University of California, 2008), PhD thesis unpublished.

Visuality, cartoon and the literary periodicals

Existing studies on the history of Hindi print culture in general, and the history of cartooning in particular, do not pay sufficient attention to the larger transformations in the visual ecology of periodicals.[13] It can be unmistakably noticed from a variety of sources –such as the changing get up of the journals, the acknowledgement of and the emphasis on the appeal of colour, images and illustrations in private papers and letters of the prominent editors – that a periodical was not only to be read but also to be seen. Apart from the necessary pedagogic intent, a periodical was also meant to provide entertainment (albeit not of a popular kind but of a 'morally uplifting' variety) and gratify the senses. Varieties of visual illustrations, including cartoon, occupied a special place in the periodicals. So much so that the indispensability of artists and illustrators for the production of the journal was captured even in contemporary cartoons like the one entitled *Kalā* (Art) below. The artists were said to be in demand everywhere including, periodicals and in film theatres. An artist was often represented as leading a life of luxury in contrast to the image of a writer, who was depicted as a pauper. Not surprisingly, the changing visual ecology of the journals was also a matter of public discussion among the critics and reviewers of art and letters.

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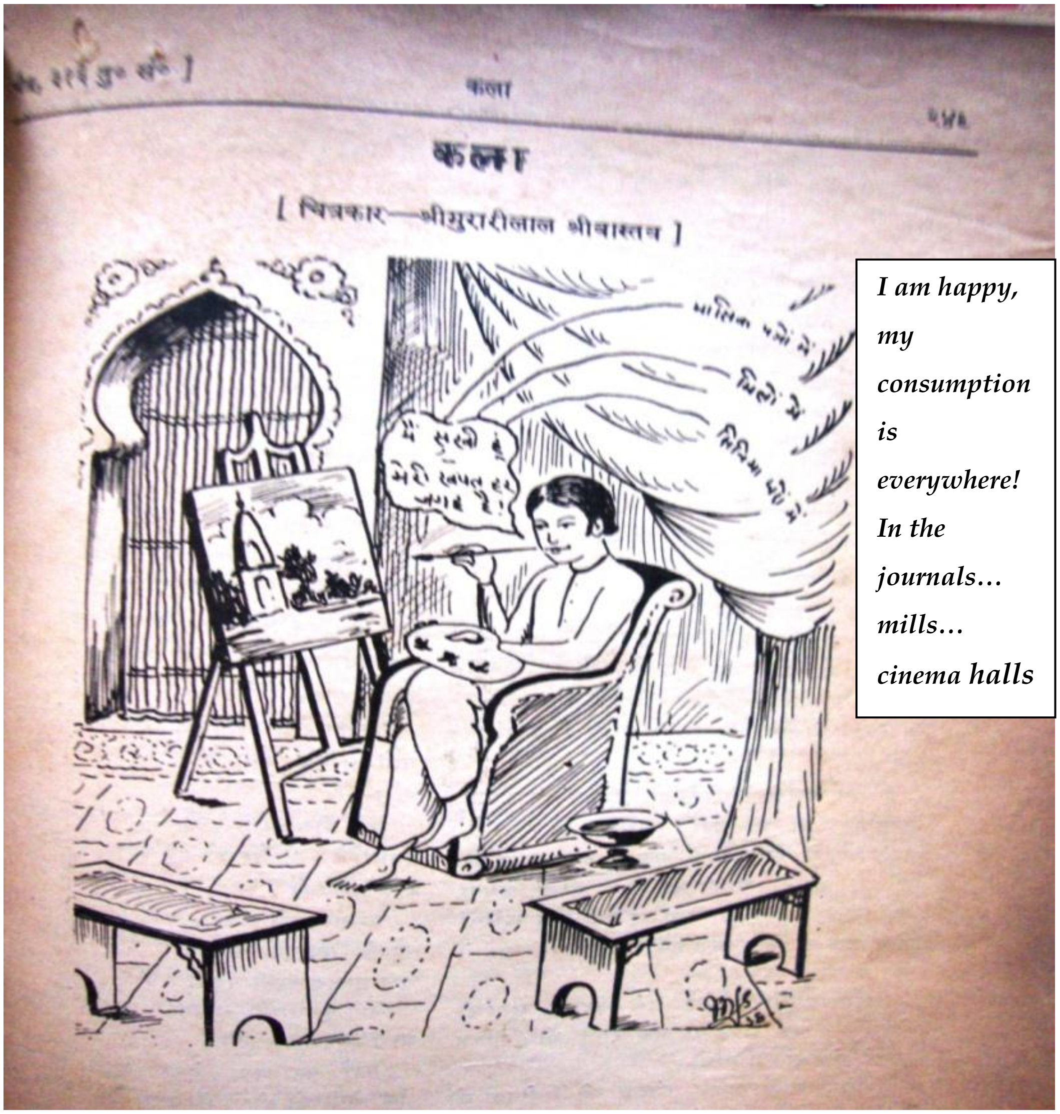
[12] Apart from journals and magazines, there was a huge influx of leaflets with visuals and cartoons. See *Balidān citrāvalī* (Kal'kattā: Vaidik Pustakālay, 1927). It contained pictures of 'Hindu martyrs' who were killed for defending their religion from the Muslims and the Britishers. File no. 573/1927 (7-21) Political Department (Political), *West Bengal State Archive*, Calcutta. N. G. Barrier, *Banned Controversial Literature and Political Control in British India, 1907-1947* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1976).

[13] There is a couple of recent exceptions. One is the study of Bengali monthly *Prabāsī,* see Samarpita Mitra, "Periodical Readership in Early Twentieth Century Bengal: Ramananda Chattopadhyay's *Prabāsī*", *Modern Asian Studies*, 47, 1 (2013): 204-49. Another excellent essay is the study of early issues of Hindi journal *Saraswatī (*belonging to first 5-7 years, when its format was yet to be stabilised) *which* It also deals with Dvivedi's experiment with literary cartoons in furthering the editors' agenda and authority. See Sujata Modi, "Visual Strategies for Literary Authority in Modern Hindi", *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 37, 3 (2014): 474-490.

Figure 5: *Kalā*, *Sudhā*, March 1939


कला
कला
[चित्रकार—श्रीमुरारीलाल श्रीवास्तव]
मैं सुखी हूँ मेरी खपत हर जगह है!
मासिक पत्रों में
मिलों में
सिनेमा घरों में

I am happy, my consumption is everywhere! In the journals… mills… cinema halls

On the outpouring of illustrated journals in Hindi a commentator even quipped: "publishing an illustrated monthly in Hindustani is a grave sin. At times the desire [of the editor] to make it illustrated is so harmful that the customers don't get to see the periodicals for months," i.e. the desire to go illustrated prevails over the professional requirement to publish a periodical within its due schedule.[14] Editors, writers and critics acknowledged that visuals were necessary to cater to a wider readership and thereby enable an even larger circulation and greater profit.[15]

Although a new discourse on ocular-centric visuality can be found in vernacular print from the late nineteenth century, the illustrated literary monthly made a departure in the twentieth century carrying and mediating visual materials and visual cultural discourse simultaneously.[16] Alongside a range of visuals – paintings invoking the culture and history of the nation, photos of gods and goddesses, photographs of great men and women of India and the world, images of exotic people and geographies, wonders and discoveries of science, and so forth,[17] critical essays on the images, and their circulation via journals and other print media appeared with a view to assessing their artistic quality, the success or failure of their moral and pedagogic intent in catering to and cultivating the readers' visual taste and ways of seeing. One of the essays written by a prominent publisher, art critic and curator, Raikrishna Das, for example, acknowledged a common fact that all Hindi weeklies and monthlies were illustrated given the greater demand and appeal for illustrated weeklies and monthlies in the market. Betraying moral anxiety, however, he observed that the duty of the periodicals, especially in the absence of art-schools, must be to educate and train the nation's eyes or ways of seeing and showing. According to him, the nation needed to be educated in all walks of life including ways of seeing. Sadly, however, the editors, instead of refining and cultivating the vulgar popular taste, were entertaining the popular in order to expand their readership and to make their enterprise profitable.[18] In other words, the literary periodical was certainly required to go visual, not only due to its commercial potential, but also for reforming and cultivating the national cultural taste. For the latter purpose the readers needed to be trained and educated in appreciating the meaning and relevance of visuals. The commercial viability of the literary periodical, which was lamented for its absence in the late nineteenth century, was paradoxically also a source of anxiety in the twentieth century. Illustrated monthlies with large circulation and catering to popular taste needed nationalist surveillance and moral control. The emerging culture of visuality in the periodicals is "not just about seeing but also about a politics of seeing and emotion", as Ritu Khanduri has appropriately observed in the context of cartoons.[19]

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[14] Sudhindra Varmā BA, "*Hindi patra aur citrakalā*" *Viśāl Bhārat*, March 1930

[15] For examples, periodicals published columns like "Citra-paricay" (Image-introduction) explaining the meaning of visuals through brief comments. Private papers of Hindi editors like Shivpujan Sahay contain substantial correspondences written in 1920s and 1930s to illustrators, printing staff and other editors/writers on the nature, type and significance of visual illustration in the periodicals to be published. *Shivpujan Sahay Private Papers*, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Teen Murti Bhavan, New Delhi. Periodicals like *Viśāl Bhārat* (1926, Calcutta), owned by Ramanand Chatterjee and edited by Banarasidas Chaturvedi, published a series of articles in self-congratulatory mode on the visuals and graphic art in Hindi periodicals of contemporary period

[16] For an insightful discussion on essays and commentaries on and around new visual culture in nineteenth century Hindi journals devoid of any image or graphic see Sadan Jhā, "Ek nayī bhāśā ka uday: devnāgarī jagat me dekhnā aur dikhānā (1850 se 1920 tak)." *Occassional Paper Series. Samāj aur Itihās* (Delhi: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 2014). Christopher Pinny also notes visual traffic between different media (inter-ocularity) in the late 19th century. See Christopher Pinney, "Introduction: Public, Popular and Other Cultures" in *Pleasure and the Nation: The History, Consumption and the Politics of Public Culture in India*, eds. Rachel Dwyer and Christopher Pinney (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1–34.

[17] Often such images were accompanied with informative essays on related issues.

2

Domesticating a transcultural art form

In such a discursive and material context cartoon, a new art form with its overt English genealogy, made its entry in the Hindi literary-cultural scene. For literary monthlies, which operated with reformist rhetoric and the agenda of serving the nation, the new art form of cartoon appeared to be a potentially attractive genre with a distinctive function. For editors, it served as a potent tool to intervene in any topical issue. They could irreverently, but humorously, attack the contradiction and anomaly of a subject matter with an elevated but implicit aim of rectification, improvement and reform. Thus some editors and commentators expounded v*yaṃgya-citra* as an art work with dual purpose: "one purpose is pure amusement and second is reform", wrote the editor of *Sudhā*, for example.[20] Others, however, were wary of entertainment which could potentially preclude the reformist agenda, in a manner we saw in the case of literary satire.

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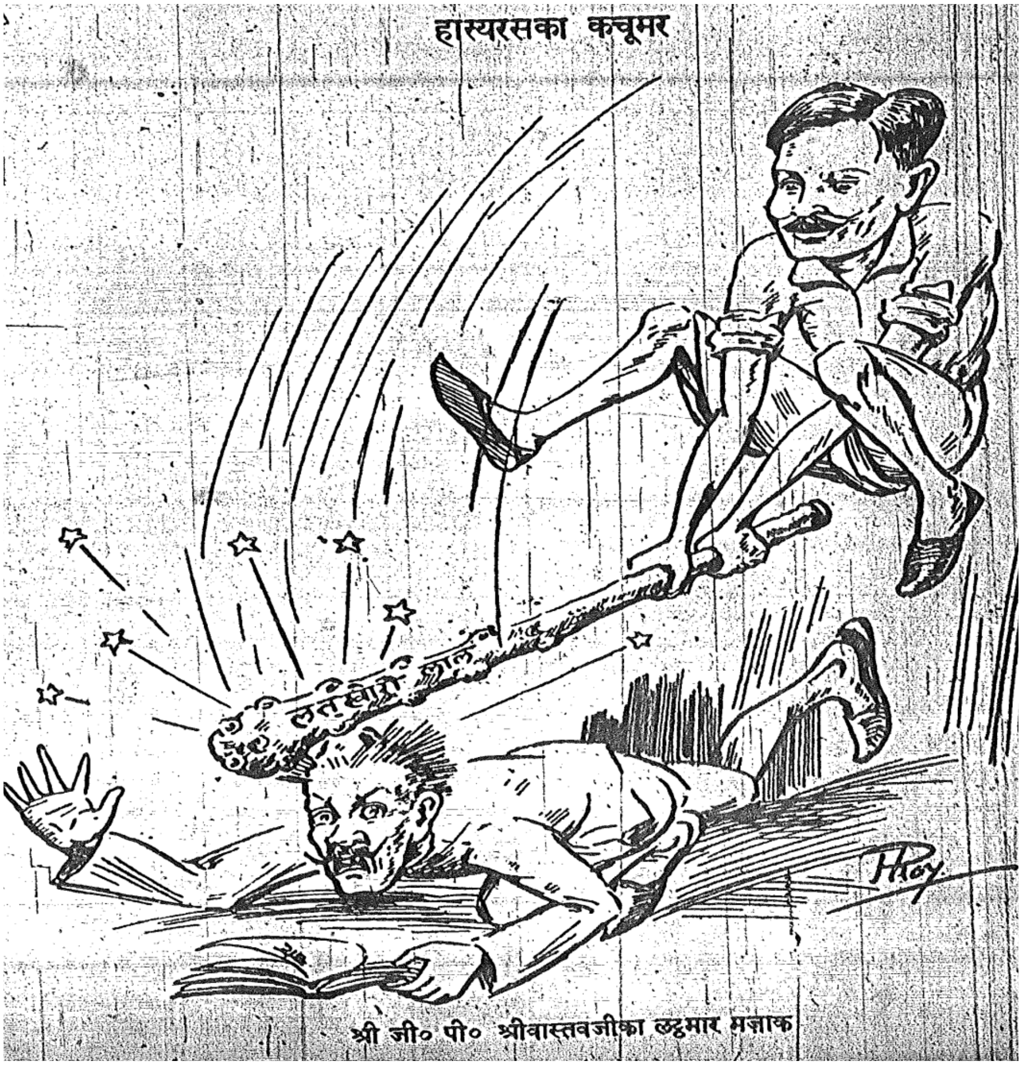
[18] See, for instance, Raikr̥ṣna Dās, "Vartmān hindī-patroṃ meṃ citra", *Viśāl Bhārat,* March 1930.

[19] Ritu Kahnduri, *Caricaturing Culture in India: Cartoons and History in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 20.

Figure 6: *Hāsya ras kā kacumar*, *Viśāl Bhārat*, May, 1929


हास्यरसका कचूमर
लतखोरी लाल
श्री जी० पी० श्रीवास्तवजीका लट्ठमार मज़ाक

---

[20] "*Kārṭūn saṃkhyā ke viṣay meṃ nivedan*", *Sudhā*, March 1929.

Interestingly, such reformist anxieties could themselves be illustrated in cartoons like *Hāsya ras kā kacumar* (*Laughter's thrashing*). One of the most widely read Hindi satirists of early twentieth century, J. P. Srivastava, according to the cartoon, was allegedly misusing humour. Instead of reforming and elevating the reader of the periodical *Cā̃d* (the magazine in which his writing such as *Latkhori lal* was serialised), the cartoon depicted, Srivastava's slapstick humour was arguably attacking him to fall rock bottom. The twin agenda of reform and entertainment, in other words, did not sit in easy relationship with one another; their coming together was marked by tension and anxiety.

History as a strategy of domestication

While editor/publicists gauged cartoon's distinctive functions, they also strove to familiarise and educate the readers to appreciate the new art form. Hence, coterminous with the profusion of cartoons in the satirical/non-satirical press, cartoon albums and individual caricature prints, what is strikingly evident is the appearance of advertisements, review articles, graphic art, and even special issues (containing historical introductions) of periodicals on cartoons. To cite a few random examples, the monthly *Cā̃d* (Allahabad, 1922), which used to publish cartoons in large numbers, advertised the publication of cartoon albums from its own press in one of its issues (see Figure 6, *Vyaṃga citrāvalī* or Photo album of satire).[21] *Sudhā* (Lucknow 1927), which was owned by Dularelal Bhargav and employed trained artists like Hakim Muhammad Khan as illustrators, published a special issue on cartoons in March 1929.[22]

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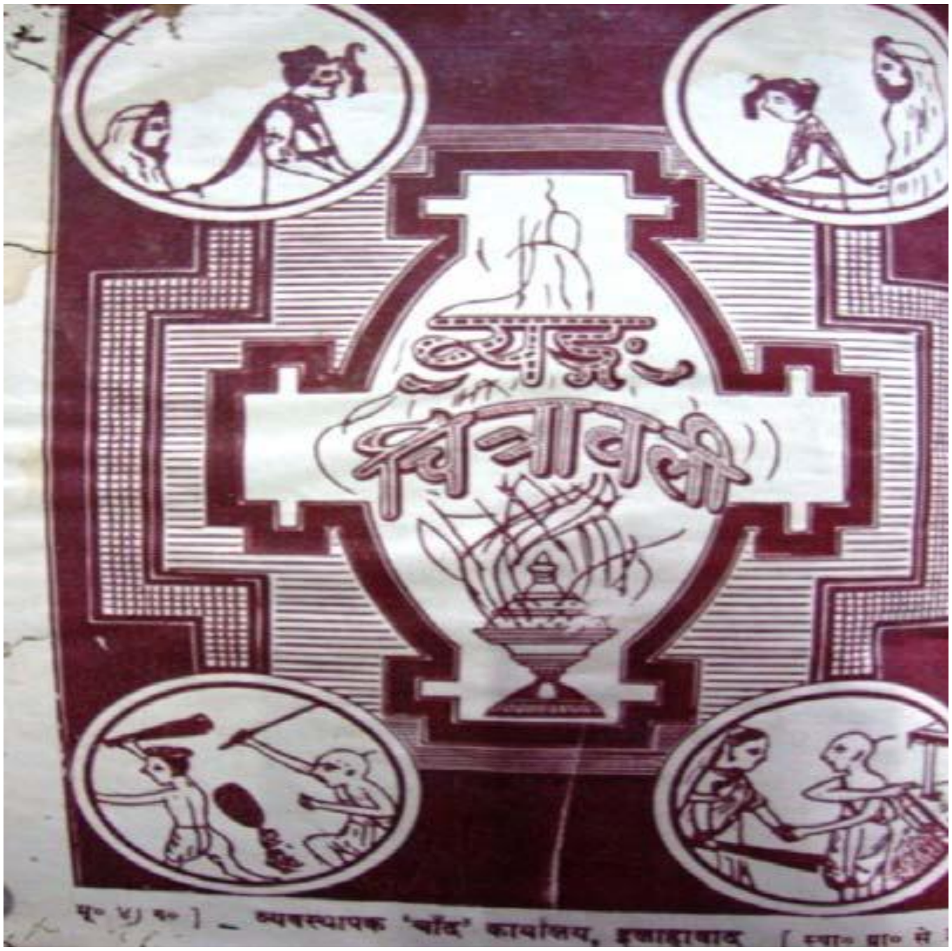
[21] Also see, back page of *Cā̃d*, September 1931.

[22] Bhargava was a press baron in Lucknow, he also published another important literary periodical Madhuri. Hakim Muhammad Khan was one of the earliest groups of students trained by Abanindranath Tagore. Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India, 1850-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 297. I have mentioned Khan because he is the

Figure 7: Advertisement of *Vyaṃga citrāvalī*, *Cā̃d*, April 1931


व्यङ्ग
चित्रावली
मू० ४) रु०] — व्यवस्थापक 'चाँद' कार्यालय, इलाहाबाद [स्था० ग्रा० से

Editorial prefaces, advertisements on the cover pages of journals, introductory comments and historical essays together function as framing devices to appropriate, circulate and popularise the new art form of the cartoon. They can be seen as 'paratexts' which function as 'thresholds' in mediating and reconfiguring the cognition of a transcultural art-form in the idiom of a new cultural milieu, thereby making it intelligible in a new historical setting.[23]

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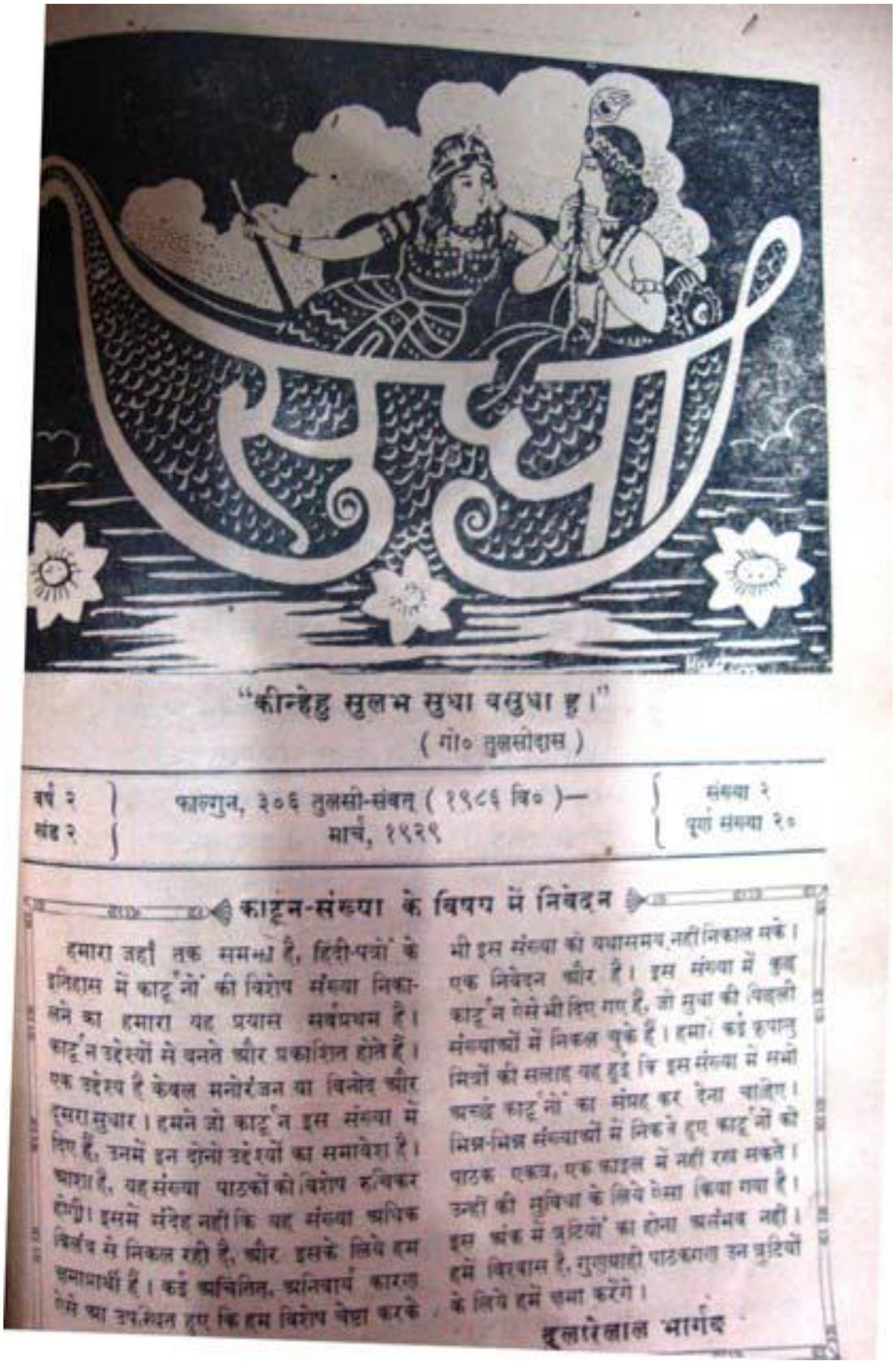
only artist who is mentioned in the standard art history book. About other artists I could not find any information.

[23] I borrow the term 'paratext' from Gérard Genette. For Genette 'paratexts' are effective framing device that accompany transmissions of texts, address or create readerships, and guide interpretations. Gérard Genette, *Paratexts*: *Thresholds of Interpretations* (Cambridge: Cambridge



"कीन्हेहु सुलभ सुधा बसुधा हू।"
(गो० तुलसीदास)

वर्ष २ | खंड २
फाल्गुन, ३०६ तुलसी-संवत् (१९८६ वि०)—
मार्च, १९२९
संख्या २ | पूर्ण संख्या २०

कार्टून-संख्या के विषय में निवेदन

हमारा जहाँ तक समझा है, हिंदी-पत्रों के इतिहास में कार्टूनों की विशेष संख्या निकालने का हमारा यह प्रयास सर्वप्रथम है। कार्टून उद्देश्यों से बनते और प्रकाशित होते हैं। एक उद्देश्य है केवल मनोरंजन या विनोद और दूसरा सुधार। हमने जो कार्टून इस संख्या में दिए हैं, उनमें इन दोनों उद्देश्यों का समावेश है। आशा है, यह संख्या पाठकों को विशेष रुचिकर होगी। इसमें संदेह नहीं कि यह संख्या अधिक विलंब से निकल रही है, और इसके लिये हम क्षमाप्रार्थी हैं। कई अचिंतित, अनिवार्य कारण ऐसे आ उपस्थित हुए कि हम विशेष चेष्टा करके भी इस संख्या को यथासमय नहीं निकाल सके। एक निवेदन और है। इस संख्या में कुछ कार्टून ऐसे भी दिए गए हैं, जो सुधा की पिछली संख्याओं में निकल चुके हैं। हमारे कई कृपालु मित्रों की सलाह यह हुई कि इस संख्या में सभी अच्छे कार्टूनों का संग्रह कर देना चाहिए। भिन्न-भिन्न संख्याओं में निकले हुए कार्टूनों को पाठक एकत्र, एक फ़ाइल में नहीं रख सकते। उन्हीं की सुविधा के लिये ऐसा किया गया है। इस अंक में त्रुटियों का होना असंभव नहीं। हमें विश्वास है, गुणग्राही पाठकगण उन त्रुटियों के लिये हमें क्षमा करेंगे।

दुलारेलाल भार्गव

Figure 8: *Kārṭūn Saṃkhyā ke viṣay meṃ Nivedan*, *Sudhā*, March 1929

University Press, 1997). I am grateful to Prof. Hans Harder and Prof. Joachim Kurtz for drawing my attention to the concept of paratext as a framing device in transcultural encounters and circulation.

The editorial preface '*Kārṭūn saṃkhyā ke viṣay meṃ nivedan*' ('An appeal with regard to the special issue on cartoon', see Figure 8) was followed by a fifty-paged introduction on the evolution of the art of cartoon, which focussed on its global history since antiquity to the eighteenth century. This historical introduction was followed by a selection of old and new cartoons, which were classified within the categories of the political, the social, the literary and 'miscellaneous'. The aim of such publications was not only to popularise the young art form, but also to define and underline its significance, to train readers in the ways in which the form had to be read and interpreted and, above all, to show how (despite its obvious English roots) it was very much in sync with India's indigenous artistic-cultural tradition.

Apart from a humble self-congratulatory remark regarding the 'historic effort' of bringing out a special issue on cartoons, the editorial note conceives cartoons essentially as an art form, which should also be collected for posterity. "It has been suggested that all good cartoons should be collected and this [special number of the journal] shall help the reader in collecting and preserving all of them in a single file."[24]

Starting from the premise of designating cartoon the status of an art form and the need of collecting/archiving the object of art, the editorial note is followed by an introductory essay entitled "Vyaṃgyātmak evaṃ vinodˡpūrṇ citroṃ kā ārambhik vikās"(The early history of the evolution of satirical and humorous visuals).[25] The essay intended to provide a short linear historical sketch of humorous visuals in different epochs and regions of world, including ancient Egypt, Greece, the Roman Empire, Europe since the Renaissance and Reformation until the beginning of the eighteenth century or the 'birth of a modern world', while speculating possible reason for the absence of cartoons in pre-colonial India. This global history of cartoon underscored many issues, problems and tensions regarding the transculturality of cartoons and also throws light on the various nationalist moves to accommodate it as a part of the corpus of (national) indigenous art. Moreover, it would be pertinent to mention that the essay selectively culls historical facts on world cartoons from the then famous book *A History of Caricature and Grotesque in Literature and Art* (first published in 1865), written by the noted British Antiquarian Thomas Wright (1810–1877).[26] The facts, described at length in Wight's book, are handpicked and adjusted to a logic of its own. Wright's book, of course, was written from the vantage point of, what we now call, Eurocentric global history. Although it starts with a brief chapter on ancient Egypt, evidences of ancient Egyptian humorous drawings are uneasily accommodated by arguing that they were inspired by those of ancient Greeks. The book deals mainly with Europe's past – starting from antiquity (ancient Greek and Rome), and ending with James Gilray's works at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It does not deal with or even mention Chinese or Indian civilizations. Consequently, eurocentric world history, as we shall see later, is manipulated and appropriated by the Hindi essay for an overtly 'nationalist' purpose.

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[24] *Sudhā*, March 1929.

[25] *Sudhā*, March 1929.

The essay on the early history of cartoon starts from the premise that the evolution of art forms is a quintessential index to measure the level of societal evolution. The graphic or visual art, it is asserted, is an important part of the advancement of a modern society (*Nav-Samāj*), and satirical and humorous visuals are important constituents of this art form.[27] In other words, the level and state of achievement in the art (of cartoon) is interlaced with the level and state of that society in an evolutionary scale of civilizational accomplishments. Once invested with the weight of civilizational value, such visuals become a crucially important art form that is expected to exist not only in the present but in past societies as well. It should be searched for, invented, found and appreciated in the past of every society claiming to be advanced and modern; it should also be produced, appreciated, consumed and preserved in the present. Given the fact that the art of cartoons was recently introduced in India, finding it in the past was a difficult and painful, if not impossible, task. Notwithstanding the article took up the task in a bid to locating the art form in early India, thereby proving that 'we Indians had it too'. However, as we shall see below, this difficult project was achieved here a little differently when compared to some other contemporaries who were grappling with the same questions in their own ways and in their own distinct contexts.[28]

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[26] Thomas Wright, *A History of Caricature and Grotesque in Literature and Art* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1875) is also available on archive.org. For Thomas Wright's short intellectual biography see Michael Welman Thompson, "Wright, Thomas (1810–1877)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); see online edition <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30063> (accessed on February 6, 2012). This book was easily available in India. For example, 1865 edition of this book is available in the National Library, Calcutta. It was also an inspiration for the nineteenth century American historian James Parton's *Caricature and Comic Art in All Times and Many Lands* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1877). I have checked content of both the books alongside our historical essay under discussion. Although many cited cartoons overlap between three, many cartoons cited in the Hindi essay is not to be found in Parton's book. A few paragraphs are translated verbatim from Wright's book but not from Parton's. It can be safely argued that the author of the Hindi essay did not consult Parton's book.

Setting the premise of art as the marker of civilizational evolution the text talks about the antiquity and achievements of a singular human civilization spread over the geographical expanse of Egypt, China, Greece, Rome and India, and covering more than two and a half thousand years of history. The essay then deals at length with the caricature or caricature-like drawings and their artists in ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome, and in medieval Europe until the beginning of eighteenth century. During the course of this description an extended definition of cartoons is offered.

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[27] "Vyaṃgyātmak evaṃ vinodˈpūrṇ citroṃ kā ārambhik vikās", *Sudhā,* March 1929.

[28] For example, citing the historical evidence of some Kangra paintings depicting the hypocrisy and corruption amongst vaishnava ascetics, which were preserved in Lahore Museum, Samarendranath Gupta wrote: "[A]s the chief motif of Indian art was religious expression, secularism in the form of caricature was never very much emphasised. But this aspect, though not very frequently represented, was not entirely absent in Indian art. Even the oldest records of Indian painting bear evidence to the fact that the sense of ridicule and satire was not altogether divorced from the canons of art of those times. Samarendranath Gupta, "Satire in Art", *Modern Review*, November 1913. Thus, Gupta, a disciple of Abanindranath Tagore and later Deputy Principal of Mayo School of art in Lahore, managed to find some evidence by combing the past of indigenous visual art. Biographical information about Gupta is taken from Partha Mitter, *The Triumph of Modernism: India's Artists and the Avant Garde, 1922-47* (London, Reaktion Books Ltd, 2007), 191. Residues of such predicament persist till date. R. K. Laxman, cited in the beginning of the chapter, also acknowledges the colonial connection of the art of cartoon then immediately asserts the pre-colonial indigenous tradition of humour and satire in other art forms.

> We do not conceive of cartoons in a different way from humorous and satirical sculptures made by contemporary artists of the time. As a matter of fact, those sculptures were just another form of contemporary cartoons... Cartoons [in medieval Europe] were a direct rendition of contemporary literature. What was expressed in literature through words was [expressed] in cartoon through sketches and on rocks and walls, and through sculptures and engravings [in India].[29]

This expansive definition of cartoon as any visual form of humorous art across different representational registers manoeuvres a strategy to flag the existence of an *indigenous* precursor of the cartoon in Indian tradition. It claimed that Indian civilization was pre-historic or more ancient, and also superior, to all others. Indian visual art, it went on to assert, was 'scientifically flourishing' (*vaijñānik ḍhaṃg se pracalit thī*) since the (pre-historic) age of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, although, for historical reasons like [Muslim] invasions, the Aryan civilization had apparently lost precious forms of art and knowledge, so that Indians lacked cartoons (and also their archival records) in the present.

Apart from defining this art form, the essay refers to a number of 'famous' (European) humorous drawings and explains their textual and contextual meanings. Most of them deal primarily with themes of rampant moral corruption in the religious and social order, for example debauched clergymen, women defying patriarchal norms, etc., which had a strong resonance with contemporary

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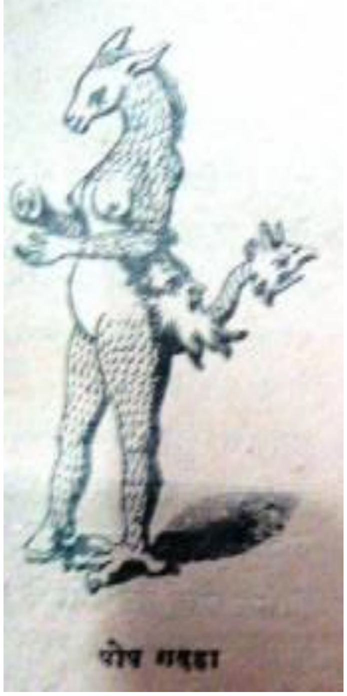
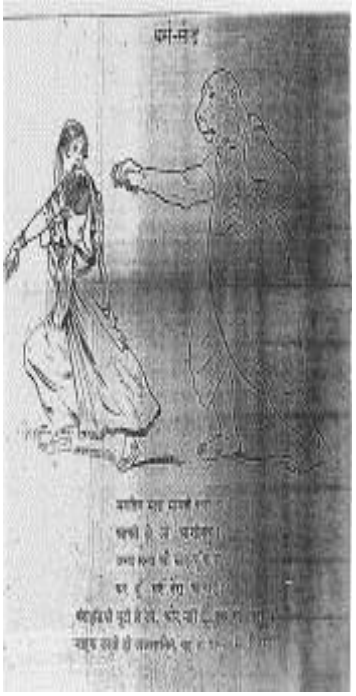
[29] Through a secular reading of mythological figures of gods and demons described in epics, it provides examples of the existence of a tradition of humorous visuals. "Vyaṃgyatmak evaṃ vinodpurṇa chitroṃ kā ārambhik vikās", *Sudhā*, March 1929.

Indian trends in cartoon production. Moreover, the analyses of examples intended to provide a model to read and interpret the cartoon and establish the art of cartooning as a legitimate mode of pursuing the agenda of national reform.

Figure 9: *Pop-gadʰā, Sudhā*, March 1929





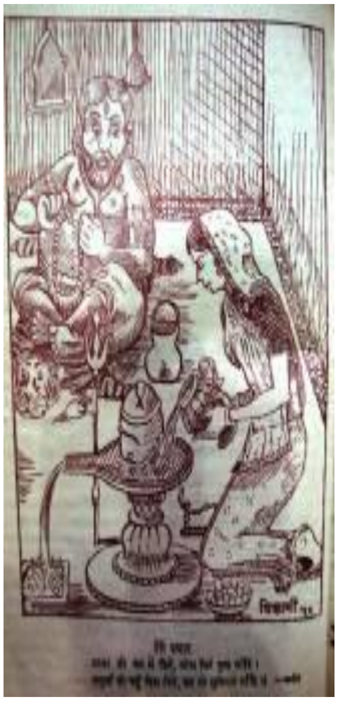


Figure 10: *Dharm-sā̃ṛ*
Matvālā, 20 February, 1926

Figure 11: *Raṃge syar*
Cā̃d, April 1934

The essay, for instance, cites *Pop-gadʰā* (Pope-donkey) against the corrupt papacy allegedly belonging to the sixteenth century.[30] This is cited as an example of cartoons in service of religious reform. Not surprisingly, then, examples like *Pop-gadʰā* strike a direct correspondence with the contemporary preoccupation of

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[30] Similarly, another visual *Ingland ka Bhenṛiyā* (Wolf of England) is introduced with a brief socio-historical background of the 17th century England. Then it is explained as follows: "[This] picture depicts that the people of the first class (the lords) are the wolves sucking the blood of the English middle class. Another point that deserves special attention is that palms and feet of this wolf are of a powerful bird known as eagle. Once this bird grabs something in its claws, it seldom gets released. That is to say that once the wealth and dignity of the middle class is grabbed by these wolves, it was impossible to retrieve them."

Hindi cartoons which were valiantly targeting the traditional religious order and its figurehead, the Brahmin priest as debauched, corrupt, unbridled sexual menace publicly threatening the pious woman and, by extension, the Hindu religious order.[31] Additionally, *Pop-gadʰā* shows the deformed body of the Pope, and the visual is encoded by drawing upon the cultural register of the fable; it also explicates its meaning to the readers in all its detail, thereby implicitly providing a model to interpret and understand a cartoon. The cartoon is explained as follows:

> In this [picture] the donkey-head symbolises the Pope and his fake principles about worldly pleasure. [His] right hand is like an elephant's leg. This symbolises his spiritual power, and....expresses the fact that just as a man [can be] crushed to death under the feet of an elephant, the souls of common folk are trampled under the spiritual power of the Pope. His left hand is that of a man and symbolises the worldly power of the Pope. The open hand expresses the Pope's prying mentality, through which [he] want[s] to establish his hegemony over Christian kings and monarchs. His right leg is that of a horse and represents spiritual ministers, priests, monks, nuns, etc. working under the Pope's authority. This means that all of them collaborate in the papal oppression. The left leg is that of an animal known as griffin,[32] which never releases its prey once it is caught. This leg [stands for] those priests working under the Pope who did not return people's money once they took it from them. The heart [breast] and torso of this picture are that of a woman. This represents the other parts of the papacy - cardinal, bishop, priest, monk, etc. – all of whom were indulging in pleasure. This part of the Pope's body is uncovered, and it signifies that they were hardly ever ashamed and fearful of committing sin and debauchery and displaying them in public. On the contrary, other parts of body are covered with fish scales. This means that, just like those scales, Christian kings and the affluent have covered up papal sin by accepting the latter's authority. On the back of [its body] the heads of an old man and a flying snake are tucked away. The snake is spitting fire. The old man's head represents the Pope's terror, his expanding empire and its degeneration. The snake's mouth symbolises that the Pope and other

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[31] For example, see Figure 10 (Bull of religion) and 11 (Coloured Jackal). These two are cited from amongst at least a dozen on this theme, which appeared during 1920s and early 1930s in various periodicals including this special issue of *Sudhā*.

[32] In the essay the term griffin appears in English. Griffin is a mythical animal typically having the head, forepart, and wings of an eagle and the body, hind legs and tail of a lion.

> [assistants] want to incinerate all attacks upon them. It is said that this picture was understood to be the best satirical cartoon-picture of its time and was found even in the smaller huts [...] [33]

To recapitulate, the introductory history of cartoon works as a paratext in framing cartoon as a transcultural art form, which was projected to be simultaneously Indian as well as global. The history of human civilization was conceived as a confederacy of many civilizations, different constituents having differing expertise and contributions. The non-existence of the precursor of modern art form of cartoon in Indian tradition is negotiated by highlighting the Indian contribution to human civilization in the expanded realm of humorous art. Visual satire, thus, could be appropriated and domesticated as part of the larger global repertoire of artistic tradition, in which Indians also had their own share. Moreover, the invocation and interpretation of cartoons from around the world was used to familiarise and train the readers in appreciating the cartoon's reformist character across histories and cultures.

3

Cartoon and its function in literary journal

The index of cartoon's popularity is reflected in its circulation within and beyond the pages of periodicals, advertisements and special issues containing essays on the history and culture of cartooning. *Vyaṃgya-citra* was conceived as the most purposeful art form by the editors in an age when public issues were debated and contested in the language of reform. Opinions were required to be sharply articulated, starkly highlighting the problems or contradiction of the contemporary state of things.

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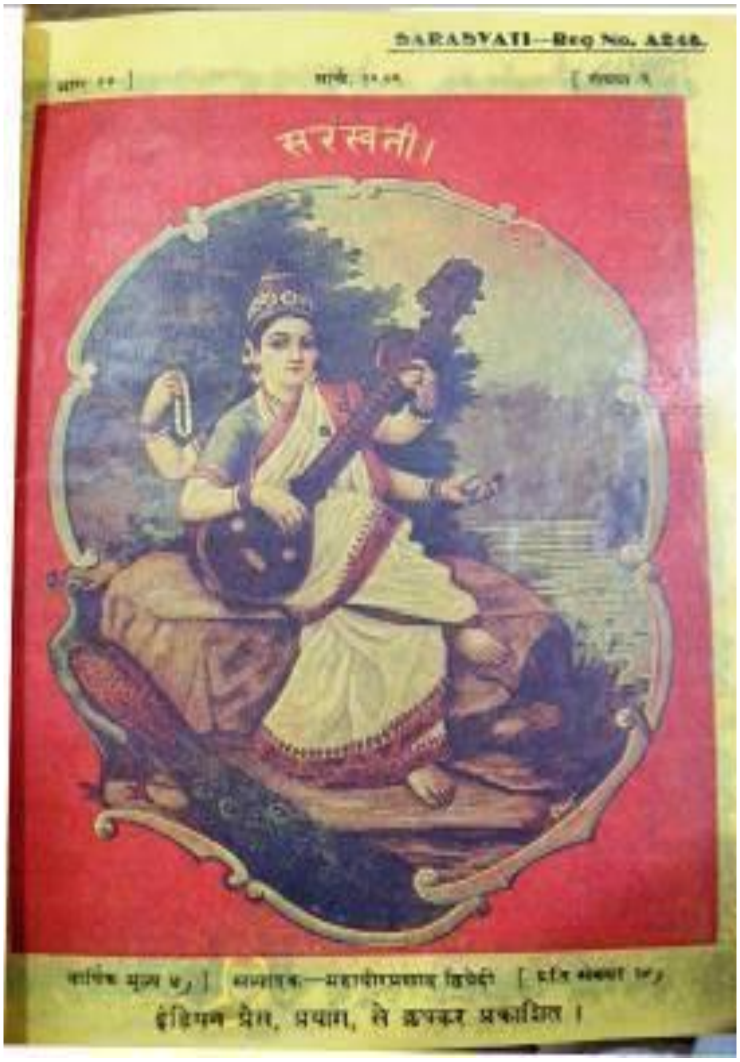
[33] "Vyaṃgyatmak evaṃ vinodpurṇa chitroṃ kā ārambhik vikās", *Sudhā*, March 1929.

Figure 12: Cover page of *Sarasvatī*


SARASVATI—Reg No. A248.
सरस्वती।
सम्पादक—महावीरप्रसाद द्विवेदी
इंडियन प्रेस, प्रयाग, से छपकर प्रकाशित।

Not surprisingly, then, it was in the literary periodical *Sarasvatī* under the editorship of Mahavir Prasad Dvivedi that cartoons became a regular feature, albeit for a very short duration.[34] Dvivedi gruffly conveyed his programmatic literary agenda on the sad state of modern Hindi literature – lacking aesthetic merit, moral power and the capacity to articulate cultural sensibility and vision required for heralding national regeneration – thereby giving a call for new literary and knowledge forms to be assembled in the treasure house modern Hindi.[35] One of the earliest cartoons to appear in *Sarasvatī* was entitled '*Hindī sāhitya* (Hindi literature)', and it accused Hindi writers of plagiarism.[36] It portrayed three men, Marathi, Bengali and English, and each represented the literature of a mature language. Marathi is shown to be in search of his turban, English his coat, and Bengali his scarf, watch and handkerchief.[37] A fourth man, Hindi literature, is congratulating himself on his quick achievements. He is portrayed as wearing the pilfered objects—a turban, a coat, and a scarf; and has a handkerchief in one hand and a watch in the other. The description below this visual glaringly highlights that Hindi is shamelessly proud of his richness, which is sourced upon larceny.[38]

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[34] A series of literary cartoons appeared in *Sarasvatī* from January 1902 onwards under the column heading *Sāhitya samācār* (Literary news). Dvivedi would conceptualize the cartoon and give direction to the artist with elaborate detail. On receiving the editor's notice the artist would supply him the cartoon as per the order. This cartoon column lasted only two years, with the final cartoon being published in December 1903. In my archival search for selected issues of *Sarasvatī* during my field work, I have also used information on Dvivedi's literary cartoons through references of the following works. Pramilā Śarmā, "'Sarasvatī'-sampādak paṇḍit mahāvīr prasād dvivedī ke vyaṃgyaˈcitra", *Sāhitya amr̥t*, 7, 7 (2002), 121-124; Udayˈbhānu Siṃh, *Mahāvīr prasād dvivedī aur unˈkā yug,* (Lakhˈnaū: Lakhˈnaū Viśvavidyālay, 1951); and Mody, *Literature, Language, and Nation Formation*.

Similarly, '*Sāhityasabhā*' (Literary congress) was another cartoon which commented on the state of Hindi's various knowledge forms and invited bitter responses from other litterateurs.

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[35] Śarma, *Mahavīr prasād dvivedī aur hindī navajāgaraṇ*; Sujata Mody, "Literary self-determination and the disciplinary boundaries of Hindi literature in the early twentieth century", *South Asia Research*, 32, 3(2012): 233-56.

[36] The issue of plagiarism is related to the question of authorship and originality, which came along with the modernist idea of art and literature. Except one recent article by Avinash Kumar, there has been no systematic study of the nationalist obsession with the issue of 'originality' in Hindi literature, which became a pressing issue from the beginning of twentieth century. Arguably, Hindi was required to have its own 'original' works in every genre of knowledge. Two cite just a couple of well-known examples; controversies arose on the originality of poetry written by Suryakant Tripathi 'Nirala' and fictions of Premchand. Some works do touch upon this issue indirectly. Avinash Kumar, "Debates around Authorship and Originality: Hindi during the Colonial Period", *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLVII, 28, (July 14, 2012): 50-57.

[37] *Sarasvatī*, January, 1902.

[38] *Sarasvatī*, January, 1902. This is very striking illustration of Dvivedi's modernist idea of originality in literature, which perceived inter-regional and cross-cultural borrowings, hitherto common, as an instance of plagiarism. For example, a couple of Harishchandra's satirical pieces like "Hymn to the Englishmen" and "Penal code for Husbands" were almost verbatim Hindi rendition of Bankim's works.

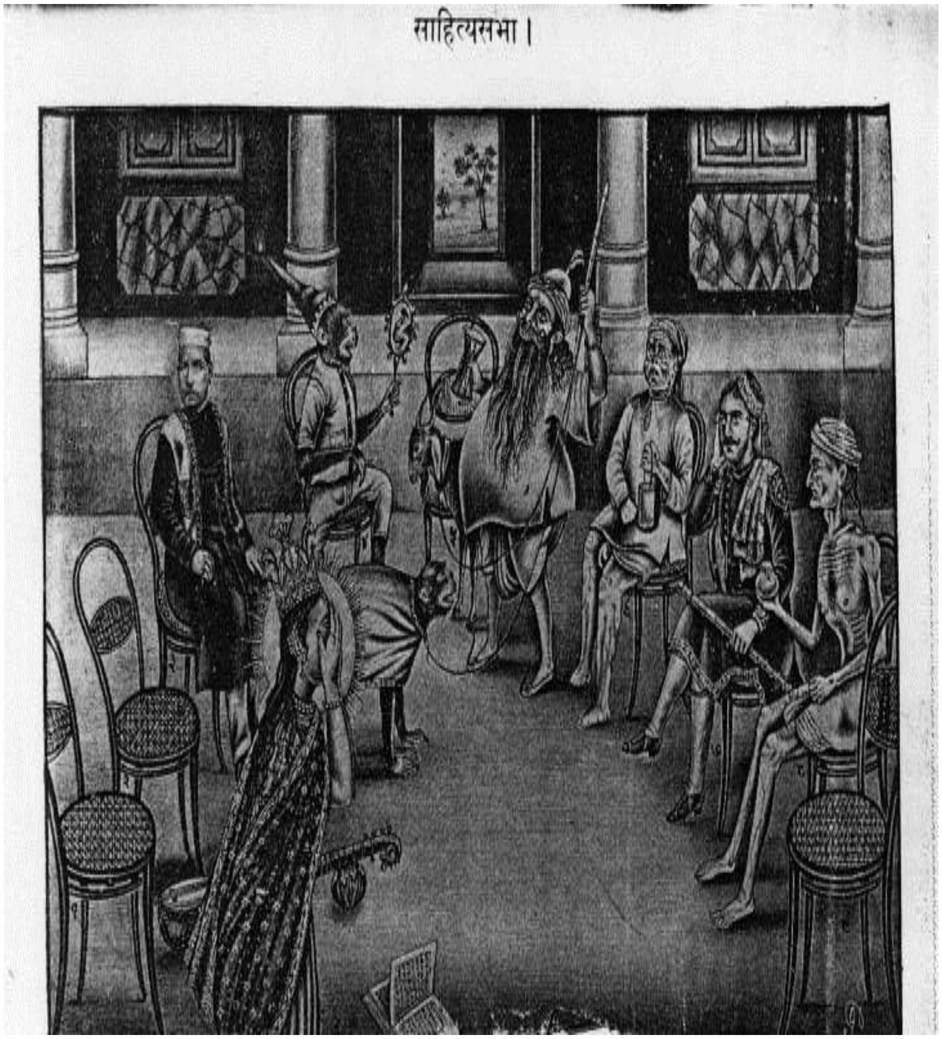

Figure 13: *Sahityasabhā*, *Sarasvatī*, February-March 1903

It portrays a scene of a conference, attended by a variety of genres represented by the presence and alternating absence of a variety of male characters. The conference room has nine chairs. Three chairs marked for *Itihās* (history), *Jivanˡcarit* (biography), and *Koṣ* (dictionary) are empty, marking the absence of these genres or indeed knowledge forms. Scholarship on these subjects, according to Dvivedi, was missing from the world of Hindi literature. The remaining chairs are occupied by a young gentleman (travelogue), a monkey (literary criticism), a fat juggler (novel), a leper (grammar), a goon (poetry), and a pauper (drama).[39] Purportedly, the novel is for mesmerising entertainment devoid of any moral and educative content; a serious and rigorous genre of literary criticism is the opposite of what it should be; grammar, the linguistic fibre of any literary language, is in tatters; drama, a hallmark of cultural richness is marked by poverty; poetry, a marker of cultural advancement and civility is in a completely opposite state, and so forth.

Dvivedi's cartoons could hardly be ignored; they invited sharp responses and were strongly contested by his contemporaries, not least because of the biting effect of the visual satire. Balmukund Gupta (1865-1907), a well-known editor-essayist-polemicist of *Bhāratˡmitra*,[40] also famous for his satirical column *Śivˡśambhū ke ciṭṭhe* (Letters from Śivˡśambhū), which was directed against the Indian Viceroy Lord Curzon, wrote a counter-satiric comment in response to the same cartoon in 25 April 1903 edition of his periodical. The periodical contained an enlarged image and quipped on Mahāvīr [synonym of monkey-god Hanuman] – or literary critic. Later he again discussed the same cartoon and published a detailed comment:

> The editor of 'Sarasvatī' has portrayed the play as a hungry and emaciated Brahmin, but Hindi is not at all devoid of plays. The translated and original plays of Hariścandra, Pratāp, Ambikādatta, Shrīnivās Das, Lakṣman Siṃh, Sitārām, and other gentlemen are objects of reverence in Hindi. The poetry available in Hindi is respected far and wide. [Works] on grammar in Hindi are also not bad. Novels are indeed wanting at present; but Dvivedījī has graciously tarred all of them with the same brush. But, [what about] the monkey of criticism, who is looking at his own stunning face in the mirror, no one knows what Dvivedījī was thinking when he made it! He is himself a critic in Hindi. He has even written a plethora of books on criticism. And then thou name is also Mahāvīr [also a name of monkey god], so he himself is seated on the chair of criticism looking at

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[39] All these characters and their descriptions in this 'concept-cartoon' are directly linked up with critical essays Dvivedi published in the journal in 1902 on the plight of Hindi and its various literary genres. Cf. Siṃh, *Mahāvīr prasād dvivedīaur unka yug*, 178-179.

[40] *Bhāratˡmitra* (1878) was a Hindi periodical published from Calcutta. It appeared as fortnightly, weekly, and daily at various points of its publication. Its editor Balmukund Gupt regularly engaged with Dvidedi's literary-critical views in his responses marked by wit and sarcasm.

> his face in the mirror and Saraswatī [the Goddess], on seeing his bizarre act, is crying. Dvivedījī attempted to make fool of others but ended up making himself, this is what *Bhāratmitra* communicated to him.[41]

Soon the publication of cartoons was discontinued in *Sarasvatī*. In his yearly remarks for 1903, Dvivedi explained the reasons behind this self-proscription:

> The Sāhitya-samācār related images, which were published this year, were liked by the readers very much. Therefore, it was our wish that we shall continue with this series; however, we have received some letters which suggest that some were also offended by these cartoons. Showing the present state of literature through such visuals is our only aim. We do not want to hurt anybody. Therefore, paying no heed to popular entertainment (*lokrañjan*), we will discontinue this series. From next year onwards, such visuals will not be regularly published every month; only when we find a really meaningful/serious (*bhāvbharā*) image, shall we publish it.[42]

Clearly, cartoon, it was accepted by Dvivedi, performed a twin function: to reform and entertain. Paradoxically, it was discontinued because of its popularity and amusement value, although it persuasively communicated his reformist agenda. The editor himself implicitly accepted that it was a medium which also offended respectable elders of tradition. It can be safely surmised that Dvivedi's deployment of cartoon – a popular entertaining (and by extension, playful!) form – was perhaps marred by an anxiety of breaking the seriousness and respectability of tradition. After all, given the periodical's overbearing didacticism and authority, cartoons perhaps went sharply against *Sarasvatī*'s self-image.

Be that as it may, a thematic survey of early productions of Hindi cartoon suggests that literary themes preceded the social in Hindi. Contrary to Partha

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[41] Jhābarmall Śarmā and Banārasidās Caturvedī eds., *Gupt-nibṃndhāvalī* (Kalkattā: Gupt smarārak graṃth prakāśan), 527-29. Śarmā, "Sarasvatī'-sampādak", 123-24.

[42] "Siṃhāvalokan", *Sarasvatī*, December 1903. Śarmā, "Sarasvatī'-sampādak", 122.

Mitter's observation about the abundance of the social in Bengali cartoons, it seems that an early focus was not so much on the social and political but on literary and artistic questions.[43] However in time, especially between 1920 and 1940, cartoons directly began to address social and political issues, both the imperial/national question as well as the issues that may be described as pertaining to social reform. In the next section we shall discuss the formal, stylistic and thematic varieties of cartoons and their communicative mechanism.

4

Cartoon and the poetics of representation

From the early 1920s a variety of visuals classified as cartoons were printed and circulated in huge numbers in periodicals. *Prabhā* (Kanpur, 1920), an illustrated monthly catering to a variety of subjects including politics,[44] was a pioneer and published at least 40 cartoons between 1921 and 1924.[45] The popularity of *Prabhā*'s cartoons inspired many periodicals to publish *vyaṃgya-citra*. Apart from satirical weeklies like *Matvālā* and *Hindū Pañc*, as mentioned in chapter four, magazines dedicated (in their self-perception) to political, literary, educational and social reform like *Cā̃d* (1922, Allahabad), *Mādhurī* (1922, Lucknow),[46] *Sudhā* (1927, Lucknow), *Viśāl Bhārat* (1928, Calcutta) and *Sarasvatī* (of post-Dvivedi years) - published cartoons in single, double or multiple plates on contemporary 'social' questions such as the condition of women and untouchable castes, on 'political' issues such as the imperial exploitation of India, Hindu-Muslim relations, nationalist politics and activities of the leaders, etc. and also on literary matters such as the nature of literary productions in Hindi, etc. Because of further demands, the publishers of these journals also printed cartoon albums, which were selections of previously published cartoons. To cite one example, a selection of *Prabhā*'s cartoons was published in 1927 under the bilingual title *Vyaṃgya-chitravalī* or *Caricature Album* and contained 95 cartoons on a variety of political issues, which dominated the nationalist imagination of the time. In the album, the Hindi commentary that originally accompanied the visuals in *Prabhā* was also translated into English and inserted alongside.[47] Also, independent prints containing graphic images and written commentaries in Hindi (sometimes along with English and Bengali translation) were circulated in abundance. They were produced to convey an anti-colonial nationalist message and were printed and reprinted across colonial Indian cities – from Lahore to Calcutta and circulating as far as present-day Assam during the high tide of nationalist agitation between 1920 and 1922.[48] We shall try to take a snapshot of each of the above varieties through selective examples. A survey of about more than nine hundred cartoons (gleaned from periodicals, albums, independent prints, etc.), of course marked by repetition, reveals certain stylistic and formal patterns and conventions. Broadly speaking, a cartoon draws its subject matter from a topical issue. It builds a visual narrative upon invoking (directly or allegorically) pre-established oral, literary and social conventions of representation. Finally, it deploys a variety of figuration techniques (displacement, deformation, exaggeration, stereotyping, etc.) to underline contrast between (moral) expectations and (wanting) reality to highlight anomaly and contradiction in the subject of representation. Let us illustrate with examples.

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[43] Mitter, "Cartoon and the Raj".

[44] This was the motto of the magazine, which went in original as *Vividh viṣay samˈpanna rajˈnaitik māsik*. *Prabhā*. See *Prabhā*, Varṣ 1, Khaṇḍ 2, 1920. Magazine with same name was first published in 1913 from Khandva, Central Province. See Arjun Tivārī, *Hindī patrakāritā kā vṛihad itihās* (Dillī, Vāṇī prakāśan, 1997), 182.

[45] I have not been able to consult 8 issues of *Prabhā* during this period.

[46] For a good documentation of its content and other major and minor information about *Mādhurī* see Vinayˈmohan Tripāṭhī, *Mādhurī patrikā kā sāhityik yogˈdān*, (Dillī, Naman prakāśan, 2006)

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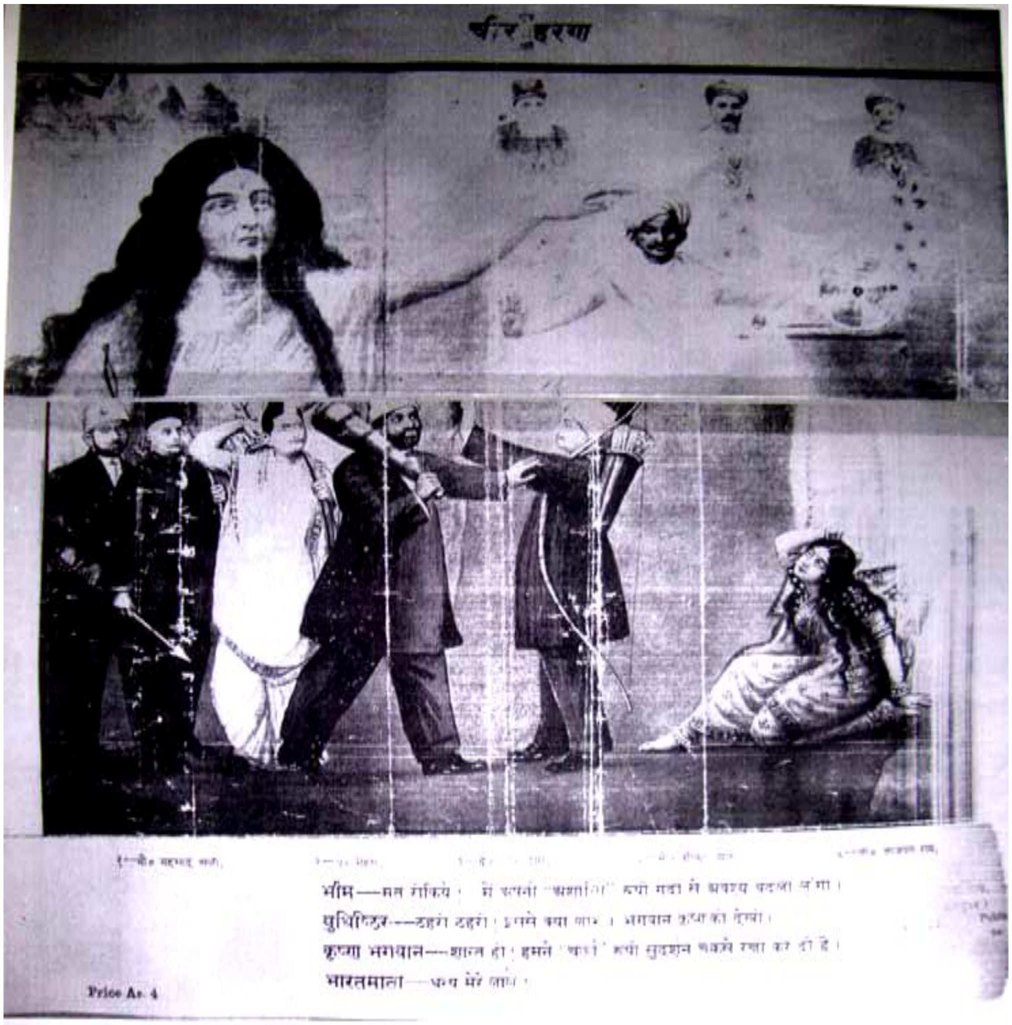
[47] *Caricature Album Vyaṃgya-citrāvalī* (Kānpur: Prakāś pustakālay, 1927). Its quoted price was Rs. 2/. This album was part of a series of albums containing nationalist visuals, which appeared in various Hindi periodicals during this period. Other two albums in the same series, as per the advertisement given on the cover of *Caricature Album Vyaṃgya-citrāvalī*, were *Bandemātaram Album* (Hail Mother India Album) and *Tilak Album* (Visuals on extremist nationalist leader Balgangadhar Tilak). *Sudhā*'s *Karṭūnāvalī*, as already mentioned above, can be cited as yet another example. Additionally, we have advertisements, for instance, in *Cā̃d* which refers to its own selection of cartoons to be republished as *Vyaṃgya-citrāvalī*. See, Figure 7 cited above.

[48] The colonial government also classified them as cartoons that were 'seditious' in nature and hence liable to be proscribed. IB Serial no. 33/1921, File no. 243/1921, West Bengal State Archive, Calcutta.

Traditional repertoire and modern form

Figure 14: *Chīṛ-haraṇ*[49]


चीर हरण
भीम—मत रोकिये। मैं अपनी "अशान्ति" रूपी गदा से अवश्य बदला लूंगा।
युधिष्ठिर—ठहरो ठहरो। इससे क्या लाभ। भगवान कृष्ण को देखो।
कृष्ण भगवान—शान्त हो। हमने "चर्खा" रूपी सुदर्शन चक्रसे रक्षा कर दी है।
भारतमाता—धन्य मेरे लाल।
Price As. 4

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[49] IB Serial no. 33/1921, IB File no. 243/1921, West Bengal State Archive, Calcutta.

Indian cartoonists developed the new art form by drawing simultaneously on multiple indigenous literary and visual resources and representational repertoire. For instance, this is a cartoon print entitled *Chīṛ-haraṇ* (Figure 14), which was proscribed by the colonial government during the Non-cooperation Movement. Drawing upon the famous episode of the Hindu Epic *Mahābhārata,* the cartoon shows the Pāṇḍava brothers Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva as the nationalist leaders Lajpat Rai, Shaukat Ali, Chittaranjan Das, Motilal Nehru and Muhammad Ali. All of them are shown as being agitated over the molestation of their wife Draupadī, represented by a woman called *Sampatti* (Indian economy). The molesters -- Duhśāsan and Duryodhana -represented by a man dressed in British uniform, stand in for colonial rule. While Lord Kr̥ṣna with the *sudarśan cakra* (magic disk) is symbolised by Gandhi, who is protecting the dignity of *Sampatti* with his spinning-wheel, the divine trinity – Brahmā, Viṣnu and Śiva- is invoked by the trio of nationalist leaders of the previous generation, Dadabhai Naoroji, Balgangadhar Tilak and Gopal Krishna Gokhle, who are blessing Gandhi from heaven. The towering figure of Mother India, representing the Indian populace, also blesses Gandhi for his benevolent act.

In independent cartoon prints such as *Cīr-haraṇ* we, thus, find allegorical portrayals of contemporary political events and discourses. Within this category, an episode from a Hindu epic, which is assumed to be already known,[50] is used as a palimpsest overwriting it with another political meaning.[51] While the spectacle of the mythological episode remains intact, the characters and the plot are altered by minor deformations and additions. Faces and bodies of mythological characters are transformed into historical characters through written and pictorial deformation and addition, bear the condensed mark of contemporary political discourse. For instance, the faces and body language of the Pāṇḍava brothers, lord Kr̥ṣna and Duryodhana are altered and re-presented as five nationalist leaders, Gandhi and the British rule, and the towering figure of a woman as Mother India is added. All of these characters, and Draupadī, are then denoted with written words for what they politically symbolize. The caption underneath the visual facilitates the transformation of the mythological dialogue amongst the represented characters into a historical one:

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[50] This episode from the epic *Mahābhārata* is still very much popular in India. In the wake of its production as tele-serial, this has been studied by Purnima Mankekar, "Television Tales and Woman's Rage: A Nationalist Recasting of Draupadi's "Disrobing"", *Public Culture*, 5 (1993): 469-492.

[51] Such cartoons were also printed in the periodicals. For instance, see, 'Surasā saimandalī – bahiṣkārī bajˈraṅgˈbalī' (Monster Simon commission - Lord Hanuman the boycotter) *Hindū Pañc*, 29 March 1928.

> Bhīm – Do not stop me. I shall definitely avenge with the club of violence.
> Yudhiṣṭhira – Stop! Stop! Is this of any use? Look at lord Krishna!
> Lord Kr̥ṣna – Let peace prevail! I have protected [Indian wealth] with the spinning wheel.
> Mother India – God bless you my son.[52]

The flamboyant Khilafat leader Maulana Saukat Ali, already identified with the short-temperd Pāṇḍava Bhīm with a mace, is advocating violence against the looter of Indian wealth. A senior nationalist leader Lajpat Rai is identified with Yudhiṣṭhira and is persuading him to follow Gandhi, who is protecting Draupadī through non-violence and the use of the *swadeshi* economic alternative. This spectacular episode of the Mahabharata, which exposes the evil designs of Duryodhana, and recounts the dastardly act of stripping Draupadī of her dignity, then, symbolizes the robbing of India's wealth by the colonial power which, in turn, is countered and resisted by the Gandhian economic-educational alternative.

Apart from the independent cartoon prints invoking mythology, many cartoons building upon long established conventions of humour appeared in the periodicals first and later were reprinted with some minor tweaking. A large number of cartoons published during this period invoked proverbial themes, like the henpecked husband and the dominating wife, the donkey-pretending to be an artist-singer, etc.[53]

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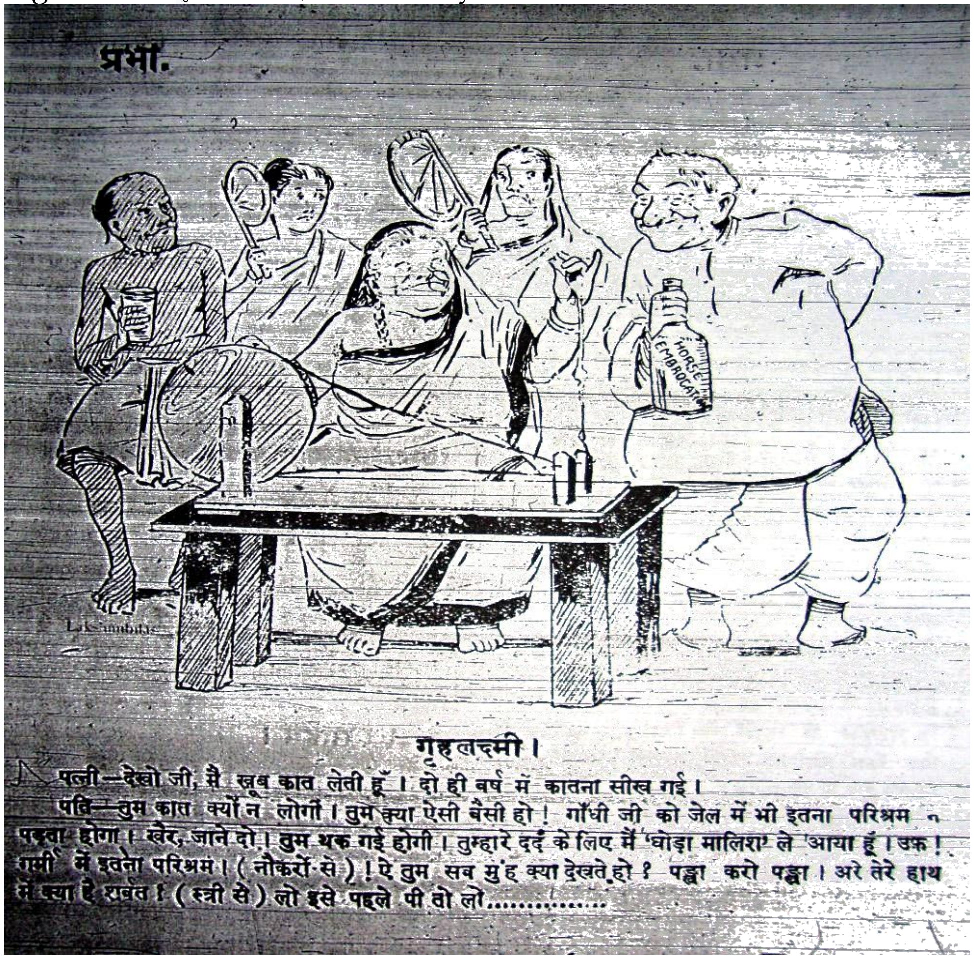
[52] IB Serial no. 33/1921, File no. 243/1921, *West Bengal State Archive*, Calcutta.

Figure 15: *Gr̥halakśmī*, *Prabhā*, May 1923[54]


प्रभा.
HORSE EMBROCATION
गृहलक्ष्मी ।
पत्नी—देखो जी, मैं खूब कात लेती हूँ । दो ही वर्ष में कातना सीख गई ।
पति—तुम कात क्यों न लोगी । तुम क्या ऐसी वैसी हो ! गाँधी जी को जेल में भी इतना परिश्रम न पड़ता होगा । खैर, जाने दो । तुम थक गई होगी । तुम्हारे दर्द के लिए मैं 'घोड़ा मालिश' ले आया हूँ । उफ़ ! गर्मी में इतना परिश्रम । (नौकरों से) ! ऐ तुम सब मुंह क्या देखते हो ? पङ्खा करो पङ्खा । अरे तेरे हाथ में क्या है शर्बत ! (स्त्री से) लो इसे पहले पी तो लो……………

Wife – Look, I spin so well, I learnt spinning in merely two years.
Husband – Why won't you spin, are you just anybody! Even Gandhiji would not have worked so hard in jail. Anyway, leave it. You must be tired. For your pain I have brought 'horse embrocation'. Ah! Working so

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[53] See Lee Siegel, *Laughing Matters: Comic Tradition in India* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987).

[54] Also reprinted in *Vyaṃgya-citrāvalī* (1927). It is unusual to find cartoon like this satirising Mahatma Gandhi or his programme, but they are not absent. Also see 'Ahiṃsāvād' (Ideology of Non-violence), *Mādhurī*, June 1928, 'Duvidhā me doū gaye māyā milī na rām' (Problem of indecisiveness causes absolute loss), *Cā̃d*, August 1931, 'Gāndhī kā mārg' (Gandhian highway), *Sarasvatī*, June 1935.

> much in this heat! (To servants) What are you all looking at? Fan her. And what is in your hand, sherbet? (To wife) Please drink this first.

A cartoon entitled *Gr̥halakśmī*[55] is a good example of this. The visual shows a young fat woman wearing precious ornaments spinning cotton on the spinning wheel, which is fixed to a table. She is showing a string of cotton to her husband with a smile. Her husband is standing beside her and looks on with a smile on his face carrying a bottle labelled 'horse embrocation' in his hand. Servants are standing behind the woman, carrying hand-held fans and drinks. The comment below is the conversation between the couple, showing that the wife is ridiculously happy about learning spinning after two long years of trying; the husband pampers her with the somewhat sarcastic remark that 'you are working harder than Mahatma Gandhi'. Amidst the social reconstruction programme initiated by Gandhi and his fellow Congressmen, the act of spinning was linked with self-imposed austerity and seen as a direct contribution to the cause of the Indian quest for an alternative national economy. Spinning also provided a new sense of economic self-reliance and political significance to women within the household.[56] In such a context one interpretation of this cartoon could be that it makes a conservative and gendered mockery of the inflated accolade received by rich household women, who take up spinning as a leisurely activity at the cost of their everyday household duties and are, in return, pampered by their meek husbands. As if spinning few strings of cotton is tantamount to working as hard as a horse, one required the massage (horse embrocation) to end work fatigue! In addition, the cartoon can also be read as an implicit criticism of the practice of Gandhian emphasis on self-austerity within middle class households, whereby the purpose of spinning cotton – originally intended to promote austerity – is defeated. Spinning is shown as a rather self-indulgent activity. It is far from being a measure of austerity and self-reliance; on the contrary, it is shown that the act involves an army of servants and attendants. Standing to serve in the background, the servants also seem to be an index of ordinary subaltern citizens, looking surprised (and probably appalled) at the duplicity and conceit of their rich Indian/Hindu masters pretending commitment to the nationalist cause.

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[55] When it was republished in the *Caricature Album*, an English title *Tender She and Solicitous He* was added.

[56] Madhu Kishvar, "Gandhi on Women", *Economic and political Weekly*, 20, 40 (October 5, 1985): 1691-1702.

Likewise, *Kavi-sammelan* (Assembly of poets) makes mockery of old-style poetry and poets by drawing its template from the established convention of humour from fables: the donkey as a fool with a poor artistic sense.

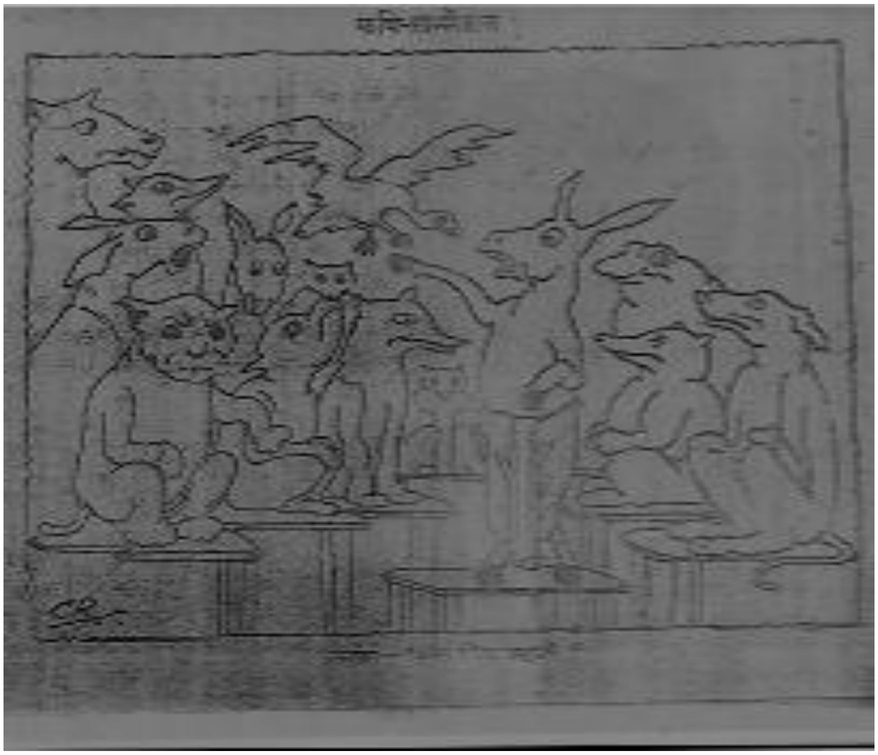

Figure 16: *Kavi-sammelan*, *Matˈvālā*, 9 February 1924

As can be clearly seen, the image shows a donkey-headed man standing and shouting in the middle, while other animal-headed men are listening to him with great attention. The comment beneath is titled as *samasyā* (problem), which refers to old style brajbhasha poetry composition competition *samasyā-pūrti* (problem solving), where the first line of the couplet is given in advance as problem. Poets have to compose the second one to complete the couplet. In the cartoon the given first line is both nonsensical and illegible. The visual and the commentary together, thus, make a mockery of old-style brajbhasha poetry which, according to its logic, makes no sense in the contemporary world marked by a new poetic sensibility.

'Then and Now', 'We and They', 'Before and After'

Another common category was of a cartoon printed in two plates, emphasising contrast: between the past and the present as 'now' and 'then', the west and the east, as 'we' and 'they', and a doublespeak or contradiction of any immediate political event or ideology in the template of 'before and after'. For example, *Kauncil Sāgar* refers to the contradiction of a political ideology. This is just one of the many cartoons of the time which targeted the group of nationalists who advocated the path of constitutionalist agitation by participating within colonial legislative institutions in the wake of the Government of India Act of 1919, which was designed to introduce limited representation of Indians in the legislative assembly.[57] *Kauncil Sagar* shows Motilal Nehru's[58] naive ideology, which sought to attain meaningful political success on behalf of the Indian people within the colonial institutional framework, and his repentance afterward.

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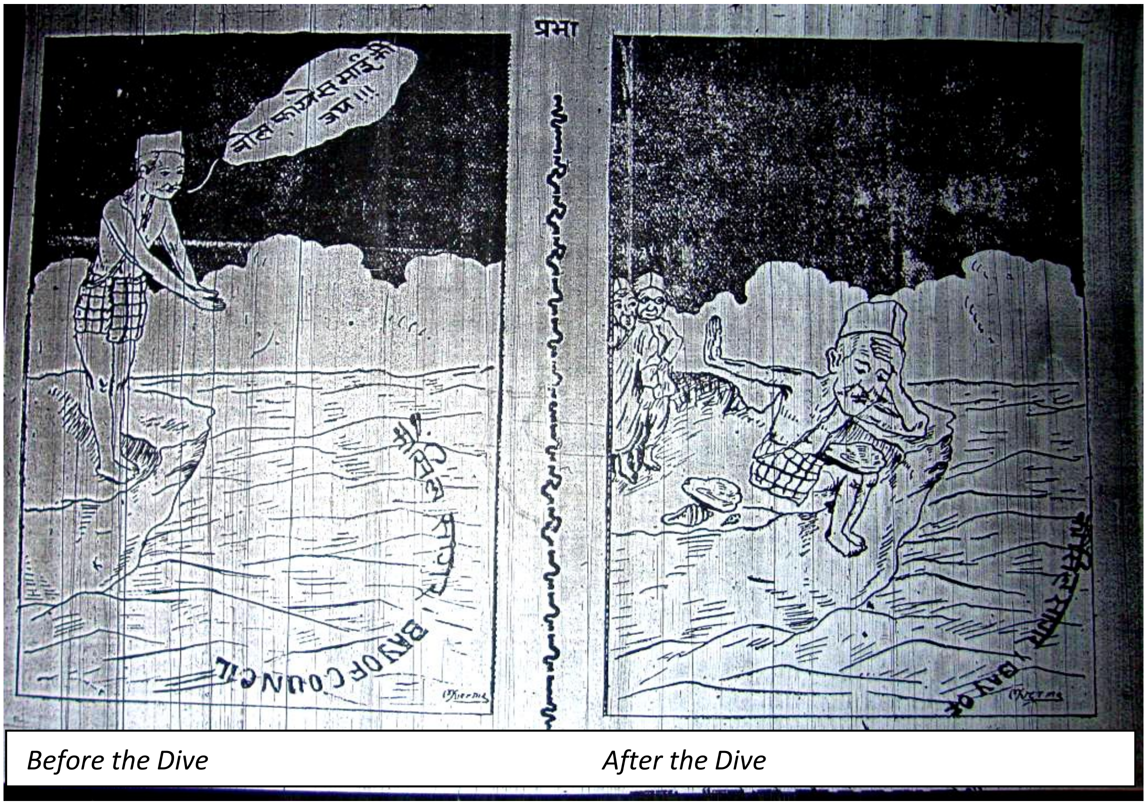
[57] Also see, 'Kauṃsil Madirā' *Prabhā*, April 1924, 'Naukarˈśāhī aur svarājī kauṃsilar' (Government and the swarajist councillor) *Prabhā*, May 1924, 'Kāuṃsil kā bhaviṣya' (Council's future), *Matˈvālā*, October 20, 1923, 'Vṛithā marahu jan gāl bajāī' (Crying for death is useless), *Matˈvālā*, November 24, 1923, 'Vah mārā' (That's the kick), *Matˈvālā*, December 1, 1923, 'Adbhut unnati' (Strange Progress), *Matˈvālā*, January 5, 1924, 'Kāuṃsil kā ātaṃk' (Terror of Council), *Matˈvālā*, January 26, 1924, 'Kāunsil krujer' (Council-cruiser), *Matˈvālā*, February 21, 1925. Similarly, in the wake of Simon Commision *Hindū Pañc* published 'Kutil-aśvārohī' (Cunning-horseman), 'Kamīśan kā madārī' (Commission's Juggler), 'Vah māra' (That's the kick) in its Special Issue on Congress, December 1927.

[58] Motilal Nehru was the senior Congress leader who argued that Indians should participate in colonial political institution to expose its limits.



Before the Dive *After the Dive*

Figure 17: *Kauncil Sāgar*, *Prabhā*, April 1924.[59]

In the first block of the visual he is shown as diving enthusiastically into a body of water, which is denoted as the ocean of the legislative council. The caption underneath refers to a proverb, which notes that the ocean is full of precious gems and has an endless possibility of exploration. In the second block he is shown as repenting the results of his diving expedition into the ocean of the Council, while two Congressmen are curiously looking at his findings. The caption below the visual explains that instead of valuables he could end up getting futile objects, which could be found in any small pond. The contrast of the two blocks highlights the futility of an ideology trapped within the logic of the colonial state, which accepts the government’s offer to collaborate in limited democratic reforms of colonial political institutions.

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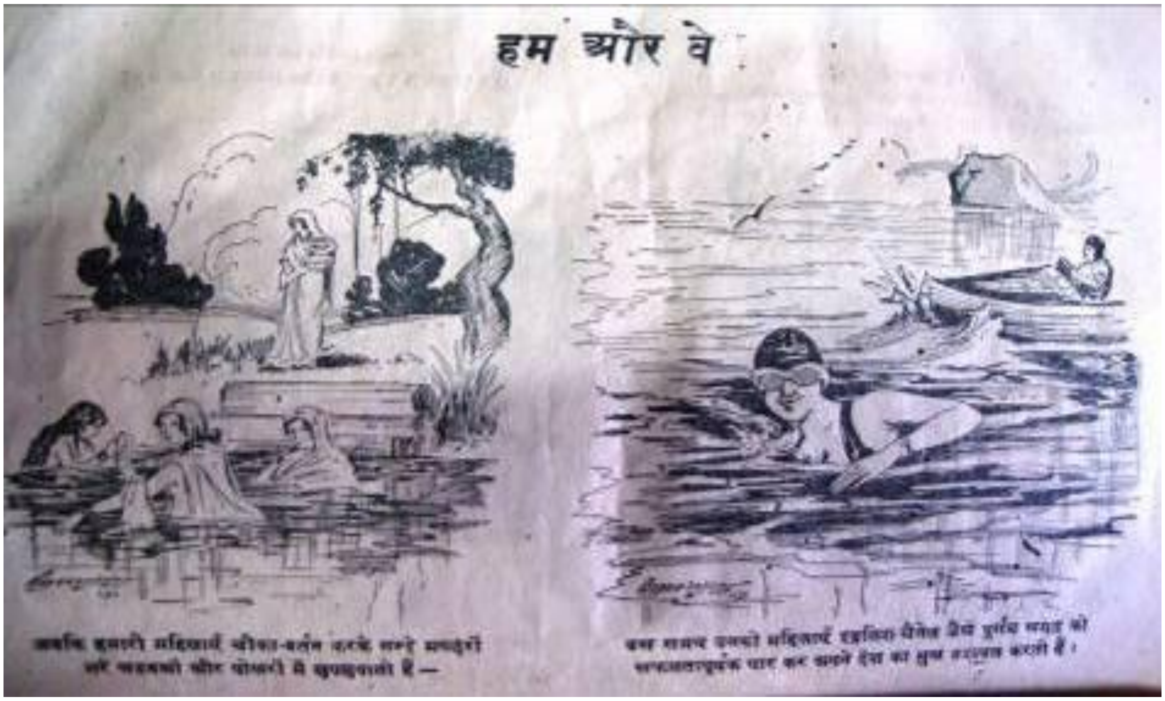
[59] Also reproduced in *Vyaṃgya-citrāvalī* (1927).

Similarly a much repeated format was of emphasising a temporal-cultural contrast: between India’s ‘glorious’ past and the decadent present[60] and the progressive west and the regressive east.[61] Issues of *Cā̃d* regularly published illustrations of this kind, which were sometimes printed in two plates in order to further invoke the contrast between India and the west as *Ham aur ve* (We and They), or between the past and present of Indian culture as *Tab aur ab* (Then and Now).

Figure 18: *Ham aur ve*'' *Cā̃d*, March 1932.



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[60] *Cā̃d* published a number of such cartoons. For example see ‘Devar aur bhāvaj – Tab aur ab’ (Brother and sister-in-laws – Then and now), *Cā̃d*, April 1929, ‘Var-vadhū nirvācan rīti – Tab aur ab’ (Custom of bride and groom selection – Then and Now), *Cā̃d*,March 1930.

[61] The same issue of *Cā̃d* contained 5 themes titled ‘Ham aur ve’. Sometimes such cartoons were also titled as ‘Yahāṃ aur vahāṃ’ (Here and there). See for instance *Cā̃d*, May 1925. Also see ‘Purvī aur paśchimī nārī jīvan’ (Eastern and western woman’s lives) ‘Yahāṃ aur vahāṃ ke sabhya yātrī’ (Civilised travellers of here and there), ‘Patnī-pūjā’ (Respect for wife), ‘Ghar kī naukarānī’ (female domestic), ‘Baccoṃ kī dekhrekh’ (Child care) *Cā̃d*, March 1930.

In Figure 18 the first plate depicts sari-clad women bathing in a water stream. The caption underneath elaborates: "*our* women dive into dirty ponds full of mosquitoes". The visual and the caption together communicate the unhygienic conditions of bathing facilities available to Indian women when they go to freshen themselves after the drudgery of household work. The second plate depicts a (western) woman swimming in swimsuits. The caption underneath notes: "*their* women brighten the face of their nation by successfully swimming across the English Channel." Thus, the second plate communicates the vigour and freedom of healthy western women who serve their nation better by setting world records in sports. Such cartoons, emphasising a *contrast* between the status of women in Indian and western societies, aimed to provide internal social criticism on a range of issues from health and cleanliness[62] to their participation in politics.

Similarly, Figure 19 below portrays the contrast between the 'glorious' Indian past - when young men used to be determinedly celibate and were unmoved by the temptations of women – with the degraded present which was marked by such sexual degeneration that even old men had become lustful.[63] In the first plate of *Then and Now*, a young man (resembling Mahavira in its iconography) is depicted as meditating in a forest despite a temptress dancing in front of him, with the caption underneath that reads: "Youth of old era". The second plate shows an old man teasing a lady in the backdrop of a modern city, the caption beneath reads: "Old of new era". A strategy of juxtaposition of opposites is used to highlight the *contrast* – golden past and degraded present of colonial modernity– in order to criticise male lasciviousness in public through a simplification and condensation of a strong nationalist discourse of the time, which sought to discipline both male and female sexuality.[64]

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[62] Apart from the periodicals like *Cā̃d*, in many other public forums Indian women's weak health was the general concern, which was tied up with the patriarchal mode of nationalist argumentation – weak women producing weak members of the nation. Madhuri Sharma, "Debating Women's Health: Reflections in Popular Hindi Print-Culture', *Indian Historical Review*, 35, 178 (2008): 178-190.

[63] On the significance of the discourse of celibacy in Indian nationalism see Joseph S. Alter, 'Celibacy, Sexuality, and the Transformation of Gender into Nationalism in North India' *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 53, 1 (1994): 45-66.

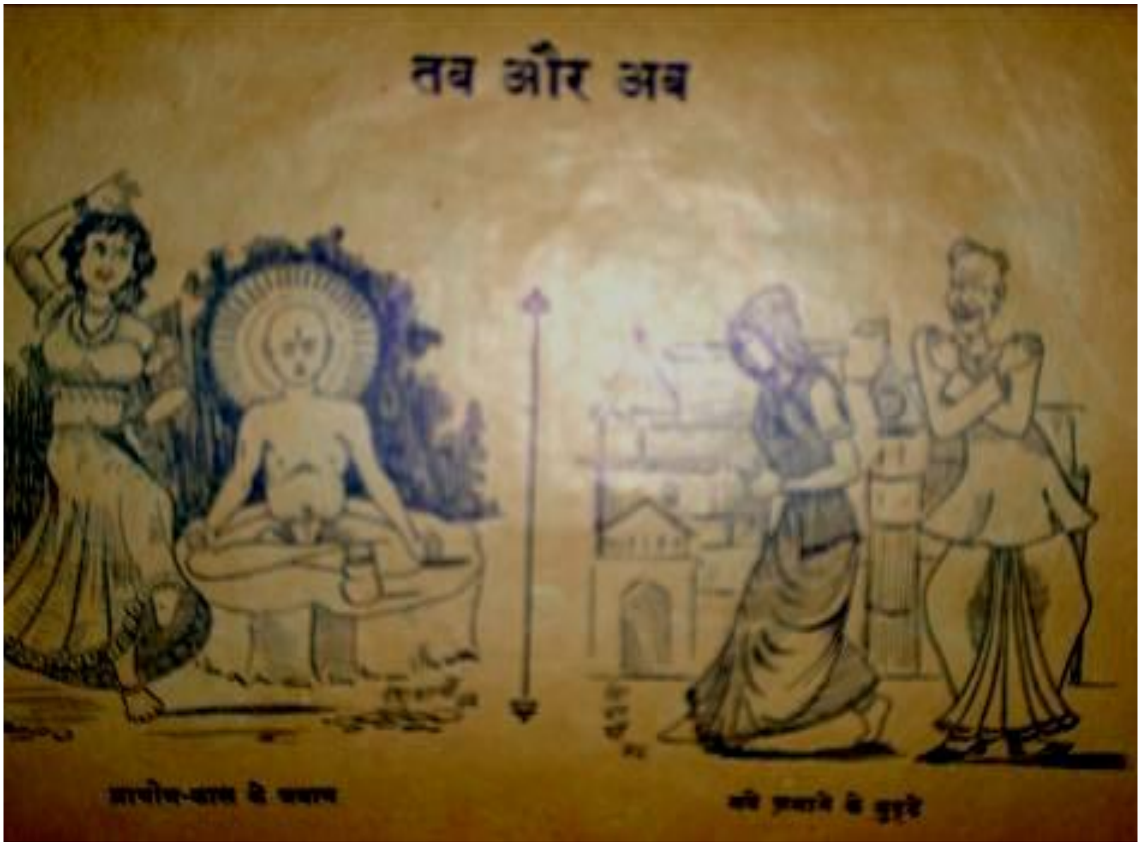

Figure 19: *Tab aur ab*, *Cā̃d*, May 1925.

Social types and stereotypes

The next category of cartoons were visuals, with a topical title without long text in the form of caption or commentary which also invoked traditional registers of social representation. A good example of this are cartoons on the question of 'untouchability'. In the wake of Gandhi's social reform programme, which accepted the classical *varṇa* schema of four-fold social division but condemned discrimination against the untouchables, the temple entry movement had been started with the intention of morally pressurising upper caste Hindus to allow the entry of untouchables into Hindu places of worship.[65] Militant Hindu nationalist organisations like the Hindu Mahasabha also supported such initiatives with the aim of bringing 'untouchables' into the fold of Hinduism, though after ritual purification.

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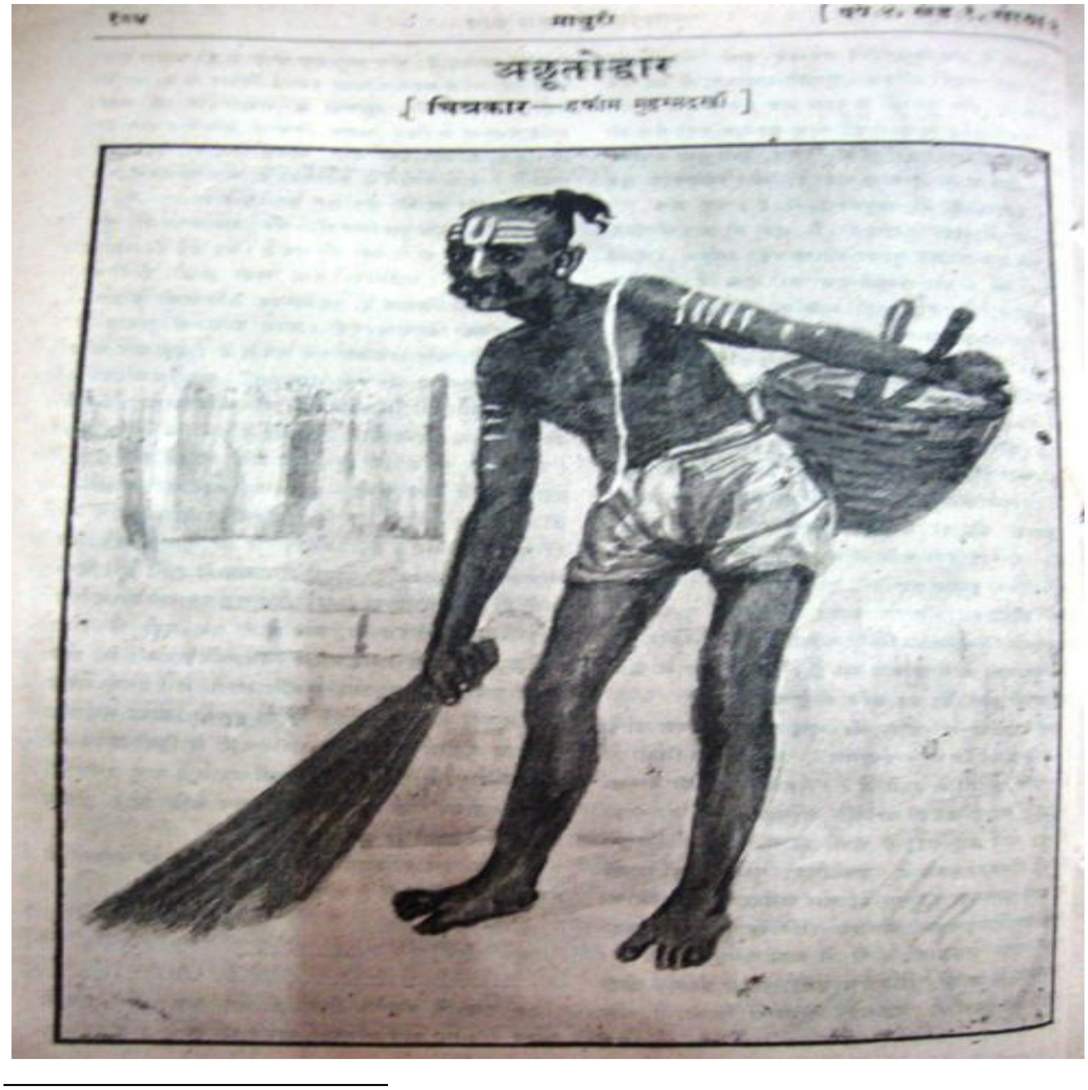
[64] Charu Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community: Women, Muslims and the Hindu Public in Colonial India* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001).

Figure 20: *Achūtoddhār*, *Mādhurī*, July, 1925



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[65] For a brilliant analysis of the paternalist Gandhian programme to remove untouchability see D. R. Nagraj, "Self-Purification v/s Self-Respect: On the Roots of the Dalit Movement" in *Flaming Feet and Others Essays: The Dalit Movement in India* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2010), 21-60.

In this political context a cartoon entitled *Achutoddhār* (Redemption of untouchable, Figure 20) appeared in *Mādhurī*. The visual showed an emaciated man with an anointed forehead, hair-lock and sacred thread, cleaning the street with a broom in his hand. What we see here is the displacement of conventional representation: a person who looks like a Brahmin, and not like a Shudra, does the sweeping. The visual can be read either as the Brahman doing the job of an untouchable scavenger (Gandhi did preach that the upper caste should do menial jobs), or as showing a scavenger doing the same old job even though he has been ritually turned into a Brahmin. Since, in the contemporary style of representation, a Brahmin is predominantly depicted as fat and pot-bellied (and also since there is little discussion in the periodicals that Brahmins took up the job of scavengers at Gandhi's call), the second reading may have been more obvious to the readers. That even if a scavenger is made a Brahmin through observing the rituals of caste Hindus, his material-social condition would remain unchanged, thereby mocking the futility of such an exercise. *Achūtoddhār*, thus, depicts the irony of such reform at the behest of upper caste Hindus, a reform that avoided the fundamental and structural problem underlying social issues.

Saṃgaṭhan (Organisation), the Hindu nationalist ideological agenda to reorganise Hindus by making the community socially cohesive from within the reified Brahmanic framework was also caricatured. (See Figure 21). This attempt emerged in the context of a very shrill Hindu nationalist discourse of an imagined threat to the Hindu community and the consequent need to reorganise it. Drawing upon the classical *chaturvarna* (fourfold varna system) imagery of the Hindu body politic, a human body with four legs and four arms is shown to be wrapped tightly by a long piece of cloth. The head of the body resembles that of the leading Hindu Mahasabha leader Madan Mohan Malaviya – a Brahmin. The four arms bear a book, a sword, a bundle of money and a broom, symbolising the social callings of Brahmin, Kśatriya, Vaiśya and Śudra respectively. Marks of social division within one Hindu body are also visible by the depiction of different footwear: one foot is adorned with a wooden slipper, the second with a royal shoe, the third with a simple shoe and the fourth without any, again symbolising Brahmins, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śudras respectively.

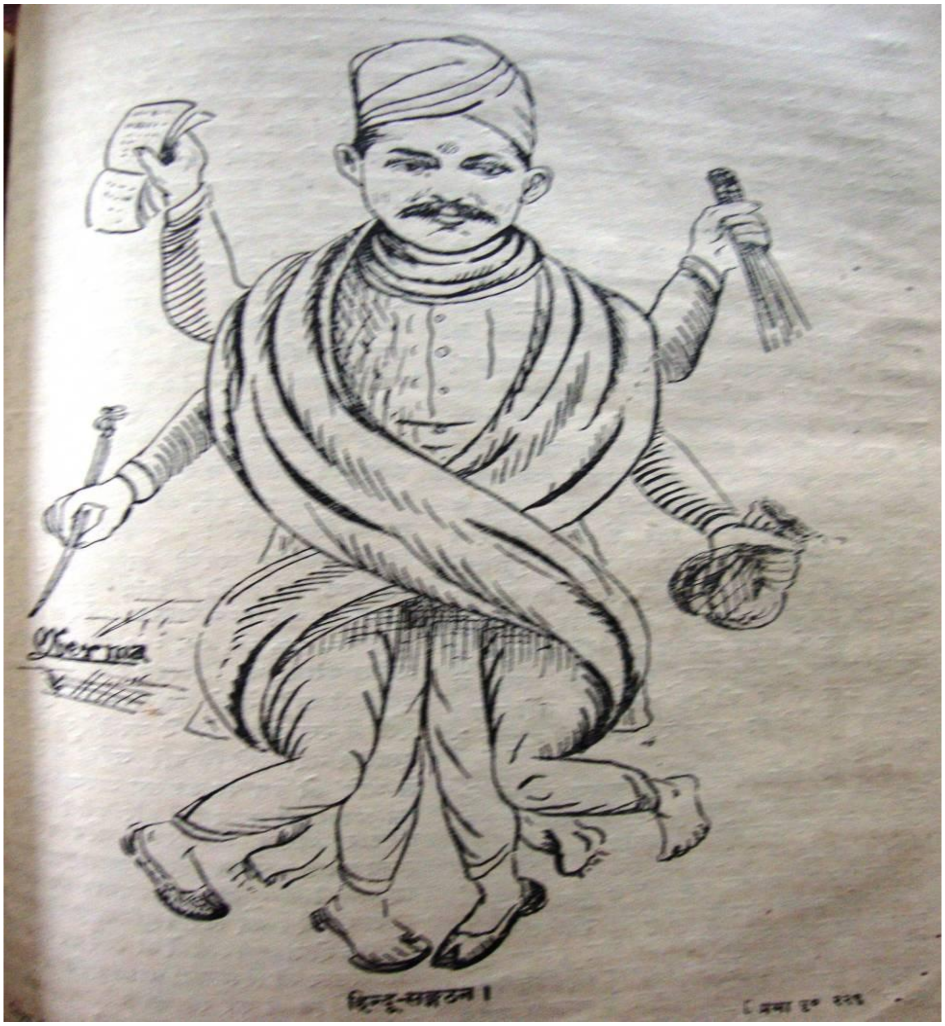

Figure 21: *Saṃgaṭhan*, *Prabhā*, September 1923[66]

The visualisation of *saṃgaṭhan* or organisation of the Hindu body politic is, thus, the grotesque epitomization of Hindu nationalism with its Brahmanic underpinnings. Such cartoons show intertextual linkages with already circulated

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[66] Republished with English subtitle 'Organisation' in *Vyaṃgya-citrāvalī* (1927)

‘regime of representation’[67] of Hindu society, which linked the social-sartorial connection between a social group and its illustration within representation. It was now rendered into visuals by the incorporation of a related topical issue around the question of untouchability and conservative political response to it, notifying them in a single-word title.

On a general level, it can be argued that cartoons built upon a topical subject matter by drawing upon the prevailing register of representation, which denoted social types by essentialisation of sartorial and physiognomic features. Brahmins as pot-bellied with anointed forehead and hair lock, Śudras as emaciated and servile or Muslims with a beard and an ‘Islamic’ cap and, alternatively, Hindu men wearing *dhotis,* Hindu women clad in saris, Muslim women in *burqa* and so forth. Cartoon for the sake of its communicability needs simplification, essentialisation and exaggeration. Since representations are always entangled with contemporary discursive formations, the communicative mechanism of simplification and essentialisation acquire a heightened dimension in representational practice of cartooning when it deals with the issues of community/national identity-politics, especially during potentially volatile political moments.

A majority of cartoons on the community question plays upon the practice of essentialisation and stereotyping a community. They, thereby, reaffirm communal stereotypes through representational practice. For example, in the late 1920s and early 30s, the Hindu nationalist discourse of social reform aimed at redefining the self of the community and consolidating its boundary vis-a-vis Muslims (also Christians). It put a premium on its women and untouchables, who were believed to be essential to the community’s strength.[68] The condition of

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[67] Stuart Hall, “The Work of Representation” in *Representation*, ed. Stuart Hall (London, Thousand Oaks, Delhi: Sage Publications, 1997)

[68] See Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community*; and William Gould, *Hindu Nationalism and Language of Politics in Late Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Hindu women and untouchables was acknowledged to be miserable because the traditional custodians of Hinduism were morally corrupt, exploitative and insensitive to them. This attitude of the traditional custodians was perceived to be the foremost cause of the disintegration of the community. It was argued that against such an attitude Hindu women and untouchables had no option but to move towards other religions whose leaders were ready to accept them as part of their vicious designs to weaken the Hindu community. Thus, a Hindu nationalist discourse of a dying Hindu race, neglected by the traditional custodians of the community and threatened by Muslim and Christians preying on "untouchable" castes and women, emerged at the centre of public debate. Cartoons like *Raṃge syār* (Coloured Jackal), *Padaskhalit hindū ramaṇī* (Fallen Hindu woman) and *Achūtoṃ ka futbāl* (Football of untouchable) were printed frequently. Using stereotypes and simplistic imageries borrowed from the dominant discourse, these cartoons depicted the vulnerability of Hindu women and untouchables to Muslims and Christian missionaries on the one hand and the tendency of the traditional custodians of the Hindu community to exploit and neglect them on the other. *Raṃge syār* (Figure 11 above) is one of the many cartoons which appeared on the widely debated issue of sexual promiscuity and debauchery of the traditional guardians of Hinduism, thus delegitimizing their authority.[69] The visual, we may recall, depicts the lascivious Hindu priest who, instead of meditating on god, is gazing at the beautiful woman devotee. The commentary beneath the visual is a verse by a famous medieval saint-poet Kabir who is known for his anti-Brahmanic teachings. It makes a quip about the pretentiousness of the priest who poses as a spiritual being but is smitten by worldly pleasures: "Rosary moves in the palm; tongue moves in the mouth. Heart moves in all directions; this is not meditation." The title of the cartoon provides a condensed reference to a famous fable which sums up the traditional custodian of Hinduism as a wolf in sheepskin.

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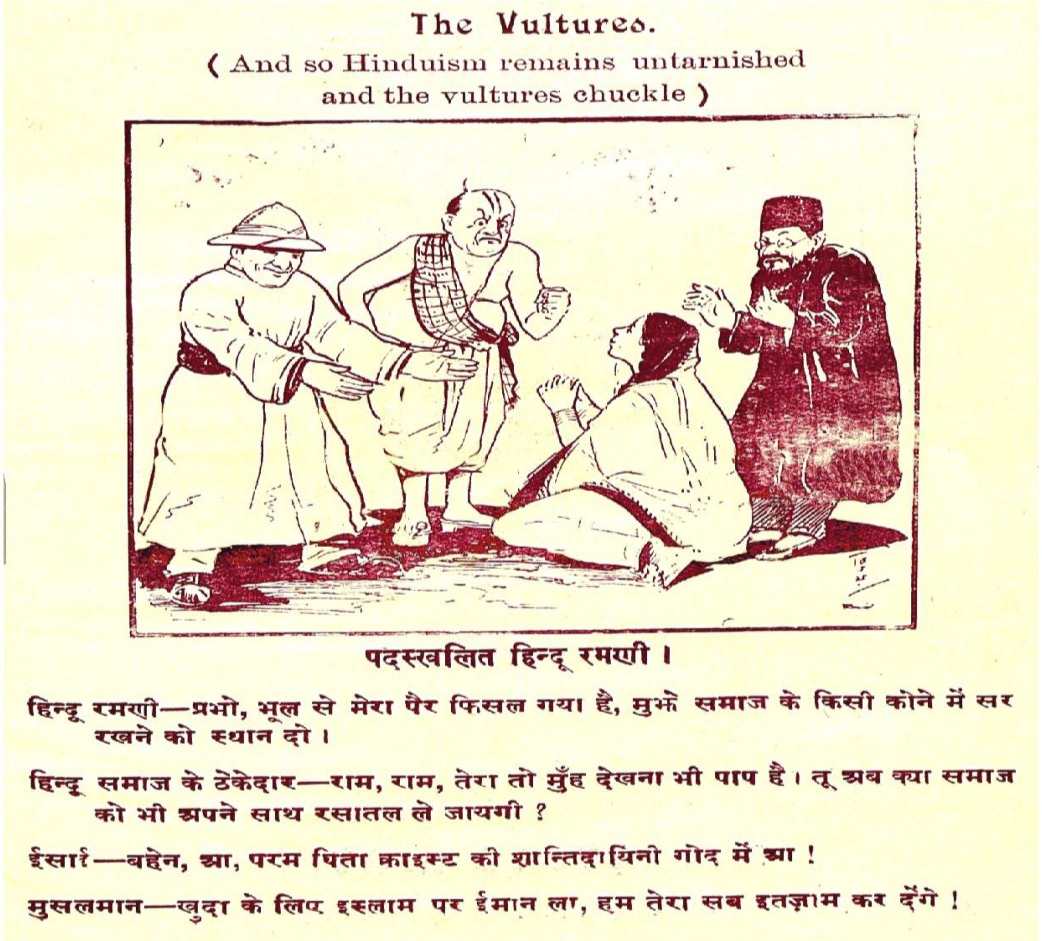
[69] Similar cartoons can be found in other periodicals. See, 'Mahant-māyā' (Power of the priest), *Matˡvālā*, July 26, 1924, 'Bābājī kā 'uṣā'-kālīn-'vidyā'-vyasang yog ' (Priest meditating for his affection to knowledge at the dawn), *Matˡvālā*, March 7, 1925, 'Duraṃgī-duniā' (World of two colours), *Hindū Pañc*, April 24, 1928, 'Guruji Pranām' *Mādhurī*, November 1924, 'Mahant-līlā' (Play of priest), *Gaṃgā*, November 1930, 'Ājkal kā yogābhyās' (Contemporary yoga-practice), *Cā̃d*, September1925, 'Dhārmik vyabhicār' and 'Om namah śivāy' (Prayer to Lord Shiva), *Cā̃d*, October 1925,

Figure 22: *Padaskhalit hindū ramaṇī*[70]


The Vultures.
(And so Hinduism remains untarnished and the vultures chuckle)
पदस्खलित हिन्दू रमणी ।
हिन्दू रमणी—प्रभो, भूल से मेरा पैर फिसल गया है, मुझे समाज के किसी कोने में सर रखने को स्थान दो ।
हिन्दू समाज के ठेकेदार—राम, राम, तेरा तो मुँह देखना भी पाप है । तू अब क्या समाज को भी अपने साथ रसातल ले जायगी ?
ईसाई—बहेन, आ, परम पिता क्राइस्ट की शान्तिदायिनी गोद में आ !
मुसलमान—खुदा के लिए इसलाम पर ईमान ला, हम तेरा सब इतज़ाम कर देंगे !

Hindu woman – Lord! Mistakenly I have fallen to disgrace, grant me even a marginal space in the society.
Custodian of Hindu society – Fie, Fie! It's a sin to look at your face. Do you want to debunk the entire society along with you?

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[70] *Vyaṃgya-citrāvalī* (1927). Also see, 'Hamāre dharm ke svarūp' (Face of our religion), *Cā̃d*, December 1935,

> Christian – Sister, come, come into the peaceful fold of almighty father Jesus!
> Muslim – In the name of God come into the fold of Islam, we shall arrange everything for you.

In continuum with *Raṃge syār* are cartoons like *Padaskhalit hindū ramaṇī* (Fallen Hindu Woman). They were part of the same discourse and were published at the same historical time. The delegitimization of the traditional leader of Hinduism is entangled not only with their callousness on the pressing issues of social reform but with the fact that their callous attitude is instrumental in creating conditions which threaten the cohesiveness of the Hindu community. *Padaskhalit hindū ramaṇī* (Figure 22) depicts the 'fallen' Hindu widow – who became a widow not being allowed to remarry took recourse to 'improper' ways to satisfy her sexual needs, praying before the leader of her community to condone her sins but to no avail.[71] On the other hand, a Christian and a Muslim religious leader are shown as waiting to convert her into their fold. While the visual shows a Hindu woman beseeching a Hindu priest, the latter looks at her with hatred. A Muslim and a Christian priest are looking at her with open arms. The comment below is a dialogue between them: While the comment simplistically elaborates the discourse of a 'dying Hindu race' the English subtitle spells out the silently laughing vultures ready to devour the dead.

Within the same frame of Hindu nationalism *Achūtoṃ ka fuṭʼbāl* also highlights, by simplification, the grotesqueness of untouchability. The cartoon shows a Hindu priest kicking a football with his front leg, while his Muslim and Christian counterparts are catching the ball with both hands. The comment underneath reads: "The Pandit is kicking him away by issuing a decree to excommunicate the untouchable; the Maulavi and Bishop are catching the ball representing the untouchable."

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[71] This was a standard argument, which acknowledged the legitimate sexual desire and put the onus on the custom preventing widow-remarriage, which forces a common widow to take recourse to illegitimate ways to gratify their needs.

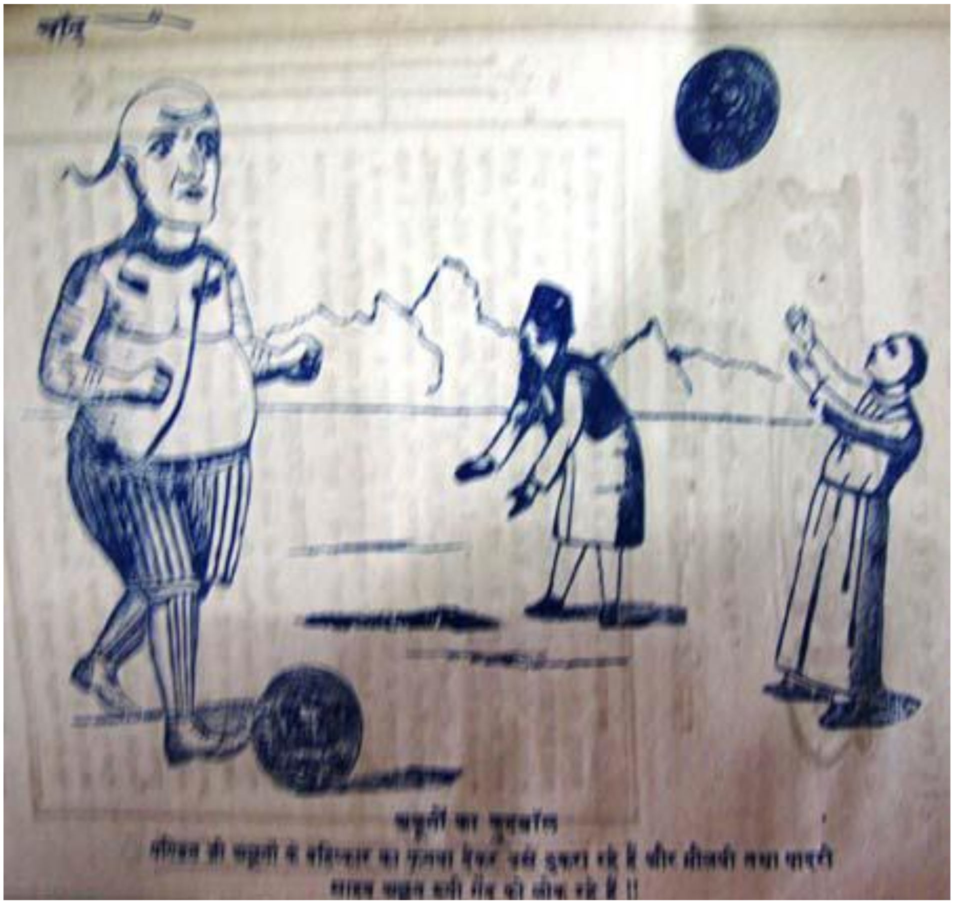

Figure 23: *Achūtoṃ ka fuṭˡbāl* [72], *Cā̃d*, April, 1928

The social group of untouchables are represented as despicable objects for the traditional custodians of the Hindu social order which, according to the logic of Hindu nationalist discourse, is the primary reason behind their elopement with Muslim and Christian missionaries and the consequent weakening of the Hindu community. Thus simplification and condensation of the dominant Hindu nationalist discourse can be seen as the main focus of such cartoons. We also notice that the stereotypical imagery of religious leaders – the Brahmin as fat pot-bellied man with a sacred thread, anointed forehead and hair lock, the Maulavi as a slim crooked-faced man with a long beard, a Turkish cap and a long overcoat, the Bishop in his traditional service dress with a rosary in his hands – bear their overt markers.

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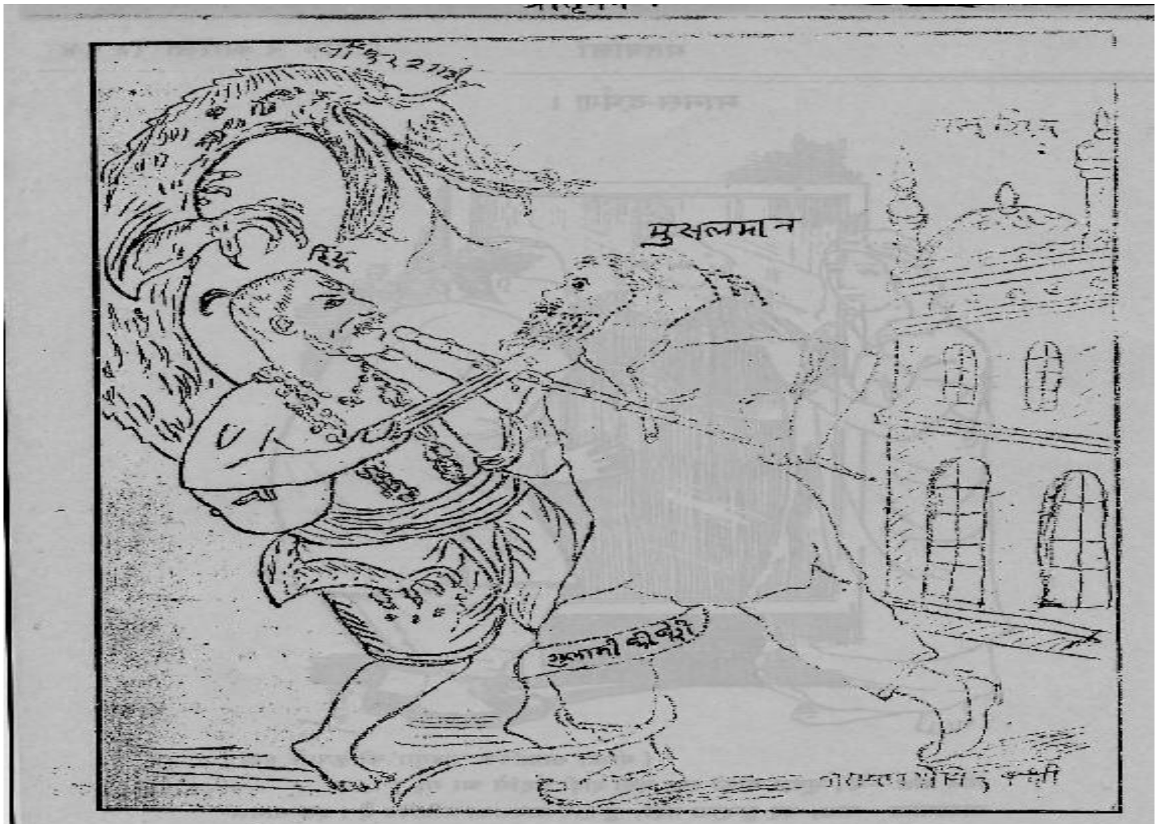
[72] Similar cartoons can be found in abundance. *Cā̃d* published a series of 12 cartoons in its special issue on untouchability, *Cā̃d*, May 1927. Also see 'Hindū samāj kī vartamān avasthā' (Present status of Hindu community) *Matˡvālā*, October 25, 1924, 'Pad-vicched' (Cutting of feet), *Matˡvālā*, March 3, 1925, 'Achutoddhār', (Redemption of untouchable), *Cā̃d* , February 1930.

Stereotypical imagery, which reinforced the communal stereotypes, was one of the chief characteristics of cartoons pertaining to the question of Hindu-Muslim relationship. Most of the periodicals of the time, in accordance with the general political outlook, were laden with such cartoons.

Figure 24: *Bhrātṛprem* (Brotherhood)



हिन्दू—(तंबूरा बजाकर) भजु मन रामचरण दिनराती !
मुसलमान—अबे-ओ उल्लू ! इबादतमें खलल डालता है !
नौकरशाही—जब कि दो पूजियोंमें हो खटपट, अपने मतलबकी डौल कर झटपट !

For instance, see Figure 24, the cartoon entitled *Bhrātṛprem*[73] ('Brotherhood'), which we have also mentioned in the last chapter and is being reproduced for the purpose of discussion. It shows the real beneficiary of the mutual antagonism between Hindus and Muslims was the colonial government. The colonial bureaucracy is symbolised as a laughing dragon, which has put both Hindu and Muslim in chains. Yet Hindus and Muslims were busy fighting with each other. This seemingly secular nationalist narrative, which aimed at pointing out the irony of fraternal fighting that ultimately served the interest of colonial government, relied on the communalised regime of representation. Image shows an 'aggressive' Muslim attacking a Hindu monk, while the Hindu monk is depicted as a serene and peace-loving man, singing a devotional song near a mosque.[74] In other words, the so-called fraternal fight was ironically uneven. If at all the two are brothers, they are of radically different behavioural dispositions: Hindu one is pacifist, the Muslim is his opposite.

Even those cartoons that most directly propagated the secular nationalist cause and appealed for Hindu-Muslim unity against the British or, alternatively, depicted the problems underlying such unity in the long term, paradoxically use and reinforce such stereotypes. For instance, Figure 25 *Hindu muslim aikya* (Hindu-Muslim unity) depicts a Hindu and a Muslim youth shaking hands. They are marked by their stereotypical community headgear and dresses of warrior prince, while in the background a temple and mosque stand side by side.

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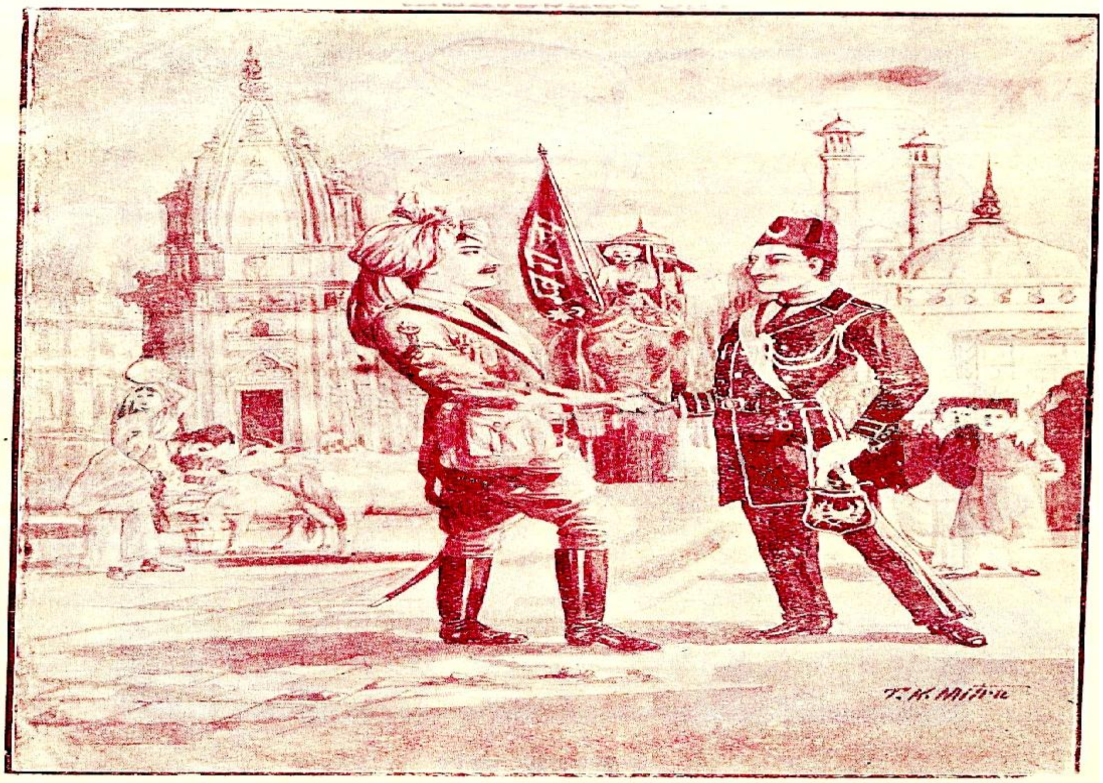
[73] *Matˡvālā*, August 9, 1924.

[74] Communal violence in the public arena of South Asia over the often repeated issues of music in front of the mosque and the role of colonial state in this communal discourse has been studied by Sandria Freitag and Gyan Pandey. Sandria Freitag, *Collective Action and Community: Public Arenas and the Emergence of Communalism in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992). *Matˡvālā* along with two other Hindi periodicals published from Calcutta, *Hindū Pañc* and *Viśvāmitra* were classified as fiercely communal by the colonial government from 1926 onwards. They were drawing from the Hindu nationalist discourse of the 'dying Hindu race', which was widespread especially in Calcutta. See Pradeep K. Datta, *Carving Blocs*.

Figure 25: *Hindū -muslim aikya or The Two Meet*[75]

The two meet.



हिन्दू-मुसलिम ऐक्य ।

मन्दिर में है चाँद चमकता मस्जिद में मुर्ली की तान,
मक्का हो चाहे वृन्दावन होते आपस में क़ुर्बान ॥
× × × × ×
हिन्दू मुस्लिम ऐक्य बनाया, स्वागत उन उपहारों का,
मर मिटने के दिवस रूप धर आवेंगे त्योहारों का ॥
× × × × ×
मुहम्मद पर सब कुछ क़ुर्बान, मौत के हों तो हों महमान,
कृष्णकी सुन मुरलीकी तान, चलो हों सब मिलकर बलिदान ॥

In front of the temple, a Muslim man wearing Turkish fez is feeding a cow and a Hindu woman carrying water vessel on her head looks on; in front of the mosque, a Hindu is embracing a Muslim man. On the road dividing the temple the mosque is standing a royally decorated elephant. None other than Mahatma Gandhi like figure is seated on the elephant bearing the flag of *svarājya* (self-rule).

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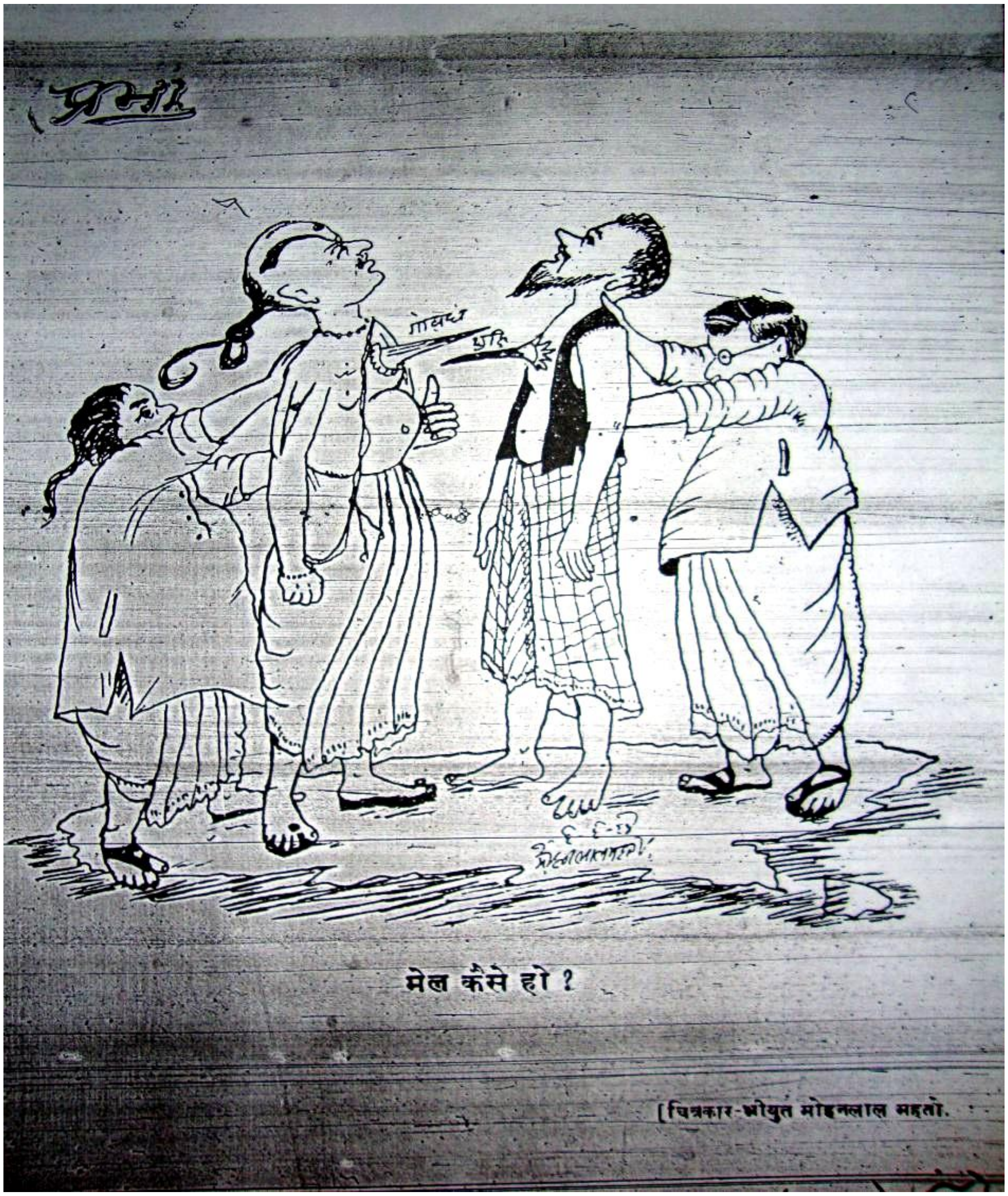
[75] This was first published in *Prabhā* September 1924, its English subtitle 'The two meet' was added in *Vyaṃgya-citrāvalī* (1927).

And yet the caption below, oblivious of its stereotyping, celebrates the advantage of this unity in the cause of national salvation.

Figure 26: *Mel kaise ho?*, *Prabhā* September 1924[76]



मेल कैसे हो ?

[चित्रकार-श्रीयुत मोहनलाल महतो.

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[76] Reprinted with English subtitle 'The Rankling' in *Vyaṃgya-citrāvalī* (1927). Also see 'Śuddhi aur tablīgh' in *Prabhā* December 1924. Similar cartoons can be found in other periodicals. See 'Bhrātṛiprem' (Brotherhood) *Mat^lvālā*, August 9, 1924, 'Hindū-muslim aikya' (Hindu-Muslim Unity), October 18, 1924, 'Svarajya-darśan' (Spectacle of self-rule), *Mat^lvālā*, December 29, 1923, 'Hindū-muslim ektā' (Hindu-Muslim unity), *Mat^lvālā*, March 3, 1924, and 'Milāp' (Meeting), *Mādhurī*, January 1925. Also see almost similar but untitled in *Cā̃d*, March 1932.

Alternatively, *Mel kaise ho?* (How is union possible?) also underlines the problems of unity in the contemporary scenario. It portrays a Hindu and a Muslim –again with their stereotypical community markers of their dress and facial features– standing on the map of India. They are reluctant to come together despite being pushed by two Indians who appear to be (Hindu) Congressmen. The reluctance stems from the mutually-inflicted wounds: A Hindu is stabbed in his heart by the dagger of *govadh* (cow-slaughter) and Muslim by the knife of Ś*uddhi*, the drive for purification and conversion of Muslims as Hindus, targeted at the supposed converts to Islam in order to bring them back into the fold of Hinduism. Again, what is noticeable in these pictures is the illustration through stereotypical images of the communities. Hindu and Muslim warriors of nationalism are represented by the dresses of the traditional ruling class in the first cartoon. In the second a Brahman priest with his hair lock and dhoti stands in for the Hindu community and a bearded man in his waistcoat and striped trousers represents the Muslim community. The representation of Muslims in the cartoons as the 'other' of the Hindu community is more glaring in reinforcing the communal stereotypes in the cases such as these usually represented as aggressive, untrustworthy, hypersexual hooligan.

Figure 27 (*True face of Vr̥kodar*) used an imagery in which a Muslim leader is depicted as the proverbial *āstīn kā sā̃p* (a serpent nursed in the bosom), hence dangerous and untrustworthy. Vr̥kodar (the voracious eater) was another name of the fiercest Pāṇḍava brother Bhīma. The cartoon, in this specific case, targeted Maulana Shaukat Ali, who was hailed as Bhīma in the anti-colonial cartoon *Cir-haraṇ* less than five years ago.

Figure 27: *Vr̥kodar kā aslī rūp*, *Matᴵvālā*, March 15, 1926

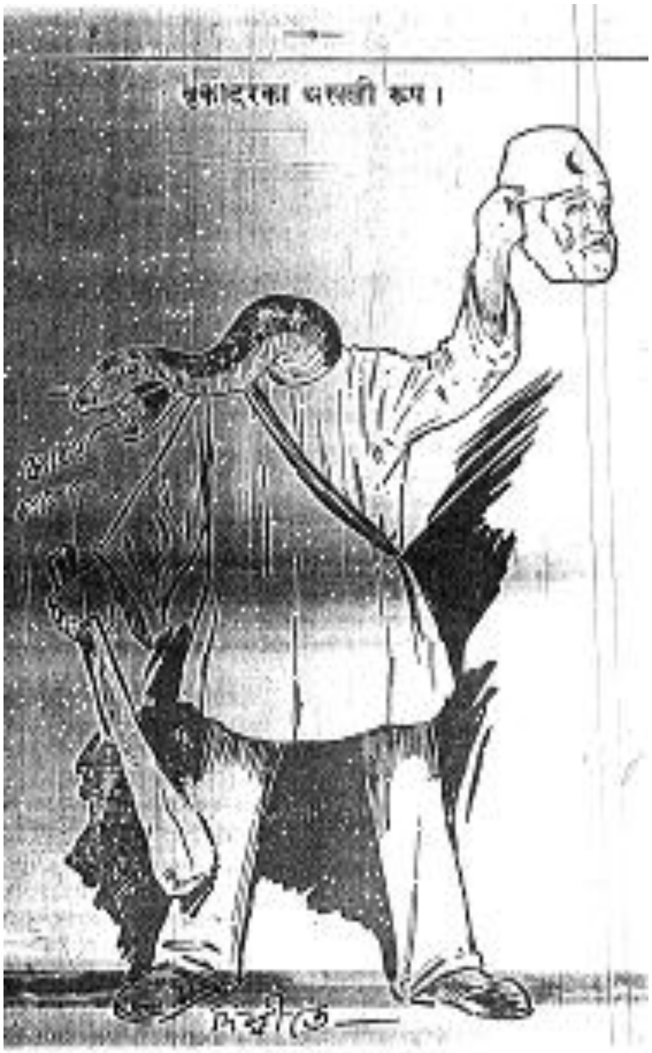
वृकोदरका असली रूप ।

Figure 28 (*Treatment of goondaism*) represented a sexually lascivious goon who **wa**s being beaten up by a united group of (molested) Hindu women.[77] In the 1920s and 30s, thus, Hindi cartooning played upon and reinforced such stereotypes and contributed to the construction of what one may call a communalised regime of representation.

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[77] The construction of the stereotype of Muslim as molester, kidnapper and rapist in the Hindu communalist discourse is clearly visible in the Hindi weeklies and monthlies of the 1930s. For instance, *Hindū Pañc* published a special column *Nāṛī niryātan* (Women's kidnapping), which published the 'news' about molestation, kidnapping and forced marriage of Hindu women by Muslim men.

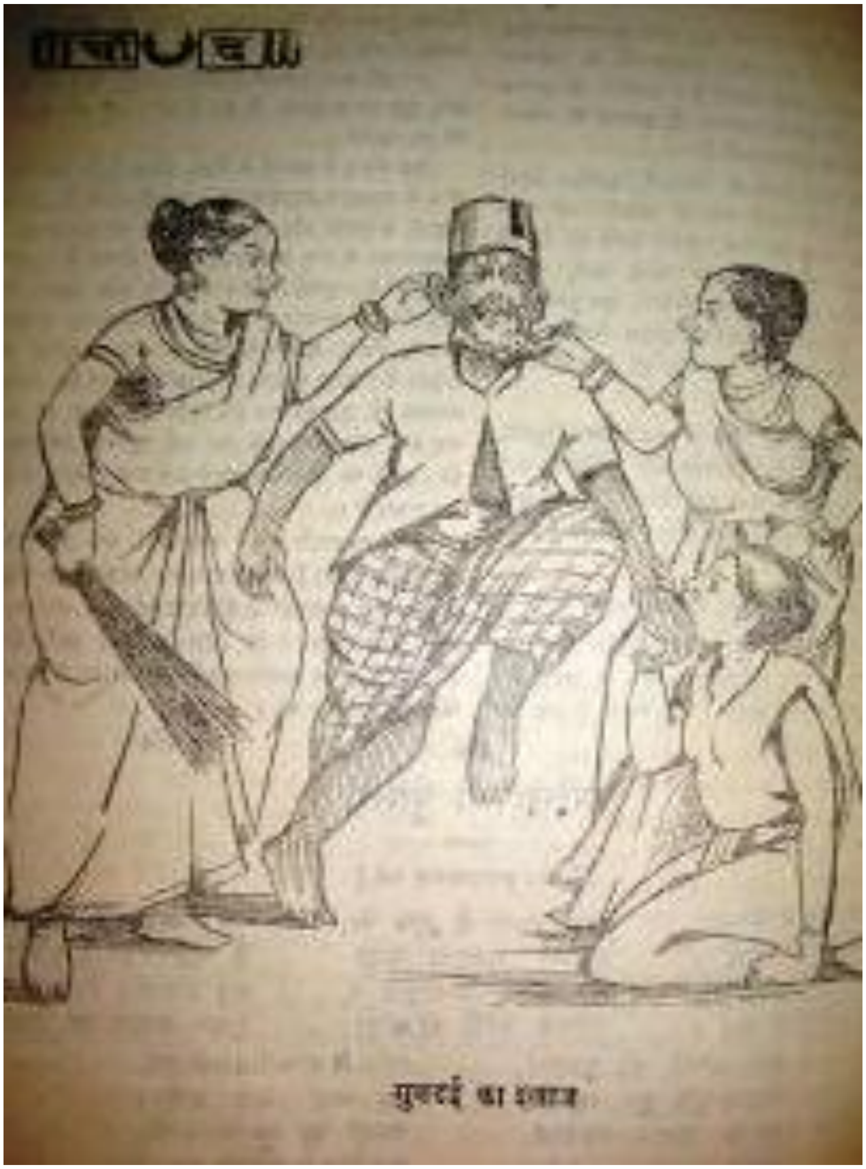

Figure 28: *Gundaī kā ilāj*, *Cā̃d*, November 1934

Cartoon strip as didactic illustration

Another variety of *vyaṃgya citra*, which was in huge circulation, was a series of didactic illustrations on any single topical social issue arranged like a cartoon strip. Accompanied by long commentaries, mostly in verse but sometimes also in prose, such cartoon strips were to be found in abundance, especially in periodicals like *Cā̃d*. Usually such cartoon strips were designed to communicate a punching narrative like the evils of incompatible marriage, social taboo with respect to widow remarriage, irresponsible male sexual desire, parˈdāˈ system, etc. from the vantage point of contemporary social reform agenda of the journal.[78] Such practices were not only detrimental to the moral cultural sanctity of the Hindu households and their woman, but they were responsible for the rot in the Hindu community itself. These issues, of course, had already been subjected to much public discussion.[79] Cartoons extended the debates further.

For example, the cartoon strips below on the evil social custom of incompatible marriage showed that the legitimate desires and concerns of a young woman is antithetical to her wedding with old rich man. Claiming to be based on a true story, a strip consisted of several plates with one episode in the subsequent life of this poor woman. and each plate has a visual and a commentary in verse, which narrates the story of one scene.

Plate 1 the visual depicts a marriage ceremony in which the bride is unmistakably younger than the groom. The comment beneath adds to its pedagogic meaning in a satirical tone: "Even if physically old the groom is young at heart! The company of women cannot be forsaken even if life is about to end!

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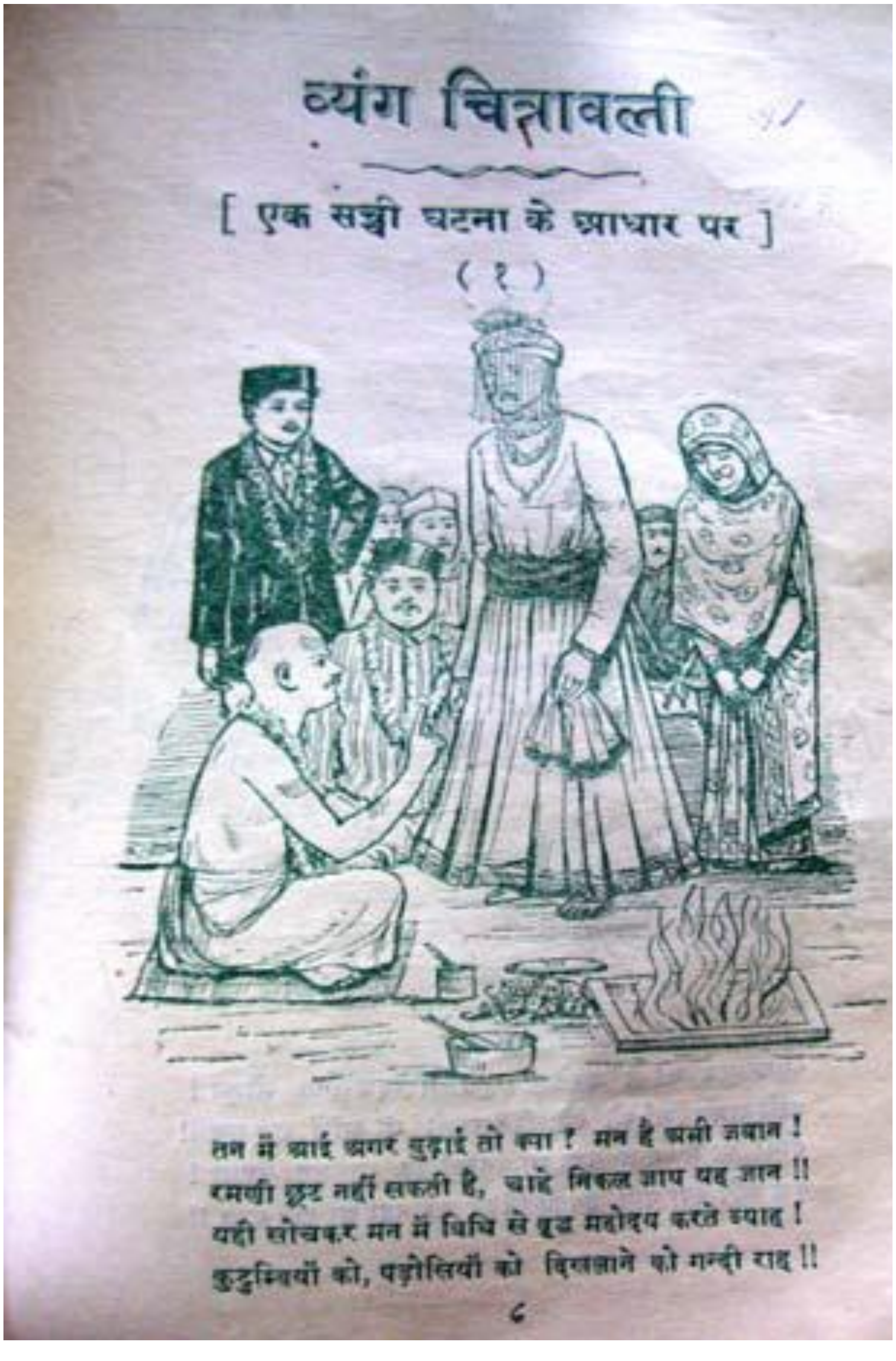
[78] Also see 'Śikṣa' (Education), *Sudhā*, August, 1937, 'Bacˈpan kī śādī' and 'Pardā' (Child marriage) 'Nitya-karm' (Daily routine) in special issue of cartoon *Sudhā*, March 1929; 'Klark-jīvan' (Life of a clerk) and 'Hindū samaj meṃ strī-puruṣ vaiṣamya' (Man-woman inequality in Hindu community) *Cā̃d*, May 1925; on the obscenity of Holi festival see, 'Holī ke bharˈve' (Pimps of Holi) C□*d* , March 1929, on the evil of dowry system see 'Balidān', *Cā̃d* , April 1929, on problem of uneducated woman see 'Aśikṣitā nārī jīvan ke kuch rūp' (Glimpses from the life of uneducated women), *Cā̃d* , February 1936, on the result of gender inequality in family see 'Puruṣ-jīvan aur nārī-jivan ka vaiṣamya' (Inequality in the male and female lives), *Cā̃d* , February 1936, on the evils of bride examination custom before marriage see 'Vivāh ke liye kanyā parikśā' (Appraisal of girl for marriage), *Cā̃d* , March 1936.

[79] See the chapter "Women and the Public sphere" in Francesca Orsini, *The Hindi Public sphere, 1920-1940: Language and Literature in the age of Nationalism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002), 243-308.

With this mentality the old man gets married and sets a wrong example for neighbours and relatives.”

Figure 29: *Vyaṃg citrāvalī*, *Cā̃d*, January 1929



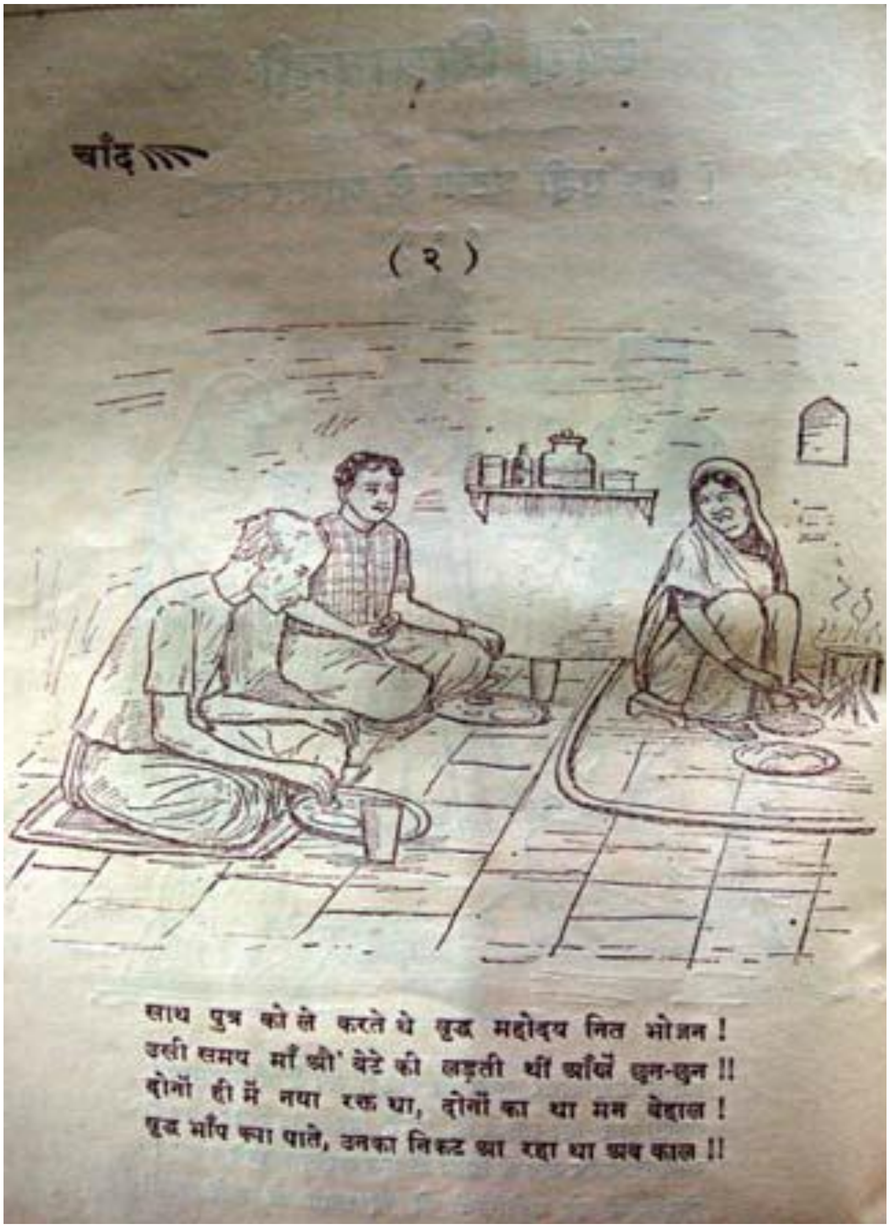
व्यंग चित्रावली

[एक सच्ची घटना के आधार पर]

(१)

तन में आई अगर बुढ़ाई तो क्या ? मन है अभी जवान !
रमणी छूट नहीं सकती है, चाहे निकल जाय यह जान !!
यही सोचकर मन में विधि से वृद्ध महोदय करते ब्याह !
कुटुम्बियों को, पड़ोसियों को दिखलाने को गन्दी राह !!

८

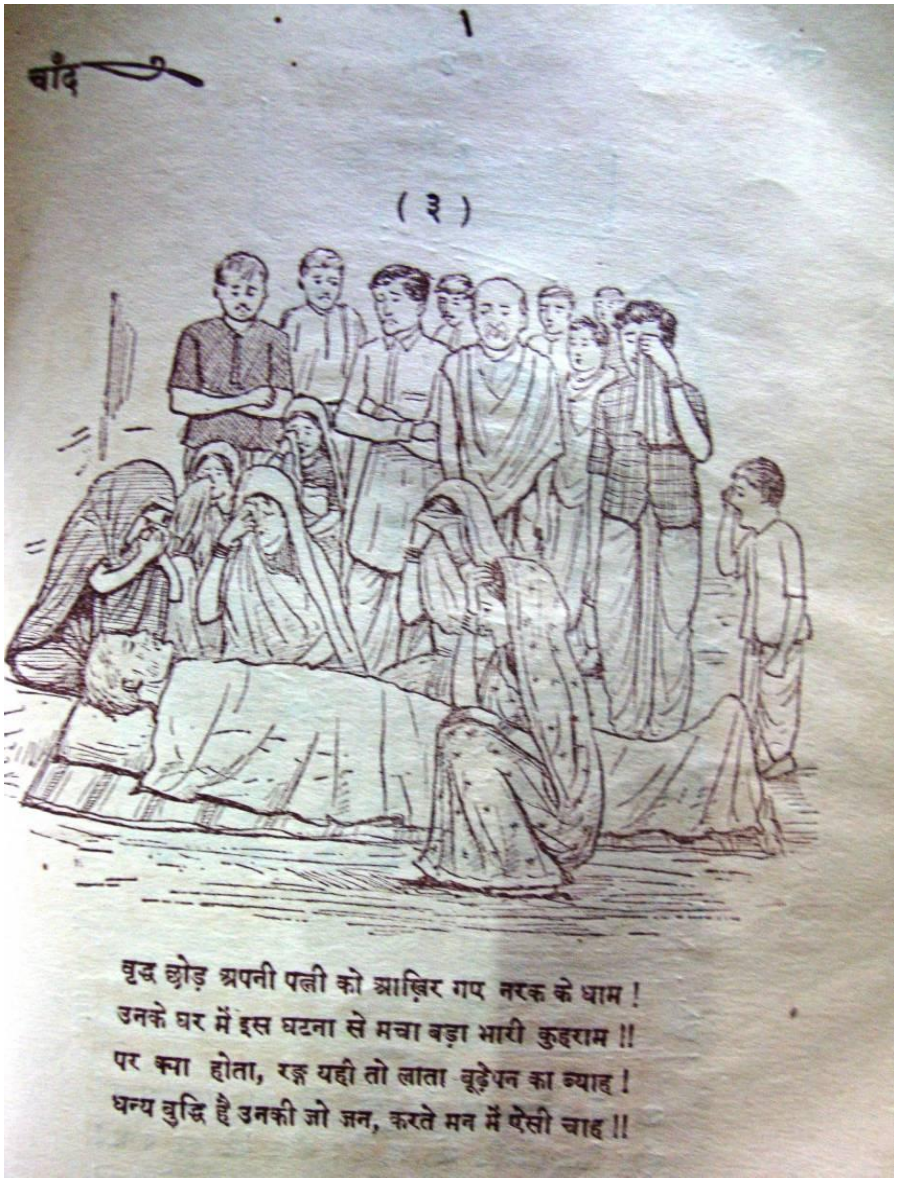


चाँद

(२)

साथ पुत्र को ले करते थे वृद्ध महोदय नित भोजन !
उसी समय माँ औ' बेटे की लड़ती थीं आँखें छुन-छुन !!
दोनों ही में नया रक्त था, दोनों का था मन बेहाल !
वृद्ध भाँप क्या पाते, उनका निकट आ रहा था अब काल !!

In plate 2 the visual shows the old husband eating with his young son, who is equivalent in age to his wife who is cooking. The young son and wife are gazing at each other while the old man is looking down at his dish. The commentary explains: "the old man used to eat together with his son and this was the time when the son and the wife were developing affection for each other. Both had young blood and were naturally desperate. But the old man could hardly realise this as he was himself counting his last days."

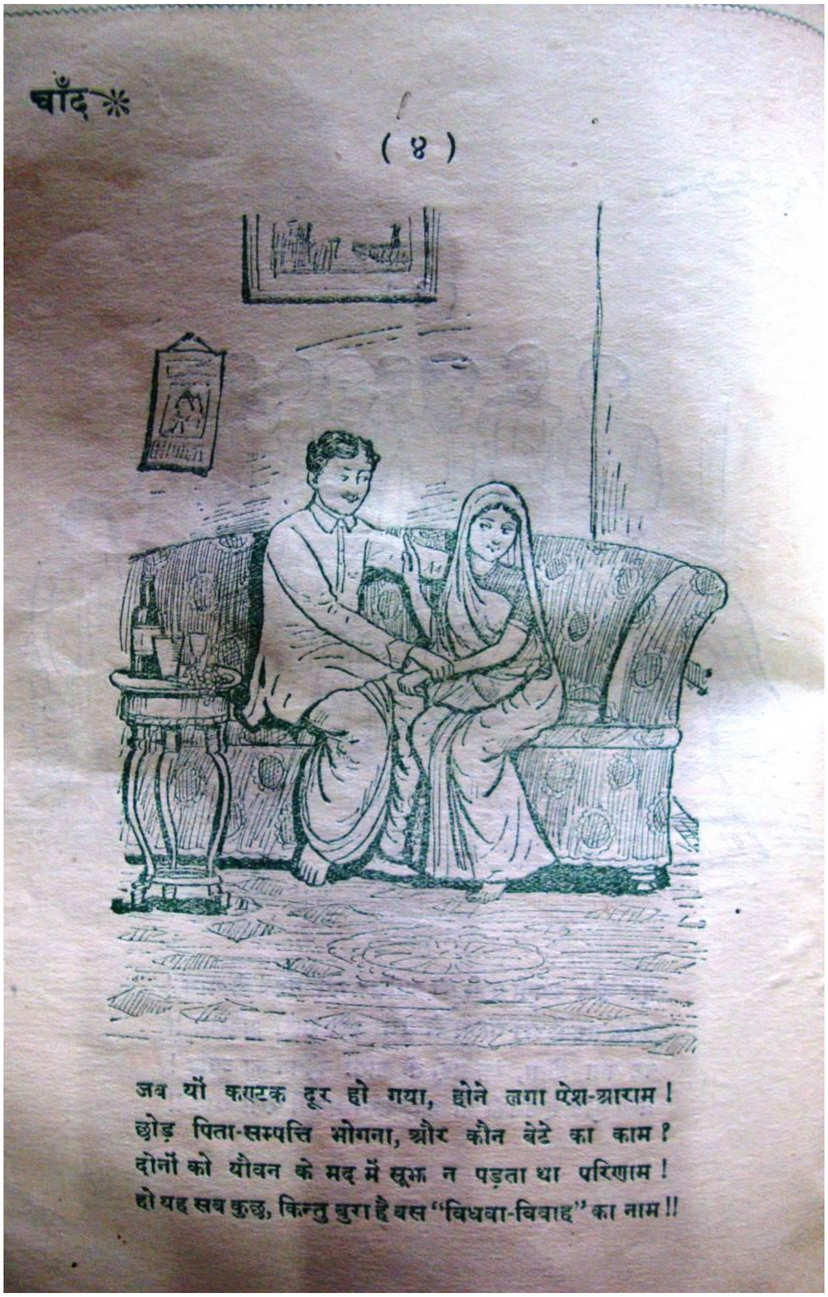


चाँद

(३)

वृद्ध छोड़ अपनी पत्नी को आख़िर गए नरक के धाम !
उनके घर में इस घटना से मचा बड़ा भारी कुहराम !!
पर क्या होता, रङ्ग यही तो लाता बूढ़ेपन का ब्याह !
धन्य बुद्धि है उनकी जो जन, करते मन में ऐसी चाह !!

In the next plate the old man is shown dead, surrounded by his crying kith and kin. The comment says: "the old man left for hell leaving his young wife behind. This is the foretold consequence of old-age marriage, and it is a pity that people even think of doing so."



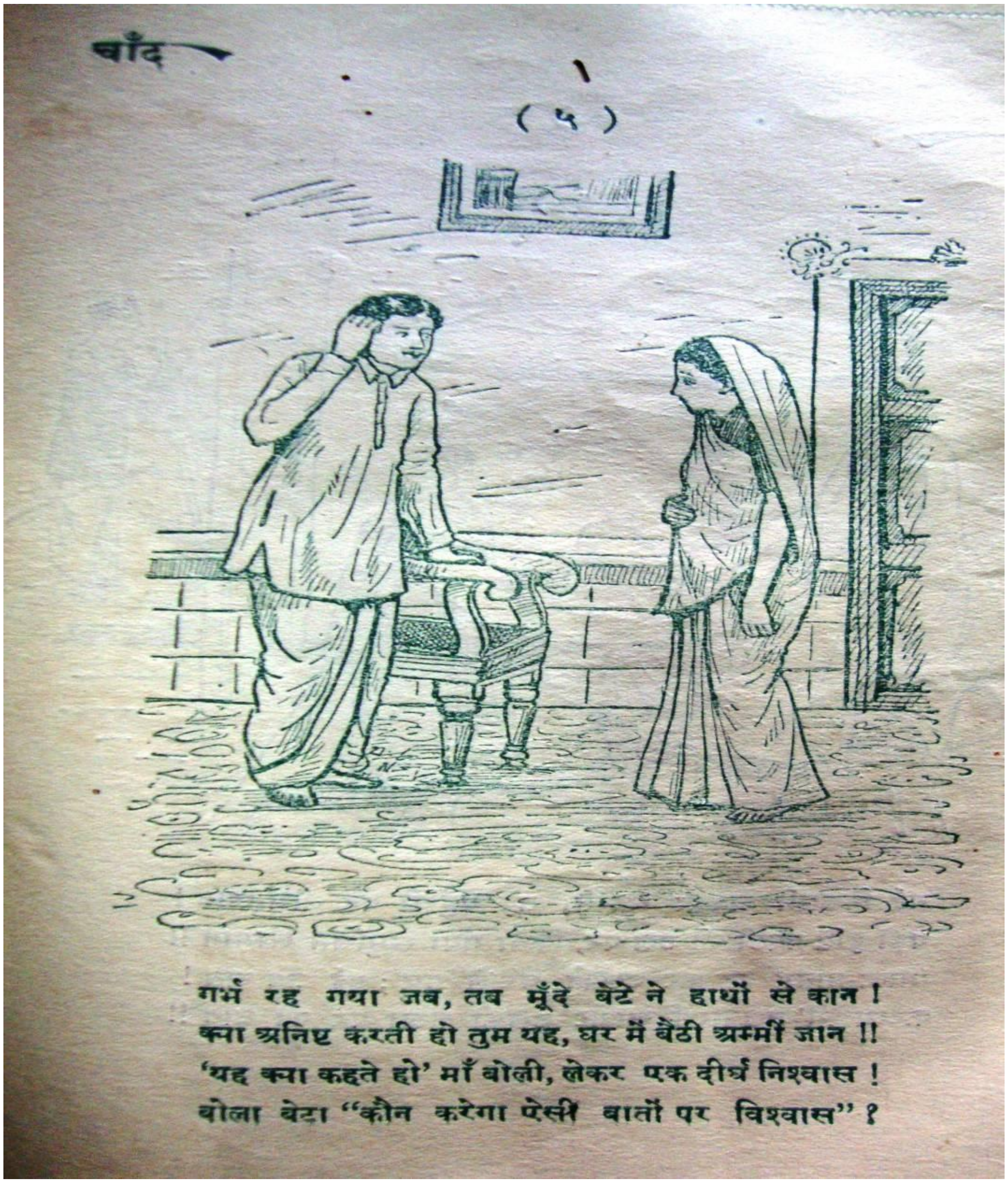
चाँद ✻

(४)

जब यों कण्टक दूर हो गया, होने लगा ऐश-आराम !
छोड़ पिता-सम्पत्ति भोगना, और कौन बेटे का काम ?
दोनों को यौवन के मद में सूझ न पड़ता था परिणाम !
हो यह सब कुछ, किन्तु बुरा है बस "विधवा-विवाह" का नाम !!

Plate 4 shows the young widow making merry with her step-son. The text below adds: "Once the thorn of the old man was gone they fearlessly immersed themselves in sexual pleasure and spent the old man's wealth." The last sentence of the comment makes a remark to the effect that this kind of illicit relationship can go on but, ironically, widow remarriage is unacceptable in society.

In plate 5 the visual depicts the woman with her hand on her belly and her stepson covering his ear. The text below explains: “The mother became pregnant and the son refused to take responsibility. He shields himself by invoking the patriarchal social mindset that nobody is going to trust her story that she had been impregnated by him.

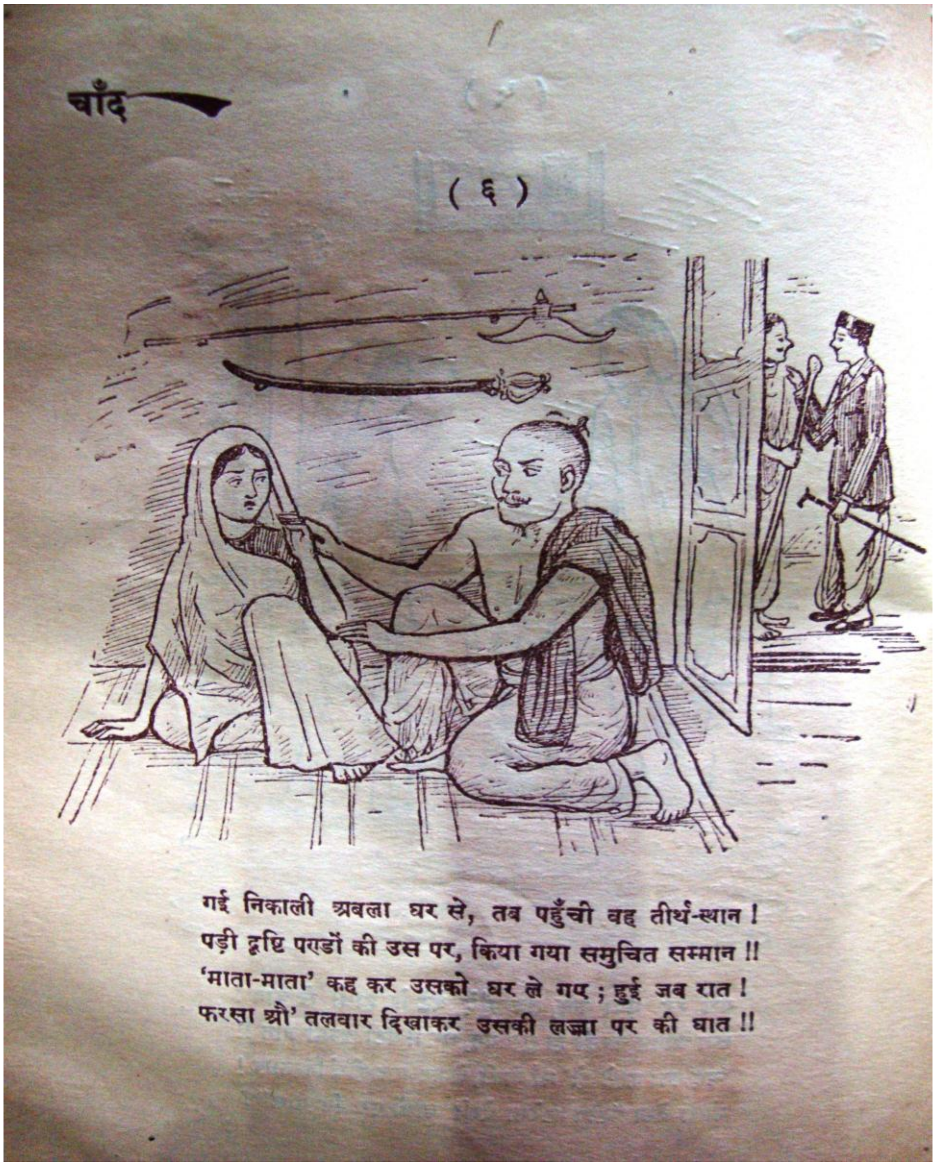


चाँद

(५)

गर्भ रह गया जब, तब मूँदे बेटे ने हाथों से कान !
क्या अनिष्ट करती हो तुम यह, घर में बैठी अम्मीं जान !!
‘यह क्या कहते हो’ माँ बोली, लेकर एक दीर्घ निश्वास !
बोला बेटा “कौन करेगा ऐसी बातों पर विश्वास” ?

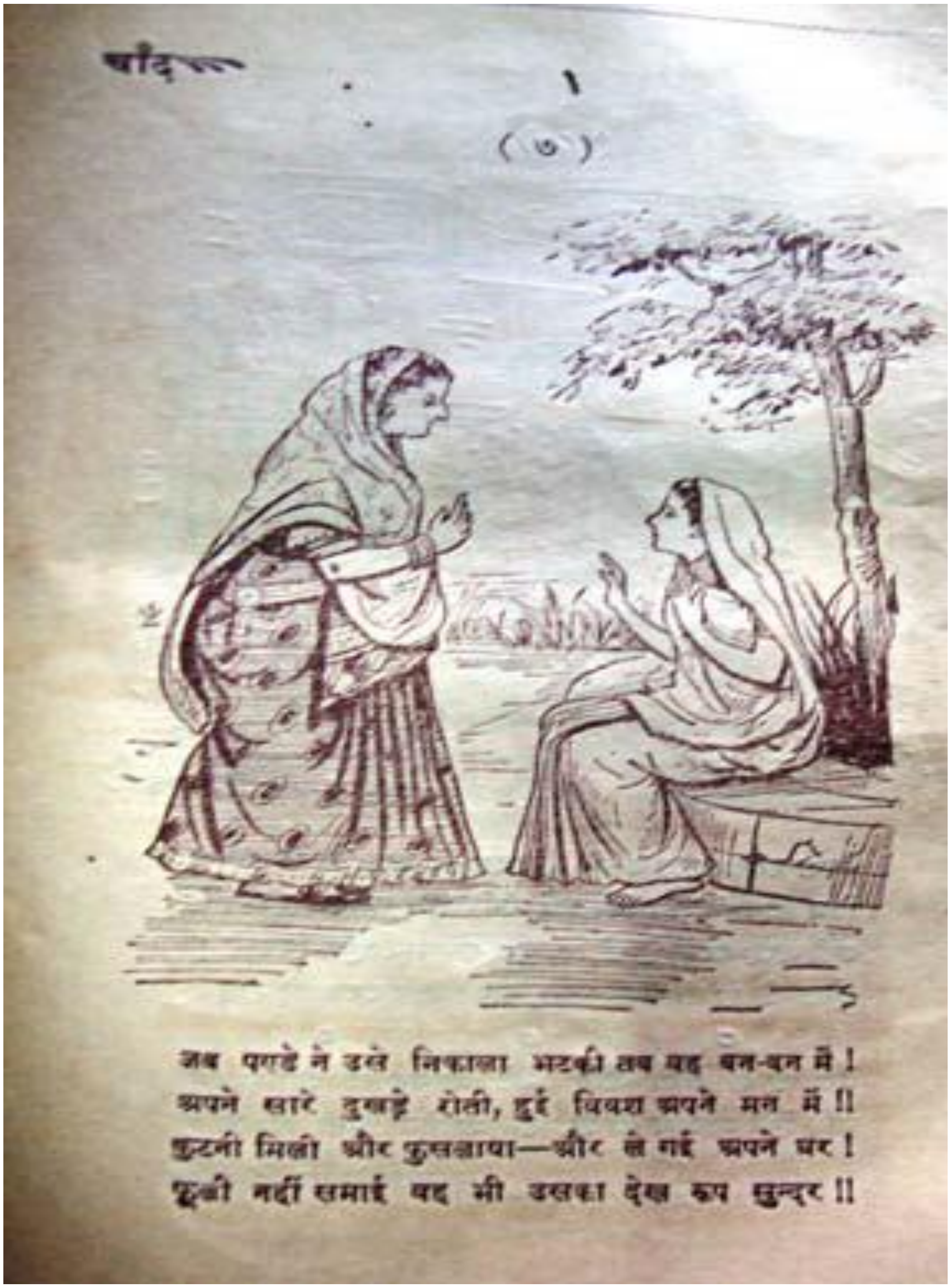
Plate 6 shows the widow being approached by a young Brahmin priest in a room. Two weapons are shown hanging on the wall, while outside the house a gentleman is talking to a guard armed with a stick. The commentary below clarifies: “The widow after being thrown out of her house reaches a pilgrimage centre where normally abandoned women go to take shelter. The corrupt priest at the pilgrimage centre persuades her and promises to provide her a shelter. Once she enters the house, she is overpowered and molested by him in the night.”



चाँद

(६)

गई निकाली अबला घर से, तब पहुँची वह तीर्थ-स्थान !
पड़ी दृष्टि पण्डों की उस पर, किया गया समुचित सम्मान !!
‘माता-माता’ कह कर उसको घर ले गए ; हुई जब रात !
फरसा औ’ तलवार दिखाकर उसकी लज्जा पर की घात !!

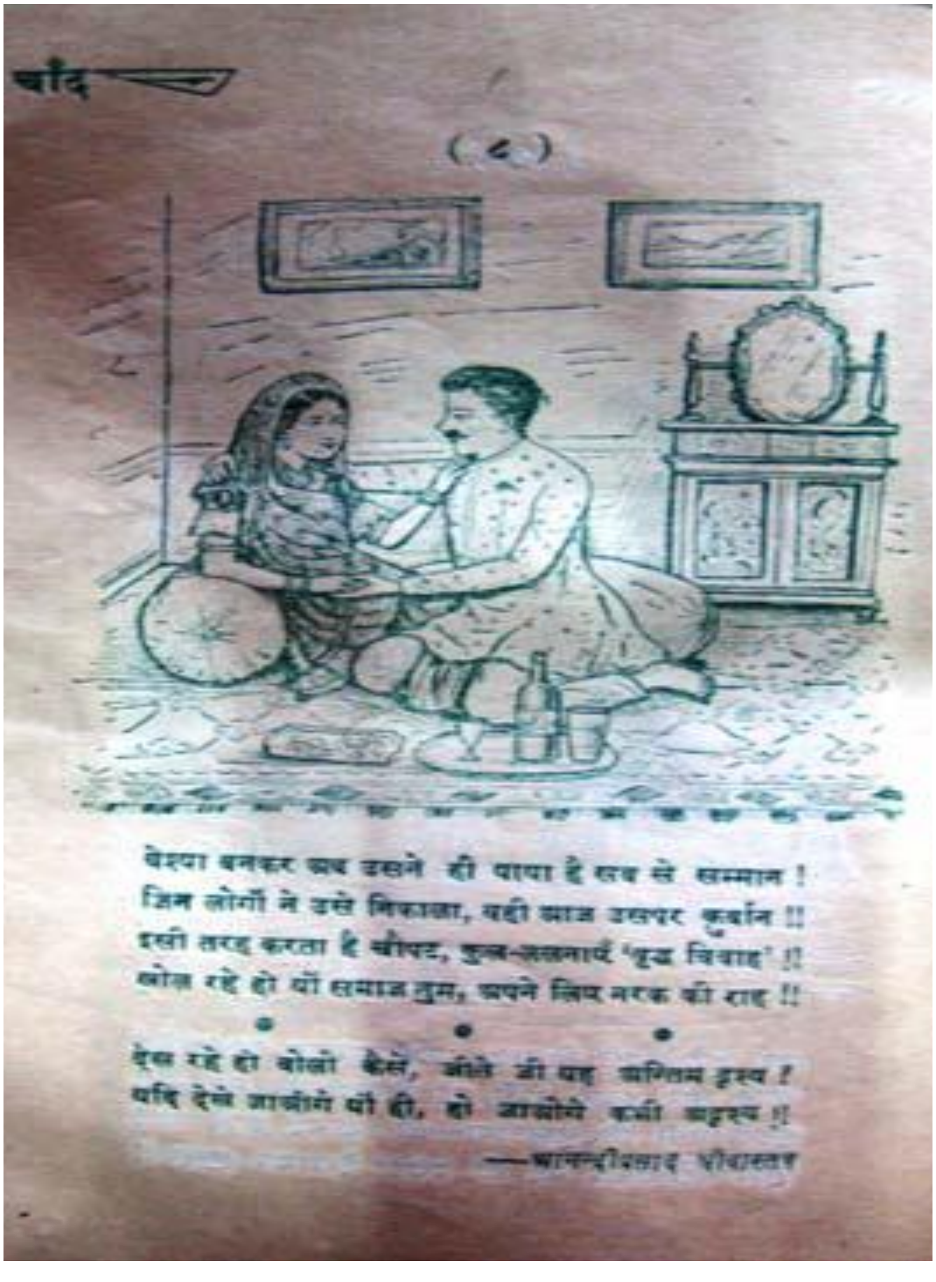


चाँद १

(७)

जब पण्डे ने उसे निकाला भटकी तब वह बन-बन में !
अपने सारे दुखड़े रोती, हुई विवश अपने मन में !!
कुटनी मिली और फुसलाया—और ले गई अपने घर !
फूली नहीं समाई वह भी उसका देख रूप सुन्दर !!

But the misery of the young widow does not end here. She is next shown sitting underneath a tree and talking to a fat woman, while the comment below reads: "she was thrown out by the priest also and was crying in a lonely forest. A pimp who was happy to find a beautiful deserted woman again persuaded her". The inevitable comes with the final plate showing that she has been turned into a prostitute who is entertaining a Hindu gentleman visible by his hair-lock. The last comment reads: "She is getting honoured by the same set of people who ostracised her. This is how old age marriage destroys the lives of household women." It warns Hindu society against the evil of such customs, which would ultimately sound a death knell to it.



चाँद

(८)

वेश्या बनकर अब उसने ही पाया है सब से सम्मान !
जिन लोगों ने उसे निकाला, वही आज उसपर कुर्बान !!
इसी तरह करता है चौपट, कुल-ललनाएँ 'वृद्ध विवाह' !!
खोल रहे हो यों समाज तुम, अपने लिए नरक की राह !!

• • •

देख रहे हो बोलो कैसे, जीते जी यह अन्तिम दृश्य ?
यदि देखे जाओगे यों ही, तो जाओगे कभी अदृश्य !!

—आनन्दीप्रसाद श्रीवास्तव

Thus the narrative of the cartoon is communicated by a constant interaction between the visual and the written commentary in each plate.

5

A note on the communicative mechanism of cartoon

On the basis of the above examples, we can safely state the following: Topicality is essential; a cartoon deals with a theme, which is already known to the reader through various other sources. This topical issue or event is put into intertextual correspondence with a plot or story from a pre-existing oral, literary or visual narrative originating from fables, epics, proverbs, paintings, etc. The intertextual trafficking between the topical issues and the pre-existing narrative is recasted through techniques like displacement, deformation, exaggeration, simplification, essentialisation, juxtaposition of the opposite, highlighting contrast and contradiction. The recasting of topical issues though these techniques is materialised in the process of rendering their signification into the combination of image and text.

It should be mentioned here that a cartoon sits between the interstices of text and image. This overlap is explicit because words themselves were frequently part of these images, whether in the form of writing that accompanied a visual, the title of a cartoon, or texts that appeared as commentary. Drawing from Julia Thomas's study of Victorian narrative paintings of the nineteenth century, it can be argued that such an intertwining of the visual and textual in the context of a cartoon also worked to subvert the idea that there was a fixed distinction between these realms. The construction of narratives was not just a textual activity, but also one that could take place in a visual arena, while the inclusion of writing within the space of an image emphasized its own graphic nature. Even the interpretation of such pictures depended not solely on perception or reading, but on an interaction between them, questioning the idea that either process should be seen as self-contained. Cartoon, like narrative painting, requires the viewer to shift between words and images. It is this alternation between the visual and the textual that generates the meanings of cartoons, allowing them to be read as one would read a text.[80] By creating a dialogue between the textual and the visual, cartoonists draw and construct first-order enthymemes, i.e. syllogisms (deductive logic built on two premises) in which one of the premises is implicit. The first order enthymemes invite the reader to respond in accordance with certain values, perceptions, prejudices and predispositions.[81] The targeted audience, in our case Hindu middle class reader, is expected to fill in the missing premise as it processes the cartoon. However, we can only speculate about the potential readers and cannot clearly delineate their actual response. How an individual or a community of readers actually read these cartoons is a difficult question to answer, as we do not have sufficient recorded evidence. In concluding chapter, we shall discuss this issue.

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[80] Julia Thomas goes deeper into the theoretical debates around this question. She argues: "questions of whether an image can be "read," of whether the pictorial is a sign system governed by culture and convention, have come to a head with the increase in semiotic analyses of visual material and the focus on the interplay between the textual and visual. Critics such as Norman Bryson argue that art is bound up in language and, like language, is a site of power that is culturally constituted and constituting. Others, however, emphasize the difference of the visual. David Summers uses the phrase "linguistic imperialism" to describe the equation of art with words that he believes has taken place in theoretical movements like structuralism, poststructuralism, and semiology. According to Summers, art is not a language and cannot be explained in terms of theories of language, but makes its meanings in distinct and unique ways. Summers reaches a conclusion similar to that voiced in 1934 by Roger Fry, who argued for the subordination of narrative images because they seduced critics into analyzing the content of pictures, rather than paying attention to artistic otherness, what Summers calls art's "unsayable" quality. […] Perhaps the problem with the accusation of "linguistic imperialism" lies in the very definition of what is a "language-based" approach to art. […] Signifiers include, but are not restricted to, words. They can also be visual. […] In a fundamental way Saussure's theory actually discounts the idea that word and image are the same, because at its core is the notion of difference between signs […] but it does suggest that while word and image are bound up in each other they cannot be reduced to each other's terms. For Saussure, difference is not based on a sign's unique and positive characteristics but is generated by the signifying system itself, in a sign's negative relation to other signs. Each sign gains its value from being what the other signs in the system are not: a picture acquires meaning to the degree that it is not a text, a book, a word, and so on. This notion of difference is negative, but it is also relational: it depends on the coexistence and interdependence of other signs. Jacques Derrida has elaborated this theory to argue that if a signifier gains its value by its difference from another signifier then it must include the trace of that other, an allusion to the excluded meaning." On the basis of these theoretical ideas Thomas examines illustration and narrative painting in the mid-nineteenth century, because, she argues, it is this presence of the other within the self-same that the constant play between the visual and textual in illustration and narrative painting exposes. She clarifies further that this does not mean that images are ever identical to texts: a relation between genres is not the same as equivalence; a visual signifier is not the same as a verbal signifier. She argues that "far from being one and the same, these modes of representation are in constant dialogue." Julia Thomas, *Pictorial Victorians* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 5-9.

Summary

In this chapter we have delineated the trajectory of the emergence of cartoon as a transcultural art form in the Hindi literary sphere. Despite a late start, with the consolidation of institutional support and the rise of a self-consciously nationalist middle class readership, printing and circulation of all kinds of print-production increased manifold from 1920 onwards. Cartoons also proliferate in the periodicals, in independent booklets or albums or even as independent single block prints. The examination of a variety of visuals, which appeared under the same category of cartoon, shows that the understanding of the cartoon as *vyaṃgya citra* in the Hindi literary sphere deflects from any straight jacketed definition. Cartoon can only be loosely defined as a socio-political commentary, which combines image and text in dialogic interaction with each other. Through the image-text interaction four essentials required for the creation of subject matter in a cartoon – topicality, intertextual trafficking between the topical issues and the pre-existing literary/cultural texts like fable, epic, mythology etc., juxtaposition of contrast, simplification and condensation of a discourse and representation of essentialised character traits of a social group or ideology – are signified. I have argued that the explicit transcultural lineage of this art form is appropriated as 'national-local' through various framing devices. The advertisements, editorial notes, historical introductions, etc. work as paratexts in foregrounding the claim of the cartoon as (much required) ‘national’ art form rooted in ‘tradition’. The conscious framing of transcultural as national-local and the interaction of this art form with the local cultural repertoire deletes its transcultural markers. In our concluding remark we shall also talk briefly about the question of transculturality in literary-cultural history with reference to imperialist and nationalist politics of denial.

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[81] This is borrowed from Martin J. Medhurst and Michael A. DeSousa, "Political Cartoons as Rhetorical Form: A Taxonomy of Graphic Discourse," Communication Monographs 48, 3 (1981): 197-236; 204.

Conclusion

Writing about the popularity of the *Punch* and its self-styled Delhi variety *Delhi Sketch Book* (1850), which was published and circulated amongst the British civil and military officials stationed in Delhi, Sidney Laman Blanchard[1] made the following observation in the opening remark of his essay "Punch in India".

> "PUNCH in India. The idea seems unpromising. A professed jester must surely be out of place among a people who have but little turn for comedy. The Asiatic temperament is solemn, and finds no enjoyment in fun for its own sake. A Bengalee or an Hindustanee can laugh at what is ridiculous; but his laughter is contemptuous, and it may be malignant. It knows little of the loving quality of humour. For such people, Punch must be libellous and cruel, to the outrage of all law and humanity. Look, too, at the incongruity of the thing: Fancy Punch among palm-trees and palaces all domes and minarets, and going about in a palankeen. Fancy him deep in the silent jungle, or out on the arid plain. Fancy him scorched by a burning sun whenever abroad, and bored by inane enjoyments whenever at home with hookahs of sickly scent, dancers of monotonous motion, fiddlers of soulless music. Fancy him but there is no need to fancy anything of the kind. Not for the indolent Asiatic does Punch disport himself in India, but for the active European; not for dreamers and drivellers, inhalers of hookahs and patrons of zenanas; but for stickers of pigs, smokers of cheroots, drinkers of brandy-panee. It is to our brave and fair compatriots in the East that Punch appeals, and it is in the jocose illustration of their manners and customs that he finds his principal sport."[2]

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[1] Sidney Laman Blanchard (b. 1825) was the eldest son of author Samuel Laman Blanchard (1804–1845). After the death of his father, Blanchard began his career as private secretary to Benjamin Disraeili, then a rising statesman. In 1854, he moved to Calcutta where he edited the *Bengal Hurkaru* until the 1857 Mutiny, when his editorials ran afoul of Lord Canning. He returned to England in 1864 where he supported himself writing for a variety of periodicals such as *All the Year Round*, *Household Words*, and *Temple Bar*. Blanchard's articles were collected in *The Ganges and the Seine* (1862) and *Yesterday and To-day in India* (1867). In 1873 Blanchard returned to India to edit the *Times of India* which lasted a short time and he owned the *Indian Statesman* for a few years. He returned to England in 1880 and died in 1883 in Brighton. The biographical information is taken from a database on Victorian Fiction (1837-1901), *At The Circulation Library*. The webpage was accessed on 01.10.2012. http://www.victorianresearch.org/atcl/show_author.php?aid=32

[2] Sidney Laman Blanchard, *Yesterday and Today in India* (London: W. H. Allen & Co., 1867), 239-40. As per the disclaimer given in the book, this essay may have also been published in the journal "*All the Year Round*" and "*The Temple*".

At the zenith of imperialist arrogance Blanchard comments that South Asians have a little or no sense of humour, least of all “a loving quality of humour” with which the British are blessed. *Punch*, the satiric narrator, could only be fancied amongst the “indolent Asiatics”, but not realised. Punch could never caricature their manners and customs, for the “dreamers and drivellers” could not appreciate such acts. It is only amongst Blanchard’s “brave and fair compatriots in the East” that the satirical journal and its narrator figure could thrive and flourish; not amongst South Asians or what he calls the “Hindustanees” and “Bengalees”. Whilst Blanchard’s imperialist arrogance and racist hyperbole could itself provoke a critical essay in its own right, we shall limit ourselves to two brief interrelated points in this concluding chapter.

First, according to Blanchard, *Punch*, the satirical journal and its narrator figure may travel and circulate beyond the territorial confines of Britain, but humour certainly could not cross over the cultural boundaries and make its way into South Asian cultures. Purportedly, according to his circular logic, South Asian cultures were too insular to receive and appreciate *Punch*’s humour. The underlying assumption was: cultures are internally bounded; they are inherently insular to interactive influences.

Second, basing his narrative on orientalist stereotypes about Indians different from Europeans, Blanchard normatively defines what the ‘ideal’ type of humour is and should be like. According to him, it should not be “contemptuous” and “malignant” [like those of the “Asiatics”], rather it should be of a “loving quality” [hence, it should generate affection towards the subject of laughter].

Blanchard was proven wrong in his own lifetime. Within a decade Blanchade’s “Hindustanees” and “Bengalees” had pulled their *Punches* [*Pañc ka prapañc* in *Kavivacan'sudhā* (1872) *Basantak* (1874), *Avadh Pañc* (1881)] and were ready to 'kick' his “brave and white compatriots in the East” and their cultural domination. In this proposition the underlying assumption is that the Orientals’ humour is slapstick brash and vulgar unlike those of the civilizationally superior Europeans whose humour is genteel, sober and modest. It is this 'superior' quality of humour which is projected as the ideal type of humour. Needless to say Blanchard's idea was deeply informed by the normative moral universe of nineteenth century Victorian England. His scheme excluded not only a variety of satirical production in his own country but even most of the later *Punch* numbers.[3] However, so powerfully seductive was this imperialist viewpoint that the Indian nationalists, despite being politically against it, tacitly shared this exclusionary normative moral premise. As we have shown in Chapter 1, nationalist Hindi literary critics and historians like Ramchandra Shukla and Banarasidas Chaturvedi are exact cases in point. Let us recall how Shukla indulged in the reinterpretation of classical texts to *show* that Sanskrit had this "loving quality" of humour, and hence deduced that the best kind of humour is, that which "generates affection towards the subject of laughter."[4] The point of showing the (unexpected!) similarity between a Blanchard and a Shukla is to expose the shared ground between the imperialist and its derivative nationalist worldviews, and yet also to indicate the limits of their interpretative value for understanding history.

In other words, what we have attempted in the previous chapters is offer a way of understanding satire as a form of humorous discourse beyond imperialist and nationalist frames in. Going beyond these ideologically charged and intellectually suffocating frames we have exemplified the making and functioning of satire as it unfolded historically through a complex transcultural interaction and negotiation in colonial North India.

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[3] This is insinuated from Brain Maidment's point made in connection with the marginal figure of dustman in the *Punch* and other satirical journals in the nineteenth century England at Conference titled "The British *Punch* Magazine as a Transcultural Format of Satire and Caricature", 13-15 November, 2010, "Asia Europe", Cluster of Excellence, Heidelberg.

[4] See section 4 of Chapter 1, especially discussion on Ramchandra Shukla's view on the 'sad' state of humour and satire in Hindi literature.

As we have seen in the preceding chapters, the story of modern Hindi literary and visual satire from its beginning in the late nineteenth century till the early twentieth century is about at least two intertwined histories of North India: the history of the constitution of modernity intertwined with the history of the making of the narrative of satire as a distinct form of social communication from a transcultural perspective. From this vantage point, Chapter 1 discussed the theoretical aspects of analytical categories–'transculturality' and 'modernity', and approaches to understand 'satire' as a literary-cultural form of social expression. In Chapter 2 and 3 we discussed the unfolding of modernity in North India under the aegis of colonialism and the way it was negotiated and reconfigured through the newly constituted modern prose narrative of satire.

Chapter 2 makes the assertion that Hindi satirical prose narrative of late nineteenth century colonial north India constituted a site and medium of literary-cultural negotiation and reconfiguration of modernity by an upper caste male Hindu middle class. It was an ambivalent response to the political reality overshadowed by colonialism. Though colonial rule provided the Hindu middle class new opportunities for socio-economic mobility, this development was, however, accompanied by two simultaneous threats, namely that of humiliation and subjection to the British, and that of the assertion and challenge posed by the hitherto inferior social class. The latter itself was a consequence of the former. The discourse of satirical narratives successfully communicated the complexity of this dilemma and ambivalent experience. Hence, satire emerged as a significant form of cultural expression.

Chapter 3 continues to show the capaciousness of a discursive satirical text *Mudgarānad'caritāvalī* (1912-13) in communicating a critical modernist predicament exemplified by a rationalist Brahmin scholar of Sanskrit. It shows how in the changed historical circumstances extending between the 1890s and the 1910s, or in the 'age of entanglement', an anti-colonial cosmopolitan Pandit Ramavatar Sharma reconfigured intellectual-cultural modernity as transcultural and universal and sought to reconstitute (Sanskrit) Indian intellectual tradition and vernacular knowledge in close interaction with modern science and reason. In the process chapters 2 and 3 move away from the sterile question of 'origin or the 'originary moment' of modernity. Instead, they highlight the significance of studying the specific historical contexts concerning the *usage* of the language and politics of modernity, how modernity's ideational and institutional forms have shaped socio-cultural history, and their implications and limitations.

Chapters 4 and 5 dwell on the question of transculturality of modern Hindi literary and visual satire as a new form of expression. Here the focus is more on the formal-structural feature of Hindi satire as a modern literary-cultural form of expression whereby its transcultural provenance is highlighted. Chapter 4 deals with the formal and political function of satirical periodicals, which commenced with an explicitly acknowledged lineage to the English language counterpart, the *Punch*. It foregrounds the ways in which a 'foreign' literary format is 'indigenised' through a process of appropriation that involves social-semantic as well as intertextual and political recontextualisation of the 'new'. It also underlines how such a process of cultural appropriation deletes the marks of transculturality of the literary-cultural form and flaunts its 'indigenous' or 'national-local' character.

Chapter 5 continues to show the same with reference to cartoon as a new art form bearing the explicit marks of transculturality. Moreover, this chapter goes into the details of political and narrative strategy of framing cartoon as an Indian art form, despite its acknowledged 'foreignness'. It shows that a nationalist appropriation of a modern art form of cartoon is constituted by a reinterpretation of a Eurocentric world history of cartoon. For example, the nationalist essay on the history of cartoon upholds it as a universal human achievement to be found in the past of all civilizations, ready to be claimed and appropriated by any national-local community. Following this line of argument, the chapter shows how nationalists appropriate the global-universal history of cartoon, even though it is marked by uneven contributions from different communities, as paradigmatically testified to by the pre-history of the new art form in India. The domestication of the 'transcultural' through various interpretative and narrative devices approximates in a way the 'nationalist resolution', but in this case of the 'transcultural question'. It locates late but successful career of cartoon in two intersecting domains: the commercial imperatives of publication as well as its literary-cultural function in contemporary reformist politics. Finally, the chapter examines the communicative mechanism of satire, the image of the reader and her expected response. However, the nature of readership and responses to literary or visual satire is difficult to elucidate beyond certain limits due to the inevitable constraints of insufficient sources.

A note on the problems of writing a history of reception

As pointed out earlier, a satirist (like any other speech genre) presumes that his readers know the language and the subject matter of satire. A satire is, therefore, built on already familiar and widely discussed themes, and, indirectly, creates image of a targeted readership. Our discussion is severely limited to the image of the targeted or expected reader inscribed in the constitution organisation of a satirical text. We have not been able to discuss in detail the social profile of the historical reader nor his/her response.

Most of the satire and cartoons discussed in this work were published in periodicals (often in the same issues and same pages of the journals). It is safe to assume that this satirical literature primarily circulated amongst individual Hindi enthusiasts, in government-aided schools, or in the newly established public Hindi libraries in North Indian district and sub-divisional towns. We, at most, get the statistical circulation figure of periodicals in some cases but can only make wild guess about precise reaction of the abstract statistical figure of reader. Even the circulation figure may not itself speak for its greater reception.

The problem of comprehension of satirical intent and target cannot be understood fully through such statistical records, especially in the case of literary satire. For example, Bharatendu Harishchandra’s ‘*Pā̃cˈveṃ paigambar*’ or Pratap Narayan Mishra’s, ‘*Kalikoś*’ or Ramavatar Sharma’s *Mudgarānandˈcaritāvalī* assumes that the reader has a prior understanding of the satirist's neologism, his strategy and politics of the trans-creation of proper nouns and his philosophical-political arguments. Also required is a general competence to decipher a range of linguistic registers - from Sanskrit and Persian to colloquial Hindi. Readers with such a capacity, it can be conjectured, might not exceed the groups of connoisseur-intellectuals! In the case of cartoons, where a reader may not be expected to master a range of linguistic registers, we can at best postulate that they were circulated and understood by a higher number of lay readers.

Nevertheless, we simply do not have the documentary evidence to reconstruct an exact social historical profile of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century reader. Hence, it is virtually impossible to evaluate the nature of the reception of Hindi satire in colonial India. Availability of primary documents and research questions to answer them are contingent, generally, in the wake of public controversy, if a literary or visual satire is able to generate one. A controversial satirical piece, for example in colonial India, would leave its trail in police and judicial records. The sources used in this study have not been able to cause such public outrage and hence are hardly accompanied by extensive reports in the files of intelligence or judicial department. Foregrounding limitations of our sources, in this sense, only reinforces the wider significance of satire as a genre of sources for an enriched understanding of wider social-cultural history.

In order to do the history of the reception, a separate research project will be required: a project that can, for example, take those popular-controversial satirical texts into consideration which focus on iconic figures of a social group or religious community.[5] Such a history shall highlight, among other things, the fact that history of satire is entangled with other histories (and so its sources). For example, a popular-controversial satirical pamphlets and cartoons usually leave a trail of a variety of other sources: interpretations, counter-interpretations, testimonials of 'hurt' sentiment, narratives and counter-narratives of humiliation and violence by the members of ridiculing and ridiculed community, litigation and counter-litigation on the issues like freedom of expression, and the rights of individual citizen in relation to community and state. Utilising a range of prospective sources one can write a richly variegated history of reception: how a satirical text outside the authorial-editorial ream is interpreted? How does it interact with public and political discourses of the time? How are its meanings reconfigured by different communities or groups? In what ways does the satirical text itself redefine and reconfigure communitarian identity-politics, political discourses, legal-judicial regimes of the state and so forth? These are some of the general but significant questions in social history which can be pursued at length in history of reception of the literature of satire.

Taking cue from recent public controversies surrounding literary and visual satire we can safely conclude that issues of reception involving moral-political questions more often than not lead to questions of fundamental literary-cultural import. For example, 'Ambedkar cartoon controversy' (2012) and 'Charlie Hebdo affair' (2015) have raised questions on reformist nature of satirical intent.[6] In doing so, they have shaken up long held 'beliefs' (read, 'stereotypes') about satire. Is satire, as any satirist claims, really 'indiscriminately' aggressive and against the powerful? What are the consequences of such 'indiscriminate' literary attack in a social world marked by discrimination? Is it really 'weapon of the weak'? Does the 'weak' literary figure of satirist, necessarily stand for the politically marginalised? Our study insinuates that there is no straightforward answer to these questions. Historically Hindi satire, for example, emerged as a 'weapon of the weak' – male Hindu middle class, against the powerful colonial authority, but we also see how the so called 'weapon of the weak' also simultaneously targeted lower castes and women. The question of 'indiscriminate attack' is more about literary and moral ploy to legitimise one's satirical activity. Whether a satirical text is selective or sweeping, 'discriminating' or 'indiscriminate' is contingent upon its textual organisation and contextual location which is hardly invariable and consistent.[7]

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[5] Satire targeting iconic figures has a long history marred in controversy; in colonial subcontinental history. This starts in the nineteenth century. The existing historiography on religious controversy in colonial India, however, has ignored the satirical nature of the sources. In colonial South Asian history religious controversy is often marked by bitter satirical exchange within and between, say, religious and sectarian communities. To cite one example which generated a huge outrage, was a vitriolic Arya Samāj pamphlet 'Raṃgīlā rasūl' (1920s) targeting Prophet Mohammad. The recent controversy generated in the wake of Danish cartoons on the Prophet Mohammad in 2005 is more contemporary international example. Killing of the editorial team of the now famous leftist Parisian satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in January 2015, allegedly by the Islamist militants for satirising the prophet and custodians of Islamic orthodoxy is latest in the series.

The present work, we hope, is a small but critical attempt in this direction. Our study, irrespective of our constraints underlined above, bring home the point that a satirical text is polyphonic,[8] contextual and, above all, it is marked by deep signs of intertextuality with other historical and discursive entities.

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[6] There are certain similarities in the reception of the cartoons in both the cases. In each case cartoon is opposed on the plank that it targets a figure, and by extension a community that this figure represents, which is already vulnerable and marginalized in the existing political context. The polemics encircling the cartoon, although ignoring the context of its (re)production and circulation, raises important questions on the article of 'literary faith' that a satirical text is innately 'reformist' and 'progressive' for its indiscriminating attack on the 'powerful'.

[7] At least in the case of 'Ambedkar cartoon controversy' and '*Charlie Hebdo* affair', in my observation, the polemicists have largely stayed away from the textual organization and contextual location of satire. In *Charlie Hebdo* case it is interesting to see a divide between political commentators and critics of the Anglophone and Francophone worlds on the nature of the magazine and its satire. While the commentators fluent in French language and its humour tradition call this magazine a far left-anarchist, anti-fascist, anti-religion targeting French political right for its anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim politics, the English language critics, on the contrary, have branded this magazine and its humour racist and Islamophobic.

[8] See my article in the context of 'Ambedkar cartoon controversy' in India. Prabhat Kumar, "This That and Other Cartoons", *Kafila*, May 24, 2012. http://kafila.org/2012/05/24/this-that-and-other-cartoons-prabhat-kumar/.

Historical study of satire, or for that matter any other literary-cultural forms of social expression, this study suggests, needs to be taken seriously in order to understand the complex socio-cultural history of India in an asymmetrically connected world bearing signs of transcultural entanglements.

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