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Healing India : implications for peace

Sriya Chakravarti

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The University of San Francisco

HEALING INDIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR PEACE

A Dissertation Presented
to
The Faculty of the School of Education
Department of Leadership Studies

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

by
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San Francisco, California
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THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Dissertation Abstract

Healing India: Implications for Peace

Peace has become more illusive than ever in India. The problem of violence in its various garbs increased after India became an independent nation in 1947. This research is an exploration on the role of religion and the place of peace in India today; particularly in light of the violence that has gripped the nation.

The rationale of this research is grounded in critical hermeneutics. The data presentation is comprised of quotations and extracts from research conversation partners, which are analyzed through the research categories of Identity, Understanding and Solitude. The aim of this research is to shed light on the different ways of thinking about the role of religion and the preservation of peace based on the opinions of selected participants representing five selected belief systems of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism in India.

The findings from this research provide a true picture of India today. This research topic may be significant in light of global complexities that leaders in India, and possibly beyond, face in government, education, and diplomatic and international relations. This research can be used for curriculum development in schools and colleges.

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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<u>Dr. Richard Stackman</u>	<u>04.21.11</u>

DEDICATION

Thank you, 'Shri. Shyam Rao' for bestowing me with strength, focus, determination and energy to complete this research work. This dissertation is dedicated to the loving memory of my grandparents.

Papa, Mummy, Teddy and Maharaj did major work behind the scenes to make this dissertation a possibility. Thank you for always believing in my dreams, aspirations and me. I would not be standing here without your support.

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CHAPTER ONE - UNLOCKING INDIA

Introduction

Everyone wishes to live in peace, but we are often confused about how that can be achieved. Mahatma Gandhi pointed out that because violence inevitably leads to more violence, if we are seriously interested in peace, we must seek to achieve it through peaceful and non-violent means – His Holiness, The 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet.

According to the International Committee for Peace Council, “religious intolerance, wars, environmental degradation, economic injustice, population explosion” are the central threats to world peace today (peacecouncil.org). India suffers all of these and it appears that peace has become more illusive than ever in India. This research is an exploration on the role of religion and the place of peace in India today; particularly in light of the violence that has gripped the nation. The rationale of this research is grounded in critical hermeneutics. In this Chapter I provide an introduction to the research topic, background and significance of the issue addressed in this study, and a summary.

Statement of Research Topic

India has always faced misunderstandings among its many ethnicities and cultures. The problem of violence in its various garbs increased after India became an independent nation in 1947. I have always been sensitive to this inquiry, as several people from my country have lost their lives in violent incidences. To find out the place of peace, and the role of religion today and in the future from selected participants, I carried out research conversations with 15 leaders who represent Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism in India. It was not my intent

to say what specifically any religion purports. The assumption behind this research was all the religions found in India generally teach that we should strive to live in peace with one another. The following directives guided this research inquiry:

1. How do you identify yourself and where do you speak from as a leader within your religious system?
2. How does your religion relate to your ideas about today's India and the larger world?
3. How do we move from terrorism to solicitude and peace?

Post 9/11 World

The world realized it must confront the problem of terrorism after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States of America. The other major world terrorist catastrophes included the Madrid train bombings of 2004, London airport bombings of 2005 and multiple attacks on Mumbai in 2008. Since then considerable attention and focus has been put in on this topic.

According to the U.S Department of Defense, Terrorism is defined as “Unlawful use of force or violence against individual or property to coerce and intimidate governments or societies, often to achieve political, religious or ideological objectives” (Balachandran 2005: 14). This definition is widely accepted because it “captures the essence of terrorism without partisan interpretation”(Balachandran 2005: 14).

Economist Alan B. Krueger (2007:15) describes, “Terrorism as a tactic, and the goal is to spread fear. The immediate victims are not as important as the broader message sent to the public.” It is clearly visible that this attempt of creating and

spreading fear through terrorism among the Indian masses has worked. The acts of terrorism have made people anxious and fearful as life has become more unpredictable in many parts of India.

The last two decades of terrorism have wreaked havoc on the Indian society. It seems like the entire spirit of terrorism is in India and that it is spread from North to South and East to West. From 1997 to 2003 alone, roughly 280 terrorist events have occurred in India (Krueger 2007: 70). Director of Criminal Justice Center, Richard Ward (2006:7) states:

Unlike most countries, India's diverse religious and political spectrum has led to years of violence that goes beyond the conflict with Pakistan. Sectarian, separatist, ideological and political differences have spawned a great many groups who view violence as the only avenue for change.

There are fifty-one extremist groups in India (Ward 2006:7). The continuing terrorism and violence experienced in North India was planted at the time of the Partition of India based on religion in 1947. Kashmir is still plagued with terrorism and is also the main source of conflict with Pakistan. The North Eastern states of India suffer violence, as they want a separate territory. The Central states in India are a victim of Naxalite insurgencies and violence in Southern India is because they do not feel a connection to India (Barua 2006).

Since the November 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai, people are living with more apprehension than ever before. The multiple attacks on Mumbai in 2008 were called the "9/11" of India. Terrorism has made life extremely challenging in India. These days an evening dinner with the family, regular local train commutes, or trips to the mall are no longer casual activities. Much thought is given to these mundane actions because no one knows if a relaxed outing with family and friends will be safe

(Kachru 2008). The concerns that people have about their safety have led to suspicions amongst different groups of people.

India is a secular country and this inflamed intolerance is not embedded in India's governmental structure; indeed, India's constitution grants each individual the freedom of religion. It reads, "Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion:"

(1) Subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this Part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion.

(2) Nothing in this article shall affect the operation of any existing law or prevent the State from making any law-

(a) regulating or restricting any economic, financial, political or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practice;

(b) providing for social welfare and reform or the throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all classes and sections of Hindus.

Explanation I.- The wearing and carrying of kirpans shall be deemed to be included in the profession of the Sikh religion.

Explanation II.- In sub-clause (b) of clause (2), the reference to Hindus shall be construed as including a reference to persons professing the Sikh, Jaina or Buddhist religion, and the reference to Hindu religious institutions shall be construed accordingly (constitution.org/cons/india/p03.html).

Despite a government that clearly supports freedom of religion, the media reports different motivations behind the violent attacks that have occurred. Krueger (2005:132) states that there are inaccuracies in the media reports because each station wants to be the first to break a story, and does not place high accountability on the information sources. The media has always played an important role in the lives of people but with ever-increasing number channels, a quest to bring new stories every hour, lack of accountability of data the place of media in the Indian society is under

criticism.

The next section of this Chapter focuses on the background and significance of the research topic.

Background and Significance of the Research Topic

India is a birthplace of many religions and at the same time is a house for many other religions of the world. This land of God for over two decades has been a victim of violence, due to which the peace of the country has been disturbed. There have been many reasons for these violent attacks, some of which are known and others are just speculation. Wars, insurgencies, religious fundamentalism, communal disharmony, economic disparities and social situations have been the key players in the disturbance of peace. There is a lack of unity in India and around the world and that is becoming a deeper problem to handle. Coexistence and tolerance are values that have become scarce.

Many Holy Scriptures offer an orientation towards living a life of peace. Most prophets over the centuries have sought peace and brotherhood as synonymous with the way of God. For example Swami Abhedananda (1997: 17) states:

God is one without a second and yet he is worshipped by different nations and various names such as Brahma, Jehovah, Yahaveh, Varun, Shiva, Vishnu, Ahuramazda, Father in heaven, Ishwar, Divine Mother, Ti, Tiem, Allah and Buddha. To know that one lord of the universe, to commune with him, to pour forth the supplication of our loving hearts at his feet and in times of distress to pray to him for help and mercy. These have always been the ideals of religion.

Mark Juergensmeyer (2005:27) suggests, “religion hardly ever is the problem but it is the role of religion that can be challenging.” Jessica Stern (2003: 18) questions how it can be “that the same faith in God that inspired Michelangelo and Mozart also inspires terrorism?” She further articulates what for many is a difficult

concept to understand, asking “why terrorists find a justification to kill when they read religious texts while others [who read the same texts] get inspired for charity.”

His Holiness the Dalai Lama believes that no religion endorses terrorism.

The essence of all major religions is compassion, forgiveness, self-discipline, brotherhood and charity. All religions have the potential to strengthen human values and to develop general harmony. But individuals twist religious beliefs for their own ends. There are people who use religion as a cover to achieve their vested interests, so it would be wrong to blame their particular religion. Religious divisions have lately become dangerous once more, and yet pluralism, under which everybody is free to practice his or her own faith, is part of the fabric of contemporary society. Buddhism may be good for me, but I cannot insist that it will also be good for you or anybody else (Dalai Lama 2001).

If religions are to pursue similar goals of cultivating peace then why are innocent people being killed by others who are using the name that they apply to their particular divinity to justify their actions? If “peace is the alpha and omega of spiritual life” (Sastri 1938: 697), a sentiment expressed similarly in diverse religious texts, then why do we in our experiences and through media influence see religion as being so inextricably linked to terrorism?

These questions take on particular significance in India that has been a victim of violence for many years. Balachandran (2005:40) states that migration, unemployment, ethnic conflict, demographic pressure, perceived injustice contribute to recurrence of violence all over the world.

The conversations that I had with my research participants considered the role of religion and peace in India today and in the future in light of the increasing number of terrorist attacks and other forms of violence. The aim of this research is to shed light on the different ways of thinking about the role of religion and the preservation

of peace based on the opinions of selected participants representing five selected belief systems of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism in India.

This topic may be significant in light of global complexities that leaders in India, and possibly beyond, face in government, education, and diplomatic and international relations. In order to support a multi-cultural environment, leaders require a better understanding of the primary belief systems in which they live so that they can make more informed decisions by keeping the people, their values, and their cultural beliefs in mind. This research can be used for curriculum development in schools and colleges.

Summary

Peace has become illusive in India today and terrorism is a key player. Terrorists have created fear, suspicion and shock among the masses by attacking people of different belief systems, age group, ethnicities, rich, poor and the middle class of India. Poverty, lack of education, ethnic conflicts, and political struggles all seem to have a hand in this chaos. The media speculates various reasons for the growing violence and terrorism in India.

India by nature is a secular country that represents numerous religions. This research presents meta-narrative on the role of religions and peace today and in the future as understood by 15 leaders in India. The richness of this conversation-based research may become a key to opening a new horizon of understandings. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama suggests, “We should explore the use of nonviolence as a long-term measure to control terrorism of every kind...The proper way of resolving differences is through dialogue, compromise and negotiations, through human

understanding and humility. We need to appreciate that genuine peace comes about through mutual understanding, respect and trust” (Dalai Lama 2001).

With this research I wish to contribute to India’s future strength by examining the role of religion and the place of peace. I hope to bring deeper understandings to the questions posed in this research and to bring out even deeper meanings. The next Chapter of this dissertation looks at India in order to create a backdrop for this study.

CHAPTER TWO - RESEARCH SITE: INDIA

Introduction

Over the centuries, India has been known for its rich culture, values, traditions, spirituality, and tolerance. It is said in the Cultural Heritage of India, “those who make the greatest appeal to the Indian mind are not the military conquerors, not the rich merchants or the great diplomats, but the holy sages” (Radhakrishnan 1937). The Indian life and culture is about “unity in variety” (Bose 1937: 8). Rabindranath Tagore (1937:21) summarizes the sentiments of most Indians when he wrote:

I love India, not because I cultivate the idolatry of geography, not because I have had the chance to be born in her soil, but because she has saved through tumultuous ages the living words that have issued from the illuminated consciousness of her great sons: Brahma is Truth, Brahma is Wisdom, Brahma is Infinite: Peace is in Brahma, goodness is in Brahma, and the unity of all beings.

India is derived from the Greek word *Indos*, meaning the river Indus. It is also known as Bharat, named after king Bharata. The constitution of India recognizes both names as they both have a geographical significance (Sardesai 2008: 2). In this Chapter I present a brief overview on India so that it will bring a context to understand the research issue at hand.

A brief history

Indian civilization is one of the oldest in the world. It flourished 4000 years ago and was known as the Indus valley civilization (Kumar, Pusalker and Dutt 1937: 37-63). According to Sardesai (2008:1), the history of India is incorporated in its present. In prehistoric India there were two main races: the Aryans and the

Dravidians. The descendants of each race are equal in number in India (Hunter 1926:39). A list of major events in the history of India is listed in Table 1 in Appendix A.

Geography and Climate

India is called *punya bhumi* or the sacred land (Bose 1937: 10). The sentiment of “The mother and the motherland are greater than heaven” resides in most Indians (Bose 1937: 10). The physical features of India have greatly influenced the history and civilization to a vast extent. In the north, for centuries the mighty Himalayas have provided protection from foreign invasions. The flora and fauna have seeped into the religious life of India. The mountains, rivers, and forests have inspired love of nature in the Indian mind (Bose 1937: 9). It is said that the climate, and the fertility of land have motivated Indian people to take up agriculture and other peaceful pursuits (Bose 1937: 10).

The Indian subcontinent looks like an irregular quadrilateral situated in the Northern Hemisphere. Due to its shape, it is also known as the “many sided diamond.” The country has a single time zone based on the “longitude of 87.5 passing through Allahabad (Prayag)” (Sardesai 2008:1-2). India is a peninsula, as noted in Figure 1 below, located in the southern part of Asia, bordered by the Bay of Bengal in the east, the Arabian Sea in the west, and the Indian Ocean in the south (India, in India, in Europa World online 2010). It shares its borders with Bangladesh, Burma, China, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan. It covers a total landmass of 14,103 kilometers and a coastline of 7000 kilometers (Mergent 2010:10). The lowest point in India is

the Indian Ocean (0m) and the highest point is at the Kanchenjunga mountain range (8598m) (Mergent 2010:11).



Figure 1: Map of India (India, in Europa World online 2010)

India represents different climatic conditions, land structures and varied lifestyle of people (Radhakrishnan 1937: 1). It falls under the tropical monsoon region. The climate of India varies from “year-around snowcapped mountains in the north to the year-round hot weather in the south”(Sardesai 2008:5).

The next section of this Chapter presents information on India from the time of Independence from the British to the present day.

India: 1947 – Present

At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old into the new; when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation long suppressed finds utterance – Jawahar Lal Nehru (Sardesai 2008: 313)

India received its independence on August 15, 1947 from the British rule. Jawahar Lal Nehru became the first prime minister of India (Metcalf & Metcalf 2006: 219). India’s independence also led to the birth of Pakistan. Pakistan was born on August 14, 1947 with Prime Minister Mohammad Ali Jinnah as the Head of State.

Today, India is the largest democracy, the second fastest growing economy, and has the third largest scientific human resource pool in the world (Sardesai 2008:1). Post-independence, the national identity of the country was developed. Below is a brief sketch of the national symbols of India. The information is drawn primarily from Indian government sources, which presents it in a highly patriotic tone. As an Indian, from my own experience, I would say that most Indians would tend to share this patriotism, but as in all democracies there is room for those who do not hold the same patriotic fervor and opinion.

National Identity

The national symbols depict the history, tradition, culture and identity of a country. Each symbol speaks of a unique cherished aspect of the country, which most Indians find a connection to (India.gov.in). Following are few symbols of India that are true to its identity:

The Flag



Figure 2: Flag of India

The national flag is tri color (deep saffron, white, green), and equal in proportion as seen in Figure 2 above. The blue wheel in the center of the white band is regarded as the wheel of law (India, in Europa World online 2010). The design of the wheel is adopted from the abacus of the Sarnath Lion Capital of Ashoka. The flag of India gives recognition to its people and represented the nation for what it stood for (Virmani 1999: 196-197). It also denotes “everyday moments from holidays to funeral services”(Jha 2008: 105-107). The Indian flag is the pride of the nation and it

represents peoples' faith in the country, commands respect, affection and loyalty from most Indians.

The State Emblem

India's motto is *Satyameva Jayate*, which means Truth Always Triumphs (Tharoor 2007:8). This motto is inscribed on the state emblem as depicted in Figure 3.



Figure 3: The State Emblem

The state emblem is adapted from the pillar in Sarnath (Lion capital of emperor Ashoka). The four lions represent the power, courage, pride and confidence of the country. This was adopted as the national seal by the government of India on 26th January 1950 (India.gov.in).

The fundamental difference between the Sarnath Lion Capital of Ashoka and the State Emblem is that “there are only three lions are visible, the fourth being hidden from view. The wheel appears in relief in the centre of the abacus with a bull on right and a horse on left and the outlines of other wheels on extreme right and left”(india.gov.in).

The National Flora and Fauna

India enjoys the tenth position in the world and fourth in Asia in plant diversity (India.gov.in). The lotus is the national flower of India. It is frequently used for artistic design and religious symbolism (Bose 1937: 10).

The Indian peacock is the national bird of India. “It is a colorful, swan-sized bird, with a fan-shaped crest of feathers, a white patch under the eye and a long, slender neck”(India.gov.in). The Tiger is the national animal of India. Unfortunately, they are an endangered species in the country today due to tiger hunting and fur trade. There are less than 3500 tigers left in India today (Herman 2007).

The National River

The rivers of India have been worshipped from ancient times because they are considered pure and holy. Their source of origination is a pilgrimage and their courses are considered sacred (Bose 1937: 8). One such sacred river is the Ganges. The Hindus consider it a holy river and many religious ceremonies take place on the banks of the river. Key Hindu religious ceremonies take place on the banks of Ganges in the cities of Allahabad, Haridwar and Varanasi. These cities are considered to be the holiest cities of the country (India.gov.in).

The Ganges is the longest river in India, which flows through 2510 kilometers of valleys, plains and mountains (India.gov.in). There are many mythological tales on the origination and personification of the holy Ganges. The Ganges originates as the Bhagirathi River in the snowfields of the Gangotri glacier in the Himalayas (India.gov.in). The Ganges basin is highly fertile and “it supports more than 400 million of India's 1.1 billion people, the majority of whom are Hindus, who revere the

river as mother and goddess” (Pokharel 2010). Unfortunately, The Ganges River is extremely polluted and has recently been allocated funds for a clean up initiative, which is supported by the World Bank (Pokharel 2010). Due to the water pollution, the Ganges River dolphin is an endangered species today (India.gov.in).

Languages

The Indian languages belong to four sects: The Aryan, Dravidian, Sino – Tibetan and the Austric. Ninety percent of the languages in the country fall under the Aryan and Dravidian categories. There are fifteen literary languages, namely: Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu (Chatterji 1937: 53-54).

According to the International Ethnologue: Languages of the World, India has the second largest group of people who use the English language, following the United States. This provides the Indian population an edge in international employment. The Sanskrit language is considered a “dead language.” As it is only used by priests performing rituals or religious ceremonies (Sardesai 2008: 11).

The Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL) was created in 1969 to bring “unity, mutual enrichment of languages and emotional integration of the people of India.” This was done in light of the 1950’s outrage when Hindi was made the official language of the country (Sardesai 2008: 12).

Political Structure

India became a republic on January 26, 1950, with New Delhi as its capital (India, in Europa World online 2010). Today, the Republic of India encompasses twenty-nine states and six union territories (Andaman and Nicobar Islands,

Chandigarh, Daman and Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Lakshadweep and Pondicherry. Unlike the states, the union territories are “administered centrally for special reasons” (Sardesai 2008: 7). The legal system of India is based on the English common law and a constitution, which was established in 1950 (Economist 2009).

Government

The legislative power is “vested in the Parliament consisting of the President and two Houses” (India, in Europa World online 2010). The President presides over the two houses in the parliament. The Indian parliament consists of the Lok Sabha (House of the People) and the Rajya Sabha (Council of States). The President is the Head of the State, and he also appoints the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister presides over the Council of Ministers that are elected members of the Parliament. The main government officials in 2010 are as follows (Economic Intelligence Unit 2010):

President: Pratibha Devisingh Patil
 Vice President: Hamid Ansari
 Prime Minister: Dr. Manmohan Singh
 Communications & information technology: A Raja (DMK)
 Defence: A K Antony (Congress)
 External affairs: S M Krishna (Congress)
 Finance: Pranab Mukherjee (Congress)
 Heavy industries & public enterprises: Vilasrao Deshmukh (Congress)
 Home affairs: P Chidambaram (Congress)
 Information & broadcasting: Ambika Soni (Congress)
 Law & justice: M Veerappa Moily (Congress)
 Petroleum & natural gas: Murli Deora (Congress)
 Power: Sushilkumar Shinde (Congress)
 Railways: Mamata Banerjee (TMC)
 Road transport & highways: Kamal Nath (Congress)
 Steel: Virbhadra Singh (Congress)

Political Parties

The scene of the political parties in India is varied and dynamic. Since the constitution was adopted in 1950, India has had fifteen general elections. The Indian politicians range from movie stars to cricketers. Indian politics is a “free field for parties of all kinds of opinions, including communists, who range all the way from the ultra violent, radical Naxalites to the communist government of West Bengal” (Sardesai 2008:8 -9). The main political parties in India are listed below (Economist Intelligence Unit 2010):

Indian National Congress; Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP); All India Trinamool Congress (TMC); Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK); Samajwadi Party (SP); Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD); Janata Dal (United); Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP); All India Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK); Bijou Janata Dal (BJD); Nationalist Congress Party (NCP); Communist Party of India (Marxist), or CPI (M)

The segment below covers the economic identity of India and is followed by social topics concerning India.

Economic Overview

Over the last fifty years the Indian economy has evolved from an agrarian economy to “ a more modern economy, with expertise in textiles, chemicals, food processing, steel production among others, as well as knowledge based industries such as IT, pharmaceuticals and biotechnology.” However, agriculture remains the backbone of Indian economy, “as three fifths of the workforce is agricultural in nature” and handicrafts occupy an important place in the Indian economy (Mergent 2010:2).

According to Economic Intelligence Unit (2008), India is defined as a two-tier economy. The service sector employs the “brightest of the middle class” whereas; the

agricultural sector uses “the majority of the vast and poorly educated labor force.” The Indian economic history can be divided into two parts post-independence. The first period is marked from 1947-1990, which was about “excessive state planning and strangulating economic controls,” and the second period from 1991 and onwards, which is about economic liberalization, privatization and globalization. Due to the 1991 change in economic policies, India is considered as one of the fastest growing economy in the world today after China. For a decade now, India has had a consistent annual growth rate of 7-8 percent. It is predicted that by the year 2015, India will be the third largest economy in the world (Sardesai 2008: 407).

Currently the Indian economy is the 12th largest economy in the world when measured in “nominal US dollars.” However, “if the purchasing power parity exchange rates are considered then India becomes the 4th largest economy in the world” (Economist 2009). The Economist Intelligence Unit Ltd (2010) states that the Indian work force is abundant and is easy to train. They are considered “a good pool of well-educated and competent staff, including technicians and engineers.” This is because of the continuous production of graduates. The information technology, business process outsourcing, telecom and manufacturing industries have created many jobs in India but the Indian economy is still agrarian in nature (Economist 2009). According to the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics, 18.1% of the total exports are contributed by the agricultural sector. The key agricultural products of India are: Rice, wheat, oilseed, cotton, jute, tea, sugarcane, potatoes, onions, dairy products, sheep, goats, poultry, and fish (Mergent 2010:5).

The Gross Domestic Product of India has been rising since 1997. An average growth rate of more than 7% in the decade has been seen since 1997, reducing poverty by about 10 percentage points. India achieved 8.5% GDP growth in 2006, 9.0% in 2007, and 7.3% in 2008” (Mergent 2010:2). Though exports have risen significantly, so have imports (Economist 2009). In 2007, the Balance of Payments reflected a higher trade deficit (US\$ 79.9 billion) than in 2006 (US\$ 62.1 billion) (Economist 2009). The global financial crisis of 2008 hit India hard with “the sliding stock market, currency slump and the liquidity crisis of the banking sector” (Economist 2009). Following are the key indicators for the Indian economy from 2008 -2013, as listed in Table 2 below (Economist 2009):

Key indicators	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Real GDP growth (%)	6.0	5.0	6.4	8.0	8.2	7.9
Consumer price inflation (av; %)	8.3	5.9	4.5	5.3	5.2	5.2
Budget balance (% of GDP)	-6.4	-7.3	-6.2	-5.5	-4.4	-4.3
Current-account balance (% of GDP)	-3.3	-3.4	-3.1	-2.1	-1.5	-0.5
Lending rate (av; %)	12.9	10.5	10.7	11.0	11.5	12.0
Exchange rate Rs:US\$ (av)	43.5	50.6	49.6	48.3	47.2	46.1
Exchange rate Rs:¥100 (av)	42.1	54.0	54.2	53.1	52.4	51.2

Table 2: Economic Indicators

Though, India is a fast growing economy, it still faces many challenges like “massive population, extensive poverty” and violence (Mergent 2010). The following section of this Chapter introduces some of the social situations and issues of India.

Social Topics

Education

The constitution of India commits to free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 (educationforallindia.com). The definition of literacy is being able to read and write for age 15 and up. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2007), the literacy rate is 66% in India (India, in Europa World online 2010). It is apparent that men are encouraged more to pursue education than women. This is clearly visible through the statistics above where 76.9% male and 54.5% female were shown as being literate (India, in Europa World online 2010).

Population and Poverty

India is the second most populated country in the world after China (Sardesai 2008: 1). Due to this reason, Indians are one sixth of the entire world population. With the help of medical sciences, the mortality rates have declined and the population of India grew from 359 million to 679 million in thirty years (Sardesai 2008: 415). India has a population of 1,166,079,217 (July 2009 estimate); out of which, 31.1% fall in the age bracket of 0-14, 63.6% in the age bracket of 15 – 64 and 5.3% fall in the age category of 65 and over (Mergent 2010:13). The problem of population explosion has resulted in scarcity of resources, unemployment and underemployment. Therefore, poverty of India is directly linked to the constantly growing population.

Religion and Secularism

India is the birthplace of four major religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Zoroastrianism came from outside and yet have influenced India in a way that cannot be defined (Blackwell 2004: 102). According to the 2001 Census Report, there are 80.5% Hindus, 13.4% Muslims, 2.3% Christians, 1.9% Sikh, 1.8% other and unspecified 0.1% (Mergent 2010:14). Today, the number of Jewish Indians is estimated at .0005 percent of the total population. This is because of the emigration of the Jews after the “independence and founding of Israel” (Blackwell 2004: 105). The Zoroastrians (also known as Parsis or people from Persia) make up .01 percent of the Indian population. They are considered an endangered community because nearly 1,000 Parsis die annually and only 300 to 400 babies are born each year (Blackwell 2004:105). Interfaith marriage is considered invalid under the Zoroastrian faith. Hence, the Parsi men and women have to marry within their own community (Joshi 2003).

The majority of the Indian population follows Hinduism. A major tenet of Hinduism, as pointed out by Sardesai (2008: 10) is tolerance, which supports a secular tradition. The stance of tolerance is ascribed to “the *Upanishadic* belief that all paths lead to the same god or absolute truth. It is also believed that God manifests through various forms to guide the human race. Therefore, all religions and their founders are respected in India.” This attitude of tolerance, as Sardesai continues, “has helped India make tolerant attitude has helped India make secularism a part of its constitution and system of laws, which are largely based on their western counterparts.”

The constitution of India makes it a secular nation and a pluralistic society. India has always given refuge to the persecuted people of various religions regardless of their origin. This includes the Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians and the Buddhists. The main reason that led to the 1962 war between India and China was giving refuge to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and 35,000 followers based on the tradition of tolerance and respect (Sardesai 2008: 9 – 10).

Violence

The independence of India also led to the partition of the nation. Pakistan was created as a homeland for the Muslims. The Partition of India took a million lives. The Muslims fled from India into Pakistan while the Hindus, Sikhs escaped to India (Blackwell 2004: 198). Since then there has been extreme tension and rivalry between India and Pakistan.

Today, one of the fundamental concerns of India is the ongoing dispute with Pakistan over the occupation of Kashmir (Mergent 2010:23). Kashmir defines the identity of both India and Pakistan (Metcalf & Metcalf 2006: 224). India has fought five wars (1948, 1962, 1965 1971, 1999) since its independence. Out of the five wars, four have been against Pakistan, and one against China. Three out of the four wars were regarding the occupancy of Kashmir, and one for the independence of Bangladesh (Sardesai 2008: 20).

India has continuously suffered horrific violence, communal incidents and terrorism post independence. Not only have these events left a permanent scar on India but also they have disturbed the peace, stability and growth of the nation. Operation Blue Star (1984) at the Golden Temple of Amritsar was convened to stop

the creation of a separate state called “Khallistan” for the Sikhs. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated the same year by her Sikh bodyguards, which led to anti-Sikh riots in New Delhi. Unfortunately, “Thousands of innocent Sikh men, women and children were killed by angry mobs” (Sardesai 2008: 350). Unfortunately, no one was ever brought to trial for this riot (Metcalf & Metcalf 2006: 260).

Babri Masjid – Ramjanambhoomi dispute led to the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992 based on the legend that the Masjid was built over a temple, which was the birth place of Lord Rama. The demolition of Babri Masjid shocked the people and threatened the secular credentials of India (Sardesai 2008: 369). In another shocking incident, on the 10th anniversary of the Babri Masjid, two railway coaches in Godhra were set on fire with Hindu passengers on it. This led to massive riots and massacre in 2002 (Blackwell 2004: 132). Other dreadful experiences include the serial bomb blasts of Mumbai (1993), attack on the Parliament (2001), sequential bombing of multiple markets in New Delhi (2005), commuter train bombings of Mumbai (2006).

Summary

India has an extensive cultural and religious heritage. It is a birthplace of four major religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Zoroastrianism are other religions that house in India. India has always sheltered the persecuted. Post independence from the British, India has been termed as a developing country. It is considered the second fastest growing economy, and has the third largest scientific human resource pool in the world. It is also the largest democracy in the world with a secular constitution.

Though India houses diverse occupations, the Indian economy is agrarian in nature. After the economic reforms of 1991, India started growing at 7-8 percent per year in terms of GDP. India is the 12th largest economy in the world when measured in the US Dollars. With the global financial crisis of 2008, the Indian economy has been hugely affected by the sliding stock market, currency fall and the liquidity crisis of the banking sector. Unfortunately, poverty, illiteracy and population explosion are other factors that are still posing to be a challenge for India. In addition, the peace and development of the country is unstable due to external and internal terrorism, insurgencies and other forms of violence. Over all, India is progressing despite the many challenges and obstacles in its path of development, stability and peace.

The remaining Chapters of my dissertation include relevant literature review of the topic at hand, critical hermeneutic theory, a description of the research process, presentation and analysis of the data collected, findings and implications for healing India.

CHAPTER THREE - REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The first section of this Chapter discusses the history of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism in India. The second section examines violence in India.

History of Religions in India

Buddhism

The golden rule of Buddhism (North American Interfaith Network 2008) is, “Treat not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.” - *The Buddha* Udana – Varga 5.18.

Bihar is regarded as the “Greece and Rome for India” and is the cradle of Buddhism (Anand 1996:1-11). Buddhism is a spiritual philosophy that originated in Bihar (India) nearly 2500 years ago. It grew rapidly in Southeast Asia, China, and also penetrated the West. The emphasis of Buddhism is on “ethics, humanism, compassion and wisdom,” which can make it a universal religion (Samtani 1983: 111). The Indian population mainly consists of Theravada Buddhists but due to the exile of the Dalai Lama, India has had an opportunity to study “Mahayana” or “Tibetan patterns of Buddhism” (Samtani 1983: 117-118).

In the world, every fourth person is a Buddhist. Buddhism spread so quickly in India and elsewhere because it was simple and had a place for reason. Religious discontent and socio-economic changes were key factors that made it attractive to the people. Buddha’s “search for truth, his means of attainment and his method of

preaching were based on his rational approach and practical experience” (Anand 1996:27-41).

Siddhartha Gautama, also known as Buddha (the awakened one) lived from 567 B.C. to 487 B.C., was the founder of a local movement that became a religion in India, and held an important place in the world. He attained enlightenment at Bodhi-Gaya in 532BC (Anand 1996: 2-11). Keith (1923: 147) suggests Buddha had the “most commanding personality ever produced by the eastern world.” Anand (1996: 31) states:

The commanding personality of the Buddha, his self sacrifice, the strength of his character, his spiritual attainments, his super sensual visions and occasional manifestation of miraculous powers... convinced people of his spiritual greatness and made them attach importance to his words.

Buddha is considered more of a social reformer than a religious leader. His eight-fold (Right understanding, thoughts, speech, actions, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration) path tackles social problems in a society rather than religious issues. His preaching teaches the appropriate conduct of living for human beings (Anand 1996:20 - 29).

After attaining his enlightenment, Buddha traveled to different parts of Bihar to preach. He taught for forty-six years and devoted eight out of the twelve months to travel and preach. The remaining four months he would stay at a fixed location due to the rainy season (Anand 1996: 2-3). Lord Buddha spent the last year of his life in Bihar. The remains of his body were divided and given to parties that claimed a share in it. The first three Buddhist councils were held in Bihar and the Buddhist canons were reduced to writing before the third century B.C. (Anand 1996: 11).

Jawahar Lal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, “greatly valued the contribution of Buddhism to world peace.” In 1956 to avoid caste discrimination of the Indian society, four million “untouchables” converted to the faith of Buddhism under the leadership of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. This was regarded as an “epoch making event in the history of the revitalization of the Buddhist movement in India” (Samtani 1983: 137-138). The following map in Figure 4 indicates the spread of Buddhism from India to the world:

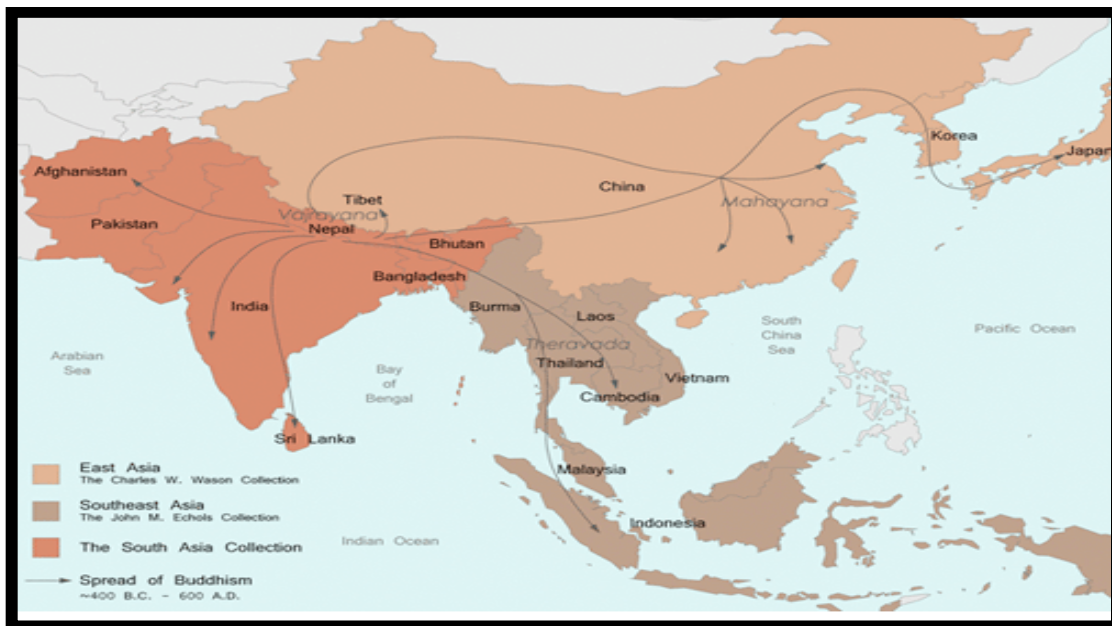


Figure 4: Spread of Buddhism

Christianity

The golden rule of Christianity (North American Interfaith Network 2008) is, “In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.” – Jesus, Matthew 7:12.

In India, Christian life has been present for the last two thousand years. It was established before many European countries came into existence. However, Christianity found its way into parts of the Roman Empire, which in turn later became

Europe. The “ancient Christian communities of Western Asia, the Indian subcontinent and continental Asia” fall under Eastern Christianity (Fernando & Sauch 2004: 57).

Christians fled to India in A.D. 345 to seek refuge from a severe persecution by emperor Sapor II. Archeological evidence points out that there was a lot of migration and the Christians of India enjoyed a high status in the Indian society. Christianity in India has helped promote literacy, elevate the status of women, and establish cottage industries (Abraham 1956: 548-570).

The data on the first set of Christians in India are not known for sure. In the opening chapter of the Acts of Thomas, the story of the spread of Christianity in India is stated. According to this text, when St. Thomas was asked to go to India, he refused saying that he is a Hebrew man and “how can he go among Indians and preach the truth?” Even with his refusal, St. Thomas found himself in India (Neill 1984:26- 27).

The Acts of Thomas claims that St. Thomas came to India in the first century after the death of Jesus Christ. Ancient writers have “mentioned India as a place where St. Thomas brought the Gospel of Jesus after preaching to the ‘Parthians’ somewhere in modern day Iran.” The Christian community of India believes that the Thomas Christians of Kerala are the earliest Christians in the country. St. Thomas is said to have first preached to the Jews in Kerala and the local population (Fernando & Sauch 2004: 59-60). This community of people identify themselves as Thomas Christians and believes of St. Thomas as their apostle. The Thomas Christians of South India are also called the Syrian Christians (Abraham 1956: 548). The Thomas Christians are divided into two groups: The Thekkumbhagar (from the south) and the Vadakkumbhagar (from the north) (Fernando & Sauch 2004: 61).

Vasco da Gama brought in the influence of the Roman Catholic Church with his arrival to India in 1498. The relationship between the existing Syrian church and the newer Roman Catholic Church deteriorated as time passed (Abraham 1956: 550).

Protestant missionary William Carey added another chapter to the history of Christianity in India. He is known as the father of the modern missionary enterprise. The Bible translation, journalism and primary education are some of his outstanding efforts towards the development of India (Abraham 1956: 564). Figure 5 below depicts the spread of Christianity from the western world to India:

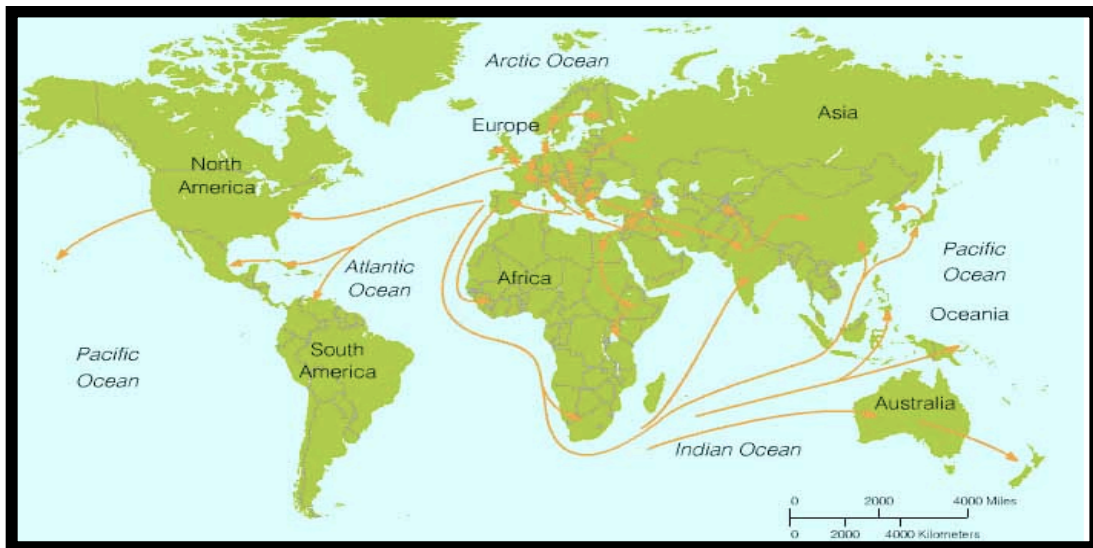


Figure 5: Spread of Christianity

Hinduism

The golden rule of Hinduism (North American Interfaith Network 2008) is, “This is the sum of duty: do not do to others what could cause pain if done to you”- Mahabharata 5:1517.

Hinduism is the one of the oldest religions in the world. It is known as “Sanatana Dharma,” which means eternal faith (Singh 1983: 19). Hinduism is one of the world’s most complex and interesting religions. The religion has no single

founder, authoritative figure, or one deity worshipped by all. Multiple streams of tradition merged to create Hinduism (Sullivan 2004: 2 – 8). Singh (1983:19) argues Hinduism as a collection of wisdom and inspiration of great sages since the dawn of Indian civilization. Sullivan (2004: 3) suggests, “A scholarly debate exists as to whether Hinduism is one religion or several.” In 1893 while addressing the first Parliament of Religions in Chicago, Swami Vivekananda (1893) pointed out that Hinduism believes in tolerance, universal acceptance and all religions being true.

The Vedas are ancient religious texts of the Hindus revealed to the sages. There are four groups of Vedas namely: Rg Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda and Atharva Veda (Sullivan 2004: 9 – 15).

The Rg Veda is the earliest collection of Aryan hymns addressed to numerous Gods of heaven and earth. The Rg Veda hymns occupy an important place in the religious life of Hindus. The Rg Veda created the caste system, which was based on occupation. The Brahmin taught the Vedas, The Ksatriya managed the defense, the Vaisya was in-charge of feeding people and the Shudras were the serving class, who looked after the needs of the people. Unfortunately, the caste system was abused but since the constitution of India (1950), discrimination based on caste or class is treated as a crime. The Sama Veda is the collection of Rg Veda verses for liturgy. The Yajur Veda contains the Vedic formula for sacrifices and the Atharva Veda contains magic and spells to achieve what one desires (Herman 1991: 50-53).

The next phase that added a knowledge base to Hinduism was the Bhagavad Gita (drawn from Mahabharata an epic poem) (Herman 1991: 89). The Harappan culture and the Indus Valley civilization have made the following contributions to Hinduism:

Phallic worship, meditational and bhakti yogas, worship of the Great Mother (whose status may be similar to that of the Mother Goddess and magna mater of Mesopotamia and the ancient Mediterranean religions of the same period), cult of trees, water, animals, beliefs in transmigration and liberation, together with a host of indigenous village deities, demons, ghosts, and spirits (Herman 1991: 49).

The religion of the Vedas (Vedic Brahminism) became a religion of the rich as they could afford the priests and their expensive demands. A change was needed and this led to the birth of Brahmanism through *Upanisads*. *Upanisads* are called the secret teachings of Hinduism and are a collection of commentaries from the Vedas (Herman 1991: 63). The history of Hinduism can be seen as a “process of challenge and response... firstly briefly withdrawing into a shell and then with its unparalleled capacity for assimilation and regeneration by a new resurgence”... [it absorbed] Buddhist, Jain movements (Singh 1983:55). Figure 6 depicts the spread of Hinduism from India to the world:

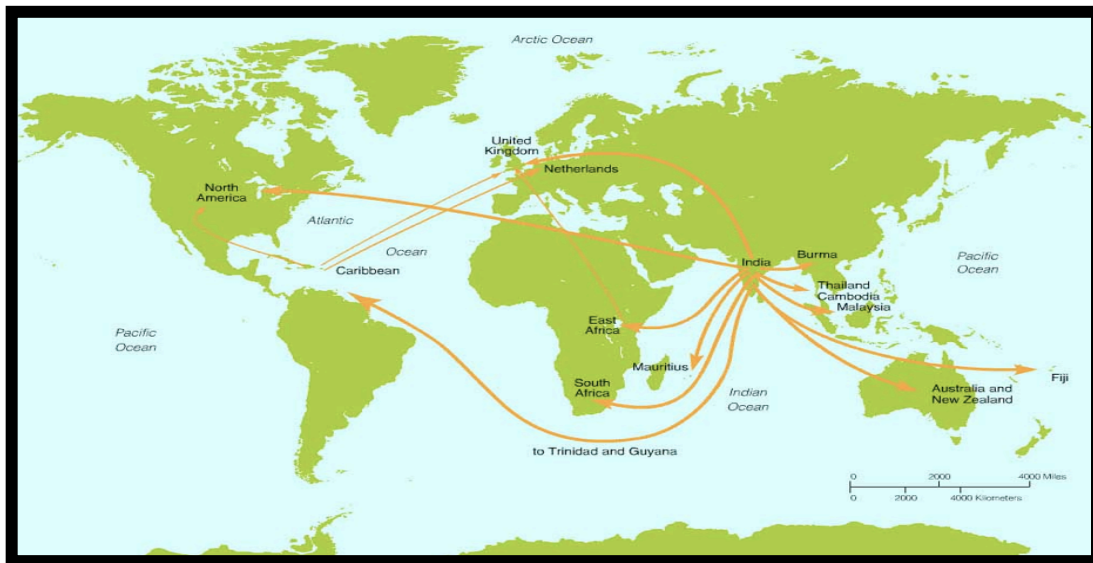


Figure 6: Spread of Hinduism

Islam

The golden rule of Islam (North American Interfaith Network 2008) is, “Not one of you truly believes until you wish for others what you wish for yourself”- The Prophet Muhammad, Hadith.

India is not only a land of Vedas and a home of the Hindus, it also the motherland for millions of Muslims (Titus 1959: 1). Muslims of India are “an essential part of Indian life, but with a distinctiveness of their own.” The Muslims have been predominant in the northern part of India for approximately a thousand years and are the “most important constituent of the national economy of India” (Kabir 1956: 579). Every seventh person in the world today is a Muslim and approximately every third person from this pool of people is either from India or Pakistan (Titus 1959: 1). Figure 7 below depicts the spread of Islam:

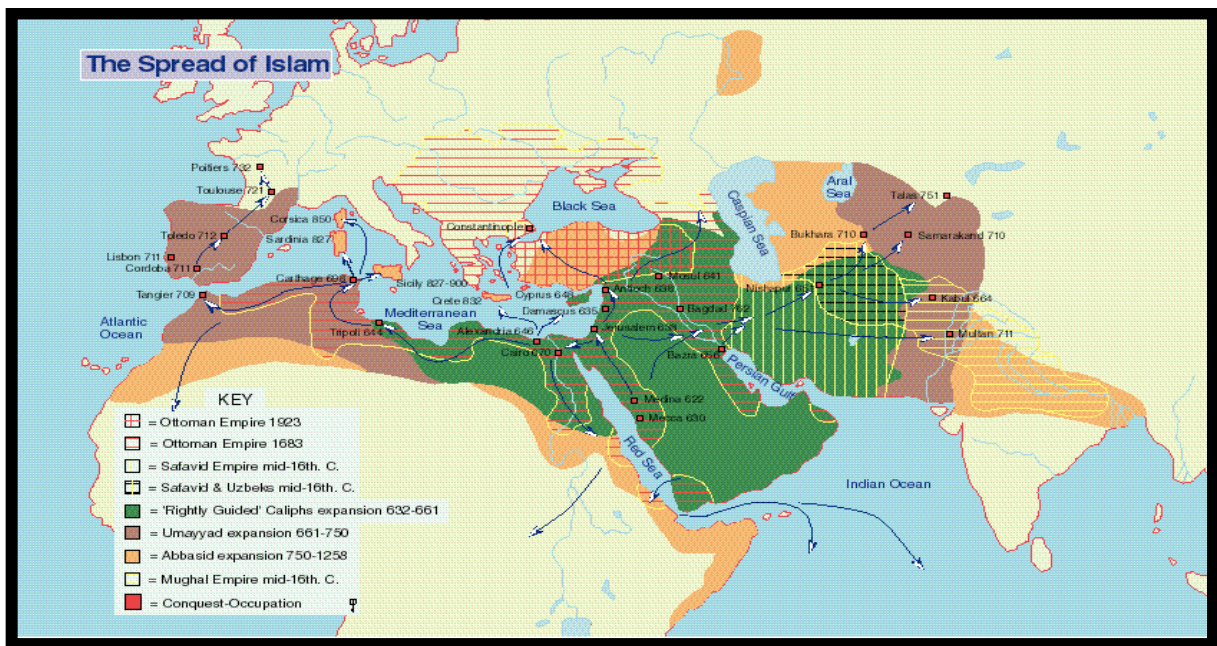


Figure 7: Spread of Islam

The Indian Muslim occupies a very special place in Indian history. Two factors have contributed to the “mental makeup and evolution” of the Indian Muslim are the “influence of Islam and the philosophy of life represented by it and the influence of Indian culture and civilization” (Kabir 1956: 579).

With the introduction of Islam in Sind by Arab general Muhammad bin Quasim the history of Islam in India began in A.D. 711 (Titus 1959: 4). The expansion of Islam was over the years and it took a major shape when the Mahmud of Gazni (a Turk), entered India for trading, looting and slaughtering of infidels. Mahmud of Gazni raided India twelve times from A.D. 1001 to A.D.1027. These reasons have contributed to the wide spread of Islam in India (Titus 1959:6). Unfortunately, this also led to a deep-seated communal rivalry in India. The conflict in religious ideology and the poor economic conditions of the Muslims became one of the main causes for the partition of India (Titus 1956: 215). Kingsley Davis (1951: 195) describes the breeding resentment before the partition of India as follows:

Two more contrasting religions would be difficult to find. Islam was rigorously monotheistic, Hinduism profusely polytheistic...to express hostility, the Muslims would sometimes slaughter cows, or destroy a Hindu temple. The Hindus would throw a pig into a Muslim quarter or desecrate a mosque.

On the other hand, Kabir (1956:584) states that Islam was well received by those people of India who “were not only the oppressed and unprivileged, but also a section of the intelligentsia who were drawn by the simplicity and vigor of the new faith.”

Titus (1959:36-37) mentions that the “spread of Islam by the sword has been told so repeatedly that it is not easy for the casual reader of history to realize that its followers ever employed any other method.” The people of India too were attacked by military and political power to convert to Islam but there is also evidence of peaceful conversions taking place in India. The peaceful conversions started with the Muslim traders. They are mentioned in history as an influential power to disseminate Islam because they were the first to arrive in India. Kabir (1956:588) states, the

Muslim settlement brought the following changes in India: The opening of doors to the west, uniform administration, restoration of peace in the northern part of India and the outlook of unity for all of India.

Kabir (1956: 579-582) states “India is the one exception where neither has Islam been overpowered by India nor has India been absorbed into the Islamic world.” Muslims entered to conquer India through military attack but “were themselves largely conquered culturally.”

Judaism

The golden rule of Judaism (North American Interfaith Network: 2008) is, “What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. This is the whole Torah; all the rest is commentary” – *Hillel*, Talmud, Shabbat 31a.

Judaism is one of the oldest religions that trace its origin to Abraham (father of the people) born 4000 years ago in Babylonia (modern Iraq) (Kolet 1983: 277). Jews have been living in India for the last 2000 years. India showed its tolerance and hospitality by ensuring that Jewish people lived a life of honor, and respect. They have never faced any anti-semitism from the people or the government (Kolet 1983: 297). Nathan Katz (2000:3) states:

The study of Indian Jewish communities demonstrates that in Indian culture an immigrant group gains status precisely by maintaining its own identity. Such is the experience not only of India’s Jews, but also of local Christians, Zoroastrians, and recently Tibetan Buddhists. This striking feature of Indian civilization is reflected by each of these immigrant groups.

There were close to 30,000 Jews in India in 1940’s but now there are approximately 7000 Jews left. After the independence of Israel, most of the Jewish people emigrated to Israel, USA and the Commonwealth countries. Kolet (1983: 297)

states, “The last group of Jews came to India as businessmen during the 19th century from Iraq and other countries of the Middle East.” According to Rabbi Romiel Daniel (president of the Indian Jewish Congregation of USA) at a Seminar on History of Jews in India (2010), there are 70,000 Indian Jews in Israel and 56 Indian Jewish synagogues. Figure 8 depicts the settlement of Jews in India:



Figure 8: Settlement of Jews in India

Cochin Jews (Cochinis), Bene-Israel and Badhdadi Jews are the three main kinds of Jews in India. They all follow the “Sepharadi form of worship and ritual” (Kolet 1983: 297). Mentioned below is a brief history on the three types of Jews in India:

The Cochin Jews state that they originated in Jerusalem “having fled the Roman invasion and destruction of the second temple in 70 C. E” (Katz 2000: 2). A metaphor described by Nathan Katz in his book, Who are the Jews of India? describes

the place of Cochin Jews' in a Hindu nation as, "side-by-side but not submerged, acculturated but not assimilated" (Katz 2000: 10). Today there are 17 Jews in Cochin (jewsofindia.org). The Cochin Jews had a "historical consciousness about themselves...their continuity with mainstream Jewish history and norms equipped them to balance the cultural worlds of Judaism and Hinduism"(Katz 2000:162).

On the other hand, the Bene-Israel got absorbed in the Indian culture because they had lost their "intellectual equipment in their legendary shipwreck. The story of their recovery to the Jewish world is as unlikely as it is inspiring" (Katz 2000:162). Today the Bene-Israel dominates the Jewish presence in India (jewsofindia.org). The arrival date of the Bene- Israel is not definite. Their origin is traced back to the northern kingdom of Israel and the ten lost tribes. The following legend has become a "pseudo history" (Katz 2000: 93):

Some sixteen or eighteen hundred years ago, they say, their ancestors were wrecked on Indian shores....They came as refugees from persecution and political overthrow, but speedily found themselves again involved in disaster ere they reached the shore on which they had intended to establish their new home. Only fourteen of their number-seven men and seven women- survived the shipwreck, and these were cast ashore at a village called Nawgaon, in the close proximity of Alibag, the present chief town of the Kolaba Collectorate, and situated about twenty miles south of Bombay.

The Baghdadi Jews were mainly refugees or outcasts who came to India as "a reaction to dangerous persecution in Iran, Iraq and elsewhere" (Katz 2000: 162). These Jews spoke Arabic and Persian languages. They established a community in Surat (north of Mumbai). Today there are only 200 Baghdadi Jews in India. Most of the Baghdadi Jews have emigrated to Canada, U.K and Australia (jewsofindia.org).

Although, most of the Jews have relocated from India, they have not completely disappeared. The Bene-Israel community of Mumbai is quite active (Katz 2000:164).

While Israel is in the process of preserving elements of Indian Jewish heritage, “languages are forgotten, memories are fading and community ties with India are dissolving in the melting pot of Israel” (Katz 2000:165).

The next section of this Chapter will examine the violence-prone regions in India.

Violence in India

Introduction

Post Independence, India has been dealing with the problem of terrorism and insurgency (Raman 2003). India’s strength of being multicultural environment overtime has also become its biggest weakness. Different sects feel that the other community is overpowering them in terms of rights, funding and favors of the government. The extreme opinions lead to formation of terrorist groups internally.

The concept of ‘India’ is a myth for many states of the country. They view ‘India’ as an imposition and find it extremely challenging to relate to the concept of India. Certain states have tried unsuccessfully to break away from being a part of the nation. Their reasoning is that “there is not and never was an India possessing...any sort of unity, physical, political, social or religious; no ‘Indian nation,’ no ‘people of India’.” Each state feels that it has a unique identity related to its culture, language, tradition and faith (Barua 2006: 8).

For some of the states India means “Hindianization of India. People resent the imposition of Hindi as the official language.” Also, they feel a weak connection to the motherland because of years of neglect from the government, an unclear identity and their role in the country. They assume that Hindi speaking states get preferential treatment from the central government. Other states view “India” as a nation of the Hindus where minority communities have no say. The so-called “preferred” or “majority” communities’ protest that they do not get enough attention because the government is too busy pleasing its “minority” communities (Barua 2006: 47). Over all, “unity in diversity” is a grand design for the conception of India with no blue print of an orientation to understanding and a weak implementation plan. Hence, it is a major roadblock for India.

According to General V.P. Malik (2010:3-10), due to the political infighting, India lacks strategic thinking regarding security measures. He further states that India has a huge unity in diversity provided “a socio-political and socio-economic equilibrium is maintained.” However, with a slight imbalance there is “more diversity and less unity.” Unfortunately, “this has been the hallmark of India’s history” which has always been exploited. Therefore, India needs to unite its people first before it can proceed forward. Hence, for the “interest of Indian nationalism” identities need “be underplayed and not emphasized. The South Asia Terrorism Portal identifies India’s conflict regions. See Figure 9 below:

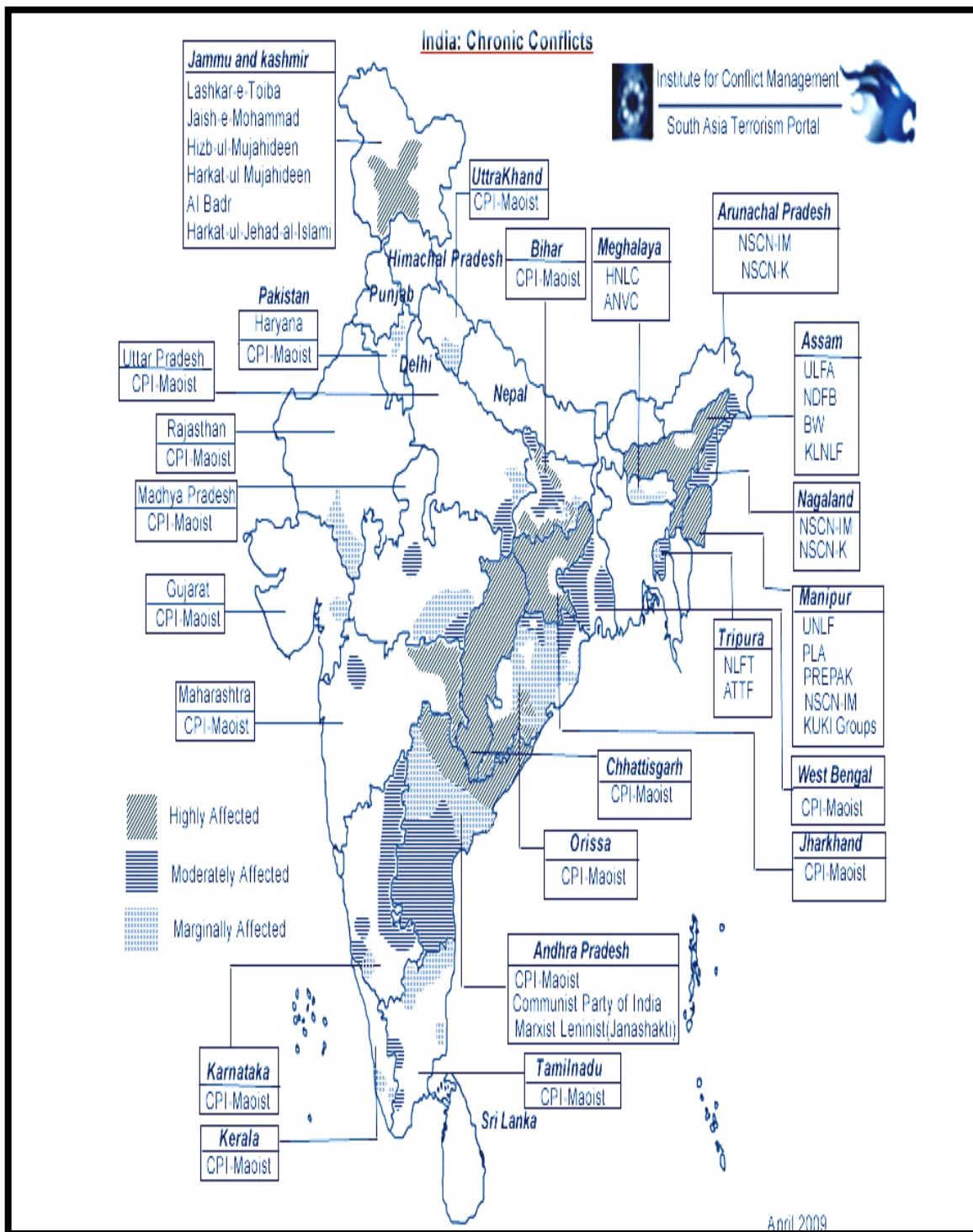


Figure 9: Conflict regions of India

Terrorism by Region

North & Northeastern India

The northern part of India has problems related to terrorism mainly due to the Kashmir issue that began with independence, and the partition of India. Religious differences are reported as the root cause for terrorism in the Kashmir conflict (Raman 2003). The creation of a separate state called “Khalistan” (land of the pure) for the Sikhs, and the demolition of the Babri Masjid to display Hindutva are other examples of violence that took many lives, damaged property and scathed the memory of many Indians. The Institute for the Study of Violent Groups reports:

A large number of terrorist groups in India will cease to exist once the Kashmir issue is resolved. The ISI funds a large number of these groups in order to gain control over Kashmir. If the matter is settled, there will be no reason for the existence of these terrorist groups in India (isvg.org).

The situation in Kashmir needs to be resolved in a similar fashion as Khalistan. K.P.S Gill (2001) (former police chief for Punjab) confirms, “the Terrorism in Punjab has on occasion, been projected as a natural consequence of...unfulfilled aspirations of the Sikhs, ...however, [the] movement of Khalistan was created out of a pattern of venal politics, and a brazen jockeying for power.”

The northeastern states of India have a separatist tendency. The British rule in India has been held accountable for the same. The Executive Intelligence Review states:

The root cause of the problem is the conditions set in place by British rule in the Northeast since 1826...New Delhi’s inability to integrate the region stems from its failure to recognize that the British Raj had converted Northeast India into a human zoo, where each tribe was allowed to roam free within its “own territory”, but was not allowed to cross the boundaries set forth by their British masters and establish contact with the rest of India.

The northeastern states are known as the seven sisters but the “are becoming more and more separated from one another. The region once lived in harmony, before being divided into individual states. Each ethnic group is now asserting its identity, mostly by violent means, and demanding a separate territory” (Barua 2006: 28).

Assam and Tripura are affected by violence because of the uncontrollable illegal immigration of Muslims from Bangladesh (Raman 2003). Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur states face terrorism because of the feelings of “ethnic separateness” (Raman 2003). The goal of the Naga people is to maintain independence against the “expansionist colonial policy of the Indian State.” They also sense neglect at the state and central level. Currently, the Naga leaders are in talks with the central government hoping for a positive outcome. Manipur is in the grip of narcotic insurgency (Barua 2006: 27- 40). It has been reported that all terrorist activity funding for the north comes from Pakistan’s external intelligence agency ISI (Inter Services Intelligence).

Central India

Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal are states that suffer violence and terrorism due to the absence of land reforms, unemployment and exploitation of landless laborers (Raman 2003). Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhatisgarh, Jharkhand are most affected by Naxalism. There are 20,000-armed cadres and a total of 50,000 Naxalite cadres in India (India, in Europa World online 2010). The “Red Corridor” is a term used to mark the placement of rebels “who claim to be fighting for the rights of the rural poor” (India, in Europa World online 2010). The Naxalites emerged in the late 1960s in West Bengal (India, in Europa World online 2010). The objective is to

“fight against the oppression and exploitation of the peasants and create a classless society” (Barua 2006: 56).

Southern India

The people from Southern India feel neglected and believe that the Hindi speaking populace gets preferential treatment from the government. Therefore, the “movement in the southern states is based on the three issues of nationalism, ethnicity, and language (Barua 2006: 48).

Other Statistics on Terrorism

Most of the terrorist attacks are on places that terrorists hail from in India (Varma & Nagarajan 2008). From the year 2001 to 2007, 71% of the communal incidents in India took place in locations from which the terrorists were from (Varma & Nagarajan 2008). “It appears, therefore, that there is some correlation between the areas from where terrorists are arising and the deep sense of siege and fear that follows communal violence” (Varma & Nagarajan 2008). In India many extremist group think that opting for violence is the only way for a change to take place. Therefore, there are 51 extremist groups in India today (Barua 2006: 72).

Summary

The literature on the history of the five religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism) and violence in India deepen our understanding on the subject matter at hand. The diversity of the country requires understanding.

Various theories from critical hermeneutics will be discussed briefly as they act as a prime medium for data analysis in this research, selection of participants, and collection of data will be discussed in the next Chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR - RESEARCH PROCESS

Introduction

Chapter Four of this dissertation discusses the research process as depicted in Figure 10 below. This research is participatory in nature, with its roots in critical hermeneutic theory. The research process is drawn from Herda (1999). This research has abided by the Human Subjects regulations of the University of San Francisco (see Appendix B). The first section provides an overview of the theoretical framework, followed by a description of the participants, methods of data collection, a summary of the pilot study and the background of the researcher. The pilot conversation analysis and implications text can be found in Appendix C.

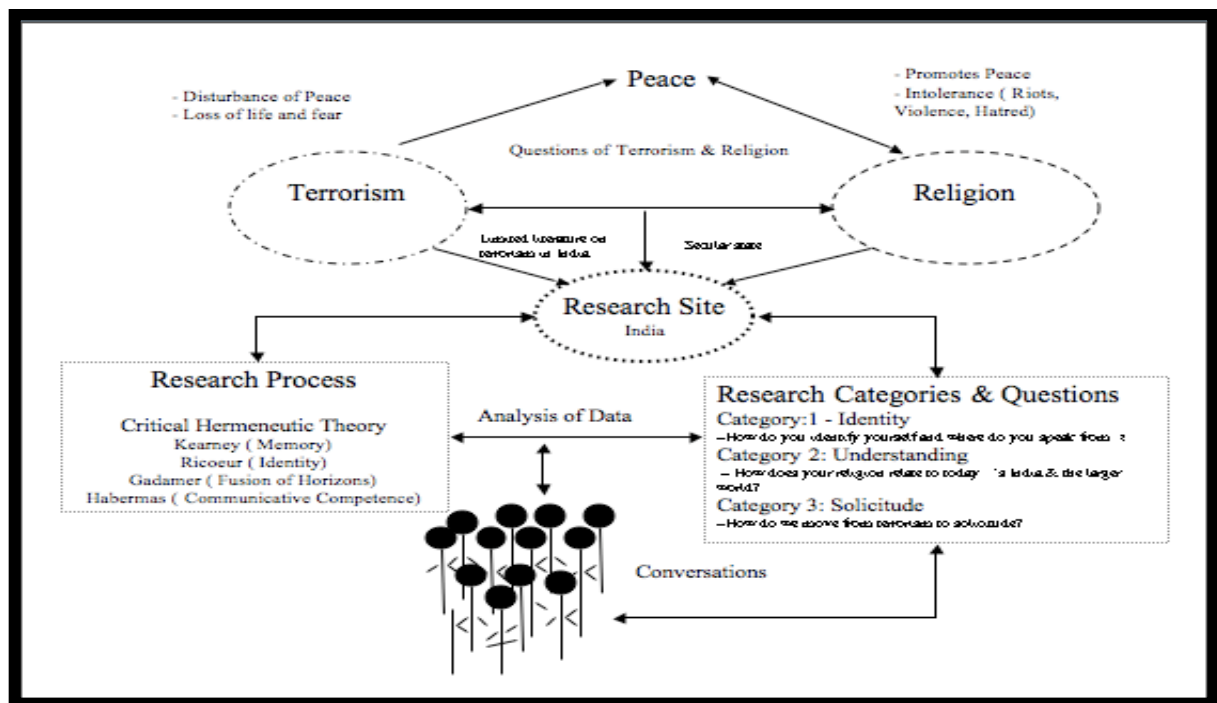


Figure 10: Research Process

Theoretical Framework

Selected concepts of Critical Hermeneutics are used for the analysis. Paul Ricoeur, Hans Georg Gadamer and Jürgen Habermas are the key theorists for this research data analysis.

Narrative Identity

Ricoeur's writings play a significant role in the analysis for this research, in particular his theories on narrative identity. Ricoeur (1992: 147-148) explains the concept of narrative identity as "the narrative constructs the identity of the character, what can be called his or her narrative identity, in construction that of the story told. It is the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character" In other words, according to Ricoeur, it is the identity of the story that makes the identity of character.

Narrative identity addresses individual identity and the stories that define that identity. Individuals make sense of identity in much the same way as readers of a text understand the identity of characters in stories. Ricoeur suggests that "we learn to become the narrator of our own story without completely becoming the author of our life" (Ricoeur 1992: 41).

Narrative is the key to identity. As Fontaine (2006) posits, with the stories come important interpretations, including the concepts that

- We come to understand the characters (ourselves) by way of the plot.
- Each person's individual identity always intersects those of other persons in the narrative/plot.
- Every person that figures in a story comes from a particular place and is the inheritor of a particular heritage. So it is with individuals.
- All narratives have ethical dimensions.

Ricoeur suggests that traditionality is the key to the functioning of narrative models and consequently, to the identification of them (Ricoeur 1992: 428). He further states that, “life has to do with narration. We speak the story of life to characterize the interval between birth and death” (Ricoeur 1992: 425). According to Ricoeur, narrative identity is characterized by the dialectic of sameness and selfhood. The identity of an individual or a character in a narrative is his or her narrative identity. A character in a narrative is an individual who may be re-identified as being the same. But the narrative identity of the character also reveals a form of selfhood.

Personal Identity focuses on concepts of *sameness* and *selfhood* and distinguishes three forms of personal identity. Ricoeur offers two answers to the question “who am I?” in regards to selfhood, using the two essential concepts of time and imagination to do so. Narrative identity is a part of time. The theory of identity is explained through the concepts of Idem and Ipse. Narrative identity is created by Idem and Ipse. Narrative identity is what happens between Idem and Ipse. Imagination is the mediator between the “poles of sameness and selfhood” (Ricoeur 1992: 148). Narrative identity is created through imagination. Ricoeur holds narrative identity responsible for mediating between the two poles of personal identity, the pole of sameness (idem), referred to by what we call character, a set of innate or acquired attitudes and capacities, and the pole of selfhood (ipse), including trustworthiness and faithfulness to oneself, despite all the deviation and transformations which mark the path of life.

Following are the characteristics of narratives drawn from Fontaine (2006):

- First, narratives draw together disparate and somehow discordant elements into the concordant unity of a plot that has a temporal span (emplotment).
- Second, all the elements that a narrative unites are contingencies. All of them could have been different or even nonexistent. Nonetheless, as emplotted, these elements take on the guise of necessity or at least of likelihood.
- Third, narratives are made up not only of actions and events but also of characters and personages. Plots relate the mutual development of a story and a character or set of characters. Every character in a story of any complexity both acts and is acted upon.
- Fourth, a narrative's character only rise to the status of persons who can initiate action when an evaluation of their doings and sufferings occurs and imputes them to the persons as praiseworthy or otherwise. An evaluation occurs when considering how the person responds when confronted by another living being who is in some addressable need.

Another concept that is related to narrative identity is mimesis. Ricoeur describes it, saying that “the relationship between time and narrative is linked to a three fold mimesis.” This is further explained by Herda (1999: 76), who notes that “when we tell a story we capture time. One can say that in a story our past (m_1) and future (m_3) belong to us, and the story we have to write (or read) only takes on meaning in the here and now (m_2) of our lives.” The three stages of mimesis are:

(Mimesis₁ : The past: the world as it exists before we interact with it – a world *prefigured*

- Mimesis₂: The present here and now circumstances – the world *configured*
- Mimesis₃: A future we can imagine ourselves inhabiting – the world *refigured*

Herda (1999:78) suggests “all three stages of mimesis are creative acts and are interrelated. Although action is present in all three stages, it is most important at mimesis₃.”

The next part contains the theory of Fusion of Horizons by Hans- Georg Gadamer.

Fusion of Horizons

The philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer, in particular his concepts on the fusion of horizon, history, and language, will contribute significantly to the foundation of this research. A fusion of horizon refers to an occurrence of transmission, in which both parties are mediated. It is through this mediation that genuine fusion of horizon and understanding arises. “To have a ‘world’ means to have an attitude towards it” (Gadamer 1975: 402). This means that in embracing the worlds and views that others offer us in sharing their own truths that our individual engagement with the world-at-large has broadened. It is not merely our habitat that is expanded in seeing and in learning other cultures, but our psychological “being in the world” that changes. Thus, this interaction between individuals can translate into an expansion that goes beyond individual participants. We are able to create a new space for understanding in embracing the concept surrounding this “fusion of horizons” in seeing our own worlds reflected through the eyes of others. For this, in and of itself, offers new possibilities of interpreting our own worlds. The next step is in being able to understand the world through the eyes of the ‘other’ and in this manner imagine a world that transcends our own borders.

For Gadamer, language and history compose an integral part of who we are. He states that the possibility of all understanding rests in language and is historical in nature (Herda 1999: 63). Language has the capacity to bring about a fusion of horizon of the researcher and of the historical phenomenon (Herda 1999: 63). Gadamer’s view of understanding does not deal with rationality only. It is based on

how one exposes the truth. The importance of language is also explored by Jürgen Habermas through his theory on Communicative Competence.

Communicative Competence

The critical theory of Habermas is used in this research, specifically as related to his writings on equal treatment of cultures, civil societies and communicative competence.

Habermas (1998) suggests that modern laws are used to tame political power to ensure freedom for all, which corresponds with “The Universal Principle of Right.” This means, “the freedom of choice of each can coexist with everyone’s freedom” (Habermas 1998). This approach satisfies the moral standard of egalitarian universalism and ethical standard of individualism. He offers his concern that the problem with fusing citizenship and national culture is that it will lead to a dull interpretation of civil rights that is insensitive to cultural differences. This problem can be solved if we detach civic solidarity from ethnic nationality and move towards solidarity between others. However, solidarity cannot be legalized as it must come from citizens, which creates a great need for a public sphere to be a sounding board to progressively form equal ethical liberties.

Habermas (1998) claims that, a civil society can develop only in a liberal political culture. He suggests that public influence turns into communicative power only after it passes through “institutionalized procedures.” He also states that autonomous discourses that arise from religious, literary, feminist, artistic public arenas cannot influence to acquire political power.

Habermas (2008) addressed the term post-secular societies, stating that this term can only be applied to the affluent societies of the west where some people's religious ties have lapsed over time. However, the religious behavior of these societies has not changed much. Habermas mentions that the hypothesis of a modern society leading to a secular population rests on considerations related to the advancement of science and technology; religious organizations and their loss of control over the fields of law, politics, science, education, and public welfare; and the development from agrarian to post industrial societies that lead to higher security and a drop in a need to have faith in a higher cosmic power to cope with unforeseen events. Habermas thinks that secularism "must be open to religious influence of believing citizens." Individualism does not have to indicate that religion loses its value in the public eye. Religion can still take on the role of "communities of interpretation" for secular societies.

However, the theory of secularization is coming to an end as the resurgence of religion is seen due to "missionary expansion; fundamentalist radicalization and the political instrumentalization of the potential for violence innate in many of the world religions" (Habermas 2008).

In the theory of communicative competence Habermas suggests that an orientation to a new understanding is always the key for better communication. The understanding achieved must not be coerced or manipulated in any way. The ability for two people to communicate effectively depends on comprehensibility, trust, shared values, and knowledge. Unless these four validity claims are met, the discourse is unsuccessful and an authentic understanding is not accomplished. Figure

11, depicts the model of communicative competence, that explains the way to genuine understanding, follows:

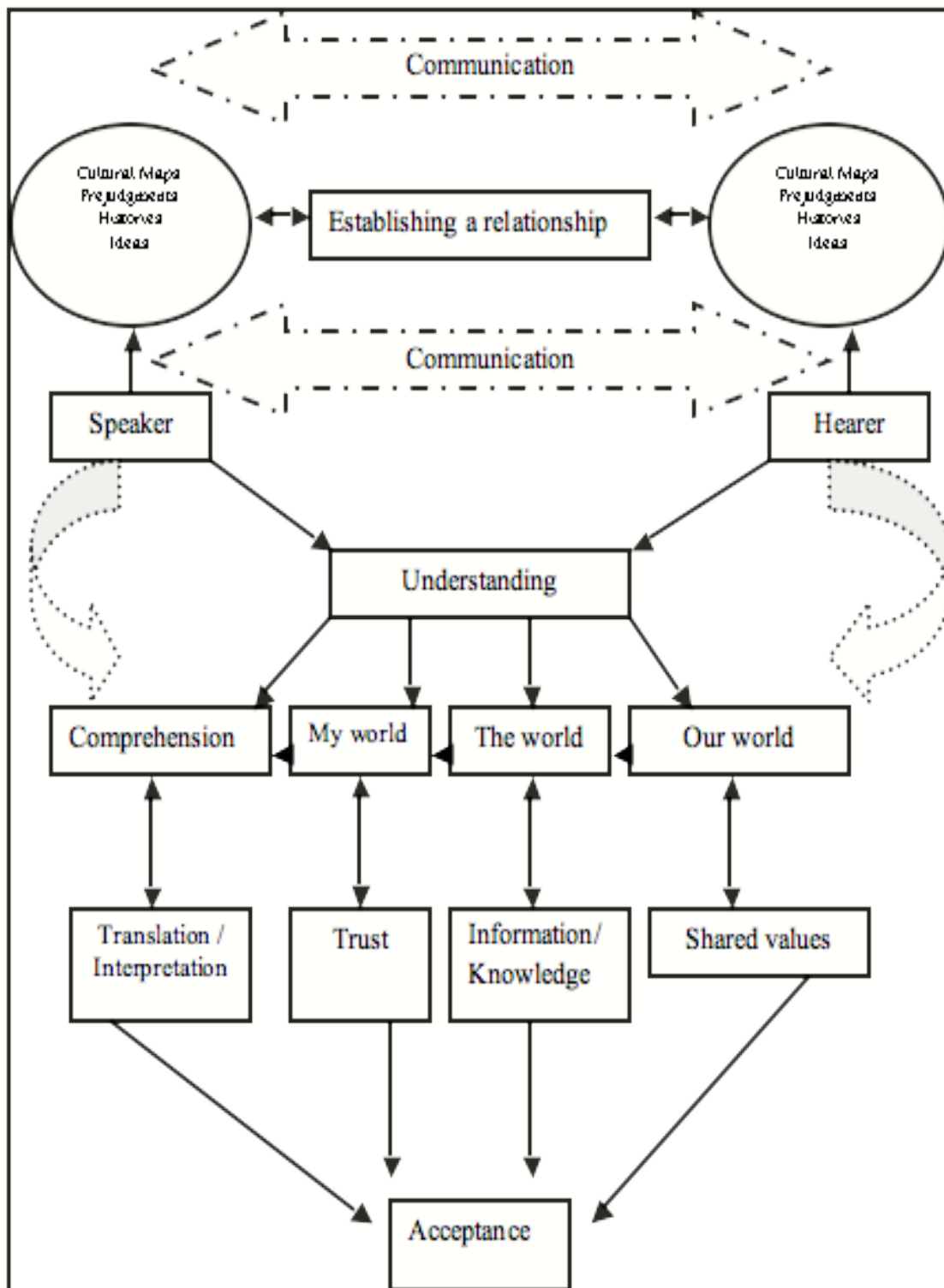


Figure 11: Communicative Competence adapted from Herda (1995: 6)

Research Participants

Fifteen conversation partners were identified and selected who represent the five major religions in India. Contacts were made through recommendations from friends and colleagues. Table 3 identifies the 15 research participants and Table 4 presents their background:

Name	Religious Affiliation	Place
Ven.Dr.Varasambodhi Thera	Buddhism	Bodh Gaya, India
Dr.Chok Tenzin Monlam	Buddhism	Dharamsala, India
Dr. Sangye Tandar Naga	Buddhism	Dharamsala, India
Brother Syed Ainul Habeeb	Christianity	Mumbai, India
Pastor Warren Christin	Christianity	Mumbai, India
Mr. Rajkumar Posche	Christianity	Mumbai, India
Prof. Kittu Reddy	Hinduism	Pondicherry, India
Swami Vigyananda	Hinduism	New Delhi, India
Lt.Gen. Jagdish Chander	Hinduism	New Delhi, India
Dr. Shafi Shaikh	Islam	Mumbai, India
Dr. Zeenat Ali	Islam	Mumbai, India
Mr. Ather Khan	Islam	Mumbai, India
Mr. Ezekiel Issac Malekar	Judaism	New Delhi, India
Mr. Elijah Jacob	Judaism	Mumbai, India
Mr. Samson Koletkar	Judaism	San Francisco, USA/ Mumbai India

Table 3: Research Participants

Name	Background
Ven.Dr.Varasambodhi Thera	M.A and Ph.D in Tripitakacharya Vidyavardhi.
Dr.Chok Tenzin Monlam	BA in English Honors and a doctorate degree in Buddhist studies
Dr. Sangye Tandar Naga	Acharya Degree in Buddhist Philosophy
Brother Syed Ainul Habeeb	Brother
Pastor Warren Christin	Pastor
Mr. Rajkumar Posche	Manager
Prof. Kittu Reddy	Professor, Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education.
Swami Vigyananda	Hindu Monk
Lt.Gen. Jagdish Chander	Retired Army Officer
Dr. Shafi Shaikh	B.A, M.A and Ph.D Mumbai University
Dr. Zeenat Ali	Masters and Ph.D in Islamic Studies
Mr. Ather Khan	Engineer
Mr. Ezekiel Issac Malekar	Head of the Jewish community
Mr. Elijah Jacob	Chemical technologist by profession. Masters degree from Mumbai University.
Mr. Samson Koletkar	Masters in Computer Software from Somaiya Management in Mumbai

Table 4: Research Participants Background

Buddhist Conversation Participants

Dr. Varasambodhi Thera is the General Secretary and a meditation teacher for the International Meditation Center in Bodh Gaya. He has a M.A and Ph.D in Tripitakacharya Vidyavardhi. He was a meditation teacher in San Francisco, California for five years.



Ven. Dr. Varasambodhi Thera

Dr. Chok Tenzin Monlam has a BA in English Honors and a doctorate degree in Buddhist studies. He is the head of the Research and Translation Department. He is the recipient of an “Uma Jabjam degree after studying ten years in the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics, Dharamsala” (www.itwa.net).



Dr. Chok Tenzin Monlam

Dr. Sangye Tandar Naga is the head of the Cultural Research and Tibetan Publication Department and the editor of Tam-Tsog (Tibetan).

He holds an Acharya Degree in Buddhist Philosophy from the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, deemed University, Varanasi. He is the author of Bod kyi brda' sprod nagtik, a research work on Tibetan grammatical literature. He translated Gandhi's Hind Swaraj and His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Compassion and the Individual and Global Community and Universal Responsibility into Tibetan. He has also translated Muge Samten's A History of Traditional Fields of Learning into English. His research papers have been published in Tibet Journal and other Tibetan literary journals. He was the editor of the Science Journal (Tibetan) and has assisted in many workshops pertaining to Tibetan language and culture (www.itwa.net).



Dr. Sangye Tandar Naga

Christian Conversation Participants

Pastor Warren Christin teaches the “love and work of Jesus Christ” in Mumbai, India. Mr. Rajkumar Posche is a Hindu convert and Brother Syed is a Muslim convert to the Christian faith.



R – L: Pastor Warren Christin, Brother Syed and Mr. Rajkumar Posche

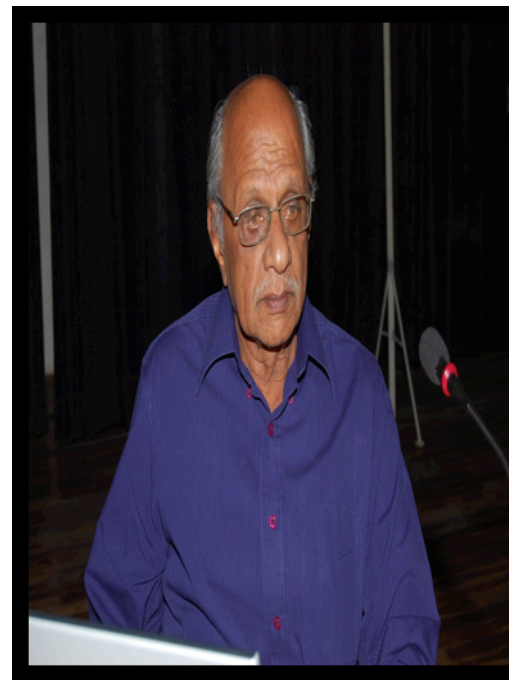
Hindu Conversation Participants

Swami Vigyananda is a monk of the Shankaracharya order under the Hindu society or the Hindu Dharma. He has been a monk for the last 22 years. He is also the joint general secretary of the Vishva Hindu Parishad (New Delhi, India).



Swami Vigyananda

Professor Kittu Reddy is the nephew of Late Sanjiva Reddy, the former President of India. He completed his entire education at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. He has written two books: History of India – A new approach and A Vision of United India – problems and solutions. He has conducted many workshops and lectures on motivation, leadership and India as a nation for the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force.



Kittu Reddy

Lt. Gen Jagdish Chander is a retired army officer. He graduated from the National Defence Academy and then served the Indian Army for the forty years. He retired as the Directorate General of Supplies and Transport for the Indian Army. He has seen three wars waged on India. His job was instrumental in handling the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in Sri Lanka. He was awarded the Yudh Seva Medal (YSM), Ati Vishish Seva Medal (AVSM) and Param Vishisht Seva Medal (PVSM) for his service and commitment to the nation.



Lt. Gen Jagdish Chander

Jewish Conversation Participants

Mr. Elijah Jacob is a chemical technologist by profession. He worked with a multinational company for 10 years after his Masters degree from Mumbai University. Before joining The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in Mumbai he worked with Marico industries. Currently, he serves as the Country Manager for The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in Mumbai, India.



Mr. Elijah Jacob

Ezekiel Issac Malekar is the head of the Jewish community in New Delhi, India. He is the Honorary Secretary of the Judah Hyam Synagogue where he offers his services voluntarily. His interest lies in inter-faith activities. He has written many articles on world peace and communal harmony from a Jewish perspective.



Mr. Ezekiel Issac Malekar

Samson Koletkar received his Masters in Computer Software from Somaiya Management in Mumbai, India. He worked in Mumbai for 3 years with NucSoft before he moved to USA. He has a strong affiliation with the Jewish Youth Group in Mumbai. His other interests lie in the field of standup comedy, Bollywood and western dance. He is often referred to as “The Indian Seinfeld” as he is the single known Indian Jewish Standup comedian (mahatma-moses.com).



Mr. Samson Koletkar

Muslim Conversation Participants

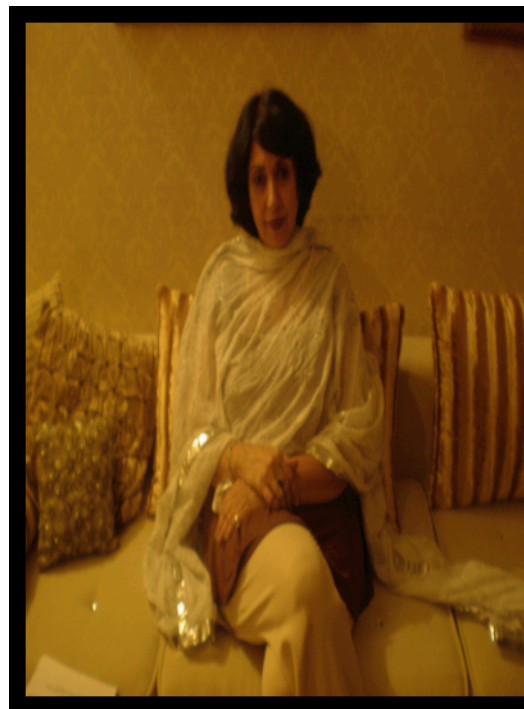
Dr. Shafi Shaikh is the Head of Department for Arabic Studies, and he is also a fulltime professor at the Mumbai University. He received his B.A, M.A and Ph.D from Mumbai University. He received the President's award for "Excellence in Arabic" in the year 2001. He has 35 years of teaching experience and has many publications in Arabic and Urdu. He has also taken part in many national and international conferences in USA, Muscat and Iraq.



Dr. Shafi Shaikh

Dr. Zeenat Ali received her Masters and Ph.D in Islamic Studies. She has written two books on Marriage and Divorce in Islam and the Empowerment of Women in Islam. She has been a professor of Islamic Studies at St. Xavier's College (Mumbai) for the last 20 years.

Dr. Zeenat Shaukat Ali is the founder of the Wisdom Foundation, which promotes dialogue, organization of mediation and gender justice. It is also dedicated to the cause of non-violence, peace-building,



Dr. Zeenat Shaukat Ali

communal harmony, conflict transformation, humanitarian service and national integration. She has been the mind behind events like Cricket for Peace, Chanting for Peace, and Art for Peace to promote communal harmony and has received many accolades for the same.

Mr. Ather Khan is an engineer by professional training who chose to spread the word of Allah. He is a public speaker and trainer for the Islamic Research Foundation in Mumbai, India. His focus lies on the world of comparative religion & Da'wah. Mr. Ather Khan has shared the stage with many world-renowned personalities (including the former president of India, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam in Mysore 2007). He also has regular appearances on Peace TV and other Islamic Satellite Channels.



Mr. Ather Khan

Research Categories and Questions

This research was driven by three major categories: Identity, Understanding and Solicitude. It was critical to explore the nature of identity because not only is it a medium to understand self but also it is pluralistic and complicated. Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen (2006: 1-14) states: Identity brings “ a sense of pride, joy...strength and confidence...and yet identity can also kill – and kill with abandon.”

The hope of harmony in the contemporary world lies to a great extent in a clearer understanding of the pluralities of human identity, and in the appreciation that they cut across each other and work against a sharp separation along one single hardened line of impenetrable division.

Fusing of horizons between the speaker and the receiver can lead to a new orientation to understanding. This understanding is a means to achieve trust, which is necessary to have a progressive and caring society that is free of fear, insecurity.

The following questions were used to guide the research conversations and not to solicit specific answers. Ricoeur (1992: 273-291) suggests, “It is through public debate, friendly discussion, and shared convictions that moral judgment in situation is formed.”

Category 1: Identity

Question:

- How do you identify yourself and where do you speak from as leader within your religious system

Category 2: Understanding

Question:

- How does your religion relate to your ideas about today’s India and the larger world?

Category 3: Solicitude

Question:

- How do we move from terrorism to solicitude and peace?

Time Line

Table 5 below depicts a timeline outlining the stages of the research process development:

Research Action	Begin Date	End Date
Pilot Study	October 2007	December 2007
Developed Research	January 2008	February 2009

Research Conversation	August 2009	October 2009
Transcription of Conversation	August 2009	October 2009
Transcripts sent to participants for approval	November 2009	January 2010
Data Analysis	February 2010	January 2011
Findings, & Recommendations	February 2011	March 2011

Table 5: Time Line

Data Collection

Data collection for this study includes recorded conversations, informal conversations, photographs, observations and documents in the research areas. The formal research conversations were conducted in the English language. All conversations have received approval from the research participants and act as a primary source for data collection for this study. The literature reviewed is in depth and it is used as a base and to give a proper frame of reference and context for this research.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is “a creative and imaginative act in which the researcher appropriates a proposed world from the text” (Herda 1999: 98). The exposure to the text may change the ways in which the researcher views the subject at hand. The boundaries of this research are created by the people who have agreed to participate within the selected categories for data collection and analysis. How the data are understood and interpreted by each reader depends on what each reader brings to this text. Following sequence was used for data analysis as presented in Herda (1999: 98-99).

1. The taped conversations should be transcribed as soon as possible. Typically, the transcription should be done by the researcher so as to live through the “conversation experience again.” Reading transcriptions helps in conceptualizing the issue at hand and initiates the course of “appropriating a new world from the text.”
2. Highlight important statements from the transcripts, develop themes and place them within categories. These categories must be adjusted continuously as needed during the research process.
3. Substantiate significant ideas with quotes from the conversation transcripts, researcher’s log and observed data. All of my research conversations will be conducted in English for this study.
4. Examine the ideas in light of the theoretical framework of critical hermeneutic categories selected for the research.
5. Transcriptions will be sent to the research participants so that they can make changes and check for accuracy, in addition to potentially furthering our discussion regarding the research topic.
6. Set a context for the written research discussion.
7. “In developing the text, discuss groupings of themes and sub-themes within each category in light of the theory and the problem at hand. Often themes may fit into more than one category, so the discussion should indicate this and bring in more than one dimension to the theme or grouping of themes.”
8. Discuss the research problem at a theoretical level allowing practical use of critical hermeneutics.
9. Explore implications from the written discussions that provide insight and new direction for the issue or problem under investigation.
10. Identify aspects of the research that merit further study.
11. Mention examples of learning experiences and fusion of horizons on the part of participants that took place during the research process. Relate study to self in terms of what I learned and what role the study played in my life.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted during the fall of 2007 in order to explore the issues that are presented in this research study. The conversation undertaken used the methods described above to provide a deeper understanding, valuable insights and helped in the development of research questions. The pilot study excerpt in Appendix C covers the participant, theory and implications.

Conversation Partner

The participant for the pilot research was Ali Hussani. Ali was born and raised in Karachi, Pakistan. He moved to Canada at the age of 18 to pursue his college

degree at Mac Masters in Commerce. He entered the United States in 2003. Ali first lived in Fresno, California and later on he moved to San Francisco to pursue his dream degree of a Masters of Science in Financial Analysis from University of San Francisco and he successfully graduated in 2006. In terms of his career, Ali has come a long way. He has worked for Visa, United Health Group, and Spectrum. Currently, he is employed as a Financial Advisor with the Levis – Dockers Treasury Department. Ali's background as a religious person and his in-depth understanding of the religion of Islam prompted me to choose him as my conversation partner for this pilot research.

Pilot Study Theory and Analysis

The main themes evoked in the conversation were identity and understanding. To various degrees, the theory presented earlier surfaced in our conversation. The following were the main highlights:

Identity

The first topic that we touched was personal identity. My conversation partner and I agreed that identity is critical because of the way it evolves and revolves around a person. Ricoeur (1992: 147 – 148) suggests:

The narrative constructs the identity of the character, what can be called his or her narrative identity, in constructing that of the story told. It is the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character

Identity is about traditions, backgrounds, prejudices, and biases that a person brings along and is ever changing. A constant part of this identity is often referred to as *Idem* and the volatile part is the *Ipsé*. Kearney states that one cannot remain constant over time, unless one has minimal remembrance from how one came to be.

Narrative identity is created through imagination. It is like envisioning; where an individual wants to move in life is the big question and after the conversation I discovered that my participant had a similar journey to mine, for he changed countries, changed cultures and through this process evolved into who he is today.

Understanding

The next important aspect of our conversation touched on understanding the other and being sensitive to them. Gadamer says the world-at-large has broadened. It is not merely our habitat that is expanded in seeing and in learning other cultures, but our psychological being in the world that has changed. This interaction between individuals can translate into an expansion that goes beyond the individual participants. It is being able to understand the world through the eyes of the other and in this manner imagine a world that transcends our own borders. Gadamer (1975:396) states:

This kind of [inexactness] of expression can be overcome only if the mind rises to the infinite. In the infinite there is, then, only one single thing (forma) and one single world (vocabulum), namely the ineffable Word of God (verbum Dei) that is reflected in everything (relucet). This provides insight as to the mode of expression employed to make one's point, which in the case of terrorism addresses issues of powerlessness and anger. While devastatingly effective and shocking, this language makes a point. But what it does not do is offer a valid platform for reaching mutual understanding. There is no desire to come to compromise when violence is the language employed. New vocabularies and a fresh intersection of language must begin to emerge for this recent and contemporary use of ancient tactics to shift.

My participant and I agreed that identity is subjective and it depends on the other person's point of view and understanding. My participant said that he may think that he is religious but people from Afghanistan may think that he is an infidel.

Implications

The research implications are as follows: every person has their identity, which is shaped by experiences of life. Such experiences become a part of their character and a story comes to existence. However, in the background there are many changes that occur and most are due to the interaction with the other. One appreciates the other with more interaction and comes to know more about the other through conversation. A way to encourage this would be moving from one country to the other. Visa processing needs to be simpler so that people can travel and see the other parts of the world.

Being sensitive to the other must be a perspective. As Ali said during our conversation about his identity as Muslim, “in Afghanistan I might be considered an infidel, in Pakistan a liberal and in America a conservative person.” Fusion of horizon is needed for a world to come to a better understanding. This understanding will lead to the transition of trust from my world and the world to our world.

With a critical hermeneutic foundation, I intend to dig deeper into the philosophy of religion, re-interpretation of text and reasons for terrorism to synergize major findings and policy changes. So far my findings have led me to the following: lack of effective understanding, solicitude and care for the other, the changing identity without a direction.

Summary of Pilot Study

The preliminary findings are as follows:

- Understanding identity is essential to connect traditions, backgrounds and prejudices of a person.
- The greatest challenge is navigating the meaning of understanding through a world that transcends our own borders.

- Ideology based interpretation of identity to mandate peoples action have not been successful.
- Imagination based on emphasizing our coexistence may address the multidimensionality of the issue at hand.

Learning from my Pilot Study

My conversation with Ali was a great research leap. It confirmed that my topic of interest is as critical as I thought it to be. The conversation also helped me with the development of the research categories and questions to be used in future research conversations. The entire transcript, data analysis and implications can be found in Appendix C.

Background of Researcher

Identity is a complicated matter. However, I describe myself as a world citizen with an Indian nationality. The other dimensions of my identity that ground me to reality are that I am a woman and a person who moves back and forth between religion and spirituality.

I was brought up in a traditional manner with a modern outlook to life. I belong to a family of educators. My parents have had the maximum influence in my life. My father, an army officer, exposed me to modern society and my mother, who is a principal of a school, ensured that my being was informed by essential culture, values and traditions.

Being a girl child I always enjoyed free schooling and college all through my academic life in India. In a short period of time I realized that life is a learning process and that we learn something new everyday. So I decided that there could be

nothing better than being a student all my life. I became a person who developed varied interests.

I always had a fascination to study abroad. I really wanted to see how the educational systems outside of India worked. So when I got the opportunity in 2002 to go to the USA, I embraced it. I came to USF for my MBA at the age of 20. Getting to earn an MBA was a good experience but it did not quench my thirst for knowledge. I felt like I needed more. While many of my colleagues were tired with the work one has to put in for the MBA, I felt that my journey had just begun. This is when I decided to join the Organization and Leadership program at USF. God was kind and I was granted a scholarship that only reinforced the fact that I was meant to do this.

For my dissertation, I decided to do my research on India as the peace of my country has been disturbed due to terrorism. Patrick French (2008) states, “the Mumbai attacks were transformative, because in them, unlike previous outrages in India, the rich were caught: not only Western visitors in the nation's magnificent financial capital but also Indian bankers, business owners and socialites. This had symbolic power, as the terrorists knew it would.” The city was under siege for four days and three nights.

My family and friends live in Mumbai. My friend’s mother was at the Taj Mahal Hotel when the terrorist attacks took place. I had a close encounter with the feeling of fear, helplessness and intimidation that terrorism generates.

It was a very difficult and an emotional time for me as I was in the United States. I was unable to get in-touch with my family or friends as the communication lines were down due to the simultaneous terrorist attacks on the city.

I was completely lost and shaken after the attacks on Mumbai because the Leopold café, The Oberoi Trident Hotel, The Taj Mahal Hotel and Towers and the railway stations were places that I would frequent when I was in Mumbai. My mind could not even grasp the magnitude of terror that was unleashed on the city. To make it worse, the media had a 24-hour coverage, which resulted in higher anxiety levels. While the terrorists had not made any demands, there were many speculations on the motives of these terrorist attacks that ranged from “American foreign policy, Afghanistan, harassment of the Indian Muslims, Kashmir issue” (French 2008). Shortly afterwards, the Indian officials said, “the killers came from the Pakistani terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba, it was taken as proof that India's misdeeds in the Kashmir Valley were the cause” (French 2008).

Lashkar-e-Taiba is part of the International Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders (the Qaeda franchise). Mr. Saeed's hatreds are catholic -- his bugbears include Hindus, Shiites and women who wear bikinis. He regards democracy as “a Jewish and Christian import from Europe,” and considers suicide attacks to be in accordance with Islam. He has a wider strategy: “At this time our contest is Kashmir. Let's see when the time comes. Our struggle with the Jews is always there.” As he told his followers in Karachi at a rally in 2000: “There can't be any peace while India remains intact. Cut them, cut them -- cut them so much that they kneel before you and ask for mercy.” In short, he has an explicit political desire to create a state of war between the religious communities in India and beyond, and bring on the endgame (French 2008).

This hatred is strongly at odds with commonly held tenants of peace and understanding held by all major religions. This enigma led to the birth of this research piece. I look forward to the end of this journey of my research to see the awareness it brings and see my life evolve as it is reconfigured through these experiences.

CHAPTER FIVE - DATA PRESENTATION & ANALYSIS

Introduction

In this Chapter, I present and analyze my research data. The research data include research conversations, and general observations. This research work is grounded in critical hermeneutics. The research data that I gathered after my conversations with the 15 leaders of India, who represent the faiths of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism, speak about the efforts for peace, and the complex role of religion in India's volatile public life. When I conversed with my research participants I recorded a variety of critical views.

To interpret this research I examined the material through the critical lens of theories by Paul Ricoeur, Hans Georg Gadamer, and Richard Kearney. I have chosen to discuss the themes as they relate to my three research categories: Identity, Understanding and Solitude. Most of the data emerged from the category of Understanding. The organization of the analysis is by theme and how it relates to my research categories. Within each category, several themes emerged. The major themes that surfaced under the category of Identity were (a) religion is on a pedestal and (b) the future role of religion in India. For the category of Understanding, the key themes were (a) language barrier, misconceptions, and misunderstandings (b) place of peace and (c) influence of politics on the Indian society. Finally, under the category of Solitude, the important themes were (a) care for the other and (b) education needs to bring a change.

The data presentation below is comprised of quotations and extracts from my

research conversation partners, which are analyzed with my understanding, through the categories of Identity, Understanding and Solitude. I begin the analysis with a discussion of the themes that emerged within the research category of Identity.

Identity

The research category of Identity provided guidance and was the starting point for all the conversations. The following data emerged from the first research category, Identity:

My research participants described their identities with the support of facts like family lineage, history, customs, culture, religion, values, traditions, language and events that influenced them in their life to describe who they are. Listed below are selected quotes from my research participants:

Buddhist (Ven. Dr. Varasambodhi Thera): “My parents were Buddhists so I followed them and became a Buddhist.”

Christian (Pastor Warren Christin): “I as a person believe in Jesus Christ as a savior.”

Hindu (Professor Kittu Reddy): “I identify myself as a devotee and disciple of Sri Aurobindo...It is not a blind belief... Well I am a proud Hindu but I am not a practicing Hindu...”

Jew (Mr. Elijah Jacob): “I basically identify myself as a proud Bene Israel of India...My parents and grand parents have shaped my Jewish identity.”

Muslim (Dr. Zeenat Ali): “I feel that identity is based in ethics. If I identify as a Muslim...I must not fail my religion.”

The details to describe their respective identities formed into a story. Kearney (2002:4) states that story telling is a way to humanize time. It gives a pattern, a plot and an order to moments of life. He further states that stories capture an existence that

would otherwise be scattered over time. He calls it the coming-together-of a life.

Additionally, Kearney (2002:7) posits:

Stories were invented to fill the gaping hole within us, to assuage our fear and dread, to try to give answers to the great unanswerable questions of existence: Who are we? Where do we come from? Are we animal, human or divine? Strangers, gods or monsters? Are we born of one (mother-earth) or born of two (human parents)? Are we creatures of nature or culture? In seeking to provide responses to such unfathomable conundrums – both physical and metaphysical – the great tales and legends gave not only relief from everyday darkness but also pleasure and enchantment: the power to bring a hush to a room, a catch to the breath, a leap to the curious heart, with the simple words ‘Once upon a time’

A key element to these stories is identity. While discussing identity, my research participants mentioned religion having an influence on the development of their own identity. As it provides a context to existence, gives a sense of grounding and fulfills man’s need to connect with God. Ricoeur (1995: 309-310) asserts that we are the character, narrator, and the author of our stories. He further states:

Life is open at both ends – whether we think of the obscurity of our birth, which sends us back to the jungle of our ancestors, or that something that is not an ending but an interruption, our death, which is kind of violence. This open-endedness places us in a situation where we can bring ourselves together narratively only by superimposing in some way a configuration with a beginning, a middle, and an ending. But at the same time, we are always in the process of revising the text, the narrative of our lives. In this sense, we may construct several narratives about ourselves, told from several points of view.

I heard a similar thought echoed in my conversation with Swami Vigyananda, as he explained identity as a collection of aspects. “Identity by virtue of distinctiveness means you are separate than others. It has several components: astrictive, descriptive and territorial...you start with your own ancestry, individual, and regional group. All in all culture and religion plays a very important role in shaping identity.” At an individual level, religion in India provides a foundation, gives a purpose, creates a

community, sets identity, and sometimes acts as an outlet for the common man in India. A similar thought echoed in one of my conversation with Dr. Sangye Tandar Naga, where he described the development of identity through “generations and religion.”

However, Dr. Zeenat Ali viewed the development of identity by a mere chance or an accident. She mentioned, “I believe that everything that happens in a human beings life is an accident and nothing is planned. You are born in a particular area, a particular region, to particular parents and whatever surrounds you.” We have no control over it and this plays an important role in who we are or what we become in a society. She further stated, the role of any particular identity has nothing to do with the violence that we are facing today. Dr. Zeenat Ali also said that it is the action and not identity that plays a role in the disturbance of peace. Identity itself is highly contested and surely Dr. Zeenat Shaukat Ali is right that actions not identity should be judged. Yet she also admits that identity is a volatile matter.

Dr. Zeenat Ali further suggested that identity leads to enmity. She stated:

Religion and Identity have become very stereotypical and monotonous in way and a crisis situation in the other. It is because of the identity that the wars are being fought today it is the identity that is separated. It is the crisis of identity. This is yours and that is mine. So what is not yours, I will grab, as I want it.

Therefore, Ven. Dr. Varasambodhi Thera said, “the concept of me, mine and I have to be eradicated, as it constitutes the ego of a person.” He further suggested seeking the ultimate truth through spirituality. According to Ven. Dr. Varasambodhi Thera, “true reality is the ultimate truth. In the ultimate truth, we are only concerned with the phenomena of the mind and body.” Thus, he mentioned that self has to be understood through the functioning of the mind, and matter.

Religion is on a pedestal

Within the research category of Identity we discussed how religion is viewed in India. Mr. Elijah Jacob said:

India has always been a religious country. Many of the basic roots of most of the religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism) have developed from India. People are religiously ingrained in India. It is good in a way, they believe in a creator and that you have to do good to find a favor in sight of your master. So I think religion plays a very important role in India.

There is a close link between identity and religion in India as it plays a very important role in the daily lifestyle of many Indians. Though the definition of religion varies from person to person, Dr. Tenzin Chok Molam mentioned, “All religions are the same... It is like dishes. It is your choice... You like rice, roti or curry.... Religion is your choice.” He further stated that fundamentalists and terrorists use religion as a medium to create violence. Therefore, we must pick up the right and positive messages offered by religions.

Mr. Malekar stated, “Religion is a way of life, thinking, awakening, and promotion of rightness for a physical and spiritual life.” Dr. Zeenat Ali mentioned, “Religion also helps one to wash off their weaknesses, failings and ineptitudes so that one can rise to be what they are created to be.” Many people in India would relate to the idea of having a purpose in life. At an individual level, Mr. Rajkumar Posche suggested that people have not evolved from a monkey or molecules in motion, but were created by God and that He has a purpose for all. At a macro level, religion has divided India and caused massive confusion. My research participant, Brother Sayed

Ainul Habeeb agreed with the above statement and said that a day will come when God will be tired with all the confusion and commotion, so he will intervene directly and once that happens India will be the best country to live in.

Future role of religion in India

The research category of Identity included a discussion on the future role of religion in India. My research participant Lt. Gen. Jagdish Chander stated, “Religion is close to Indians...a binding force...the future of religion remains where it is today and that will not change. Religion will never influence the international strategies or policies of the country.” Though, Lt. Gen Jagdish Chander stated that the role of religion will remain unchanged for years to come, it has been noted that the youth in the metropolis of India is slowly moving away from organized religions and seeking spiritual guidance due to the emptiness they find in religious institutions.

Mr. Rajkumar Posche summed up the collective feeling of the youth by saying, “The Gods have failed, communism has failed, materialism, intellectualism has failed.” The youth are looking at innovative ways to achieve religious experiences: They have a choice of connecting with the supreme by way of having a one-on-one relationship with Jesus Christ, becoming a disciple of Sri Aurobindo or stopping global warming to preserve the planet earth. These are the answers for the youth of India in hopes of surpassing religion and connecting directly with the ultimate reality. Gadamer (1999: 119) states, “Has the end of an illusion arrived? Or is precisely that the illusion: thinking that human beings can live without religion?” This is becoming a reality in India, especially with the educated and informed youth. Professor Kittu Reddy suggested that religion in India is stepping towards spirituality

with the new generation and the educated mass. In contrast to secularizing European theorists, Professor Kittu Reddy said that India should work so that religions can co-exist. He further stated:

This world is a creation and the manifestation of the divine. Therefore, all men have the potential to ultimately unite with the divine. All religions are ways to connect with the divine and we do not have to fight with any religion. We need to respect everyone's approach.

This is contrary to Gadamer (1999:119) where he asserts:

It is no longer waging war for the true god against the false ones or defending one's own religion against the attacks of unbelievers, whether those belonging to another faith or that of scientific atheism. Today the issue is much more the question whether humanity needs religion at all.

Against this position, Professor Kittu Reddy stated:

Religion is the inevitable starting point of every human being when he tries to relate to some higher power, which he faintly believes is there. Therefore dogmas and, rituals exist... We are convinced that religion is a stepping-stone to spirituality and religion can help you to graduate to spirituality.

Professor Kittu Reddy further stated, "Do not terminate religion, as the average man needs a staff." As the population of India becomes more informed and educated, there may be a paradigm shift in the way they think about their need to connect with the ultimate reality. People may become more spiritual and seek divinity from that perspective as opposed to being religious.

While speaking about the various identities and influences on them, we delved into a discussion about how people with various identities across India interact with each other. This leads me to my second research category, Understanding.

Understanding

Language barrier, misconceptions and misunderstandings

Language barrier, misconceptions and misunderstandings were the most

prominent themes that emerged under the research category of Understanding. My research participant, Mr. Malekar stated, “Indians believe in *Vasudev Kutumbh*,” which means living in a global village. Even though, we consider that humans belong to one big global village, we are still having difficulty in co-existing peacefully. Mr. Rajkumar Posche said, “This is because of the way we are brought up. If what we believe in is different than what you believe in then there will be an upheaval.” There seems to be a lack of awareness and it stems out from not understanding the other.

Gadamer (1976:9-25) states, our prejudgments constitute our being and we cannot live without understanding others, the world and ourselves. Gadamer further states, the tradition in which a person lives shapes his or her horizon. In other words, one sees, understands and makes sense of the world through one’s prejudices (Ataman 2008:40). Therefore, for a peaceful coexistence, it is very important to have a fusion of horizons where the parties (with different identities) involved are open to a new orientation of understanding.

Gadamer (1975: 306) in Truth and Method resonates the following:

The horizon of the present is continually in the process of being formed because we continually have to test all our prejudices. An important part of this testing occurs in encountering the past and in understanding the tradition from which we come. There is no more an isolated horizon of the present in itself than there are historical horizons, which have to be acquired. Rather, understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves.

Therefore, Gadamer (1988) suggests a peaceful existence through understanding. He states that the nature of understanding is historical and, for understanding to occur it is necessary to have the interpreter’s past, prejudices and language. Language has the capacity to bring about the fusion of horizons of the interpreter. Herda (1999:63) mentions, “understanding is possible because the object

to be understood and the person involved in the attempt to understand are in a condition of relatedness transcending historical time.” A similar point occurred in one of my conversation with Dr. Zeenat Ali:

The difference comes when you don't learn and understand the other. So when I say Allah hu Akbar, you think I am saying go kill everyone.... similarly when you say something in Sanskrit, I feel you are saying the same. There is a barrier because of the language.

Gadamer (1975:398-404) acknowledges the importance of language when he mentions, “Languages are a product of man's mental power. Wherever there is language, the primary linguistic power of the human mind is at work.” Learning a new language extends our ability to what more we can now comprehend. Human language is just not a means to communicate. It “must be thought of as a special and unique living process in that, in linguistic communication ‘world’ is disclosed.”

Gadamer (1976:25) further states:

The phenomenon of understanding, then shows the universality of human linguistically as a limitless medium that carries everything within it- not only the culture that has been handed down to us through language, but absolutely everything-because everything (in the world and out of it) is included in the realm of understandings and understandability in which we move.

Human beings dwell in language and it gives an identity to us, “If we listen, and not only hear, what is already understood, opportunities come into play to open new worlds” (Herda 1999: 62).

Therefore, Mr. Elijah Jacob suggested, interfaith dialogues in different languages that could be started by the government so that it can help in clearing misconceptions and misunderstandings about other religions, and will promote openness and understanding. He also thinks “the moderates of each society need to play a greater role in shaping of the society.” A similar thought echoed by Herda

(1999:60), “Language brings world into being and in bringing forth a particular world, the relationships among everything in that world are disclosed.

During our discussion on the language barrier under the category of Understanding, we also touched on the topic of misconceptions. A common sentiment floating around India today is that terrorism is mainly propagated through Islam. Dr. Shafi Shaikh mentioned that the Qur’an states, “If you kill a person, it is as if you have killed a community.” To emphasize on the precious nature of life, he commented further by saying, not even killing self is allowed as life is perpetual and what you do in this life will repeat itself, and there is no end to it. Mr. Ather Khan supported the above statement when he said, “Islam means peace, so it is very foolish if someone says that peace teaches disturbance of peace.” He further stated, It is mentioned in *Surah Maidah* i.e. chapter 5 verse no. 32:

If anyone killed a person not in retaliation of murder, or (and) to spread mischief In the land - it would be as if He killed All mankind, and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if He saved the life of All mankind.

Dr. Shaikh elaborated further and said: Islam condemns harming others unnecessarily whether it is your relative or a stranger. He mentioned that no religious leader would give the layman a true meaning of controversial terms. The most commonly off quoted and misunderstood term in the Holy Qur’an is *Jihad*. The term *Jihad* comes from the word *Jihada*, which means to strive and protect the truth with your tongue. There are various forms of *Jihad* but the best *Jihad* is saying the word of truth in front of a tyrant king as it is very difficult to tell the truth in front of a tyrant king because you are at risk of being killed. This means, you are not killing someone but you are facing the killing. You are endangering yourself to tell the truth. You are putting

yourself at a huge risk for letting the truth prevail. Another type of *Jihad*, which depicts strife, is a Hajj (holy pilgrimage) with no mistakes. Finally, the *Jihad* with sword occurs when the honor of person, a community or a nation are threatened. Only when you are attacked, you have to use the sword to defend the honor and protect the citizens of the nation. Every country in the world performs *Jihad* to defend its legitimate interests, boundaries and honor.

Unfortunately, the fundamentalists and the terrorists interpret it in a way that is gainful to them. Dr. Zeenat Ali mentioned, “Some sections of the Muslims have become very dogmatic...they go down to the letter and not to the spirit of Islam.” Due to the lack of awareness and understanding of religions, we see intolerance. Dr. Sangye Tandar Naga reiterated a similar point of view:

When there are two religions in one society...they fight. People are not intelligent. Wherever you are born, you stick to it, which is not bad...but why do we do that? Whatever we are shaped from the childhood, we always remain the same. When you become wise and a philosopher, you rise above the religion. In the name of religion, you have social problems. It is like politics. You have no solid issues, then you raise religious questions...people get agitated. Someone takes advantage of the situation.

An example of the same would be the intolerance between Hindus and Muslims.

Ven. Dr. Thera mentioned that people today have become very selfish. He further mentioned, “They feel like only having their own community, religion to enjoy everything.” It is their way of defining a preferential class. Due to which, hatred has seeped in the minds of the people. It is clearly visible that there is a need to hear the aspirations of all communities in India so that they do not feel neglected or force others to accept their religion, mind-sets, and philosophies.

During our discussion, I also found that the term “Terrorism” is not clearly

defined or understood. Dr. Sangye Tandar Naga stated, “Terrorism is to harm a society, and someone who does it is a terrorist.” Lt. Gen Jagdish Chander mentioned that conquering and taking over was accepted in the past and was not considered terrorism. Unfortunately, with the media coverage things are blown out of proportion and we are made to believe that any act of violence is terrorism. Professor Kittu Reddy said:

From what I have heard that all these TV channels are funded from abroad ... I want these channels to first believe that they are Indians. Not Hindu, not Muslim, but an Indian without losing their identity.

Therefore, the media needs to decide on its true role and purpose in India. The information given should be accurate, and timely. The media should address the concerns of the mass, and yet not burden them with anxiety.

Dr. Sangye Tandar Naga mentioned, “We should study the real problems of the terrorists who are creating havoc in India today and try to remove misunderstandings if any.” For which a dialogue is required. This will enable us to understand the issues at hand, and at the same time we will be able to reduce our enemies. Once the people in India are able to reach a stage of mutual understanding, Mr. Samson Koletkar said that he hopes to see people “rise above childish ideas and petty differences and realize that we all belong to one race, one religion that is humanity.”

Professor Kittu Reddy mentioned that a “no-nonsense policy” approach to terrorism must be adopted to clean out the terrorists from the country. He further stated that it is speculated that much of the terrorism is imported from Pakistan; the hatred towards India is bred early on through schools. Dr. Tenzin Chok Molam suggested, “Pakistan has a problem, not all Pakistanis do.” All violence spread by

terrorists from whichever country is just for personal gain. Therefore, perhaps we could look at the problem of “violence” spread through different methods and not point fingers at other countries.

My research participant Dr. Shafi Shaikh believed that the quest for power leads to terrorism. He further stated, “When there are elections in Pakistan they harp on the issue of Kashmir. Kashmir is our territory... we have to take Kashmir.” The Indian politicians use a similar tactic by enticing the illiterate masses to build a vote bank and to strengthen their seat in the politics of the country. Swami Vigyananda posed a suitable recommendation in which “motives” need to be given up and said, “on counts of terrorism, government and society have to deal with it strongly. Finish terrorist organizations; deal strongly with people who support terrorist organizations and the ideologies behind it.”

These statements indicate that while terrorism in India stems from Pakistan regarding the Kashmir issue. Pakistan as a country is not a problem but the terrorist organizations that thrive in Pakistan. If these terrorist organizations cease to exist, the Kashmir issue will be automatically settled, and we can look for a peaceful co-existence.

Place of peace

Under the category of Understanding, we also discussed the place of peace in India. Looking back in history, my research participant Professor Kittu Reddy mentioned that India has never been aggressive about defending its legitimate interests and “the United Nations should not have been consulted in 1948 about the Kashmir issue by the government of India.” Another thought by Professor Kittu

Reddy was that “if India and Pakistan had become one nation after the war of 1971, peace would have prevailed in this nation.” Head of the Jewish Community, Mr. Malekar stated, “Peace cannot be found it has to be built....it is highly difficult” and that peace exists in two forms. He further mentioned, “Peace is inward and outward, what we lack today is the tolerance for each other.” Therefore to achieve peace in India, we need to cultivate acceptance and understanding of the other.

After the “26/11” terrorist attacks on Mumbai, India is considered a highly unsafe country and it has tremendously affected the life of an average Indian. The situation is so grave and intense that Pastor Warren Christian remarked, “There may be peace between Palestine and Israel but not in India.” Mr. Malekar stated, the population of India wants peace, which can last forever and not a temporary peace through cease-fire. According to him, this can be achieved through respect, love and understanding. After all, “What is achieved through peace can be retained forever.” However, to get to that stage of peace Swami Vigyananda said that we need a society that is free from fear and threat. Therefore, Professor Kittu Reddy rightly pointed out that “we cannot stand at the Wagha border with candles” to light the hope of peace. We need stronger policies and qualified leaders who can lead the country to its true potential.

Ven. Dr. Varasambodhi Thera mentioned that people today are indecisive and lack tolerance in their thinking, which is proving to be a great hurdle in having a peaceful and prosperous country. One-way to a secular outlook is to bring different religions in dialogue within an educational context so that it promotes the understanding of the other. If we fail to achieve this goal, we will see more violence

in years to come. Therefore, Dr. Zeenat Ali mentioned, to keep history from repeating itself we need to understand the other. The statements above clearly indicate that there is a low tolerance, confusion and a lack of understanding among people, which ignites even more violence in India. The research text, when read, interpreted, analyzed and understood from a hermeneutic lens speaks about the presence of inequality in the Indian society. The question then constructed by the interpreted text is: Why do we see low tolerance, confusion, lack of understanding and what has made the people of India so bitter that they have to resort to violence?

The answer lies in the historical narratives of India. Overcoming the events of the past is difficult, and to build a bridge of mutual understanding for a peaceful co-existence today and in the future is a challenging task for Indians who have witnessed this violence in history and live with the scars in memory. There is anger, resentment and hopelessness in the hearts and minds of Indians. To heal this scathed memory will require them to forgive the acts of the past. Kearney (1999:18) poses a question with a similar dilemma:

How much of the past should be remembered and recounted? How much forgotten and forgiven? How do we respect the summons of history-personal or communal – to be recollected again and again, so that our debt to the past be honored, without succumbing to resentment and revenge?

This text above speaks about the situation of India today. The events of the past have made India's foundation fragile and there is a fracture in the unity of the country.

Each group feels that it has suffered more than the other. Mr. Ather Khan from the Islamic Research Foundation said, "If the Hindus, Muslims and Christians come to a common platform then we can live in a united India." This is because the majority population comprises of the people adhering the faiths mentioned above in India.

Professor Kittu Reddy from the Aurobindo Research Center stated that for India to be united there needs to be a national fervor in the mass, where every person from India is an Indian first and then whatever else he or she wants to be. Once each person understands the objective and means to attain a peaceful co-existence, violence and intolerance in the hearts of people will vanish on its own, according to professor Kittu Reddy.

Ricoeur (1995:290) states, “Remembering is a moral duty. We owe a debt to the victims. And the tiniest way of paying our debt is to tell and retell what happened.” Retelling of the stories “gives them a voice, the voice that was denied to them... to prevent their life stories from becoming banal.” Therefore, the horrible events of history need to be rescued from “forgetfulness by the means of memory and narration” to honor, remember and pay a tribute to those who were lost forever.

However, remembrance brings back bitter memories into the forefront that can evoke a wide range of feelings that are very difficult to deal with. For Indian society to move forward, Kearney (1999:31) suggests, it is important to let go of history and “to ‘actively forget’ the past in order to surmount the instincts of resentment and revenge...other times it is essential to remember the past in order to honor our debt to the dead and to ensure it never happens again.” The steps mentioned by Kearney are critical to heal the people of India who have faced continuous violence since independence. Though history will remain unchanged, the re-telling of stories will be approached and narrated differently after people heal. Kearney (2002: 17) reaffirms this point when he states, “It is not history which will write his story but his story that will rewrite history.” Therefore, immediate steps

need to be taken to heal the historical memory of Indian citizens by honoring all those who lost their lives through remembrance and by acknowledging mistakes of the past while re-telling the stories so that such tragedies never occur again.

Herda (1999:64) asserts the importance of history by saying that it grounds our sense of being and contributes to the development of who we are. She further points out, “Through the knowledge of history...we come to know ourselves and others.” History gives us a context to our existence so that we can make sense of the world we live in. Gadamer (1975:276) states, “history does not belong to us; we belong to it. Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society and state in which we live.” Therefore, history in a way gives us an identity, long before we understand ourselves.

Effective History is created between the object to be understood and the person involved in the attempt to understand. It is made up of an “overarching historical and cultural continuum that is the cause of prejudices that function as a necessary condition of historical understanding”(Herda 1999: 63). These prejudices provide knowledge and a context for the world we live in. Gadamer (1988:239-240) states that prejudice does not mean false judgment, but it means that we give positive or negative value to opinions that we hold on to for longer periods of time.

Still, the narratives of history recited from memory are differently recalled, they tell a tale of violence, distrust, negative emotions, fear and apprehension. I found a similar experience in my conversations with my research participants. Brother Sayed Ainul Habeeb and Dr. Zeenat Ali recalled the Partition of India from their

memory as a “shameful thing for the whole nation” and “a criminal offence.”

The hatred and distrust we see today between the Hindu and Muslim population is a by-product of the act of partition. Not only was the country divided into two but also were the hearts and minds of people. All Hindus had to move to the “new India” post partition and all Muslims had to move to the newly formed holy land of the Muslims, Pakistan, though a majority of Muslims remained in India despite the directive. The displacement, and the disorientation suffered by those people cannot be penned down. Therefore, Dr. Zeenat Ali rightly mentioned, “it will take a lot to be just friends” for bringing amity between the citizens of two nations who have bared severe violence. Though the partition belongs to the past but the stories are retold and shared by families with every generation that comes along. This is done to either remember members of their community who directly experienced violence in the horrific event or to refresh the memory of the suffering endured by a community. These stories then constitute the prejudgments of the youth, which brings uneasiness, a sense of distrust, and hatred in the newer generation. Kearney (2002:29-30) mentions, “stories we inherit from our family, culture or religion...work as purveyors of tradition and heritage or of ideological illusion and cover-up. They also can serve the purpose of creation, imagination and bring a creative solution for actual problems.”

Hence, it becomes an imperative to inform and educate the youth, acknowledge the mistake and forgive the act of the partition to heal relations between India and Pakistan. So that when stories are retold from one generation to the next,

not only do they pass on their experience through historical narratives but at the same time can provide a context, guidance and acknowledgement for all that went wrong.

The next section of the research conversation analysis under the category of Understanding covers the major causes for the disturbance of peace in India. My research participant Brother Sayed Ainul Habeeb mentioned that if the future of India is hands of politicians then we are looking at another partition and that God may save this country if it so happens.

Influence of politics on the Indian society

Within the category of Understanding, my participants discussed the influence of politics on the Indian society. We also spoke about the hand of politics in the intolerance of religion, and causes for insurgencies and terrorism. Professor Kittu Reddy stated that in the past and even today, “Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir lived beautifully...on the whole there is no religious intolerance. If there is any intolerance problem, it is because of politics.” Unfortunately, the political system present in India is not suitable for its development and progress. Professor Kittu Reddy recommended that India needed to go back to the *Panchayat* system of decision making and governing the people of India, where the elders or people with most experience jointly come to an understanding about situations and issues.

Professor Kittu Reddy further mentioned, to make a real difference in India today, we need to adopt the model of the Indian Army, where everyone collaborates and works together for the common goal of safeguarding the citizens, and defending the borders of the country from intrusion and attacks that can erupt from various sources. Therefore he suggested, to see any critical improvements in the political

arena, we need a national party, a common goal that is for the progress and betterment of the nation and legislation where everyone accepts the prime minister and not just the majority party. This will enable the communities to feel like they are heard at the top most level and that they have a stake in the country.

While discussing the involvement of politics and politicians in violence on the Indian society, Mr. Ather Khan stated:

According to the Indian government report every day on an average 1 riot takes place and when investigated we come to know that almost all the riots are instigated by the politicians for their own vested interest. These people instigate innocent citizens of India to kill the other human beings in the name of religion. Many people almost all more than 95% people want peace but because of these politicians who use religion and do mischief for their own vote bank, gain, fame etc.

The above quote is a sentiment that is carried by many Indians at heart. Mr. Elijah Jacob stated, "In terms of terrorism, basically it is politicians who entice people of different religions against each other." They mainly target majority communities for this purpose. Therefore, Mr. Elijah Jacob confirmed that minority communities like the Jews of India are ignored because they are considered an insignificant vote bank for the politicians. Dr. Shafi Shaikh said, "All riots, violence, terrorism have political strings attached to it." The Ram Janambhoomi-Babri Masjid riot was a leading example of this type of politically induced religious intolerance.

Dr. Shafi Shaikh stated that in the 1992 Mumbai riots, a political party was at the forefront of killing Muslims. This political party tried to convince and influence the Hindus in the state of Maharashtra that they were their protectors. They went on to say that they had saved the Hindu populace from the cruel clutches of the Muslim brethren and that if they did not exist, Muslims would have killed all Hindus. It must

be noted that before elections there is hardly any disharmony or communal incidences. Suddenly, as the election dates approach, intolerance of everything turns up. Dr. Shaikh also said that there is no exception to this rule and no political party is different. He further stated, “They are power hungry and they will try to manipulate the situation.” The political parties make bold statements to capitalize on the fear, insecurity, and uncertainty generated in the minds of the people. The end result of which becomes apparent when such political parties come to power and capture seats in the state assembly. It is clearly visible that the sudden riots, communal incidents, insurgencies, violent attacks have their roots in the politics of India. Therefore, there is a need for competent leaders who can lead India.

Dr. Sangye Tandar Naga said, “Wherever there is dissatisfaction people will emerge.” Many leaders use this mantra tactfully and have a hand in the way secular India is viewed. With the widespread inequality in India, politicians use this to their advantage and entice people against each other for their personal gains. Though the constitution of India marks it as a secular nation, Rajkumar Posche said that it is just on paper. Pastor Warren Christin called it “hypocrisy” and Professor Kittu Reddy described “secularism being misplaced.”

From these testimonies, it is obvious that there is considerable discontent, unmet aspirations and dreams of people. For India to be truly secular, it must either stay out of everything and not give preferential treatment to anyone or give an equal treatment to all parties concerned.

The leaders I conversed with feel like their religion is not given priority or the respect they think it deserves. They feel that the treatment they receive is unequal and

unfair in comparison to the other religions existing in the country. Interestingly, most religions feel the same about the other. The minority thinks that the majorities dominate them and vice versa. Mr. Rajkumar Posche stated, “Some religions feel superiority ... claim their place and origin here [and] that drives them to a little bit of terrorism.” On the other hand, violence prevails in India due to lack of equal respect. Swami Vigyananda said, “Religious intolerance is not responsible for the disturbance of peace. Importantly, equal respect for all religion is not given in the modern socio-political religious component of the community.” If there were equal respect there would be less intolerance.

Most of my research participants together believed that religious intolerance is rooted in politics, power and the fear of extinction of any given group of people. Dr. Zeenat Ali mentioned, “On the whole, there is no religious intolerance but only political lies. As long as the two are connected in the wrong way it will be an unholy alliance.” The 1992 riots of Mumbai were a prime example of the same. Dr. Shafi Shaikh stated that the senselessness of the riots cannot be described because “After a riot emotions run high.... tolerance becomes zero and it is difficult to make a community understand.” People lose perspective; question their identity and their future in the country. The job of a leader becomes very difficult and almost impossible when you have to deal with the various populations, some of which are not only poor but also uneducated and therefore, gets enticed quickly.

Any creative method to bring amity among groups can lead to significant accusations from the community and organizations. They view this effort as a loss and consider such a person creating such an effort to be a puppet in the hands of the

majority community (Hindus). In an effort to bring the Hindu and Muslim community together after the 1992 riots the following article was published in *Times of India*, which stated:

Muslims should refrain from offering praying on the roads where there is a provision of second time establishment of the Friday prayer. Also, there were no loud speakers during the time of the Prophet so why use them now [for the prayers]?

The rational statement of not using loud speakers at 5am and not blocking traffic on Fridays for a prayer service was understood but not implemented by the community on the logic that if these demands were accepted, then the majority community would ask for more demands. Plus, accepting demands of the majority community would indicate that minorities' compromise on their freedom and rights of living in India.

Kearney (2002:25) states, "Stories allow us to tell certain things about our lives which we would never allow ourselves to tell in real life." The narrative on the experience of the 1992 riots denotes the oppression and fear the Muslim community feels in India. They consider themselves a minority and feel like they have to fight for their survival. They also think that if they compromise or come to common grounds of understanding they will perish.

On the other hand, Mr. Elijah Jacob, representing the Jewish community of India, mentioned that they have been able to practice their religion, offer prayers, and celebrate festivals without any "bounds and reservations." They confidently assert their position as Indian Jews, which is a minority community in India today by stating, "We are proud of being Jews in India where we have never faced any anti-Semitism, at the same time our identity is also being nurtured by the tolerant community and the society in which we live." It is evident from the stories above that

religion is used as a tool to exploit the people whose aspirations the politicians cannot fulfill. It seems to be a medium through which to take away peoples' mind from their basic requirements in life.

My participants collectively feel that all religions promote and teach peace and they talk about compassion, morals, ethics and honesty. Dr. Shafi Shaikh stated, "The acts of terrorism and violence have got no relation or remote relationship with religion. Whether you talk about the Islamic bomb or the Trishul." Therefore, Mr. Ather Khan stated that it is incorrect to link religion with violence that occurs in the world today as "No religion teaches its adherents to disturb peace or teaches its adherents to be terrorists or to destroy peace."

This important distinction between doctrines, none of which promote violence and organization that do is highly complex. Religions in India are competing with each other and there is a race among religious organizations. Each religious group is trying to outdo the other where processions and festivities are concerned. Brother Sayed Ainul Habeeb said, "Religion in India has become commercialized and people are selling their religion [and] are very proud of [their] religion." While promotion of religion through festivities is a good thing, everyone seems to think that they know God the best. In all of the histrionics and commercialization, the essence of God has disappeared and confusion, insecurity, fear have seeped in the minds of the citizens of India.

Unfortunately, the politicians and religious leaders of India are to be blamed for misguiding the uneducated and illiterate populace. Mr. Malekar mentioned, "Religion and Holy Scriptures are all fine...we misguide [leaders]...we do not show the right

path.” Dr. Tenzin Chok Molam said that all religions are good but the way it is practiced makes it dirty like politics and the true saints and “real practitioners live in mountains not in the society.” Lt. Gen. Jagdish Chander stated the following four causes for violence in India:

First it is a revenge for having being ruled for 1100 years.
 Second, because of the inner caste system in India and separate identities, there is a conflict of ideas, a conflict of continuity and towards commonality.
 Thirdly, Inadequacy of the government to deal with peoples aspirations
 Fourthly, The politicians using religion as a tool, when they fully know that they cannot fulfill the promises they made to the people. It is a tool to gain power.

From these testimonies it can be suggested that religion has become a tool for the extremists and politicians. They twist religious doctrines and use it as a medium of creating conflict and disharmony in the mass.

My research participants also touched on the violence spread through insurgencies in India. According to Lt. Gen Jagdish Chander, poverty is touted as the main cause for the disturbance of peace in India. He mentioned, “So long as people continue being poor, poverty will drive terrorism. Maoism, Naxalism in India is because of poverty.” Therefore, we need a government that can induce jobs not only in the urban areas but also in the rural areas where the majority of the population live. Once the economic disparities reduce insurgencies will minimize.

During our discussion on the category of Understanding, my participants touched on nature of care. This brings me to the third research category, Solitude. The section below will discuss this category in detail.

Solicitude

Care for the Other

Ricoeur (1992:193) states that solicitude adds value in our life. Due to this, each person is “irreplaceable in our affection and esteem.”...“Similitude is the fruit of the exchange between esteem for oneself and solicitude for others.” It essentially means that unless I respect others I cannot respect self, and vice versa. I found a similar thought pattern in my conversations. Most of my research participants state that if each person sincerely followed their religious path, love, care and peace would be at the doorstep of mankind. I have listed below a few quotes from my participants:

Buddhism (Ven. Dr. Varasambodhi Thera): “If we practice the teachings of Buddha, then how can communal riots, violence and hate exist.”

Christianity (Brother Sayed Ainul Habeeb): “Love thy neighbor as thy self. Love thy enemies and pray for those who do evil to you.”

Hinduism (Swami Vigyananda): “See our religion totally opposes harming others... We do not have commandments. This is our value that our society is built on.”

Islam (Mr. Ather Khan): “The only way to attain eternal peace is by following the commandments of the Creator i.e. to follow the last and final revelation the glorious Qur’an and the teachings of Prophet Muhammed (pbuh).”

Judaism (Mr. Ezekiel Malekar): “What is hateful and hurtful to you, do not do to others. If you follow this and the 10 commandments, I don’t think there will be any envy, bloodshed war and hatred in the world.”

Ricoeur (1995: 292) asserts, “God is not the cause of suffering.” When the above quotes are examined side by side, we notice that Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism and Islam urge its followers to abide by the teachings to see peace in India. As for Hinduism, it does not have a set number of teachings but it introduces the concept of peace by saying that it is a value passed on to everyone adhering to that system.

Education needs to bring a change

Within the category of Solitude, we discussed how care could be cultivated between one another so that we can live in a harmony and peace. Ricoeur (1992:192) states, “We need friends...the self perceives itself as another among others”. A similar view of experiencing the other through self came up in my conversation with Dr. Shafi Shaikh when he stated, “It is said that if your neighbor is hungry, you don’t eat yourself. What is the definition of neighbors? 40 houses in all directions...160 houses you have to take care. You need to know about them. You must find out about them.”

While conducting this research, the imperative to restructure and improve the education system in India became clear. My research participant, Dr. Zeenat Ali felt that the “educational curricula needs to change” to bring about awareness, hope, imagination and understanding. When there is a shift in thinking, issues we are encountering today will be approached and tackled differently. However, this idea in one case did not work entirely.

Dr. Shafi Shaikh carried out one such experiment when he started a course in Islamic studies with an emphasis on understanding other peoples’ religion and the philosophy of co-existence after the 1992 riots in Mumbai, India. The course was extremely popular at the university level but now it is no longer in demand. It appears that the course became popular because of the fear and confusion the people experienced after the riots of 1992.

The key problem that we see today in India is lack of educational consistency to promote public understanding and acceptance of competing voices. Dr. Shafi

Shaikh mentioned, "People need to be educated about religion being a personal affair as it is between me and my God." He insisted that if this approach is adopted in the educational system and elsewhere the so-called religious clashes will cease to exist. Therefore, Dr. Shafi Shaikh mentioned that the desperate need of the hour is to give the right religious education in a correct perspective. He thinks that a mass awareness is required, unless this happens, disturbances, intolerance and violence will continue and the motivating factor will not matter. Dr. Sangye Tandar Naga supported the above statement when he mentioned, the education of the soul from the inside will enable people not to fall for rumors or become a victim of any given situation. The current secular education system in India addresses a variety of subjects. However, there is disconnect between the secular education offered and the diversity of religion present in the country as it plays an enormous part in the lives of the people. Therefore, it is important to address this need in the public education system. Mr. Elijah Jacob said that early awareness could be spread through schools as they could introduce different aspects of religions so that students understand the history, culture, and the context to which the other members of the society belong.

Secular education that also allows for India's youth to feel pride in their own beliefs and respect others' is paramount for India. The government of India needs to be true to its people, especially the youth. It needs to send out the message of unity in diversity more strongly than ever before. Mr. Malekar stated, "The youth do not understand the values inculcated of the scriptures are misguided. From childhood they bred hatred and are told that these are your enemies and by hook or crook the other community needs to vanish." The text above points out that there is a great necessity

to spread information among the Indian masses, especially the youth.

Summary

Chapter Five presents an analysis of the data. I used the research categories of Identity, Understanding and Solitude to guide the analysis of the themes that were generated through my research. This research was carried out under a critical hermeneutic lens to find out the place of peace and the role of religion in India. The data was generated through the conversations I had with my research participants. My research journey experience and photographs can be found in Appendix D.

I have immense respect and gratitude for all my research participants. Without their help and support this research would not have been possible. Each of my research participants was warm and welcoming. They thought my research project was noble and I received vibrations of hope in conversations that I carried out. This helped my overall confidence level to bring a conclusion to a journey that I began. Each conversation took its own time, and has its own place in my memory. I was given access to plenty of resources for research without asking.

My research participants agreed that people in India were religiously ingrained and that religion will be on a pedestal for years to come as it gives an identity and context of existence to many in India. However, recently there is a shift seen from religion to spirituality among the educated youth of India as they find religious institutions empty.

Most of my research participants also agreed that peace has always been volatile in India and that violence in India has its roots in politics. Religious intolerance, communal disharmony, and riots are examples of politically driven

violence in India. Some research participants said that Pakistan also has a hand in the violence we see in India.

The real culprits for the disturbance of peace are poverty, caste problems, intolerance and inequality. Politicians use religion as a tool to create a false problem, to take peoples' mind off the real issues that are grounded in the economy of the country. Therefore, special attention needs to be given to the poor sections of the Indian society, as they are more vulnerable to manipulation due to their economic conditions.

It is clear from my research on the political instrumentalization of religion that education would greatly ameliorate the misuse of reason with the less advantageous classes of India. The citizens of India need to be informed, and made aware of the other to remove misunderstandings and misconceptions. Therefore, it is imperative to restructure the educational system in India so that awareness on all religions is disseminated equally.

Through the conversations we comprehended the power of language and how it can be used to unite the country. We live in language and it partially helps us to conjure who we are. Therefore, it is important to have interfaith dialogues and peace talks in various languages all over India. So that people all over can understand each other better.

Language and history together influence identity and understanding in people. Telling stories from the past gives people a sense of being, a perspective and a context to be grounded in reality but it can also bring back bitter events from memory. The anger, resentment and hopelessness in the hearts and minds of Indians

can be healed if we actively let go of history, acknowledge the mistakes of the past while re-telling stories so that such tragedies never happen again. This is the only way to heal and move a society forward.

From my research conversations, it was clear that peaceful co-existence is important to build a progressive society. This can only happen in India when people have mutual respect, and care for the other. There is also a need for robust policies, competent leaders and unbiased media to have a stronger India.

Chapter Six concludes this dissertation with a summary of the dissertation. In addition, the research findings, implications and suggestions for future research are included.

CHAPTER SIX – SUMMARY, FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS & CONCLUSION

Introduction

In this Chapter, I present a brief synopsis of the previous Chapters, my research findings, implications, and a conclusion to this study. This research is a step towards stabilizing peace in India, understanding the role of religion in light of violent incidences, promoting national integration, building awareness and comprehending the other. This research was participatory in nature and grounded in critical hermeneutics. The data gathered was analyzed through the theories of Paul Ricoeur, Hans Georg Gadamer, and Richard Kearney.

A brief synopsis

India comes from the Indus valley civilization, which is the second oldest in the world. It is a peninsula, which lies in the continent of Asia. Guarded by the Himalayas on the top, and protected by the Arabian Sea in the West, Bay of Bengal in the East, and the Indian Ocean in the South. India shares its borders with Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan.

India also represents different climatic conditions and land structures. The snow capped Himalayas, the perennial rivers and the sandy Thar Desert are examples of geographical variety existing in the country. In addition, India also enjoys the tenth position in the world, in terms of its Flora and Fauna. The people on the Indian soil belong to diverse lifestyles, cultures, and various religions. The cuisine is specific to each region, so is the language and the traditional outfits.

However, the metropolitan cities in India are westernized. With the globalization of the Indian economy in 1991, a new society of the “higher middle class” was born. Since then, there has been a huge influx of western products. Cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, etc. have massive shopping malls that carry almost all international brands in shoes, clothing, accessories, makeup, electronics, sports equipment and automobiles. Rock music, MTV, Pepsi, Coke and food chains like McDonalds, KFC, Pizza Hut, Barista and Baskin Robins have captured the younger generation that lives in these metropolitan cities. There is an assimilation of culture, food, lifestyles, thought and outlook with the West. On the other hand, some sections of rural India are still living in shackles of illiteracy, rusty rituals and archaic traditions. Female infanticide, child marriage, bonded child labor; caste problems are still prevalent today. There is a huge contrast in the urban and rural lifestyles of India.

India is truly an example of a diverse multi-cultural environment in the world. It is also one of the largest democracies with a secular constitution. With an annual GDP of roughly 8%, it is considered the second fastest growing economy after China. It is also a nuclear state, and is supposed to become one of the leading economies in the world by 2015. In addition, it has the third largest scientific human resource pool in the world.

Unfortunately, there are factors that are blocking the growth of the country. 25% of the population is still below the poverty line, which means that these people struggle for the three basic meals in a day. Population explosion has led to scarcity of resources, unemployment and underemployment. Even with a rising middle class, the inequality between the rich and the poor remains widespread.

Education is free for all until the age of 14 in India. The literacy rate is only 61% between the age group of 15-over. In the rural parts of India, men are still given preferential treatment, when it comes to even the basic education. Agriculture is still the backbone of the Indian economy and roughly 70% of the people depend on it for their livelihood. Along with the problem of poverty, unemployment, and population explosion, Indian people are struggling with the unstable nature of peace.

Historically, sustaining peace has been an issue for India since Independence. Unfortunately, due to wars, terrorism, insurgencies, religious fundamentalism, communal disharmony, economic disparities and social situations peace has been volatile in India. Since the November 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai, people are living in more fear and terror than ever before. The multiple attacks on Mumbai in 2008 were called the “9/11” of India. The concerns that people have about their safety have led to suspicions amongst different groups of people. Although India is a secular country and the Indian constitution grants each individual the freedom of religion, old tensions remain between groups and the media aggravates these to gain a higher viewership.

The purpose of this research was to find out the place of peace, and the role of religion today and in the future of India. My main research contains conversations with 15 leaders who represent Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism and Islam in India. The data collected from these conversations helped in understanding the role of religion in light of the violent incidences, the factors contributing to the disruption of peace, and implications for peace. It was not my intent to say what specifically any religion purports. The assumption behind this research was all the religions found in

India generally teach that we should strive to live in peace and coexist without conflict. Theories by Paul Ricoeur, Hans Georg Gadamer, and Richard Kearney were used to analyze the data collected through conversations with 15 leaders in India.

Chapter Five is the heart of this dissertation. The data presentation in Chapter Five contains quotations and extracts from my research conversation partners, which are analyzed with my understanding, through the research categories of Identity, Understanding and Solitude. The research categories provided guidance to my conversations to discuss the topic at hand. Most of the data emerged from the category of Understanding. Within each research category, several themes emerged. The major themes that surfaced under the category of Identity were (a) religion is on a pedestal and (b) the future role of religion in India. For the category of Understanding, the key themes were (a) language barrier, misconceptions, and misunderstandings (b) place of peace and (c) influence of politics on the Indian society. Finally, under the category of Solitude, the important themes were (a) care for the other and (b) education needs to bring a change. Based on the data analyses in Chapter Five, the next section discusses the main findings of this research:

Findings

Biased Media

Since 9/11, Terrorism has become a hotly debated topic. Unfortunately, the term “terrorism” is not clearly defined, thus it is difficult to label acts of violence or terror are external, internal or religious in nature. Despite the need for a better understanding of the term, the media in India marks all events that have an element of violence as “terrorism.”

Indian TV channels compete to win the highest audience and use the media to propagate information without regard to the sources. Such poorly regulated media bent on sensation has the negative effect of raising anxiety of the general public at large. Some of the funding for these channels comes from countries that want to create disturbance and unrest in India.

Barrier towards understanding

Through this research I have learned that there is wide spread ignorance about different religions and religious groups in India. Common people do not know each other well enough to trust each other. As India is house of many religions, a lot of the leaders feel that their religion is not given priority and the appropriate respect they deserve. They feel that the treatment they receive is unequal, and unjust. Interestingly, all religions feel the same about the other. The majority believes that the minorities are given preference. Whereas, the minorities thinks that the majority group has the upper hand. The youth in the metropolis of India have moved away from organized religion because they find it empty and lack trust in their institutions. They have turned towards avenues that give a spiritual experience.

With this research, I have gathered that there is a need to bring awareness of the religions in India. People do not have the time to know or inquire about the other. The judgments they form are based on hearsay. Feelings of discontent or brewing hatred between religious communities are purely based on misunderstandings. Therefore, information about different religions regarding their history and doctrines needs to be disseminated in the mass in various languages. This way the barrier of

language and the misunderstandings can be conquered and we can reach to a mutual understanding where we can co-exist without conflict.

Growing discontent

As long as the Kashmir issue remains volatile there will be political trouble. It is a dangerous open wound that needs immediate attention. It is said that once the Kashmir issue is resolved, terrorism in northern India will come to an end. Similarly the Naxalite insurgencies in the northeastern states of India will cease to exist if a solution is found regarding the economic disparities present in the country. The absence of land reforms, unemployment and exploitation of landless laborers are the major reasons for unrest in central India as well. Overall, it seems like various factors are threatening the peace of the country and the situations are becoming worse as more time elapses.

Regional dispute, neglect from the government, failed aspirations of the people, economic differences, identity clashes, lack of understanding, political motives, are the main reasons for the various forms of violence we see today. Poverty and caste problems along with violence in its various forms are haunting subjects that India is facing today. The next section of this Chapter will discuss implications of this research based on findings.

Lack of unity and trust

Contrary narratives on India have created a lot of confusion in the minds of the citizens of the country. In one narrative, India is described to be a shelter for the persecuted of any religion, and in another, a nation that was divided in 1947 for

people of two religions could not live together. Therefore, it is unclear to the mass if the country is tolerant and all encompassing or if it is a totalitarian regime.

Due its political history, peace in India is fragile. The partition of India, wars, riots, insurgencies, terrorism and communal disharmony has made peace difficult to attain. Therefore, to restore trust and unity in the country, it is necessary to heal the memory of Indian citizens who have directly or indirectly suffered violence. The memory of history cannot be erased but it can be healed if we acknowledge the mistakes and losses occurred and forgive the parties involved in the act. To actively forget and to let go of history can help in achieving a society that is united, peaceful and progressive. To establish peace, people need to be united and the government needs to take its own decisions without relying on outside help from other countries and international organizations.

Shift towards Spirituality

Through this research, it was interpreted that the educated younger generation of India is trying different ways of connecting with the ultimate reality. There is a shift from religious institutions to spirituality as the younger generation of India lacks trust in them. Religion is neither the cause nor a cure to the volatile state of peace in India. Religion is an independent entity and is sometimes used as a tool to create discontent by politicians and extremist groups.

Implications

Awareness and Unity through Education

The crisis India faces today is lack of educational consistency to promote public understanding and acceptance of competing voices. Education is a solution to

bring awareness and change in society. The current secular education system in India addresses a variety of subjects. Unfortunately, there is separation between the secular education offered and the diversity of religion present in the country as it plays an enormous part in the lives of the people. Therefore, it is important to address this need in the public education system. This will generate the desired awareness needed for the future of a united India. Secondly, it will create job opportunities in various fields and finally it will make people feel that their voices are heard.

I suggest, a handbook on all religions as a part of the curriculum. This will build harmony, and a knowledge base for the future of India. This recommendation is based on my 20 years of experience living in India. I would have never known the things I know now about the five religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism) if I did not pursue the quest of knowing about them through this dissertation. While conducting my research fieldwork, this reality came to the forefront when I was trying to look for the Synagogue in New Delhi, but no one knew what or where it was.

I also recommend starting summer institutes that teach students about world religions, and other cultures to broaden their horizons. It is imperative that these institutes be run and funded by the government, which has a secular constitution and a mandate for inclusiveness. Greater public education about religion will give everyone a chance to make a change, and feel the difference.

Both my field research and theoretical study have demonstrated the necessity of recognizing the other and promoting mutual respect. My conversations with religious leaders in India show there is a demand to understand that all of us have a

place in the world, and make a significant contribution in ways not known to the other. Mutual respect can lead to the path of peace and progress. Therefore, it can be concluded that for the growth and progress of the country, peace has to be built all over India. The process of building peace has already started in Auroville (a town located close to Pondicherry, India). The purpose of this town is to realize human unity. This kind of a town model may be replicated throughout the country for mutual understanding and to stabilize peace. In order to build peace, India must feel united. This goal must be clear to achieve peace. Inclusion of all religions is also required because religion is a major part of life in India.

Robust Policies

The government needs to focus on policies regarding eradication of poverty, population control and purging illiteracy from India. Agriculture should not be the backbone of the Indian economy after 63 years of independence. The government must put its attention on the educational policies implemented all over the country. Simply churning out thousands of graduates each year (without jobs or underemployed) is doing a disservice to the graduates as well as the economy. Therefore, the government needs to promote entrepreneurs, setup various research laboratories for new inventions in different fields, work on getting more foreign investors, and start additional industries to create employment in India.

The roles of moderates in each society have to be bigger than what it is today to see some significant changes. The moderates need to be involved in policy making. For the common man identifies more with the moderates of a society.

A no-nonsense policy on terrorism needs to be set in place as well. We need to secure our borders for which, the security forces should be properly funded and equipped. There needs to be a clear demarcation of responsibilities for efficiency, security and to avoid the blame game. The 26/11 attacks on Mumbai could have been avoided if the security organizations (e.g. RAW, Maritime Police, Coast Guards, Navy) were cooperating and communicating the information received with each other. Had they anticipated and analyzed the information received, this crisis could have been averted or handled very differently. Even though, peace is volatile in India, it is evident that there was no crisis anticipation plan or management team in place for a metropolitan city like Mumbai. National Security Guards from New Delhi had to be especially flown in to Mumbai to eliminate the terrorists and to bring the city back together. The sleeper cells (dormant terrorists) in the country need to be found and removed as quickly as possible. The citizens need to contribute by alerting security organizations if they see suspicious activities.

It is said that Vasco Da Gama discovered India, while the British invented Pakistan. The intellectuals of India believe that Pakistan and India are essentially one nation. To them it is just sheer hatred, greed, motives and not religion that have separated the people of one nation. Bringing Kashmir into mainstream India can solve the problem of terrorism in the northern part of the country. This can be achieved by infrastructure building, setting up of new industries and connecting railroads, freeways. The terrorists thrive by either terrorizing the locals or by gaining their support. Once the socio-economic programs are set in place for the locals, hard action needs to be taken against the terrorists.

An all round development, meeting the aspirations of the people, defining the role of the state in relation to the nation can decrease the terrorist groups and violence from India. This will enable India to move towards peace, progress and development. India needs to borrow some inspiration from the European Union. Each country in the European Union has its identity intact but together they form a strong alliance that gives a strict competition to the most popular currency in the world, the U.S Dollar. Similarly, Kashmir can be still true to its identity and yet remain a part of India. This holds true for all the states in the country.

Equal Opportunity

Due to the caste system and the lack of equal opportunities for all, the quota system or reservations have come into existence. There is no scope for equality in India because the resources are not equally distributed. Therefore, the government of India needs to take creative and adequate measures to provide resources to all the citizens of the country and eradicate the quota system. For the growth of India, it is imperative that the reservation system is removed. People need to qualify for jobs based on their merit, and not affluence or reservation.

Suggestions for Future Research

Two areas for future research that were evident from this project are listed below:

1. There are many discussions about bias in India's media. Research into the question of media's bias could be important when trying to reach understanding among different social factors.

2. Research into the question of youth following religions or seeking spirituality could perhaps shed light on the relevance of how religion is portrayed in light of social differences.

Conclusion

India has a rich historical past in which people have lived in harmony for centuries. However, since independence, peace has been volatile in the country. Terrorism, communal disharmony, riots, insurgencies and wars have tormented the nation and are posing as a huge impediment to its progress. For a progressive Indian society, there is a need for unity and peaceful co-existence. Peace can be built but it is difficult. It relies heavily on mutual respect, an orientation to understanding and care for the other. Mutual respect can be harbored by educational awareness of the other. In addition, we need robust policies for the security of the country, equal opportunities for all, eradication of the reservation system, poverty and the caste system. Also, we need qualified politicians and a media that understands their vital role and responsibility towards the country.

I have listed my findings, implications and suggestions for future research with a hope that it may bring awareness, plant a seed of imagination in young minds, bring motivation for much needed and desired action, a paradigm shift in the way we think and to start a revolution of some sort. I would like to end by quoting Rabindranath Tagore (1914:27):

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
 Where knowledge is free;
 Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
 Where words come out from the depth of truth;
 Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
 Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way

into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action –
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

TABLE 1: CHRONOLOGY OF HISTORICAL EVENTS IN INDIA

(Sardesai 2008: 11-20)

BCE	
2600-1300	Indus – Saraswati Civilization
1200-1000	The Vedas
1200-600	Vedic Age
1000-800	Brahmanas
800-600	Upanishads and Aranyakas
563-483	Gautam Buddha
480	First Buddhist General Council
327-326	Alexander invades India
321-185	Mauya Dynasty
273-231	King Ashoka
100-100	Composition of Bhagavad Gita
CE	
100-200	Buddhists split into Mahayana and Theravada
300-500	Syrian Christian community in Cochin
320-540	The Gupta Dynasty
629-645	Chinese traveler Hsuan Tsang in India
700-800	Buddhism spreads to Nepal and Tibet
712	Arabs conquer Sind

1000-1026	Muhammad of Gazni raids into India
1498	Arrival of Vasco da Gama
1526-1530	Babar's reign
1556-1605	Akbar's reign
1600	Queen Elizabeth I issues charter to the East India Company
1659-1707	Aurangzeb's reign
1757	Battle of Plassey
1853	East India Company's charter renewed for an indefinite period
1857-1859	The Great Uprising
1885	Indian National Congress is formed
1906	Indian Muslim League formed
1919	Jalianwala Bagh massacre
1930-32	The Round Table Conference
1935	Reserve Bank of India founded
1937	Burma politically separated from India
1945	Gandhi launches the Quit India movement
1947	Separate state of Pakistan created, August 14 and India attains independence August 15.
1947	Jawahar Lal Nehru becomes the first prime minister of India.

Appendix B

IRBPHS

May 20, 2009

Dear Sriya Chakravarti:

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco (USF) has reviewed your renewal request for human subjects approval regarding your study.

Your renewal application has been approved by the committee (IRBPHS #08-038). Please note the following:

1. Approval expires twelve (12) months from the dated noted above. At that time, if you are still in collecting data from human subjects, you must file a renewal application.
2. Any modifications to the research protocol or changes in instrumentation (including wording of items) must be communicated to the IRBPHS. Re-submission of an application may be required at that time.
3. Any adverse reactions or complications on the part of participants must be reported (in writing) to the IRBPHS within ten (10) working days.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRBPHS at (415) 422-6091.

On behalf of the IRBPHS committee, I wish you much success in your research.

Sincerely,

Terence Patterson, EdD, ABPP
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

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Appendix C

**Pilot Study Transcript, Data Analysis and Implications
University of San Francisco**

Transcript

Sriya: Ali hi, how are things with you?

Ali: I am fine thank you. Things are good. How are you?

Sriya: Thanks for taking the time, I know how busy you are and it is thanks giving and I know you are flying to New York tomorrow. I know it is holiday time, thank you for letting me know about the switch in plans and thank you for all the consideration you are giving me towards my dissertation. Right now in my pilot mode where I couple do to conversations and finally come up with a proposal sketch by the end of this term. So I really appreciate everything you have done for me.

Ali: My pleasure, thank you

Sriya: So how has everything been so far?

Ali: Life is good and trying to make it even better

Sriya: I was wondering if you could tell me a little about your self, where you were raised, your career, where you are and where you started and all of that.

Ali: In Summary, I was born in Karachi Pakistan. I was there till the age of 18, and then moved to Canada to work on my college degree. At Mac master got my undergraduate degree in commerce and moved to Fresno, California and soon I pursued my dream degree which is MSC in Finance. Then I worked in corporate environment. I have worked for visa, spectrum, United Health Group and recently with Dockers finance in the treasury department.

Sriya: You have come a long way. That is very interesting. Was there a particular reason why you moved out of Pakistan, generally people don't leave home?

Ali: Well first of all , Education in Western countries have an edge compared to Asia, it is a dream for many people, they strive to get the best education they can and the second thing I like to go abroad, and just the change. A young guy who wants to see the world, what's out there and to get knowledge

Sriya: You moved here when you were 18, your identity was developed and for you to come into a new country, how did it feel?

Ali: It was an amazing experience; luckily I have been to other countries like England before I got to Canada. I knew what I was looking for so it wasn't a big cultural

shock. I have watched movies, culture, a little about it, it wasn't surprising, it was better, big time better, the communication difference, even education difference, and examination is MCQ in North America, Where as in Asia we still write a lot of essays, so pretty much different here from the way they teach there.

Sriya: So comparatively what kind of education would you prefer if you were given a choice? Were you glad that you were a part of both systems of education?

Ali: I cannot compare education; it is not apple to apple. I did my college here and not in Pakistan so it is not apple to apple. I have an idea of education and I have an idea of both types of education, I enjoyed writing essays and answering multiple choice questions.

Sriya: So essentially it has developed you, your comprehension, analysis inculcated and both parts of your brain blossomed

Ali: Yes

Sriya: So when you came to a new country how did it feel? As Pakistan is mainly a Muslim state.

Ali: It did not affect me as such because in Pakistan no forcing to go to mosque, In Canada no one not forcing me not to go the mosque. It was my decision when I was a teenager to go to the mosque or not. There was a little parent and peer pressure. There was no parent pressure in Canada. In Canada there was peer pressure. In terms of changing the country, Pakistan the system facilitates going to the mosque, for example Friday half day so that people can go to the mosque but in Canada on Friday's I had classes. The system helped or facilitates but it is finally my choice and my decision.

Sriya: How did you base your priorities when you were in Canada?

Ali: I had gone to Canada to study and so that was my priority. I tried not taking classes when I had Friday prayers, but if there was no choice and it was mandatory, I took my classes first. I put aside my religion. I hope god forgives me because there were cases where Prophet Mohammed and other companions put aside their religion aside to achieve something big. So that is very common from Prophet Mohammed times also and I continue that. If I had exam, I had some other priority and responsibility comes first

Sriya: Where did these religious values come from?

Ali: It is a Part of everything, my father used to go to the mosque and prayed 5 times a day. I used to see him, I saw my friends and who go out and you have time and you stop by. Mosques are everywhere. One difference between Canada and Pakistan is that the system does not help you; you have to prepare to go to the mosque in Canada.

In Pakistan it is more convenient and when I am not doing anything, some part is guilty, family pressure, friends and combination of everything....

Sriya: So it becomes a cultural thing doesn't it?

Ali: Yes

Sriya: So when you can't go to the mosque you pray at home?

Ali: I pray out of 5 times just once at home on a regular basis. As I am not a very religious person, I am not one of those people who think religion is wrong and I am right, or religion is right and I am wrong.

Sriya: Where do you identify yourself religion wise?

Ali: Well depends this question is subjective, if I am Afghanistan – I am definitely non-religious or an infidel, If in Pakistan – more towards liberal or moderate and in America – I will be considered quite conservative.

Sriya: That is very interesting and quite a distinction, judging oneself according to the cultures and social norms.

Ali: It is like putting California house in Pakistan or putting a California house in New York. You will die because of the weather. One shoe does not fit all. People think differently. Sometimes the best way to judge is from the outside. House from outside will be different from inside. A big house from outside may be a mess from inside and a completely a good house from inside may be a mess from outside. It depends which aspect you are looking at?

Sriya: Thinking of religion and praying 5 times and we have spoken earlier about Islam...and that the religion has been linked to terrorism. What are your views on it?

Ali: What is religion? Religion is an institution which has particular laws, values, culture, particular way of living, it is a name of an institution that exists and it has many contents wrapped into a religion. Within that package you have peace, love your brothers, and live in peace. No religion there is no peace because if every religion needs to be in harmony or everybody would fight. Even a wrong religion wouldn't preach that and there is no wrong religion. To have an institution People have to be likeminded. They have to be similar minded. Philosophy is the same. You cannot have an institution that teaches finance courses in an arts and sciences department. You cannot put arts and sciences in finance department. When you talk about finance, in big theory everything is the same and therefore it is an institution and that is why it runs. If everyone has different views people will do different way. Big part it is all the same, the views need to be the same. When there is following

people follow, definitely religion will never tell do not have peace love and go fight, and terror activity. It is almost impossible. One part of religion emphasizes on peace.

So one part of religion talks about peace but then there is a part where the religion teaches to defend your philosophy, your people and your religion and there things get messed up.

Sriya: Please explain the defending religion, what does that mean? Why would it arise?

Ali: Defend is not in a negative way. You are writing a thesis, you defend your thesis; at the end you defend... is it wrong? It is a positive thing. What is happening, you have an idea, and you work and make sure that your idea is right, you have all the research and you go and you defend your thesis. Same thing with the religion

Sriya: Correct

Ali: Institution comes and thinks about Past present future, they defend by theory, talking, by critiquing, criticizing people or other very polar way of living and that is wrong and we are right or it could be fighting. If someone attacking you defend...you are not going to put your body and you are not going to ask someone to kill yourself. when you talk about defending back in era, Islam came in 1400 years age war was common. People kept weapon to kill.

Defend is always applicable in every single aspect of life, defending culture, values, religion, institution, children and your house. It can be fighting, discussion, intellectual conversation or debate or anything

Sriya: so defend is basically when someone attacks you, correct?

Ali: by definition defend means someone attacks to stop their influence in any shape or form

Sriya: But it is only when you are attacked and then you have your guards up.

Ali: Attack does not mean through weapon. E.g.: Jesus left Jerusalem and he was essentially attacking other religions or values. When you bring Christianity you say Judaism is wrong, when you bring Hinduism you say Buddhism is wrong. You cannot say Buddha was right and Jesus wasn't. What I am trying to say Jesus attacked, even Prophet Mohammed attacked. It can be anywhere. Your values not the best.

Philosophy attack not physical attack it can be any form. Religion grew by attacking or other people converting and their way of living was not the best way and they converted. In case of Islam from the Arab town towards Africa and Asia, which has

different religion but Islam was attacking other religions, by philosophy or I can use the word influence.

The biggest difference between east and west is the way the west live and not appreciated by the east. We call it influence. Influence and Attack I am using interchangeably. Summary, defending does not mean by weapon nor does attack, but it is influence or transfer of thought.

Sriya: Great point, we talk about it all...every religion started somewhere and some people capitalized on it...we have seen god, we will tell you what has happened and become our follower and we shall show you the path. This has happened in Hinduism and from my knowledge of it, a caste system developed – Brahmins were the scholastic people who read the sacred text, then the warriors, the Traders and finally the Shudras who did janitorial work.

The Shudras were never allowed to enter temples and they felt humiliated and they felt disrespected and they thought that god was for the rich people and so the poor person started believing that there is God somewhere who would take care of him and if someone was kind, someone gave him food was given and this has happened in India where certain Hindus converted into being Christians because they were not respected and may be it was for the standard of living, food, respect etc that came with it.

Ali: One thing is for sure, religion is based on faith, and every single thing cannot be rationalized. Rationalizing that God exists. It is hard to prove it, the point here is, in religion a lot of things do not make sense and the subsequent things make sense. You have a big heading and if the sub division makes sense then upper part makes sense, if conclusion is correct, hence beginning was correct.

If you build a tall building and if you are on 102 floor that means that the base was right. Otherwise the building would collapse. People don't need to check every part. If the building exists for many years that means the foundation was right.

People try to rationalize that is how you rationalize religion and God. God cannot be proved but the other foundations are so solid that you try believing in it. Just like Jesus brought life to dead people and most people followed it. If you are happy and then you influence others or may be attack other people. Same thing happened in India with the Shudras who were not happy and converted into other religions as the other religions said why don't you join us, sit with us they were influenced.

Sriya: Thinking of human beings from the psychological perspective if you may so, happiness is a factor, everyone wants to be happy, be fed, nice bed to sleep on and they all want the comforts of life and whoever can offer the most, all individuals would fall towards it. Would you agree?

Ali: Yes to a certain extent, but people won't follow Bill Gates if he provided all luxuries of life, you rather live in a small ghetto place but you may prefer in believing in your own god. The happiness or peace of mind is important

Sriya: The peace of mind or happiness. E.g.: BG says I m god, I will give every individual on this planet good food to eat, excellent place to stay, nice car to drive, plenty of vacation time and absolute high standard of living, but I am GOD. Do you think people will say NO You think of people will say no? Think of the downtrodden

Ali: People did that, gave their life in Japan, a lot of people followed him. Supernatural is extra ordinary skills in behavior that can influence other person so much or it could be simply skills of talking that can influence people so much. In Scientology, people think of religion as God does not ask you for money then why join a religion that asks money of you. It depends what you like? If money is everything then Bill Gates is god.

Sriya: Let us think of the people who are as the lowest level of hierarchy of needs and all of a sudden they are elevated to a high standard of living...If I was there in that position and someone offered me the food and I wouldn't mind God being Bill Gates. But as you go higher on the needs, your basic needs are met...

Ali: You ask for more

Sriya: Yea, so you want education and then the self esteem and I think from where you are speaking you have your basic needs met, you have the education and the skill set, you know where you are going. You don't want that subsistence, you don't want anyone to come to you and say I am God. That is where the difference lies and I think the Maslow's law of hierarchy comes into play.

Ali: Again the question is what they need? If they need food give them food, don't bring them a jaguar. They don't even know what he is talking about. People talk about Rugby and the game looks easy to me. I am not involved and just throw it away but unless you are involved in it, you don't have the understanding for it. A person, who does not drive a car, does not know about a good car. Same thing with motor cycles depends on your needs and your knowledge about it. If the person does not know anything but he knows about food, and the person who provides food is God. Person like you and me won't believe it. We do not need the basic needs met. We realize that you are talking nonsense.

Sriya: From our conversation it just struck me that the human being is so easy to manipulate. I can that person make into anything. I give you food and I am God.

Ali: And that is why all religions flourished back in time, and it is so hard to bring in a religion to flourish now.

Sriya: People still do not have food to eat and the basic needs are not met. People don't even have one square meal a way.

Ali: You can ask them to do anything. This also answers the question of terrorism, how come people are killing each other? Knowing it wrong? What is influencing them? Someone is influencing them and filling in a requirement, and it is destructive but they don't know

Sriya: Really

Ali: In some cases they don't, you are growing up and you believe in something with.

Sriya: A part of me did think but now I am pretty open.

Ali: If you have to choose one culture

Sriya: obviously Indian because I was raised in it

Ali: when you have kids, won't you teach them Indian culture? You wouldn't tell them how they eat etc.

Sriya: Yes, because I wasn't raised that way.

Ali: Very simple theory that the way you grow in most cases that the way it is the best. It is the human nature; if you lived in a hot country you are comfortable with a hot country. Same thing applies to people when they have seen this one thing and they thing that is right. And the opposite with wrong. Indians eat with hand and if you ask them to eat with sticks they would slap you and vice versa the Chinese would think that is not civilized. Opposites think that you are wrong. Even now, it is about every person or a majority. Just like I am comfortable in American culture now, and I may not be comfortable in Pakistani culture. I am influenced by American culture and I become part of it. I did not like jeans but now I do so it influences me. Jeans looks bad and it is crappy but now I have my views.

Sriya: So it is the human mind that can be manipulated and it looks for satisfaction or am I am going off track, it is just the mind but coming back to the topic of terrorism and how you were telling me, that there are people and that religion is effecting or the people who do not have their basic needs met, they can be converted who are prone to do anything

Ali: as they have nothing to lose, and everything to gain. So the same thing they think others are wrong and they are right and that start or the first step of terrorism

Sriya: right

Ali: Let us discuss Terrorism. Terrorism is a word to terrorize other people or to build insecurity or safety. Or you can put it in a way that I am thinking of a good definition about terrorism: I cannot come up with any.

Ali: well you have this information and in essence. What is the definition of terrorism?

I would say the easiest definition according to me is the sequence of action violently occurred to pursue individual goals and philosophies. It is the act, which is violent in nature and to achieve the political or philosophical goals. Started with the French revolution and it is the part of the history, in Spain, in Peru, freedom fighter, mujahidin, jihadi, militant, para military, guerillas, separatists and they are all considered terrorism but the freedom fighter thinks they are on the right path, and all think they are defending their image

Sriya: so basically it is the oppression and when you oppress too much then they fight back and that is terrorism.

Ali: Everyone action has equal opposite and reaction. Part of the reason for terrorism is what you said. But sometimes in nature some people are evil. Sometime when two people fight they both are on the right side. If 2 countries are fighting and if they have their individual goals, USA and USSR cold war, both were wrong in a sense / right both achieving their goals. But if there is one goal and 2 people fight then one has to be wrong. Freedom fighters were not terrorists.

Sriya: In the minds of those victims, such people were terrorists.

Ali: Terrorist in the middle, just like an umpire and it is not asking you are terrorist, when we say terrorist that everything is equal and we are as a third person observing and then you use the word terrorist

Sriya: Everything is not equal in life has not been that way.

Ali: the only who has the right to call is the person who is not involved. The word terrorism according to my view is who can define who is third party

Sriya: the third party does not know the context and for them to judge the situation where she or he has nothing at stake how do you make that fair assessment.

Ali: that is the jury. I think you are going towards as long as the other person is wrong, ff think they not wrong because they pursue their goal. You are saying both parties are right. When we go to the court, we have the reasoning behind it...when you go to the court, if you listen to people who have been in parole, they will tell you genuine reasons. It doesn't mean they are right. They must be some people outside who can say you are right something forced you do something but your action was not right. We cannot say terrorist because things are not the same, somebody is oppressed and they are doing this. Then no body would be in jail because they all have reasons. With the third person is not involved in it, not a party and he says the decision is this. Just like the jury. So my question is who is in jail, a defendant would never say he is wrong and the plaintiff would say he is right too. So that is why the third party comes and who is right or wrong. Same theory comes here to. They got to

be terrorist because of reasons no matter what the reasons are and upto them to decide. May be UN if totally individual who is terrorist? But not like terrorism in Pakistan. Afghanistan thinks Pakistan is a terrorist and vice versa.

Sriya: Ya but when it comes to the third person and we are getting a bit off track here...the third person and how much trust, how do you know that the third person would make the right decision. Thinking back on Rwanda and that the UN forces did were to protect the foreigners. So what was the point?

Ali: the only person in that case is GOD but then Atheists won't believe that. But the question is you let both parties decide and they come to a consensus we think that the third person has the capability of deciding it. In that case, even if both decide, may be the judging party is bias. The world is not fair

Sriya: Unfortunately, the world is not fair.

Ali: I have an argument against the UN is, UN 5 member is ammunition. The main supplier of ammunition is the UN. UN is the criminal then and they are biggest terrorist. How do you terrorize people? Through ammunition, helicopter, manpower, nuclear bomb to terrorize people. UN compromises those rules. UN in one theory is the biggest terrorist in the world. Terrorism comes from terror to facilitate the process of terror but a small crazy guy with a gun in his hand will be terrorized because I don't know what he is capable of doing. The biggest terrorist is the UN

Sriya: So many come countries come together, I think UN is a good organization but the distribution of power is not fair. If every member was equal then and every vote counted then I think that you know it would be different and people were not ignored if they were from the third world country. If you are not in the G8 you don't speak.

Ali: Like people say, in one theory that World Bank is the best thing that happened but nothing has destroyed the poor country because of the World Bank. The WB knows that the poor country will use the money for corruption but still they provide you the money. The country grows more in debt. Why are you giving just like the bank will not give me a loan, Unless I have a collateral security or they ask you a reason. Then how come they are pumping money into countries for what purpose? So lots of people have this theory because they are GOD now the World Bank 20 percent of your loan out if you do this

Sriya: I think that this happened to India and the trade deficit in 1992 and open the markets to the multinationals. Which was fine as every customer got the benefits.

Ali: what if it was a bad decision? Like NAFTA. Result may be right or wrong. Influencing they might be right or wrong, why would you give money when you know they are not capable of paying. Not looking at the end side, they taking money for the bridges their wont be any bridges. It is just like giving a poor person loan who can never you back. Same thing happened to A n P people give them food, clothing

and shelter and they grow in debt and nothing can pay but the life. The other person is playing with the others mind. You will be in such debt that I cant pay you with my own life. So how this is happening. So the question is, the debate is he has nothing to give, he was in such debt, the only thing is life, and he put his life on the line of his duty and of he thinks and it doesn't justify him killing other people. Who is the criminal? Person pumping money. His intention was wrong, the person who conducted that stupid act may not realize. Again if you have done something wrong you need to be punished

Sriya: where is the money flowing from? Why such acts, what is the motivation?

Ali: more power, more connections, more money and one thing leads to another. When a person makes websites, he wants more people he wants the people to the website. He goes to marketing firms and says 4 million hits, so the marketing people say that they would put more advertisements. 2000 aside and 4000 on the website, and he goes to bigger agencies. So that is how you start controlling that is how it happens

Sriya: In ideal world and people had all the money, all the resources, and great jobs and everybody was happy

Ali: those things happen in dreams. People have the concept that past was so good and the present is so bad but in many cases past was miserable in many many cases now.

Sriya: As I spoke about the ideal world, there still would be disparities their still would be complains about physical looks, locations and they would find something or the other that would cause conflict.

Ali: if you are believer, god says that evil exists and it asks you to do the wrong things

Sriya: what do you tell atheists? They don't believe in anything.

Ali: no I am trying to say that there is no perfect world. Even in religion, atheists think that there is no perfect world because of religion. Everybody does not have the capability to understand. If you say every person had the same capacity, capability and that is impossible and everybody cannot have the same brain. May be 99 percent is same and that 1 percent makes a difference. There cannot be 100 percent peace and 100 things fine because of the fact that young is powerful than old, he will take advantage when he can and that is how it is. In a perfect sense, everybody is born at 6'. Same weight, same understanding and then it is a machine but too bad that we are not machines. And that is the best thing that we are not machines

Sriya: So unfortunate, that religion is linked to terrorism when it is teaching you to be in harmony.

Ali: so faith in god, it does exist influencing you to do good things. You cannot see from your naked eye, who has immense power in a bad way and that is evil. Just like god has influence to good things and evil has influence to do bad things

Sriya: you think of 9/11 and the linkage to Jihadis the terrorist act, what is your take on it.

Ali: I gave you an example, defendant and plaintiff they have their reasoning but it is not right.

Sriya: but when the wrong is done

Ali: 9/11 is small when you see the history, very small part of terrorism and it is wrong act nothing can justify it. Specially putting it on religion is stupid because 5 or 10 or 200 people represent one religion and 200,000 people diss it. So why associate it with 200 people. But that is how the world is. If a bad thing happens, we associate bad things first and not the good things. When you think of Oakland, people killing each other, same thing for Detroit, people killing each other. It is easy to associate bad things than good things. So it is making religion giving a bad name. I don't think people can live if Islam is asking you to do this. If every third person started killing then 50 percent of the population would be dead by now. I think it is crazy that Islam has anything to do with the terrorism

Sriya: it is just the ulterior motives of power hungry people, basing it off religion and ignorant people.

Ali: May be they come in their mind they come up with it. They read something in Quran, it said ...just like poetry, poetry has different meaning to different people, interpretations are different. Some people understanding and comprehension is different and took something out of Quran and have different views.

Sriya: I understand this because of critical hermeneutics. We all have stories, we have our history and when we read something new, we interpret it from our identities and what has happened in the past.

Ali: If I tell you something, your understanding is according to what happened to you. It could be different for other persons. More water is good for you but more water for someone may kill them. A person with kidney problem would die; one thing can lead to different results. You can do the right thing at the wrong time and the result can be devastating

Sriya: wow, what an insightful conversation. Excellent talking to you and I look forward to talking you. Thanks

Ali: Thanks, it was a pleasure.

Data Analysis

For this document, I will analyze the pilot conversation described in section seven. The main themes that evoked in the conversation were identity, imagination, understanding, and trust.

The first topic that we touched was personal identity. My conversation partner and I agreed that identity is critical because of the way it evolves and revolves around a person. It is about traditions, backgrounds, prejudices, and biases that a person brings along and creates an identity of his or her own in due course of time. These identities are not constant and they develop continuously. Richard Kearney states that one cannot remain constant over time, unless one has minimal remembrance from how one came to be. Over a period of time, the person changes and forms an identity of character. A constant part of this identity is often referred to as *idem* and the volatile part is the *ipse*. Kearney also states that one cannot re-invent themselves unless they are constant. There needs some grounding force to carry out a change and that is the constancy of an identity (*IDEM*). Bernstein said that through others we gain true knowledge of ourselves. Narrative identity is created through imagination. It is like envisioning, where do you want to move in your life is the big question. My participant had a similar journey.

Ricoeur holds narrative identity responsible for mediating between the two poles of personal identity, the pole of sameness (*idem*), referred to by what we call character, a set of innate or acquired attitudes and capacities, and the pole of selfhood

(ipse), including trustworthiness and faithfulness to oneself, despite all the deviation and transformations which mark the path of life.

The next important aspect of our conversation touched on understanding and trust among people, religion, nations and the world at large. We embraced Habermas's theory of communicative action. He talks about Trust as a concept. My world, The world and Our world. We also touched on Gadamer where it is very important to have a Fusion of Horizon for a better understanding.

Implications

The research implications are as follows: Every person has their Identity, which is shaped by experiences of life. Such experiences become a part of their character and a story comes to existence. However, in the background there are many changes that occur and most are due to the interaction with the other. One appreciates the other with more interaction and comes to know more about the other through a conversation. A way to encourage this would be moving from one country to the other. Visa processing needs to be simpler so that people can travel and see the other parts of the world.

Though in the end we all are human beings but we all live in different parts of the world and are raised differently. Being sensitive to the other must be a perspective. As Ali said during our conversation about his identity as Muslim, In Afghanistan I might be considered an infidel, in Pakistan liberal and in America a conservative person. Fusion of Horizon is needed for a world to come to a better understanding. This understanding will lead to the transition of trust from *my world* and *the world* to *our world*.

With the hermeneutic foundation, I intend to dig deeper into the philosophy of religion, re-interpretation of text and reasons for terrorism to synergize major findings and policy changes. So far my findings have led me to the following: lack of effective understanding, solicitude and care for the other, the changing identity without a direction. I will leave the reader to interpret the plot of my story. The plot will thicken to complete my story and turn into a successful journey with the completion of my dissertation.

Appendix D

Research Journey and Photographs **University of San Francisco**

In the process of writing this research piece, I felt like I have had a spiritual awakening of some sort. From the Buddhist monasteries in Dharamsala to the Jewish synagogue in New Delhi, I sensed various sentiments and expressions towards God. My research participants were located all over India. I went from Mumbai to Pondicherry through Chennai. Later on I traveled from Gaya (near Patna-Bihar) towards Dharamsala crossing Delhi and Chandigarh. The highlight of my research trip was meeting His Holiness the Dalai Lama and attending a three-day religious teaching conducted by him in the month of September 2009.

Buddham Sharanam Gacchami (Seeking refuge in Buddha)

I flew from Mumbai to Patna and then went by road to Gaya. Due to rains and the poor visibility of the road, it took us roughly 5 hours to reach the holy land of the Buddhists. The town in vicinity was untouched by modernity and had huts made of straw and bamboo. There were expansive green fields, bullock carts, and narrow roads. My journey continued on one such narrow road for the next few hours as I made an interesting observation about the true purpose of the Kutcha (dirt) roads from a passenger seat.

The functionality of Kutcha (dirt) roads has always fascinated me and its capability of serving in various capacities amazes me. I saw cows, goats and buffaloes casually sitting, street hawkers selling, little children playing, and vehicles emitting tons of poisonous gas continuously trying to pass each other on a so-called “two way street.” Looking out of the window, and making observations kept me entertained throughout my journey.

As soon as I set foot in Gaya, I felt a positive vibration. The land was calm and contented in an indefinable way. I went straight for my conversation with Venerable Dr. Varasambodhi Thera. The next day, I was able to stopover at Bodhi Gaya to have a look at the Bodhi tree (the place of enlightenment for Lord Buddha), witness *Shraadh* (Hindu ritual of offering homage to deceased ancestors) at Vishnu Path (Hindu temple) and catch a glimpse of the oldest university in the world (Nalanda) in Rajgir (See Figure 13, 14, 15).

The other two Buddhist research participants, Dr. Tenzin Chok Molam and Dr. Sangye Tandar Naga were stationed in Dharamsala (Himachal Pradesh, India). I went to Dharamsala after taking a break at Yol (a picturesque town 35 kilometers short of Dharamsala). I stayed overnight at Yol, where the weather was pleasant but by evening it started raining heavily. The sweet smell of the rain, the buzzing of the crickets later that night and the proximity to nature were invigorating. The drive from Yol to Dharamsala was scenic. The city of Dharamsala is very close to nature and is enclosed with eucalyptus trees, curvy roads, Buddhist monasteries, and clouds hugging mountaintops.

As I entered the temple to attend the sermon by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, I saw thousands of people sitting outside were trying to tune into the right FM station before the lecture began. There were people from every country of the world. I sat in the front row of the temple with the Korean delegates and we were all served some bread and tea to start our morning. The atmosphere was spiritual and divine. After the lecture was over, I met with His Holiness in person (see Figure 12) and then proceeded to meet my other research participants.

Overall, my research conversations with the three Buddhist participants were quite enlightening. The conversations gravitated more towards the categories of care, and understanding for the other. The spirit of the conversations orbited around interconnectedness with the other, being close to nature, following the eight-fold path of Buddha to achieve peace, the need for education to raise awareness, getting rid of the ego in self to exonerate pride and conceit, the hand of politics in promoting violence in India and the need for tolerance for the other.



Figure 12: His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Love Thy Neighbor

The three Christian research participants were situated in Mumbai, 10 kilometers away from my residence. I got an invitation to meet all of them in one place. It seemed like this meeting was divinely orchestrated and destined to take place all along. Interestingly, I had never been to this part of the town, or met these people before but somehow it all came together for the purpose of this conversation. Ms.

Maggie Sundaraj a close family friend acted as a connection and introduced me to these three conversation partners. Her efforts were instrumental to seek data for this section of the research.

Brother Ainul Sayed Habeeb, Pastor Warren Christin and Mr. Rajkumar Posche were my Christian research participants. I gauged an immediate connection, a sense of trust, enthusiasm and interest from them. Ms. Maggie brought us some chilled lemonade to start our conversation.

As soon as we finished our lemonade, I realized we were in a deep conversation about the Bible. The conversation was flowing naturally and I was getting informed as the seconds progressed to become minutes and the minutes turned into hours. Time became an irrelevant concept in that moment. When our throats were parched, we finally took a break to drink some water and eat some cilantro *chutney* cheese sandwiches. Before we ate, Brother Sayed prayed for me and said, May all success come to you for this indeed is a great venture.

My conversation with my Christian participants was deeply inclined towards love, care for the other and understanding of self. I soon realized that this conversation began to have a life of its own. The key point in the conversation was that - Though, India is a secular nation; the people of India are insecure about their religion. Religion in India has become commercialized. Each group is trying to prove superiority of his or her own God. In all this commotion, God has actually gone missing. Some Indians have moved away from religion, as traditional structures are not working for them. They find it empty, and lack trust. Hence, they are delving into

spirituality, meditation, chanting, yoga, feng shui, vastu and other means of seeking a connection with the supreme one or to come to that ultimate reality.

Another interesting perception on India was that it seems like a “ Fairy tale” or “Disney Land” to the West because of the presence of mystical, magical, and supernatural elements in it. While talking about the future of India, politics came to the forefront of the conversation. My research participants felt that Indian politicians have misled the Indian mass for a very long time and the rift created is so grave that it has caused us many lives due to the violence created for their personal gains.

Om Tatsath Om (The Beginning and The End)

My three Hindu conversation partners were located in distant places. I had to fly to Chennai and then take a taxi to Pondicherry to meet with my first Hindu research participant, Mr Kittu Reddy. After my conversation with Mr. Kittu Reddy, I went about roaming in the “White Town.” The beauty of this town can be justified only when it is visited in person. I was staying at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram facing the bay, which was calm, peaceful and serene. I felt that even the air that I was inhaling had a spiritual note to it and my mind was at peace. I also received a very friendly welcome at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and Research Studies where I met several people and had great informal conversations.

The next day, I visited Auroville and Our Lady of Vellankani (the most renowned healing Catholic church in India). I was stunned to see incense sticks and garlands being offered to Mother Mary along with candles. I could see a fusion of Hindu and Christian sentiments in the air.

My time in Pondicherry was very productive and informative. I was exposed to a lot of information and had diverse encounters with people that I would have never met otherwise. After spending a week in Pondicherry, I went back to Mumbai. I rested for two days, while reminiscing my time in Pondicherry, pondering my conversation with Mr. Kittu Reddy and collecting my thoughts for my upcoming conversations. I flew to Delhi to meet my other two Hindu conversation partners: Swami Vigyanand from the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and retired army officer Lt. Gen Jagdish Chander.

My Hindu research participants were ecstatic to see that I was carrying out this research. Each conversation took its own time, and has its own place in my memory. I was given access to plenty of resources for research without asking. For this I am deeply thankful to Swami Vigyanand. The Hindu participants were so excited to be a part of my research journey that it seemed like it was their own.

The collective highlights of the conversations are as mentioned: India strongly needs to realize its unity. The aspirations of the Indian mass need to be met so that they are not misled by anyone. The deep-rooted hatred that is in ourselves, which comes out in forms of violence and intolerance needs to be examined as it is very hard to purge because of the various layers of bitter experiences we have had from birth.

Say: Shalom

I was anxious about finding my Jewish research participants, as they are so few left in India. Then suddenly one day, I got an invitation on Facebook from Mr. Samson Koletkar. When I clicked on his profile, I noticed that he was an Indian Jew

living in San Francisco. As odd as this seemed but this was exactly what I needed to further my research. It seemed like some angel was listening to my prayers as I was trying to find my Jewish participants. I promptly e-mailed Mr. Koletkar about my research and he happily introduced me to Mrs. Leora Joseph, who helped me in getting acquainted with the Jewish population in Mumbai. When I requested Mr. Koletkar to be one of my Jewish research participants, he gladly accepted my offer.

The work and coordination by Mrs. Leora Joseph was key to this section of the research. Without her help, this part of the dissertation would not have been possible. She got me an appointment with my second participant, Mr. Elijah Jacob. While conversing with Mr. Jacob, I realized that he and my father had worked together years ago on a project for a Jewish Home for the Elderly. As he learned that I was the daughter of Maj. Chakravarti, he opened his heart for a very deep and meaningful conversation with me. He then took me on a personal tour of the Jewish Distribution Center where he showed me posters and photographs of the involvement of the Jewish Distribution Center in Tsunami relief, care for the elderly and meal-on-wheels plans. He also told me that all work done at the Jewish Distribution Center was non-sectarian in nature.

I got an appointment to see Mr. Malekar in Delhi through my relative Mr. Sanjit Bannerjee. Mr. Malekar is very revered and is the head rabbi of the Jewish community in India. Though, I had the address, I was unable to find the synagogue. I was running from one alley to the other, circling around buildings and was totally lost. People did not understand when I asked for a synagogue. They did not know what that was, and I did not know what the Hindi term for it was. So I went about

asking for the prayer room for Jews. They were even more puzzled with the word “Jew.” They kept sending me to the church or to the Bible Bhavan (place where you study the Bible). I was lost but adamant. The harder it got for me to locate the synagogue, the more I was motivated to find it. It finally started pouring heavily. I was standing with my uncle (Mr. Ranjit Bannerjee) and then it dawned to him that the word for Jews in Hindi is *Yahudi*. So I asked around again, and this time I said, “*Yahudi ka temple.*” (Temple of the Jews) - They looked at me with excitement and finally directed me. Soon, I found myself standing in front of a light blue colored house - It was the Jewish Synagogue “Judas Hym.”

This was my first experience in a synagogue. The aesthetics of the room were quite pleasing to the eye and soon Mr. Malekar and I were in a conversation. I also met a few Jewish people from around the world, who had just come to the synagogue for the evening prayer. It was a very fascinating experience for me. People I met in the synagogue were very interested in my work because of the recent terrorist attacks on Mumbai. I could feel their energy and support while I explained my research goal.

My conversation with the Jewish research participants was unique and substantial.

I am glad that I got an opportunity to explore this avenue, as it was new to me. My conversations were leaning towards the aspects of identity, understanding of the other to get a grasp on the identity of self and the lack of the much needed care in India and the world today. The soul of the conversations led to the following summary:

Religion will play an important role in India as it gives a sense of direction to people.

The moderates of each society have to participate in the policy making and decision taking. Terrorism in India is driven for political purposes.

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim (In the name of Allah, the beneficent the merciful)

I was able to identify three Muslim conversation partners in Mumbai.

However, I had to travel to various locations. The traffic jams made it very difficult to keep up with the right appointment times. Sometimes I wondered if it would be better to fly and meet people located in different parts of the world than to be stuck in a cab for three hours in a traffic jam.

My first conversation was with Dr. Shafi Shaikh. I met up with Dr. Shaikh at his office in Santa Cruz, Mumbai. This conversation started casually but it became extremely passionate overtime. Dr. Shaikh voluntarily clarified certain terms and misplaced quotes that are used out of context from the Qur'an. He was very excited to meet me. He said, "in a time where students want to just mug up notes or buy guides (monkey notes) to pass examinations, you actually want to take the time to research and study?" He was very encouraging and supportive. This gave my self-esteem a boost and I felt more passionate about my research.

Mrs. Leora Joesph (Director, American Jewish Distribution Center) gave me the contact of my second Muslim participant. Dr. Zeenat Ali was very excited to hear from me and invited me to her residence in Bandra, Mumbai for a meeting. We had an hour-long conversation. Our conversation was so natural that it seemed as if we had known each other for many years. There was a level of unspoken comfort and trust. We sat out in the veranda till it got dark. Dr. Zeenat Ali shared her ideas on how to achieve peace in India. She gave a few examples where she had organized events

like Cricket for Peace, Art for Peace and Chanting for Peace to build unity and bring harmony in the country.

After our conversation, we went in for a sumptuous dinner that comprised of *dosas*, *sev puri*, rice, chicken curry, and some Indian dessert. Over dinner, she introduced me to her family and told me stories. I felt like we had a similar childhood. I started chiming in my stories and she was relating very well to them. That day, I found a friend in a research participant.

My third participant was Mr. Ather Khan from the Islamic Research Foundation. I visited the Islamic Research Foundation to know about comparative religions and Islam. The staff at the Islamic Research Foundation was very friendly, hospitable, and respectful. When I entered their office, I was a little apprehensive. I wasn't sure of what to expect, plus I saw no women around. The gentleman who was accompanying me was asked to sit and wait in the men's room and I was directed to the women's room. After waiting for a while, I was given permission to meet Mr. Ather Khan.

Today, I feel quite blessed to have a conversation with him in person as his ideas and thoughts were very impressive. At some point in our conversation he said, "Until a leader quotes the text from a sacred book, he is not a true leader, and should not be believed in." Overall, he seemed very knowledgeable and gave me a lot of direction on my research.

The main theme that developed from my conversations with the Muslim research participants was care for the other. Care was most important to all my participants. Each gave an example on how the Prophet or the Qur'an suggests about

taking care of the other. My research participants unanimously agreed that religious intolerance in India is rooted in politics.

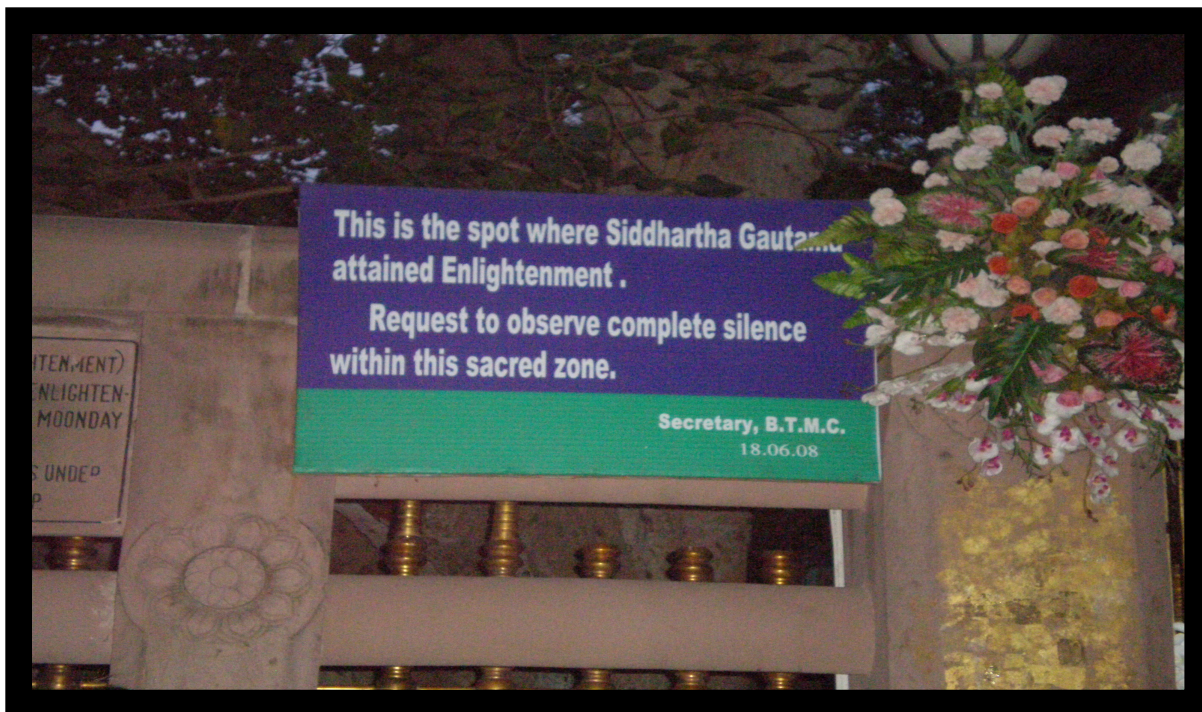


Figure 13: Bodhi Tree



Figure 14: Nalanda University



Figure 15: Vishnu Path