

2003

# Mapping Political Violence in a Globalized World: The Case of Hindu Nationalism

Sangeeta Kamat

*School of Education, UMASS Amherst, [skamat@educ.umass.edu](mailto:skamat@educ.umass.edu)*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cie\\_faculty\\_pubs](https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cie_faculty_pubs)



Part of the [Political Science Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Kamat, Sangeeta, "Mapping Political Violence in a Globalized World: The Case of Hindu Nationalism" (2003). *Social Justice*. 25.  
Retrieved from [https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cie\\_faculty\\_pubs/25](https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cie_faculty_pubs/25)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for International Education at ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in Center for International Education Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@library.umass.edu](mailto:scholarworks@library.umass.edu).

# Mapping Political Violence in a Globalized World: The Case of Hindu Nationalism

Sangeeta Kamat and Biju Mathew

*A Gujarat Gaurav Rath Yatra on the streets of New York City? This is the suggestion given to [Gujarat's] Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, by Non-Resident Gujaratis [NRGs] settled in the United States.... The president-elect of the Indian American Forum for Political Education, Sudhir Parikh, a consulting allergist in the U.S., expressed concern over the soiled image of Gujarat abroad following the communal riots and suggested that Mr. Modi take out "gaurav rath yatras" on the streets of New York and other cities in the U.S. to help improve the State's image (Dasgupta, 2003).<sup>1</sup>*

THE ABOVE NEWS REPORT FROM A LEADING DAILY IN INDIA INDICATES THE exchange of culture and identity politics in a globalized world. The communal riots that have tarnished the "image of Gujarat abroad" refer to the extreme violence unleashed against Muslims in the Indian western state of Gujarat in February and March of 2002 that killed between 800 and 2,000 people. Although tensions and conflicts between various religious and ethnic communities are not new phenomena in India, political commentators and scholars agree that the recent campaign of extreme violence in Gujarat is a departure from previous episodes of communal violence in India (Human Rights Watch, 2002; Mander, 2002). Following from this, the two questions we explore in this article are: (1) What is the ideological basis of this new and extreme violence against minorities in India, particularly against Muslims? (2) How do we understand the support for this violence from the Indian community in the U.S.?

The conjuncture we seek to address has deep historical roots and is tied to rapidly changing economic conditions in India. We focus on the specific violence in Gujarat (hereafter referred to as "Gujarat 2002") to highlight the ideology of the Hindu nationalist movement that makes such violence possible. In addition, we

---

SANGEETA KAMAT (e-mail: skamat@educ.umass.edu) is an Assistant Professor in the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst (Amherst, MA 01003). BIJU MATHEW (e-mail: mathew@rider.edu) is the Jesse E. Harper Associate Professor in the School of Business at Rider University (Lawrenceville, NJ 08648; e-mail: mathew@enigma.rider.edu).

outline the contours of the Indian American community's investment, material and ideological, in furthering the movement's cause. This allows us to suggest new directions for research on the global nature of political violence. The first section of the article provides details of the seven days of horrific carnage of Gujarat 2002, and the continued violence and environment of fear that persists to this day. The brutality and systematic precision of the pogrom of February 28 to March 6 that spread rapidly from the cities to the villages of Gujarat is a window into the Hindu nationalist movement and its widening sphere of influence. The second section highlights the racialized discourse of the movement, which rests on a fabricated history of persecution and victimhood of Hindus, while Muslims are presented as the main perpetrators of violence in this mythical history.<sup>2</sup> The final section discusses how an important sector of the Indian diaspora in the U.S. foments this violence, straddling a minority and majority identity simultaneously and cleverly using the former to augment the latter. In conclusion, we suggest that an analysis of political violence should take into account the transnational and global relations by which dominating ideologies are reproduced and sustained.

### **“Crime Against Humanity”: Gujarat 2002**

On February 27, 2002, the Sabarmati Express was attacked a few minutes after it pulled out of the Godhra station in central Gujarat, allegedly by a Muslim mob. One carriage, numbered S6, caught fire and 58 passengers were trapped inside and burnt alive — a large number of whom were Hindu religious volunteers returning from a controversial temple-building project sponsored by the militant Hindu nationalist movement, Hindutva.<sup>3</sup>

Beginning February 28, the State of Gujarat witnessed unimaginable acts of cruelty and violence as large mobs of Hindu nationalist cadre roamed the streets and systematically massacred the Muslim community in Gujarat. No one was spared: young, old, men, women, children and newborns, the disabled and the destitute, Muslim members of the Opposition Party, and business establishments. The violence was conducted in the manner of a genocide, that is, “acts committed with the intent to destroy in whole or in part a national ethnical, racial or religious group,” making Gujarat 2002 a “crime against humanity,” according to international law (Dayal, 2002). The two-volume report of testimonies prepared by the Concerned Citizens Tribunal, a separate report by Human Rights Watch, and numerous fact-finding missions by other NGOs corroborate the claims of the massacres. The stories included descriptions of murderous, slogan-chanting mobs of youth carrying swords, gas cylinders, guns, and sticks that isolated Muslim men from women, raped women in full view of their families, slayed infants with swords, destroyed Muslim-owned property, homes, and mosques, and chased the escaping crowd to set them on fire. To give a sense of the extreme violence, we briefly describe the murder of Ahsan Jafri, a former trade unionist and parliamentary member of the Congress Party (the opposition party). Jafri's fingers were

chopped off and he was paraded around the locality badly injured. Next, his hands and feet were chopped off. He was then dragged, a fork-like instrument clutching his neck, down the road before being thrown into the fire (Citizens Tribunal Report, 2002: 30).

Jafri lived in a middle-class neighborhood in Gandhinagar, Gujarat's capital. His family and the several dozen families that came to his house seeking refuge were brutally murdered in like manner, while his middle-class Hindu neighbors watched the carnage from their apartments. According to eyewitnesses, members of the police stood by during the public spectacle of torture, rape, murder, and looting (*Ibid.*). On this and other occasions, police officers are said to have directed the mobs to people hiding from Hindutva members. The alleged complicity of the police and municipal officers in aiding and abetting the violent mobs, directing them toward Muslim businesses and homes, and then calmly watching the rape and murder of innocent people, points to a breakdown of the legal system that no one had anticipated (Simeon, 2002; Roy, 2003).

At the time of the incidents, Gujarat's chief minister, Narendra Modi, flip-pantly dismissed them as the "Hindu backlash" in response to the Godhra incident. However, numerous fact-finding teams and testimonies expose the lie of the "backlash" thesis. The evidence shows that the organization and precision of the killings and burning of Muslims and the destruction of their property was anything but spontaneous and instead reflected months of careful planning (Human Rights Watch, 2002; Citizens Tribunal Report, 2002).<sup>4</sup> The mobs, ranging from several hundred to several thousand people, were equipped not only with swords, knives, firearms, cans of an unidentified petroleum-based solvent, and *trishuls* (a trident of Hindu religious significance), but also with municipal listings of Muslim homes and business establishments. Telephone lines in Muslim neighborhoods were cut off well before armed mobs arrived there. Reports concur that in several neighborhoods the police cordoned off areas where Muslims lived to prevent them from escaping their attackers. In some cases, the police opened fire against fleeing Muslims (Human Rights Watch, 2002). The burning of people, whether alive or dead, was a systematic tactic that made it impossible to accurately assess the number of people who lost their lives. Figures vary from 800 killed as per state government figures to over 2,000 people killed in five days as per the Citizens Tribunal Report.

Systematic sexual violence took place in the pogrom. Muslim women, young and old, were brutally gang raped, their limbs hacked, and they were ultimately killed. Eyewitnesses recount that pregnant women were cut open and the unborn child speared before the mother was killed and burned. When young Muslim boys and girls were spared, it was to watch the brutal murder of their parents and the rape of their mothers and sisters (Citizens Initiative, 2002; Citizens Tribunal Report, 2002). An inquiry team documented the following:

The fact-finding team found compelling evidence of the most extreme form of sexual violence against women during the first few days of the carnage — in Ahmedabad on February 28 and March 1 and in rural areas up to March 3, 2002. The testimonies point to brutal and depraved forms of violence. The violence against minorities was pre-planned, organized, and targeted. In every instance of large-scale mob violence against the community in general, there was a regular pattern of violence against women (Citizens Initiative, 2002: 5).

The specificity of targeted violence of mass proportions on women is a key aspect in understanding the ideology of Hindutva (Sarkar, 1999). The patriarchal aspect of the ideology places the protection of women by men as symbolic to the integrity of the community as a whole. In the case of the massacre against Muslims, subjecting “their” women to bestial forms of sexual violence was seen as a critical factor in the destruction of the integrity and self-worth of the Muslim community as a whole.

As the violence spread from urban pockets of Ahmedabad and Baroda into the rural heartland of central Gujarat, a mass exodus of Muslims was forced into makeshift refugee camps set up in large part by volunteer groups with little or no assistance from the state or federal governments. More than 150,000 Muslims were rendered homeless after their homes and business establishments were burned to the ground. Mosques and tombs of Muslim saints were torn down, and in some cases, the area repaved in a few hours, leaving no trace that they had existed at all (Human Rights Watch, 2002). At the time of this writing, at least two “refugee camps”<sup>5</sup> continue to exist, with few relief and rehabilitation services, as the refugees find it impossible to return to their villages with any sense of security. The federal and state governments refuse to acknowledge the existence of these camps and claims that “normalcy has been restored” (*Times of India*, 2002). In some cases, refugees returned to their burned homes and reconstructed them with the assistance of volunteer groups, but were driven out and their houses again destroyed. To date, the government has refused to take any action against the perpetrators and instead further polarized the Hindu and Muslim communities by calling for early elections in Gujarat.

The State of Gujarat, like much of India, has a majority Hindu population, with a Muslim population just above 10%. Gujarat experienced incidents of communal violence before 2002, especially in its commercial capital, Ahmedabad. However, Gujarat 2002 signals a new phase in the power of the Hindu nationalist movement, not only in the scale and brutality of the violence it organized, but also in terms of the flagrant violation of law and order by the state. Modi’s government forced the hand of the Federal Election Commission by dissolving the assembly as early as June 2002, and called for new elections to prove that the campaign of violence had been successful and had the full support of the people of Gujarat. The level of

polarization between the two communities in Gujarat, especially in the areas affected by violence, was best exemplified on election day. Indian citizens stood in two separate lines to vote in the same election booth, one Hindu and one Muslim. In many ways, it can be argued that the “Gujarat Genocide,” as some commentators refer to it, was not just an exhibition of state-sponsored mass murder of a minority community by a majority movement, but was a new lesson on the use of violence within the framework of democratic politics to secure an election victory (Roy, 2003). The statement made by leaders of the Hindutva movement was that “Gujarat will be repeated” until they achieve their goal of a *Hindu Rashtra* (Hindu Nation), which sent a chilling message across the country.

The dotted lines that connect a burning train in Gujarat, mass murder in India, and a *Gaurav Rath Yatra* (Parade of Gujarati Pride) in New York City opens up the possibility of a new incarnation of state-based political violence. The idea of a *Gaurav Rath Yatra* in New York is a momentary signal that organized mass political violence in the new millennium is unlike the classical fascism that Europe experienced from the 1930s onward. A diasporic Indian population celebrates the rise of a militant and fascist movement in their native country with a public display of pride and patriotism in an American metropolis. The open support of diasporic Indians for a politics of violence, intimidation, and fear, even as they seek representation as a minority group in the U.S., is a clear example that in an era of globalization, political identity and allegiances are contradictory and unpredictable. The politics of the Indian diaspora also show how contemporary political violence crosses national borders and is manifested as a global phenomenon even when it is directed toward a national project.<sup>6</sup>

Before we can address the question of how the diaspora becomes invested in the Hindutva movement at home, several questions remain unanswered: How did Gujarat 2002 come to be? What enabled the Hindutva movement to mobilize the masses and unleash such horrific acts? To answer these questions, we must understand the history of the Hindutva movement in India and the basis for its steady and systematic growth over the last 80 years. This is the subject of the next section.

### **The Fundamentals of Hindutva**

The formal origins of the Hindutva movement can be traced to 1925 when the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS, literally, National Volunteer Corps) was founded for “propagating Hindu culture” (Golwalkar, 1939: 11). RSS states its prime objective to be the transformation of India into a *Hindu Rashtra* by imposing a narrow definition of upper caste Hindu religious and cultural practices on a society that has historically been intensely plural and diverse. The ideological basis of Hindutva is premised on the creation of two groups, insiders and outsiders, that is, those who belong to the Hindu family and those outside the fold of “Hinduness” (Jaffrelot, 1996; Ludden, 1996; Pannikar, 2000). Perhaps the most

explicit characterization of insider/outsider status is found in the writings of the “Supreme leader”<sup>7</sup> of the RSS, M.S. Golwalkar:

The foreign races in *Hindusthan* [India] must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no ideas but those of the glorification of the Hindu race and culture, and must loose (*sic*) their separate existence to merge in the Hindu race, or may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu Nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment — not even citizen’s rights. There is, at least, should be, no other course for them to adopt (Golwalkar, 1939: 47–48).

Ironically, the reference to “foreign races” was not to the British against whom Indians raged a fierce anticolonial struggle at that time. Instead, it stood above all (and continues to stand) for Muslims in the subcontinent, followed by the entire range of religious and cultural minorities such as Indian Christians, Zoroastrians, Jews, and Sikhs (Thapar, 2000). All these communities are depicted in the writings and history textbooks of the movement as “outsiders,” or in the case of Muslims as “invaders” who arrived into what Hindutva followers deemed a Hindu land. Hindutva’s claim over India centers on the idea that Hindus are the original inhabitants of the subcontinent. Moreover, the category “Hindu” is itself racialized to refer to those of Aryan stock and does not include “dark skinned” Dravidians of southern India, who are regarded as Hindus of a lesser racial stock. The racial discourse of Aryan Hindus versus non-Aryans has no scientific standing, but serves to narrow the astounding pluralism of philosophical and religious traditions that have a claim to Hinduism. In claiming Hindus as Aryans and identifying a particular philosophical tradition — the Vedic tradition — as the authentic representation of Hinduism, the diverse traditions and philosophical treatises that adopt the label Hinduism are disavowed and rendered invisible within this discourse. In this way, the polycultural and syncretic forms of being “Hindu” are abandoned for a rigid definition that is not only religious, but also racial. Lochtefeld (1996: 114) analyzed the writings of one of the founding fathers of the Hindutva movement for an explication of the religio-cultural construction of “Hindu”:

Savarkar (who first expounded on the Hindu Nation) defined a Hindu as anyone regarding India as a fatherland and holy land, and to this day these remain the litmus test. This defines the Hindu nation on cultural criteria — as a people united by a common cultural heritage — and from the start Hindutva proponents have insisted that the word “Hindu” refers to a cultural rather than a religious community. One must look at who this definition excludes. Savarkar’s definition of a Hindu is plastic enough to include everyone in a notoriously polyform tradition, but the condition

that one regards India as the Holy Land largely excludes both Muslims and Christians. This definition equates Hindu identity and Indian nationalism, meaning that religious minorities are not only “aliens,” but because of their “extraterritorial loyalties” (to holy lands in Arabia, Israel [and Palestine]), they are also potential traitors.

The ingenuity of tying culture to race makes possible a definition of a “pure” nation. By defining those who belong through a territorially contained notion of culture, it becomes possible to denote some minorities within the ambit of Hinduism, but the rest as foreigners who can never belong to the nation. Thus, certain minority communities, such as Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, and *Dalits* and *Adivasis* (tribal/indigenous), that have been historically oppressed by upper caste Hindus, in the last decade have been subjected to “conversion” campaigns in which they are initiated into Hinduism much like non-Christians are baptized to become Christians (Sarkar, 1999).<sup>8</sup>

A range of political and cultural organizations has been established to carry out the cultural and political project of constructing a Hindu identity among Hindus and non-Hindus. They are also initiated into the task of building a Hindu Nation. As described below, the success of the movement lies in building a dynamic organizational network that at the same time maintains the ideological unity of the movement. The core activity for propagating its ideology is the reproduction of the RSS *shaka*, a cell or local unit that initiates children and youth (mostly young men) into the movement. The organizational sophistication of the movement resides in the RSS *shaka*, which are organized into neighborhood units in which male children and youth learn physical education exercises and the Hindutva ideology. After proving themselves in an RSS unit, members receive additional responsibilities in any of the movement’s organizations. They can be found running everything from daycare centers and play schools in neighborhoods to trade unions in factories, or *Bajrang Dal* (a paramilitary group whose name loosely means Soldiers Unit)<sup>9</sup> to student groups on national and regional university campuses (Noorani, 2000). Beyond the RSS and its shakas, other known Sangh constituents are its parliamentary wing, the Indian Peoples Party (BJP),<sup>10</sup> the World Hindu Council (VHP), a cultural and social movement unit that aggressively promotes Hindutva in society, and its military wing, the Bajrang Dal, which provides muscle power on the streets and offers training camps for the creation of suicide squads. Because of the ways in which the movement’s extensive “family” (known as *Sangh Parivar*) is structured, it is almost impossible to exhaustively map the entire organizational network. We focus here on the organizational style of the Hindutva movement rather than on its specific parts.

The Hindu nationalist movement would not succeed without long-term cultural, social, and paramilitary work that lays the foundation for a specific trajectory of politics that is amenable to escalation into organized violence at particular



moments, such as the Gujarat 2002 pogrom. A little-known service wing of the RSS, the Sewa Vibha, largely does this long-term work. It offers service and development through public activities such as schools for the poor, particularly in tribal areas, emergency relief in disaster-struck regions, blood banks, free eye checkups in rural areas, distribution of clothing, group homes for widows, and organized tours of temples. Sewa Vibhag has a network of “one-teacher schools,” staffed usually by males who have undergone training in a RSS shaka and whose expenses as a teacher are paid by the RSS. Such entities ensure that rural and remote tribal areas have functioning schools, creating an ideal setting for propagating the RSS ideology of Hindu supremacy. For example, textbooks have a map in which Pakistan and Bangladesh are included within the borders of India, and Hitler is depicted as a great leader who united Germany and led that country to great heights (Delhi Historians Forum, 2002; Setalvad, 2001).

The complex network of organizations, each playing a specialized role in the Hindutva movement and working with a largely volunteer force recruited at a young age, illuminates two important aspects in the reproduction of dominant ideologies. First, an elaborate institutional edifice that is part of the normal associational forms of civil society ensures the routinized production of Hindutva ideology. Second, the movement has a dual identity; some organizations have an overtly political and public role (such is the case of the BJP), while another facet of the movement operates through voluntary organizations that engage in laudable social services to the needy and the poor, maintaining their political project at ground level.

Interestingly, each organization retains formal autonomy while remaining committed to the ideological “family” of the Hindu nation. Thus, each organization’s autonomous functioning and identity allow them to associate with or dissociate from the movement, a politically expedient flexibility. This organizational structure and logic give the movement a hegemonic influence and the possibility of continuous expansion. An ideological discourse that can construct the notion of a single Hinduism where one did not exist, combined with functionally specialized organizational forms, make Hindutva one of the most powerful machines for political violence available, and it has been in preparation for eight decades.

### **Global Hindutva and the Politics of Multiculturalism**

The Hindutva movement in the U.S. mimics the organizational style of the movement in India. In the U.S., the movement is being shaped into a dispersed and autonomous, albeit coherent, network of organizations, a model that is already well established in India. In fact, the model is almost a replica of the movement in India with each U.S. organization having a “sister” (or should we say, “brother”) organization in India. Thus, the equivalent of the RSS is the *Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh* (HSS), with summer camps that resemble the RSS shakas. The sister organization of the BJP is the Overseas Friends of the BJP, while the VHP’s

counterpart is the VHPA (VHP of America). The low-profile Sewa Vibhag has a similar low-profile charitable agency in the U.S. known as the India Development and Relief Fund (IDRF); and the aggressive paramilitary counterpart has a web-based presence at [www.hinduunity.org](http://www.hinduunity.org) that includes a dramatic “hit list” comprising U.S.-based Indian scholars and other critics of Hindutva. Even Hindu students on U.S. campuses are organized by Hindu Student Councils (HSCs) that parallel those on college campuses in India. Over the last decade, HSC chapters have grown exponentially and there are close to 75 chapters on university campuses across the U.S., many in prestigious universities such as MIT, Harvard, Columbia, New York University, University of Texas at Austin, and Northwestern.

Providing financial support for the political projects back home is the most effective role of the Hindutva movement abroad. The momentum that foreign exchange can provide to a political project in India should not to be underestimated. Relatively small amounts of cash from the U.S. or the U.K. convert to hefty budgets for Sewa Vibhag organizations in India, which changes the scale of propaganda work. For example, in the last six years, the movement’s tribal development activities received more than \$250,000 dollars from the U.S. and almost double this sum from donations made by sympathizers in England for the setting up of Hindutva schools in tribal areas (SACW, 2002).

Thus, at the most obvious levels the globalization of Hindutva is connected to the funds that the Hindutva movement overseas channel to the RSS in India. However, as noted, this is insufficient for understanding the process by which political violence is globalized. If we take the growth of the “saffron dollar” as an indication of the movement’s growth in the U.S., the question remains as to how such a right-wing nationalist movement is able to take root and grow in this manner in a foreign country. Which dominant ideologies in the “host” society provide a supportive context for the nationalist sentiments of its immigrant community? Equally, what is it about the condition of the migrant subjects that makes participation and investment in a nationalist project “back home” a relevant and attractive option for them? Our analysis points to the paradoxical interlinking of apparently contradictory discourses — the discourse of Hindu nationalism and the discourse of multiculturalism.

An established thesis is that the production of ethnic and religious identities within migrant/minority communities in the West is in significant part a response to the racism of the host society (Mathew and Prashad, 2001; Sarhadi Raj, 2001). Faced with negotiating the racial politics of the U.S., Indian-Americans have very little choice but to adopt and operate some version of an ethnic or religious identity that allows them to position themselves within the logic of U.S. race politics. Under such circumstances, the desire for an identity that invests a subject with a history such as Hindu-American makes available a fertile ground for Hindutva. The discourse of Hindutva and pride in being Hindu provides the immigrant Indian community with a history that gives it value and “social capital” within the

ideology of liberal multiculturalism (Mathew, 2000). Thus, the desire for a special identity is implicitly encouraged by the discourse of multiculturalism. If the core of racism and conservatism in the U.S. is the enforcement of a monochromatic vision that rejects the idea of cultural diversity, U.S. liberalism responds with a philosophy of multiculturalism that proposes that each group's culture must be accorded equal respect. The Hindutva movement draws from multiculturalism to champion its exclusionary ideology as the neglected culture of Hindu-Americans. Hindutva flourishes under the aegis of U.S. multiculturalism, where such sectarian movements receive implicit permission to promote the accomplishments and triumphs of their "neglected civilization."

The reason multiculturalism deteriorates from being a progressive solution of empowerment to a regressive arena for nationalism is because relativism is a core principle of liberal multiculturalism. An important expression of multiculturalism proposes that all cultures and histories should be considered equal. This results in an ahistorical presentation of different cultures, each with their distinct and particular history, disconnected from one another. Culture devoid of history is thus an uncritical celebration of difference and it is in this officially sanctioned context that a violent and hateful nationalism is able to flourish. HSCs have made use of the institutional policy of multiculturalism to attract young Indian-Americans who often know little about the political situation in India, but who wish to attach themselves to a cultural imaginary of India as a great civilization. This desire is in large part facilitated by multiculturalism since within this discourse each minority ethnic and racial group is expected to present its own unique cultural repertoire. For instance, a primary HSC educational activity is to organize Sunday study sessions with a local temple priest or a parent who teaches the *Gita* to HSC members. Yet the "exotic" knowledge of *Gita* readings shuts out the rich, syncretic, and conflicting history of "Hinduism," and instead produces a narrow and curtailed version of upper caste patriarchal Hinduism that is at the center of Hindutva ideology (Mathew and Prashad, 2001).

In sum, Hindutva travels from India down 5th Avenue in New York City as part of a multicultural parade on the streets of New York. It circulates back homeward as an ideology that is now a legitimate part of U.S. society. A point we wish to emphasize here is that fundamentalist ideologies, rather than being opposed to liberalism, are able to find a niche for themselves within liberal-democratic politics. Thus, a transoceanic analysis of cultural nationalism reveals the shortcomings of dominating liberal ideologies as well. Further, the case of Hindu nationalism also points to how certain cultural nationalisms are able to garner legitimacy in the U.S., while others, such as Islamic nationalism, are singled out for attack in the "global war on terror." We are unable to develop these issues and contradictions in this article, but urge the scholarly community to engage in a closer scrutiny and analysis of how sectarian ideologies and violent nationalisms are strengthened via transnational interests and discourses. Research on ideologies

of hate needs to pay closer attention to the dynamics of transnational cultural flows such that we understand these ideologies not as things that happen “out there,” but as part of an intricate and contradictory articulation of global politics.

## GLOSSARY

**Adivasi:** Term of self-identification used by the “tribal/indigenous” population of India. Literally, it translates to “first inhabitants.”

**Bajrang Dal:** Paramilitary group.

**BJP:** Bharatiya Janata Party (Indian Peoples Party). The parliamentary constituent of the RSS family of organizations. The BJP is currently the main party in the ruling coalition at the federal level and the party in power in Gujarat.

**Dalit:** Term of self-identification used by oppressed untouchable castes of India.

**Gaurav:** Pride; honor.

**Gaurav Rath Yatra:** Parade of Gujarati Pride.

**Hindu Rashtra:** Hindu Nation, specifically, a nation imagined by Hindu nationalists owing allegiance to the RSS.

**Hindutva:** A violent and militant Hindu nationalist movement that seeks to make India a Hindu Nation.

**HSC:** Hindu Student Councils.

**HSS:** Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh, equivalent to the RSS in the context of the U.S.

**NGO:** Non-Governmental Organization

**NRGs (Non-Resident Gujaratis):** Gujaratis living outside of India, especially in the U.S.

**Rath:** Chariot.

**RSS:** Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (National Volunteer Corps), the core organization of the Hindutva movement and its ideological fountainhead.

**Sangh or Sangh Parivar:** Terms used to refer to the “family” of organizations that constitutes the Hindutva movement and that have ideological affiliation with the RSS.

**Sarsanghchalak:** Supreme leader of the RSS.

**Shaka:** The basic unit of the RSS organization on the ground. Primarily refers to neighborhood training cells.

**Trishul:** A trident — a weapon of religious significance in Hindu mythology with a sharp triple-pointed end.

**Yatra:** Journey; procession; parade.

## NOTES

1. Our emphasis. *Gaurav Rath Yatra* refers to a “pride parade” similar to parades organized for gay pride, July 4th, or St. Patrick’s Day in the U.S. The term NRG is a spin-off from NRI (Non-Resident Indian), a common term that refers to the Indian immigrant community in the U.S. The “*Gaurav Rath Yatra*” in the news story was scheduled for the end of June 2003.

2. In this mythical history, Hindu nationalists portray other non-Hindu groups and societies as destroying their culture. Included here is the West as a generalized construct, Christians, and even Communists. Anti-Muslim discourse has been central to the Hindu nationalist project, with the partition of India and the creation of Pakistan used as “evidence” of a deep-seated primordial civilizational hostility. Christians, especially priests and missionaries, have also been subjected to vicious, though sporadic, attacks.

3. An investigation by a government-appointed independent commission was unable to conclude what caused the fire or who was responsible for it (SACW, 2002).

4. At least one minister of his cabinet suggested that Modi was aware of the Hindu nationalist movement's planned intent of organizing mass murder in response to the "Godhra incident" (Citizens Tribunal Report, 2002).
5. There is a cruel irony in using the term "refugee" when those displaced and rendered homeless are citizens of the country.
6. A systematic analysis of the nature and effects of the connections between national politics and migrant identities is beyond the scope of this article, but that issue deserves the attention of scholars interested in understanding the role of global migrations in the rise of ethnic and religious violence.
7. "Supreme leader" is a formal title held by the successive heads of the RSS. In Hindi, the term used is *Sarsangchalak* (supreme leader of the Sangh).
8. Conversion rituals modeled after Christian baptism rituals have never existed in Hinduism, but have been concocted for this purpose. Tribal participation in Gujarat 2002 indicates the success of the conversion process (Dayal, 2002).
9. The Bajrang Dal was formed in 1984 and gets its name from an army in the mythological story of Ramayana. On its official website, it states that the primary task of every Hindu should be "revenge on Islam."
10. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, the Indian Peoples Party) was formed in 1979 after the dissolution of its earlier version, the Jan Sangh.

## REFERENCES

- Citizens Initiative  
2002 *How Has the Gujarat Massacre Affected Minority Women: The Survivors Speak*. Ahmedabad, India (April).
- Citizens Tribunal Report  
2002 *An Inquiry into the Carnage in Gujarat: List of Incidents and Evidence*. Citizens for Justice and Peace, Bombay (November).
- Dasgupta, Manas  
2003 "A Gaurav Yatra in New York." *The Hindu* (January 9): 5.
- Dayal, John (ed.)  
2002 *Gujarat 2002: Untold and Re-told Stories of the Hindutva*. Delhi: Media House.
- Delhi Historians Forum  
2002 *Communalisation of Education: The History Textbooks Controversy*. Delhi.
- Golwalkar, M.S.  
1939 *We or Our Nationhood Defined*. Bangalore, India: Jagrana Prakashan.
- Human Rights Watch  
2002 "We Have No Orders to Save You: State Participation and Complicity in Communal Violence in Gujarat." *HRW India Reports* 14, 3(C) (April).
- Jaffrelot, Christophe  
1996 *Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lochtefeld, James G.  
1996 "New Wine, Old Skins: The Sangh Parivar and the Transformation of Hinduism." *Religion* 26: 101–118.
- Ludden, David (ed.)  
1996 *Introduction. Making India Hindu: Religion Community and the Politics of Democracy*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Mander, Harsh  
2002 *Reflections on the Gujarat Massacre*. SACW (March 17).

- Mathew, Biju  
2000 "Byte-Sized Nationalism: Mapping the Hindu Right in the United States." *Rethinking Marxism* 12,3: 46–58.
- Mathew, Biju and Vijay Prashad  
2001 "The Protean Forms of Yankee Hindutva." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23,3: 516–534.
- Noorani, A.G.  
2000 *The RSS and the BJP: Division of Labour*. New Delhi: Leftword Press.
- Pannikar, K.N. (ed.)  
1999 *The Concerned Indian's Guide to Communalism*. New Delhi: Viking.
- Pannikar, K.N.  
2000 *Outsider as Enemy: The Politics of Rewriting History in India*. Working Paper of the Center for the Advanced Study of India, University of Pennsylvania.
- Roy, Srirupa  
2003 "Democracy and Genocide: State and Civil Society in the Aftermath of Gujarat." Unpublished manuscript. South Asia Faculty Seminar, Five Colleges, MA.
- SACW  
2002 *The Foreign Exchange of Hate: IDRF and the American Funding of Hindutva*. South Asian Citizens Web (November). Mumbai: Sabrang Communications.
- Sarhadi Raj, Dulekha  
2001 "'Who the Hell Do You Think You Are?' Promoting Religious Identity Among Young Hindus in Britain." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23,3: 535–558.
- Sarkar, Sumit  
1999 "Hindutva and the Question of Conversions." K.N. Pannikar (ed.), *The Concerned Indian's Guide to Communalism*. New Delhi: Viking.
- Sarkar, Tanika  
1999 "The Gender Predicament of the Hindu Right." K.N. Pannikar (ed.), *The Concerned Indian's Guide to Communalism*. New Delhi: Viking: 42–65.
- Setalvad, Teesta  
2001 "How Textbooks Teach Prejudice." *Communalism Combat* 70 (September 7): 5–9.
- Simeon, Dilip  
2002 "Out of the Shadow." *Communalism Combat* 75 (January 8): 12–15.
- Times of India*  
2002 "Gujarat Returned to Normalcy." *Times of India*, Editorial (May 11): 6.
- Thapar, Romila  
2000 *The Past and Prejudice*. New Delhi: National Book Trust of India.