

THE CONTEST OF INDIAN SECULARISM

Erja Marjut Hänninen

**University of Helsinki
Faculty of Social Sciences
Political History**

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Map of India

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INTRODUCTION

Three coaches of a train carrying devotees belonging to the Hindu community back home from a place of pilgrimage in Ayodhya, Northern India, were burnt down by a mob from the Muslim community on the 27th of February 2002, in which 57 people, including women and children, were burnt alive and charred to death.¹ The attack could be seen as an act of revenge against the holy and disputed site in Ayodhya and against the expanse of Hindutva. This attack was followed by the second largest communalist riots² in the country since the beginning of the 1990s. The Hindu nationalists wanted to start the construction for the temple for God Ram, which had been pulled down during the Muslim era. Until 1992, on the place stood the Babri Mosque, but the Hindus demolished it.

The Hindu nationalist organisations were able to continue their agitation in the state of Gujarat, while the government of India was not able to respond to the riots quickly enough. The organisations circulated flyers which demanded people to boycott Muslim shops and not to watch movies whose protagonists were Muslims!³ Some suspects that there was no interest on the side of government to respond and has let the rioting continue. The opposition and several intellectuals have demanded that the Chief Minister of Gujarat, Narendra Modi, and the Union Home Minister, L. K. Advani, resign. The Prime Minister of India has also got a share of the criticism.⁴ The violence in Gujarat has been referred to as the genocide and pogrom of Muslims,⁵ and low-scale rioting still continues.

The Hindu nationalist party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), has shifted to promote the Hindutva message through the fight against terrorism, by claiming that the Muslims are

¹ International Herald Tribune, February 28, 2002, frontpage '57 die in train inferno in India'. Hindustan Times, February 28, 2002, The Week March 10 2002, 32-34, India Today March 10 2002, 30-32.

² The rising death toll can be followed from the Hindustan Times March 1-5, 17, April 1, 3, 6, 17, 2002.

³ Hindustan Times, March 5, 2002 'And now, a set of riots vows'.

⁴ Hindustan Times, March 12, 2002 'Advani refuses to quit over Gujarat'. Hindustan Times, March 26, 2002 'Gujarat rioters did it by the book'. Hindustan Times April 2, 2002, front-page 'NHRC raps Modi for not stopping riots'. Varadarajan Siddharth, The Mask is Off. A Tale of Two Hindus. In The Times of India April 19, 2002, 14.

⁵ The Times of India, April 17, 2002 'Violence in Gujarat areas was a genocide, says women's panel'. Indian Express, April 24, 2002, 'A word called 'genocide''.

terrorists.⁶ Prime Minister Vajpayee (the BJP) took a strident pro-Hindutva line at a public rally. He claimed that Islamic terrorism and not Hindu extremism was the real danger to India and the world⁷ and accused Muslims of lighting the fire.⁸ Vajpayee also blamed the European Union and the USA for their involvement in India's internal affairs after they had expressed concerns about the violence in Gujarat, by saying that India does not need any lessons in secularism from the West.⁹ The Chief Minister of Gujarat, who is also of the BJP, posed the Muslim attackers in Godhra as terrorist supported by Pakistan.¹⁰

After the storming in Gujarat the situation has heated up in Jammu and Kashmir as well. In the late spring in 2002, the attacks in Kashmir became more frequent, as the state elections were coming closer. So far, the Kashmiri separatist groups have been against participation in the elections because that would legitimise the rule of India in Jammu and Kashmir. However, some groups have got tired of the constant violence and have considered participation as a solution to the dead-end situation. The issue of participation caused division among the separatist groups and as a consequence a moderate leader of a major separatist party¹¹ was shot. The situation suddenly got worse after a terrorist attack on an Indian army camp, and the diplomatic relations between India and Pakistan broke down. The international community reacted quickly and tried to moderate between the quarrelmongers, but without any success. The situation was close to a nuclear war, as both of the countries are equipped with nuclear weapons.

These recent developments show that communalism is still a very 'hot' and pending issue in India. For the last six years, India's political landscape has been characterised by political fragmentation and the rise of caste and regional interests, and no national party has managed to command a majority on its own. India's current Hindu nationalist government is the fifth government in two years, with the BJP depending on the support of 19 other parties, some with a primarily regional focus, to form the National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

⁶ The Times of India, March 21, 2002, front-page 'Advani asks RSS to look for a new Hindutva agenda'. Kang Bhavdeep, Act II: Haws have landed. In Outlook, April 8th 2002, 34.

⁷ Vohra, Pankaj, BJP conveys one message to its cadres and another to allies. In Hindustan Times, April 21, 2002, 3.

⁸ The Economist, April 20, 2002, 29.

⁹ The Times of India, April 26, 2002, front-page 'PM tells West: Save your sermons'.

¹⁰ Hindustan Times, March 24, 2002, 14 'POTO: BJP stoops to conquer'.

Presentation of the topic

After a long struggle against Britain's colonial rule, the Indian subcontinent was divided into two states, India and Pakistan, in 1947. Pakistan portrayed itself as a state of a homogenous people whereas India proclaimed a pluralistic nationalism that welcomed religious and cultural diversity. At the time of the partition there were 361 million people living within India's borders; of these people 315 million were Hindus, 32 million Muslims, 7 million Christians, 6 million Sikhs, one million Buddhists, 100 000 Parsians and a small minority of Jews.¹² Exactly because of the multi-ethnicity India opted for secularism, which was considered vital for the existence of the Indian state. Secularism was supposed to solve the problem of religious and ethnic pluralism by uniting India. Secularism derived from the idea of modernity. It was connected to the nation-building and development of the new and modern India, and it was supposed to give a basis for a new identity for Indians. A modern, secular Indianness would replace the traditional, old-fashioned religious identities.

The father of Indian secularism, Jawaharlal Nehru, with the Congress Party of India, developed a strategy of containment by which he meant that there should be a distance between the state and the religious passions of society. But to make a difference to the Western secularism this was interpreted so that all religions are entitled to flourish in India equally. The state of India has the demands and will lean on its mantra that India will stay united: '*unity in diversity*'. In spite of this equality, secularism has faced opposition from both outside and inside of India's territory. The threat from outside has come from the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and the threat from inside from the different religiously motivated ethnic groups, such as Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims, and from some of India's territories, such as my example, Kashmir. These groups and areas threaten secularism and federalism by their secessionist or separatist aspirations. The aspirations are partly religious, partly disguised in a religious form, but they also affect the political, economic, social and cultural situation in the areas.

¹¹ Abdul Ghani Lone of the Hurriyat Conference.

¹² The figures from: Stukenberg Marla, *Der Sikh-Konflikt: Eine Fallstudie zur Politisierung ethnischer Identität*. Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart 1995, 1.

Communalist incidents and the number of people injured in these incidents have increased in India since the 1960s¹³ and, at the same time, benefited the decay of secularism in India. To explain this I discuss more in detail two main communalist incidents and a dispute that have taken place during the independence of India. The first is the demolition of the Babri-mosque in the town of Ayodhya in 1992, done by Hindu nationalists who claimed that the mosque was built on the birthplace of Hindu God Ram. The second is Operation Blue Star, an attack initiated by Indira Gandhi on the Sikh temple in Amritsar in 1984. My third example is the dispute of Kashmir and especially the malfunction of democracy there as the cause of the uprising. The Kashmiri nationalists consider their fight against the Indian rule justified because India has gradually diminished the autonomy in their state. Therefore they want to secede from the Indian Union. India does not want to guarantee independence to Jammu and Kashmir because it takes the state for an essential part of the Indian Union. There are also various other confrontations that contest secularism,¹⁴ but I leave those out as unnecessary because their essence is not so much communalist.

I chose this topic because of my long interest in the history of the former colonial countries and politics of India and the interest in the history after the second world war. India presents one of the most colourful histories of these countries and its importance is now growing because it is a big country with nuclear-weapons. I find it important to keep track of what is happening in the country because of its unstable politics and the hatred that prevails in the country against minorities. Kashmir is also nowadays mentioned as one of the most likely places on earth for a nuclear war. To be able to find a solution and follow the developments in Kashmir, it is also important to understand the history and its underpinnings.

When I started my studies I found it useful to specialise in some area, for me it was South Asia. Through the specialisation I hope to in get a comprehensive outlook on the South Asian history and politics and to be able to continue to research the topic after my graduation as well. I have also familiarised myself with the development questions of India in my development studies and during internships both in India and Finland. I

¹³ Two tables as annexes. The other presents the official numbers provided by the Indian government and the other one presents the figures estimated by some observers.

¹⁴ For example in Assam, Nagaland, Tripura, Darjeeling, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

came to the topic of this thesis through my Bachelor's thesis in which I studied the Hindu nationalist movement. I found it amazing that this gigantic territory-state has stayed united for more than 50 years in spite of the ethnic plurality. Particularly, because several states in Asia as in Europe have fallen into pieces. In the beginning I also found the idea of having secularism as a blueprint in India fascinating. Mahatma Gandhi skilfully united the people in the 1920s and 1930s with his campaign against the colonial rule. He understood the totalising meaning of religion for the Indian people and tried to integrate the religions of India to the nationalist movement. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, wanted to create secularism on the foundation that Gandhi had made, but he saw that the unity would be more stable if religious feelings were confined to be outside of the political life.

Aims

In this thesis I argue that the religiously-oriented nationalisms of India have contested Indian secularism which has led to the crisis of secularism and to the failure of the Indian nation-state. Thus my aim is to demonstrate how Indian secularism has been contested by communalist powers that function inside India. The contest and the position that the communalist movements have gained in India has made it difficult for the secularism to serve as the ideology of the state. This is important for understanding the state in which India finds itself today and for understanding the politics of India in the twentyfirst century. My aim is to study the way the nationalisms have been able to contest the secularism; which still remains a constitutional principal of the unity of India. To do this, I examine the political development of the nationalisms and their conjuncture with the Indian politics led by the advocate of secularism, the Congress Party. I also examine why the separatist nationalisms turned against the nation-building project of India and started to demand the recognition of their own nations. The contest has evolved during several decades and therefore the timeframe of this thesis is also long. In spite of this, I aim at a comprehensive picture of the contest which necessarily includes studying the political field of India up to today. All the nationalisms have been confined to discuss the time until the beginning of 1990s because an important change took place at that time in the Indian political field: the Hindu nationalist party Bharatiya Janata Party won the parliamentary elections on the federal level and became a significant challenger of the Congress. My emphasis is more on the contest and how it

evolved than on the failure and the decay of secularism. I naturally explain the developments of Sikh, Hindu and Kashmiri nationalisms to clarify how they have contested secularism.

As the challengers of the Indian secularism I examine Hindu nationalism, Sikh nationalism and Kashmiri nationalism. They represent different forms of nationalism, but in the framework of secularism they all lead to the same consequence: the decay of secularism. These nationalisms have been the three most powerful nationalisms in India. Hindu nationalism is majoritarian nationalism and thus its aim is not to secede but to convert India to a Hindu state. Sikhs, on the other hand, are a minority who at first wanted autonomy for their territory and after having achieved this started to demand independence. The problems in Kashmir, then, started as a territorial dispute between India and Pakistan but after the mid-1980s it evolved into a Kashmiri nationalist movement demanding for the autonomy that had been granted already in 1948 but was never put into practice. Today the Kashmiri nationalists also dream of independence. Both Pakistan and India still claim that Kashmir is an essential part of their territory and nation-state. Therefore, independence is not considered an option.

I have confined the topic on Northern India, because communalism is more concentrated there. Both Punjab and Kashmir, which are situated in North India, are two of the main challengers of Indian secularism. Hindu nationalism, on the other hand, is concentrated in the North, as it is the Hindi speaking area of India. I will not focus on the areas in Northeast and South India even though they also partly contest secularism. In these areas the reasons for contest are more linguistic than communal. In the federal state of Assam, for example, the agitation unites all speakers of the Assamese language, whether Hindus, Muslims or tribal people. The threat there comes not from another religion but from another language and culture.¹⁵ The Assamese have lost large areas of their former state for the formation of new tribal states like Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya, and now they see themselves as likely to be outnumbered and out-bought in their own homelands, as well as inadequately recompensed for the contribution that their products, such as oil and tea, make to the national income.¹⁶ My

¹⁵ Jeffrey Robin, *What's Happening to India? Punjab, Ethnic Conflict, Mrs Gandhi's Death and the Test for Federalism*. Macmillan Press Ltd, Hampshire and London 1986, 7-8.

¹⁶ Morris-Jones W. H., *India –More Questions than Answers*. In *Asian Survey* Vol. XXIV, No. 8, August 1984, 811.

focus is only on the contest done inside of India. Therefore I have left out the role of Pakistan, even though I discuss it when it is necessary for the matter in question, especially in the case of Kashmir.

I have divided this thesis into three main chapters: Secularism, Contest of Secularism and Crisis of Secularism. In the first part, I study the concept of secularism and how it derives from the framework of the modern idea of nationalism and development. On my opinion, Indian secularism is a product of this reasoning. This gives then a background for understanding the contest of secularism. In the second part, I look at the evolvement of communalism and try to shed some light on how a communal identity develops. Then, I examine the conflict between secularism and communalism which has resulted in the contest of secularism by Hindu, Sikh and Kashmiri nationalisms. As the defender of secularism I see the Congress Party, because it is the loudest and most noteworthy advocate of secularism in India. I explain also the inner evolvement of the nationalisms and their conjuncture with the decay of secularism. In the third part, I discuss the internal causes of the crisis. For this purpose I look at the political development of India and use two theories to explain the failure of secularism. At the end I put the contest of Indian secularism in the wider framework of the history of the independent India.

Sources and Literature

The main sources of my thesis are researches in Indian history. I have used books by Indian scholars quite a bit, as I think that it is fruitful to be familiar with the views of both Western scholars and “domestic” Indian scholars. Indian society is very complex and therefore these researchers might have very different ways to explain and interpret the history of India. Indian research is also widely recognised for its high quality, but unfortunately only a fraction of the research is published in Europe. For me problematic in reading the works of Indian scholars was that it took me a long time before I noticed whether behind the opinion of the researcher lies a nationalist conviction, for example Hindu nationalism. I have worked on my thesis for almost two years and during these years I have read at least one hundred books written on the topic. I have familiarised myself with the leading Indian scholars like Partha Chatterjee, Ashis Nandy and K. N. Panikkar but also with less famous researchers. How much of the research literature I have been able to cover, is hard to say. In my opinion, I have covered most of the point

of views that exist on the study of the crisis of Indian secularism, though some of those I have left out from the thesis as unnecessary¹⁷.

I was entitled to write the thesis in Berlin and Kiel and use the excellent libraries of the universities of Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel. Without this possibility the topic of my thesis would have needed to be different. The variety of books on South Asian history and politics for this topic would have been too restricted in Finland. I read several Indian newspapers and articles about the topic during my three-month-stay as an intern in New Delhi. This has clarified many of my unanswered questions and brought me up-to-date on the issue.

Most of the first hand sources were beyond my reach because they are in India. Therefore my sources are basically all secondary. However, there are some books that serve both as primary sources and secondary sources. The books are primary sources when I examine the discussion on the topic and secondary sources when I present facts about the topic. The archive material is from the archives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland. I studied the files on Kashmir and Indian domestic politics during the years 1951-1977. The reports from the Embassy kept repeating the same very often, probably because of the changes in the personnel; every new person that came to town wrote an analysis on the situation, including a short history of India, maybe more for clearing the situation for himself than for the Ministry. I hoped to find more information on the contracts made by India and Pakistan on the situation in Kashmir, but these had been left without any the observance of the diplomats.

I also read the Lok Sabha¹⁸ Debates from December 1992 concerning the demolition of a mosque in the town of Ayodhya, and from July 1984 concerning Operation Bluestar that Prime Minister Indira Gandhi started to restrain the rise of Sikh militants. Unfortunately the Finnish Parliament library did not have the debates from early June 1984 or November 1984 which would have been more useful for me. The Debate reports were quite difficult to interpret as they only mentioned from which part of India the speaker came from but not the party that the speaker represented. I read *The Times*

¹⁷There is for example a discussion going on in the legal field about the role of secularism as the constitutional principal. According to this discussion secularism is not in crisis, as the constitution is not threatened. I find this argument too formal, as the crisis can also happen on the political level.

¹⁸ The Lok Sabha (House of the People) is the lower house and the supreme legislative body in India.

and *Helsingin Sanomat* newspapers from June 1984, November 1984 and December 1992, and looked for information on the course of events during the attacks on the Golden Temple and the Babri Masjid. I also examined the speeches of Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi and the web sites of those political parties that I studied in this thesis.

There is some research done on this topic already, but from a historical point of view, only little. The studies also concentrate more on the crisis of secularism than on the contest. The crisis of secularism has been examined from the perspective of political science, from a sociological point of view and from the field of religion. I think that one of the tasks of science is also to structuralise and categorise information and concentrate on the discussion on the topic. This way the researcher can find new aspects that have not been realised before and present the information in a more logical and comprehensive manner. My benefit to the study of the crisis of Indian secularism is that I compare the different nationalisms, which no one else, to my knowledge, has done before. Because of this new approach the emphasis in this research is not on one singular nationalism but on a broader perspective of the Indian state and how the nationalisms have been able to contest it. Therefore I am not studying the separatist nationalisms as such and presenting new interpretations of the nationalisms. By doing this, I aim at a more comprehensive picture than the former research on the series of events leading to the contest of secularism and on the fact that the contest is a phenomenon that goes through the Indian society. The facts have been presented already many times by different authors, but I have managed to fill up some gaps and to answer the questions that rose from the literature. To study the three nationalisms in one thesis is a wide area to cover, but I argue that it gives a more coherent picture of the Indian politics than the research where only one or two contesting nationalisms are discussed.

Partha Chatterjee is one of the leading political scientists studying Indian political history. In his book *Nation and Its Fragments* he criticises the state-centred ideas of nationalism by taking examples from old Indian texts, such as fairytales, poems and myths. He pays special attention to history of Bengal, because it was the area where nationalism raised its head first in India. Chatterjee's emphasis in interpreting the colonial history of the roots of nationalism in India. My point of view on Indian history does not lie in the colonial time but in the time of independence. Therefore, Chatterjee

cannot be one of my main sources. The book *Locked Minds, Modern Myths* by T. N. Madan is a sociological study on the crisis of Indian secularism and the rise of fundamentalism. Madan sees religious behaviour as a reason for the rise of fundamentalism which has then caused the decline of secularism. The idea in my thesis is the same, but the field under examination is different; I do not put emphasis on religion but on politics and history. My other main sources are Sumantra Bose's *Hindu Nationalism and the Crisis of the Indian State*, Sudipta Kaviraj's *Crisis of the Nation-State in India* and the book *Creating a Nationality* from Ashis Nandy, Shikha Trivedy, Shail Mayaram and Achyut Yagnik. These books and articles helped me to understand the character of the crisis and introduced me to the theoretical background on the topic.

For the theoretical background I use the researches by Juan Linz and Antonio Gramsci. It is not very typical to attach them to the context of India. I did this because their theories present an excellent framework for the crisis of the Indian state. I also have a short look on the wide field of the study of nationalism. There, under my examination are Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson and Anthony D. Smith. I base my conception of the idea of nationalism on the definition of Anderson. I also interpret all the nationalisms discussed in this thesis according to Anderson's definition.

Hindu nationalism is the most researched of the three nationalisms but most of the research has been done on the nationalism, not on the connections between the Hindu nationalists and Indian secularism. I divide the academic work concerning Hindu nationalism into two groups. The first strand revolves around the political role and the newly gained dominant position of Hindu nationalism. It is seen as the result of decades of systematic work and good political strategies. My main source, Christophe Jaffrelot, falls under this category. The second group interprets Hindu nationalism in cultural and historical terms. These researchers¹⁹ see Hindu nationalism more in religious terms: they emphasise the historical roots of Hinduism and the central role of the Hindus in Indian nationalism.

Sikh nationalism has got the least attention of scholars and the research is mostly describing historiography. An example of this is Khushwant Singh's *History of the Sikhs*, which describes the events very precisely from the times of Guru Nanak to the

year 1988. Singh, who is a Sikh himself, introduces an orthodox version of the Sikh historiography which can be interpreted as the history of the Sikh faith. Sometimes his argumentation does not meet all requirements of scientific research. A good and thorough research on the development of the Sikh identity has been done by Rajiv A. Kapur. He concentrates more on the beginning of the twentieth century. A German researcher and one of the few Western women who have studied the history and politics of India, Marla Stukenberg has studied the Sikh conflict. Her sources are manifold; she has interviewed strategists of the conflict, terrorists and those who suffered from the conflict, but the officials of the central government she has left out without stating a reason. Stukenberg has also studied the rhetoric of Sikh leaders. These have all apparently helped her to get a thorough picture of the Sikh community. Several articles in *Asian Survey* have cleared up the dimensions of the Punjab crisis for me.

The research on Kashmir is highly concentrated on the political relationships of superpowers and the perspectives of India and Pakistan in the conflict. This point of view is definitely very interesting, with its implications on the one hand on the Cold War and on the other hand on non-alignment politics. The focus, especially in the studies of Alastair Lamb and Robert Wirsing, has strongly been on the turning-points and in the reasons why the wars in Kashmir flared up. But the opinion of the Kashmiris on their own destiny is totally missing, as well as the effects of the wars and the competition between the states on the Kashmiri people. Even though the possession of Kashmir is a matter of life and death to India, according to its own argumentation, it has not been the focus of any research so far. The research does not analyse but tell the history, just like Leopold von Ranke had described 'wie es eigentlich gewesen ist'. My main source on the Kashmir question is the doctorate of Sten Widmalm, *Democracy and Violent Separatism in India: Kashmir in a Comparative Perspective*. The doctorate revolves around the question of Jammu and Kashmir without putting it into the wider Indian context. Widmalm knows very well the separatist movements in Kashmir and the development of democracy in the state. He as well as other scholars use the concept of Kashmiri identity without explaining properly what they mean by it.

¹⁹K. N. Panikkar could fall into this category.

Concepts

Secularism, nationalism and communalism are the main concepts, all of which I also discuss later. Secularism and nationalism are of Western origin and therefore it is hard to apply them to the Indian context. Communalism, on the other hand, is more an Indian phenomenon. Though, in India it has widely been limited to mean religious nationalism and religious fanaticism. I have explained in the corresponding chapters the difficulties in applying the concepts, but I need to rely on the Western concepts as there are not any responding ones and also Indian scholars have made the same remark. Therefore, I use definitions which I find the most appropriate to the Indian context.

Shortly, with secularism I mean that religion and politics should be kept in different spheres in society, religion in the private sphere and politics in the public. Indian secularism, on the other hand, means that this division is not that strict but the state is allowed to support religions equally. According to T. N. Madan, secularisation ordinarily refers to the socio-cultural processes that enlarge the areas of life, such as material, institutional and intellectual, in which the role of the sacred is progressively limited. Secularity, then, is the resultant of this process, and secularism is the ideology that argues for the historical inevitability and progressive nature of secularisation everywhere.²⁰

Nationalism, then, is in broad terms the feeling of unity among a group of people which leads them to strive for a political unit. I examine different nationalisms in India which should not be mixed with Indian nationalism, as it refers to the nationalism that rose against colonialism and whose supporters were adherents of the common Indian identity 'Indianness'. Indian nationalism was secular and its leaders were Mohandas 'Mahatma' Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. The Indianness was one of the main ideas of the Congress Party. Hindu, Sikh and Kashmiri nationalisms, here referred to as the other nationalisms in India, oppose the Indian nationalism and its attempts to unify and homogenise the different communities in India, but they also oppose each other, as they assume that the other ones threaten their position.

²⁰ Madan T. N, *Locked Minds, Modern Myths*. Oxford University Press, Delhi 1997, 5-6.

Communalism is the political dimension of nationalism. Communalism is not based on the feeling of a distinct nation but of a smaller unity, community. In this thesis communalism refers to the desire to protect this distinct community from others. Religion often lies behind communalist action and in the case of India the communalists use religious feeling of the people as the means of mobilisation. A common character that all the communalisms, that I discuss here, share is the fear of the threatening 'Other'. For Hindus it is the Muslims, for Sikhs the Hindus and for Kashmiris the Sikhs and the Hindus. All of them see Indian secularism as a threatening force that needs to be fought against.

The contest of Indian secularism means that Hindu, Sikh and Kashmiri nationalisms try to brake the secular central power of India by separating from the Indian Union. The separation has political, economic and social but also religious dimensions. This, then, has led to the crisis of Indian secularism. Indian central powers have not been able to solve the conflicts by negotiation but have needed to rely on violence and armed forces. They have also succumbed to use religion for their political purposes. Indira Gandhi, for example, has made an appearance as a supporter of the Hindu religion in Kashmir to gain the votes of the Hindus and win the Muslim party²¹.

The main religions that are discussed in the thesis are Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam. Shortly, Hinduism is a religion which actually consist of many different religions. It bases on several different deities and on the idea of rebirth. A Hindu tries through good deeds in the present life to get a better life in the next one. Sikhism, on the other hand, has only one god, but gurus are worshipped as well. However, Sikhism derives from Hinduism and therefore the Sikh and Hindu identities can sometimes be overlapping. Islam is a religion, which is based on the concept of one god and the law system of Sharia. Islam is, generally said, a holistic lifestyle for its adherents which also makes it a major political player. For this thesis the concept of jihad has some relevance. Jihad means a justified war in the name of Islam. It is for defending Islam and Muslims, but it does not necessarily have to be limited to defence. There are fighters in Jammu and Kashmir that fight in the name of god, claiming that their fight si based on the concept of Jihad.

²¹ Kolodner Eric, The Political Economy of the Rise and Fall (?) of Hindu Nationalism. In Journal of Contemporary Asia, Vol. 25 No. 2, 1995, 241-2.

SECULARISM

Modernity

Secularism, democracy, nationalism and nation-state derive from the changes that took place in eighteenth century Europe. They are products of the ideals of Modernity,²² which changed the relations of power in society by the transformation of frontiers into borders²³, the rise of the bourgeoisie and the new role of rulers which was characterised by a fundamental change in the relation between the rulers and the ruled. Modernity was considered to be applicable universally and the idea was brought to the colonies by the colonial power and the colonial elite that had been educated in the colonial power, in the case of India in Great Britain. Before the eighteenth century, the right to rule was legitimated by the belief that legitimacy came from above, rather than from the ruled. A radical shift occurred as a consequence of the spread of the new ideas emphasising liberty, equality and particularly the idea of state power rooted in popular consent.²⁴ The Enlightenment changed the structure of the state to a more centralised one and the role of the state strengthened. The voyages of exploration and colonialism which provided information on other cultures and the possibility to compare Europe with the new areas and study both of them critically.

The modern concept of popular sovereignty was designed for the 'whole people', even though in the first instance it was assumed that the most educated and enlightened citizens would guide the people and bring them gradually into political life. The principal of sovereignty resided essentially in the nation, which in practice meant the demand for national self-determination.²⁵ Modernity eroded the local structures by transforming the economic life and giving an impetus to greater mobility. It introduced industrial societies which were organised around territorial nation-states, often promoting a liberal conception of individual citizenship. Education and literacy were

²² One of the most emphatic arguments on the connection between nationalism and modern practices is from Gellner Ernest, *Nations and Nationalism*. Blackwell, Oxford 1983. An analysis on the political imagination is from Anderson Benedict, *Imagined Communities*. Verso, London 1983.

²³ Frontiers are considered to be between civilisations, borders, on the other hand, divide the area into states.

²⁴ Guibernau Montserrat, *Nationalisms. The Nation-State and Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*. Polity Press, Cambridge 1996, 52-7.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 52-3.

considered to be the responsibilities of the state, not of the church as it was before. Industrialisation was expected to lead to capitalism and mass-consumption, which both were aimed at increasing the welfare of the nation.²⁶ Modernity bears a particularly intimate historical connection with nationalism because a national community was an identity unavailable in earlier political imagination.²⁷

The idea of modernity made it seem like the colonial rule impeded further development in colonised countries: colonial rule had become a historical fetter that had to be removed and an own nation was to replace it. After the formerly colonised countries had gained independence they had a territorial state, but they lacked a politically constituted 'nation', which needed to be constructed or imagined for this purpose. This nation was then to lead the development of the country. Despite its internal complexity, the Indian national movement imagined of a constructed modern Indian nation. Most nationalist politicians were found of the narratives of western modernity, for example democracy, secularism and social justice. I concentrate only on the contest done inside of India. Therefore I have confined the role of Pakistan out even though I discuss the role of Pakistan when it is necessary for the matter in question, especially in the case of Kashmir. However, some aspects of the trajectory of European nationalism could not be replicated under Indian conditions. If the nation-state had to be culturally homogeneous by definition, it did not fit the cultural reality of the Indian subcontinent.²⁸

The nationalist leaders were convinced that the absence of a proper nation-state and proper nationalist sentiments were major gaps in Indian society and showed how backward it was. For the nation-building process, the Congress appointed a Committee of Experts in the beginning of the 1940s to consider urgent and vital solutions to the problems occurring in the scheme of national reconstruction and social planning. The aims of the Committee were the national integration of a diverse mosaic of groups, communities and societies; economic development of a country that had suffered from colonialism for 200 years; social equality in a land that was dominated by myriad forms

²⁶ Gellner Ernest, Nationalism and Modernization. In Hutchinson & Smith (ed.) Nationalism. Oxford University Press, Oxford 1994, 59-60.

²⁷ Kaviraj Sudipta, Crisis of the Nation-State in India. In Political Studies, Vol. XLII Special Issue (Contemporary Crisis of the Nation-State? ed. John Dunn) 1994, 115-6.

²⁸ Ibid., 118-9.

of entrenched inequality; and consolidation of multi-party political democracy.²⁹ The planning of the nation-state had to be a way of avoiding the unnecessary setbacks of an industrial transition in so far as it affected the masses in India's villages. On the other hand, planning was to become a positive instrument for resolving conflicts in a large and heterogeneous subcontinent.³⁰

Modernity also paved the way for the idea of secularism. In the time of Enlightenment states shifted from the rule of the Church to the rule of a secular ruler. The aims of the shift were better rights for the citizens: democracy, liberal rights, parliamentary system. Secularism limited the rights of the Church to interfere in issues concerning governing. A secular state is then the opposite of a religiously governed state.

Secularism

The English word 'secular' comes from the Latin '*saeculum*', which means 'an age' or 'the spirit of an age'. It has the same meaning as the Greek '*aeon*', which is used in the New Testament for an 'age' or 'era'.³¹ The conflict between religious faith and human reason, which forms part of the background to the emergence of the modern ideology of secularism, surfaced in the late Middle Ages.³² Historically secularism as an orientation to the world is linked to two major interrelated processes in Europe. There were some theological developments within Protestantism that legitimated scientific investigations as a search for laws of nature that God had instituted; however, the scientific activity gained its own internal autonomy and legitimacy among the practitioners without the role of God in the work. The second stream that led into secularism was the dominance achieved in European thought from the seventeenth century onwards by Enlightenment rationalism.³³ This change began in Europe at the end of the Thirty Years' War when the church properties started to be transferred to the exclusive control of the princes. This statement became after the French Revolution a

²⁹ Bose Sumantra, Hindu Nationalism and the Crisis of the Indian State. In Bose Sugata, Jalal Ayesha (ed.), Nationalism, Democracy & Development, Second Impression. Oxford University Press, New Delhi 1998, 111-2, Chatterjee Partha, The Nation and Its Fragments. Oxford University Press, Delhi 1994b, 200-1, Blom Hansen Thomas, The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India. Oxford University Press, Oxford 1999, 48.

³⁰ Chatterjee 1994b, 203, 208.

³¹ Madan 1997, 6.

³² Ibid., 10.

³³ Tambiah Stanley, The Crisis of Secularism in India. In Bhargava Rajeev (ed.), Secularism and its Critics. Oxford University Press, Delhi 1998, 419.

value statement as well: in 1789, French statesman Charles Maurice de Talleyrand announced to the French National Assembly that all ecclesiastical goods were at the disposal of the nation, as they should have been. The term ‘secularism’ was coined in 1851 in England and the secularisation was built into the ideology of progress.³⁴ Nowadays the term secularisation is generally employed to refer to the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols³⁵ as religion is considered to be an open or potential threat to modern polity.³⁶

An Indian political scientist, Partha Chatterjee, has defined three principles as the characteristics of a secular state. The first is the principle of liberty, which requires that the state permit the practice of any religion, within the limits set by certain other basic rights which the state is also required to protect. The second is the principle of equality, which requires that the state does not give preference to any religion over another. The third is the principle of neutrality that is best described as the requirement that the state does not give preference to the religious over the non-religious and which leads, in combination with the liberty and equality principles, to what is known in the constitutional law of the United States of America as the ‘wall of separation’ doctrine: namely, that the state does not involve itself with religious affairs or organisations.³⁷ Basically the same principles have been defined by D. E. Smith as well.³⁸

A short examination of the Constitution of United States of America points out that these principles are included in the First Amendment to the Constitution. The first is ‘non-interference’, meaning that the state or the government shall not establish a church, and the second is ‘entitlement’, meaning that the citizen has the right to follow a religion of his or her choice, or none at all.³⁹ In the USA the Congress cannot make any law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,

³⁴ Madan T. N, *Secularism in Its Place*. In Bhargava Rajeev (ed.), *Secularism and its Critics*. Oxford University Press, Delhi 1998, 297-8.

³⁵ Berger Peter L, *The Social Reality of Religion*. Allen Lane, London 1973, 113.

³⁶ Nandy Ashis, Trivedy Shikha, Mayaram Shail, Yagnik Achyut, *Creating a Nationality. The Ramjanmabhumi Movement and Fear of the Self*. 2nd impression Oxford University Press, Delhi 1998, 326-7.

³⁷ Chatterjee Partha, *Secularism and Tolerance*. In Bhargava Rajeev (ed.), *Secularism and Its Critics*. Oxford University Press, Delhi 1998, 358.

³⁸ See: Smith D. E, *India as a Secular State*. In Bhargava Rajeev (ed.), *Secularism and Its Critics*. Oxford University Press, Delhi 1998, 178.

³⁹ *The Constitution of the United States*, Smith Edward C. (ed.). Barnes & Noble Books, New York 1987.

meaning that both religion and government can best work to achieve their aims if each is left free of the other within its respective sphere.⁴⁰ In spite of the fact that the US has been a secular country since 1787, the Supreme Court did not hold until 1947 that the government must be neutral toward religion.⁴¹ Only from 1947 on government grants of money to religious institutions were prohibited.⁴²

Indian Secularism

India will be a land of many faiths, equally honoured and respected, but of one national outlook.

Jawaharlal Nehru, 24 January 1948

The British colonial rule evolved a policy of religious neutrality in their colonies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The British tried to stay neutral on the disputes over religion, and were particularly careful not to be seen as promoting Christianity. After the assumption of power in India by the British Crown in 1858, a significant step was taken in instituting equality before the law by enacting uniform codes of civil and criminal law. The area left out was personal law, which continued to be governed by the respective religious laws as recognised and interpreted by the courts. The reason why personal law was not brought to the scope of a uniform civil code was the reluctance of the colonial state to intervene in matters close to the very heart of religious doctrine and practice.⁴³ However, there were various kinds of involvement in religious affairs that produced a somewhat confused interpretation of this phase. During certain periods, grants of money were given by the British government for the support of Hindu temples and Muslim mosques, and Christian missionaries were actively discouraged. Later, under other officials, missionary work was vigorously promoted. In general, the administration still remained fair, impartial and secular, and by the end of the nineteenth century most educated Indians would have been willing to concede that. Generally the aspect of the principle of religious neutrality was being faithfully adhered.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Scanlon T. M, *The Difficulty of Tolerance*. In Bhargava Rajeev (ed.), *Secularism and Its Critics* Oxford University Press, Delhi 1998, 55.

⁴¹ Sandel Michael J, *Religious Liberty: Freedom of Choice or Freedom of Conscience*. In Bhargava Rajeev (ed.), *Secularism and Its Critics*. Oxford University Press, Delhi 1998, 75.

⁴² Smith D. E. 1998, 217.

⁴³ Chatterjee Partha, *A Possible India. Essays in Political Criticism*. Oxford University Press, New Delhi 1997, 234-5.

⁴⁴ Smith D. E 1998, 189.

The Founding Fathers of Indian Secularism

Mahatma Gandhi has on his own part benefited the evolvement of the concept of secularism by clarifying the relationship between state and religion. Gandhi actually rejected the ideology of secularism without any qualifications, but interestingly and consistently advocated for a secular state completely detached from the religious concerns of the people.⁴⁵ At the same time, Mahatma Gandhi emphasised the inseparability of religion and politics and the superiority of the former over the latter. He has written that ‘those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means.’⁴⁶ For Gandhi religion was the source of absolute value and hence constitutive of social life and that is why politics were the arena of public interest. The inseparability of religion and politics in the Indian context was for Gandhi a fundamentally distinct issue from the separation of the state from the church in Christendom. When he did advocate that religion and state should be separate, he clarified that this was to limit the role of the state to secular welfare and to allow it no admittance into the religious life of the people.⁴⁷ Gandhi died because he had striven unceasingly to promote Hindu-Muslim unity. There were competing nationalists discourses in India in the beginning of the twentieth century but Gandhi had tried to combine these under the aim of “*swaraj*” (self-rule).

Jawaharlal Nehru was the main architect in the relation between the state and religion in India. While Gandhi put his faith in the reformed, ethnically refined individual, in creating a better if not the ideal society, Nehru considered the shaping of suitable institutions as the best means of achieving the same goal. Of all the modern institutions, it was the state which he believed would be the principal engine of social change. The ideal state according to Nehru was first and foremost democratic, but also socialist because of its bad economic situation and secularist because of the cultural and religious diversity.⁴⁸ An example from Nehru’s writings and speeches brings out very clearly his conviction that religion is a hindrance to the change and progress which are inherent in human society and that the belief in supernatural agency which ordains everything has led to a certain irresponsibility, and emotion and sentimentality have taken the place of

⁴⁵ Madan 1997, 36-7.

⁴⁶ Gandhi M. K, *An Autobiography or the Story of My Experiments with Truth*, Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad 1940, 383, also Madan 1998, 305.

⁴⁷ Madan 1998, 305.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 310.

reasoned thought.⁴⁹ He was influenced by the experience of European nations and Marxist thinking and believed that industrialisation would erode the influence of religion. Therefore, he did not worry too much about religion or its political expression, namely communalism, because he passionately believed that these phenomena would vanish at the touch of reality.⁵⁰ In a letter from 1931 he insisted that, ‘the real thing to my mind is the economic factor. If we lay stress on this and divert public attention to it we shall find automatically that religious differences recede into the background and a common bond unites different groups. The economic bond is stronger than the national one.’⁵¹

Nehru insisted that once a national state came into being it would be economic problems that would acquire salience; there might be class conflicts but not religious conflicts, except insofar as religion itself expressed some vested interests.⁵² Nehru was committed to the ideas of the Enlightenment and represents better than anybody else in India the predicament of modernity.⁵³ Nehru has described the creation of a secular state in a religious society as the biggest problem that he had during his years in power. In 1961, just three years before his death he wrote: “We talk about a secular state in India. It is perhaps not very easy even to find a good word in Hindi for ‘secular’. Some people think it means something opposed to religion. That obviously is not correct...It is a state which honours all faiths equally and gives them equal opportunities.”⁵⁴

Even though Indian society at large was constituted by a diversity of cultures, languages, religions and customs, Nehru wanted it to become one nation in unity. Thus the secular state was a requirement in the project of nationhood, as it would guarantee the unity of India and further the identity of common ‘Indianness’. Secondly, the partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan in 1947, and the formation of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, nevertheless left within the boundaries of India a very considerable majority of Muslims. During the partition Muslims and Hindus killed each other without any hesitation, and if India had become for example a Hindu state, the

⁴⁹ Nehru Jawaharlal, *The Discovery of India*, Asia Publishing House, New York 1961, 543.

⁵⁰ Nehru Jawaharlal, *An Autobiography*, Oxford University Press, Delhi 1980, 469.

⁵¹ Nehru Jawaharlal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru: Volume five*, B. R. Publishing Corporation, Delhi first published 1972, reprinted 1988, 203.

⁵² Nehru 1961, footnote 30.

⁵³ Madan 1997, 37.

⁵⁴ Nehru. Quoted in Madan 1997, 245-6.

living conditions of Muslims in India would have been difficult to guarantee as positive. Nehru's view on the state's neutrality towards all religions does not give clear directives as to how this pragmatic and diplomatic view is to be implemented when disputes regarding differential claims on state support were demanded by different religious groups or when religious groups, collided over religious practices that allegedly violated their respective rights and their autonomies.⁵⁵ Nehru admitted that before secularism can function in India, there needs to prevail a level of general education and a liberal outlook on life and scientific temper which unfortunately lack in India.⁵⁶

In sum, what was pursued by the founding fathers of Indian secularism was a separation of two realms in the public: one was the political realm, wherein the interest of national unity, nonpreference, and the rationalities and imperatives of the state compelled political actors to speak and act in certain ways, while at the same time praising the cultural diversity of India; the other was the cultural realm, wherein any community could celebrate itself and its own myths and exclude others. This cultural diversity was the foundation of the larger nation. However, the political realm was not supposed to be "contaminated" by unilateral celebration of one community or the open representation of particularist interests of a community.⁵⁷

The Constitution of India

The British influence, experience with the workings of provincial autonomy and the popularity of federalism as a desirable political system for plural societies in the 20th century influenced the framers of federalism. The Constituent Assembly recommended a centralised federal model for India according to the ideals of the upper caste English-educated supporters of the national movement. The Constitution of India gives far greater powers to the central government than for example the federal Constitution of the United States does. The central government in India can not only command and control states or provinces but also make their autonomy ineffective and dismiss their governments⁵⁸ and replace them with administrations run directly from New Delhi. The president may declare an Emergency in a state if convinced that its government cannot

⁵⁵ Tambiah 1998, 423-4.

⁵⁶ Madan 1997, 246.

⁵⁷ Blom Hansen 1999, 54.

⁵⁸ Rajashekara H. M., The Nature of Indian Federalism: A Critique. In Asian Survey Vol. XXXVII, No. 3, March 1997, 245-6.

be conducted in accordance with the Constitution.⁵⁹ This was meant to sustain national identity by giving power to the central government, which would then be responsible for educating the less educated rural masses on nationalism.⁶⁰ The strong role of the central government has been a significant factor in shaping the history of independent India.

In the Preamble to the Constitution,⁶¹ India has clearly been referred to as a sovereign socialist secular democratic republic that secures for all its citizens: social, economic and political justice; liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; equality of status and of opportunity; and promotes among them all fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation.⁶² The problem is that the Constitution does not define accurately what is meant by a secular Indian state and how religion should be separated from politics and the state. The most common conception of how this should be done, has been formulated by Jawaharlal Nehru, but the definition does not have a legal basis.

The Constitution of India also discusses the role of religion within the state. Religious rights were put into the Constitution as perceived solutions to the problems of religious turmoil which haunted pre-independence India and which led to the partition between India and Pakistan.⁶³ The chapter on fundamental rights guarantees the minority groups that they and their interests could not be overridden in a majoritarian democracy. In part III on fundamental rights and the right to equality article 15⁶⁴ prohibits the Indian state from discriminating any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. For some reason or other this article has not always been followed in India. For example, the Muslims of Kashmir claim that they have not been granted government posts because of their religion, and this is the same reason the Sikhs have given for the refusal of the Indian Army to give them military posts after the mid-1980s. The Constitution advances principles of secular democracy (article 292) by prohibiting

⁵⁹ Thakur Ramesh, *Ayodhya and the Politics of India's Secularism*. In *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 7, July 1993, 656.

⁶⁰ Jeffrey 1986, 184.

⁶¹ The Constitution of India is from November 26, 1949.

⁶² Abhyankar Sharad D, *The Constitution of India*. In Franz Gisbert H (ed.), *Constitutions of the Countries of the World*, Release 97-6. Oceana Publications, Dobbs Ferry New York 1997. The Constitution of India is also in the Internet. The Constitution of India 2002. WWW-document, Indian Parliament <<http://alfa.nic.in/const/a1.html>>

⁶³ Kolodner 1995, 237-8.

electoral reservations on the basis of religion and outlaws the establishment of a special electorate for Muslims (article 32).

The All India Nationalist Forum and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), both Hindu nationalist organisations, seek to abolish two crucial articles of the Constitution that seem to give significant concessions to minorities or the minority-dominated state. For instance, Article 30 [1] permits religious and linguistic minorities to establish and run their own educational institutions, which the Forum believes to be against the interests of national unity. Similarly, Article 30 grants special status to the state of Jammu and Kashmir where Muslims constitute an overwhelming majority. According to the Forum, granting of such a status to a minority-dominated state will encourage other minorities to seek special status within the Indian union and eventually lead to an imbalance within the Indian union.⁶⁵

Difficulties with Indian Secularism

The transferability of the idea of a nation-state based on secularism into multi-religious societies like India is beset with many difficulties. It should be realised that secularism cannot be restricted to rationalism, but it should be compatible with faith.⁶⁶ The Indian version of secularism implies that while the public life may or may not be kept free of religion, it must have space for continuous dialogue between religious traditions and between religion and secularism.⁶⁷ The state in independent India is officially secular as it is not allied with any particular religion or an instrument of any church. Yet, in practice the Indian state does not separate itself from religion, but tries to give a picture of itself as a neutral country by publicly recognising all religions and their social practices. Religious rituals, often with a preference for the Hindu, form a part of public functions held under the auspices of the state.⁶⁸

The founding fathers of the Indian Constitution and the Congress leadership were quite aware that it was necessary to avoid an overt politicisation of community identities.

⁶⁴ Also articles 25-28 focus on religious rights.

⁶⁵ Malik Yogendra K. & Vajpeyi Dharendra K., *The Rise of Hindu Militancy*. In *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXIX, No. 3, March 1989, 316-7. BJP, BJP Manifesto, *Our Social Philosophy 2002*. WWW-Document BJP Central Office. <<http://www.bjp.org/manifes/chap9.htm>> A copy is in the possession of the writer.

⁶⁶ Madan 1998, 309.

⁶⁷ Nandy et al. 1998, 327.

⁶⁸ Panikkar K. N, Introduction. In Panikkar K. N. (ed.), *Communalism in India*, Manohar Publications New Delhi 1991, 10.

Secularism was seen as the only possible option that would be able to provide harmonious living together for the different tribes and peoples of India. Unfortunately Indian understanding of secularism failed to provide a satisfactory relationship between state and religion and the founding fathers were not able to explain to the people in their own languages what was meant by secularism.⁶⁹

Partha Chatterjee claims that the application of the three constitutional characteristics of a secular state to the situation in India has led to major anomalies. These anomalies can be said to be the special features of Indian secularism. The first principle, that is, a right to freedom of religion, gives to every citizen not only 'the equal right to freedom of conscience but also the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion'. However, the state has the right to regulate 'any economic, financial, political or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practice' to provide for social welfare and reform to all sections.⁷⁰

The second principle, equality, prohibits the state from discriminating against any citizen solely on the basis of religion or caste, except when it makes special provisions for the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes or for scheduled tribes. Such special quotas in employment and education, or reserved seats in representative bodies, have of course led to much controversy in India in last few decades. These quotas can be seen as positive discrimination in favour of scheduled castes: in order to qualify as a member of a scheduled caste, a person must profess either Hindu or Sikh religion; a public declaration of the adoption of any other religion would lead to disqualification from the quota.⁷¹

The third principle, the separation of state and religion, declares that there shall be no official state religion, no religious instruction in state schools, and no taxes to support any particular religion. But the state has been entangled in the affairs of religion in numerous ways and the degree and extent of entanglement has increased since independence. The wall of separation can hardly be applied to the present Indian situation. This is precisely one of the reasons why Indian secularism is interpreted

⁶⁹ Hasan Zoya, *Changing Orientation of the State and the Emergence of Majoritarianism in the 1980s*. In Panikkar K. N. (ed.), *Communalism in India*. Manohar Publications, New Delhi 1991, 143.

⁷⁰ Chatterjee 1997, 241-2.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 243-4.

differently from Western secularism. The cultural and historical realities of the Indian situation call for a different relationship between state and civil society than what is regarded as normative in Western political discourse, at least in the matter of religion. In India the state should favour all religions equally which would be a required extension to the principle of equality.⁷²

THE CONTEST OF SECULARISM

Nationalism

Ethnicity and nation are multivocal words: their meanings depend upon who uses the word and in which context. Ethnicity and ethnic group are sometimes defined as a common identity based on characteristics acquired either at birth (colour for example) or through cultural experience (language, religion, caste, sense of regional identity etc.).⁷³ The primordialist approach to the study of nationalism, which I discuss later in this chapter, bases its image of identity on ethnicity, whereas Max Weber has noted that nation has notions with the sentiment of solidarity of ethnic communities, but the sentiment of ethnic solidarity does not by itself make a nation.⁷⁴ In the past years many scholars have argued that aspects of modernisation in fact shape and intensify feelings based on religion, language, caste or similar characteristics and make such identities more 'salient' for politics than before.⁷⁵

The Latin origin word '*natio*' originally means birth, but also tribe, race, nation and species. From the late thirteenth century on, it started to mean a group of people who are related to each other through common blood. In the 15th century, it already meant the people living in the same area.⁷⁶ It is hard to find a comprehensive definition for the concept of nation. Even though nation means collective identity it should not be mixed

⁷² Chatterjee 1997, 247-8.

⁷³ See for example Connor Walker, A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group, is a... In Nationalism (ed.) Hutchinson John & Smith Anthony D, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York 1994, 43-6.

⁷⁴ Weber Max, Economy and Society (ed.) Roth Guenther, Wittich Claus, Bedminster Press, New York 1968, 923. Quoted in Connor 1994, 45.

⁷⁵ Jeffrey 1986, 3.

⁷⁶ Connor 1994, 38.

with other concepts that describe the same, like class, region, gender, race and religious community.⁷⁷

The consensus among those disciplines⁷⁸ that study nationalism is that the term nation is tantalisingly ambiguous. All, though, agree that a nation is not a race nor is it a state. They see language, religion, and territory as important factors in a nation, but none of them is the exclusive determinant of nation. However, their approach to the meaning of the word nation is always determined by the demands of their own discipline. Historians generally see a nation as the population of a sovereign state or as a population struggling for its own state, living within a definite territory, and possessing a common stock of thoughts and feelings that are transmitted during the course of a common history by a common will. They believe that the meaning of the nation is itself subject to historical change.⁷⁹ A nation is also seen as a new entity, a socio-political community in modernity. It is not a mere by-product or an afterthought of nationalism either as an ideology or a movement. It is a new kind of collectivity in which some deep, permanent and profound changes have taken place in which society is organised. Nation here precedes nationalism, at least logically if not also historically.⁸⁰ A crucial aspect in the articulation of any nationalist ideology is the intellectual construction of a nation as a continuity from a hoary past. The construction of histories and the invention of traditions in a nationalist context are intellectual activities of myth-making in modern times, whose political import far exceeds their factual content.⁸¹

Ambiguity is even doubled with the use of the term nation-state. The nation-state is a modern phenomenon, characterised by the formation of a kind of state which has a monopoly on the legitimate use of force within a demarcated territory, and which seeks to unite people by means of homogenisation and creating a common culture with shared symbols and values, as well as by reviving traditions and myths of origin, and sometimes inventing them. The main difference between a nation and a nation-state, when the nation and the state do not coincide, is that the members of a nation are

⁷⁷ Hutchinson John, Smith Anthony D., Introduction. In *Nationalism* (ed.) Hutchinson John, Smith Anthony D., Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 1994a, 3-5.

⁷⁸ For example, anthropology, political science, sociology, psychology, history.

⁷⁹ Snyder Louis L, *Encyclopedia of Nationalism*. St. James Press, London 1990, 232. For example French historian, Ernest Renan, has given a theoretical definition in his famous *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?*

Calmann-Levy, Paris, 1882.

⁸⁰ Aloysius G., *Nationalism Without A Nation in India*. Oxford University Press, New Delhi 1997, 11-2.

conscious of forming a community, whereas the nation-state seeks to create a nation and develop a sense of community stemming from it.⁸² A state, then, according to Max Weber, is a human community that claims a monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory.⁸³

Nationalism is as difficult to define as nation and nation-state are. Most commonly nationalism is considered the condition of mind, feeling, or sentiment of a group of people living in a well-defined geographical area, speaking a common language, possessing a literature in which the aspiration of the nation has been expressed, and in some cases, having a common religion. Nationalism can also mean the actual historical process of establishing nationalities as political units, of building out of tribes and empires the modern institution of the national state.⁸⁴ Nationalism has also been linked to the formation of states striving to produce cultural homogenisation, authorised histories, unified languages, and shared symbols of authority. States attempted to represent the nation as an all-encompassing principle of order and governance, and strove systematically to produce “the people” as a homogeneous entity. A very important aspect in the study of nationalism is the concept of “Other”: nation-states tend to define themselves not by reference to their own characteristics but by a series of exclusions of the “Others”.⁸⁵

Power and culture are two crucial terms in the study of nationalism. The modern consciousness of the imperative for a fusion between culture and power, and the attempts to bring this about, form nationalism both as an ideology and a movement. This has two reference points, one external and the other internal. The external reference is to other cultures, nations and nation-states, which are perceived as obstacles in the way of one’s own nationalism. Under this aspect, nationalism seeks to liberate one’s own culture from the determinative influences and interference of other cultures. This came to be established as the right of nations for self-determination within the community of nation-states in the modern times. The internal dimension of the culture-power fusion is what constitutes the specifically modern element in the notion of nation.

⁸¹ Aloysius 1997, 154-5.

⁸² Guibernau 1996, 47-8.

⁸³ Weber Max, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Routledge, London 1948, 78.

⁸⁴ Snyder 1990, 246-7.

Here the reference is to the culture's own past as the Other. Nationalism seeks to move away from the notion of the past, or the pre-modern form of the culture-power fusion, usually unequal and hierarchical, and construct an equal and formally homogeneous one. Here the demand is for the equal spread of power over culture as the transition to nation. In modernity the nationalist process of politicisation takes hold of culture in its totality, empowering all its members with equal rights and responsibilities, and sets them apart from cultures and individuals outside. The mobilisation of the nation's masses in nationalism takes place not merely on the basis of commonality of political purpose and destiny as the emergence of a socio-political community. The masses who hitherto were excluded from the arena of public power through hierarchical structures of privileges/liabilities in society and dynastic rule in polity, now emerge politically in nationalism to constitute the new politico-civil society of equal rights and liabilities. Such is the specific form of congruence between culture and power in modern nationalism.⁸⁶

Approaches to Nationalism

The study of nationalism can be divided into three streamlines: Primordialism, instrumentalism and constructivism. The division between the veins is not black and white but different kinds of interpretations can appear simultaneously.

Primordialists claim that communities are natural and given. Every person who belongs to a community carries through life attachments derived from place of birth, kinship relations, religion, language and social practices. These attachments are natural and provide a basis for an easy affinity with other peoples from same background.⁸⁷ Primordialists pay attention to the character of modern nationalism and to the pre-modern nation-state. This character is revealed through the beliefs in the historical origin and cultural heritage of the nation, and through the importance of social relations like the family and kinship.⁸⁸ A German philosopher, J. G. Herder, considers each nationality a manifestation of the divine and therefore something sacred which should

⁸⁵ Blom Hansen 1999, 29-30. For example a common saying in Finland during the independence struggle that goes followingly: We are not Swedes, Russians we will never become, let us be Finns!

⁸⁶ Aloysius 1997, 14-5. The author bases his analysis on Ernest Gellner's definition of nationalism as a congruence of power and culture (Gellner 1983).

⁸⁷ Brass Paul R, *Élite Competition and Nation-formation*. In *Nationalism* (ed.) Hutchinson John, Smith Anthony D., Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York 1994, 83.

be cultivated, not destroyed. He writes: “a nation is as natural as a plant, as a family, only with more branches”.⁸⁹ The socio-biological version of this argument asserts that ethnicity, with all the primordial ties, is an extension of kinship and that kinship is the normal way to pursue collective goals in the struggle for survival.⁹⁰

Anthony D. Smith tries to solve the problem of choosing between a natural and a modern theory of the origin of nations by suggesting that nationalist movements could be motivated by historically constructed ethnicity.⁹¹ According to Smith the nationalisms that occur in different parts of the world can be defined by what he calls the nationalist doctrine. According to the doctrine, humanity has been divided naturally into nations and all these nations have their own character. A nation is the source of all political power, and to gain freedom and self-understanding people need to identify themselves with the nation. This is why nations can only be fulfilled in their own states. Loyalty to the nation-state supersedes other loyalties and the first condition of global freedom and harmony is the strengthening of the nation-state.⁹²

Instrumentalist researchers consider that elites and political systems have created communities and the national feeling so that they could use these sentiments for promoting their own interests. Instrumentalists see nationalism and the nation-state as a typical phenomenon for the modern era which has evolved through the development of political institutions, like elections, political parties and administrative bureaucracies. According to them, nationalism is attached to the birth of the urban, industrialised community, and to that of nationality and national sovereignty.⁹³

Smith seems to represent both primordialism and instrumentalism by writing that the modern state has a central role in advancing nationalism, but he also thinks that the problem of legitimacy is more far-reaching. Nationalism rises from a widely spread moral crisis, in which the secular state challenges the divine authority. The attempts to solve this crisis have led to different forms of nationalism. The two most common

⁸⁸ Allen Tim & Eade John, *The New Politics of Identity*. In *Poverty and Development into the 21st Century* (ed.) Allen Tim & Thomas Alan, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2000, 490.

⁸⁹ Herder J. G., *On Social and Political Culture*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1969, 324.

⁹⁰ Guibernau 1996, 49.

⁹¹ Allen & Eade 2000, 491-495.

⁹² Smith Anthony D, *Theories of Nationalism*, Duckworth, London 1971, 21.

⁹³ Allen & Eade 2000, 490.

bases for a state are a political community (a territorial state) and a community of culture. In territorial nationalism the leaders of the political community or the new state try to create a culturally homogeneous population, which would have a feeling of special ethnic bounds. Ethnic nationalism, on the other hand, seeks safety from a community that is culturally identifiable. In both of the cases the nationalists believe that their cultural communities either are or will be nations.⁹⁴

An instrumentalist approach can be clearly seen in Ernest Gellner's book *Nations and Nationalism*. Gellner also defines nationalism firstly as a political principle, where the political and the national parts should be compatible. According to this principle, nationalism can be described best as a sentiment or as a movement. Nationalist sentiment arises from anger, when this principle has been violated, or the other way around, when the feeling of satisfaction or fulfilment has been achieved. From this kind of a feeling arises the nationalist movement. Nationalism is the theory of political legitimacy, when the ethnic and the political borders should be congruent.⁹⁵ Gellner continues: "But nationalism is not awakening of an old, latent, dormant force, though that is how it does indeed present itself. It is in reality the consequence of a new form of social organization, based on deeply internalized, education-dependent high cultures, each protected by its own state. It uses some of the pre-existent cultures, generally transforming them in the process, but it cannot possibly use them all. [...] Nations as natural, God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent though long-delayed political destiny, are a myth; nationalism, which sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates pre-existing cultures: *that is a reality*".⁹⁶

Gellner writes that nationalism sees itself as the universal and natural order of the humanity's political life. It cannot be noticed until it demands its own state. Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not yet exist. Nationalism cannot exist in stateless societies. If a state does not exist no one can ask where its borders are convergent with the borders of the nation. According to instrumentalist interpretation, the human element has great significance in the birth of

⁹⁴ Allen & Eade 2000, 490-491.

⁹⁵ Gellner 1983, 1.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 48-9.

nations. This human element includes inventions and social engineering⁹⁷. The idea of nations as natural, as God's way of classifying people, as inherited political destinies is a myth; in reality, nationalism sometimes changes the already existing cultures to nations and sometimes invents them and quite often demolishes the earlier cultures. Therefore, analytically, nationalism comes before nation.⁹⁸

A more recent approach in the research on nationalism and ethnicity is constructivism. This new approach leans on rhetoric of post-modernity and aims at changing the logic of instrumentalism and primordialism, because, according to constructivism, instrumentalists are considered too concentrated on interests and primordialists too concentrated on values. The constructivist approach sees ethnicity as something that people have produced themselves. Ethnicity is something like a creative social activity, through which a common identity can be formed and political organisations become woven into a consciousness of shared identity. Certain common characteristics are required so that the common identity can form itself. These characteristics are the rules on how to speak and what to say, cultural habits and practices and political organisation, which all form a common identity. This identity becomes conscious through time.⁹⁹ The difference from instrumentalism is that, according to constructivism, identity has not been build for any other purposes than for itself. According to constructivists, a common national identity is composed by itself or consciously build, but then this happens only for the sake of the community. National identity is based neither on rights nor attachments gained by birth, like the primordialists claim.

Leroy Vail has well summarised the meaning of the approach.¹⁰⁰ According to him, ethnic identity has taken its form through different phases and it has been influenced by subordinators and subordinates. Normally, in the first phase of forming the ethnic identity, there are a group of intellectuals that have a tremendous impact on the identity. In the second phase, the identity starts to be influenced by the people working in the

⁹⁷ Social engineering means the manipulation of the human behaviour and of the social institutions so that they would be like wanted.

⁹⁸ Gellner 1983, 48-49.

⁹⁹ Young Crawford, *Evolving Modes of Consiousness and Ideology: Nationalism and Ethnicity*. In *Political Development and the new Realism in Sub-Saharan Africa* (ed.) Apter D. E. & Rosberg C. G., University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville 1994, 79. Gould Jeremy, *Localizing Modernity. Action, Interests and Association in Rural Zambia* Finnish Anthropological Society, Helsinki 1997, 62.

¹⁰⁰ Vail Leroy, *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1989, 11.

administration who subordinate the people through indirect administration. This influences the nature and limits of the ideology. Third, normal people have a real need for so-called traditional values, especially under times of rapid social change, which opens ways for the acceptance of new ideologies. Therefore, ethnicity is manufactured rather than given, and innovative rather than atavistic ¹⁰¹.

Benedict Anderson has given an interesting definition to a nation by describing it in his book *Imagined Communities* as an imagined political community. This means that a nation has been imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because even the members of the smallest nation will never know all the people living in that nation and still they have a feeling of togetherness and they have a common picture of their community.¹⁰² Gellner makes a comparable point when he rules that “Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist.”¹⁰³ The difference, though, is that Gellner assimilates invention to fabrication and falsity rather than to imagining and creation. This shows clearly that Gellner is an instrumentalist while as Anderson is a constructivist.

A nation has been imagined as limited because even the largest of them has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind. A nation is imagined as sovereign because the concept was born during a time when the Enlightenment and the Revolution were destroying the idea of a divine dispensation and hierarchical dynastic realm. Nations started to dream of freedom. The gage and emblem of this freedom was the sovereign state. Finally, a nation is imagined as a community because regardless of the inequality and exploitation that may prevail in it, a nation is always conceived as a deep horizontal comradeship. This fraternity has made it possible that, during the last couple of hundred years, millions of people have been ready to die for these limited imaginings.¹⁰⁴

According to Anderson, nationalism is a cultural artefact that in a way came to replace religion after it had faded during the Enlightenment. An important change that benefited the most the rise of nationalism was the expansion of written vernacular languages. It

¹⁰¹ Young 1994, 80.

¹⁰² Anderson 1983, 15.

¹⁰³ Gellner 1983, 1.

¹⁰⁴ Anderson 1983, 15-16.

first happened in Europe, when Latin was replaced as the most important language, and later in the colonial world. In the colonies vernacular languages were promoted through education and a local elite was created to help in administration. Through the promotion of vernacular languages, the means of communication also increased and the amount of people reached by these languages grew because people outside the intelligentsia were able to understand vernacular languages. Anderson uses as an example the print-capitalism which made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways. This made the new kind of imagined community possible, which set the stage for the modern state. The potential stretch of these communities was inherently limited, and, at the same time, bore none but the most fortuitous relationship to existing political boundaries. Through print-capitalism these nations got their national print-languages.¹⁰⁵

To sum up, the main aspect of nationalism is that a group of people, defined by common religion, language, decent and history that forms a nation, aims at achieving its own state.

Communalism

*”To awaken to history was to cease to live instinctively. It was to begin to see oneself and one’s group the way the outside world saw one; and it was to know a kind of rage. India was now full of this rage. There had been a general awakening. But everybody awakened first to his own group or community; every group thought itself unique in its awakening; and every group sought to separate its rage from the rage of other groups.”*¹⁰⁶

The Encyclopaedia of Nationalism defines communalism as “a sense of community among ethnic or linguistic groups. The word is often used as a synonym for tribalism. It may also denote a system of government in which communes or local communities possess a certain amount of autonomy inside a federal state.”¹⁰⁷ This definition is quite exhaustive and is only partly applicable to India. Communalism in India definitely bases on a community feeling along both ethnic and linguistic lines but in Indian communities

¹⁰⁵ Anderson 1983, 23-49.

¹⁰⁶ Naipaul V. S, India. A Million Mutinies Now. Minerva, London 1990, 420.

the tendency was towards centralisation of power until the 1990s, but after this, village councils have been widely promoted.¹⁰⁸ The feeling of togetherness in communities grew but it did not affect so much the rise of communalism. Communalism in India is rather a sense of community among ethnic and linguistic groups in which each individual of the community shares a perception of the distinctiveness of his ethnic group from the other groups surrounding, and a sense of common historical experience. To this sentiment is normally added continuity through biological descent, and the sharing of common social and cultural conditions. At the heart of ethnicity is the feeling of being special.¹⁰⁹ Communalism is not just a unique Indian phenomenon. Richard G. Fox has compared Sikh communalism with Welsh nationalism and concludes that in both nationalisms derive from modernity and the incompetence of a bureaucratic state.¹¹⁰

K. N. Panikkar adds a new factor to the definition of communalism, namely religion. He separates communitarian and communal identities from each other. Panikkar explains what he means by communal identity but the definition of communitarian identity remains unclear. A communal identity is firstly an identity of belonging to a community. Secondly, it can include a feeling of belonging to a religion. Communitarian identity, according to him, is religious. A communal identity does not necessarily need to be against another religion or community. Panikkar continues that these religious or communitarian identities need not necessarily be communal. Yet it is important to recognise that such an identity could be transformed into a communal one by posing an antagonistic relationship. Therefore, religious and communitarian identities form necessary pre-requisites for communalism. Without these pre-requisites, the type of communalism existing in India today cannot take place at all. Communalism usually assumes that there is a dormant communitarian feeling which can be activated. Communal forces are today engaged in reinforcing and activating religious communitarian identities.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Snyder 1990, 58.

¹⁰⁸ Brass 1990, 118-9.

¹⁰⁹ Snyder 1990, 94.

¹¹⁰ Fox Richard G., *Communalism and Modernity*. In Ludden David (ed.) *Making India Hindu: Religion, Community, and the Politics of Democracy in India*. Oxford University Press, New Delhi 1996, 244-248.

¹¹¹ Panikkar 1991, 10.

Surajan Das adds an important view to Panikkar's definition. A communal identity, when regarded as religious, concerns personal allegiance to a set of practices and dogmas, which are often part of a search for a reward from the transcendental reality. Communitarian identity, on the other hand, entails individual commitment to special interests of a religious community for gaining worldly advantages at the expense of other communities. Religious violence is provoked by sectarian and doctrinaire differences; communal animosities are primarily motivated by conflicts over political power and economic resources.¹¹² When communalists strive for political power and autonomy, or independence for the territory one can speak of religious nationalism. Different from Panikkar and Das, I use the word 'communalist' to refer to communalism as ideology and movement and word 'communal' to refer to a feeling based on the togetherness of a community, which may or may not be related to communalism.

When communalism has a political or an economic aspiration we can start speaking of ideology. T. N. Madan has defined three principals for ideology which are also applicable to communalism. First, every ideology is rooted in historical experience, but it is futuristic even when it calls for a return to historical fundamentals. It is, then, a link between identity and aspiration. The roots of communalism are in the ethnic identity and traditions of a person, which are then promoted to highlight the difference to other identities. Secondly, an ideology is a comprehensive, even totalising, blueprint for living and for action, which defines whether to preserve elements of the status quo, or to revive elements of a past that are considered weakened or lost, or to proceed towards a newly visualised future. Communalism is a way of life for the supporters of its ideas. Sikh communalists, for example, retreated to their sanctuary, the Golden Temple of Amritsar, to be able to practise their religion and plan their political activity. Thirdly, ideology is rhetorical in form: it seeks to convince and persuade people of the desirability of a particular world image, and mobilise them for action to achieve the stated objective. Hindu communalists seek to revive the historical Golden Age to promote their idea of a Hindu state and to gain more support for this.¹¹³

¹¹² Das Surajan, *Communal Violence in Twentieth Century Colonial Bengal: An Analytical Framework*. In Panikkar K. N (ed.), *Communalism in India*. Manohar Publications, New Delhi 1991, 34-5.

¹¹³ Madan 1997, 2-3.

To sum up, communalism aims to improve the social, economic or political position of a community based on religion, language or common descent/ethnicity within a state. Communalisation takes place when some issue is being used to promote the social, economic and political position of the community. An important aspect of communalism is collective antagonism. As we see, nationalism and communalism are both based on a group of people connected by these common features. However, whereas communalism aims at political power and social and economic benefits, nationalism aims at creating a state for a nation. Communalism can change into nationalism, and in general the line between communalism and nationalism is hard to draw. In India, communalism supposes that Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims form separate communities that oppose each other. These communities can then imagine themselves as nations through their communal feeling, which is created, for example, by emphasising the periods of history when the community was the one that ruled in India.

The Evolvement of Communal Identities

It is often asserted that communalism is a modern phenomenon, suggesting thereby that communal tensions, riots and politics became a major factor in the Indian society only during the colonial rule. The pre-colonial society was not devoid of tensions and conflict, but one cannot make the conclusion that communalism was created by colonialism. However, the colonial period witnessed the recurrence of communalist riots from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the days of the partition 1947, and since then they have been an integral part of Indian politics.¹¹⁴

The political life in pre-colonial Indian society was structured around a peculiar organisation of hierarchically distributed power. The connection between people and the state was tenuous, and identity itself also meant a somewhat different kind of social adhesion. The logic of traditional identity appears to have been different from its modern counterpart in several respects. Politically, premodern identities tended to be fuzzy. The identity of an individual was distributed through several different social practices. The person could belong to his village, local community, caste group, religious sect, language or kinship complexes. It was not only the individual identity that was plural and flexible; the structure of identities itself was fuzzy in a related

¹¹⁴ Panikkar 1991, 6.

sense.¹¹⁵ Traditional societies are a world of transitions rather than of boundaries. Traditionally, individuals were equipped with a fairly detailed and sometimes astonishingly complicated system of classificatory categories by which to distinguish the relevantly similar from the different, us from them¹¹⁶. Still, they simply lacked the cognitive means to generate a global picture of the spaces in which social groups lived. Conflicts were not rare among religious sects, castes, or other social groups; but in the absence of the knowledge of maps and numbers, they were primarily wars of position in the terrain of everyday life rather than wars of manoeuvre in the political arena.¹¹⁷

The British colonial power put an end to this by bringing an entire cognitive apparatus from modern Europe, especially mapping and counting for their administrative purposes. The colonial power produced an image of India as a geographic and demographic entity. The fundamental transformation involved a picture of the social world in which the organisation and perception of social difference was altered: it changed people's images of their collective selves and their occupancy of the social world. People realised what it meant to be a member of a majority or a minority community, and how to act appropriately in these social roles. The political consequence of this was decisive: it made possible a membership of individuals in abstract religious identities like Hindus and Muslims, and a new kind of impersonal and abstract violence, as people began to ascribe to them non-traditional capacity to have intentions and undertake actions.¹¹⁸

Enumeration processes began in the early nineteenth century, as did the establishment of western-style education for producing a new, collaborating middle class. The British intended to create a class which could become the interpreter between the British and the people, but English education spread unevenly, as it concentrated mainly in the metropolitan cities of the coastal presidencies and created an elite that was able to come to power.¹¹⁹ By the middle of the century, the first unintended consequences of these processes had become apparent. Sections of the new intelligentsia grasped the sources of power this space provided. However, the earliest anti-colonial writers had only

¹¹⁵ Kaviraj 1994, 116-7.

¹¹⁶ They can also be referred to as the Other.

¹¹⁷ Kaviraj 1994, 117.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 117-8.

¹¹⁹ Aloysius 1997, 36.

resolved to defy colonial power, but had not yet been able to specify their nation. The first Bengali 'nationalist' writers¹²⁰ asked themselves whether the nation they belonged to was a nation of Bengalis, Hindus or of Indians.¹²¹

The British also 'created' the Indian peasantry by forming a new type of property right on land by welding together existing forms of proprietary domination with the obligation to pay the land revenue. They speeded and generalised changes which had gathered pace over the centuries. Demand in foreign markets for Indian agricultural produce was an important stimulus to peasant commodity production and settled agriculture. The British also transformed the rural elites into landlords and merchants, which then led to the loss of status and political rights of the ordinary peasants of the village.¹²² These peasants were later a good ground for mobilisation to communalist organisations in the twentieth century, as their identity still remained traditional and religious and because they were to a large extent exploited by the new secularised middle class.¹²³ There were different personal laws for the advocates of different religions. This, then, legally authorised a certain interpretation of Indian society as being made up of discrete and legally incompatible communities and caste groups that were governable only through encapsulation and control of their irrational religious passion.¹²⁴ The colonial state in India was, however, never bifurcated, as was the case in parts of Africa. The bifurcation of the colonial state in Africa was expressed in a spatial separation between direct rule under colonial law in the urban areas and the indirect rule through native authorities and customary law in the rural areas.¹²⁵

For census purposes the British colonial power tabulated and identified all Indians by both religion and caste or so-called tribal community, as well as by occupation, age and sex.¹²⁶ By the end of the nineteenth century, a growing array of official materials including military recruitment manuals, gazetteers and census reports featured listings assigning people of particular title and background to a certain order or status with

¹²⁰ For example Rabindranath Tagore.

¹²¹ Kaviraj 1994, 118.

¹²² Bayly C. A., *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire*. The New Cambridge History of India II-1, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1988, 150.

¹²³ Aloysius 1997, 54.

¹²⁴ Blom Hansen 1999, 33-5.

¹²⁵ Mamdani Mahmoud, *Citizen and Subject*. Princeton University Press, Princeton 1996, 3-34; Blom Hansen 1999, 32-3.

either honourable or humiliating qualities being possessed by each group.¹²⁷ The census system and the colonial governability provided a new matrix of intelligibility through which native subjects could come to know themselves as communities. This new matrix also displaced older hierarchies and produced a social imaginary structured by consolidated communities in competition. North India had for centuries been marked by rather clear political and military hierarchies governed by a mainly Muslim elite. Religious identities were both visible and subject to political regulation, but were not necessarily important in relation to the distribution and exercise of power, as long social hierarchies and political loyalties remained intact and nonnegotiable. With the intrusion of British colonialism, these political hierarchies were subverted and rendered fluid and negotiable, especially after rebellion of 1857¹²⁸ and the subsequent curbing of the political power of Muslim rulers all over the subcontinent. The higher-caste Hindu communities that had most effectively utilised the new educational and commercial opportunities gained new power and public visibility as representatives and “natural leaders” of the Hindu community. Conversely, the Muslim elite lost both their former aura and their “mandate to rule” and patronage power, and were now forced to represent themselves as leaders of the Muslim community as such. The enumeration was also central to the mechanisms through which natives were to be represented in accordance with their numerical weight. From 1880s on, the local municipal administration emerged, but the criteria of eligibility was (as in Britain itself) determined by income levels and property, which generally disadvantaged Muslims and the lower class.¹²⁹

The enumeration was not an easy task for the British because of the fuzzy identities of the Indians. In the first Census of Punjab in 1855, Hindus and Sikhs were enumerated together, as Sikhism was considered being only a branch of Hinduism. In the 1881 census, Sikhs were enumerated separately from Hindus but still the application of the term Sikh was not defined. Some of those persons that could have considered themselves Sikhs today might have been enumerated as Hindus in 1881, because of the

¹²⁶ Bayly Susan, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age*. New Cambridge History of India IV.3, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1999, 124.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 126.

¹²⁸ The rebellion was the first uprising by the Indians against the British and it was led by the Indian soldiers, sepoys. The Rebellion has been considered an impetus to nationalist movement for independent India.

¹²⁹ Blom Hansen 1999, 36.

division in the Sikh religion and its origins in Hinduism.¹³⁰ In 1922 the term 'Sikh' was defined to mean a person who professes the Sikh faith. The decision excluded the Sahajdhari Sikhs from the Sikh definition, because they saw themselves as part of the larger Hindu religious community.¹³¹ By the end of the nineteenth century, the colonial authorities were in a very different position from those of their predecessors, who had been involved in the collection of social and statistical data. From mid-century onwards, the wider intellectual climate affecting the colonial data-collectors underwent important changes, most notably through the world-wide elevation of ethnology to the status of an authoritative discipline attracting both Western and Asian scientists. Within India, the Mutiny-Rebellion of 1857 drove both military and civil officials to expand and formalise their networks of control and surveillance, and to pursue the search for social knowledge.¹³²

The Government Act of India of 1935 introduced the principle of communal representation throughout the political system, elevating religious identity above all else and providing separate electorates for Hindus and Muslims. Political coalitions began to be built along communal lines; religious leaders acquired vested interests in demonstrating numerically large followings as the surest path to political power. Mohammed Ali Jinnah, 'the father of Pakistan', claimed and was conceded political importance up to 1947, not as the leader of a major political party but as the leader of the Muslims living in the Hindu majority area of the subcontinent. The problem of religious minorities was not solved by partition, a policy of divide and leave.¹³³

The British colonial rule definitely had a role in shaping cultural-national identities and urging communalism forward. The question that remains is whether they did that on purpose or by accident. Partha Chatterjee notes that the British advanced communalisation accidentally by complex arrangements of governance with the British provinces and the princely states. They recognised the complexities of Indian society and tried to follow a policy of non-interference in many areas of the social life of

¹³⁰ Kapur Rajiv A, Sikh Separatism. The Politics of Faith. Allen & Unwin Publishers Ltd., London 1986, 9, 12, 27.

¹³¹ Ibid., 187.

¹³² Bayly S. 1999, 119-21.

¹³³ Thakur 1993, 647.

Indians.¹³⁴ C. P. Bhambhri, on the other hand, thinks that the British made the communalist divisions greater by making every effort to promote religious divisions and by following the strategies of preferential and discriminatory treatment of different religious communities. The consequence of this dual strategy of active encouragement and neglect was the reinforcement of religiosity and caste feeling among the Indians which the post-independence state of India has inherited. This legacy has often turned to religious conflicts.¹³⁵ The British enumerated the people of the different tribes and peoples in India for their own administrative purposes, which then unfortunately broke the native culture and gave rise to the new types of identities and later served as a prerequisite for communalisation. It would be wrong to say that communalisation was the aim of the British. It was more an accident.

Thomas Blom Hansen has his conception on how the communal identities were constructed. He sees communalism as being an irrational force of primitive and atavistic hatred, emanating from the “masses” steeped in tradition and superstition, who are an easy target for manipulators. According to him, a communal identity has not been build from the outside but has constructed itself. He presents three reasons for this. First, there are everyday practices of neighbourliness. This includes the relatively limited interaction across community boundaries that has historically been substantiated by patterns of settlement in separate parts of villages or urban neighbourhoods. Second, the narratives, rumours and sometimes experiences of riots establish the other community as the source of absolute evil and brutality. The third is the complex reproduction of communal violence: the formation, organisation, and dissemination of political identities around discourses on the other. One may distinguish between one form of identification of the self and the community that is derived primarily from experiences of riot situations, rumours, and daily practises, and the form of identification of the community and the nation that derives its principles of intelligibility from larger ideological constructions and political problematics. He thinks that the waves of rioting in the 1990s were in most parts of India rarely triggered by local circumstances, but rather by the ideological fantasies and Hindu communalist discourse systematically circulated and organised in the public in the preceding years.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Chatterjee 1997, 234-5.

¹³⁵ Bhambhri C. P, State and Communalism in India. In Panikkar K. N (ed.), Communalism in India. Manohar Publications, New Delhi 1991, 127-8.

¹³⁶ Blom Hansen 1999, 201-7.

Economic Reasons

The economic policies which the government has undertaken since independence have hastened the process of communalisation. Immediately following independence, the Congress Party, in order to gain support from a broad range of Indian citizens, especially the huge numbers of the poor, instituted policies which stunted economic growth. This was done by promoting economic self-reliance, protecting Indian manufacturers from international competition, following an import-substitution industrial strategy, deterring the international investors with bureaucratic obstacles, and subsidising an inefficient public sector. Since the 1980s, the Indian government has begun to liberalise the economy. Initiatives aimed at privatisation and increased global competitiveness threaten to remove job security from the middle and lower-middle classes. Commerce has replaced traditional bonds of exchange, and contracts have replaced custom.¹³⁷ Citizens respond to this by turning to communalism and communalist parties, which they hope will solve their problems of material deprivation, psychological uncertainty and ideological anomie. Because of this, it was in the interest of political parties to appeal to common religious and ethnic sentiments. Competition for material goods and services further tends to encourage people to organise themselves along religious, caste, and ethnic lines.¹³⁸

Sukumar Muralidharan¹³⁹ criticises that communalism has been excluded from the research on economy and left to the analytical domain of history, sociology or politics. Communalism is a change in the institutional factors which affect the whole society. Communalism is normally seen as an irrational, destructive force which obstructs and distorts the regular movement of development, but which could be dissolved or extinguished with the advance of science and education and with material progress. However, advances in science and technology have not necessarily dissolved the social divisions and discriminatory practices that are based on religion, community, language, caste and creed. In India in particular, neither education nor material progress has eliminated social discriminatory processes.¹⁴⁰ It is the other way around; economic growth has been divided very unequally. This can be seen in the situation in Jammu and

¹³⁷ Kolodner 1995, 238.

¹³⁸ Malik & Vajpeyi 1989, 311.

¹³⁹ Muralidharan Sukumar, *Mandal, Mandir aur Masjid: Communalism and the Crisis of the State*. In Panikkar K. N. (ed.), *Communalism in India*. Manohar Publications, New Delhi 1991, 214-5.

Kashmir. Muslims have not been granted the higher and better paid administrative posts and Hindus have been preferred in employment¹⁴¹. According to Muralidharan, one of the justifications of a nation-state is the continuing growth of the national income, from which different sections are entitled to their respective shares. However, when the justification of the nation-state fails in periods of economic stagnation, disputes over material entitlements become endemic. Differences of class and status, submerged in the task of national development, come to the surface. Incapable of sustaining the politics of consensus, the nation-state increasingly has recourse to the politics of coercion.¹⁴² The Indian nation found itself in such a conjuncture during the Indira Gandhi era, and to some extent during the years of Rajiv Gandhi.

Zoya Hasan presents an interesting explanation for the strengthening of the communal identity. According to her, the new generations of mobile middle castes and classes, born after independence in the countryside and in the city, were attracted to communal revitalisation movements. There is a tendency on the part of many of the beneficiaries of the green revolution, and professionals and entrepreneurs, to channel their newly acquired wealth into temples and other religious causes. For the new groups, patronising ritual practices not only earned them respect, but also provided a familiar and satisfying world view and social identity. The concern for identity is particularly important for the Indian middle class eager to find its social moorings in a rapidly changing society. This might be one of the principal reasons why community identities and community based politics have been revived and intensified. They have gained greater legitimacy in the context of growing competition, which has upset the existing status and power hierarchies that lead to resentment and envy. In Northern India, Maharashtra and Gujarat, where there are large concentrations of Muslims, communalist violence became endemic as a result of struggles between Hindus and Muslims over land, property and business opportunities. What Hasan saw happening in the beginning of the 1990s was that in these areas a particular dominant group or caste, faced with a challenge from rival groups or lower classes, gave a communalist character to such conflicts.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Bharaswaj Krishna, *Economic Development and Communalism: A Note*. In Panikkar K. N (ed.), *Communalism in India*. Manohar Publications, New Delhi 1991, 219.

¹⁴¹ Muslims generally remained stuck in such economically marginal positions as self-employed artisans, traders, and marginal farmers. Blom Hansen 1999, 150.

¹⁴² Muralidharan 1991, 214.

¹⁴³ Hasan 1991, 151.

Politicisation

Democratic participation is both an opportunity for the secularists to contain communalism by using state power, and an area of dispute among the contending ideologies. The representational state in India is subject to multiple pressures from classes, castes and communities, and their ideological worlds.¹⁴⁴ Religious identities have had a powerful influence on social consciousness, which then has given rise to communal feeling and solidarity. Middle-class politics have increasingly resorted to communalism as a possible source of either maintaining or achieving political power. In this process the relationship between politics and communalism has become complementary, one reinforcing the other.¹⁴⁵

In the nineteenth century, communalism was an expression which was deeply rooted in the interests, outlook and point of view of the middle classes. They were in a social situation characterised by economic stagnation and the absence of a vigorous struggle to transform society – the communal question could then be described as a petty bourgeois question par excellence.¹⁴⁶ Later, merchants, traders, feudal classes and even sections of the peasantry have been drawn into it. The resurgence of communalism in recent years stems from the broadening of its social base.¹⁴⁷ Communalists understood that by politicising the issues of which they were concerned they could attract masses and gain more power for their demands. This seems to have worked out in India. The advocates of Sikh nationalism are mostly young, unemployed men. Hindu nationalist appeals were until the beginning of the twenty-first century heavily supported among the rising, selectively modernised middle class, who are conservative and pious in their sentiments.¹⁴⁸ But with varying levels of intensity, Hindu nationalism appeals nowadays also to young, lower-caste males, who are anti-Muslim in their rhetoric.¹⁴⁹

The political parties of pre- and post-independent India fall into two categories. First, there are parties organised around communalist ideologies, like Hindu Maha Sabha and the Muslim League during the pre-independence period, and the BJP, the Akali Dal and the Muslim League in contemporary India. The parties in the second category are those

¹⁴⁴ Bhambhri 1991, 129.

¹⁴⁵ Panikkar 1991, 8.

¹⁴⁶ Chandra Bipan, *Communalism in Modern India*. Vikas, New Delhi 1984, 40-41.

¹⁴⁷ Panikkar 1991, 7.

¹⁴⁸ Khilnani Sunil, *Exploring the Beast Within*. In *Newsweek* July 23, 2001.

which use communalism for political support and mobilisation without necessarily adopting communalism as their political ideology. K. N. Panikkar claims that the Indian National Congress under the lead of Indira Gandhi falls into this category. Indira Gandhi tried to identify herself with Hinduism even though she represented a secular party. Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir are explicit instances of communalist politics to which the Congress party had succumbed.¹⁵⁰

Bipan Chandra brings a new aspect to Panikkar's definition. He has come to the conclusion that it would be wrong to brand the Congress Party as a communalist party, earlier or now. According to Chandra, communalist parties and groups are those which are structured around the communalist ideology. If you take away communalist ideology or make the parties abandon communalist ideology, nothing is left of them. In other words, the communalist party only exists because of communalism.¹⁵¹ Chandra distinguishes communalism and opportunism and classifies the Congress party rather as an opportunistic party. He asserts that there is a difference between communalist parties which are structured along communalist ideologies, and secular, even weakly secular, parties taking an opportunistic stand towards communalism. As an example of the opportunistic politics of the Congress Party Chandra explains how the Congress party used to put up Muslim candidates in Muslim areas and Brahmins in Brahmin areas for gaining the votes of those areas. They would never have put up a Muslim candidate in an area where there are only three to four per cent Muslims. Opportunism is partially a response to the communalisation of society.¹⁵²

For the state, secularism has become to mean attempts at keeping violent conflicts between groups and bestowing equal privileges on each community. Again, this equal treatment has to be made compatible with the notion of equity, where the less privileged groups need to be favoured. Such an attempt has become even more difficult because the different communities feel that it is precisely by seizing political power that they would turn the distribution of the scarce resources in their favour. It is in this sense that the aggressive pursuit of self-interest of the individual on the one hand, and the strategic factors of political pressure groups on the other, have entered the political field in India.

¹⁴⁹ Kolodner 1995, 236.

¹⁵⁰ Panikkar 1991, 8-10.

¹⁵¹ Chandra 1991, 134-5.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 136.

While the basic ethical principles of religion that sought to provide harmony and security for the community are gradually disappearing, communalist forces are becoming as powerful or more powerful than the class forces in the shaping of development.¹⁵³

Thomas Blom Hansen concludes that Indian society is probably one of the most politicised societies in the world. It happened because the democratic order that the leaders of India fought for released new, assertive and uncontrollable social identities that over time produced a form of modernity –pluralist, creative, chaotic and brutal at the same time.¹⁵⁴

Hindu Nationalism

The Hindu nationalist movement, led by the political Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the militant organisation Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), has grown into the most powerful cluster of political and cultural movements in India. Hindu nationalism evolved to the ruling ideology of contemporary India in the 1990s when the BJP emerged as a powerful party in Indian politics. Hindu nationalism has evolved from a cultural organisation into a mass political party, not only in the political life but also in the everyday life of the people. It is contesting Indian secularism because it seeks for a Hindu nation, which can only be created when the Hindu majority adapts the Hindutva ideology. This majoritarianism combines well-established paternalist and xenophobic discourses with democratic and universalist discourses on rights and entitlements, and has successfully articulated desires and anxieties in both urban and rural India.¹⁵⁵ This was highlighted in the demolition of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya in 1992, when the Hindu nationalists pulled down a mosque after a populist campaign because it was assumedly on the same spot as a former temple of a Hindu god.

Hindu nationalism has been explained as cultural and historical nationalism. In Partha Chatterjee's view it is an entirely modern, rational and historicist idea. As many other modern ideologies, it allows for a central role of the state in the modernisation of society and strongly defends the state's unity and sovereignty. Its appeal is not religious

¹⁵³ Bharadwaj 1991, 222-3.

¹⁵⁴ Blom Hansen 1999, 59.

but political.¹⁵⁶ Even though Hindu nationalist leaders might appropriate religious symbols and rituals, the Hindu nationalist movement can hardly be considered a 'religious' campaign akin to the Islamist movement in the Middle East or the Protestant revival in the United States and Latin America. Instead it is like any other communalist movement, a diverse and disparate response to social, economic, and political dislocation in India.¹⁵⁷

Thomas Blom Hansen widens the definition made by Chatterjee by approaching Hindu nationalism from a constructivist perspective. In cultural nationalism the central idea is the belief that a community consists of one common culture. Cultural nationalism also emphasises constant strengthening of the community to prevent it from falling into pieces. It tries to create some sense to the world by building one, homogenous culture and recognising one nation as the nuclear of the nation.¹⁵⁸ According to Blom Hansen, Hindu nationalism has constructed itself inconsistently with the modern. Hansen argues that Hindu nationalism is above all an attempt to deal with the modern and to control it. Democracy also gives rise to a new imagination of society that makes new identities and demands possible, but also makes possible new forms of violent conflict and fantasies of power and xenophobias. He sees Hindu nationalism both as an expression of the politicisation of Indian public culture, and a reaction against it.¹⁵⁹

The term '*Hindu*' was coined over two thousand years ago to categorise a people living within the Indus valley, and was unrelated to religious belief or practice.¹⁶⁰ The word is Arabic-Persian in origin and it has etymologically the same meaning as the word India, which is Greek-Roman in origin.¹⁶¹ Notions of Hinduism as a unified religion, Hindu culture as a distinct culture, and Hindu as an adherent of Hinduism, are the products of orientalist scholars, missionaries and colonial administrations in the Indian subcontinent since the seventeenth century.¹⁶² The term was also changed to mean a religious

¹⁵⁵ Blom Hansen 1999, 4.

¹⁵⁶ Chatterjee 1994b, 110.

¹⁵⁷ Kolodner 1995, 244.

¹⁵⁸ Blom Hansen Thomas, Controlled Emancipation: Women and Hindu Nationalism. In the European Journal of Development Research, Vol. 6. No. 2 December 1994, 83. Quoted in Rikkilä, Leena, Ranta-Tyrkkö Satu, Hindunationalismi ja sukupuolen politiikka. In Kosmopolis 1/2000, 37.

¹⁵⁹ Blom Hansen 1999, 9.

¹⁶⁰ Kolodner 1995, 236-7.

¹⁶¹ Jaffrelot Christophe, The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India. Columbia University Press, New York 1996, 4.

¹⁶² Blom Hansen 1999, 65.

category and extended to include all those who were not either Muslims or Christians.¹⁶³ Hindu nationalists use this categorisation in their definition of Hindus as well.

From a Cultural Organisation to a Mass Political Party

While Indian religious groups have been involved in the politics as far back as the 17th or 18th centuries, there was no attempt to conduct a unified Hindu movement until the late 19th century.¹⁶⁴ The rise of Hindu nationalism has its roots firstly in the development of the Muslim identity and Muslim movement in the 19th century, and secondly in the struggle against the colonial power. In Northern India the strengthening of Hindu identity began in the cow protection movement, which demanded that the possession of the holy cows should be given to Hindus, because Muslims only killed them for the meat. For Hindus cows symbolise mothers, and therefore it is strongly forbidden to eat beef. The encounters turned into violence and the movements succeeded to mobilise a great number of Hindus. The significance of the movement for Hindu nationalists was that through it people either adapted a Hindu or a Muslim identity. From another perspective, the movements caused a division between Hindus and Muslims of Northern India.¹⁶⁵

The first Hindu nationalist movements were socio-religious, such as Brahma Samaj and Arya Samaj, which were both founded by high caste religious Hindus in the 1870s. These organisations were to a large extent set up against the British colonial state and Christian missions. Their primary concern was to maintain the basic elements of the traditional social order and culture of Hindus.¹⁶⁶ The organisations also advocated certain aspects of Western society, like public education, improvements in living conditions for 'untouchables' and the rights of women.¹⁶⁷ Arya Samaj had also included an anti-Muslim component.¹⁶⁸ At the same time, the tension between cultural preservation and modernisation was solved through the invention of a distant Golden Age and the reinterpretation of this ancient time in Indian history when the Aryans ruled

¹⁶³ Nandy et al. 1998, 58-9.

¹⁶⁴ Kolodner 1995, 234.

¹⁶⁵ Pandey Gyanendra, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi 1994, 162-176.

¹⁶⁶ Jaffrelot 1996, 11.

¹⁶⁷ Kolodner 1995, 235.

¹⁶⁸ Blom Hansen 1999, 72.

India. The Vedic tradition that derives from that era was revitalised to meet the challenge of the West.¹⁶⁹ Consequently, the medieval age, when the Mughals were the rulers of India, is described as the age of decadence and the modern period as the age of revival. This Hindu-centred view is being extended to almost all aspects of Indian history.¹⁷⁰

Soon after the establishment of these socio-religious Hindu organisations, politics began to merge into Hindu nationalism. Hindu politicians employed Hindu rhetoric to champion the nationalist cause of independence from the British. As the movement for independence grew stronger, and as Hindu nationalists began to realise the political benefits of employing religious symbols and ideology, they established various Hindu organisations. All-India Hindu Mahasabha,¹⁷¹ founded in 1920s, was the first politically-oriented Hindu communalist organisation.¹⁷² Nowadays one of the largest Hindu nationalist organisations, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)¹⁷³ was founded in 1925. The goal of the organisation was to train young men to resist the temptations of secular society. The RSS adapted some features of the Indian military communities, like military education and certain religiousness. Traditional physical practices have been part of kshatriya's¹⁷⁴ lifestyle everywhere in India. Only through education could Indians get a national consciousness strong enough. The RSS stayed strictly as a cultural and educational organisation during its first two decades.¹⁷⁵ Today the RSS is an umbrella organisation of 32 social, cultural and political organisations. It has been labelled as a chauvinist organisation, and the radically changing roles of Indian women are a key issue for the Hindu extremists. They have also begun to infiltrate academic, cultural, and government institutions. Some Indian historians are afraid to publish historical researches against the interpretation of Hindu extremists after being threatened by RSS members.¹⁷⁶

The final push for the RSS was a book by the leader of the organisation, Vinayak Domodar Savarkar. In the book, Savarkar coined the term '*Hindutva*' which became to

¹⁶⁹ Jaffrelot 1996, 11-3.

¹⁷⁰ Panikkar 1991, 3.

¹⁷¹ 'Great Hindu Council'.

¹⁷² Kolodner 1995, 235.

¹⁷³ 'Association of National Volunteers'.

¹⁷⁴ Kshatriya is the soldier caste.

¹⁷⁵ Jaffrelot 1996, 33-41.

mean a political ideology. In addition to the religious side Hindutva also comprises cultural, linguistic, social and political aspects.¹⁷⁷ Savarkar minimises the importance of religious criteria in the definition of a Hindu by claiming that Hinduism was only one of the attributes of 'Hinduness'. Hindu, Hindustan and Hindutva mean the whole civilisation and history. Hindutva does not mean the term but the history.¹⁷⁸

*“Hindutva is not a word but a history. Not only the spiritual or religious history of our people as at times it is mistaken to be by being confounded with the other cognate term, Hinduism. Hinduism is only a derivative, a fraction, a part of Hindutva....Hindutva embraces all the departments of thought and activity of the whole being of our Hindu race”.*¹⁷⁹

Savarkar's argument is that the Aryans, who settled in India in the early periods of history, already formed a nation, which is now embodied in Hindus. Hindutva, according to him, rests on three pillars, which are geographical unity, racial features and a common culture. Savarkar minimises the religious criteria in the definition of a Hindu by claiming that Hinduism was only one of the attributes of Hinduness.¹⁸⁰ Savarkar's notion of Hinduism concentrates on cultural criteria rather than on racial theory. It is in harmony with the traditional Brahminical world view, but at the same time it represents ethnic nationalism, which has borrowed many features from Western theories.¹⁸¹ Hindu nationalism is a political project. The aim of Hindutva, political Hinduism, is to change the traditional religious identity to a modern political identity. In this sense Hindu nationalism is different from Sikh nationalism, for example, because as a nation-building project it is non-religious.¹⁸² According to Savarkar it is necessary to create Hindu Rashtra, a state based on Hinduism. Its inhabitants are not expected to be Hindus in the first meaning of the word. The traditional Hindus are considered too feminine, irrational, pagans and anarchic, and that is why they are not able to run a state. The new Hindus are able to do this because they live in urban India and they understand the

¹⁷⁶ Power Carla, Gods in the Classroom. In Newsweek July 23 2001, 20-22.

¹⁷⁷ Bose 1998, 154.

¹⁷⁸ Jaffrelot 1996, 26-7.

¹⁷⁹ Savarkar V. D., Hindutva. Veer Savarkar Prakashan, Bombay 1969, 3-4. Quoted in Blom Hansen 1999, 77.

¹⁸⁰ Jaffrelot 1996, 25-27.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 31-32.

¹⁸² Rikkilä & Ranta-Tyrkkö 2000, 38.

Western civilisation and its values. The modern Hindus are able to adapt this information and re-interpret the Hindu tradition.¹⁸³

Mohandas 'Mahatma' Gandhi was assassinated on 31 January, 1948, by a radical Hindu nationalist and a member of the RSS. Gandhi became a victim of assassination because he had demanded that the Indian government pay compensation to Pakistan for its losses in the Partition and willing to settle the arguments with the Muslim leaders. In the months following Gandhi's murder, Jawaharlal Nehru showed his determination to deal with Hindu nationalists and banned the RSS until the leaders of the organisation had written a constitution for the organisation on democratic terms. The RSS was disbanded in July 1949.¹⁸⁴ This stemmed from Nehru's conviction that Mahatma's killing was only the first stage in a 'fairly widespread conspiracy'¹⁸⁵ to seize power, in which the prime mover was the RSS. In the 1950s the RSS began to strive actively to become a political organisation. The members of the RSS saw the Congress party as being too strongly based on Western ideas and concepts. They thought that the young state would need a new political party whose programme would build on a Hindu world view.¹⁸⁶

Since the independence in 1947, a number of other Hindu organisations have been established. Bharatiya Jana Sangh¹⁸⁷ party was founded in 1951 as the nuclear of the political activity of Hindu nationalism. But in the 1950s it did not have resources to become a major part of Indian politics.¹⁸⁸ Jana Sangh concentrated all its activity during the existence of the party to Northern India and strove to copy the election campaign of the Congress party. The problem with Jana Sangh's strategy was that it concentrated too much on the Hindibelt of the Northern India, and on topics like the status of Hindi, the question of the Hindu refugees from Kashmir and objection to Pakistan.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸³ Nandy et al. 1998, 63.

¹⁸⁴ Graham B. D, *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics. The Origins and Development of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh*. Cambridge University Press, New York 1990, 11-5.

¹⁸⁵ Nehru Jawaharlal, *Letters to the Chief Ministers 1947-1964*, vol.1 (G. Partasarathi ed.), Oxford University Press, Delhi 1985, 56-7, (letter of 5 Feb. 1948).

¹⁸⁶ Jaffrelot 1996, 86-91.

¹⁸⁷ 'Indian Peoples Party.'

¹⁸⁸ Graham 1990, 28, 262.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 251-253.

In 1964, the former leader of the RSS, Mahdav Sadashiv Golwalkar, established the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP)¹⁹⁰, an organisation dedicated to ensuring that Hindu values influenced the Indian polity. Its objectives were formulated in a pamphlet to consolidate “Hindu society,” to spread the Hindu values of life, to establish a network comprising all Hindus living outside India, and “to welcome back all who had gone out of the Hindu fold and to rehabilitate them as part and parcel of the Universal Hindu Society”.¹⁹¹ The integration of Hindu nationalists to the rest of society continued in the 1970s. In 1975 Indira Gandhi declared an Emergency in the country, prohibited the activity of political parties, imposed censorship, and jailed numerous opposition leaders.¹⁹² During the Emergency years 1975–77 the RSS stood against the limitation of civil rights like other democratic organisations. In the parliamentary elections after the Emergency in 1977, the Janata party, which was a coalition of four opposition parties¹⁹³, won the Congress party. In 1979 the Janata party split, but a new party called Bharatiya Janata Party¹⁹⁴ (BJP) was established to replace it.¹⁹⁵

The BJP became the major Hindu nationalist party in the course of 1980s. It is committed to the concept of ‘*One Nation, One People and One Culture*’. BJP’s conception of the Indian nation bases on the Hindu heritage, which should be culturally rooted on Hinduism and the Hindu civilisation. “The unique cultural and social diversity in India is woven into larger civilisational fabric by thousands of years of common living and common shared values, beliefs, customs, struggles, as well as symbols of high degree of unity without uniformity.”¹⁹⁶ The nationalist vision is not merely bound by the geographical or political identity of Bharat (India) but it also includes the cultural heritage, Hindutva. According to this view, minorities should accept the political supremacy of the Hindus and the central position of Hinduism in the national identity.¹⁹⁷ Hindu nationalists think that Nehru’s conception of secularism results in political appeasement of minorities, doing great damage to the fabric of national unity

¹⁹⁰ ‘World Hindu Association.’

¹⁹¹ Blom Hansen 1999, 101.

¹⁹² Kolodner 1995, 241.

¹⁹³ The Congress (O), the Socialist Party, the Bharatiya Lok Dal and the Jana Sangh. Jaffrelot 1996, 277-8, Blom Hansen 1999, 131.

¹⁹⁴ ‘Indian Peoples Party.’

¹⁹⁵ Nandy et al. 1998, 70-1.

¹⁹⁶ BJP, BJP Election Manifesto, Our National Identity 2002. WWW-Document BJP Central Office <<http://www.bjp.org/manifes/chap2.htm>>. A copy is in the possession of the writer.

¹⁹⁷ Malik Yogendra K., Singh V. B, Bharatiya Janata party: An Alternative to the Congress? In Asian Survey Vol. XXXII, No. 4, April 1992, 323.

in the process. It is not even serving the interests of minorities since they are used by politicians as vote banks, and as soon as the elections are over, their interests are forgotten. Such a strategy results in the isolation of the minorities, from the mainstream of national politics.¹⁹⁸ From 1984 on, the BJP began reverting to extreme Hinduism, mostly because the Congress Party and Rajiv Gandhi had got upper class Hindus on their side, who had traditionally been supporters of the BJP.¹⁹⁹ The BJP is trying to create a cohesive community, not on the basis of internal cohesiveness but on the basis of opposition to a perceived enemy. It is well aware that Hinduism does not have a clear structure or shape of homogeneity and therefore the only way to bring the Hindus together is to create a feeling of “us” and “them”. By demonising the Muslim minority, Hindu nationalist leaders aim to unify a diverse set of Hindus and guarantee their political support.²⁰⁰ In the 1984 state elections the BJP won only two seats out of 545 in Lok Sabha.²⁰¹ The rampant rise of Hindu nationalist politics started at the end of the 1980s. By 1989, they held 85 seats, and in 1991 they were already the second biggest party with 119 seats in Lok Sabha.²⁰² In the general elections of 1996, the BJP emerged for the first time as the largest political party in India.²⁰³ Furthermore, the BJP has not been the sole Hindu nationalist political organisation to win elections. The radical Shiv Sena²⁰⁴ won municipal elections in Bombay in 1985 and has extended its political power throughout other parts of the state of Maharashtra.²⁰⁵ It seems that a multi-party system during the 1990s has developed in India.

Hindu nationalism has employed religious symbols on numerous occasions for their political or economic purposes. The RSS, for example, consistently uses images of India with Hinduism’s Mother Goddess, and exhorts its followers to serve their Hindu nation with divine self-sacrifice. Additionally, it reinterprets traditional Hindu festivals in a nationalist context. However, the underlying messages in the ideology are essentially devoid of religious sentiment of philosophy. The ‘religion’ which Hindu nationalist leaders advance contains virtually none of the elements which are considered

¹⁹⁸ Malik & Singh 1992, 324.

¹⁹⁹ Nandy et al. 1998, 72.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 72-3.

²⁰¹ Juergensmeyer Mark, *The New Cold War?. Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State.* University of California Press, Berkeley 1993, 83.

²⁰² Thakur 1993, 645.

²⁰³ Blom Hansen 1999, 218.

²⁰⁴ ‘Army of Shiva.’ Shiva is a prominent Hindu deity.

²⁰⁵ Kolodner 1993, 236.

constitutive of an organised religion. Namely a doctrine, eschatology, and theories on morality and divinity.²⁰⁶ Some of the BJP leaders, among them BJP party leader and the second Prime Minister of the current government of India²⁰⁷ L. K. Advani, have publicly announced that they were irreligious and never went to temples. They posed for the educated urban middle classes as “the political Hindus” in a modern, secularised (but not secular) and nationalist sense of them.²⁰⁸

The rises of Hindu and Sikh nationalisms are partly linked up with each other. Before Sikh a terrorist campaign for a Sikh state started by Sikh leader Jarnail Bhindranwale, Hindus and Sikhs had mostly been living harmoniously together, but when Bhindranwale sent his supporters to destroy homes of Hindu families and kill Hindus, Hindus began to turn towards their own nationalist organisations to seek security. The pressure on Hindus had strengthened abroad as well. In Pakistan the majority’s religion, Islam, has been declared the state religion and the Hindu-Sikh minorities have been put aside in society. This has made Hindus second class citizens in Pakistan. For instance, one cannot get an governmental post, if one is not a Muslim. Similarly, in Sri Lanka, where Buddhism and the Sinhala language are the hallmarks of the majority nationalism, the Tamil speaking Hindu minority was forced to fight for its survival.²⁰⁹

The Ayodhya Case

The restoration of Hindu temples destroyed during the medieval Mughal period is the most emotive issue employed for communalist mobilisation. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bharatiya Janata Party have selected three sites, Ayodhya, Mathura and Varanasi²¹⁰, for initial agitation. The BJP leaders picked these sites for an obvious reason: they would arouse the religious sentiments of the devotees of Ram, Krishna and Shiva²¹¹. For the BJP, the agitation for the restoration of the temples is a means of

²⁰⁶ Heuze Gerard, Shiv Sena and ‘National’ Hinduism. In Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XXVII, No. 40, Oct.3 1992, 2258.

²⁰⁷ The government started its term of office in the autumn 2002.

²⁰⁸ Blom Hansen 1999, 174.

²⁰⁹ Malik & Vajpeyi 1989, 320-1.

²¹⁰ The holiest town in India. Formerly known as Benares. It is the town of Shiva, Krishna is considered to be born in Mathura.

²¹¹ Krishna and Shiva are the most worshipped gods in India. Ram, on the other hand, is the chosen god of the Hindu nationalists for their agitation. Before this, he was not one of the best known gods within Hinduism.

creating a sense of solidarity among the Hindus. It identifies the Muslims who had committed vandalism in the Hindu shrines as the enemy to fight against.²¹²

Before the situation in Ayodhya communalised, the town used to be a pilgrimage destination. Unlike the famous temples in some other Indian cities, in Ayodhya temples were open to all, Hindus and non-Hindus, high-caste Hindus and untouchables.²¹³ The beginning of the communalisation of the Ayodhya issue dates back to the year 1984, when during the high noon of Indira Gandhi's appeal to the Hindu majority, when the VHP announced a campaign to liberate the disputed site of Ramjanmabhumi in Ayodhya, allegedly conquered by the Babri Mosque. The demand was revived the following year. On February 1st, a district court decreed that the site was indeed that of a temple. This action, however, also precipitated massive protests in Muslim communities and organisations throughout India.²¹⁴ The situation got worse when in 1986 the government of Rajiv Gandhi promised the Hindus the right to practise their religion in Babri Masjid and in 1989 he held his election campaign speech near Ayodhya. By the end of the decade, the relation between Hindus and Muslims had worsened and led to clashes in the big cities of India.²¹⁵ Because a political solution turned out to be impossible, the Ayodhya issue was taken to courts of different levels. Most of the cases ended without a judgement. In 1994, the Supreme Court declared that a place of worship is a piece of property and as such is subject to normal civil laws which apply to any other piece of property.²¹⁶ The declaration remains very ambiguous.

In 1989, the RSS launched a well-planned campaign to mobilise people for their electoral purposes. It made a door-to-door collection of sanctified bricks in the villages for building up the Ram-temple in Ayodhya.²¹⁷ This would also make it possible to tap a "Hindu vote", even in the remotest villages, by associating the BJP with this ritual process. By this the BJP succeeded to better its position in the coming parliamentary elections and in 1991 it became the second biggest party in the parliament right after the

²¹² Panikkar 1991, 5.

²¹³ Elst Koenraad, *Ayodhya and After: Issues Before Hindu Society*. Voice of India, New Delhi 1991, 3.

²¹⁴ Bose 1998, 127-8.

²¹⁵ Thakur 1993, 649-50, 656.

²¹⁶ Dasgupta Swapan, Jois M. Rama, Jaitley Arun, Gupta S. P., Elst Koenraad, Shourie Arun, *The Ayodhya Reference: Supreme Court Judgement and Commentaries*. Voice of India, New Delhi 1995, vii-xi.

²¹⁷ Nandy et al. 1998, 94.

Congress party.²¹⁸ In September 1990, the party leader L. K. Advani launched a nationwide campaign in support of the movement for the construction of a temple for Ram in Ayodhya. He engaged in a 10 000 km *ratha yatra*, chariot journey, in a car painted to look like a war chariot, calling upon people to demonstrate Ram worship.²¹⁹

An urge for the communalisation of the Ayodhya issue was the Mandal²²⁰ Commission Report. This report had advocated affirmative action on behalf of the so-called 'other backward classes' (OBC's)²²¹. The Mandal Report, calculating the OBC's to about 52 per cent of India's population, recommended for them a reservation of 27 per cent of Central Government employment. The implementation of the report threatened the employment of the higher caste Hindus, who so far had been the entitled group in government employment because of their education. People of the lower castes or casteless people are considered by higher caste Hindus to be pollutive, and therefore they were not welcomed to the working places of the higher caste Hindus.²²² During the 1980s and 1990s the unemployment has risen and become a threat to educated people as well. Therefore Hindus reacted strongly against the recommendations of the Mandal report. The Mandal Commission Report was implemented anyway on 7 August 1990 by the Prime Minister V. P. Singh, leader of the Janata Dal²²³ Party.²²⁴

The announcement provoked a violent anti-Mandal agitation by upper-caste youth and students among the middle classes of urbanised north India. By bringing caste divisions and explosive caste conflicts to the forefront of national politics, the Mandal controversy had potentially grave implications for the long-term project of the Hindutva movement.²²⁵ The acceptance of the Mandal Commission recommendations also threatened to split the political base of the BJP. The BJP had been working to expand its upper-caste support by utilising the ideology of Hindu nationalism. Its targets had switched to the numerically strong and politically mobilised backward castes. The

²¹⁸ Jaffrelot 1996, 384-5, 449.

²¹⁹ Thakur 1993, 653.

²²⁰ Mandal is the metaphor for a variety of divisiveness.

²²¹ OBC's are distinguished from the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The latter, on account of their constituency, about 22,5 % of the country's population, had already been allotted 22,5% of jobs in all services and public sector undertakings of the Central Government.

²²² Nandy et al. 1998, 72.

²²³ 'Peoples Party.' Singh had founded it for overturn Congress. (Jaffrelot 1996, 378)

²²⁴ Tambiah 1998, 436-7.

²²⁵ Bose 1998, 142.

Mandal report pitted these two groups against each other.²²⁶ The BJP had no choice but to relaunch a campaign called Mandir, because it was threatened with a loss of political initiative on account of the Mandal report. The Mandir campaign was supposed to bring the entirety of the undifferentiated Hindu community together, keeping out only the Muslims, whose patriotism is suspect on account of their supposed extra-territorial loyalties.²²⁷ The central point in the Mandir campaign was to restore some Hindu temples which had been destroyed during the Mughal era, including the Ram-temple in Ayodhya.

On 30 October 1990, a few thousand men, largely members or sympathisers of ultra-Hindu organisations belonging to the RSS, VHP or BJP, converged here in response to a call given by militant section of their leadership to liberate the “real” and “only “ site of Lord Ram’s birth. This site, they claimed, was the same on which the Babri Masjid of Ayodhya stood and where an ancient Ram temple had been destroyed in 1528 by the Mughal Emperor Babar’s court. Whether there was a temple or not is still under discussion. There are opinions on both sides. Historians from Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi say that there is no evidence that there has been a temple before the mosque. But the BJP defends this by saying that the situation revolves around faith and belief, not around facts.²²⁸ Liberation meant pulling down the existing structure of the Babri Masjid and constructing a Ram temple exactly on the same spot to avenge the injustice done to the Hindus in the past. This first attempt to destroy the mosque was followed by a second one, which took place on 2 November, but both attempts failed.²²⁹ These attempts were followed by communalist rioting in Jaipur (Rajasthan) and in Ahmedabad (Gujarat).²³⁰

True to Indian practices, the problem at Ramjanmabhumi²³¹ did not die out or was not resolved in earlier incidents. It began to simmer again towards the middle of the year 1992. The reason for this sudden spurt of activity was BJP’s lack of success in the federal state of Uttar Pradesh (UP). The attack that led to the demolition took place on

²²⁶ Nandy et al. 1998, 72-3.

²²⁷ Muralidharan 1991, 197.

²²⁸ Kumar, Prabhat, For Hindus, Ayodhya is a Question of Faith 2002. WWW-Document BJP Central Office. <<http://www.bjp.org/philo.htm>>. A copy is in the possession of the writer.

²²⁹ Nandy et al. 1998, 5-6.

²³⁰ Ibid., 110, 123.

the 6th of December 1992 when the Hindu crowd, gathered in Ayodhya, rushed to the mosque armed with hammers, iron rods, bamboos and shovels. They were pelting the police with stones and bricks. Nearly all Muslims in the town had left their homes before 6 December to be safe, and others fled after hearing the news that the Babri Masjid had fallen. Those who were not able to escape in time, died. The destruction was systematic and the Hindus got help from the UP police and the local Hindus.²³² The manner and speed of the destruction of the mosque alone suggest that the episode was more than a spontaneous surge by an excited crowd. The demolition of the mosque plunged India into the worst outbreak of communalist violence since the partition, with 1700 dead and 5500 injured. Thousands of Muslims were trying to escape the violence even in cosmopolitan cities like Bombay and Calcutta.²³³

After the demolition, Prime Minister Narasimha Rao dismissed the BJP government in the federal states of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh, and imposed central rule. The dismissals attracted considerable criticism. They were seen as an alibi for the inaction of the Congress Party which did not have an idea of how to confront the political challenge of the BJP.²³⁴ The main leaders of the Ramjanmabhumi campaign were arrested, and this included BJP leader Advani. Several Hindu nationalist organisations were also banned.²³⁵ The Speaker of the parliament needed to adjourn the parliament for a week because of constant distractions in the plenary sessions by the BJP members.²³⁶ When the parliament returned to New Delhi, it wrote a resolution on the Ayodhya debacle.

“This house strongly and unequivocally condemns the desecration and demolition of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya by and at the instigation of forces represented among others by VHP, RSS, and the Bajrang Dal, which has caused communal violence in the country. Such act of vandalism was carried out not only in violation of the orders of the Supreme Court but amounted to an attack on the secular foundations of

²³¹ Ramjanmabhumi means the birthplace of Ram. The Ramjanmabhumi Movement is the movement of Hindu nationalists for the restoration of the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

²³² Nandy et al. 1998, 187, 193-8.

²³³ Thakur 1993, 645.

²³⁴ Ibid., 657-8.

²³⁵ Parikh Manju, The Debacle at Ayodhya. In Asian Survey, Vol. XXXIII, No. 7, July 1993, 674-5.

*our country. This House expresses its anguish at the happening and wishes to reiterate its resolve that it will ceaselessly endeavour to uphold the secular and democratic traditions of our country and for the maintenance of the Rule of Law. This House conveys its sympathies and condolences to all victims of the tragic incidents which have been caused consequent upon the sacrilege at Ayodhya and demands from the Government all necessary steps to rehabilitate the affected people. It appeals to the people of the country to maintain peace and communal harmony.*²³⁷

In January 1993, the government proclaimed a presidential ordinance to acquire almost 68 acres of land in and around the Ramjanmabhumi-Babri Masjid complex in Ayodhya. The land is to be handed over to two trusts, one to build a temple and the other a mosque.²³⁸

The demolished Babri Masjid brought into sharper focus the estranged relations between Hindus and Muslims in India today. Moreover, the demolition was widely believed by non-religious people to be a frontal attack on the secular Constitution of India. The ferocity with which militant Hindus attacked and contested the Constitution left many people wondering whether believers and non-believers could live together at all. It was earlier thought that the ideology of secularism enabled people with different religions and faiths to coexist peacefully.²³⁹ The demolition of the mosque did not only mobilise the Hindus but also the Muslims of the subcontinent. An Indian journalist has noticed how the religious identity of educated Indian Muslims has strengthened. Many Muslims that before were agnostics or atheists now speak the language of religion.²⁴⁰

²³⁶ Lok Sabha Debates (English Version), Fifth session (Tenth Lok Sabha), Publisher: Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi 1993, Tenth Series, Vol. XVII, No. 12, Wednesday, December 9, 1992, column 7.

²³⁷ Lok Sabha Debates (English Version), Fifth session (Tenth Lok Sabha), Publisher: Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi 1993, Tenth Series, Vol. XVII, No. 13, Wednesday, December 16, 1992, column 1928-9.

²³⁸ Thakur 1993, 662.

²³⁹ Bhargava Rajeev, What is Secularism For? In Bhargava Rajeev (ed.), Secularism and Its Critics. Oxford University Press, Delhi 1998b, 486.

²⁴⁰ Mukhopadhyay Nilanjan, The Demolition: India at The Crossroads. HarperCollins Publishers India Ltd., New Delhi 1994, 354.

Sikh Nationalism

The breakdown of the political order and the rise of communalism in India's economically and strategically important Punjab state, home for most of the country's Sikhs, has taken thousands of lives and resulted in the suspension of democracy and constitutional rights in the state. The crisis began with a political agitation by leaders of the mainstream Sikh political party in the early 1980s to secure greater rights for the state and for the Sikh community. The agitation turned violent in 1983 and 1984, in the face of a stalemate in talks between the Akali party leaders and the central government headed by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. The political deadlock gave the initiative to militants who employed violent tactics to promote their own vision of Punjab as an exclusively Sikh entity.²⁴¹

The crisis culminated in two shattering events: the bloody June 1984 assault on armed militants in the Golden Temple in Amritsar, the holiest centre of the Sikh religion; and the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in October 1984 by Sikh members of her bodyguard, in revenge for the Golden Temple action. The cycle of violence continued with the subsequent massacre of thousands of Sikhs in New Delhi and other cities by Hindu mobs, allegedly in some cases with the active participation of Congress (I)²⁴² politicians and with complicity of the police. Sikhs are contesting Indian secularism by claiming an independent Punjab or Khalistan to become the land of Sikhs.

The Way to a Sikh Identity

Sikhism as a religion came into being in the fifteenth century, as a protest against the degeneration which had crept into Hinduism. It is a syncretic creed combining elements of both Hinduism and Islam. Its mystical, monotheistic and egalitarian tenets were laid down by Guru Nanak, the first of ten Sikh gurus, who was born in 1469.²⁴³ His

²⁴¹ There is a 38 per cent Hindu minority in Punjab.

²⁴² The Congress Party split in two in 1969. Congress (I) refers to the Congress Party under the leadership of Indira Gandhi, and Congress (R), for requisitioned and later for ruling party, refers to the dominant Congress Party.

²⁴³ Singh Amarjit, *The Reorganisation of the States in India: A Case Study of the Punjab*. Claremont Graduate School and University Center, Ph.D. 1967, 38, Stukenberg 1995, 26.

followers were known as *sikhs*, learners.²⁴⁴ After Guru Nanak's death, Sikhism divided because of a heritage quarrel. It was in the nineteenth century that a powerful Sikh kingdom developed in the area watered by the Indus river and its tributaries (Punjab means, literally "five rivers"), and at that time many sectarian groups started to emphasise the distinct identity of the Sikhs. But the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1839 caused the downfall of the Sikh kingdom, and its annexation to the British Empire in 1849.²⁴⁵

The rise and spread of the Hindu revivalist movement in Punjab further forced the Sikhs to turn inward and strengthen their own subnational identity. Since then Hindu and Sikh nationalisms have been closely interwoven. In the 1870s, the Sikh identity got stronger when the modern consolidation of the Keshdhari version of Sikh identity separated from Sahajdhari Sikhs.²⁴⁶ Keshdhari or Khalsa Sikhs emphasised the difference between Hindus and Sikhs whereas Sahajdhari Sikhs considered Sikhism a sect of Hinduism and called themselves Sikh-Hindus.²⁴⁷ The identity was further strengthened by Sikh Khalsa college whose aim was to teach Sikh history and generate Sikh employment in Punjab. Khalsa college, then speeded up the further establishment of Sikh institutions.²⁴⁸ Eventually, a Sikh body called Shiromani Gurdwara Prabhandhak Committee (SGPC - the peak Sikh temple management body) was established in 1920. The SGPC provided material and organisational resources to the Sikh political elites to mobilise the Sikh public into a community distinct from that of the Hindus.²⁴⁹ The Sikh party, Akali Dal, was founded at the same time to become the political dimension of the SGPC.²⁵⁰ Through these organisations the 'new' identity was cemented and institutionalised. Before the year 1947, the SGPC and the Akali Dal, whose participation in national politics was largely interlinked with the management and control of Sikh temples or gurdwaras, had a non-violent struggle against the government for the control of Sikh temples. The British needed to consent to the SGPC in 1922 after Mahatma Gandhi had given his support for its demands on the management of the gurdwaras. The Akali Dal

²⁴⁴ Jeffrey 1986, 52.

²⁴⁵ Singh A. 1967, 38.

²⁴⁶ Chima Jugdep S, The Punjab Crisis: Governmental Centralisation and Akali-Center Relations. In Asian Survey, Vol. XXXIV, No. 10, October 1994, 848.

²⁴⁷ Kapur 1986, 2, 8-9, 26.

²⁴⁸ Grewal J. S, The Sikhs of the Punjab. Cambridge New History of India II-3, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1990, 145-9.

²⁴⁹ Nayar, Baldev Raj, Minority Politics in the Punjab. Princeton University Press, Princeton 1966, 176, Stukenberg 1995, 48.

and the SGPC gained support in nearly all sections of the Sikh community, which made the Akali Dal a movement of masses.²⁵¹ They were particularly successful in the rural areas.²⁵² After the agreement on the management of the temples had been reached, Sikhs turned their political concentration on the establishment of their own electorates, and later on their own state.²⁵³

The partition of the subcontinent split Punjab down the middle and caused some 2 million Sikhs to abandon their homes in West Punjab, now part of Pakistan. Sikhs from Pakistan settled primarily in the Indian part of Punjab and in nearby New Delhi. The partition and its aftermath left a legacy of bitterness and had a negative effect on Hindu-Sikh relations. During the partition hundreds of thousands of people died.²⁵⁴ Sikhs saw Muslims achieve a separate state (Pakistan), while they ended up as a minority in the new East Punjab state.²⁵⁵ Hindus occupied the political professions in the central administration, and they refused to form a Sikh homeland as Hindus were the majority in the state. There was also an aggressive communalist mentality displayed by some Punjabi Hindus.²⁵⁶ Already in 1944, a Sikh Conference had suggested that a committee be established to look into the possibility of creating an independent Sikh state. The Akali leader, Tara Singh, declared that Sikhs, too, were a nation and they would not be slaves of Pakistan or Hindustan.²⁵⁷ Earlier British policies, such as the preference for Khalsa Sikhs in the army and the police recruitment²⁵⁸, higher investments in infrastructure, and intervention in land tenure relationships, had accentuated rivalries among the main religious and caste groups. The partition accentuated this tendency.²⁵⁹

In the 1950s and 1960s, Sikh politics came to revolve around the demand for Punjabi Suba (Punjabi state), a linguistically determined entity compact enough to give the

²⁵⁰ Stukenberg 1995, 49-50.

²⁵¹ Grewal 1990, 159-63, 175-6, Kapur 1986, 156-7.

²⁵² Kapur 1986, 140.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 72-7.

²⁵⁴ Report no. 38 from the Embassy of Finland in New Delhi to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs on 4 June 1956, 'Sikhit'. 100 Intia; Sisäpolitiikka v. 1951-63. Archives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Helsinki (UMA).

²⁵⁵ Stukenberg 1995, 57-8.

²⁵⁶ Grewal 1990, 182-3.

²⁵⁷ Kapur 1986, 206.

²⁵⁸ In the first world war half of the men (100 000) in Indian army were from Punjab. Kapur 1986, 61.

²⁵⁹ Stukenberg 1995, 37-9.

Sikhs a majority²⁶⁰. The demand paralleled those of other linguistic groups throughout India, but it met with stiffer resistance.²⁶¹ The State Reorganisation Commission submitted its report in 1955 stating that the majority of the Punjabis were opposed to the demand for a Punjabi-speaking state. The most crucial part of this ‘majority’ was actually the articulate section of Hindus in the Punjabi-speaking zone.²⁶² The Akali Dal responded to the refusal with violence. Protestors used the Golden Temple as their headquarters, but the police entered the temple and arrested 10,000 protestors.²⁶³ After this in 1956, the Akali Dal managed to negotiate a scheme which came to be known as the Regional Formula. Punjab did not become a Punjabi-speaking state, but it could concentrate on the promotion of the religious, educational, cultural, social and economic interests of the Sikhs.²⁶⁴ By 1963, several linguistic- based states and federal territories had been created through territorial reorganisations, but Punjab was not one of them because of the Hindu majority.²⁶⁵

In March 1966, the Congress Working Group recommended to the Union Government that a state with Punjabi as a state language be created. In reaction there were strikes, murders and all other acts of violence, mainly committed by Hindu nationalists.²⁶⁶ The Parliament nevertheless decided in favour of the reorganisation of Punjab on a linguistic basis.²⁶⁷ The eastern districts of the previous Punjab state, which were predominantly Hindu in religion and Hindi-speaking in language, were split off to create the new states of Haryana and Himanchal Pradesh. Sikhs became the majority in the state of Punjab with a population of 60.2%, and Hindus a minority (37.6%).²⁶⁸ But demographic balance still did not favour the main Sikh communalist party, the faction-ridden Akali Dal. The nationally dominant Congress Party remained also the strongest party in

²⁶⁰ Most Sikhs speak Punjabi as their mother tongue Punjabi is written in Gurumukhi script, which is different from the Devanagari script of Hindi.

²⁶¹ Grewal 1990, 187-9.

²⁶² Rai Satya M, Punjab Since Partition. Durga Publications, Delhi 1986, 292.

²⁶³ Jeffrey 1986, 106, Wallace Paul, Religious and Ethnic Politics: Political Mobilisation in Punjab. In Frankel Francine & Rao M. S. A. (ed.) Dominance and State Power in Modern India vol. 2, Oxford University Press, Delhi 1990, 439.

²⁶⁴ Grewal 1990, 191-3.

²⁶⁵ Singh A. 1967, 138.

²⁶⁶ Report no. R-292/57 from the Embassy of Finland in New Delhi to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs on 14 March 1966, 'Vastatuulta Tashkentin hengellä'. Kashmirin kysymys; Intian ja Pakistanin selkkaus 7 D2, (UMA).

²⁶⁷ Grewal 1990, 204.

²⁶⁸ Wallace 1990, 445 (Table 13).

Punjab.²⁶⁹ The Akali Dal web-page comments the reorganisation followingly: “Punjabi Subi was carved out to appease a small band of selfish and treacherous; power hungry and greedy; and the anti-Sikh Akali Dal leaders”. The web site is very critical against the leaders of Akali Dal. The party claims on the page that the leaders have betrayed the Sikh nation by signing contracts with the Congress party and by not defending the Sikh nation enough.²⁷⁰ The Akali Dal sees that the formation of Punjabi Suba is still unfinished. It is seeking for an independent state for the Sikh nation, and the leaders have not acted effectively for this aspiration. Even the attack on the Golden Temple and the massacre of Sikhs are proofs for the need of Khalistan, an independent state for the Sikhs.²⁷¹

In the 1970s, Akali Dal split into two factions, the dominant group led by the Akali Dal’s president, Harchand Singh Longowal, and the other led by the Akali leader and former president of the party, Jagdev Singh Talwandi. The two groups at times joined forces, but the campaign was marked by a rivalry between them, which led to an escalation and contradiction in demands and statements.²⁷² Several developments in the 1970s and early 1980s caused the Akali-led campaign, for essentially political and economic goals, to shift towards an emphasis on demands with fundamentalist religious overtones, purely for the benefit of the Sikhs, and towards the emergence of a violent secessionist movement.²⁷³ This can be seen in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution from the year 1973, which states the demand for a Sikh nation and calls for a dramatic devolution of power from the centre to the states.²⁷⁴

Is Sikh communalism then also nationalism? Can a religious community be a nation? The Sikh movement started as a fundamentalist campaign protecting its own religion and later demanded political power and the right for an own state. However, of the many Indian religious communities, the Sikhs are one of the communities that possess the strongest sense of of their own identity and community. In my opinion the Sikh

²⁶⁹ Stukenberg 1995, 60-5.

²⁷⁰ The Akali Dal, Opportunism – Thy Name is Akali Dal. 1998-2000. WWW-Document Akali Dal <<http://www.akalidal.org/intro.htm>>. A copy is in the possession of the writer.

²⁷¹ Malik Yogendra K., The Akali Party and Sikh Militancy. In Asian Survey Vol. XXVI, No. 3, March 1986, 350-2.

²⁷² Kapur 1986, 218-9.

²⁷³ Malik 1986, 350-2.

²⁷⁴ Telford Hamish, The Political Economy of Punjab: Creating Space for Sikh Militancy. In Asian Survey Vol. XXXII, No. 11, November 1992, 971.

separatism meets the conditions for a nation. The Sikh community is a new entity, a socio-political community in modernity, which was imagined as a continuity from a hoary past and tradition during the nineteenth and twentieth century. They are a group of people living in a well-defined geographical area, possessing an own distinct and separate identity that emphasises a common language, visible cultural and religious symbols, as the cloth tied around the head of the male Sikhs, and a common religion.

Sikh communalism is also called Khalsa nationalism. All the male converts to the Khalsa adopted the surname Singh, or lion, which is an important part of the separate Sikh identity. During the agitation campaign in the twentieth century, Sahajdhari Sikhs had either adopted Khalsa tenets or chosen to be regarded as Hindus.²⁷⁵ But despite the development of a Sikh consciousness and the drawing of communal boundaries between Sikhs and Hindus over several decades, there remained much in common between the Sikhs and a large body of Punjabi Hindus: a common identification with the same caste groups, a shared spoken language and culture, common social and historical traditions and intermarriage. Sikh communal separation based essentially on religious differentiation.²⁷⁶

Operation Bluestar and the Assassination of Indira Gandhi

Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale gained power in the beginning of the 1980s and became the leader of Sikh extremist movement. He studied in a small centre for Sikh orthodoxy and religious teaching. In 1971 he became the head priest of the institution. From the outset of his new responsibilities Bhindranwale emerged as a rigid champion of Sikh orthodoxy. He toured Sikh villages and baptised hundreds, and paid special attention to the traditional arms of a Sikh man and rapidly assumed the role of a militant messiah.²⁷⁷ Bhindranwale wanted to integrate Punjab under Sikhism, and for this purpose, he occupied the Golden Temple of Amritsar, the holiest shrine of Sikhs, and made it a fortress making use of its immunity as a sacred place. The supporters of Bhindranwale served him and the faith by going on with the mission of killing Hindus. Motor-scooter commandos drove to the villages and shot people, buses were stopped and the Hindus in them killed. The violence started to escalate.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁵ Kapur 1986, xiv, 4, 32.

²⁷⁶ Ibid, 199.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 226.

²⁷⁸ Stukenberg 1995, 86, 94.

The impetus for Operation Bluestar is in the year 1980, when the central government declared President's Rule in Punjab and eight other states whose governments were still dominated by parties other than Indira Gandhi's own. This dissolved the states' legislative assemblies and required new elections. In Punjab, new elections managed to bring a government to power that achieved Mrs Gandhi's trust.²⁷⁹ In the first half of the 1980s, the Congress party helped Bhindranwale gain political power, hoping that his religious influence among the Sikh masses would be greater than that of the Akalis. In a way, there was a common interest between the Congress party and the Bhindranwale group, as both sought to destroy the power base of moderate Akali leadership. For Mrs Gandhi, this would have paved the way for capturing Hindu votes in North India.²⁸⁰ But Bhindranwale turned against his promoters to overcome their hegemony, and outdid the Akalis with his strong campaign for the acceptance of the religious and economic demands. In early 1984, Bhindranwale broke with the Akalis; by then he had become a phenomenon in his own right.²⁸¹

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi wanted to prevent the possibility of Bhindranwale achieving more political power, by undertaking an attack against the Akalis and Bhindranwale. The excuse for the assault was found in a peaceful road blockage organised by the Akali Dal. They wanted to prevent the movement of foodgrains out of Punjab by blocking roads and rail traffic as a protest against the economic policy of the central government. Indira Gandhi made the decision to attack on her own and kept her plans in secret until the end.²⁸² She held a speech on the situation in Punjab on June 2, 1984, but she did not refer in any way to the attack, which took place a couple of days later. Instead, Indira Gandhi suggested that the Akali Dal sit at the negotiations table with her to find a solution, because in a democracy the right and only way to settle problems is through discussions.²⁸³ According to India's noted journalist, Khushwant

²⁷⁹ Leaf Murray J., The Punjab Crisis. In *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXV, No. 5, May 1985, 485.

²⁸⁰ Stukenberg 1995, 86-8, 98.

²⁸¹ Madan 1997, 89-90.

²⁸² Singh Khushwant, *A History of the Sikhs. Volume II: 1839-1988*. Oxford University Press, New Delhi 1991, 358-9.

²⁸³ Gandhi Indira, *Selected Speeches and Writings 1982-84 Volume V*. Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi 1986, 76.

Singh, the President of India, Zail Singh, was kept in the dark about the plans for an attack on the Temple.²⁸⁴

The attack, called Operation Bluestar, began on June 5, 1984. First the water and electricity supply to the Golden Temple was stopped. The next day the army entered the Golden Temple in Amritsar and blindly killed all the people who came in their way. Several other gurdwaras in Punjab were also taken over by the army. Most of the victims were innocent pilgrims, including women and children. The estimations of the casualties rise up to 5000 civilians.²⁸⁵ The Times reported that all the bodies had been quickly cremated, and therefore it is hard to estimate the real number of casualties.²⁸⁶ An Amritsar witness, a journalist of the Associated Press, puts the death toll at 1000, of which 800 were militants and 200 soldiers.²⁸⁷

A month after Operation Bluestar, the government published its version of the events in the *White Paper on the Punjab Agitation*. In addition to the one-sided narration, it had many factual inaccuracies. Its main theme was that the Akali agitation generated Bhindranwale's terrorism and, since Akali could not control it, the government had no option but to stamp it out. The White Paper put the entire responsibility for Bhindranwale's misdeeds on the Akalis without mentioning the government's role in building Bhindranwale up. The most glaring inaccuracy in the report was its estimate of human casualties and the damage to sacred property. According to the report, the 'civilian-terrorists' killed 554 persons. Army casualties were estimated at 92. The government never bothered to publish the names of those killed, nor anything to refute the evidence that quite a large number of those captured were executed in cold blood.²⁸⁸ A member of the parliament criticised the White Paper in a parliament discussion by saying that it was only a collection and a compilation of some of the reports from newspapers.²⁸⁹ According to Jugdep S. Chima, the real reasons why Prime Minister Gandhi ordered the army to attack the Golden Temple were that she wanted to end the perceived Khalistan terrorist threat, as well as the intensified Akali mobilisation and the

²⁸⁴ Singh K. 1991, 359.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 357-71. The Times, Monday June 4, 1984 - Friday June 8, 1984.

²⁸⁶ The Times, Saturday June 9, 1984.

²⁸⁷ The Times, Tuesday June 12, 1984.

²⁸⁸ Singh K. 1991, 369-71.

²⁸⁹ Lok Sabha Debates. Fifteenth Session, session Publisher: Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi 1993, Seventh Series, Vol. XLIX, No. 3, Wednesday, July 25, 1984, column 255-6.

increased level of political violence in Punjab, but also that she feared the possibility of losing the elections in four predominantly Hindu Northern states in the coming months.²⁹⁰ Indira Gandhi herself said in an interview, which she gave three weeks before her death, that the reason for the problems in Punjab lay in the politics of the Akali Dal. The Akalis did not fight against the terrorism and therefore the militants were able to intrude into the temple and make it a storage for their arsenal.²⁹¹

After the operation, Sikhs came to be treated as suspects, harassed and discriminated against. Since the army was ordered to stamp out terrorism, it continued with another operation called Woodrose. Village after village was surrounded, the houses of Sikhs were searched for arms, and Sikh young men were taken for questioning, beaten up and tortured. Far from stamping out terrorism and the feeling of separatism, operations Bluestar and Woodrose gave rise to feelings of alienation and turned hundreds of young Sikh men and women into terrorists. Many of them crossed the border into Pakistan and made it a base for their operations. They returned with sophisticated arms, and they were able to perpetrate acts of terrorism because after the army brutalities the peoples sympathies were with them.²⁹² On October 1, 1984, the army withdrew from the Golden Temple. It was handed over to the SGPC and the reconstruction started. The army action widened the gulf between the Hindus who had welcomed it and the Sikhs who had not, and accelerated the movement for Khalistan.²⁹³

After Operation Bluestar, Indira Gandhi became the main target of terrorism because she had demolished the most sacred place of the Sikhs, the Golden Temple. On 31st of October, Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her two closest bodyguards, who were both Sikhs. She had been advised to change the bodyguards after Operation Bluestar, because they had both had contacts with Sikh extremists, but Indira Gandhi had refused to do so saying that she will count on the loyalty of her bodyguards. On the same day after the assassination, president Zial Singh designated Indira Gandhi's son Rajiv Gandhi as the next Prime Minister of India.²⁹⁴ The Indian intellectual Salman Rushdie criticised the designation of Rajiv Gandhi after the assassination by writing that "The

²⁹⁰ Chima 1994, 854.

²⁹¹ Interview with Indira Gandhi by Jari Lindholm, *Intia pysyy yhtenäisenä*. In *Helsingin Sanomat*, Saturday November 3, 1984.

²⁹² Singh K. 1991, 374-6.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 378, Grewal 1990, 228-9.

cloud of courtiers enveloped Mrs. Gandhi, and it would be a great advance if it were now to lose power. For this reason it seems to me quite wrong for Congress (I) to choose, as its new leader, a man as untried, and as unsuited for high office as Rajiv Gandhi; it is time for India to assert, and for its ruling party to demonstrate, that the nation is not owned by any one family, no matter how illustrious. The Queen is dead; *vive la république.*"²⁹⁵

The universality of Sikh resentment was reflected in a spontaneous celebration of the assassination of Prime Minister in the towns and villages of Punjab. An equally spontaneous anger over her assassination resulted in violence in Delhi and in some other cities in India.²⁹⁶ 'Sikhs were sought out and burned to death. Children were killed, shops looted, cars burnt and markets and houses destroyed. Trains were stopped, and Sikhs were picked out and murdered.'²⁹⁷

The release of Akali politicians in 1985 began a renewed and intensified phase of competition for leadership among them. Having voluntarily surrendered to the military authorities during the confrontation at the Golden Temple, they now sought to establish their credibility within their community by rapidly adopting militant postures. Sant Harchand Singh Longowal refused to condemn Sikh terrorists and the assassins of Indira Gandhi. He also expressed his sympathy and support for the families of those killed during Operation Bluestar. His former rival, Jagdev Singh Talwandi, also became a supporter of Sikh militancy.²⁹⁸

There was an attempt to solve the crisis in July 1985, with an accord (Rajiv Gandhi-Sant Longowal Accord) between the government and the leader of the mainline Sikh Akali Dal party on the termination of Akali agitation. Rajiv's politics of accommodation and reconciliation had won. However, a complete restoration of normalcy in the state was not possible until it was brought under the control of a popularly elected government. In September 1985, state elections brought a Sikh government to power in

²⁹⁴ Stukenberg 1995, 104.

²⁹⁵ Rushdie Salman, *After Indira, an Awakening or the Whirlwind?* In *The Times*, Thursday November 1, 1984, 16.

²⁹⁶ Grewal 1990, 229.

²⁹⁷ Akbar M. J, *India. The Siege Within.* Penguin Books, Harmondsworth 1985, 109.

²⁹⁸ Kapur 1986, 238-9.

Punjab.²⁹⁹ Just before the election, Sant Longowal was assassinated by Sikh extremists because of his moderate politics.³⁰⁰ Throughout 1986 and early 1987, the elected moderate Sikh government (headed by Surjit Singh Barnala) suffered a steady erosion of authority within the Sikh community and a progressive loss of confidence on the part of the central government. The collapse of the political settlement stemmed from the failure of Rajiv Gandhi's government. It faced problems of its own with a Hindu backlash, because Hindus were acting as the brakes in the agreement. In May 1987, amidst escalating violence and a rise in the number of militants, Rajiv Gandhi suspended the legislature and reimposed the direct rule of the central government.³⁰¹ Both this action and a new surge of extremist violence appeared to foreclose any possibility of achieving an early settlement in the conflict. To end the violence, the government of India released in March 1988 40 Sikh extremists and 5 priests who had been convicted after Operation Bluestar. But after some time the extremists started to arm the Temple again and Rajiv Gandhi needed to react to that. He called up Operation Black Thunder. This time things worked out better. Rajiv used pressure as the tactic and the terrorists capitulated.³⁰²

Internal factors

The internal dynamics of the Punjab crisis derive from the changes in Punjab's political economy emanating from the green revolution. The green revolution transformed Punjab's largely subsistence farming to profit-oriented agriculture. It was carried out in Punjab during the late 1960s and 1970s and it produced a manifold increase in agricultural output but also increased the costs of agricultural input. However, the benefits of the green revolution did not distribute equally. Along with the green revolution there was a revolution in education in Punjab, as the processes of agricultural modernisation began to allow for the liberation of many children from farm labour. Unfortunately, higher education did not translate into economic gains for many of the rural Sikh youth, as distortions particularly in the disparity between agricultural growth and a retarded industrial sector led to significant levels of unemployment among educated youth.³⁰³ The migration of young, often educated Sikh men was beginning to increase in 1981, as the division of landholdings, the unavailability of industrial jobs,

²⁹⁹ Malik 1986, 356-8.

³⁰⁰ Kapur 1986, 245.

³⁰¹ Stukenberg 1995, 115-119.

³⁰² Ibid., 125-131.

and a desire for adventure and a better life outside of India caused a sense of restlessness in rural areas. They also faced competition from migrant labourers, who were almost all Hindus. A large segment of Punjabis were in the early 1980s ready for mobilisation, agitation, and possibly glorified violence, given the right catalytic agents.³⁰⁴

The green revolution so produced socio-economic conditions affecting various producer classes in the state. These conditions led to increased societal dissatisfaction and tension that was channelled through the Akali Dal agitation. The Akali-elite mobilisation combined with societal unrest, increasingly displayed Sikh nationalistic rhetoric and tendencies. The mobilisation was possible through the linking of the political frustration of Akali elites with the religious symbolism offered by Bhindranwale and the discontent of large segments of Sikh community. The animosity of both the Sikh political elites and the Sikh community became directed toward the Congress (I)-led central government, whose centralising political and economic policies were perceived as being the primary sources of Punjab's political, economic and religious problems.³⁰⁵

Robin Jeffrey concentrates in his analysis on the modernising impact of the green revolution. To him, it accelerated the emergence of the mass society: face-to-face village communities disintegrated; urbanisation, consumerism and mass literacy inflated expectations; ethnic identities became firmer emblems of competition; rootlessness, alienation and graduate unemployment nurtured messianic tendencies, especially fundamentalism; and above all, a revolution took place in communications. Modernisation played a large part in shaping the Sikh unrest, which ultimately led to the storming of the Golden Temple, Mrs Gandhi's assassination and the communalist violence in Northern India.³⁰⁶ Gurharpal Singh argues that Jeffrey's mass society thesis is based on a few selected social indicators which do not warrant such a construction. But Singh does not give any specific examples of these insufficient indicators or give a better explanation.³⁰⁷

³⁰³ Telford 1992, 977-9.

³⁰⁴ Chima 1994, 855, 858.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 848, 855, 861.

³⁰⁶ Jeffrey 1986, 2-8.

³⁰⁷ Singh Gurharpal, *Understanding the "Punjab Problem"*. In *Asian Survey* Vol. XXVII, No. 12, December 1987, 1277.

Political Implications

The Akali Dal Party has usually been seen as non-violent. It has organised several non-violent campaigns during the independence. It has also been interwoven with the Indian government through the 20th century and followed a secular strategy. This strategy was thus a double-edged sword; as long as the Akalis could form coalition governments, the strategy paid dividends. However, the resounding defeat of the Congress Party in the 1972 elections put the Akali moderates in a vulnerable position, as the more nationalistic Akalis urged a return to a more Sikh-based orientation.³⁰⁸ The Akali Dals aimed to increase the powers of states enormously at the expense of the federal government.³⁰⁹ From the perspective of the Akali moderates, the Punjab crisis was due to the refusal of the government to grant states autonomy, and from a deep-seated Hindu bias against the Sikhs. The central government has failed to make appropriate concessions to the Akalis' demands regarding issues such as limiting the central government only to the areas of defence, foreign affairs, communications, railways and currency. Akalis also demanded the recognition of the Sikhs as a nation rather than a religious community.³¹⁰

Akali Dal represents the moderate fraction of Sikh nationalism, unlike the Bhindranwale group, who were communalists. From the perspective of these Sikh militants, the roots of the problem lie in the suppression of the Sikhs by the government and their betrayal by the Akali political leaders. Operation Bluestar was not a security operation, as the central government says, but a clash of two nations, the first war for Khalistan.³¹¹ The extremists also claim that Hindus have shown through their support for the central government that they are fundamentally anti-Sikh. The government showed in the Golden Temple attack and in the Delhi riots that it was prepared to conduct "genocide" against Sikhs. The only answer to this is to seek an independent Khalistan, and to employ violence both to attack the government and its allies, and to make all Sikhs realise that they must choose to be either for or against Khalistan. The groups referred to as extremists range from religious fundamentalists to militant political/paramilitary groups, such as the All-India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF),

³⁰⁸ Telford 1992, 971.

³⁰⁹ Singh Mahendra Prasad, *The Dilemma of the New Indian Party System: To Govern or Not to Govern?* In *Asian Survey* Vol. XXXII, No. 4, April 1992, 305.

³¹⁰ Malik 1986, 352-4.

³¹¹ Singh 1987, 1269.

and openly paramilitary or terrorist groups, such as the Khalistan Commandos Force and the Dashmesh Regiment. The militants stand for the construction of a theocratic state and the expulsion of the forces of the central government.³¹²

Punjabi Hindus have long opposed the ambitions of Sikh leaders to give the state an exclusively Sikh identity. From a Hindu perspective, the Sikhs are seeking to create a state in which Hindus would be at the mercy of the majority. Even where there are shared class or economic interests, Hindus feel that Sikhs can no longer be trusted due to the communalist polarisation. For many Hindus, the answer lies in greater Hindu solidarity and organisation, and support for Hindu chauvinist parties. Others continue to put their faith in the Congress party and the central government's paramilitary forces to protect their interests. For Balraj Madhok, an ideologue of the BJP, the roots of the Punjab problem lie in the Muslim connection. According to him, Muslim imperialism had attempted to divide Sikhs and Hindus – the Sikhs being a militarised wing of Punjab's Hindu society.³¹³

The crisis has an important regional security dimension, due to the allegations by India that Pakistan has aided the separatists with weapons and training. Claims by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi that the crisis derives mainly from the efforts of Pakistan to destabilise India lack persuasiveness, given the obvious and well documented domestic political origins of the conflict. While the Punjab crisis is essentially a domestically and internally produced political problem, India has long complained that Sikh separatists and terrorists are aided by Pakistan. There is some evidence on the separatist forces regularly crossing the border between India and Pakistan, following routes used by smugglers. Pakistan denies that it has played such a role and has agreed to co-operate against terrorism, including joint efforts to control illegal border-crossing. Punjab is strategically very important to India, because losing Punjab would create enormous defence liabilities vis-à-vis Pakistan, especially since Punjab constitutes a vital land corridor to Indian controlled Kashmir.

³¹² Malik 1986, 354.

³¹³ Madhok Balraj, Punjab Problem: the Muslim Connection. Hindu World Publications, New Delhi 1985, vi.

Kashmiri nationalism

The departure of the British from the Indian subcontinent and the partition into two successor states, India and Pakistan, were the starting points for the dispute on Kashmir. During the last five decades, there have already been three wars and innumerable uprisings and riots. And so far, the end of the dispute is not perceivable. The dispute started as a struggle between India and Pakistan over the territory of Kashmir, but later it has changed more into a people's wish to rule their own life. This is closely connected to the Indian government's denial of their regional identities. The Kashmiri identity developed during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and led to a Kashmiri nationalist movement that started to demand the right to independence.

Kashmiri Identity

There are several inconsistencies that make the definition of Kashmiri identity problematic. Firstly, the state of Jammu and Kashmir consists of three different parts: the Hindu majority in Jammu (62 per cent), Muslim majority in Kashmir (94 per cent) and Buddhist majority in Ladakh (52 per cent)³¹⁴. Secondly, Kashmir does not only consist of different religious groups but also of different ethnic groups: the Buddhist of Ladakh are Tibetans, the Hindus in Jammu are Dogras and the Muslims in Jammu are Punjabis. These different parts of Jammu and Kashmir declare that they are all combined by a separate Kashmiri ethnicity, Kashmiriyat.³¹⁵ However, Kashmir has always been different from the other parts of India. The distinct culture, language and customs within the area of Kashmir have remained so on the account of the high mountains that cocoon it. Religions have changed in Kashmir but they have still coexisted there in peace.³¹⁶

Kashmiri identity has developed as a consequence of different foreign rulers and the discrimination these rulers exercised against Kashmiris. The discrimination was mostly

³¹⁴ Husain Majid, *Geography of Jammu and Kashmir*, Second Edition. Rajesh Publications, New Delhi 1998, 89-91.

³¹⁵ Varshney Ashutosh, *India, Pakistan and Kashmir: Antinomies of Nationalism*. In *Asian Survey* no. 11, November 1991, 1003-4.

³¹⁶ Singh Tavleen, *Kashmir: A Tragedy of Errors*. Viking Penguin Books India Ltd., New Delhi 1995, xiii.

directed against the Muslims because the rulers of Kashmir have been powerful Hindus and Sikhs. The complex relationship between India and Kashmir has also sharpened the identity. However, Balraj Puri, a political activist in Jammu and a member of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference, argues that Kashmiri identity has eroded during the battle for greater autonomy and independence, because the central government has not conceded any autonomy to Kashmir, which then has matched with the refusal of Kashmir to allow Jammu any right to autonomy within the state. This has created tension between the different regions within the state.³¹⁷ The Kashmiri identity is a strong one. One can still meet people in Delhi, who identify themselves as Kashmiris, even though they have not been born there.

There are three different kinds of nationalisms that use Kashmir as their battlefield. Those are the religious nationalism represented by Pakistan, the secular Indian nationalism and the ethnic Kashmiri nationalism³¹⁸. In the Kashmiri nationalist movement, the Muslims of the Kashmiri Valley have had the leading role. Hindus in Jammu have been under the attack of Muslims and they firmly support Kashmir's position within the Indian Union. Ladakh, then, is a very remote area and mostly controlled by China. Thus, the discussion of Kashmiri nationalism refers to the Muslims in the Valley of Kashmir. Jammu has always been strongly attached to India, because the majority of its inhabitants are Hindus. However, I refrain from calling the nationalism in Kashmir Muslim nationalism. All the Muslims of India do not live in Kashmir and all of them do not support autonomy or independence of Kashmir, and many of the people, who consider themselves Kashmiris, are in fact Hindus of their religion. Therefore it would be misleading to call Kashmiri nationalism Muslim nationalism. Kashmir nationalism is also more secular than religious. It aims at independence but not necessarily on religious terms.

The Rise of Kashmiri Nationalism

The era of foreign rule began in Kashmir in 1586, when the Mughal emperor, Akbar, attached it to his empire.³¹⁹ During the Muslim era, there was hardly any discrimination, but unluckily the Mughal administration was terminated by the Afghans, who ruled

³¹⁷ Puri Balraj, *Kashmir: Towards Insurgency*. Orient Longman Ltd, New Delhi updated edition 1995, vii.

³¹⁸ Varsney 1991, 1003. Varsney specifies that Kashmiriyat which bases on Kashmiri nationalism has, on the whole, been both ethnic and secular. However, since it has tried to separate itself from India's secular nationalism, it is the ethnic aspect of Kashmiriyat that has become its distinctive mark.

Kashmir harshly from 1753 until the early nineteenth century. In 1819, five hundred years of Muslim rule ended, when Maharaja Ranjit Singh extended his Sikh empire to the area and drove the Afghans out. The situation of Kashmiri Muslims started to worsen in 1846, when a Dogra³²⁰ ruler Gulab Singh, assumed to himself the power with the help of the British in the Treaty of Amritsar. The Dogras occupied the posts in the administration and the army. Muslims became, in practice, second class citizens.³²¹

At the beginning of the 20th century, many Hindu associations were established which then inspired Muslims to organise themselves. In 1905, the Anjuman-i-Nusrat-ul-Islam was formed to preach Islam and to improve education and social justice for Kashmiri Muslims. The Anjuman formed councils and committees for communication and established the Islamia High School in Srinagar. Following the Anjuman, other Muslim organisations emerged in Kashmir, including one in Jammu. At first these organisations were strictly social, but during the 1920s, Muslim organisations became more political as a result of rising consciousness and increase in higher education among Kashmiri youth. These organisations started to oppose Maharaja's autocracy.³²²

The bitterness of the Muslims against the Dogras and the colonial rule broke out to the streets in July 1931. After the incident, Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah took a leading role in the creation of the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference, which began to organise opposition to both British and Dogra rule. The Muslim Conference was dissolved in 1939 because of internal divisions, but Sheikh Abdullah formed the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference to replace it. By doing this, he wanted to stress the secular and Kashmiri character of the organisation. Abdullah and the National Conference suggested an agreement with the aims of the Indian nationalist movement led by Mohandas Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru.³²³ Abdullah "saw the relationship with India as the best available option in the circumstances; as a partnership inspired by common ideals of democracy, autonomy, secularism and socio-political reform; not

³¹⁹ Spear Percival, *A History of India* volume II. Eleventh impression, Penguins Books, London 1998, 31.

³²⁰ Dogras is an elusive term. According to Alastair Lamb, the Dogras are hill Rajputs who are most numerous in Jammu. Today the term Dogras is used to refer to the Hindu businessmen/families in Kashmir.

³²¹ Widmalm Sten, *Democracy and Violent Separatism in India. Kashmir in a Comparative Perspective*. Doctoral dissertation presented at Uppsala University 1997a, 40-1.

³²² Rahman Mushtaqur, *Divided Kashmir: Old Problems, New Opportunities for India, Pakistan, and the Kashmiri People*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., Boulder (USA) and London 1996, 38-9.

³²³ Rahman 1996, 41-3.

only subservience.’’³²⁴ Sheikh Abdullah can be considered the father of Kashmiri identity and the first Kashmiri nationalist. He spoke eagerly for the rights of the Kashmiri people.

The dispute began in 1947, when the subcontinent was divided into India and Pakistan according to the two-nation-theory³²⁵. The British performed the partition according to the geographical continuity and the religious majority in the state. The Hindu majority states were to be part of India and the Muslim majority states part of Pakistan. Kashmir posed serious problems because it consists of three different parts: the Muslim majority in the Valley of Kashmir, the Hindu majority in Jammu and the Buddhist majority in Ladakh. Even though Kashmir was home to a very substantial Muslim majority³²⁶ and was contiguous with Pakistan as well as with India, it refused to be attached to Pakistan. The reason for this was that at that time it was ruled by a Hindu Maharaja, Hari Singh.³²⁷ At first, Maharaja Hari Singh was seriously considering independence as an option for Kashmir, but he considered co-operation with Sheikh Abdullah to reach this goal unthinkable. In addition to this, India offered wide autonomy to Kashmir, which was a more tempting alternative for Hari Singh than the accession to Pakistan. Both the creator of Pakistan, M. A. Jinnah,³²⁸ and the Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, believed that Kashmir had to be a part of Pakistan or India. The political confrontation between the Muslim League and the Congress Party became more severe, and in 1946, communalist violence between Sikhs and Muslims, and Hindus and Muslims, gradually increased.³²⁹

Territorial Dispute

The first war between India and Pakistan started in October 1947, when Pathan tribal forces, with the help of Pakistan, attacked Kashmir with the mission of liberating it. To save Jammu and Kashmir from the accession to Pakistan, Maharaja Hari Singh asked the central government in Delhi to help. The last viceroy of India for the British Empire, Louis Mountbatten, Jawaharlal Nehru and the Deputy Prime Minister of India, Sardar

³²⁴ Bhattacharjea Amit, *Kashmir the Wounded Valley*. UBS Publishers, New Delhi 1994, 13-4.

³²⁵ Muslims and Hindus are different nations not just different religions.

³²⁶ 77,11% according to the 1941 Census.

³²⁷ Wirsing Robert, *India, Pakistan and the Kashmir Dispute. On Regional Conflict and Its Resolution*. Second impression St. Martin's Press New York 1998, 34-8.

³²⁸ Jinnah was the leader of the Muslim League, which was the main party calling for a Muslim state, which later became Pakistan.

³²⁹ Widmalm 1997a, 46-8.

Vallabhai Patel, agreed that Jammu and Kashmir had to accede, at least temporarily, to India before Indian troops could be sent for the rescue operation. This came to be known as the Instrument of Accession.³³⁰ Both India and Pakistan agreed that the final decision on the status of Kashmir would be made by a plebiscite.³³¹ As Indian forces put a stop to the Pathans' advance, the Pakistani army gradually became more involved. The conflict led to a war between India and Pakistan. Although the war was brought to the United Nations (UN) in January 1948 at the request of India, a cease-fire agreement did not come into effect until 1 January 1949. In 1948 arrived the newly formed United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP)³³². The United Nations' Security Council also supported the idea of a plebiscite and the demilitarisation of the area.³³³ The cease-fire line, which was supervised by the UN, turned into a line of control. This subsequently became the de facto border between India and Pakistan which remains today. More than a third of what had hitherto been called Jammu and Kashmir came under the control of Pakistan and is now more commonly known as Azad Kashmir in Pakistan and Pakistani Occupied Kashmir by the Indian Government. Not surprisingly, the part remaining in India is referred to Indian Occupied Kashmir by the Pakistani Government.³³⁴ There were plans to set Kashmir under the auspices of the United States of America, but this failed because of the resistance of the Soviet Union.³³⁵ Diplomats have speculated about the possible outcome of the plebiscite and have noted that the elite in Kashmir would have voted for the accession to Pakistan. The farmers, on the other hand, would probably have voted for India, as Sheikh Abdullah had successfully pulled through a landreform by splitting up farms into smaller ones and so helping small-scale farmers.³³⁶ Pakistan had counted that if the plebiscite had taken place after the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah, 90 % of the Kashmiris would have voted in favour of Pakistan.³³⁷

³³⁰ Widmalm 1997a, 46-50, Wirsing 1998, 35-40.

³³¹ Wirsing, Robert G., *The Kashmir Conflict*. In *Current History* April 1996, 175.

³³² UNCIP was replaced 1951 by the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) and that has remained ever since.

³³³ United Nations' Security Council's Resolution 47, 21 April 1948. WWW-document, United Nations, Security Council. <<http://www.un.org/documents/sc/res/1948/scres48.htm>>

³³⁴ Widmalm 1997a, 52-3.

³³⁵ Report no. 35 from the Embassy of Finland in New Delhi to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs on 22 August 1953, 'Kashmirin šeikin romahdus'. *Kashmirin kysymys v. 1952-54*, 7 D2, (UMA).

³³⁶ Report no. 18 from the Embassy of Finland in New Delhi to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs on 8 April 1953, 'Vaikutuksia Kashmirista'. *Kashmirin kysymys v. 1952-54*, 7 D2, (UMA).

³³⁷ Report no. 43 from the Embassy of Finland in New Delhi to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs on 16 September 1953, 'Pakistan ja Kashmir'. *Kashmirin kysymys v. 1952-54*, 7 D2, (UMA).

After the independence of India Sheikh Abdullah became the Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir. He made the life of maharadza Hari Singh so unbearable in Kashmir that he needed to leave Kashmir in 1949.³³⁸ Abdullah was arrested in 1953 because he had started to support the idea of an independent Kashmir in the early 1950s.³³⁹ After Abdullah's dismissal, the Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir under the new Kashmiri leader, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, ratified a new constitution declaring Jammu and Kashmir an integral part of India.³⁴⁰ According to India, the accession was irrevocable and there would be no need for plebiscite.³⁴¹

There was a round of discussions between India and Pakistan concerning the situation in Jammu and Kashmir in 1963,³⁴² but they were not able to ease the tensions between Hindus and Muslims which continued through the 1950s and 1960s and ended in a second war on 1st of September 1965. The UN reacted quickly and the war lasted only three weeks³⁴³. The war based on three assumptions: (1) that widespread support existed in Indian-occupied Kashmir for waging a guerrilla campaign; (2) that India would not be inclined to launch a large-scale military offensive against Azad Kashmir; and (3) that India would not cross the international frontier in either East or West Pakistan. The assumptions did not have solid ground under them and India countered the attack with military force.³⁴⁴ Strategically, the war did not have any results, but politically it was a big mistake for Pakistan. Pakistan had started the war because it had assumed that India would not be able to respond to this because it had suffered a defeat in the war against

³³⁸ Report no. 43 from the Embassy of Finland in New Delhi to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs on 19 November 1952, 'Kashmir on valinnut valtionpäämiehensä'. Kashmirin kysymys v. 1952-54, 7 D2, (UMA).

³³⁹ Report no. 8 from the Embassy of Finland in New Delhi to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs on 10 March 1954, 'Katsaus Kashmiriin'. Kashmirin kysymys v. 1952-54, 7 D2, (UMA).
In 1951 Sheikh Abdullah still supported the autonomy within the Union of India. Kashmir documents no. 7, Sheikh Abdullah's Address to Kashmir Asseby on November 5, 1951 published by Information Service of India in New Delhi. Kashmirin kysymys; Pakistan Aggression in Kashmir 7 D2, (UMA).

³⁴⁰ Rahman 1996, 96-98.

³⁴¹ Wirsing 1998, 59.

³⁴² Reports no. 1, 24 January 1963 'Kashmiria koskevat keskustelut', no. 6, 18 March 1963, 'Kashmiria koskevat keskustelut II', no. 9, 17 May 1963, 'Kashmiria koskevien keskustelujen loppunäytös', no. 549, 14 June 1963, 'Intian ja Pakistanin jatkoselontekoja Kashmirin kysymyksestä' from the Embassy of Finland in New Delhi to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Kashmirin kysymys v. 1956-58, 1962-63, 7 D2, (UMA).

³⁴³ The war was widely discussed at the United Nations' Security Council which made several resolutions on the issue (Resolutions 209 4 September 1965, 210 6 September 1965 and 211 20 September). In the last resolution the Security Council demands that the cease-fire take effect on 22 September 1965 at 0700 hours GMT. United Nations 1965, United Nations' Security Councils Resolutions September 1965. WWW-document. <<http://www.un.org/documents/sc/res/1965/scres65.htm>>

³⁴⁴ Rahman 1996, 108-10.

China. In spite of the hopes of Pakistan, the Kashmiris chose a union with India rather than with Pakistan. India and Pakistan both claimed that the other was responsible for starting the war³⁴⁵. It was not until 1972 that Pakistan admitted its defeat and made a peace treaty with India in Simla.³⁴⁶ The Simla Agreement was an attempt to restore some order into Indo-Pakistani relations, and for a while it also succeeded to bring an end to Kashmir as being an active territorial dispute.³⁴⁷

Jammu and Kashmir's first free and fair elections were held in 1977, when the National Conference and the Congress Party met as political equals. The role of Prime Minister Morarji Desai has also been emphasised in the democratic development of Jammu and Kashmir. He strengthened security in Jammu and Kashmir so that fair elections could be held. In the end, the Congress (I) won 11 seats and became the third largest party in the assembly, the Janata Party, which just had won the national elections, won 13 seats, and the National Conference secured a majority with 47 of the assembly's 75 seats. The Muslim party, Jamaat-i-Islami, won only one seat.³⁴⁸

During the 1970s and early 1980s the level of violence and turbulence was insignificant compared to the times before, and it would seem that the political conditions did breed integration.³⁴⁹ This was because there was no war, but the violence in Jammu and Kashmir still remained endemic.³⁵⁰ The war on Bangladesh in 1971 had changed the political situation so that independence for Kashmir was no longer a possibility. Internally Delhi reopened negotiations with the newly appointed Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Sheikh Abdullah, who had been released from prison and house-arrest, and signed an agreement in 1975, accepting that Kashmir was a constituent unit of the Union of India, and that no law made by the Legislature of the State of Jammu and Kashmir seeking to change it would take effect unless the Bill received the consent

³⁴⁵ Embassy of India in Helsinki press release 6.9. 1965 about the Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri's broadcast to the nation on the Pakistani aggression to Indian side Kashmir. 7/8 65. Embassy of Pakistan in Finland to the Finnish Foreign Minister on 4.9. 1965 about the President's broadcast to the nation that India took the initiative to the war, 14/3270-63. Kashmirin kysymys; Intian ja Pakistanin sota; Suomen kansalaisten turvallisuus Intiassa ja Pakistanissa, 7 D2, (UMA).

³⁴⁶ Varshney 1991, 1010-3.

³⁴⁷ Lamb, Alastair, *Kashmir a Disputed Legacy 1846-1990*, Second Impression. Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1992, 297.

³⁴⁸ Widmalm Sten, *The Rise and Fall of Democracy in Jammu and Kashmir*. In *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXXVII, No. 11, November 1997b, 1006-7.

³⁴⁹ Widmalm 1997a, 74.

³⁵⁰ Lamb 1992, 328.

the president of India.³⁵¹ After his release, he turned back to become a friend of India, possibly because neither Pakistan nor the international community was able to support the independence.³⁵² The agreement put Kashmir under the central power of India, and the autonomy of Kashmir became even more restricted, because it took away a great deal of the remaining strength from the Article 370 of the Constitution.³⁵³ The Indian Constitution has two articles which are important for the status of Jammu and Kashmir. In Article I the state is deemed to be an integral part of the Indian Union, but in Article 370 it is given a special status by means of “temporary provisions with respect to the State of Jammu and Kashmir”, which effectively limits the power of the Indian Parliament there to three matters, namely defence, external affairs and communications.³⁵⁴

The Turn Against India

When Sheikh Abdullah passed away in 1982, his son, Farooq Abdullah, took over the party leadership. Farooq Abdullah inherited a popular but internally fractured party. The National Conference was torn because of Sheikh Abdullah’s decision to let his son succeed him instead of his daughter’s husband Ghulam Mohammed Shah. The Congress (I) suggested co-operation to the National Conference in the 1983 elections, but the alliance was avoided because of the fear of the NC that it could be marginalised. The campaign was still undertaken on a secular basis and both the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Muslim Party, Jamaat-i-Islami, were wiped out in the election. The BJP argued that Jammu and Kashmir should lose its special status in the Constitution and be totally integrated with the Indian Union, and the Jamaat-e-Islami advocated the accession to Pakistan. In the elections, the National Conference won 46 of the 75 seats and the Congress 26.³⁵⁵

The central government removed Farooq Abdullah from power because it claimed that he had not taken necessary and stern measures against the separatist movements. It is more likely that the real reason for this was that the Congress (I) saw Abdullah as a

³⁵¹ Varshney 1991, 1013.

³⁵² Report no. R-492/130 from the Embassy of Finland in New Delhi to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs on 19 June 1975, ‘Kashmirin kysymyksen viimeaikainen kehitys’. Kashmirin kysymys v.1975, 7 D2, (UMA).

³⁵³ Wirsing 1996, 175, Lamb 1992, 307.

³⁵⁴ The Constitution of India, Lamb 1992, 190.

³⁵⁵ Widmalm 1997b, 1009-11.

threat to national security. But there were two other levels of conflict that affected the situation: one between the state and the central government and the other between Indira Gandhi and Farooq Abdullah. There had been a deterioration in the state-centre relations because of Abdullah's May 1983 decision to join an alliance of regional parties from around India – the so called Opposition Conclave – as the election campaign in Jammu and Kashmir was concluding. Indira Gandhi saw this as a national anti-Congress (I) alliance.³⁵⁶

The separatist incidents in Jammu and Kashmir became salient during the 1980s. The extremist parties gradually but increasingly became more successful in using region and religion as the basis for political mobilisation. In March 1986 the situation was already so bad that Governor's Rule³⁵⁷ was imposed in Jammu and Kashmir. Just before the expiry of the six-month term of Governor's Rule, Abdullah entered a power-sharing agreement with the Congress (I). In November the agreement was crowned by the central government's decision to reinstall Abdullah as Chief Minister. Such frequent changes, in forms of loose alliances, Governor's Rule, and central government intervention, dramatically eroded the belief of the people in democracy in Kashmir.³⁵⁸ In Kashmiris' eyes, Farooq became an adjunct of the Congress Party, and he possessed little legitimacy.³⁵⁹

In the elections of 1987, the National Conference and the Congress (I) formed an election coalition to create a political monopoly and capture all the votes in the election.³⁶⁰ Only a few days after it became clear that Farooq Abdullah and the Congress (I) were forming an alliance, a hitherto unknown organisation, the Muslim United Front (MUF), started to join the opposition forces of the NC and the Congress (I).³⁶¹ For return, the NC-Congress (I) cartel fingered the election outcome because the

³⁵⁶ Widmalm 1997b, 1011-6.

³⁵⁷ The Governors have started from the 1960s on to intervene in situations of instability in the states in a way which clearly indicates that they are following the explicit directives of the central government rather than simply implementing their constitutional mandate. The Governors should give only a formal approval to the decisions of the Chief Minister and Cabinet to report impartially to the central administration of the situation in the states. Each state has a Governor who is the official head of the state, a bicameral legislature, a Chief Minister and his Council of Ministers or Cabinet (Brass Paul R., *The politics of India Since Independence*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1990, 49-50).

³⁵⁸ Widmalm 1997b, 1017.

³⁵⁹ Ganguly Sumit, Bajpai Kanti, *India and the Crisis in Kashmir*. In *Asian Survey* Vol. XXXIV no. 5 May 1994, 405.

³⁶⁰ Rahman 1996, 143.

³⁶¹ Widmalm 1997b, 1019.

majority of the Kashmiris had turned to support the MUF. The election fraud was the trigger that led Kashmiris from the Valley to cross the border into Pakistan and enrol in extreme organisations. The National Conference – Congress cartel still officially managed to get the majority of the votes, but they ruled without legitimacy.³⁶²

The dissatisfaction led to a popular uprising in 1989. Sumit Ganguly supposes that another reason for the revolt could also be the expanded political awareness and participation in Kashmir, because India had invested in literacy, higher education and the mass media in Kashmir. A strong and unsatisfied middle class had arisen in Kashmir. Kashmiris were still in the opinion that the Indian government was not ready to expand the same rights to the Muslims of Kashmir that it guaranteed to other Indians in the country. The disappointment led to ethnic-religious mobilisation.³⁶³ Rahman calls this a ‘youthquake’ as most of the mobilised were young Kashmiris, who felt discriminated against, oppressed, and wronged by the history of India. They were inspired by a religious and cultural power that emanated from the Iranian revolution and the Soviet expulsion from Afghanistan.³⁶⁴

Freedom Fighters

Since the political conditions have continued to deteriorate with the erosion of Article 370 and with Governor’s rule, a number of militant organisations have emerged to attempt to liberate Kashmir from India. Prominent among these is the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), formed in 1966. Other groups that emerged after the 1977 elections include the Muslim united Front (MUF) and the People’s League.³⁶⁵ The leading faction within MUF was the Jamaat-e-Islami, which can be described as a non-secular, Islamist, or ethnic party. It never accepted the accession of 1947 and openly expressed sympathies for the Pakistani General Zia-ul-Haq’s drive for Islamisation in Pakistan. Jamaat-e-Islami has been accused of being one of those responsible for the growing communalist tension in Kashmir.³⁶⁶ The number of militant groups continued to increase; according to security forces, by November 1990 there were 158 of them, and some other reports put this number at 40. India identifies these groups as ‘anti-national’, ‘pro-Pakistan’, or ‘fundamentalist’. In 1990, Jagmohan banned Hizb-ul-

³⁶² Varshney 1991, 1015-6.

³⁶³ Ganguly Sumit, An Opportunity for Peace in Kashmir? In *Current History*, December 1997, 416-7.

³⁶⁴ Rahman 1996, 145.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 152-3.

Mujahideen (HUM), the JKLF, Jamaat-i-Islami, the Islami Students League, the People's League, Mahaz-i-Azadi, and Jamaat-i-Tulba. These organisations can be divided into two groups: one group wants Islamisation and union with Pakistan, and the other group wants an independent Kashmir. The pro-Pakistani groups are the Jamaat-i-Islami and its youth-wing Jamaat-i-Tulba, Hizb-ul-Islami, Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, the Muslim Students Federation, the Allah Tigers, the Zia Tiger Force, the Islami Students League, the Al-Jehad, the Tehrik-e-Amal, and the People's League. Among those seeking an independent Kashmir are the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front and Kashmir's Peoples Conference. Only the National Conference and its president Farooq Abdullah wanted restoration of the Article 370.³⁶⁷

The JKLF came into existence during in 1965 and has been responsible for kidnappings and other smaller terrorist campaigns. Later on, the members of the JKLF turned into covert resistance against Indian rule in the State of Jammu and Kashmir, and they were responsible to nobody but their own leadership and controlled by no government.³⁶⁸ The JKLF supports an ideology of Kashmir nationalism, which is opposed to Islamic fundamentalism. A commander of the JKLF has said that "whether we are Muslims, Christians, or Hindus, we are Kashmiris first, and we believe in secularism". However, the JKLF has gradually moved toward an Islamic ideology. There are supporters of Islamic rule based on Quran and Sunnah within the organisation in Kashmir, but officially the JKLF is still for a reunified and independent Kashmir.³⁶⁹ The leader of the JKLF, Yasin Malik, recalls "the rich tradition of humanity, brotherhood and communal harmony in Kashmir and invoked Gandhian values".³⁷⁰ One of the most active organisations nowadays struggling for Kashmir's self-determination is the Mujahideen Lashkar-e-Islam. It has formulated the mission followingly: "we strive hard and continue our struggle against India, to liberate Kashmir from the clutches of oppressors and to get the people of Kashmir the right for self-determination."³⁷¹

³⁶⁶ Widmalm 1997a, 73, 94-5.

³⁶⁷ Rahman 1996, 152-3.

³⁶⁸ Lamb 1992, 292-3.

³⁶⁹ Rahman 1996, 153-4.

³⁷⁰ Puri 1995, 68, 98-9.

³⁷¹ Mujahideen Lashkar-e-Islam, Mission Statement. Lashkar-e-Islam Jammu & Kashmir 2002, WWW-Document <http://www.lashkar-e-islam.org/Mission_statement.htm>

The Hizb-ul-Mujahideen has a membership of 11,000 young men. This group gained prominence in 1990 by kidnapping and killing Mir Mustafa, a former member of the legislative assembly. The Hizb-ul-Mujahideen is committed to Islam and Jihad. The group is responsible for forcing the closure of bars, beauty parlours and cinemas, which represent Western values. The members of this organisation assured the Hindu population that their struggle is only against the Indian occupation and that no harm will be done to Kashmiri Hindus, their property, or their places of worship. This is only partly true today. The Hizb-ul-Mujahideen has divided into two parts. The militant part is closely connected to Pakistan, whereas the other one has been willing to negotiate with India about the situation in Kashmir.³⁷² The Hizb-ul-Mujahideen is well armed and has been involved in attacks on army installations and convoys in rural areas. It is alleged that the Hizb-ul-Mujahideens have close links to the Afghan Mujahideens.³⁷³ Since 1990s, direct support has been given to Hizb-ul-Mujahideen by Pakistan.³⁷⁴

The Hurriyat (freedom) Conference was formed in March 1990 to become an umbrella organisation for most of the separatist, or secessionist, organisations in Jammu and Kashmir. This 11-party alliance³⁷⁵ contends that because the accession to India was temporary, Kashmir poses an international problem that should be solved in keeping with the United Nations resolutions. The alliance believes that the Kashmiri people have a right to self-determination. The orientation of the Hurriyat Conference is Islamic, with a focus on freedom and Islam. Members are normally young academics and from legal and professional groups.³⁷⁶ Today the Hurriyat Conference is the mouthpiece on Kashmiri issues for the international press.

The Origins of the Unrest

Democracy was established in Jammu and Kashmir in 1977. In the 1970s and the early 1980s, the National Conference was a fairly stable organisation and policies were still pursued on a secular basis. An underlying weakness in the system was that the most

³⁷² International Crisis Group, Kashmir: Confrontation and Miscalculation. ICG Asia Report No. 35, 11 July 2002, 7. The document is available in Internet under the address <http://www.intl-crisis-group.org/projects/showreport.cfm?reportid=696>

³⁷³ Rahman 1996, 154.

³⁷⁴ Widmalm 1997a, 113-4.

³⁷⁵ The Members of Hurriyat Conference are: The Muslim Conference, the Peoples League, Mahaz-i-Azadi, Jamaat-i-Islami, the Islamic Student League, The Islamic Student Circle, Jamaat-i-Tulba, Tahrir-i-Nifaz-i-Shariyat, Jamiat Ahle Hadith, Dukhtaran-i-Millat (Daughters of the Nations) and the Jammu and Kashmir Bar Association.

important parties, such as the National Conference and the Congress Party, were organised dynastically or nepotistically. The democracy in Jammu and Kashmir started to decline drastically in 1983 and 1984. The behaviour of the political elite led to deinstitutionalisation, which in turn led to populism and communalism and concluded in political violence. Both the Congress (I) and the National Conference were then struggling for support and trying to hold their poorly organised parties together. Regional and religious arguments began to be used in the effort to attract political support, even if the overall character of the political messages from the parties could still be described as mostly secular. Before the election of 1987, there was still motivation for a democratic solution, but after the betrayal of the rules of democratic fair play and the events during the 1987 election, many politically aroused but frustrated young Kashmiris turned to armed struggle. Finally, in 1989, the political opposition gave up its belief in the usefulness of competing within what was left of the democratic framework.³⁷⁷

The social differences between Hindus and Muslims might have fuelled the conflict at least to some extent. The Pandits and the Dogras belong to the traditional elite in Jammu and Kashmir and, like Brahmins all over in India, the Pandits are overrepresented in banks, private companies, and salaried jobs in the public sector. An Indian intellectual and an appreciated columnist Prem Shankar Jha argues that this imbalance is one of the most important underlying causes of the conflict.³⁷⁸ Muslims have, in many ways, received a rather raw deal in secular India. Their share of urban ghettoisation and rural pauperisation is proportionately greater than that of Hindus. Muslims also remain deplorably under-represented in the Indian Administrative Services and the Indian Police Service.³⁷⁹ On the other hand, the economic decline seems more likely be a consequence of the violence than a cause of it. The economic situation improved in Jammu and Kashmir as the income level rose steadily from 1950 to 1986, although it was about 10% below India's average per capita income. In 1986,

³⁷⁶ Rahman 1996, 154.

³⁷⁷ Widmalm 1997a, 115, see also Widmalm 1997b.

³⁷⁸ Jha Prem Shankar, *Frustrated Middle Class: Roots of Kashmir's Alienation*. In Engineer Al Asghar (ed.) *Secular Crown on Fire: The Kashmir Problem*, Ajanta, Delhi 1991.

³⁷⁹ Bose 1998, 127-8.

the economy began to falter because of climatic conditions and the increased breakdown of law and order.³⁸⁰

The external cause for the uprisings in Jammu and Kashmir is the battle between India and Pakistan because of their different kind of visions of nationalism and state-building. This has then led to a dispute over regional order. For India, Kashmir is symbolic of secular nationalism and state-building and of the possibility of a Muslim-majority area choosing to live and prosper within a Hindu-majority country. For Pakistan, Kashmir is symbolic of the impossibility of secular nationalism in the region and thus of the need for a Muslim homeland in the North-western corner of the subcontinent.³⁸¹ The countries are not even close to finding an agreement on the difficult situation in Jammu and Kashmir. According to some sources the uprising there is part of a scheme planned by the Pakistani government to capture Jammu and Kashmir. This has been referred to as Operation Topac, and it has been alleged that it was created by General Zia ul-Haq.³⁸² The government of Pakistan has supported some of the uprisings in Jammu and Kashmir, by allowing separatists access to the arms market and allowing them to establish bases inside Pakistan, but a more active role of Pakistan is hard to prove.³⁸³ The situation in Jammu and Kashmir has continued through the 1990s as a low-scale war. Both India and Pakistan have their troops there and clashes between the groups happen every day.

Assessment: The Contest of Indian Secularism

The contest of Indian secularism developed fast during the 1980s, and some of the economic problems of 1970s gave an impetus for it. In the 1970s, India was faced with starvation, a lack of currency, an increase in prices and growing unemployment. The highly praised green revolution did not turn out to be such a big success as was expected and India needed to import a lot of grain from abroad.³⁸⁴ The Congress party was not able to react to this and solve the problems which caused a lot of disorder and

³⁸⁰ Widmalm 1997b, 1024.

³⁸¹ Ganguly & Bajpai 1994, 402, 405.

³⁸² Widmalm 1997b, 1026.

³⁸³ Widmalm 1997a, 109. See also Wirsing 1998, 113-118.

³⁸⁴ Report no. 67/20 from the Embassy of Finland in New Delhi to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs on 23 January 1973, 'Intian ongelmat ennallaan'. 100 Intia; sisäpolitiikka v. 1971-74. (UMA).

confusion in the country. The nationalist parties started to offer an alternative for the Congress Party.³⁸⁵ The Congress Party responded to the challenge by declaring an Emergency in 1975. Other reasons are connected to the politics of the Congress Party, which have over the years manifested an increasing disarray, and have been riddled by both corruption³⁸⁶ and factionalism. This included the decay of institutions: the downhill of the Congress party, the politicisation of the justice institution and the need to rely on military power in maintaining the public order. Its long periods in power, and internal divisiveness, and its loss of collective purpose, have created the space for challengers, who could mobilise many in the urban-based middle and lower classes. The main mobiliser has been the BJP party, in terms of making a collective Hindu identity through populist cultural rhetoric. The second mobilisation has taken place through the insurgency mounted by radical Sikhs and the Khalistan secessionist movement. In addition to the disastrous and worsening war in Kashmir, which led to the flight of many Kashmiri Hindus and seriously put the continuing unity of India in jeopardy, there has been much anxiety, especially among India's burgeoning middle classes, about the threat of the country's political fragmentation and attendant economic losses.³⁸⁷

Certain structural changes in the organisation of national political authority, made during Indira Gandhi's era, were also partly responsible for the break-up of nationalisms. Precisely because of the existence of a weak national identity, and the country's potential for disintegration, the founders of the modern political system in India recognised the need for the creation of a federal polity. It was seen as an outlet for the utilisation and satisfaction of the political ambitions of the regional and local elites. This has also helped in the regionalisation of political conflicts.³⁸⁸

The Surrender of Secularism

Although the Indian state does not openly side with any religion, in practice it has not always functioned in a secular manner. It has failed to deal with the challenges of Punjab and Kashmir because it adopted a strategy of compromising with communalism by surrendering its secular ideology. The state apparatus per se failed to contain the

³⁸⁵ Report no. R-307/89 from the Embassy of Finland in New Delhi to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs on 2 April 1974, 'Intian tila jatkuvasti huononemassa'. 100 Intia; sisäpolitiikka v. 1971-74. (UMA).

³⁸⁶ For example, the Defense minister of Indira Gahdhi's regime "forgot" to pay his taxes for 10 years because he was so busy. Report on 2.April 1974. 100 Intia; sisäpolitiikka v. 1971-74. (UMA).

³⁸⁷ Tambiah 1998, 436-7.

³⁸⁸ Malik 1986, 360.

religious terrorists in Punjab.³⁸⁹ The method adopted to solve the Babri Masjid dispute is another example of the Indian state surrendering its secular role. There was an attempt to solve the dispute through mutual negotiations with the representatives of the Hindu and Muslim communities. Therefore, the state abdicated its role of intervening and settling disputes on the principles of secular governance. These incidents clearly reveal the limits of state intervention, because there were no attempts to solve the crisis through an ideological offensive by the secular state of India. The contests that have taken place in India have demonstrated that the ideological legitimisation process of the Indian state is weak and fractured, and society and the state in India are dealing with multiple and competing ideologies.³⁹⁰ The vacillatory stance of Indian state has been responsible to great extent for the escalation of communalism in independent India.³⁹¹

Sumantra Bose argues that the insurrection currently raging in Kashmir is a direct result of a consistent policy of oppressing the Kashmiri people, and the denial and subversion of their basic democratic and human rights by the Indian state; starting with Nehru, and continued by Indira's and Rajiv's regimes. According to him, it is thoroughly misleading to depict the Kashmir conflict as a revolt of a Muslim-majority province against predominantly Hindu India. The battle is more accurately characterised as one between the brutally coercive power of a big state and the resistance of a people who happen to be mostly Muslim.³⁹²

The Congress government has falsely interpreted the principle 'equal respect for all religions' to require intervention in religious affairs and support for religious activities are required in order for all Indians to have an equal opportunity to practise their religions. Since independence, state policies have been marked by active regulation and institutionalisation of the practices of religious communities, as the government has protected and maintained religious institutions, funded television shows advocating particular religious views, subsidised religious educational institutions, granted tax breaks for mosques and temples, and permitted aspects of Islamic law pertaining to marriage, divorce and inheritance to apply only to Muslim communities,³⁹³ like the

³⁸⁹ Bhambhri 1991, 131.

³⁹⁰ Ibid., 131.

³⁹¹ Panikkar 1991, 10-11.

³⁹² Bose 1998, 144.

³⁹³ Kolodner 1995, 239-40, Blom Hansen 1999, 52-3.

Shah Bano case in 1987, when the civil courts awarded alimony to a divorced Muslim woman contrary to the provisions of the shariat. When agitation against the Shah Bano case decision among orthodox and conservative Muslims intensified and appeared to gain mass support, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi capitulated to conservative Muslim opinion to the extent that he passed the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Bill. This literally adopted the provisions of shariat into secular law.³⁹⁴ The decision of Rajiv Gandhi accelerated the clashes between Hindus and Muslims. It also provided a ready-made propaganda weapon to the growing Hindutva movement's claim that the Indian state was pseudo-secular and pro-Muslim, and that it appeased minorities at the expense of the interests of the majority.³⁹⁵

Centralisation and Personalisation of Politics

The communalist problems in India became more salient in the late 1970s, when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, without undertaking any formal amendment to the Constitution, centralised more political power to her own hands. In addition to her absolute control over the national government, she also created a pyramid-like structure for the Congress party, which was reduced to merely an instrument of her personal power. The people that she appointed to political posts were also known to be loyal to her. This understandingly led to growing corruption. In the 1980s Rajiv Gandhi continued on the same lines as his mother.

In the moral vacuum of Indian politics Indira Gandhi "created" the Punjab problem in order to secure and consolidate a perpetual Congress majority in national elections. At the end it paid off in the massive victory of the Congress in 1984, due to the wave of sympathy and national rage in the wake of the assassination of Indira Gandhi.³⁹⁶ Her reluctance to solve the Akali agitation was also part of a calculated strategy to divide the Akalis into moderates and extremists, while cultivating sympathy among a predominantly Hindu electorate.³⁹⁷ In the media, Indira Gandhi normally described the opposition as religious fanatics who advocate secession and separatism and are motivated by communalism and regionalism. She also referred to the actions and statements of the extremists more often than to those of the moderates. Punjabis in

³⁹⁴ Brass 1990, 192.

³⁹⁵ Bose 1998, 128-9.

³⁹⁶ Blom Hansen 1999, 148.

return were aware of this misrepresentation of their concerns and its acceptance, and it only increased their frustration and anger. It also evidently increased their willingness to tolerate, for example, Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale.³⁹⁸ After the defeat in the elections in 1977, Indira Gandhi shifted the Congress Party from a so-called protector of religious minorities and secular values to a champion of Hindu interests. She passionately advocated Hindu hegemony in the Hindi heartland, made numerous pilgrimages to Hindu religious sites throughout the country, and even hired an internationally-recognised guru to be her spiritual guide. Rajiv Gandhi followed his mother's politics.³⁹⁹

The process of the centralisation and personalisation of political authority resulted in an increased inability of the system to accommodate regional demands. Every regional movement was perceived as a threat to the Prime Minister's supremacy, and an autonomous political opposition was regarded as a hindrance to national integration. The most salient incident was Operation Bluestar. The political activity of the nationalist movements grew during the Emergency (1975-77), when Indira Gandhi cancelled all civil rights and forbade the activity of political parties. Consequently, people lost their faith in the functioning of the Indian political system. In Kashmir, Mrs Gandhi reacted to the nationalist demands by trying to suppress the minorities and cancelling most of the special rights given earlier, such as the Article 370 in the Indian Constitution that guarantees autonomy to Kashmir and Jammu. The conflict in Jammu and Kashmir seems to have deepened because of the difficulty of Kashmiri political institutions and leaders to handle the pressure from an interventionist central government. Indira Gandhi was able to dismiss Farooq Abdullah without trouble and persuade the National Conference into an alliance with the Congress (I). The shaken balance between local autonomy and central control had to do with the fundamental questions of who shall govern, in whose interests, and to what ends.

³⁹⁷ See, for example Kothari Rajni & Deshingkar G, Punjab: The Longer View. In Samiuddin Abida (ed.) *The Punjab Crisis: Challenge and Response*, Mittal Publications, Delhi 1985, 622-6.

³⁹⁸ Leaf 1985, 493.

³⁹⁹ Kolodner 1995, 241-2.

The New Nationalism

The Punjabi crisis, Hindu nationalism and the Kashmir dispute have all raised serious questions about the future of India's democracy and the ability of the country to accommodate the aspirations of religious and linguistic minorities under the Indian Union. There was a moral, political and ideological vacuum in Indian politics, which the nationalisms as political forms surged to fill up. People were disappointed with the politics of the Congress party and they were open to new policies and change.⁴⁰⁰ One suggested solution could be to stop seeing subnational identities as threats to the central government. The problems in Punjab and Kashmir show the need for a new nationalism instead of the 'old' Indian nationalism. This new nationalism should be comfortable with multiple loyalties, which focuses loyalty to the centre because the centre helps expand the cultural and political space available to people of diverse faiths, languages, and ethnicities.⁴⁰¹

Hindutva has tried to create a new nationalism for India. It is quite similar, in its emphasis and content, to the monolithic, unitary conception of Indian nationalism that has tried to serve as the official ideology of the post-colonial Indian state, but it reduces Indian nationalism to a brute Hindu majoritarianism. This helps explain why Hindu nationalism as a political creed has assumed salience and potency in the state in India. Hindu nationalism differs from its post-colonial Congress counterpart in its explicitly communalist focus. The similarities, on the other hand, are compelling. Hindu nationalists do not at all reject the Congress model of post-colonial nation-building. They accuse it of impotence and ineffectiveness because it has not gone far enough. The secular state and communalist politics, far from being binary opposites, have in reality been interlinked and implicated in one another: they are the two sides of the coin of a monolithic and state-centralist conceptualisation of Indian nationalism. Their relation is therefore dialectical, not adversarial. In 1969, Jana Sangh, proclaiming Indianisation its ultimate goal, defined it as the subordination of all narrow loyalties like religion, caste, region, language or dogma to the overriding loyalty to the nation. And the constitutive of this nation was the Hinduness of a man. That makes him a national of India.⁴⁰²

⁴⁰⁰ Widmalm 1997a, 103.

⁴⁰¹ Ganguly & Bajpai 1994, 407.

⁴⁰² Bose 1998, 156-9.

It can be argued that the political crisis between different nationalisms in India and the Indian state is a by-product of the defects in India's secular, democratic political system. National political elites view ethno-religious identifications as harmful cleavages undermining political integration, development and modernisation. The processes of national integration and modernisation assume the necessity to forge new loyalties to the centralising state through the formulation of a 'national' culture or identity and the erosion of 'parochial' ethnic identities. But a countertendency reinforcing ethnic identity exists in India, which takes the form of group representation in the democratic political process. The process of nation-building emphasises the forces that bring about assimilation into one system, but the dynamics of democratic competition often amplify the need for collective expression by ethnic groups. This suggests a 'democratic paradox'. Within Punjab, however, the countertendency of reinforcing ethnic identity was exacerbated by the well-entrenched, institutionalised Sikh ethno-religious organisations that promoted their own Sikh nation-building tendencies.⁴⁰³

Unity Under Threat

The crises raise serious questions about whether democracy can continue to function in the face of the polarisation of politics along sectarian or linguistic lines, and whether the Indian Union can continue to contain forces of disintegration. The danger for democracy lies also in the growth of paramilitary organisations, as well as in the armament of the army. This continuing deployment of various paramilitary units as well as the army is fatal for Indian democracy, and it has only exacerbated the situation in Jammu and Kashmir and in Punjab.⁴⁰⁴

The situation in Kashmir and Punjab will continue to affect India's international relations, as the volatile situation in the Kashmir Valley and Pakistan's support for the insurgents raises the possibility of unintentional or even intentional war.⁴⁰⁵ The bad situation in Punjab is reflected in those countries to which Sikhs have immigrated from India, such as Britain and Canada. After Operation Bluestar many riots took place in these countries as well.⁴⁰⁶ The same happened also after the demolition of the mosque in 1992. India has gone through a reorientation in its armed forces to be able to respond to

⁴⁰³ Chima 1994, 859-60.

⁴⁰⁴ Ganguly & Bajpai 1994, 406.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 407.

⁴⁰⁶ *The Times*, Saturday, June 9, 1984.

external danger. During the 1980s, a very large paramilitary establishment was built to deal with religious and ethnic tensions in these highly politicised affairs. In 1989, medium range missiles were tested, which could be armed with nuclear warheads,⁴⁰⁷ and in 1998, India performed nuclear tests in the Rajasthan desert. Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee proudly announced that India now has a “big bomb”.⁴⁰⁸ Vajpayee had dreamed of the weapon from the 1970s on.⁴⁰⁹

The contest by the nationalisms threatens the unity and federalism of India. Secularism was taken as the blueprint in India, particularly to guarantee unity. The Congress Party would be the right channel for strengthening secularism, if it only had the sincere will to do it. Recently, the desire for power and corruption have been keeping it away from its task and Hindu nationalism has been able to take the lead in the politics. Punjab and Kashmir, then, are both essential parts of India. Punjab is not that big of a threat, as it does not have another country fighting on its side, but the situation in Kashmir is more serious because of the proximity of Pakistan. According to the mantra of India, Kashmir is holding India together; if Kashmir were able to secede from the Indian Union, there is the danger that other federal states might try the same. The secession of Kashmir or Punjab would then mean the end of Indian secularism, federalism and democracy. Hindu Rashtra, if comes true, would be a threat to the existence of other religions in India. The persecution of other religions has already become salient in Indian society.

THE CRISIS OF INDIAN SECULARISM

In this chapter, I first look at the reasons for the unsuitability of modernity for India and for why secularism does not function in India as it is supposed to do. Then I move to the crisis of nationalism and the nation-state by explaining why Indian nationalism did not succeed in uniting the Indian nation and why we can say that the Indian state is in a state of crisis. After this I examine the reasons for the crisis of secularism inside the Indian political culture. For this purpose I use the theories of Antonio Gramsci and Juan

⁴⁰⁷ Bracken Paul, *The Military Crisis of the Nation State*. In *Political Studies*, Volume 42 Special issue (Dunn John ed. *Contemporary Crisis of the Nation State*)1994, 113.

⁴⁰⁸ Abraham Itty, *The Making of the Indian Atomic Bomb: Science, Secrecy and the Postcolonial State*. Zed Books Ltd., New York 1998, 1.

⁴⁰⁹ Report no. R-260/64 from the Embassy of Finland in New Delhi to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs on 7 April 1977, ‘Janata-hallituksen suuntaviivat; pääministeri Moraji Desain ja ulkoministeri A. B. Vajpayeen näkemyksiä’. 100 Intia; sisäpolitiikka 1977. (UMA).

Linz. After presenting the principles of the organic crisis of the Indian state, I close by having a look at the political history of independent India to show how the crisis of secularism has developed in the course of history.

The Crisis in Nation-Building

The Unsuitability of Modernity

Indian secularism is a creation of modernity and the idea of a modern nation-state, and it was supposed to guarantee the unity of India and the welfare of the citizens. Many of the researchers who specialise in Indian history and politics argue that secularism does not suit India. They find the reasons for the rise of communal feeling in modernity.⁴¹⁰ India is a traditional society, and modernity, which was brought to India by the colonial power, has always remained an unfamiliar element to Indians and is seen as something threatening, as the 'Other'.

Modernity has a role in the increase of communalist violence. Ashis Nandy claims that today, as India gets modernised, traditional tolerance is diminishing and religious violence increasing. In earlier centuries interreligious riots were rare and localised. Over ninety per cent of the riots begin in urban India, within and around industrial areas.⁴¹¹ According to T. N. Madan's view, modernity also replaces religion with modern, scientific principles. This triggers off an irreconcilable conflict between scientific secularism and religion. Religion, which has been marginalised in India, becomes a source of resistance to this alien world-view and sometimes curdles into bigotry and violence. Therefore, the demand for the removal of religion from public life within the secular framework, which is based on the mainstream Enlightenment view of religion, is irrational.⁴¹² Much of the fanaticism and violence associated with religion today comes from the sense of defeat of the believers, from their feeling of impotency, and from their free-floating anger and self-hatred while facing a world which is increasingly secular and desacralised.⁴¹³ The rise of communalism confirms Rajeev Bhargava's assumption that secularism in the context of India is insensitive to religious people. By forcing people to think of their religion as a matter of private preference, it has

⁴¹⁰ For example Ashis Nandy and T. N. Madan.

⁴¹¹ Nandy et al. 1998, 336-7.

⁴¹² Madan 1997, 5-16, Bhargava 1998a, 22.

⁴¹³ Nandy et al. 1998, 332.

uncoupled the link between religion and community, and deprives people of their sense of identity.⁴¹⁴ It has become more and more obvious that modernity is no longer the ideology of a small minority; it is now the organising principle of the dominant culture in politics. The fact that religion, or as Ashis Nandy classifies it, religion-as-faith⁴¹⁵, dominates the normal life of Indians, is being pushed to the side in politics.

Madan argues that secularism will not find a suitable form in which it could function in India. In the prevailing circumstances, secularism as a generally shared credo of life is impossible in South Asia, because a great majority of the people of South Asia are in their own eyes active adherents of some religious faith. It is also impracticable as a basis for state action, because the standpoint of religious neutrality is difficult to maintain since religious minorities do not share the majority's view of what this entails for the state. According to Madan, secularism would also be impotent as a blueprint for the foreseeable future, because it is incapable of countering religious fundamentalism and fanaticism.⁴¹⁶ Amartya Sen disagrees on this with Madan. Sen writes that the Indian state needs to be secular in the political sense, but does not have to withdraw from dealing with religions and religious communities altogether. For example, it is no violation of secularism for a state to protect everyone's right to worship as he or she chooses, even though in doing this the state has to work with– and for– religious communities.⁴¹⁷

The Crisis of the Nation-State

The nation-building process did not work out as well as had been planned in India. The nation was imagined, but the people did not support this imagined nation. Indian nationalism based on a secular citizenship rather than on any mystical cultural or ethnic essence. Interestingly, there was no way, in the political arrangement, for any person to be only Indian and nothing else; one could not be an Indian without being something else at the same time. Being a Punjabi, Hindu or Muslim, was not contradictory to being

⁴¹⁴ Bhargava 1998b, 487.

⁴¹⁵ Ashis Nandy has divided religion into two categories: religion-as-ideology, as distinguished from religion-as-faith. The latter is definitionally non-monolithic and operationally plural, the former denotes religion as a sub-national, national or cross-national identifier of population contesting for non-religious, usually political or socio-economic interest. To proponents of religion-as-ideology, mobilisation based on religious identity and issues serves a purpose.

⁴¹⁶ Madan 1997, 276.

⁴¹⁷ Sen Amartya, *Secularism and Its Discontents*. In Bhargava Rajeev (ed.), *Secularism and Its Critics*, Oxford University Press. Delhi 1998, 457.

an Indian. Indianness was a complex and multilayered identity which encompassed other such identities without cancelling them out.⁴¹⁸ However, this idea of *homo indicus* has never fully been adapted by the people. The Indian minorities that consider themselves the real nations of India started to rebel against the Indian nation after it had forbidden their demands for autonomy or sovereignty.⁴¹⁹ They wanted Indian states to be reorganised on a linguistic basis. The Congress Party argued that the linguistic principle would mean sowing the seeds of destruction of the political unity of India. India could only be effectively ruled by concentrating the power in the capital and dividing the basis for democratic solidarity between the provinces. The Indian state always took the position that there was only one nation – India – and its territorial sovereignty was unitary and inviolate.⁴²⁰

A sense of Indianness is by no means absent among the citizenry, but the project of integrating the nation seems to have been a very partial success. This is manifested most graphically in the growth of powerful and popular secessionist insurgencies during the eighties and nineties in Kashmir, Assam and Punjab.⁴²¹ These problems have turned the attention to the creation of a distinct nationalism, which usually combines religion, language and ethnicity. The creation of *homo indicus* has partly failed because religions in India are totalising; they have strong importance in everyday life, old religious traditions are highly valued and people will not give up on those ones⁴²². Amartya Sen, unlike Nandy and Madan, does not see Indian identity as a stable basis for the national development of India. He suggests that the identity of being a Hindu, a Muslim, or a Sikh should politically come before being Indian. Sen asserts that, given the preponderance of Hindus in the country, other Indian national identities cannot form a part of a largely homogeneous identity as a necessary basis for nationhood. Only a shared cultural outlook, which in India can only be a largely Hindu view, can produce such a cohesion.⁴²³

⁴¹⁸ Kaviraj 1994, 118-9.

⁴¹⁹ Ganguly & Bajpai 1994, 405-7.

⁴²⁰ Chatterjee 1997, 148-9.

⁴²¹ Bose 1998, 112.

⁴²² The caste system, for example, has already been forbidden for several decades, but it still has a major impact on the lives of Indians.

⁴²³ Sen 1998, 459.

The modern nation-state tries to appeal to believers to keep the public sphere free of religion, but it has no means of ensuring that the ideologies of secularism, development and nationalism themselves do not begin to act as faiths intolerant of others. On the contrary, with the help of modern communications and the secular coercive power at its command, the state frequently uses its ideology to silence its non-conforming citizens.⁴²⁴ Ashis Nandy concludes that the proposition that the secular ideology of the state would be a better guide to political action and to a less violent and richer political life is unsuitable for India. It has become increasingly clear that, as far as public morality goes, the Indian state has very little moral authority left.⁴²⁵

The crisis of the Indian nation-state has several dimensions economically. The five-year plans in their early stages got remarkable results by rationalising resource utilisation and giving some direction to the economy. But once this was reached, traditional forms of planning failed to produce growth and made industries wasteful. Bureaucratic shielding of their performance and government protection made them immune to criticism and they became expensive white elephants. The state sector also came to represent an economic sphere whose function slipped unnoticed from a predominantly economic to a political one: from distribution of welfare by producing low cost inputs for industries, to producers of unaccountable funds used by politicians and bureaucrats. The corruption inside the political machinery increased.⁴²⁶

A second success of the Nehruvian development design also started turning sour. Industrialisation after independence helped strengthen the national economy, but at the cost of intensifying regional inequalities. With the opportunity provided by democratic institutions, resentment against regional unevenness tended to find quick outlets in regionalist movements. Indira Gandhi successfully pursued policies of isolation in Assam and Punjab, outmanoeuvring regional opposition through a formal democratic process. However, sometimes the central government was successful in transforming guerrilla leaders into instant Chief Ministers; such transactions were done in an attempt to head off widespread social resentment, but they often led to the quick isolation of the leaders because of the disapproval of their militant followers. In any case, this pattern

⁴²⁴ Nandy et al. 1998, 333.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, 333-4.

⁴²⁶ Kaviraj 1994, 126.

did nothing to produce long term political stability. Punjab offers the best example of a situation where the people of the state became the battlefield between two combatants speaking in the name of contrary nationalisms: Indian armed forces preserving the Indian nation-state and armed militants trying to create a new Punjabi state of Khalistan.⁴²⁷

The central contradiction in the history of the Indian nation-state seems to be between the logic of economic development and the logic of political identities. Economic change through the centralising state and the homogenising market works towards large entities, like commodities and the labour market. The associated institutions of the modern society, such as the armed forces, the large and powerful bureaucracy, a massive managerial middle class the size of the population of the big European nations, all understand the advantages of scale; they enjoy the surpluses that only India's scale makes possible. Therefore, this is one of the reasons for the ruling-elite to speak the language of national integration and unity. Unity, too, often has become to mean the homogenisation of the political communities. This does violence to the political imagination of the Indian nation-state, which emphasised diversity as a great asset and enjoyed the principles of tolerance and mixture as the special gift of the Indian civilisation.⁴²⁸

The Organic Crisis of the Indian State

The contest of Indian secularism has led secularism to an organic crisis in the post-colonial Indian state. It has been in the making for several decades, and inevitably has massive influence throughout civil society as well. I will first present the theoretical background of the organic crisis, following the theories of Juan Linz and Antonio Gramsci. They come from very different kinds of intellectual surroundings; Linz represents today's political research whereas Gramsci was a Marxist scholar from the beginning of the 20th century. However, they both speak in the same way about the organic crisis of a state. Neither of them has used the theory in an Indian context. Gramsci has studied Italy and Linz Spain, but both of the theories apply to the situation in India. This chapter aims to show that the contemporary Indian crisis is a

⁴²⁷ Kaviraj 1994, 126-7.

⁴²⁸ Ibid., 128.

multidimensional one, in which the earlier discussed communalist conflict is but one aspect. The other aspect comprises the Congress regimes' policies that have facilitated the meteoric rise of Hindu, Sikh and Kashmiri nationalisms. As Juan Linz puts it, "the independent contributions made to regime crisis by political incumbents is an aspect all too often to be overlooked" because of a one-sided focus on the characteristics and activities of apparently radical opposition movements.⁴²⁹ The focus of Linz's⁴³⁰ study is on the incumbents and their actions, and their way of defining problems and the capacity to solve them.⁴³¹

An organic crisis is systematic and relatively permanent. It has deep structural roots, and cannot be resolved through mere changes in the personnel of the government. An organic crisis tends to generate chronic social and political instability, and occasionally, major political realignments. The organic crisis of the Indian state has two major dimensions: one at the level of the democratic regime, and the other in the sphere of the party system. At the level of the regime prevails a situation that Juan Linz characterises as a crisis of "legitimacy". This crisis in turn has two dimensions which concern a severely damaged and deficient regime, "efficacy" and the regime "effectiveness". Efficacy refers to the capacity of a regime to find solutions to the basic problems facing any political system. Effectiveness, then, refers to the capacity to actually implement the policies that have been formulated, with the desired results.⁴³² The crisis of regime legitimacy is defined by failures in the interrelated categories of efficacy and effectiveness. Legitimacy crises have two salient aspects. First, they are not unfortunate accidents or aberrations but the result of structural strains. Second, regime breakdowns are only the culmination of a long and complex process.⁴³³ In India, there is a crisis of legitimacy for the secularism as for the Congress party. Secular politics in India have not been able to find peaceful ways to contain communalist violence. Instead they have intervened the state government formations and relied on the armed forces.

⁴²⁹ Kaviraj 1994 107, Linz Juan, Crisis, Breakdown, and Reequilibration. In Linz Juan J. & Stepan Alfred (ed.) *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1978, ix.

⁴³⁰ Linz excludes authoritarian, totalitarian and traditional political systems from his analysis, citing the lack of institutionalisation. However, I believe that Linz's framework is applicable to contemporary India, which is a highly institutionalised democracy and meets Linz's criteria for a democratic regime. These are: freedom to create political parties, freedom of speech and association, (reasonably) free elections at regular intervals, on the basis of at least universal male suffrage, and inclusion of effective political offices in the electoral process. Linz 1978, 5-7.

⁴³¹ Linz 1978, 40.

⁴³² *Ibid.*, 20-2.

⁴³³ *Ibid.*, 12, 80.

In the sphere of competitive party-politics, there is a “crisis of hegemony” for the Congress Party. This has generated a situation of unprecedented instability, unpredictability and flux in the multi-party system.⁴³⁴ The concept ‘hegemony’ constitutes Gramsci’s major theoretical innovation in his *Prison Notebooks*. It has not been formulated clearly but instead has been used in variable meanings and connections. Generally, hegemony has come to be understood as a mode of social control by which one group exerts its dominance over others by means of ideology.⁴³⁵ In Antonio Gramsci’s writings, an organic crisis refers to the historical failure of the Italian bourgeoisie to generate the liberal society envisaged during the period of national unification, the Risorgimento.⁴³⁶ “In any country the process is different, although the content is the same. And the content is the crisis of the ruling class’s hegemony, which occurs either because the ruling class has failed in some major political undertaking for which it has requested, or forcibly imposed, the consent of the broad masses (especially of peasants and petite-bourgeois intellectuals) have passed suddenly from a state of political passivity to a certain activity, and put forward demands which in their disorganic whole constitute revolution. A ‘crisis of authority’ is spoken of, and this is precisely the crisis of hegemony, or general crisis of the state”.⁴³⁷ Differently, a crisis of hegemony occurs when a force that has formerly exerted political, economic and ideological leadership over society is challenged from below and is no longer able to sustain a cohesive bloc of social alliances. It is this overall crisis that has provided the context and opportunity for the communalist movements to make a serious challenge for capturing the state power. The crisis has made salient old and new conflicts, contradictions and cleavages in India’s vast and increasingly differentiated social structure, and has fostered profound dissatisfaction, disillusionment and anxiety among sections of the population.⁴³⁸

Another dimension of the organic crisis, according to Linz, is the failure of the regimes, particularly democracies, in building legitimacy to define boundaries of the state and the

⁴³⁴ Bose 1998, 109.

⁴³⁵ Femia J. V., Gramsci’s Political Thought. Hegemony, Consciousness and the Revolutionary Process. Clarendon, Oxford 1981. Martin 1998, 66.

⁴³⁶ Martin James, Gramsci’s Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction. Macmillan Press Ltd., Hampshire & London 1998, 129.

⁴³⁷ Ibid., 75.

⁴³⁸ Bose 1998, 109-110.

nation. In this case, full democracy must allow the expression of the nationalism of the periphery, and it permits not only autonomist or federalist demands, but secessionist demands.⁴³⁹ Tolerance of secessionist and separatist movements has not succeeded in India. These secessionist movements can be described with Linz's term disloyal opposition. Disloyal oppositions are minorities but also certain parties, movements and organisations which reject political systems based on the authority of the state or a central authority with coercive powers, or for example secessionist and irredentist nationalist movements can be defined as disloyal oppositions.⁴⁴⁰ Good examples of Linzian disloyal oppositions in the Indian context are Kashmiri and Sikh secessionists, who reject the present Indian state as a legitimate institutional framework. The BJP is clearly not a disloyal opposition in this sense. It is, to the contrary, an extremely system-oriented party which is in the favour of the centralisation and the coercive role of the state. However, the BJP does meet Linz's definitive criterion for semiloyalty,⁴⁴¹ which is a willingness to encourage, tolerate, cover up, excuse, or justify the actions of other participants that go beyond the limits of peaceful, legitimate patterns of politics in a democracy. Parties become suspect when, on the basis of ideological affinity, agreement on some ultimate goal (Hindu Rashtra), or particular policies, they make a distinction between means and ends. Ultimately, semiloyalty can be identified by a system-oriented party's greater affinity for extremists on its side of the political spectrum than for system parties closer to the opposite side.⁴⁴² In a normal situation a democratic government should enjoy legitimacy even among those who constitute its opposition. This is what is meant by the expression loyal opposition.⁴⁴³

Gramsci defined a 'war of movement' as a series of frontal assaults on the ruling authority, and a 'war of position' as a protracted organisational and mobilisational effort in civil society, whose objective is the formation of a collective will among the people, a prerequisite for the taking of state power. The Hindu nationalist campaign is mostly a war of position, whereas the conflicts between Sikhs/Kashmiris and the Congress party have taken the form of a war of movement. A 'passive revolution' is a historical situation in which a new political formation comes to power without fundamentally

⁴³⁹ Linz 1978, 46.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., 28.

⁴⁴¹ Bose 1998, 110.

⁴⁴² Linz 1978, 32-3.

⁴⁴³ Ibid., 16.

reordering social relations, but rather by adapting to and gradually modifying the status quo.⁴⁴⁴ It also refers to a persistent series of reforms to the political system without the integration of the masses into the public sphere. The majority of the populace has continually remained outside of any effective control over political institutions – essentially passive – despite being subject to their rule.⁴⁴⁵ According to Bose, the goal of the Hindutva movement is a “passive revolution” in crisis-ridden India.⁴⁴⁶

The systematic exclusion of or discrimination against the opposition in many realms of public life, such as the bureaucracy, the armed forces, or the administration of interventionist economic policies, might push those ready to form a loyal opposition into semi- and disloyal positions.⁴⁴⁷ Such is the case in Kashmir and partly in Punjab. The Muslims of Kashmir have been denied representation in the better occupations of the state, and in Punjab the central government has intervened dramatically in the economic planning. The most serious crises are those in which the maintenance of the public order becomes impossible within a democratic framework: when the regime needs to be reassured of the loyalty of the forces of repression, when the use of such forces against one or another group becomes impossible without endangering the regime-sustaining coalitions, and when the disloyal opposition is perceived as capable of mobilising large parts of the population, or strategically located sectors of it, unless the problem is solved.⁴⁴⁸

Uneven development is closely related to persistent, indeed deepening forms of social inequalities and attendant conflicts in India. Caste is still a reality in the social and political life, most glaringly among Hindi-speaking Hindus in Northern India. Indeed, caste has become firmly established as the organising principle of contemporary Indian politics, and this fact has much to do with the present appeal of the Hindutva ideology to certain caste-based social groups. These structural underpinnings, combined with various conjunctural developments, had resulted in an organic crisis of state power in the 1970s and 1980s. However, in order to show how this crisis unfolded, it is necessary

⁴⁴⁴ Bose 1998, 111.

⁴⁴⁵ Martin 1998, 47.

⁴⁴⁶ Bose 1998, 109.

⁴⁴⁷ Linz 1978, 34.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 54.

to look deeper into and retrace the major trends in India's institutional politics and political economy since 1947.⁴⁴⁹

The Decline of Indian Secularism

The Nehru Tenure

The relative stability of the Nehru years (1947-1964) has often been contrasted with the personalised and plebiscitary politics associated with Indira Gandhi. But there are problems with this dichotomy, especially given the limited and fragile structural basis of the Nehruvian consensus. During the Nehru era the state was meant to be a viable machinery of power exercised by the ruling class. It was an elaborate system of balances, structured hierarchically as well as over geographical regions, providing a reasonable degree of autonomy at each level.⁴⁵⁰ This balancing between different sectional interests within the ruling class alliance was sustained by the Congress party which was built on alliances with influential men in villages, towns, and districts throughout India, a system which was based on the ability of the ruling party to provide patronage in return for votes.⁴⁵¹ Since the 1960s, however, politicians gradually started to become more provincial, while federalism became more complex, requiring bargaining and accommodation between governments run by different political parties.⁴⁵² Beneath the rhetoric of modernisation, Nehru's regime was reproducing traditional patterns of domination, and creating new ones. It was during Nehru's reign that an elaborate system of patron-client networks developed, whereby agrarian dominants delivered the votes of the subaltern classes as well as their own to the Congress during the elections of the fifties and sixties. The fundamental and long-term failure in both efficacy and effectiveness fostered a crisis of regime legitimacy, as well as serious questions about the viability of Congress hegemony in competitive party-politics. This was reflected first in a dramatic decline in support at regional and provincial levels for Congress at the first general elections in 1967 after Nehru's death,

⁴⁴⁹ Bose 1998, 113-4.

⁴⁵⁰ Chatterjee 1997, 102.

⁴⁵¹ Ludden David, Introduction, *Ayodhya: A Window on the World*. In *Making India Hindu: Religion, Community, and the Politics of Democracy in India* ed. Ludden David, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1996, 17-8.

⁴⁵² Thakur 1993, 648.

culminating in the split of 1969 into old guard and populist-progressive Indira Gandhi factions.⁴⁵³

Indira Gandhi's Authoritarianism

Indira Gandhi's Congress was never the same as Nehru's Congress. The basic accent was now on the centralising of executive power. Thus, the representational function of the ruling party, which was earlier diffused and layered across different levels and regions, was now concentrated in the hands of the Prime Minister, who, beyond all political interest groups, supposedly stood in a direct relationship with the nation. This centralising tendency and an increasing reliance on state violence to meet oppositional moves were a response to growing unrest, and to agitational movements by the oppressed classes. The difficulties with this system became clear during the Emergency period (1975-77). The Emergency showed the inherent difficulties of an undemocratic and centralised system in maintaining a balance between different sections and interests divided regionally and locally. There are sources saying that Mrs Gandhi's return to power in 1980 did not alter this tendency.⁴⁵⁴ Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared the Emergency because she had noticed that a small but religiously fundamental group was preparing with the press to overthrow the government. She found the Emergency a success, as everything worked well during that time and because she had saved the country from anarchy.⁴⁵⁵ Behind these words by Mrs Gandhi could have been the fact that she was being accused of using her privileges as Prime Minister, like the airplanes of the government, for her election campaign which could have prevented her to take part in the coming elections.⁴⁵⁶

At the level of the political process, the imposition of the Emergency, followed by the defeat of the Congress party and the election of the Janata Party in 1977, brought immense changes to the party system and the strategies of mobilisation. The Congress (I) tried to gain votes from the political terrain which was normally occupied by right-wing parties.⁴⁵⁷ A new election strategy were the vote banks, which Indira Gandhi built

⁴⁵³ Bose 1998, 114-6.

⁴⁵⁴ Chatterjee 1997, 102-3.

⁴⁵⁵ Telegram no. 40/ 3732 K from the Embassy of Finland in New Delhi to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs on 5 August 1975. 100 Intia; sisäpolitiikka v. 1975. (UMA).

⁴⁵⁶ Report no. R-489/129 from the Embassy of Finland in New Delhi to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs on 16 June 1975, 'Indira Gandhi pinteessä'. 100 Intia; sisäpolitiikka v. 1975. (UMA).

⁴⁵⁷ Hasan 1991, 143-4.

along sectarian divides. There was a series of laws, decisions and policies that cumulatively seemed to demand adherence of the majority community to secularism, while conceding to the Muslim minority the right to live by other norms. This progressively eroded the very secularism on which the security of Muslims depended in a Hindu-majority country. Permitting Muslim men to have four wives, for instance, is grist to the Hindu chauvinist's propaganda mill that India will eventually be overrun by Muslims.⁴⁵⁸

The understanding of the retreat of secularism begins by looking at the nature and character of inter-communal relations in the 1980s. Communalist riots were not entirely absent in the Nehru era. But there has been a tremendous spurt in communalist violence since the late 1960s which has bloodied the Indian landscape. Communalist forces, kept under check by Nehru's leadership, surged forward causing serious damage to India's secularism. The last phase of the Indira Gandhi era witnessed a marked polarisation of Indian society on communal and sectarian lines. Nearly 4,000 people were killed in communalist violence, which is almost four times the corresponding figure from the 1970s. The number of districts affected increased from 61 in 1960 to 250 in 1986-87. Another notable feature was that, while in the past these incidents occurred mainly in urban areas, more recently they have also spread to rural areas.⁴⁵⁹

The closing years of the Indira Gandhi era were marked by the breakdown of the secular consensus. The leading ruling class party was worried that its close identification with minorities bore the risk of alienating many of their constituents, as Muslims had already begun to drift away from the Congress. The gradual decline of the Congress base made it possible for communalistically oriented groups to step into the political vacuum. The Congress responded with appropriate communalist themes, especially with themes of Hindu hegemony that appeal to the Hindi heartland. Such themes and symbols gained currency in Indira Gandhi's speeches.⁴⁶⁰ The Congress Party had also earlier adapted the cow as the symbol of the Party, even though the use of religious symbols for

⁴⁵⁸ Thakur 1993, 648-9.

⁴⁵⁹ Nandy et al. 1998, 8,10. The table Nandy et al. use for the casualties of communal incidents states that there were only 445 casualties in communal violence in 1984. That cannot be true, as in the attack on Golden Temple alone approximately 1,000 people died. The government of India claims that in the attack on the Golden Temple only 554 civilians and 92 soldiers were killed.

⁴⁶⁰ Gandhi Indira 1986, 280-3. Gandhi speaks of the importance of Hindi as the unifying language of India.

advertisement was forbidden.⁴⁶¹ The cow is the symbol of the Mother and fertility for the Hindus and it is a good means of raising the feeling of togetherness among Hindus. During 1982, the Congress leaders recognised that a confrontational posture towards the National Conference and the Sikh extremists might gain them the support of many Hindus in Kashmir and Delhi. The logic behind the move to the right was somewhat similar to Indira Gandhi's adoption of radical slogans after 1969. Then, it was a means of undermining the parties on the left, while now, the move to the right was an attempt to appropriate the symbols and appeals of the rightist parties, mainly the BJP, which posed a threat to the Congress in Northern India. This strategy was put to effective use in the 1984 elections. The Congress leaders adopted a narrow and intolerant rhetoric in which the opposition parties were routinely attacked as anti-national forces. This sort of strategy catalysed communal sentiments and provided the Congress an opportunity to become the main spokesman for majoritarian interests by concluding that in doing so the Congress was protecting India from the dangers of communalism and disunity.⁴⁶² Indira Gandhi was consequently able to arrest the Congress' decline as India's hegemonic party, and temporarily contain the regime's crisis of legitimacy. The new Congress strategy was encapsulated in the slogan "*Garibi Hatao!*" (Abolish Poverty!) and entailed the cultivation of particularly deprived and degraded social groups, such as scheduled castes and tribals. Indira Gandhi's style, often termed as populist and plebiscitary, is characterised as one revolving around majoritarian politics.⁴⁶³

The Hindu nationalist movement that defined its politics in the idiom of pan-Hindu resurgence was confined in its appeal primarily to urban areas of Hindi-speaking north India. Hindu nationalism has historically been very much the movement of a relatively small, socially and territorially circumscribed minority speaking the political language of integral majoritarianism. But during the 1990s it has gained popularity and cannot be described as a minority movement anymore. From 1984 on the Congress started to face troubles. It lost heavily in provincial elections in two southern Indian provinces, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, which had stood solidly behind Mrs Gandhi even in 1977, when the North had rejected the Congress and supported the Janata tenure that followed. Later that year the situation in the major Northern province of Assam went completely out of

⁴⁶¹ Report on 16 June 1975. 100 Intia; sisäpolitiikka v. 1975. UMA.

⁴⁶² Hasan 1991, 144-5.

⁴⁶³ Bose 1998, 116-7, Blom Hansen 1999, 141.

control because of the regime's mishandling of a student-led ethno-linguistic movement that demanded enhanced regional autonomy, as well as genuine development, in an area which remained desperately poor despite its rich natural resources. Even though this movement did have separatist overtones, the regime's response, a combination of repression and manipulation, only led to the deterioration of a tense situation and into massive violence.⁴⁶⁴ In the elections of the Jammu and Kashmir provincial assembly, in which the Congress had as its rival the National Conference, a predominantly but not exclusively Kashmiri Muslim organisation, Mrs Gandhi appealed explicitly to communal sentiments among Hindu voters in Jammu. The Congress campaign, however, could hardly have evoked the response it did had it not been for the rapidly worsening situation in Punjab, where secessionist sentiment had appeared among Sikh youth.⁴⁶⁵

The Congress, with its majoritarian nationalism, had not been able to offer solutions to India's long-term structural problems, but was also constantly creating new crisis-areas through its policies. Many of the factors conditioning the 1967 election reappeared in a contemporary form in 1989: a crisis of leadership credibility, an economic downturn, dissension within the Congress, its non-performance and misrule at the centre and the provinces, popular anger with corruption among senior officials, and a general desire for change. But there was one crucial difference. The Congress lost in the 1989 elections decisively because, unlike in 1967, the issue was no longer one solely related to the legitimacy of a particular regime. The crisis was now an organic crisis of state authority as such. Congress' continuation in office was seen as being detrimental to the continuation of India as a unified, democratic and secular state.⁴⁶⁶

In Rajiv Gandhi's era, the emphasis was switched to technological modernisation, symbolised by Rajiv's obsession with computer use as a mark of progress, and expressed by the catchy slogan, "*Moving Into the 21st Century*". This vision obviously appealed only to the urbanised upwardly mobile classes of Indian society. The other noticeable trend was the continuing centralisation of decision making on key issues. The result was a correlation between the growing centralisation of power and the increasing

⁴⁶⁴ Bose 1998, 118-120.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid., 121.

⁴⁶⁶ Bose 1998, 124-5.

powerlessness of the centralisers. By 1989, India was in the throes of a serious economic recession and foreign-exchange shortage, the result of economic mismanagement by the regimes of Indira and especially Rajiv Gandhi. Since 1989-90 the organic crisis of the state has only intensified.⁴⁶⁷ After the electoral decline of the Congress, India faced the prospect of a fractionalised multiparty system in which the major contenders for national power were the Congress, the Janata Dal, the BJP and the Communist Party of India.⁴⁶⁸

CONCLUSION

Indian nationalism and Indian secularism are both attempts to come in terms with multi-cultural India. They both tried to unite the different ethnic groups and religions of India by forming an identity of togetherness: Indianness. For the unity of the country Indianness was supported by an Indian form of secularism. They both were aimed at guaranteeing the peaceful coexistence of the different religions and ethnic groups of India. Indianness was imagined, but it was not accepted by other Indian nationalisms. This can be seen in the way the Indian state was alienating from the Indian society when it tried to unify the different communities under the state. Indian secularism denied the role of religion in everyday life situations in a way that communities could not accept. An important aspect of the Indian nationalism was also the promise for a modern India with economic growth and well-being of the citizens. The Indian nation-state failed to provide this and 'new Indian' nationalisms started to emerge and demand the right to rule over their own communities on their own conditions. The 'traditional' ethnic identities were stronger than the central government had assumed, and this quickly led to clashes and violence between the different views on the essence of India. The violence was often conducted by a political party, which proved that it is nearly impossible to limit religion in the private life in India. Therefore, Nehru's well-wishing attempts to keep religion away from politics have more or less failed. The state was also not able to respond to the demands of multi-ethnicity and solve the demands constructively. Nehru's advocacy for the secularisation of society was not supported by the people. Many minorities felt that through the homogenisation their religion and culture were being oppressed when trying to create a common version of Indian culture.

⁴⁶⁷ Bose 1998, 125-131.

⁴⁶⁸ Singh M. P. 1992, 303-4.

The democratisation of the state gave the minorities a possibility to organise themselves politically and start to protect their own culture, language or religion. Political parties, on the other hand, found the feeling of subordination useful for their own purposes and started to resort to the religious identity of the people as their basis for political mobilisation. Politics communalised in India.

There are two main reasons for the contest of Indian secularism. They are interwoven and to some extent also parallel. However, historically, the contest of Indian secularism has first happened through the different Indian nationalisms which refused to merge into the idea of an Indian nation-state. The ruling power considered that the integrity of India was threatened by the secessionist movements, and to maintain the idea of integrity, some of the leading politicians of the Congress party have relentlessly pursued the project of homogenising diversities. But everything turned out the other way around: because of the attempted homogenisation, a growing number of separatists and secessionist movements have gained political power in the country. Therefore, homogenisation has partly led India into political decay and caused the decline of secularism, especially because of the use of oppressing politics, which then has consequently induced the rise of secessionist movements. This has then been strengthened by the other nationalisms that have benefited the rise of each other: Kashmiri nationalism has given impetus to Hindu nationalism and vice versa, but Sikh nationalism has also grown because of the rising Hindu nationalism.

Secondly, the contest and the decay of secularism has been the result of the politics of the originally secular Congress Party, which has surrendered its secular role several times by using communalist tensions to further their political aims. It has also surrendered its democratic role by consciously attempting to weaken and even to destroy institutions, in the often a mistaken belief that this will strengthen their hands. This centralisation and alienation policy led then to the weakening of the Congress Party's effectiveness in controlling communalism. It lost its legitimacy as the state power and it has drifted into a crisis of hegemony because of the politics of centralisation. The Congress Party resorted to populism in the 1980s as the result of the growing communalist movements. This made it possible for the communalist parties to start a wide-based mobilisation. The Congress used the national unity and secularism as manipulative symbols for electoral mobilisation. Thus, it has been easy for Hindus to

rely on Hindu religious symbols in their mobilisation. However, this does not mean that it was the fault of the Congress that Hindus have leaned on their own to use cultural and religious background to advance their political aims. Because of the contest done by the nationalist movements and the unsuccessful politics of the Congress Party to contain these movements and to preserve the secular character of its politics the Indian political system has failed to hold on to the principles of secularism and democracy, which has then consequently deepened the crisis of secularism. The crisis has also brought up old cleavages and disputes and therefore it has grown even deeper. The crisis of Indian secularism is like a vicious circle.

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ANNEX I: The Map of Jammu and Kashmir

ANNEX II: Hindu-Muslim riots: victims⁴⁶⁹

Year	No. of casualties	No. of victims
1954	83	34
1955	72	24
1956	74	35
1957	55	12
1958	41	7
1959	42	41
1960	26	14
1961	92	108(139)
1962	60	43(42)
1963	61	26(30)
1964	1070	1919(1703) ⁴⁷⁰
1965	173	34(30)
1966	133	45(42)
1967	209	251(253)
1968	346	133(87)
1969	519	674(572)
1970	521	298(297)
1971	321	103
1972	240	70
1973	242	72
1974	248	87
1975	205	33
1976	169	39
1977	188	36
1978	219	108
1979	304	261
1980	427	375
1981	319	196
1982	474	238
1983	500	1142 ⁴⁷¹
1984	476	445
1985	525	328
1986	764	418
1987	711	383
1988	611	223
1989	706	1155
1990	1404	1248
1991	905	474
1992	1991	1640

These are official figures and they under-estimate the actual number of casualties and therefore it is not possible to say to what extent.

⁴⁶⁹ Table from Jaffrelot 1996, 552.

⁴⁷⁰ This figure is due to an exceptionally high death toll of 985b in the state of Orissa.

⁴⁷¹ This high figure is due to the anti-Bangladeshi riots in the state of Assam.

ANNEX III: Frequency and Casualties of Communalist Incidents⁴⁷²

Year	No. of incidents	Persons killed	Persons injured
1954	84	34	512
1955	75	24	457
1956	82	35	575
1957	58	12	316
1958	40	7	369
1959	42	41	1344
1960	26	14	262
1961	92	108	593
1962	60	43	348
1963	61	26	489
1964	1070	1919	2053
1965	173	34	758
1966	144	45	467
1967	198	251	880
1968	346	133	1309
1969	519	673	2702
1970	528	298	1607
1971	321	103	1263
1972	240	69	1056
1973	242	72	1318
1974	248	87	1123
1975	205	33	809
1976	169	39	794
1977	188	36	1122
1978	230	110	1853
1979	304	261	2379
1980	421	372	2691
1981	319	196	2631
1982	470	238	3025
1983	500	1143	3652
1984	476	445	4836
1985	525	328	3665

⁴⁷² Rajgopal P.R., *Communal Violence in India*. Uppal, New Delhi 1987, 16-7. Quoted in Nandy et al. 1995, 7.