Cultures of Peace in India: Local visions, global values and possibilities for social change

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Introduction

> *Peace cultures thrive on and are nourished by visions of how things might be, in a world where sharing and caring are part of the accepted lifeways for everyone. The very ability to imagine something different and better than what currently exists is critical for the possibility of social change. (Elise Boulding, 2000:29)*

In contemporary society, the world is presented and mediated to us in myriads of ways, through news, social media, written words and innumerable visualities, in digital and analogue forms. These representations of society show different visions of the reality around us, the status quo of societal relations, and the directions to which our society is heading. Some years back, peace scholar Elise Boulding wrote about the important of vision to sustaining and thriving peace cultures. Do we envision a peaceful future, or one of war and terror? Fostering peace and peace cultures, in her understanding, was dependent on visionaries that could imagine peaceful futures, no matter the present state of affairs. Rather than seeing utopia in its common negative connotation, she argued for the importance of alternative visions as profound "critiques of the present" (Boulding 2000:29) and as drivers for social change.

In this article, we draw on this understanding to investigate sources of peace cultures in India through the lives and philosophies of those that carry such alternative visions and have made them relevant for social and political transformation. India is probably the most culturally, ethnically and religiously diverse country in the world. If one examines different cultures in the country, one finds that religious and spiritual values comprise an important part of traditional and emerging notions of peace (Kumar 2010; Upadhyaya 2010; Kumar and Jacobsen 2014). There is no doubt that peace is part of the local cultural practices and traditions of societal living; socio-religious traditions in India are widely acknowledged as resources of values of peace, love, compassion, non-violence and tolerance (Upadhyaya 2010, Kumar 2010; 2011).

The sub-continent is the birthplace of some of the major religious traditions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Jainism.

India has also been home to various socio-religious figures and movements that have carried forward values of peace and social harmony based on societal ethics, ancient scriptures and lived traditions on the sub-continent (Upadhyaya 2010, Kumar 2010). This article explores four Indian figures and their peace work against the background of the UN decades for a culture of peace and non-violence and rapprochement for cultures,*Mohandas K. Gandhi, Aurobindo Ghose, Jiddu Krishnamurti and Mata Amritanandamayi (Amma).* It recognizes their lives as a contribution to the peace cultures, based on their philosophical and practical approach to issues such as conflict, social reform, humanitarian relief and other societal issues.

Peace culture and the social vision

The understanding of peace as rooted in religious and spiritual traditions and practices is found in avenues of Peace Studies that emphasize on the importance of cultural understandings of peace, its historical, social and etymological meanings in different parts of the world, as well as local understandings of conflict resolution andpeace works (Lederach 1995, 2005, Boulding 1978, 1985, Richmond 2007, Mac Ginty 2006, Upadhaya 2010, Kumar and Jacobsen 2014, Dietrich et al. 2011). Indian culture holds a rich promise to explore religion and spirituality as potent sites for peace building and conflict transformation, an insight that has been appreciated by both early as well contemporary scholars of Peace Studies (Galtung 1969, Lederach 1995, Upadhaya 2010, Upadhaya and Kumar 2014, etc.).

In the last decade we have seen a proliferation of work towards cultures of peace worldwide - not only within the field of Peace and Conflict Studies but also on a broader communal, societal and international level - spurred by the United Nations declaration for a year and a decade dedicated to education for a culture of peace and non-violence. The purpose of the Decade for Peace and Nonviolence has been to promote a culture of peace in all arenas of the global society - the family; the neighborhood communities where people live, work, play, study, serve, and worship; and between and among people in states and nations in the larger global society through peace education. The decade is followed by the current International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022) which emphasizes on the importance of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity and understanding and cooperation for peace.

Even long before the UN and UNESCO identified cultures of peace, non violence and cultural diversity as important goals that needed to be globally achieved in the

21st century, Indian society at large had already been involved in a national movement – the independence movement against British colonial rule- that embraced a culture of peace and non-violence as its core values. The Indian people's non-violent struggle against colonialism became an inspiration for many other social and political movements around the world in the second half of the 20th century, e.g. Civil rights movement in the US, Anti-Apartheid movement in South Africa.

In post-independent India, several social movements and peace workers have adopted principles of non-violence and 'peace by peaceful means' in order to achieve their goals (Ramachandra 2006, Kumar and Jacobsen 2014). However, the various cultures of peace work that are taking place in India do not only belong to the modern conditions of the colonial and post-colonial period, but also are based in the cultural traditions and the various religions and philosophical customs of the country that date back to pre-colonial times. Throughout history, various prominent figures and movements have used the support of socio-religious tradition as transformative tools in order to carry out various social reforms (Upadhyaya 2010, Kumar and Jacobsen 2014). The bhakti traditions from South and North India in the 15th and 16th century, for example, stressed for an egalitarian and peaceful society (Gandhi 2004: 63).The bhaktisaints from that period like Guru Nanak (1469-1539) - the founder of Sikhism - largely rejected the hereditary of Brahminicalrule and caste system and its focus on prescribed ritual and morals, emphasising instead the need for purity of heart and an attitude of selfless love (Gandhi 2004; Kumar 2010). Sikhism thus became a movement of social and religious reform.

The cultural history of India is a filled with countless stories of sages, saints and ordinary people who have dedicated their lives to self-knowledge and personal and societal transformation. Some of those figures have impacted their followers and societies with values such as selfless-love, peace and compassion.In the nineteenth century, for example, several individuals such as Rammohan Roy (1774–1833), Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824–1883) used indigenous Hindi discourses to oppose oppressive cultural practices as untouchability and prohibition of widow marriage (Upadhyaya 2010). Saraswati established the Arya Samaj to spread values of social equality and development in the Hindu community. Another outstanding reformer of that era was Swami Vivekanand (1863–1902) who introduced the teachings of the Vedanta and yoga to the West and accorded Hinduism a status of as a world religion. He opposed caste discrimination and emphasized the task of ending poverty and illiteracy as critical religious work. Vivekananda founded the Ramakrishna Mission, which continues to remain an active site of peace education and spiritual learning in India and around the world today. There are several hundred educational institutions and hospitals inspired and supported by the Mission.

In the following sections of this article, we look into the visions of four individuals who have fostered social change and contributed to cultures of peace through their visions of society and human relationships, and "how things might be" (Boulding 2000:29).

Gandhi's visions of non-violence and self-rule

Amongst those people who appropriated the value of Indian religious traditions as a resource for societal peace and for achieving socio-political reforms, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869–1948) has been an outstanding figure. Gandhi built his philosophy on the teachings of Indian traditions such as Hinduism and Jainism (Gandhi 2006). Gandhi's principles and ethics such as ahimsa – non-violence- and satyagraha – holding to the truth - as well as his struggle for swaraj -self-rule - against the British Empire were firmly rooted in these traditions of India (Kumar and Jacobsen 2014).

Gandhi's principles and ethics of love and non-violence have been influential in the activities of many modern environmental, social, human rights and peace movements in the world. His philosophy and activism have been important resource for peace workers as well as significant in the conceptualization of important theories within the field of contemporary Peace and Conflict Studies (Kumar 2010; Upadhaya and Kumar 2014). Early modern peace researchers and scholars such as Johan Galtung, Gene Sharp or Kenneth Boulding, for example, have drawn essential insights from Gandhi's philosophy on peace, violence and conflict, and developed them to systemic theories and promoted Gandhi's ideal of non-violence and 'peace by peaceful means' (Weber 1999; 2004). These peace scholars were especially influenced by Hindu and Buddhist philosophy and ethics (Weber 1999).

In theories of Peace Studies the focus is oftentimes on how to transform violent conflicts among adversaries, or prevent such conflicts from occurring. Gandhi's philosophy and actions, rooted in Indian cultural and religious traditions, were firmly situated in the belief that one could fight an opponent without resorting to violence. Gandhi's (peace) philosophy, in particular, emerged from *satyagraha*, which he saw as the most noble, perpetual, a high and thoughtful value. Indeed, Gandhi referred to his teaching as 'holding to truth' (Bondurant 1988) in his autobiography 'My Experiments with Truth' (2006). The teachings and practices of *satyagraha* and *ahimsa* developed by Gandhi rapidly became a central feature of the struggle of the Indian people, providing a strong counter to the power and dominance of the colonial state. Gandhi rejected intolerant and hate-filled opposition to any adversary. His position was that contradictions were best resolved through a compassionate process of dialogue, but failing that, a non-violent dispute was the only truthful strategy (Hardiman 2003).

Gandhi thus founded the struggle for India's freedom in visions that would normally seem 'utopian' to the common man. The notion of *satyagraha*, for example,was a forceful combination of reason, ethics, spirituality and politics. It appealed to the opponent's head, heart and interests (Parekh 1995). *Satyagraha* incorporated such positive traits as courage, directness, civility, absolute honesty, respect for other living creatures, and willingness to suffer in pursuit of deeply felt goals (Barash 2000).Gandhi always stressed that the decision to embark on *Satyagraha* was a choice to be made consciously by each individual. To him, it was wrong, in principle, to force people against their will for the purpose of protest. Gandhi, however, taught people that however humble and powerless they may appear to be, they had the power in themselves to resist, and that this resistance was entirely legitimate (Hardiman 2003).

Gandhi's Truth was intimately connected to his concept of *ahimsa*, often conflated with and interpreted as non-violence. *Ahimsa*, as a means, does not only imply non-violence, but also non-violent love (Uyangoda 2005). For Gandhi *ahimsa* was rooted in love, altruism and compassion towards fellow humans and all beings. He believed that without *ahimsa* it wasn't possible to seek and find Truth, as *ahimsa* is a constituent of *satya*/truth:

> *Ahimsa* and Truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. They are like the two sides of a coin, or rather of a smooth unstamped metallic disc. Who can say which is the obverse and which the reverse? Nevertheless, *ahimsa* is the means and Truth is the end. (Gandhi qtd. in Kibriya 1999:17).

Ahimsa, for Gandhi, involved qualities of respect and sympathy for the opponent, freedom from anger, and a desire for peace (Hardiman 2003). Rather than a passive state of resistance and restraint from participation in violent acts, *ahimsa* is quite a dynamic element in Gandhi's thinking, 'one that calls on all self-aware sentient beings to actively transform the conditions that make violence likely or possible'(Oberprantacher 2009). Gandhi expressed not only an attitude of non-injury, non-killing and non-harming, but he uncovered love and compassion as active forces that could potentially transform all forms of violence.

Gandhi's political and social struggle and teachings have played an important role in shaping contemporary Indian peace and social movements. There are leaders who are guided by his philosophy both in the political and in the social realm (Kumar and Jacobsen 2014).In more recent times, some socio-spiritual leaders have evoked

the Gandhian ethos, distinguished themselves as advocates of peace and societal harmony. Sri Sathya Sai Baba (1926-2011), Sri Sri Ravi Shankar (1956-), Baba Ramdev (1965-) have devoted their lives and teachings to disseminate the understanding and practices of inner and societal peace. They have promoted the message of peace across communities through establishing numerous spiritual education and humanitarian centres (Upadhyaya 2010).

Aurobindo Ghose: social and human evolution

Another Indian thinker that has influenced social transformation is Aurobindo Ghose(1872-1950). He is today best known as a spiritual philosopher and yogi, the author of numerous and voluminous works such as *Savitri* (1950), *The Synthesis of Yoga* (1932) or *The Life Divine* (1949), and the founder of an ashram in Pondicherry, South India, that bears his name. In 1950 he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Price.

Before Aurobindo 'retired' from political activism and settled in Pondicherry to engage himself in practices of yoga and the spiritual elevation of humanity he was famous throughout India as a political writer and activist. The editorials he published in the newspapers *Bande Matram* (1906-08) and *Karmayogin* (1909-10), and the speeches he delivered during the same period, were among the most remarkable expressions of anti-colonial nationalism to come out of the Indian freedom struggle. Many of these pieces dealt not only with transient political issues but also with some of the perennial problems of human society (Heehs 2005).

In a series of works written between 1915 and 1920, Aurobindo Ghose presented a theory of social and human evolution that was of a piece with his spiritual philosophy, personal experiences and empirical observation. These later works, together with some of the earlier pieces, constituted a significant contribution to political, social and cultural theory (Kumar 2011). In brief, Aurobindo's philosophical discourses aimed towards a transgression of the human mind and a spiritual evolution of humanity. His teachings were the result of his meditative practices and 'supramental' inner visions and accordingly cannot be measured solely on rational and/or empirical grounds. His comprehensive and integrative system of yoga was primarily concerned with the spiritualization of society (Kumar 2011).

Aurobindo's life exemplified vividly the blending of socio-political activism and spiritual insight.In his writings on philosophy and yoga, Aurobindo emphasised that the right way for society to move towards a harmonious and peaceful state was for each individual in it to achieve the greatest possible self-realization and self-expression (Heehs 2005: 261). According to him, social harmony could only be reached when

the inner self of man is awakened, free and generous, not enslaved to selfish thoughts and aims. Social harmony is not a result of social machinery but the freedom of the human intellect and the nobility of the human soul (Heehs 2005:145). Aurobindo thus embraced a wide range of achievements and developments that led to fostering cultural values towards peace cultures based in visions of an alternative society. In addition to his political activities and political thoughts, his inheritance comprises a systematic philosophy, literary works, yoga system and the spiritual force attributed to him by his followers and contemporary companions.

Visionaries of potentialities of future peace are ultimately also critics of the present (Boulding 2000). Similarly, in his political and social writings Aurobindo cautioned that it would be vain to imagine that a solution to the pressing problems of the world could come from arrangements that were what he called solely 'mechanical' (Aurobindo 1997). As a believer in a reality that would arrive through the means of spiritual revolution, he affirmed that:

> "[…] a deeper, wider, greater, more spiritualised subjective understanding of the individual and communal self and its life and a growing reliance on the spiritual light and the spiritual means for the final solution of its problems are the only way to a true social perfection" (Aurobindo 1997:183).

This would come by a deeper understanding of the spiritual truth of existence, supported by a persistent effort after knowledge and harmony in all domains of human activity. Aurobindo thus was not primarily a social thinker, but also a mystic and philosopher who was interested not only in spiritual matters but also in secular problems. He certainly believed that a general change of consciousness had to precede the final solution of such problems, but he did not believe that the striving for harmony and peace had to be pursued on the spiritual plane alone.

Like other famous Indian figures, such as the noble laureate Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), former Indian President Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975) and Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), Sri Aurobindo combined impressively traditions of India and the West, and envisioned a subtle integration of Indian and Western cultures. Sri Aurobindo firmly believed that the two great components of the future evolution of man were Indian spirituality and Western intellectuality. Thus Aurobindo did not view and categorise the world in terms of fixed dichotomies: East and West, spiritual and material, conservation and progress. When two cultural systems came into conflict, he would see it as an occasion for them to move towards a synthesis in which both would be harmonised and exceeded (Heehs 2005:237). For Aurobindo

East and West have the same human nature, a common human destiny, the same aspiration after greater perfection, the same seeking after something higher than itself. East and West have always met and mixed more or less closely, they have powerfully influenced each other (Heehs 2005: 287).

> There is a common hope, a common destiny, both spiritual and material, for which both are needed as co-workers. It is no longer towards division and difference that we should turn our minds, but on unity, union, even oneness (Aurobindo qtd. in Heehs 2005:287).

Aurobindo's life and thought creatively related the spiritual East with the intellectual and historical West, thus allowing them to jointly serve as a model for a societal peace culture.

Krishnamurti: 'we are the society'
Similar to Aurobindo, Jiddu Krishnamurti's (1895-1986) life and teaching combine in an unparalleled manner thoughts of India and the West. Krishnamurti teachings were concerned with our day-to-day struggles and with some of human's fundamental question on existence and peace. In his writings and discussions, the reader found a contemporary relevance for fundamental human problems, together with an invitation to solve it for and by oneself (Kumar 2011).What is interesting about Krishnamurti's approach is that while addressing social, political and economic issues of the period, his answers are rooted in a timeless and universal vision of life and universal values.

Born in South India and educated in Europe, Krishnamurti spoke a language that could be understood by people from diverse backgrounds. He explained with great precision the subtle workings of the human mind. His vision of peace was, similar to Aurobindo, founded in a philosophy of self-realization. At age 90 Krishnamurti addressed the United Nations on the subject of peace and awareness, as he was awarded the 1984 UN Peace Medal. In his speech to the UN in New York Krishnamurti said, "[…] there can only be peace when mankind, when you and I, have no conflict in ourselves" (Krishnamurti 1985).He continued that,

> The present is not only the past, but also contains the future; the past modifying itself constantly through the present and projecting the future. If we don't stop quarrels, struggles, antagonism, hate, now it will be like that tomorrow. And you can stretch out that tomorrow

> for a thousand years, it will be still tomorrow. So it behoves us to ask ourselves whether we, as human beings, single or a community, or in a family, whether we can live peacefully with each other? (Krishnamurti 1985).

Krishnamurti stressed that a radical individual human transformation was essential as a prerequisite for any approach to peace, love and compassion. He considered that humanity would be set free from conflict through discovering love in the core of the self. He maintained that the individual is freed by becoming aware of their own psychological conditioning, and that this awakening would enable them to care to another. In his eyes, love alone can transform the present madness and insanity in the world, not systems, not theories: "It is only when there is love that all our problems can be solved and then we shall know its bliss and its happiness" (Krishnamurti 2013:262).

Krishnamurti's practical and profound teaching marks an important contribution to modern social thinking as well as to a culture of peace. At the core of his teaching is the realization that fundamental changes in society can be brought about only by transformation of individual consciousness. Krishnamurti's teaching stresses that a radical individual human transformation is essential as a prerequisite for any approach to peace, harmony and compassion. In order to transform the conflicts and wars in our world there must be first and foremost a transformation in ourselves, which will lead to a change in society. His teachings are thus valuable for the idea of multiple cultures of peace that are based in universal values found locally in different cultures (c.f. UNESCO 2016).

Amma's universal peace message

Mata Amritanandamayi, more popularly known as Sri Amma (Mother), is a contemporary example of an Indian figure that has rooted her spiritual and humanitarian work in the values of Indian religious traditions. Revered as a saint, she is certainly one of the most widely respected and appreciated Indian women of our time and is an inspiration for peace workers, educationalists, spiritual leaders and environmentalists (Kumar and Jacobsen 2014). Her practices are based on the devotional tradition of Hindu faith –*bhakti* – within which values such as selfless service and love are central (Warrier 2003).

Mata Amritanandamayi's teachings contain a universal message that peace is unconditioned love and compassion for others (Amritanandamayi 2004). The absence of love leads to human suffering, and obsession with the self (ego) and preoccupation

with consumerism and material goods also creates deficit for love (Warrier 2003). In her speech at the UN Millennium World Peace Summit in New York in the year 2000, she emphasized on humanity's need to seek peace from within: 'The real change must happen within us. For only when conflict and negativity are removed from within can we play a truly constructive role in establishing peace.' The last three decades, Amritanandamayi has also been teaching spiritual aspirants all over the world. She is the leader and founder of Mata Amritanandamayi Math (MAM), one of the largest humanitarian organizations in India, providing education, medical care, disaster relief, community development and environmental protection with a particular concern for the very poor.

In 2005, the United Nations conferred 'Special Consultative Status' to Mata Amritanandamayi Math, thus enabling collaboration with U.N. agencies in the future. This status was given in recognition of MAM's outstanding disaster relief work and other humanitarian activities.

Conclusion: cultures of peace and their visionaries

We began this article with the understanding that peace cultures are rooted in the possibilities to envision alternative futures. Boulding later in her work also problematized the importance of 'utopia' as a driving force for social change, and drew example from national failed utopian experiments. In this article, we have investigated four past and contemporary thinkers and revolutionary leaders who have utilized visions for a better society in order to drive social change and transformation. The thinkers discussed in this article have also had tremendous impact on Western thought, and contributed to the development of peace studies as a discipline.

The lives and teachings of socio-religious figures such as Gandhi, Amritanandamayi, Aurobindo and Krishnamurti emphasize the relevance for transformation in human consciousness for the achievement of individual and societal peace. Amritanandamayi's understanding of peace and peace work reflects Indian culture's integrative approach in addressing human problems. In a similar manner the lives and teachings of two Indian thinkers of the 20th century, Aurobindo Ghose and Jiddu Krishnamurti, offer prominent insights to understand the socio-religious culture of peace in India, as they give both value to direct spiritual experience and intellectual understanding. In their teachings Aurobindo and Krishnamurti ask for a transformation of society through invoking human's spiritual consciousness. Though Aurobindo's and Krishnamurti's philosophies and approaches deviate from each other due to their personal experiences and practices, their teachings share a distinctive commonality (Kumar 2011).Society is made up of people, in the words of

Krishnamurti "we are society", and these thinkers hold on to the relevance and need for individual insight and values such as compassion.

According to their philosophical thought, social harmony and a culture of peace grow by removing the motives for engaging in activities that bring about a conflict between man and man. The thinkers mentioned in this chapter show that cultures of peace in India bear values such as compassion, non-violence and selfless love. Those cultures of peace also emphasise the integration of spirituality into a more complete vision of humanity. The lives and teachings of figures like Gandhi and Aurobindo appeal to a culture of peace that recognizes the spiritual dimension of life. Gandhi's life and teachings can be seen as best example of that integrative approach. Gandhi advocated a culture of peace where selfless love and non-violence were to be the fundamental point in attaining individual and collective peace. In modern times Amritanandamayi has carried forward Gandhi's principles. She is advocating a culture of peace through combining unconditional love and compassion with an honest engagement of humanitarian relief work. Their teachings contain a unique and timeless perception of humanity's transformation and a culture of peace, bearing brilliant testimony of the vibrant and dynamic spiritual realism that is native to Indian life.

These thinkers are still relevant to discussions today about the world-wide fostering of peace cultures. As UNESCO has proclaimed the current decade of 'rapprochement of cultures', as a means to 'take into account and clearly demonstrate new articulations between cultural diversity and universal values' (UNESCO 2016), it becomes all the more important to appreciate Indian past and present contributions to universal values such as non-violence, love and compassion, and the effects these have had on fostering peace cultures in the subcontinent.

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Non-violent Protest Movements
Ripples across the land: From *Nirbhaya* to *Occupy Baluwatar*[1]

Anjoo Sharan Upadhyaya

Scientific studies on protest movements - peaceful confrontation involving collective action- constitute, a less traversed realm in the discipline of Political Science. Although described as 'response of relatively powerless people (Tilly: 2004), the political phenomena of protest movementpresent an alternate paradigm of change to the otherwisedominant model of coercion. Maria J. Stephan and Erica Chenoweth, for instance, haverefuted the prevailing view among the political scientists that violent methods are more effective than nonviolent strategies at achieving policy goals. (Stephan and Chenoweth, 2008).[2]

The non-violent activism of Mahatma Gandhi is indeed the most instructive instance in point. The unceasing popularity of Gandhian visions and the frequent surge of non-violent protest movements in different parts of the world continue to challenge the prevailing legitimacy of state based coercion. Gene Sharp (2009) has produced a remarkable array of conceptual and practical trajectories, which emphasize the pragmatic utility of non-violent tactics to cope with social injustice and human rights violation. Sharp reiterates Gandhi's belief in people's power, disobeying which, would deprive leaders of their power and legitimacy (Sharp, 1973).

Indubitably we need to locate the continuing influence of protest movements as distinct political phenomena to explore their varied regional and local nuances and connections,andwhat accounts for their success or failure.

It is in this context that I have tried to pinpoint that protests like the one New Delhi witnessed in the winter of 2012 (in the wake of the much infamous Delhi rape case) which not only exemplified the tradition of political agency hood of India but also left its imprint across borders. Notwithstanding sceptics who looked at the string of protest movements in the wake of the Nirbhaya case as an exceptional incident, my take is that this case has the norms making potentials as manifest in similar precedents, though not comparable in scale, and the pattern is likely to continue. The study coincides with the findings of Braithwaite, Alex *et al* (2015), that nonviolent campaigns in foreign countries increase the likelihood of the onset of new nonviolent campaigns athome.

I examine the formation, organizing strategies and internal deliberations and debates amongst the protesters, both in the case of Indian 'Nirbhaya' movement (NM)and a

less known yet similar protest movement in Nepal, known as 'Occupy Baluwatar'(OB). Whereas in the case of India, the movement resulted in unprecedented alterations in legislation concerning violence against women, in Nepal it left an indelible imprint or a landmark, though it could not bring about any transformative amendment in the law and political norms.It is instructive to explore the convergence and contrast between the two protest movements especially as the mass protest has been a popular tradition in both countries.

This studyis divided in three distinct but interconnected segments. In the first segment, I discuss briefly the antecedents of protest movements in India, establishing the background of the 'tradition' of nonviolent protests in the country. In the second segment I discuss the protest movements pertaining to violence against women in India, highlighting issues of similarities and dissimilarities between earlier and later movements, culminating in NB. In the third segment I analyse the emulative potential of such movements across the borders, in this case namely Nepal. My effort is also to examine the regime characteristics of regional neighbour that shape mobilizationand the impact creating potential that is linked to the issue of governance.

Lineage of Nonviolent Protest

Nonviolent Protest movements have been generic to the Indian subcontinent from the colonialperiod to the postcolonial democratic struggles.Drawing inspirations from the Civil disobedience movement, the disempowered dependent peopleof India, often resorted to non- parliamentary platforms to raise their unmet demands. These included: Non Co-operation, Satyagraha and fasting followed by *Bandhas*(closure), *Gheraos*(Encirclement), *Dharna*(sitdowns) *Padyatras*(walkathon) *Aamaran Anshan* (fast unto death) and even self immolation.

In Independent India, one of the most popular protest action was staged in the 1970s by Jayaprakash Narainwho was a former freedom fighter, an activist and a politician. He dubbed the call as a call for Total revolution (*SampoornaKranti*). So massive was this protest that the then government evoked 'emergency' (suspension of civil and political rights of the citizens, provided under the Constitution of India) on grounds of internal unrest, for the first time in the history of otherwise democratic India.

Earlier, there have been protests on varied grounds. Any issue that a sizeable group of people felt was significant enough to draw the attention of the government,has been taken up and brought as a flash point of an agitationist movement. So there have been protests for creating new states (provinces),[3] on issues of language (inclusion of certain languages in the 8th schedule), and environment protection (*Chipko*),[4] development projects (*Narmada Bachao)*[5] and against landacquisition for manufacturing purposes (Singur protests).[6] One of the most overwhelming protest was led by Anna Hazare (2011) against corruption in public places of the country and a demand to put in place institutional machineries to check the same.

Towards Women's Agency hood

Public Protests have been generic to the women's movement across the world ranging from thesuffragist movements to the burning of Swedish currency notes by the women protesting against unequal wages. In India too, Women remained in the forefront of the freedom struggle. They were the ones that took out *prabhatpheris* (morning rounds singing patriotic songs), picketing in front of liquor shops demanding closure of the sale of alcohol, and in the boycott movement of protesting the consumption of foreign made goods, as it was detrimental to the economy and industry of India.

In Independent India, various issues concerning women were discussed and laws were enacted about them, but it was rare that these matters came to occupy mass concern, least of all, form an agitation or a non violent protest. So, for instance, the very important debate on Hindu Code bill, ironically did not receive public support or agitation from women themselves. Whereas in the pre-independence era, issues related to women remained in the forefront of the discourse on 'modernity' for over a century, and women in social reform movement and in the nationalist movement were at the Centre of the 'reformation' and 'renaissance' of the country. Matters started changing in the decade of 1970s. Women's question was the focus then; gendered relations are now.

It was as late as the 1970s that the issue of gender violence began assuming a central concern of protestors. In late 1970s women activists organized around the problem of gender based violence. It was the Mathura rape case[7] that mobilised activists and academics on the issue of sexual violence. Two more cases expanded the protest over custodial or police rape. Rameeza Bee Rape casein 1978 followed by public protest in the city of Hyderabad, and Maya Tyagi rape case (1980)[8] debated in the *Loksabha* initiated byan opposition leader.[9]

These three cases led to a major protest campaign on the custodial rape. Though each of these cases was significant in its own right, it was the Mathura case that evoked public protests and became the flashpoint for campaigners of protesting violence against women. The verdict of the Supreme Court on Mathura rape case was protested by four Delhi University law professors: UpendraBaxi, LotikaSarkar, VasudhaDhagambar and RaghunathKelkar, who wrote an open letter to the Chief Justice of India, criticizing the judgment and asking for fair justice for Mathura. This was accompanied by country wide protests on the case.In Mumbai, Anti Rape Campaign started in 1980 with the formation of Forum Against Rape (FAR), which later become Forum Against Oppression of Women (FAOW) in 1981 and took up the issues of rape, particularly police and custodial rape, dowry deaths and harassment of women.In the 1980s there were protests mainly in Delhi, followed by similar actions in smaller cities against what was then known as dowry deaths[10]. This invariably resulted in the enactment of one law or the other in favour of security

of women. Flavia Agnes, a strong women's rights protagonist, sums up the movements of the 1980s in following lines:

> If oppression could be tackled by passing laws, then the decade of the 1980s would be adjudged a golden period for Indian women, when protective laws were offered on a platter. Almost every single campaign against violence on women resulted in new legislation. The successive enactments would seem to provide a positive picture of achievement. [But] the crime statistics reveal a different story.... The deterrent value of the enactment was apparently nil. Some of the enactments in effect remained only on paper. Why were the laws ineffective in tackling the problem? (Agnes 1997:521 cited in Sunder Rajan, 2003:32).

Yet in similar other instances in a disturbed area of Kashmir where allegedly mass rapes took place (Kunan and Pashpora) not much has been heard or seen[11], Similarly, no such movement could build up during the mass rapes that happened in the context of political agitations. For instance, the human rights organizations and the women's groups have provided detailed testimonies of mass rape of Dalit women during caste riots in Marathawad (1978), Ahmedabad (1983), Bhojpur (1985), Nagpur (1988) and communal riots in Delhi and Bombay (1984), Bhagalpur (1988) and Bhopal and Surat (1993) to the government. However, one of the most shocking protest took place in Manipur in 2004 where women paraded naked with placards stating 'Indian Army Rape us'.[12]

Protests against violence on women were largely taken up by organizations such as *Asmita* in Hyderabad and *Vimochana* in Banglore, *Pennurimailyakkam* in Tamil Nadu, *Chingari NariSanghatan* and Ahmadabad Women's Action Group in Ahmadabad, Gujrat and *Stri Jagriti Samiti* in Bangalore and Bombay also actively work on the issue. Some women publications such as *Manushi* (1979) in Delhi, *Saheli* (1982) played important role in mobilizing around the issues of gender based violence.

Notwithstanding the public outrage, incidences of violence against women have been on the rise, or at least their reporting has been so. As per the figures released by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), the total number of rape cases reported in India has gone up to 33,707 in 2013 from 24,923 in 2012. The National Crime Records Bureau of India suggests a reported rape rate of 2 per 100,000 people. The number of reported rape cases doubled in Delhi in 2013 compared to the previous year. On an average, four rape cases were reported in Delhi every day in 2013.[13]

Nirbhaya

Yet the protest movement that took place in New Delhi and in several smaller cities of the country in the wake of the infamous gang rape of a 23-year-old paramedic student in December 2012, overtook all by a storm.[14] The unprecedented protest over what came to be known as the Nirbhaya attracted young and not so young people within and across the country. The educated were very much at the core of the agitation but the not so educated were equally agitated. The women were the main agency of the movement but men also owned it. But above all, the cross-national impact that the movement made, demonstrated its remarkable capacity of stimulating similar movements across the border.

Described as a game changer,in terms of its intensity, immensity, spontaneity and popularity, the Nirbhaya movement was unprecedented. It brought the government to acknowledge and take note of it, as has not been the case earlier. The Prime Minister of the country took note of it and assured the people of strong and immediate action. The event also got international acknowledgement when Secretary of State Hilary Clinton said she was proud of student protest that followed Delhi gang rape (*India News,* January 30, 2013). The 23 year old student was posthumously presented with the International women of courage award by the United States (India News; NDTV). In the past too, the Bhanwari Devi[15] case received tremendous circulation when she presented at the Beijing Conference. On the domestic front though it took time before legislation to protect women at work place took more than ten years before it was enacted.

Spontaneity: There were *no specific organisations* that took the lead. Unlike earlier movements where established voluntary organisations initiated the demonstrations, in this case the campaigners mostly connected with each other more or less spontaneously. At least in the initial week the activists were students form Delhi University colleges, Jawaharlal Nehru University, young professionals, parents and even grand parents. Only on day seven there was any visibility of people holding placards that were attributed to some students union or in one case a donor funded initiative.Yet the people who galvanised the protest were also the ones who had participated in the anti-corruption (Anna) movement just a couple of years ago. The networks were already in place. The task was only to revive and expand them.

Issues of Identity: '(T)he girl, the aspirations (a small town girl coming to Delhi to fulfill her dreams) the movie (or entertainment, so far constrained,) all of these things became points of identification with the victim. Discussion around the caste identity of the woman have taken place and it has been defined as protests related to upper caste Hindu women ...despite feminist interventions that call attention to the intersections of caste, class and gender, the bodies of lower class, non hindu, rural women are excluded from protest movements…. demand for legal reform is premised on a normative subject- the Hindu, middleclass women' (Shandilya, 2015).

This interpretation does not hold good when juxtaposed with the history of protests that prevailed across India in the context of violence against women. The three cases mentioned above, namely Mathura, Rameeza Bee, Bhanwari Devi did not belong to the upper caste or only Hindu women. Mathura was a tribal girl, and Bhanwari Devi a Dalit and Rameeza bee a Muslim. Contrary to the assertion that a protest was evoked due to the protesters identifying with the person who was wronged, it is likely that in this case (VAW) there has been a solidarity as was not evident in any other wrong doing.

However, there is no denying the fact that so many VAW cases go unprotested just prove a point that people have their lives to live, and being on the roads can not deliver them their daily bread. None the less, the violence that gets reported routinely is often condemned in blogs, newspapers and journal articles.

Governance: A close look at the events that snow balled into this masive protest reveal a remarkable similarity on this count, between previous such agitations. The initial apathy of the government was in many ways not new, none the less it sparked the sensitivities of 'active citizens'.[16] Yet the 'The entire public debate arising out of the recent Delhi gang rape incident … cantered round the issues of "enacting a strong law" and "prescribing harsher sentence" says Vibhuti Patel (2014). 'It failed to highlight the flawed process of the criminal justice system when it comes to lodging complaints by victims of sexual violence. Similarly, other related and very basic issues of patriarchy, caste and domesticity of violence also did not form the core of the agitation'. The fact that the woman was raped by these six men in a moving bus that had tainted glasses (illegal in Delhi) in the capital city of the country outraged the people who demanded safer roads and more secure spaces to move around. The focus of this protest was the state machinery. The activists also took note of behavioural inadequacies of males, an aspect to which the slut walk[17] that was staged a year ago in Delhi, with very little success.

Tools of Social Media: The campaign was largely organised around the social media.[18] Facebook accounts were opened, twitter messages were framed and films were shown and the media followed the social media not vice versa. The *Times of India* captured the social media keenness in reporting the case of 19-year-old SambhaviSaxena arrested during a protest in Delhi. On her journey to and at the police station, Sambhavi tweeted to India and the world to highlight her plight. Her tweets - "Illegally being held here at Parliament St Police Station Delhi w/15 other women. Terrified, pls. RT" led to more than 1,700 people retweeting her SOS. According to Favstar, the social media analytics site, her tweets reached over 200,000 people. All this resulted in the galvanizing of civil society where lawyers and activists arrived at the police station to offer help and advice. Others condemned the police action through social media. Twitter hashtags like #DelhiGangRape #StopThisShame #DelhiProtests #Amanat #Nirbhaya #Damini served as anchors to inform, educate and galvanize mass support. So where as a Mathura took seven years (it happened

in 1972 and the protest climaxed in 1979), Nirbhaya protest took just hours. The instant communication and reporting came in handy for the protest to swell the way it did.There were also innumerable online submissions for comprehensive amendments of the laws under the CrPC.[19] Even when the movement was over, the Social media stopped a popular music concert that was to be staged as a part of a New Year celebration. The online campaigns lead to the cancellation of the popular concert.

Not only the social media but also the *print media* remained glued to it for several days when it occupied front news for several days.

The Scale:The scale at which this movement was able to galvanise people was phenomenal. The slut walk, mentioned earlier, that took place in Delhi justabout one year ago had hardly 200 participants. The protests against bride burning too were not that overwhelming. But the Nirbhaya protest was unique in as much as the scale at which it got spread was unprecedented. Similar protests also took place in cities like Hyderabad, Bangalore, Kolkatta and even smaller cities like Varanasi and Jaipur. Solidarity in the form of marches was also staged in Singapore and as far away as in Paris.

Violence against women and the security of women became a major *issue in the general elections* of 2014, and the shadow of Nirbhaya loomed sihnificantly large on the campaigns. Though the movement was neither led nor supported by any political party, it was definitely made into a capital from where opposition parties gained electoral dividends.Ironically, the groups that had gathered to protest against the inaction of the government had one common perception: deep scepticism towards governance efficiency, yet a hope in making it better. There for it is not surprising that the impact it made was on the electoral results.

Occupy Baluwatar (OB):

In the case of Occupy Baluwatar (OB) there was a distinct inspiration that the protesters drew from the Nirbhaya protest, in the spirit of—"if they (Indians) could do it, why not us." The success or otherwise of the Indian movement was not the criterion. Therefore one may not agree with Braithwale et.al. when they say that emulation of peaceful protests occurs across borders only when there is evident success of similar movements abroad. Yet as one of the protesters remarked that New Delhi could bring about so many legal reforms in the wake of the Nirbhaya protest, whereas in Nepal nothing much could be changed. In this case we decipher that there has been a sense of relief to the protesters. As one protestor mentioned that the sheer action of staging nonviolent protests was accorded a value and brought a 'sense of remorse', and also a purpose of some form of catharsis. The empowerment of the 'powerless people' as Charles Tilly mentioned in 2004.

Taking inspiration from the massive movement taking place in India, some young students and professionals took to the streets in Kathmandu, protesting against the rape of Sita Rai (name changed), a young migrant worker. In November 2012, SitaRai, had been detained by the immigration department at the airport when it was detected that the passport she was using to work and travel in the middle east, actually belonged to one Bimala KC of Baglung.[20] Officials had then offered her a deal: Pay up and avoid being thrown behind bars. After they had taken the Rs 2,18,000 she had with her, a police constable had volunteered to drop her off, but when they got to the bus park, he told her the bus was gone, and then took her to a guest house in the Old Bus Park. It was here that he raped her. The women was robbed of her other belongings and set off later to her home town where after many days she confessed to her sister about the rape and robbery. Meanwhile the constable, Parsu Ram Basnet, had been calling her, sending wailed threats of imprisonment if she divulged anything. It was her sister who told her parents. By the time she came to Kathmandu to file a case against her aggressors at the Home Ministry, it was already more than a month since the incident had occurred.[21]

On 18th December2012, there was a small report by RoshanSedhai, who first broke the news. *NayaPatrika* followed this the very next day. So far, most other media houses hadn't stepped forward. 'Not long after, however, newswires were abuzz with the story of the Delhi student who was raped by a group of men on a bus, and that story had spread on social media, although the TIA (Tribhuwan International Airport) incident was still relatively ignored'.[22]

Sharing harassments at the TIA some concerned women and men took the cause of protesting against this episode with two goals in mind. One was securing immediate justice to the victim and the other was brining about policy changes. PranikaKoyu,StutiBasnyat, BidushiDhungel, GyanuAdhikari, DewanRai mooted the idea of a coordinated protest, which was pushed through emails.

On 28th December, the campaigners reached the prime minister's residence in Baluwatar to hand over a demand letter, but were chased away by security. GyanuAdhikari, who was working for the Kathmandu Post at the time, stood his ground to make evocative speeches. This was the start of a 107 days' protest known as Occupy Baluwatar (OB)[23]. Occupy Baluwatar has been described as a movement that was led and organized by ordinary citizens from diverse backgrounds. They had solidarity with a number of different organizations and associations working together to fight violence against women. Their main goal was to ensure that impunity is put to an end.

Gathering Popularity: The movement had initially focused on one case, that of SitaRai. Later on others who were also sufferers of impunity joined and were included in the demands: Chhori Maya Maharjan, Bindu Thakur, ShiwaHasmi and SaraswatiSubedi. Maharjan had been missing for over two years, while Thakur and

Hasmi were both burnt alive for allegedly having affairs, and Subedi was reported to have committed suicide, but was widely believed to have been murdered.

So each day after the 28th December protesters stood in front of the official residence of the Nepalese prime minister from 9 -11 am showing placards, shouting slogans, inventing new techniques of attracting attention of the authorities and the people at large. Their demands being two fold: Justice to the victims and Policy change.

The Strategy:The movement gained impetus with the strategy that these young people adopted. Some of the activists who steered the movement were correspondents with leading news papers of Kathmandu and started writing about the injustice in the national dailies. This drew the attention of likeminded people and they came forward to support the movement. Here too the social media was made good use of. Twitter handle #Occupy Baluwatar came up instantly. So did the facebook page.

News then trickled down to other victims and they came forward with the injustice meeted out to their kin. The cases of Maharjan, Thakur, Hasmi and Subedi were brought to the fore highlighting the culture of Impunity prevailing in Nepal *vis a vis* violence against women. It, underscored the need to bring to books the violators of these women.

To keep the movement going (as the interim government had not taken any note of this unfolding), the key organisers encouraged the artists amongst them to make new posters and to use them at the site. Caricature drawing and attracting still younger people to the protest site in solidarity with the protesters was yet another technique.

On day 65 they dressed up as superman activists, a satire on the indiffrence of the government machinery towards their call. "We will go on like this for 90 days of creative protests. If the government continues to be apathetic, we will devise new strategies," said PranikaKoyu, one of the main organisers[24].

But the most significant initiative in the entire strategy was of 'going alone'. As a post conflict society Nepal had received a good deal of International aid for Peace and reconstruction. There was a significant amount of disenchantment due to this money being charged of misappropriation. Though the donors, that were already present in Nepal, made instant offers to the organisers for financial support, the organisers flatly declined[25] and did not accept any contribution from any donor. The movement sustained itself finanially by individual contributions. Though there were never more than a hundrd people on the roads during the campaing, but to be able to sustain it for 108 days was a big breakthrough. More so in a country that had just experienced a decade long violent conflict, staging a non–violent campaign in defence of disempowered women was no mean achievement.

The bodies of these young protesters, who were not always women, or young, became the site of protest against violence, dicrimination based on gender, expoliation in the name of discriminatory state laws, and also corruption in governance. The incident revealed the brutal face of the state power overpowering a helpless individual said one of the activists.

Impact:The then Prime Minister BaburamBhattarai formed a high-level committee led by the secretary at the Prime Minister's Office, Raju Man Singh Malla. It was also reported that Mr Malla mentioned that they are too busy and they do not have time for GBV (gender based violence).The committee however made no headway.

Despite the steadfast efforts put into the campaign, the impact of the movement was not as visible as it was in India, where the central and state governments initiated law reforms, set up fast-track courts and also made provision of life imprisonment in rape cases said DewanRai, a writer and an activist himself[26].

Voluntarity of the Movement: In a unique decision, activists staging protests against the inaction of the state in the SitaRai case, repeatedly rejected any offer of support that came their way from various international organizations including the UNMIN officials still in Kathmandu. Popularly known as the 'Occupy Baluwatar' movement, this protest lasted 107 days in the capital Kathmandu, wherein young people of Nepal staged their resentment against the government's inaction not only on the rape and robbery of SitaRai, but also of other similar cases of violence against women and related impunity. Their position was taken to protect the movement from being discredited, as was their impression of the fate of other organizations that were supported by such bodies. As the leader BidushiDhungel, a former journalist from Kathmandu Post and daughter of a University Professor, stated:

> It proved to donors we don't need millions we just need a core of dedicated people. Our accounts too were transparent. This was in sharp contrast with the NGO work that is being done by so many politically active women here. If you scratch the surface each of these NGOs are linked to some political party or the other, and with the aid money the organization then massages the constituency in place of doing the work for which the money is actually meant for.[27]

Assessing the movement's impact, Dhungel said: Overall it questioned the donor agencies. Millions are spent in Nepal, but very little impact is made by this investment. But within two months all are talking about this movement. Unfortunately, no established political party came forward to associate with the cause of women, as at least one of the primary accused were considered to have political ties, despite the importance of the case and topic in the eyes of both national organizations and agendas of international funders.

This case was also not unique, as a number of other cases of violence against women were brought to the streets. Kin of many women who were missing, raped, or killed, joined the protesters and asked for answers from the government. But Nepal's political parties were loath to express solidarity with the issue in question.

Still, almost all the major players in Kathmandu's INGO scene continued to offer financial and logistical assistance. Despite the dire need for resources and powerful partnerships to legitimate the cause, this aid was universally declined by the protesters. The leaders of the movement were clear on one issue that they did not want to align themselves with any foreign funding agency, lest it is construed that the entire movement is motivated by 'a foreign hand.' So close to the hearts of the protesters was the issue of demanding justice to the victim and making Nepal safe for women that they did not consider accepting support from outsiders.

Many local organizations feel that international support is so tainted by foreign agendas, and so laden with foreign frames, that they consider it better to go it alone in an attempt to create positive change rather than have their own agenda potentially subverted by INGOs, or to have the agenda itself subsequently.

Take away?

So whereas New Delhi looked at the protesters with sympathy and quite a great deal of urgency to bring about changes in the Cr PC, and even conceded to their demands of reforming the law, Kathmandu suspected them of being agents of foreign countries, out to malign the culture of Nepal[28]. Not only that, none of the political parties of Nepal came forward to express solidarity with the protesters, as the cases that came to be linked with the OB protest, had one or the other political party worker involved in the episode. Hence they exercised their political muscles to ensure that the protest movement did not gain wide social acceptance.

India too faces the dilemma of not having adequate socio-economic support system as well as resolute political will to decisively curtail the extent of gender-based violence. The violence against women continues to take place, in 'routine' notwithstanding the more stringent laws and policing. This is despite the epoch making potentials of protest which led to fast-tracking laws and public interrogation of issues of patriarchy and masculinity[29]. But in all fairness the protests like Nirbhaya have certainly enhanced public and also private awareness against sexual violence. India is surely inching towards a GBV free world, but hasn't yet got there. As long as this goal is not reached, the relevance of such agitationist politics can never be ignored or understated. The significance of such actions lies in their being and not in the scales that they climb.

Notes:

1. Earlier versions of this paper were presented at Uppsala University, on 11 May, 2016, and Karlstad University on 8 December, 2015 and at Martin Chautari, Kathmandu in October 2013.

2. Based on a systematic exploration of successful employment of nonviolent methods by the civilian populations in Serbia (2000), Madagascar (2002), Georgia (2003) and Ukraine (2004–05), Lebanon (2005), and Nepal (2006), the study evidences that major nonviolent campaigns have achieved success 53 per cent of the time, compared with 26 per cent for violent resistance campaigns.

3. One of the earliest protests took place in 1951, when PottuSreeramulu, a former Gandhian freedom fighter, went on hunger strike to press the issue of creating a separate state of Telugu speaking people as the State of Andhra Pradesh. His death while fasting, led the then Prime Minister J.L. Nehru to declare the creation of a new state of Andhra Pradesh in 1953.

4. The 'Chipko' was a movement that began in 1973 primarily by hill women of India against the indiscriminate shelling of tree for commercial purposes.

5. A movement to protest (starting 1989) against the making of a dam on river *Narmada* as it would threaten the livelihood of hundreds of thousands of people on the land that would be submerged.

6. In 2006, the matter related to acquisition of 997 acres of land for a small car manufacturing company by a lead industrial house of India, the Tatas. The main opposition came from women, and also the then party in opposition.

7. In the Mathura case (a teenage tribal girl raped by two police men in custody on 26th March 1972) the district (lower) Sessions court found policemen innocent as the victim showed 'no resistance', and since Mathura had a boyfriend, it was stated that Mathura was a woman of 'easy virtue'. Though a higher court reversed this judgment, it was again reverted by the Supreme Court of the country because 'sexual intercourse' was peaceful, as she did not raise any alarm.

8. Maya Tyagi involved a 25 years old married women stripped and raped by policemen in a small municipality of Baghpat in Uttar Pradesh.

9. Paswan complained that he was harassed by the police in Baghpat when he visited the area after rape case. After his protest, campaigns of feminist organizations took form of public protest and hundreds of women gathered outside the parliament demanding judicial probe and justice in the matter.

10. The dowry prohibition act 1961 was also amended by act 63 of 1984 in view of the ever-increasing number of dowry deaths. The offence was also made cognizable so that the police was given power to register a case under the act to take up investigation. The act also made it clear that demand for dowry itself was an offence and made it punishable with imprisonment for a term, which shall not be less than six months. If the demand were satisfied it would constitute an offence under section 3 that provides penalty for giving and taking dowry.

11. As late as in the spring of 2013, a group of women came together to file a public interest litigation to reinvestigate the atrocities unleashed on women of villages of Kunan-Poshpora who were raped by soldiers of the Rajputana Rifles in 1991. In June 2013, a Public Interest Litigation filed in the Jammu and Kashmir High Court, by 50 Srinagar- based

women, supported by a human rights group, Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil society (JKCCS), had resulted in a Magisterial order for further investigations of the mass rape by the Indian army personnel of women of Kunan and neighbouring hamlet Poshpora on the night of February 23-24, 1991. The Support Group for the Kunan-Poshpora Survivors was formed after joint consensus emerged among motley group of women regarding the pending status of the KunanPoshpora case. The closure report had not been filed for 22 years and the victims await justice endlessly.

12. This was against the rape and subsequent murder of ThangamManorama, a Manipuri woman by members of the armed forces of India. Even as the curfew was imposed, members of the NaoriaPakhanglakpaApunbaMeiraPaibiLup gathered at the market shed at HaobamMarak and staged a sit-in-protest in defiance of the curfew.

13. There are also evidences to indicate that not all reported cases are factually corroborated. The Badaun rape case was one such case where it was detected that no rape had taken place, instead, it was a case of honour killing of the women since they were going out with men who did not have parental approval. There are also land disputes where rape is inserted in the complaints to make the conflict serious enough to warrant police action against the accused.

14. On 16th December, 2012, a 23 year old paramedic student was criminally assaulted by 6 men on a bus that she had boarded on her way from a movie with a male friend. Her resistance earned her the name of Nirbhaya (the fearless one),13 days later, she succumbed to the injuries sustained during this incident, in a Singapore hospital. In 2013, the Criminal law (Amendment) Ordinance, 2013 was promulgated by President Pranab Mukherjee,several new laws were passed, and six new fast-track courts were created to hear rape cases.

15. Bhanwari Devihas an iconic status within the Indian Women Movement (IWM). In the year 1997 women's organization filed a Public Interest Litigation in Supreme Court with the objective to use the Bhanwari Devi case to get the rights of all the women who face sexual harassment and assault at workplace. The judgment in response to this PIL (Vishakha and others vs. State of Rajasthan) resultedin the enactment of Sexual Harassment at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal)Act, 2013.

16. I am referring to Kymylca's notion of active and passive citizens here.

17. More recently Delhi also witnessed what was popularly known as the Slut walk, "unequal, unfair and the stereotyped treatment of women in society" in 2011, where not more than two hundred women turned up.

18. In an earlier protest (slut walk) there were initiatives towards preparing for the same "We campaigned at places such as Seemapuri and Shahdara where we performed street plays and held discussions with people. The issues which we highlighted struck a chord with them as well."

19. As the movement was on a high powered Committee to suggest reforms in the Cr PC , Justice Verma Committee was set up.

20. According to Nepali law, women younger than 30 years could not undertake foreign employment in the middle east, and Sita was younger than 30.

21. According to the rape laws of Nepal there was a time bar of 35 days to report an incidence of rape to the police.

22. Rai, Dewan. 2014 'A look back at Occupy Baluwatar', in *The Kathmandu Post,* January, 18.

23. Baluwatar is the neighbourhood where the official residence of the Prime minister of Nepal is located.

24. Available at http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/south-asia/state-apathy-toward-nepal-rape-protests/article4469641.ece (accessed 17 January, 2016).

25. Based on personal interactions with the main organisers in Kathmandu during 2013.

26. Based on personal interactions in Lalitpur in September 2013.

27. Based on interview in Lalitpur Nepal in September 2013.

28. My personal exchanges with many notable people in Kathmandu and also in the plains left this impression that the protesters were looked upon as people paid by the donor agencies to make a case for yet another intervention in the internal affairs of Nepal.

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Muslims at the Shifting Margins: Hindu-Muslim Relations through the Margins Perspective

Chittaranjan Das Adhikary

Religious Indians

Religion has been unduly privileged to understand the south Asian social reality. Western scholars born in the age of Enlightenment and protestant reformation have, under the blinding effect of 'modern' (which includes the notion of secularity, nation and rational individual) branded the non-western cultures of Asia, China, and Africa as overtly religious. Many Western scholars assume that modern westerners act out of secular rational concerns while South Asians (as well as Middle Eastern and inhabitants of other regions) act under a primary impulse of religious sentiment (Said 1978). Thus orientalism assumes that religion in India is the key to understand people and identity. Identities in south Asia are predominantly religious ones, in contrast with Europeans and Americans, who are nationalists first. Privileging religion in understanding India is not a problem. However positing non-western cultures as religious, first, overlooks the salience of religion in Europe and America. Secondly it oversimplifies the existence plurality of religious groups as exclusive and divided. Western scholars of the subcontinent rely too heavily on Hindu and Muslim (particularly), as '...self-apparent terms of exclusive arenas of religious activity so that South Asian cultures can best be viewed , de facto, through bifurcated glasses that discreetly discerns two halves of India- Hindu and Muslim-in time, space and society'.

Understanding Marginalisation

Marginalisation has emerged as a most contemporary theme in the discourse on social justice and equality. Though the study of margins claims no conceptual originality and freshness for its being rooted in the conventional notions of centre-periphery debate of the dependency theorisation, still the theme is potent with capturing broader processes hitherto marginal to mainstream sociological research. The term 'Marginalization' generally describes the overt actions or tendencies of individuals and societies whereby those perceived as being without desirability or function are removed or excluded (i.e., are 'marginalized') from the prevalent systems

of protection and integration, so limiting their opportunities and means for survival. Marginalization may manifest itself in forms varying from genocide/ethnic-cleansing and other xenophobic acts/activities at one end of the spectrum, to more basic economic and social hardships at the unitary (individual/family) level. Of course, the forms of marginalization may vary, generally linked to the level of development of society; culturally, and as (if not more) importantly, with relation to economics. For example, it would generally be true, that there would exist more marginalized groups in the Third World and developing nations, than in the Developed/First-World nations. Indeed, there can be a distinction made, on the basis of the choice that one has within this context: those in the Third World who live under impoverished conditions, through no choice of their own (being far removed from the protectionism that exists for people in the First World,) are often left to die due to hunger, disease, and war (Anupkumar, n.d.).

To be marginalised is to be forced to occupy the sides or fringes and thus not be at the centre of things. In social Life, groups of people or communities may have the experience of being excluded. Their marginalisation can be because they speak a different language, follow different customs or belong to a different religious group from the majority community. They may also feel marginalised because they are poor, considered to be of 'low' social status and viewed as being less human than others. Sometimes, marginalised groups are viewed with hostility and fear. This sense of difference and exclusion leads to communities not having access to resources and opportunities and in their inability to assert their rights. They experience a sense of disadvantage and powerlessness vis-a-vis more powerful and dominant sections of society, who own land, is wealthy, better educated and politically powerful. Thus, marginalisation is seldom experienced in one sphere. Economic, social, cultural and political factors work together to make certain groups in society feel marginalised.

In India, the problem of marginalization is very real. We see it with women and women's rights—perhaps not as much in Metropolises, but definitely in smaller cities and towns, and villages. Discrimination exists against women at every level, from Female Infanticide to Widow Remarriage, and so on. The plight of Dalits is also not much different (largely due to corruption allowing only a fortunate few to benefit from the welfare programs in place). Muslims also face severe forms of marginalisation, as do people of various other minorities. The marginalization of the honest is another problem—so is the marginalization of various issues, ranging from corruption to the environment.

The effects of Marginalization are immense. Those who are marginalized generally suffer from a crisis of identity (often portrayed as 'the bad guy') and this perhaps leads to a rise in social militancy / delinquency (in terms of castes, religions, ethnic

and linguistic groups, people suffering from Medical problems (AIDS, etc), those of other sexual orientation (homosexuals). Women and the physically handicapped or mentally challenged, are simply smothered and subdued into the acceptance (without choice) of whatever is offered to them, and/or whatever views and beliefs are forced upon them. These cycles back to the marginalized being viewed in this light, since they are forced to be so. In terms of decision-making abilities and power, the marginalized are also shunned and shunted away from the mainstream, remaining a 'fringe' group, with little real representation (and due to their marginalization, little desire to organize protest against this marginalization). Policies and Political Representation are meant to cater to the larger audience. Those in power, or those with power prevent the marginalised from fuller realisation from policies and programmes. Those already marginalized remain largely so. Marginalised are not a homogenous group. For every stage of marginalized people, there exists a hierarchy of inequality within that group, contributing to the degree of marginalization. The concept of Marginalised is a dynamic one for there is impetus for constant contestation within and between the groups who are part and apart from the mainstream.

Diagram 1

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Minorities, Muslims and Marginalisation

The term minority is most commonly used to refer to communities that are numerically small in relation to the rest of the population. However, it is a concept that goes well beyond numbers. It encompasses issues of power, access to resources and has social and cultural dimensions. The Indian Constitution recognised that the culture of the majority influences the way in which society and government might express themselves. In such cases, size can be a disadvantage and lead to the marginalisation of the relatively smaller communities. Thus, safeguards are needed to protect minority communities against the possibility of being culturally dominated by the majority. They also protect them against any discrimination and disadvantage that they may face. Given certain conditions, communities that are small in number relative to the rest of society may feel insecure about their lives, assets and well-being. This sense of insecurity may get accentuated if the relations between the minority and majority communities are fraught. The Constitution provides these safeguards because it is committed to protecting India's cultural diversity and promoting equality as well as justice. Every citizen of India can approach the courts if they believe that their Fundamental Rights have been violated. Muslims are 13.4 per cent of India's population and are considered to be a marginalised community in India today because in comparison to other communities, they have over the years been deprived of the benefits of socio economic development.

Recognising that Muslims in India were lagging behind in terms of various development indicators, the government set up a high-level committee in 2005. Chaired by Justice Rajindar Sachar, the committee examined the social, economic and educational status of the Muslim community in India. The report discusses in detail the marginalization of this community. It suggests that on a range of social, economic and educational indicators the situation of the Muslim community is comparable to that of other marginalised communities like Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Among other things the report found that 25 % children in the age group of 6-14 years do not attend any school. In no State Muslim participation in the workforce is proportionate to their population share. Political participation of Indian Muslim is also inadequate and is often stifled by the policy of reserved seats on a rotation basis (Sachar Committee Report on Social, Economic and Educational Status of Muslim Community in India, Government of India, Nov., 2006). Economic and social marginalisation experienced by Muslims has other dimensions as well. Like other minorities, Muslim customs and practices are sometimes quite distinct from what is seen as the mainstream.

Muslims as others

Prior to British rule in India, it was generally believed that Hindu-Muslim relations in India were that of complementarities and uneasy peace. Self-identification, exclusion

and tension among religious groups on the subcontinent derived solely from the colonial encounter. However evidence from many sources point to the otherness of Muslims in India. In the eleventh century, Al-Buruni in his *Kitab-al-Hind* distinguished between Hindus and Budhists and referred to Hindus as religious antagonists and co-religionists (Muslims) as followers of truth. Similarly, in mid-twelfth century Brahmana Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* we find reference to Muslims by an ethnic like label called *Turuska* (Turks). In a similar vein, the rise of the orders of militant *sadhus* contributed in equal measure to the construction of exclusive religious identities. The first half of the second millennium AD witnessed the expansion of ascetic orders, along with the cults of their God, throughout the Indian subcontinent. These orders combined trade with military duty and allied their economic ascent with an expansion of their cult across south Asia, establishing a comprehensive binding of *Shaivite* and *Vaishnavite* worship for many of the myriad, previously loose pages of local religious beliefs and practices. Pre-colonial political efforts to form a single organisation of Hindus soon followed and provided the basis for the discourse of communalism taken up by the imperial British and fostered by the current religious chauvinists (Veer, 1994).

The British Imperial rule in India borrowed heavily from this already existing religious exclusionism and selectively used them in furthering their imperial interest. British imperial rule in South Asia consciously and unconsciously agitated extant communal dynamics in South Asia through four mutually interacting factors: Ethnography, Historiography, the Census, and representational politics...The British first had to determine what that was, and so they attempted to discern and depict this through three forms of knowledge: Historiography, Ethnography and Statistics. Historiographers, who projected western historical patterns forged in the renaissance and tempered in the enlightenment created expectations that Asian cultures would reflect pre-modern European social conditions in which religion supposedly played a very public, socially divisive and developmentally retardant role. The British used religion as a primary criterion for the categorization not only of time but also of society. The decadal census of India, initiated in 1872, sought to delineate South Asian society principally via categories of caste and religion (Gottschalk, 2001). Similarly, with the introduction of communal representation, religious discourse ceased to be site of engagement and it quickly transformed into a tool of trans local political mobilisation.

Theoretical Traditions

In the above backdrop of religious exclusionism, it is interesting to examine the different forms that discourses on Hindu-Muslim relations in India have taken. Engagement with the Hindu-Muslim question in social science has drawn upon a rich stock of theoretical traditions which can be grouped under four broad categories,

namely, 1) Exclusivist 2) Conflict 3) Historical 4) Composite. Exclusivist tradition treats religion like Hinduism and Islam as a singular whole as neatly separate from each other. The tradition is limited to the study of a particular religion. In this view Hinduism and Islam derive from quite different sources with origins in Aryan, Dravidian, Sanskrit and Vedas on the one hand and in Arabs, Arabic, the Prophet Mohammed and the Quran on the other. Exclusivist discourse (Eg. British Historiography) divides India temporally and spatially so much so that ancient Indian civilisation as Hindus and medieval India as Islamic. Spatially places come to carry a religious tag (Benares as a Hindu City) missing in the process the role Muslims play in the pilgrimage economy of Varanasi. Conflict scholarship is a consequence of communal violence in recent times. Typically the approach (Asghar Ali Engineer, Ashis Nandy etc.) focus on Hindus and Muslims as opposed to each other and study the ways in which religious groups come to position themselves in conflict. Historical school also studies the communalist discourse but from a historical perspective. Typically they seek to find the roots of Hindu-Muslim conflict in colonial and pre-colonial past. Scholars like Bipan Chandra, Gyanedra Pandey and van der Veer consider communalism to be the direct result of British policies and Ideologies applied to South Asia. Composite approach to religion (Nita Kumar) study religious groups as a constituent of other group formations. So Hindus and Muslims are not only Hindus or Muslims but also Hindus or Muslims of a place, of a profession and so on. Or in other words identity is composed of many nested sub identities of which religion is but only one component. Nita Kumar demonstrates in the study of mostly Muslim Benarasi weavers that th[...] more than Muslims living in uneasy peace in the Hir[...] 1999).

All the above approaches do shed light or[...] can study religion, religious groups, their formation, c[...]. However the available traditions tend to pose reli[...] either in conflict or are at a safe distance from e[...], religious groups, in the process of negotiating the[...] insulated from each other. Neither have they alwa[...] opposed to each other. There is, in reality, a considerable amount of engagement between them. Marginalised religious groups, in their engagement with the mainstream, take on new strategic names and forms which compel us to consider the case of shifting margins, consciousness and identities. Old oppositional identities coalesce into new ones, boundaries serve only as symbols, communal become communitarian (Kumar, 1995).

Muslims at the Shifting Margins: A Narrative

The revenue village *Mian Patana*, Bhograi Block, Balasore District, Odisha under this study here was a Jagirdari of Hadi Mian during Mughal times. In keeping with the practice then, administrators were used to be granted land and Jagirdari of villages instead of salary for their service. Though it was not hereditary, but as long as they continue to provide services, like tax collection, maintenance of peace in the village and keep a watch on moral order, from generation to generation, the Jagirdari rights remain vested in them. Since then the village has been named after khairat mian (Son of Hadi Mian) as Mian Patana. Some 150 years ago there were only two/three Muslim families in the village and few more families in a neighboring basti (settlement, referred to as Basti henceforth) in Sarisaganj. The basti rapidly grew in size and now have around 135 families in Mian Patana. After the abolition of Zamindari and Jagirdari, rights of land ownership was taken away by the Government. Slowly over the years majority of the Muselmans rendered landless. Poor converts (some might have been forced to Islam) came to settle down in Mian Patana over the years. Now the village or as is called by Hindus, *Pathan basti* has a population of nearly 800 people, majority of whom (80%) are illiterate. Very few Muslim children go to school, though there is a primary and secondary school within a distance of 2km from the village. People cite reasons of poverty and a lack of appreciation to explain illiteracy particularly with reference to modern education, in the community. Though there was a Madrasa which had 30-35 enrollments every year in Sarisaganj, a neighboring hamlet, it is now closed for lack of fund. 'Though the local MLA (Member of Legislative Assembly) assured government grants several times, it never happened' grumbled Seikh Basir, a local Muslim. There are three Muslims from Mianpatna who are in government service. Most of the Muslims are landless. Only one person has got more than 10 acres of land and nearly 10 more Muslims owning 5 acres or less. Rest of the community is landless. Occupational structure of the basti consist of free wage labourer, yearly contract labourer for agriculture and cattle grazing, petty trade in collection of refused iron and plastic articles, unskilled mechanical work like tube well repairing etc. These days nearly 10-15 boys go to places like Bombay, Surat, Singapore, Saudi Arabia to work in hotels, construction sites, cotton mills etc (Adhikary C. D. 2010). Poverty is writ large in the basti. The basti is surrounded by agricultural lands owned by Hindus. There is no proper approach road to the basti; earlier the basti used to be very compact. But recurrent floods in river *Subernrekha* have forced some dislocations and it now looks a little scattered. There is one Mosque in the village, another one is in Sarisaganj basti.

Muslims, in this backdrop, are living in Mianpatna with Hindus by their sides since last five generations, the maximum they can recall. The village is known as Pathan basti by majority Hindus, which is normally referred to with disdain. Pathan stands

for someone who has lost his caste; somebody who is defiling. A general attitude of contempt prevails among Hindus. Some of the Muslims also admit that some Hindus refuse to even sit with us. Muslims are ideally evaluated in a framework of purity-pollution. Detail codes of conduct designed to maintain distance exist among Hindus. Muslims are not allowed to enter homes, kitchen, touch cooked food etc. These days these taboos are little loose. Muslims are liberally allowed inside lower caste homes. Though they do not dine together, still it is a common sight to find Hindus and Muslims sharing the sitting place in the tea shops at village crossings. In keeping with the lowering of traditional moral standards, social distance and nearness between Hindus and Muslims, these days, is decided more by economic pragmatism. There was a time when people used to take bath if they happen to come through Pathan basti. Muslims today, to a large extent, are polluting to the extent that they are poor, have filthy life styles, and of course the important one, eat beef. Pathan basti used to be a place which is inhabited by Pathans, who are for all practical purpose, others or not any part of us (Hindus) or our social and moral life. Typically the basti used to be located away from the neighborhood in the middle of farmlands. However, floods wrecked large scale devastation recently. Though Hindus were also affected, Muslims having mud huts in low lands had to bear disproportionate damage. These calamities have pushed the geographical boundaries of *Pathan basti* (Muslim Settlement) somewhat closer to Hindu neighbourhood in recent years. As no Hindu will sell homestead land to a Muslim, this coming closer of Pathan basti and Hindu Sahi (Neighbourhood) is significant. Hindu and Muslim families are more face to face. There is a certain development of social exchange relations between Muslims and low caste Hindus. Few of the Muslims have now become designated relatives. These relations involve all relations of give and take, except the fact that the relations are not real but imaginary. Hindu space in the village like village crossings, that typically have few shops, selling tea and other utilities, are now crowded more by Muslims. These village squares are very important for negotiating rural power and politics and staking claim to status in the village prestige hierarchy where Muslims rub shoulder with Hindu rural elites. As the neighbourhoods are closer Muslim children (school going as well as illiterates or drop outs) freely come to play in the Hindu Sahis with Hindu children. Though Hindu children going to Pathan basti to play, however, is not very common. In general Muslims are thought to be degraded, i.e., outside caste society. However an exception to this Hindu-Muslim opposition is a general belief of Hindus as well as Muslims in *Haji Harman Pir Sahib*. In fact one of the village crossings is named after him as *peera chhak* (Peera Square, which is of course considered a frightening place, after sunset). Both Hindus as well as Muslims come here to worship with Sinni bhog (sugar offering) says Selikh Malli, Maulavi of the basti. Hindus come particularly in cases of theft which involve cows and other valuable article. Hindus are happy to depend on Bairuddin and Jabruddin (Two very familiar names even with Hindu Children) in the

basti for magic healing in cases of snake bite and other illness. There is primary health care centre at a distance of 5 km. However, Abbas, a local untrained health practitioner of allopathic medicine in the basti, is invariably the first person to approach for Hindus as well as Muslims. Abbas Daktar or simply Abbas Bhai (Doctor Abbas) is popular among Hindus and Muslims. Except a communal flash point in 1982, where there was large scale conflict over an incident of cow slaughter, religious tolerance has been a rule among Hindus and Muslims since then. The conflict then was resolved by local MLA by allowing Muslims to slaughter cows but they cannot do it openly keeping the religious sensibility of Hindu neighbours. Muslims are strictly kept away from Hindu temples and ceremonies. However, Muslims are selectively, depending on their status and closeness with the Hindu man in question, are invited on occasions of marriage and occasions like that which are not strictly religious. Of course there are few people who insist not to sit with *Muselmans* (Muslims)*.*

In the domain of village economy, there seems to be a tentative division of labour between Hindu and Muslims. While lands belong to Hindus, Muslims are mostly landless. Basti has been a source of farm and non-farm labourers for Hindu farmers for a long time. Some of the Muslims remain tied to Hindu Landowners on a renewable contractual basis for a year. However Hindus are less likely to work as wage labourers on Muslim land (Also there are very few land owning Muslims). However there are cases of exchange labour during peak agricultural season, where a Hindu labourer, more frequently from the low caste, compensate for every man days taken by him from Muslim labourer, by working on Muslim field. All labourers, Hindu and Muslims work together in the field of big Hindu land owners. The traditional division of labour is slowly changing in favour of Muslims. The economic standard of Muslims is improving now as they are cultivating land on a share cropping basis and are increasingly taking to profitable vegetable cultivation during rabbi season. Vegetables are sold by Muslims in the weekly village market as well as nearby semi-urban daily markets. Market place represents a 'free for all' place where Muslims do buying and selling without any religious barrier. Muselmans have monopolized cattle trade in the village. They supply and buy cows and bullocks to and from Hindu villagers and sell them in nearby Sunakania *haat* (Weekly Market). Few Muslims have also turned local moneylender for Hindu clients. Hindus turn to these well off Muslims, whose, sons are in Saudi Arabia or in other places outside, for hand loans in times of need. Some enterprising young Muslims and Hindus have entered into a partnership to trade in coconut which is amply available in the area. It is aptly said that Muslims and Hindus share the burden of poverty together, and there seems to be no or little religious barrier to economic activities.

The Muslim basti used to be very sleepy politically. Poverty being their priority preoccupation they see little rationality in political pursuits. However there is gradual

realisation of the value of their votes. Increasing political party penetration among Muslims is creating consciousness among them. The whole basti is now swears by two political parties- Congress and Biju Janata Dal, a regional political oufit in Odisha, informs Seikh Ajmal, the ward member of the basti. This situation provides opportunities for community leaders to remain in touch with Hindu politicians. Muslims constitutes a sizable vote bank during panchayat elections. A new leadership pattern is on the rise consisting of young and active young Muslims from the generation next. Muslims in Mianpatna have two tier leadership. One is the *basti mukhia* (village head) responsible for settling individual disputes, quarrels in families, cases of petty burglary etc. There is another formal leader in the shape of ward member who represents the basti in the panchayat. However it is often found that quarrels and other disputes among Muslims are referred to Hindu nobles (village leaders who are senior, highly regarded and traditionally responsible for dispute settlement in the locality) in the neighborhood.

Discussion

Muslims being in minority has lived in Mianpatna at the margins of majoritarian Hindu society. However their everyday experience transcends their religious difference in the reciprocity and engagement between them. This has led to also a change in their marginality in the overlapping spheres of religion, society, culture and the political economy. Muslims being marginal to Hindus do have margins within margins in the shape of (*Sarv Hara*) dispossessed and landless Muslims. The engagement of Muslims with the mainstream is thick at the bottom of the social hierarchy. The poorer Muslims through share cropping, vegetable cultivation, outmigration networks with the poorer Hindus achieving economic success. Economic success directly translates into lowering of Hindu morals, civic voice, political weight and visibility in the public space. Many commensal restrictions are abandoned. Many Muslims in Mianpatna are designated relatives of Hindu Households. Farm lands now frequently change into the hands of Muslims. Poor Hindu small farmer are the one to sell off their land to Muslims who now have surplus from the remittances from far off places like Saudi Arabia, Surat and Bangalore. Same may not be true of sacred homestead land as no Hindu would sell it to a Muslim. However this has been breached due to displacement by a recent flood. *Eid-ul-Fitr* is louder today, *Tazias* are bigger now. New Panchayati Raj has excited Muslims about their political importance. Demand for representation, grant-in aid for *Madrasa* testify to the increase in reflexive self-awareness of the community. Religious identities, however instead of sharpening, seem to be decomposing. There seems to be a shifting and repositioning of Muslim marginality. Muslims now have better scores than low caste-low class Hindus in social, economic and political landscapes.

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A Study on the Role of Social Media as a Tool for Promoting Dialogues on Peace Building and Non Violence among the Youth

Sayantani Roy

Introduction

Since times immemorial, people have had within themselves a very strong urge for communication and willingness to express themselves in front of others. In order to gratify this need they went at great lengths started way back from inventing the wheel to today's well developed "Media Industry". Now within the huge magic bag of media there are several sources that promote communication a grand deal. However there has been a predominance of what is alluded to as mainstream media, which incorporate electronic media like television and radio, print media like newspapers, magazines etc. More recently there has been the emergence of the new media which includes the social media. It has complemented mainstream media in imparting information to the masses. The mostly used social media platforms include; Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Google chat, Skype, Yahoo chat and Blogs.

A vast majority of those on social media are the youth. The reason behind their prevalence has been ascribed to the simple access from mobile phones. There is a Short Message Service (SMS) to Facebook for occasion, which sends content to the users each time something happens on Facebook. All the more essentially there is an application called 'Facebook', which had made the content delivery easier. In addition to those who access social media websites on their phone there are those who are more or less computer literate. Twitter is a social networking site a lot like Facebook. Tweets are twitter messages, which are message based with a most extreme of 140 characters in length. Dissimilar to Facebook messages which can contain photographs or videos, these messages are posted on the user's profile page and read by followers. While Facebook has a limit of 5000 friends for each part, Twitter has set no such limitations.

Likely 'the social media on political movement to touch off violence' has turned into a topical issue. In India for example the discourse encompassing it has been

portrayed as a dual of anecdotes between cyber utopian and cyber skeptics. Some perspectives encircle with the uses of social media. On one hand it is considered that popularity of social media will certainly direct to a more transparent government and democracy and on the other hand it is viewed as an elitist phenomenon that could bring danger because of the uncontrolled communication. The Arab spring in the Middle East and North Africa in mid 2011 has provoked calls for need of thorough study into the prospective role that the new media can play in peace building.

Despite the fact that social media is basically very important and has a great potential for exchanging democratic dialogue, conflict prevention and peace building, a number of risks can be identified.

In Indian there has been increasing access to internet which is the fundamental access to social networking; most of the users now have the greatest tool for expression and sharing of information. Nevertheless not everybody is morally and ethically guided while utilizing it, and in this manner the social media can be misused by such people. The other noteworthy concern is the trouble of ensuring reliability and accountability of facts and information disseminated through internet, unverified facts are usually circulated with proposed actions. The social media users regularly do not offer consideration regarding the precision of the information contextualization or authentication of such information. Vague or ambiguous information can have grave results on emergence of violence. As a new platform for communication, the social media acts in unpredictable ways and without regulations, ethical standards or professionalism any individual posting material can make events and revise them.

Another fret emerges from the unrestricted nature of the internet which is extremely hard to regulate. In truth controlling the internet is more troublesome than the traditional media. Further internet and other social media networks are not civil rights platforms. They have a business angle and thus they are jointly a part of a business dominated platform. The inventors of the platforms have priority on commercial interests and profits. Internationally Google and Facebook have been expelled from certain area sites taking after an Indian court choice on the premise of religious sensibilities. The inventors of the platforms have priority on commercial interests and profits. They may therefore not be interested in regulating content, but rather just offer what the market demands. However some actors have set up measures for reporting offensive communication.

The rise of social media has dared to de-formalize communication. Social media has given a method for consistent and quick communication, which interface in and around as well as locally. It has created a movement in the communication environment which was already ruled by the mass media. Social media has an idea

for power relations. Throughout history information is a key element in starting conflicts far and wide. The media can thus assume an imperative part of a watch dog of the general public, by exposing to the masses what is essential but hidden; however it can also be used to mobilize violence. Social media can therefore act as a tool for widening the democratic space, but can simultaneously lead to destabilization of peace. While there is no evidence proving the role of the social media in the Arab uprising, here is considerable debate of whether credit properly goes to the social media compared to other factors in precipitating this wave of political unrest.

In spite of the several debates, there is little systematic research on this area. There is insufficient material on the use and role of social media for conflict prevention and peace building. This could be comprehended as lack of control over the research environments, speedy changes of public attention, difficulties in measuring the casual impact of media intervention, and the heterogeneity of conflict environments and changing objectives in the conflict torn countries.

The Concept of Social Media

Social media alludes to the method for interaction among individuals in which they share as well as exchange information thoughts in virtual groups or systems utilizing technology. Kaplan and Heanlein (2010) have characterized social media as gathering of internet construct applications that work with respect to the ideological and technological establishments of the internet and that permit the creation and exchange of user-generated content. The content might include text, video, images, podcasts and other multimedia communications. The most prominent examples of social media include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google + Google talk, Yahoo chat, Skype, WhatsApp etc.

Facebook is a free social networking site that permits registered users to make profiles, transfer photographs and videos, send messages and stay in contact with families, friends and colleagues. Twitter is a free micro blogging site that permits registered individuals to communicate posts called tweets. Twitter members can broadcast tweets and follow other user's tweets by using multiple platforms and devices. Wikipedia is a free, open substance reference book made through the communitarian exertion of a group called the Wikipedians. Anybody enlisted on the site can make an article for production. Enlistment is not required to alter articles.

Besides, social networking relies on mobile and web based technologies to generate highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, discuss and modify user generated content. It acquaints substantial and persuasive changes

to communication between organizations communities and individuals. It is contended that social media has presented constructive outcomes, for example, permitting the democratization of the internet while likewise permitting people to advertise and form friendship. Much of criticism of social media has been that it has decreased face-to-face interactions, there have been issues of reliability of information presented, concentration, ownership of media content, and the meaning of interactions created by social media.

Social networking sites as defined by Boyd and Ellison (2007) as web-based services that allow individuals to (a) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (b) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (c) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and categorization of these connections may vary from site to site. While we use the term "social network site" to describe this phenomenon, the term "social networking sites" also appears in public discourse, and the two terms are often used interchangeably. We chose not to employ the term "networking" for two reasons: emphasis and scope. "Networking" emphasizes relationship initiation, often between strangers. While networking is possible on these sites, it is not the primary practice on many of them, nor is it what differentiates them from other forms of computer-mediated communication.

According to Jolene Zywica and James Danowski (2008) on the other hand social networking sites allow users to create a personalized account that includes the information like; date of birth, hobbies, preferences, education status, relationships status and personal interests, etc. Whereas Heythornthwaite (2011) viewed that the term 'social network site' has been used to describe this trend, instead of the term, 'social networking site', as the latter is majorly understood as networking with regard to maintenance of relationships with friends or people know personally and/ or via the social network. Social network sites provide a lot of networking for people, but that is not their prime concern, as it appears. Social network sites let people connect to others, and enable them to speak their thoughts. This results in associations between individuals which are often described as 'latent ties'. With the way social media space is flourishing, people think it has become very essential for them to create their own space on the social media, and there is no dearth of content, comments, pictures, videos, links or WebPages people are ready to share, to do so.

Social Media and Peace Building

The tools that we use in new media, especially the social media are powerful peace building tools, if we identify them so. All the activities in print or electronic media, as

we have realized it for quite a while now, with regard to building and maintaining peace and decorum in the society, have become better with the advent and continuous use of new media. The communities that work for peace building in the society transform social media into an extremely utilitarian entity as spreading awareness for peace building tasks is concerned.

Normally, media is utilized to engender plans to society, convey messages, and communicate on the behalf of both powers and the masses. This is finished with the utilization of devices of mass communications, to which new media like the social networking sites are included. History has a proven record of the utilization of media to attract individuals toward a specific strategy, to motivate them into taking or not taking up a task, and creating a world-wide view on situations, events, communities and people. It has moreover been seen that media can offer hatred among groups in the society and create violence. This hold true for social media also.

If the same stands true, tools of media and new media i.e. the social media can be utilized for creating and maintaining peace in the various sections of the society. They can be put to use to make people aware of conflict prevention strategies and can in themselves act as one, by communicating on those lines. It can be prevailing means to mobilize people to build peace. As far as youth is concerned, social media can be utilized very well by the youngsters to take up peace building tasks. The current study probes the possible role of social media for promoting dialogues on peace building and nonviolence among the youths by understanding the strengths of social media for the same.

Review of Literature

In their study 'Why and When to Use the Media for Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding', Vladimir Bratic and Lisa Schirch (2007) discusses media's direction toward conflict and sees the medis' function in peace building and conflict resolution. Besides, it discusses how the use of new media can lead to change in the society and how it can encourage people to contribute to peace building tasks, and also support in the same.

Sheldon Himelfarb and Megan Chabalowski (2008) in their study Media, Conflict Prevention and Peace building: Mapping the Edges had mentioned that there is growing recognition among policymakers and conflict management experts that the media should be a building block of any comprehensive peace building strategy. Yet there are scant guidelines in this regard. Projects are still planned and implemented in a relatively ad-hoc manner, with minimal reference to lessons learned from previous initiatives**.**

Whereas Sacha Wunsch-Vincent and Graham Vickery (2007) had said the social media and UGC are characteristics of what is called Web 2.0 or the "participative web. The participatory feature of the web is now a reality to many users. When reading the news, internet users can see and rate comments, as well as make comments. Many Internet users interact with overlapping online and offline community over digital social networks like Facebook.

In an essay 'Media in Conflict Prevention and Peace Building: An Opportunity for E.U. Leadership' Communication for Social Change Consortium, Bernardo Monzani (2009) states that 'media often promote violence'. The study takes up the classic examples of the Rwandan genocide and the explosion of mass protests on Moldova, to enumerate on how media often builds up tensions instead of building peace. The study talks about the role of media in general and new media technologies per se in channelizing the debate on new media affecting the social set up and promoting violence.

In his essay titled 'New Media for Peace building and Conflict Management,' Cladwell (2012) highlights on how new media is 'used to create peace or more tragically to foment violence'. It is understood that the knowledge revolution has created bridges and divides in the society and how new media when portrays information, makes it easier for destructive behavior to spread more easily across borders.

Research Methodology

The study was conducted among the two districts of Madhya Pradesh viz Gwalior and Morena among 100 youths who are pursuing their under graduates and post graduates courses of the age group between 19-25 to see their usage of social networking sites and their behaviors therein with an effort to have equal gender representation. A questionnaire was given to the participants, the results of which were later analyzed. It is a descriptive research and hence aims to describe the current status of the phenomena of role of youth in peace building tasks. The sample was selected after careful observation of the current trends in social media usage.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table :1 Social Media Accession	
Accessing social networking sites from desktop	6%
Accessing social networking sites from laptop	20%
Accessing social networking sites from smart mobile phones	45%
Accessing social networking sites from any two tools	29%

From table 1 Social Media Accession it is evident that 45% of the respondents are using social networking sites from their smart mobile phones, while 29% are surfing social networking sites from any of the two tools, mere 20 % of respondents are using laptop and 6% using desktops for the same This helped the researchers understand the social media accession behavior.

Table: 2 Common Trends And The Popularity of New Media and Its Usage	
Using Internet for Reading	9%
Using internet for surfing and shopping	10%
Using internet for social networking sites	38%
All of the above	43%

Table 2 Common Trends And The Popularity of New Media and Its Usage indicates that a percentage of 10% each is using new media for surfing, shopping and social networking, 9% for reading or academics and 43% performing all of these tasks with the use of new media while 38% of respondents are using internet for social networking sites. This shows the prevalent trend and the popularity of new media along with lining its usage.

Table: 3 Daily Internet Consumption	
2-3 hours	23%
4-6 hours	33.33%
6-7 hours	30%
Lesser hours in Internet	13.33%

With regard to daily internet consumption on a routine basis was concerned, the results revealed that 33.33% spent four to five hours on the internet, 30% spent six to seven hours, and 23% spent two to three hours and 13.33% spending the least number of hours using new media

Table : 4 Awareness of Cyber Jargon	
Awareness about cyber culture	30%
Awareness about virtual space	33%
Awareness about digital divide	26.66%
Awareness about crisis mapping	10%

From Table 4 it is evident that awareness of cyber jargon question on cyber jargon revealed that 30% were aware of the commonly used term cyber-culture, 33% were like to virtual space, 26% understood the concept of digital divide and 10% had an idea about the term crisis-mapping.

Table: 5 Purpose of Using Internet	
Blogs	6.66%
Apps	13.33%
Emails	40%
All of the above	40%

Table 5 indicates 6.66% of respondents are using blogs and 13.33% are using mobile and computer applications, whereas 40% of the respondents are using emails 40% of the respondents are using all the applications.

Table: 6 Significance of social media	
Social media can be used for civilian peacekeeping	16%
Social media can be used for making space for democracy	12%
Social media can be used for women empowerment	16%
Social media can be used for all of the above	56%

Table 6 tries to understand the significance of social media usage from youth perspective. On asking further about the significance of social media it came into view that 16% understood that social media can be used for civilian peacekeeping. Accordingly 12% of the applications of social media can be used in making space for democracy and 16% for women empowerment. A huge 56% agrees that the power of new media can be used for all of these.

Table: 7 Effect of Peace Building on Youth	
Peace building invokes cognitive changes	27%
Peace building invokes attitudinal changes	24%
Peace building invokes behavioral changes	14%
Peace building invokes all of the above	35%

From table 7 effect of peace building on youth it is imperative that it can lead to behavioral changes in 14% of the cases, cognitive changes in 27% and attitudinal changes in 24%.

Table :8 Crisis Mapping	
Awareness about peace building	7%
Awareness about conflict prevention	5%
Awareness about both	8%
Awareness about none	80%

When further technical concepts on peace building were asked, it came into view that 7% understood the terms peace building and 5% understood about conflict prevention and 8% understood about both peace building and conflict prevention a chunk of 80% had not heard of these.

Table: 9 Uses of Social Media in Peace Building Dialogue	
Conflict Resolution in Social media Platform	16%
Social Media can create theories of peace building	10%
Social Media as a platform for peace building and intercultural dialogue	36%
All of the above	38%

From the above table 9 uses of social media in peace building dialogue it is clear that 38% of respondents believed that peace building activities can be escalated with the use of social media and 36% feel that new media can play a significant role in the same by coming up with peace building dialogues, 16% believe that taking conflict resolution to social network platform can be of assistance, approximately 10% state that creating a theoretical framework to deal with conflict resolution with the help of new media can be fruitful, and 20% agree that all of these are required to gear up with peace building tasks in the society.

Table :10 Participation of Youth In Peace Building Activities through Social Media	
Creating awareness among youth for peace building activities a	58%
Influencing youth for peace building activities	24%
Decision implementation regarding peace building	7%
All of the above	11%

As far as participation of youth in peace building activities through social media concerned, 58% believed that enhancing knowledge to that effect can be of immeasurable assistance, 24% agree that influencing the youth can do the task, 7% target on implementations of decisions, and 11% same percentage believes that all of these are required to encourage youth to get involved with peace building activities.

Conclusion

The study concludes that social media is an important communication tool among the youth. Social media's popularity can be recognized to certain key element which includes:

a.   it responds to the youth's desire for communication;
b.   It is inexpensive and has the opportunity for instantaneous communications.

Most of the youths in the study bought internet bundles to connect to social media and those who didn't relied on their friends and relatives to connect. This means that internet has been made available in price that can be afforded by the users especially those who are hailing from area with socio-economic challenges.

The study had also concluded that a major portion of teenagers and university goers use internet on mobile, laptop and desktop in the decreasing order. We also come to know that the respondents use internet for surfing, shopping and social networking, followed by reading online. A majority spends five to seven hours on the internet, with others spending an average of four hours. It is also understood that a good number of respondents are aware of the concepts of internet like cyber culture, virtual space, digital divide, with very few having the knowledge of crisis-mapping. The respondents of the study use emails, mobiles and computer applications and blogs, which bring out the fact that they are side by side with the innovations in new media technologies. Nevertheless a majority did not seem to be aware of the concepts of peace building and conflict management. There was an understanding among the respondents about the areas where social media can contribute constructively. The following study revealed that social media has been used for social reasons and not much in conflict prevention and peace building. Therefore it presents a great potential for scaling up peace building initiatives and peace building among the youth who should be target for conflict prevention and peace building. There is however need to popularize the use of social media as a tool for conflict prevention with very user friendly interfaces for it to be a effective tool for conflict prevention.

The study thus reveals that conflict prevention and peace building activities invoke behavioral changes, cognitive changes and attitudinal changes, in that order. It further states that social media can assist in creating peace by taking conflict resolution and strategies to a social network platform, leading to peace building intercultural dialogues among members of the social setup, and coming up with theories with regard to same. With the increasing penetration of mobile telephones specially the smart phones among the youths especially those represented in this study provides the opportunity to integrate mobile telephony and internet based social media platforms to increase the participation level of the youth in reporting violence and taking part as well as reporting peace building activity. This will enable those who posses ordinary mobile phones (which cannot connect to internet) to participate, since they can simply use SMS to report violence or peace building activities to the concerned place. Likewise they can receive warning and alerts for conflict and take precaution.

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Developing Media and Information Literacy Skills to harness the power of Social Media to promote Peace

Vedabhyas Kundu

Introduction

"First: Let us examine our attitude towards peace itself? Too many of us think it is impossible. Too many think it unreal. But that is a dangerous, defeatist belief. It leads to the conclusion that war is inevitable-that mankind is doomed-that we are gripped by forces we cannot control. We need not accept that view. Our problems are man-made-therefore, they can be solved by man. And man can be as big as he wants. No problem of human destiny is beyond human beings." – Former US President, John F Kennedy

The assertion of the former US President, John F Kennedy that no problem of human destiny is beyond human beings is a negation of the invincibility of conflicts around the world which plagues harmony and peace co-existence. If as Kennedy said that problems are man-made and therefore can be solved by man, then the culture of peace will also have to be made by man himself. In this context, the 1980 Nobel Peace Prize winner Adolfo Perez Esquivel (2015) stresses that to build a society in which peace is the foundation of life 'we much reach out our hands, fraternally, without hatred and rancour, for reconciliation and peace, with unfaltering determination in the defense of truth and justice. We know we cannot plant seeds with closed fists. To sow we must open our hands."

Esquivel's thrust on the need for people to reach out for a peaceful society underscores the importance of different strategies human society has to constantly use to nurture solidarity among communities and individuals. While there are contention and contestations on the efficacy of the communication revolution as a driver for peace and nonviolent action, technological advancement offers a large number of people a space for global conversation and is one of the strategies for reaching out and nurturing solidarity.

There are examples around the world on how the new media is manipulated to incite hatred and violence, mobilize young people to terrorism, spread ill-feelings

and xenophobia. Ikeda (2007) points out that rapid advancement of media technologies have made it possible for religious and ethnic hatred to be broadcast around the globe in the blink of an eye. Hence the challenge to communications today, he says, is to address the lack of true dialogue linking the hearts of one individual to another.

Similarly, Bokova (2010) notes, "Though rapid development of information technology has multiplied opportunities for rapprochement and social interaction, it has also exacerbated misunderstandings and expressions of discontent."

Towell (2011) argues, "The digital culture is laying the foundation of a new kind of society, one marked by increased openness, communication and participation. These qualities, together with the mutual understanding fostered through cross-cultural exposure, are the basis of a culture of peace. And for those who feel passionate about contributing to peace, the expanding possibilities of our digital connectedness offer an endless field of potential, limited only by our imaginations."

The challenges and possibilities of using the new media for peace, nonviolence and greater social interaction as underlined by Ikeda, Bokova and Towell takes us to analyze the different dimensions of promoting peace using the digital space. While there are also dangers of the new media being used to propagate misunderstandings and hatred, it is critical that we promote media and information literacy amongst the citizenry especially amongst young people to able to deftly use the new media for peace.

Grizzle et.al. (2013) argues that the creation of a culture of peace and peaceful understanding between communities and people must be the ultimate principle for media and information literacy. Grizzle et.al. (2013) further notes that the promotion of media and information literacy (MIL) and intercultural dialogue for peace and sustainable development is a key approach to challenge the growing inequalities, misunderstandings and soft conflicts. They point out, "If citizens improve their media and information competency, they can contribute to representing a serious demand for the mass media and other information providers to operate in accordance with peace and harmonious international relations."

Tornero and Varis's (2010) perspectives on the new objectives of media literacy in the twenty-first century underline the significance of linking media literacy education to peace. These objectives includes: a) capacity for listening, namely for understanding, for talking; b) tolerance; c) respect for diversity; and d) ethics. They further note that the creation of a culture of peace and peaceful understanding between communities and people must be the ultimate value for media literacy.

Further, Nagaraj and Kundu (2013) argue on a framework of media and information literacy which could help facilitate dialogue between diverse communities, further positive engagement in conflict situations, promote a culture of peace and, most importantly, facilitate sustainable development in culturally diverse country like India. They use the perspectives of eminent Gandhian, Natwar Thakkar on the centrality of emotional bridge building and mutual respect in the communication praxis of India to argue their case for the framework.

To ensure greater focus, this chapter while delving on different dimensions of peacebuilding through social media, will look at components of peace and nonviolence to be integrated in media and literacy programmes so as to enable young people to greater use of social media for peace.

Social Media and Peace

Kaplan and Haenlein's (2010) defines social media as 'a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content'. These Internet-based applications facilitate collaboration and interaction between people across the world and contribute to the creation of a global community. Some of these interactive applications include different social networking services (eg.Facebook), blogs (eg. Blogspot), microblogs (eg. twitter), wikis (eg. wiktionary.org), forums (eg.minecraftforum.net), video sharing (eg.YouTube), and image sharing (eg. Flickr & Instagram).

Explaining the nature of the social media, Sawyer (2011) points out, "New social media have been rapidly spreading across the globe and gaining popularity in today's society. While providing a common way of linking people together through knowledge, behaviours, and attitudes, a sense of belonging to a greater social network other than one's own local community is effectively created. The Internet exemplifies such a significant means in connecting to a diversity of people, places, ideas, and cultures. New social media have provided ways in which people can communicate and interact with others across the world, without being restricted by the limitations of time and distance."

Sawyer further talks about how the new social media is able to contribute to dialogues for peace and harmony, "Intercultural dialogue is critical today in our globalized and blended world, where different cultures encounter each other daily, especially through social media such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and the iPhone. Turmoil and violence would exist unless people actively promote intercultural dialogue and communication competence to achieve harmony and understanding."

How the social media can be used to promote peace can be analyzed by the following example. Here is the excerpt of this unique intervention from The Economist (2008) (http://www.economist.com/node/10650741)

> *It was the first time Facebook, a social-networking website, has been used to organise what many have described as the largest demonstration in their country's history. On February 4th more than a million people in Colombia, and smaller groups in dozens of cities across the world, took to the streets to repudiate the FARC guerrillas. In doing so they may have changed the terms of the debate about how to free the 750-odd hostages held by the guerrillas, some for a decade…. That prompted Oscar Morales, a young engineer, to set up on Facebook a group called "One million voices against the FARC". The media took up his call for a march. The government cleverly stayed out of its organisation, although it gave public workers time off to attend. The opposition was divided, with some calling for protests against abuses by the security forces too, but in the end many of its leaders marched."*

While analyzing different news reports, it was found that Morales could use his Facebook campaign to rally around 12 million people against the guerrillas. Morales talked about the impact of his initiative, "The campaign convinced people to say: We do not tolerate the kidnappings and we want their freedom. On the day of the protest, February 4, 2008, the whole country was surprised by how many people marched. More than 500,000 people joined our Facebook group. Months later many freed hostages said they had heard our protest in captivity on a radio and it gave them hope they had survived. We showed most people do not support FARC. Many members left and rejoined society."

(http://metro.co.uk/2010/02/08/oscar-morales-how-i-used-facebook-to-protest-against-farc-85760/)

Thomas and Kundu (2012) cites the example of a Class XII student from Kolkata, Ananya Roy who used the new media to take up a nonviolent protest against the death of over 90 people in a fire in AMRI Hospital. They quote Roy (The Peace Gong, April 2012), "On December 12, 2011, I sent out approximately three hundred text messages to students of various schools and colleges telling them that I would be in front of AMRI, sticking a few posters and lighting a candle as a mark of a silent

(53)

protest. The message was forwarded to numerous people and I received a huge response saying that they wanted to join in too. They wanted to light a candle that would ignite the change in the prevailing darkness. I went ahead to create an event on Facebook named, 'VOICE YOUR GRIEF AND ANGER-PLAY THE ROLE OF THE YOUTH'. It was a public event open to all those with a heart and will bring about a change. Within a day we got a response from more than 200 people saying that they would be attending the gathering."

Social Media platform like Facebook offers great opportunity to individuals, institutions and groups to construct peace messages, initiate dialogues, share information of peace initiatives, recognize peacebuilding efforts, promote rapprochement and reconciliation and facilitate networking amongst groups/individuals/organizations involved in peacebuilding. There are large number of pages, groups and events related to peace in the Facebook. For instance the page of Global Peace Index regularly updates visitors on measurements of peacefulness. The page of the Global Campaign for Peace Education shares information on different initiatives on peace education across the world. The Peace in your lifetime-I'm a Dreame AND- we're creating it NOW has interesting insights on different dimensions of peace. Similarly there is large number of groups which comprises of individuals working on peace. These are also sites for dialogues and sharing of information. Some of these groups include Transcend Peace University, Tools for Creative Peacebuilding, Teachers without Borders Peace Educators, Peace Journalism, Soldiers for Peace International, Aman ki Asha etc.

A case in point on how dialogues for peace are constructed in social media can be gauged by the following example in The Peace Gong page in the Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/The-Peace-Gong-187829521307498/):

A poem, The Confession by Syeda Rumana Mehdi, was posted in the Page which eloquently portrays how we humans are responsible for conflicts around the world and the essence of individuals to practice humanism.

> The sand is slipping slowly,
> Grain by grain,
> In the hourglass,
> Time is passing,
> Yet we stand still,
> The perfect picture of misery,
>
> We fought with sticks, guns, bombs,
> And then with the mighty nuclear bombs,

Yet we lost,
We lost the battle of trust and humanity,
We secured wealth for our children,
But we cannot tell them,
Stories of our selfishness,…..

My daughters are not safe,
Neither are my sons,
Nor my honor,
Spasms of agony,
Rip my core,
As I write this confession,
I call out,
To Madiba and Bapu,
To help us,
Bless us,
Help us find ourselves,

Lose yourselves in the sea of humanity,
And find yourselves,
In the smile of an orphan,
In the happy gurgle of a baby,
And in your heart.

While the poem was shared in more than 45 groups, about 50 comments were posted on the poem. An analysis of the comments in general pointed out on how people themselves were responsible for conflicts, as these were all made by human. Majority of the comments argued that it was not impossible for resolving these conflicts through nonviolent means. The comments underscored that all conflicts and disputes could be resolved through dialogue and peaceful means. It was pointed out that 'human-to-human contact was extremely important in today's world of conflicts, it is critical for global peace.' For instance one comment pointed out that human are not born with a tendency to consider violence as a normal phenomenon.

> *@ Ruby Rajawat: Violence is no more than just an impulse. Very oft we consider it as a normal human tendency to get impulsive on things and acts those irritate us, hurt us or harm us. But we seldom give a thought to the very concept of humanity. We tend to relate it with religion but we don't pay attention to the fact that it's more of spiritual being. Humans*

> *are not born with a tendency to consider violence a normal thing. But we as a society impart these attributes to a child. Sharing, patience, and determination we are getting sans of these human traits gradually. Media is highlighting violence in each form. Why are we not focusing and propagating news that have peace in them? Why do we see just blood and murder of humanism everywhere?? Is our world really like this???*

Meanwhile Dinan (2009) shares an interesting example of Twitter contributing to peace dialogues:

"On Tuesday, May 19th, 2009, Deepak Chopra (@Deepak_chopra) offered a simple 88 character tweet on Twitter "Please take the vow of non-violence with me today:http://www.itakethevow.com Please RT!"

What followed offered a fascinating experiment in this medium's capacity to be a catalyst for something quite noble — the spreading of peace on earth. Within one hour, there had been one hundred retweets of his post and by the end of the day, over two hundred. Each retweeter offered their encouragement to followers to join them in the vow of non-violence in thought, words, and actions. Hundreds did so. Many more watched the inspiring music video and the story of the origin of the global movement, which has resulted in close to 20,000 people taking the vow since it began in November of 2008…. The vow also includes a commitment to encourage two others to join you in taking the vow. It's thus designed as a simple viral strategy to create peace on earth, with a goal of eventually having 100 million people take the vow. That sounds audacious until we look at the current rate of growth. From 450 people who took the vow in November to nearly 20,000 who have done so six months later, the spread has been rapid, with close to a doubling of signatories each month. If the current rate of growth continues at the same pace, I Take the Vow would reach 100 million signatories by mid-June of 2010. I believe this can be a powerful demonstration experiment of the deepest spiritual purpose of Twitter: for us to evolve our culture rapidly and to create major change on the planet with ease. Taking and then spreading a powerful vow that can truly lead to peace on earth takes only personal willingness, a few minutes and a few dozen words."

By examining several examples of social media and peace including that of Morales, Ray (2010) articulates, "There is no question that social media can bring great and positive change in our world, but here's the problem: It cannot do it alone. In each of the examples above, it was not Twitter or Facebook that created change but the

action of people (or the threat of action of people) that did so." The examples of Morales and Ananya Roy are in sync with Ray's articulation on the importance of action by individuals and groups who through the deft use of the social media can contribute to positive change.

Further Mehdi (2013) talks about how the social media can be used creatively by young people to promote a culture of peace in her editorial for the children's newspaper, The Peace Gong to mark the International Day of Nonviolence on October 2, 2013, "Let every dream become Martin Luther King's dream, let every step towards peace become Mahatma Gandhi's Salt March and let every obstacle in your path become Nelson Mandela's painful twenty-seven years in prison. Promise yourself that you will contribute your best to make the phenomenon of violence outdated, promise yourself that you will try to motivate your friends to walk on the path of nonviolence."

Using Media and Information Literacy skills to use the social media for peace

Iflah Javed Qureshi's (a former editor of the children's newspaper, The Peace Gong) perspectives encapsulate the importance of promoting media literacy education for peace among young people. She (2013) says, "Our aim is to bring together children from different parts of the world to work for global peace. Through The Peace Gong we will try to promoting diversity and encourage dialogues among children from different cultures and communities..... Our goal hence is to use our skills in communication and media so that we connect children from different cultures and share our values, ethos and concerns. We hope to use our understanding of media to work to make the phenomenon of violence outdated."

Renee Hobbs (1998) underlines the importance of media literacy education which helps young people to negotiate challenges in their daily lives, "Media literacy practices help strengthen students' information access, analysis and communication skills and build an appreciation for why monitoring the world is important. Media literacy can inform students about how the press functions in a democracy, why it matters that citizens gain information and exposure to diverse opinions, and why people need to participate in policy decision-making at the community, state and federal levels. Secondly, media literacy can support and foster educational environments in which students can practice the skills of leadership, free and responsible self-expression, conflict resolution and consensus building, because without these skills, young people will not be able to effectively engage with others in the challenges of cooperative problem-solving that participation in a democratic society demands. Third, media literacy skills can inspire young people to become more interested in increasing their access to diverse sources of information."

Tornero and Varis (2010) explains how media literacy can enhance critical faculties of individuals and how they can use new technology with diligence, "Media literacy entails the acquisition of a new culture in which technology and human beings are in harmony with and complement one another. It is a culture poised for dialogue that is itself the outcome of dialogue and communication, a culture whose ideas is a type of person who is flexible, intelligent, diligent and prepared to interact meaningfully with others through technology and with technology; a critical person who knows how to debate and discuss messages and proposals reaching them from the outside, who knows how to reveal their interiors and their hidden agenda. Through this capacity, they gain the ability to imagine alternatives, changes and new courses of action. In short, they know how to be creative and productive."

Talking about new emerging values of media literacy, Tornero and Varis further argues, "The new media literacy movements stress the value of understanding and respect for cultural diversity and dialogue among cultures. The new media literacy respects the autonomy and uniqueness of each culture, but it builds bridges in order to construct a universal dialogue among them that fosters the spirit of understanding and the gradual, painstaking construction of shared values. In this way, the media literacy movement is against stereotypes and prejudices and in favour of the potential of the media and ICTs to build a universal culture of peace."

In the backdrop of the social media being the site of propagating violence, hate and conflicts, Webb et.al. (2009) talk about the goals of the media literacy education: to reduce exposure to media violence; to change the impact of violent images that are seen; to locate and explore alternatives to media that focus on violence to solve conflict; to uncover and challenge the cultural, economic, and political supports for media violence and; to introduce skills of media advocacy and organizing for change.

On how media and information literacy when combined with information, media and technology provides new opportunities for dialogue and a culture of peace, Grizzle (2014) lists out the following possibilities:

i. To reduce intolerance and increase understanding across political or cultural boundaries.

ii. For citizens from all around the world to easily communicate thus enabling more cultural exchange.

iii. For social vigilance and critical faculties at a time when anyone can post anything on the Internet. Some challenges if not effectively remedied by media and information literacy could undermine the freedom of expression in virtual spaces.

iv. To overcome disinformation but also stereotypes and intolerance conveyed through some and in online spaces.

v. To empower citizens with competencies to hold media and other information professionals accountable.

On the framework of media and information literacy for peace and intercultural dialogue, as discussed above, Nagaraj and Kundu (2013) talks of senior Gandhian Natwar Thakkar's perspective on emotional bridge building amongst different cultural groups. Discussing Natwar Thakkar's approach, they point out, "He is of the view that the communication praxis of India should not only encompass a deep understanding of each other's culture and tradition but also do the work of emotional bridge building and thereby connect people of diverse cultures. He observes that unless pluralism and mutual respect becomes centre to one's communicative abilities, one cannot reach out to diverse communities across the country. These, he opines, have to be part of any communicative message, be it person-to-person or via the mass media or the social media."

In the context of the social media, where negative propaganda and hate comments can be easily propagated, media and information literacy programmes incorporating communication approaches of seers of peace like Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Daisaku Ikeda offers great hope for more positive use of the social media for a culture of peace and nonviolence.

Natwar Thakkar's perspective on emotional bridge-building on communication takes us to the nonviolent approaches to communication of Mahatma Gandhi which can be a powerful tool in media and information literacy education to promote initiatives for peace and intercultural dialogue in the social media. Borde (1995) lists out the different aspects of nonviolent communication of Mahatma Gandhi, "The nonviolent communication theory consists of four theoretical units: (1) nonviolent speech and action; (2) maintenance of relationships and enrichment of personhood; (3) openness; and (4) flexibility. To carry these units further: Gandhi predicted that from violent communications harm would result, and that nonviolent communication contributes to the maintenance of peaceful relationships and to the enrichment of personhood. The theory of nonviolent communication recommends means (flexibility and openness) of achieving the end. For Gandhi, the goal of communication was to build and maintain human relationships and thus enhance personhood."

The Gandhian theory of nonviolent communication offers great opportunity to users of the social media to experiment and practice nonviolent action. The possibilities of integrating this theory of nonviolent communication in media literacy curriculum

were discussed in the Peace Gong's Facebook page. (https://www.facebook.com/The-Peace-Gong-187829521307498/). This attracted interesting comments. Waynad Shishu Panchayat commented: "The media literacy curriculum should focus on studies of peace movements and tolerance and how these used different tools of communications and media. For this we have to look beyond our shoulders and go thorough lessons of history where great events happened and go through great lives of Gandhiji, Martin Luther King, Mother Teresa, Daisaku Ikeda and John Lennon. Incredible movements like the anti- racial struggle of South Africa, Ahimsa and Satyagraha movement. To learn and share knowledge, students should be given practical exposure. Let scientists, farmers and even beggars (if the system can be that much magnanimous) should enter the campus of schools as resource persons through methodologies like Living Books. Students should be encouraged to learn and write about the lives of these true examples from real life and practice these in action."

Abhshek Bharanwal commented: "Mahatma Gandhi's Nonviolent Communication theory should be used to bring different sections of the society together. The common conflicts are due to the difference in status and money and most of the antisocial activities are also due to negligence of weaker sections. The higher-ups look down upon those who are below their status. Use of nonviolent communication and mutual respect, we can try to balance between different sections and it would bring peace and harmony in the society."

Mahatma Gandhi had said, "My writings cannot be poisonous, they must be free from anger, for it is my special religious conviction that we cannot truly attain our goal by promoting ill will...There can be no room for untruth in my writings, because it is my unshakable belief that there is no religion other than truth...My writings cannot but be free from hatred towards any individual because it is my firm belief that it is love that sustains the earth." (From The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi, R K Prabhu and U R Rao, Navjivan Publishing House) This approach of communicating in the social media without being poisonous and free from hatred can contribute towards a global culture of peace and reconciliation. Students of media and information literacy need to develop their skills to restrain from poisonous writings and posts which can contribute to conflicts.

Using these approaches to nonviolent communication, users of the social media can develop relationships even amongst opponents. In this context, Himelfarb (2012) discusses the emerging trends in the field of using social media tools to manage conflicts and contribute to peace. These trends include fostering inter-ethnic dialogue, managing elections, preventing gang violence, preventing resource disputes, constitution-building, platforms to protest against violence. On how social media

fosters inter-ethnic dialogue, he talks about a conflict resolution curriculum and evaluation platform underpinning the Salam Shabab online youth network in Iraq, showing shifting attitudes about ethnic diversity. He also discusses 200,000-member YaLa-Young Leaders network that is there in the Middle East between Israelis and Palestinians, creating a growing lobby against violent conflict.

Meanwhile Ikeda (2011) argues that the fragmentation of the society is a result of communication breakdown. He cautions on the dangers of communication in the digital age being bereft of a human face. He notes, "It is true that the development of information technology presents opportunities for people to forge new connections. However, relations formed online will have no human face if they are limited to anonymous, depersonalized exchanges. Such interactions can only be inorganic and neutral, far removed from the refreshing wonder, tangible response and satisfaction that come from the effort to realize face-to-face, soul-to-soul communication. It is only when immersed in words and dialogue that human beings can become truly human; one cannot mature into a complete and full-fledged human being without such experiences."

Incidentally this views of Ikeda was also shared in The Peace Gong's Facebook page as part of its *'There is No Alternative to Nonviolence'* campaign. The post attracted interesting comments. For instance the children's group, Children of Nature commented, "A nonviolent approach to media literacy enables users to use the social media with a human face. It enables new forms of communication which furthers mutual respect and compassion. Groups or communities when are trained in nonviolent media literacy programmes even if they are opposed to each other will make efforts to reach out and promote harmonious relationships."

Martin Luther King's meaning of nonviolence also offers important dimensions to media literacy training programmes. By integrating it in curriculum, users of social media can be motivated to practice nonviolent action in their daily usage and for taking up causes. King said, "Nonviolence is the relentless pursuit of truthful ends through moral means.... the practitioner of nonviolence will say to his opponent, 'We will meet your capacity to inflict suffering by our capacity to endure suffering. We will meet your physical force with soul force. Do to us what you will, we will still love you. We cannot in all good conscience obey your unjust laws, throw us in jail and as difficult as it is, we will go to jail and still love you. We will still love you, but be assured that we will wear you down by your capacity to suffer and one day we will win freedom for ourselves; we will so appeal to your heart and your conscience that we will win you in the process and our victory will be a double victory."

Conclusion

Mahatma Gandhi's theory of nonviolent communication, Ikeda's soul-to-soul communication and the importance of dialogue, King's perspectives on nonviolence and Esquivel's thrust on the need for people to reach out for a peaceful society when combined with Tornero and Varis's objectives of media literacy in the 21st century gives media and information literate citizens tools to contribute to a culture of peace and nonviolence using the social media.

The challenge however is to actually integrate these in the curricula across the world so that more and more people imbibe these while using the media. As the social media is growing using these approaches to nonviolent communication can help these sites to not only challenge false propaganda and hatred in the digital sphere but as several examples show actually contribute to reconciliation and peaceful co-existence.

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Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Central Asia : Theoretical Perspectives

Manoj Kumar Mishra

Introduction

One dramatic characteristic of the world during the last quarter of the 20th century was the reassertion of non-state identities and especially of more intimate cultural identities within existing states. This occurred inspite of, and partly in reaction to, decades of "state-building" and "political development". Most people have multiple identities: as members of a class, an ethnic group or a national people, as citizen of a state. When demands made in the name of one-identity conflicts with those of another valued identity, it creates a potential for the emergence of movements to defend the threatened identity.

It is essential to recognize that there are many bases of group identity that bind communal groups together. For some, it is language or religion or ethnicity or cultural practice or attachment to land, but none of these is essential to group identity. What counts most fundamentally is the belief by people who share such traits and by these, with whom they interact – that they are inherently different.

One of the unintended consequences of the last half-century of political and economic development is that these processes have brought diverse people into closer contact with one another and thus increased their self-awareness of these differences. In addition, groups that take the lead in modernization often draw comparison between themselves and culturally or ethnically distinct groups. Thus differences in culture often lead to differences in collective interests. Groups that are disadvantaged or threatened on any of these dimensions have shared grievances that make them susceptible to mobilization for collective action that link the Russian minorities of the "Near Abroad" with nationalists in Russia.

These ethno-political groups are so diverse, that we lack a simple vocabulary for labelling them. Some call them 'nations', while dominant groups in those societies often label them 'minorities'. There is no completely natural phrase, but 'peoples', 'communal groups', 'ethnics', and 'identity groups' are among the aggregative terms now used by scholars (Gurr, 1994).

Threats of valued group identities and invidious distinctions, based on cultural and ethnic differences, provide raw material for ethnopolitical protests and rebellion. Ted Robert Gurr in an essay "Minorities at Risk", identifies peoples who are politically significant, on the basis of two criteria:

  a) They are, or have been, subject to discriminatory or invidious treatment by other groups because of their cultural, ethnic or religious traits; or

  b) They are mobilized for political action to promote or defend their common interests (Gurr, 1993).

Communal groups that meet one or both criteria are called ethno-political groups. In 1990, for example, the Russian people were "minorities at risk" within the Soviet Central Asian Republics. After the five Central Asian countries became independent, the Russian minorities in these Republics have been at risk, subjected to discrimination, pressured to learn local language, and threatened with expulsion if they do not. The consequences of the dissolution of the USSR are instructive. In 1989 roughly half the total population was non- Russian and "at risk". The collapse of the Soviet Union satisfied the nationalist aspirations of many but at the expense of others.

Conceptual Delineations

Before we theorize about ethnicity and nationalism, it would be appropriate to make some conceptual clarification of certain terms:

Minorities

Contemporary sociologists generally define a minority as a group of people– differentiated from others in the same society by race, nationality, religion or language– who both think of themselves as a differentiated group and are thought of by others as a differentiated group with negative connotations. Further, they are relatively lacking in power and hence are subjected to certain exclusions, discriminations and other differential treatment. The important elements in this definition are a set of attitudes – those of self-segregation from within the group and those of discrimination and exclusion from without (International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Vol. 9. 1968: 365).

Ethnic Groups

An ethnic group is a distinct category of the population in a larger society whose culture is usually different from its own. The members of such group are or feel

themselves, or are thought to be, bound together by common ties of race or nationality or culture. The nature of an ethnic group's relationships with the society as a whole, and with other groups in it, constitutes one of the main problems in describing and analyzing such societies. It is not on racial or cultural differences that we need to focus our attention, but on group relations (Ibid: 167).

Ethnic Minorities and Nationalism:

Ethnic nationalism is defined as that politicized social consciousness centered upon an ethnic identity born out of shared commonalties, seeking to achieve unity, autonomy and group interests by mobilizing ethnic-based constituencies. Central to this definition is the notion of ethnic identity which may be defined as an aggregation of ethnic variables such as race, culture, language, society and so on, by which the ethnic group differentiates itself from generalized others (Norbu, 1992: 181).

In the light of large-scale nationalism, it would appear that ethnic nationalism is not fundamentally different from ideal type nationalism. It exhibits most of the essential characteristics of nationalism. The only significant difference is that ethnic Nationalism is retarded, small-scale and limited in its goals, in comparison with large-scale nationalism. These differences spring not from the logic of ethnic nationalism but from the specific historical situations in which it finds itself, that is, the multinational state whose power is captured by the dominant ethnic group (Ibid: 182).

Apart from such differences, both large-scale nationalism and ethnic nationalism are rooted in ethnicity or what we have called traditional component: since culture is nothing but a way to describe human behaviour it would follow those discrete groups, i.e., ethnic units, to correspond to each culture. And if we choose to regard the culture-bearing aspect of ethnic groups as their primary characteristics, this has far-reaching implications, for our conception of nationalism (Ibid). The ethnic group in a discrete social communication may be effective. And ethnicity provides the potent raw material for nationalism that makes sense to only the members of the ethnic group. Its primary function is to differentiate the group members from the generalized other. It, therefore, calls for an ethnicity specific approach to nationalism because each ethnic group corresponds to a specific culture through which nationalism is expressed (Ibid: 183).

Social Prerequisites of Ethnic Nationalism

Nationalism, despite some of its undesirable consequences, is definitely an advanced political consciousness indicating the optimal unit of integrated social life. Its prerequisites include the following:

a) A complex yet unfragmented society that provides the social basis for national unity;

b) Socially-shared fundamental cultural values that form the psychological basis of general will;

c) A common language or system-wide symbols that facilitate social communication;

d) Considerable stratification and literacy rate so that nationalist leadership may emerge;

e) A pan-ethnic identity that transcends tribal or other particularistic identities (Ibid: 205).

So we can conclude that in our comparative analysis of large-scale nationalism ethnic conflict indicates that ethnic nationalism reveals almost all the essential characteristics of modern nationalism precisely because all the five [(a) – (e)] prerequisites of nationhood as discussed above are inherent within the structure of most ethnic groups. So, nationalism commences with cultural symbols as a principle means of mass mobilization, then crystallizes into national identity as the locus of nationhood but consummates with economic matters, particularly national interests as the *raison d'etre* of the nascent nation-state (Ibid: 206-207).

Ethnic Nationalism—A Theoretical Perspective

As post-communist states, the Central Asian States have started a simultaneous triple transition from a centralized economy to a market economy and from authoritarianism to democracy, as well as from a centralized federal state to a sovereign nation-state. As this triple transition process has been going on in the Central Asian Republics, there has been a rise of ethnic nationalism in these republics. My analysis of ethnic nationalism will be based only on Anderson's concept of nationalism.

Nationalism Defined

Anderson argues that 'nationality/nation-ness as well as nationalism is cultural artifacts of a particular kind'. He defines the nation in 'an anthropological spirit' as 'an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, or meets them, yet in the minds of each

lives the image of their communion (Anderson, 1983:22). The word 'imagined' means the creation of the myth of a common historical past as well as a contemporary belief in shared historical/cultural ties and destiny produced by that myth. Print capitalism was the main device in historical development that brought this sense of national unity.

Before analyzing Anderson's theory, we would present the current debate in the vast literature of nationalism including the classical works of E. H. Carr and Selon-Watson. Arguably, despite the existence of vigorously disputed theories many scholars agree with Earnest Gellner's statement:

> Nationalism is not the awakening of nations of self-consciousness, it invents nations where they do not exist…' Nonetheless, there are many different views on the origins of nationalism. For instance, the position of Gellner and Kedourie are often contrasted in the literature while Smith sees their views as identical regarding the imagined. quality of nationalism. This imagined quality is the substance of Anderson's work. (Sarsembayev, 1999: 320-21)

Gellner contends that nationalism stems from processes of social change, modernization, and growing class awareness that alienate sectors of society from traditional culture, notably intellectuals and workers and create a new sense of cultural homogeneity. Kedourie detects nationalism's root in Germanic ideas of language unity and inspiration that forms a will to national destiny, resulting in the creation of a state that is seized by political opportunists… But both would agree that nationalism invents nations, not vice-versa, while perhaps disputing what inspire nationalism (Ibid: 321).

On the other hand, Anthony Smith emphasizes the coreness of ethnics 'which furnish the nation with much of its mythology, symbolism and culture, including it's association with an ancient homeland'. He argues that 'nations require ethnic cores if they are to survive [but] if they lack one, they must "re-invent" one (Smith, 1989). But in essence, Smiths position, on the concept of 'invention/re-invention' seems to be different from those of Hobsbawn and Anderson.

For both, the nation is ultimately a work of invention. The western and non-western peoples were or are in the identical process of creating nations by Hobsbawn's 'invention of tradition and Anderson's invention of 'subjective antiquity', resulting in the creation of 'imagined communities' that serve as the justification of nationhood in the present by establishing a belief in shared values.

Another theory can be found in the social mobilization approach of Karl Deutsch. He distinguishes three phases: the pre-mobilization phase (the traditional state),

the mobilization phase (the onset of the modernization process) and a third one that has to do with the effects of that mobilization in a modernized society. Deutsch needs only one bit of information to predict whether modernization, i.e., social mobilization by means of communication, urbanization, alphabetization etc., will lead to assimilation and integration or to conflict. The criterion is whether the underlying population is relatively homogeneous or heterogeneous in the pre-mobilization phase. In the first case, the forces of modernization will lead to higher integration due to their communicating effects on members of the system. In the second case, modernization will lead – so the powerful prediction of Deutsch – to conflict, at best latent conflict (Deutsch, 1966: 26). Hibbs (1973:18) successfully tested Deutsch's theory in a worldwide study of political mass violence from 1948-1967. The developments after 1989 in former Yugoslavia, in the former Soviet Union and now at the fringes of Russia where heterogeneous populations undergo mobilization and modernization clearly testify to the power of Deutsch's explanation.

Anderson's Criteria of Nationalism

According to Anderson, first, nationalism is a cultural artifact. Therefore, the history, meaning the emotional legitimacy of nationalism, is central to our understanding of its nature. Second, the logic of print capitalism ensured the rise and spread of the vernacular languages as opposed to the sacred languages of religions. The combination of capitalism, technology of communication (print) and fatality of human linguistic diversity made the new communities imaginable. Third, the result of these languages (language standards) and language-of-power (official languages). As Edward Said noted, an outcome was 'an internal field created and accomplished by language users themselves'. Fourth, there was a special role of language-related professionals as producers for the print-market. Fifth, there was also a problem of the relationship between the rural and urban masses: how far do they share in the vernacularly imagined communities? Sixth, in many cases, 'bureaucratic middle classes' and 'new middle-class intelligentsia' assumed certain roles in the rise of nationalism, especially in the colonial domains. Seventh, language-of-state and official nationalism such as Germanification, Russification and Japanification also– had their own roles in this process. Eighth, schools and universities might be used as the means for the progress of nation building and nationalism. Ninth, the colonial school systems determined educational and administrative pilgrimages indicating the territorial base of a new nation. Tenth, the census, the map, the museum and patriotism as an idea of the ultimate sacrifice were important if not crucial in nation building. Finally, the solution to a problem of creating a new 'imagined community' was also found in History, in inventing a narrative of 'identity'. There was the need for such a narrative since 'nations have no clear identifiable birth, and their deaths, if they ever happen, are never natural… [y] et the deaths that structure the nation's

biography are of a special kind… [b] ut to serve the narrative purpose, these violent deaths must be remembered/forgotten as "our own" (Sarsembayev, 1999.).

Since independence in 1991, nationalism has emerged as a strong social force in present Central Asian Society. It has a crucial impact on the domestic and international politics of the new Central Asian States.

Ethnicity in the Soviet And Post-Soviet Context: Primacy on Primordialism

The Soviet social science tradition, especially with respect to interpreting ethnicity, is heavily dominated by the primordial approach. Its adherents see ethnicity as an objective 'given', a sort of primordial characteristics of humanity. For primordialists, there exist objective entities with inherent features such as territory, language, recognizable membership and even a common mentality (Tishkov, 1997: 1).

The term 'primordialism' was coined by Shills (1957) and further developed by Geertz, who explained it as follows:

> "By primordial attachment is meant one that stems from the 'givens' – or more precisely, as culture is inevitably involved in such matters, the assumed 'givens' – of social existence: immediate contiguity and kin connection mainly but beyond them the givenness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language, and following particular social practice. These congruities of blood, speech, custom and so on, are seen to have an ineffable, andat times over-powering coerciveness in and of themselves. (Geertz, 1973:259)

The Russian tradition of interpretation of ethnicity stems from 19th century ethnography, with its emphasis on the Russian 'folk' (*narod*). In the 1920s, Sergei Shirokogorov collected materials on the Tungus peoples of Siberia to formulate a general model and 'classification of ethnoses'. Shirokogorov proposed the following definition of ethos: 'a group of people, speaking the same language, who recognize their shared heritage, and have a shared complex of social mores, mode of life, retained and sanctified traditions which differentiate them from other groups' (Tishkov, 1997: 1-2).

Two well-known scholars, Lev Gumilev and Yulian Bromley, together with a number of other Russian experts from 1960 to throughout the 1980s made major contributions to what was called the 'Soviet theory of ethnos', and which has remained a dominant

theoretical paradigm for the study of ethnicity in Russia. For Guimlev, 'ethnos' is a form of existence for Homo Sapiens as a species, but it is also something greater 'a phenomenon on the border of biosphere and sociosphere which has a highly special function in the formation of the biospheres of the earth. Gumilev uncritically included in his category of ethnos practically all historically known cultural, political, religious and other formations, groupings and politics, dividing them into categories of 'super-ethnos', 'ethnos', 'sub-ethnos', 'ethnic relics' etc. Depending on landscape, energy resources, and particularly internal 'passionarism', ethnoses as described by Gumilev live their own lives (of about 1200-1500 years) passing through the various stages or 'phases' of ethnogenesis rise, breakdown, inertia, and finally death (Ibid: 2).

For Bromley 'ethnos is a historically stable entity of people developed on a certain territory and possessing common, relatively stable features of culture (including language) and psyche as well as consciousness of their unity land of their difference from other similar entities (self-awareness) fixed in a self-name (ethnonym)'. Bromley's ethnos theory was mainly based on such key factors as exclusive group membership and status reflected in titular statehoods granted to the major non-Russian nationalities in the Soviet Union. Those who had their 'own' union or autonomous republics were considered 'socialist nations', the highest type of ethnos. Those with a lower status of administrative autonomy (like the Northern indigenous people), or who did not have any status at all (like Volga Germans, Poles, Jews or others) were dismissed as *narodnest* – not an untranslatable term indicating something between a tribe and a nation – not even *ethnikoses*, because many of them did not have their own 'ESO' (ethno social organism) . Thus, according to Bromley and his followers, 'nation' is not an ethnic group with a titular statehood – it is exclusively that part of the group which resides on its 'own' national territory. To mere adequately address Soviet realities and ideological innovation on a 'new entity of people – the Soviet people' (*sovetskii narod*) – ethnographers had to invent a notion of 'meta-ethnic community' or Bromley, echoing Gumilev's rhetoric on 'super-ethnoses' such as Eastern Slavs or Turks (Ibid: 3-4).

To disperse any doubts as to what ethnicity means in post-Soviet academic discourse and in curriculum text, a quotation from the concluding chapter of one University text book:

> "Human history is not only a history of states, of outstanding personalities, and of ideas, it is also a history of the peoples-ethnoses who make states, delegate from their milieu outstanding figures, construct cultures and languages" (Ibid: 4).

With the emergence of ethnic politics in the former Soviet Union, ethnographic primordialism ceased to be merely a marginal and empirical approach and suddenly

revealed its potential for being enthusiastically applied in the quest for new identities, as well as in nationalist political discourse. The term 'ethnos' became a central one in intellectual and political debates of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Many aspects of ethnos theory, posing as pure scholarly exercises, were made part of painful public displays, led to conflict-generating political projects and finally, violent manifestations of ethnic entrepreneurs. Raphael Khakimov, political adviser to the President of the Tatarstan republic and one of the ideological leaders of the local nationalist movement, writes in his pamphlet '*The Twilight of Empire: About A Nation and A State*:'

> Ethnos is a biosocial phenomenon, combining nature and society. Ethnos carries in itself a biological energy and is subject to other laws than those for social processes. Sometimes one can here appeal to forget about ethnic origin and not to divide people according to this category. These appeals are derived from the misunderstanding of the nature of the phenomenon. Ethnic features are not just wishful thinking, nor a devil's plot on the part of 'separatists': they are destined from birth. (Ibid: 4).

In the post-1990's, debates in ethnic discourse revolve around topics like the 'dying out' or 'disappearing' of ethnoses – the actual physical death of great number of people. Concerns about the 'death of ethnos' are expressed by experts writing not only about small, vanishing cultures, but also about large dominant groups, like the Russians in Central Asian Republics Eduard Bagramov in an essay '*Will Russia Share the Fate of the USSR*' has this to say.

> The growing process of uncompromisable reorientations of economic and social relations has put the Russian ethnos to a test of survival. At historical turning points, like the present, not only ethnos but whole civilization disappear. The question, 'what will happen to the Russian' has not been properly asked yet. (Bagramov et. Al, 1993)

Professor Victor Kozlov, of the Institute of Enthology and Anthropology, Moscow, has concluded on the basis of recent demographic tendencies, that 'the Russian nation is dying out'. In his recent text, *The Russian Question: A History of the Tragedy of a Great People*, he ignores Gumilev's thesis on the predetermined 'live of ethnos', according to which the fate of Russian ethnos is prescribed by 'Laws of Nature' and should thus be accepted. 'To avoid the death of Russian ethnos', Victor Kozlov proposes purely political measures:

There are many difficulties in this issue, the main one being how, under conditions of social degradation, to awaken oriented mass activities. It is a question of how, under presidential rule, to democratically elect a president who can realize his historical responsibility and who is capable of changing a traditionally Russophobic nationalities policy of course, the character of a President and his 'team' should not be limited by Russophobia only,…
but a moderate Russophilia is a prerequisite in this situation. (Kozlov 1995: 329)

In recent years, debates on the concept of ethnos have reached a wider audience, with elements of racism and intolerance. In an academic context, Bromley, among others, elaborated a thesis on 'ethnic function of endogamy', meaning that for an ethnos to survive, as a 'stable entity', certain mechanism are needed to provide this stability and ' a reproduction of ethnos'. One of these mechanisms is endogamy, the tendency to marry within one's own group. Bromley is speaking not of primitive tribes or isolated communities, but of 'large ethnosocial organism, like for example, contemporary nations' (Bromley, 1983: 200-11).
So we can come to the conclusion that in the post-Soviet context the 'poverty of primordialism' coexists with the 'power of primordialism', influencing not only intellectual debates, but also political inspirations and the behaviour of social actors.

These observations on the role of intellectual constructions do not deny the reality of the cultural/ethnic mosaic *per se*, not existing collectivistic identities. But defining 'a people' in the sense of an ethnic community needs serious reconsideration. 'People' is most often understood in contemporary scholarship as a group whose members share a common name and common elements of culture, who possess a myth of common origin and a common historical memory, who associate themselves with a particular territory land who share a feeling of solidarity. Shared beliefs and feelings of solidarity are key elements of this definition because they are results of specific efforts and the nation-building process. They are the result of family socialization and education. In the same way, nations are, according to Benedict Anderson's widely accepted definition, 'imagined communities' (Tishkov, 1997: 21).

Ethnic Situation in Contemporary Central Asia

The disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the independence of the Central Asian Republics, led to a cultural renaissance in the region and a reassertion of their indigenous cultural roots. The leaders of these Republics reaffirmed their common historical ties by renaming the region Central Asia (*Tsentralnaya Azia*) thereby refusing to recognize the Soviet imposed separation of Kazakhstan from the other four Republics which are grouped together and known collectively as

Middle Asia (*Srednyaya Azia*) (Olcott: 1994). In 1996 Uzbekistan celebrated the 660th anniversary of Timurlane, and has built a grand Amir Timur Museum in the capital of Tashkent which endeavors to collate and collect all significant artifacts of the period. Likewise, in 1995, the Kryghyz celebrated the millennial anniversary of their epic poem, *Manas*, and in similar fashion Turkmenistan has promoted the celebration of its renowned national poet Makhtumkuli. This resurgence has continued apace, with all the national languages being given the status of 'official language of state communication' Soviet streets and place names have been replaced by national ones and historic figures have been elevated to the national heroic status by various states (Glenn, 1999: 103).

According to the official Kazakhs census figures of 1999, the population of Kazakhstan is 14,953,126, whereas it was 14,464,464 as per Soviet census of 1989 (Sinnott, 2003: 104-105). This is because of large scale outward migration of Russians from this region. As estimated in 1996, 1.8 million Russians have left Central Asia to resettle in Russia, of which 6,14,000 have departed from Kazakhstan, 4,00,000 from Uzbekistan, 3,00,000 from Tajikistan, 2,96,000 from Kyrgyzstan and 1,00,000 from Turkmenistan. Many Russians genuinely feared they would become second class citizens or persecuted minorities. In this section we will discuss republic wise the ethnic profiles of the region and some of the major problems these ethnic minorities are likely to face in the near future.

Kazakhstan

The ethnic equilibrium which was present in the Soviet era was lost after Kazakhstan gained independence in 1991. Within the Soviet Union, Russians and Kazakhs had worked easily together in Kazakhstan both in government and in the private workplace. But in an independent state, Kazakhs became more vocal in championing "Kazakhstan for the Kazakhs", while ethnic Russians, Germans and other minorities became more pessimistic about their long-term prospects in the country.

According to the 1999 census the Kazakhs accounted for 53.4% of the population. Figure 1.1 gives a break-up of the ethnic minorities of Kazakhstan. The ethnic Kazakh population has grown by about 1.5 million, an increase of 22.9%. Kazakhs now represent 53.4% of the total population, up from 40.1% in 1989 census. Meanwhile, the Russian population has fallen to only 29.96% of the total population, which together with other European and Slavic, groups reaches only 34.7% of the total population (Sinnott, 2003: 104). This is due to two reasons, first, the birth rate among the Kazakhs is significantly higher than among the other minorities, and second, there has been a large influx of Kazakhs from Russia and Mongolia. Slow birth rate and migration of Slavs and Europeans has accounted for the declining presence of Russians and European citizens in Kazakhstan.

The main bone of contention between the Russias and the Kazakhs is the Kazakh language policy. In August 1989 President Nazarbaev put forward legislation that named Kazakh as the state language and Russian as the language of inter-national communication, thereby giving Russian language a secondary status. This was vociferously opposed by Russians. In December 1992 approximately 15,000 Russians demonstrated in Ust-Kamenogorsk in East Kazakhstan Oblast, demanding that Russian be given the status of a state language, dual citizenship be recognized; and that the oblast be given extensive rights of self-determination in language, culture, and exploitation of natural resources. In addition to this the Slavic Culture Soviet of the region has threatened to set up an autonomous Transirtysh republic. The 'Organization for the autonomy of Eastern Kazakhstan' has also been created, its stated objective being for the eastern oblasts to be declared an autonomous region so that they will be exempt from Kazakh language legislation (Glenn, 1999: 112). Large scale replacement since independence of Russians by Kazakhs in the higher echelons of private and public institutions, has become a major discord between the two communities in everyday life. The shifting of the capital city from Almaty to Akmola, which is situated right on the edge of the region in which Russians are predominant; which enables the government to keep a closer eye on events in the north and sends a signal to the Russian population that the unity of the Kazakhstan is inviolable.

Pie Diagram 1.1 Kazakhstan
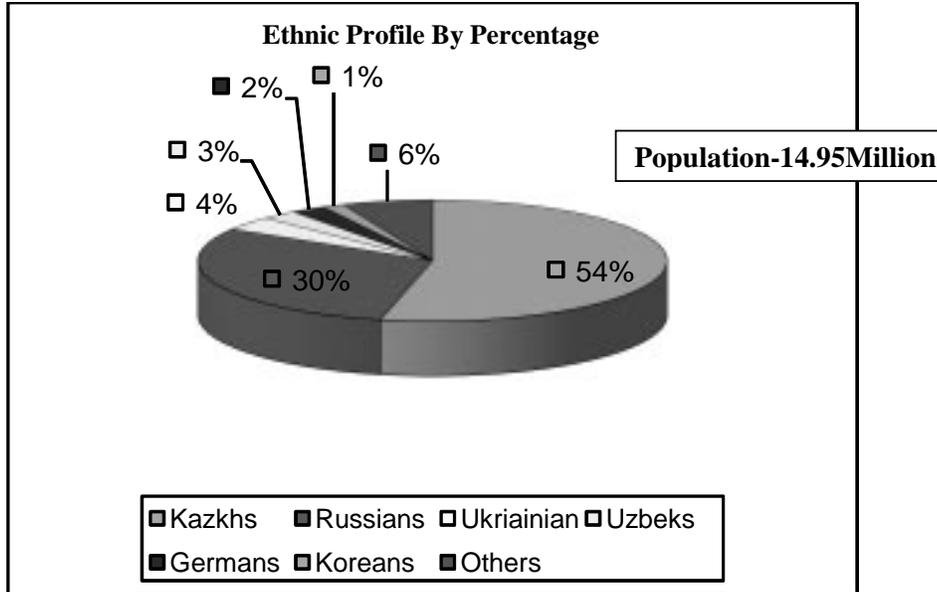
Source- Sinnott, Peter. 2003. "Population Politics in Kazakhstan", *Journal of International Affairs*, 56(2):104-105

After independence, there has been a resurgence of Kazakh ethno-nationalism. President Nazarbayev has implemented the dual policy of 'Kazakhsation' and a state-building project of 'harmonisation' (*garmonizatsiia*) (Bremmer and Cory, 1996: 182). The government has also established the Kazakhs Tili (Kazakh Language) organization whose purpose is to promote the Kazakh language and Kazakh culture in the north of the country where the population has become more Russified. The government has also endeavored to revive a greater interest in Islam by sending several *Imams* to the north of the country to redress the religious imbalance between the north and south (Bremmer, 1994: 621). The policy of 'harmonisation' has included the banning of associations seeking to promote, 'social, racial, national, religious, class or tribal discord'. Organizations that wish to be registered by the state must therefore be ethnically neutral in characteristics. At the same time, although dissension remains over the unequal status of the Russians language, Nazarbayev, in an effort to assuage Russian fears, has endeavoured to dilute the recent language law passed by parliament that makes knowledge of Kazakh compulsory by claiming that it is unconstitutional (Olcott, 1994: 115).

The inter-ethnic discord has been prominent particularly because Germans, Koreans and especially the Russians has been excluded from top administrative jobs, Kazakhstan has to give equal status to the Russian Language and has not accepted of dual citizenship.

Kyrgyzstan

After independence Kyrgyzstan has emerged as the only true multi-party democracy in Central Asia. President Akayev's major accomplishment in the first three years since he became President has been the creation of a democratic and pluralistic society in Kyrgyzstan. A state towards securing democracy occurred with the adoption of the new Constitution on 5th May 1993 (Almas, 1994: 170).

According to July 2003 estimates the population of Kyrgyzstan is 4,892,808, of which Russians constitute 6,03,201, 13%, and overall drop of 8% from 1989 census. Figure 1.2 gives an account of the ethnic profile of Kyrgyzstan. One of the factors for the decline of Russian population is the better economic benefits of higher wages they are getting in Russia. But the main reason for this out-migration is a similar one to that which pertains in Kazakhstan. Russians are now daily discriminated against and since independence there has been a widespread replacement of Russians by Kyrgyzs in the high-level posts in administration and industry.

Another major irritant between the Kyrgyzs and the Russian minority is the 1990 Law on the Official Language, which laid out a phased transition to adopt Kyrgyz as

the official language. The Russian population began to fear that the institution of Kyrgyz as the official language would seriously cripple its ability to succeed in Kyrgyzstan. President Akaev, recognizing the damage that the out-migration of the Russians has had on the economy, endeavoured to rectify the situation by pushing for Russian to be accepted as an official language in 'industry, health care, technical and other areas (Anderson, 1997). He also prevented the more openly discriminatory bills from being passed, for instance he vetoed the Kyrgyzs Parliament's proposal that land of Kyrgyzstan and its natural resources were to be the sole property of the Kirghiz people.

Pie-Diagram- 2

Kyrgyzstan

Ethnic Profile By Percentage

Population-4.90 I

1.00%

5%

2.50%

7%

14.00%

13%

65.00%
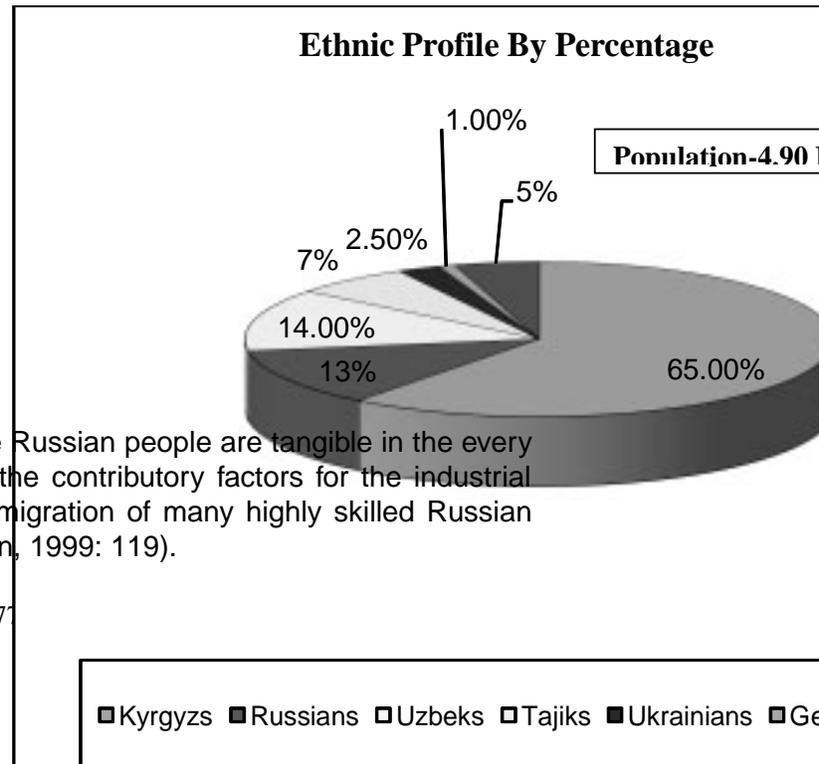
Resentment and antagonism among the Russian people are tangible in the every day life in Kirghizstan and that one of the contributory factors for the industrial decline of the country is the large out-migration of many highly skilled Russian personnel as a direct result of this (Glenn, 1999: 119).

(7

☐Kyrgyzs ■Russians ☐Uzbeks ☐Tajiks ■Ukrainians ☐Ge

Source: *www.cia.worldfactbookcentralasia.com,* 20

Uzbekistan

Politics in Uzbekistan circles around five regions- Ferghana, Khorezm, Samarkhand/ Bukhara, Surkhandarya / Kashkadarya and Tashkent with Farghana and Tashkent being the most influential out of the five. The Ferghana Valley, consisting of the Ferghana Namangan and Andizhan Vilayati (administrative regions) has traditionally been the most influential region within Uzbekistan and it is also the most Islamic. The Uzbek government considers the *Islamic Renaissance Party*, and *Hizbul-tahrir* as sources of 'Islamic Fundamentalism' and has banned them from engaging in political activity. Opposition parties like the *Birlik* and *Erk* have been targeted. They are denied to hold rallies, obtain office space, publishing newspaper etc.

The population of Uzbekistan according to the 2004 estimate is 26,410,416 of which Uzbeks constitute 80%, Russians 5% and Koreans 2%. Kazakhs 3%, Karakalpaks 2.5%, Tatars 1.5%, others 6%. Refer figure 1.3, which gives the ethnic dimensions of Uzbekistan. The fact that an estimated two million Uzbeks are unemployed, approximately 10% of the total population, which may further aggravate the apparent

Pie-Diagram 1.3 Ethnic Profile By per

Uzbekistan

Population-26

1%
2%
6% 3% 3%
5%
80%

Uzbeks Tajikis Russians Kazakhs Tatar Ko

(78)
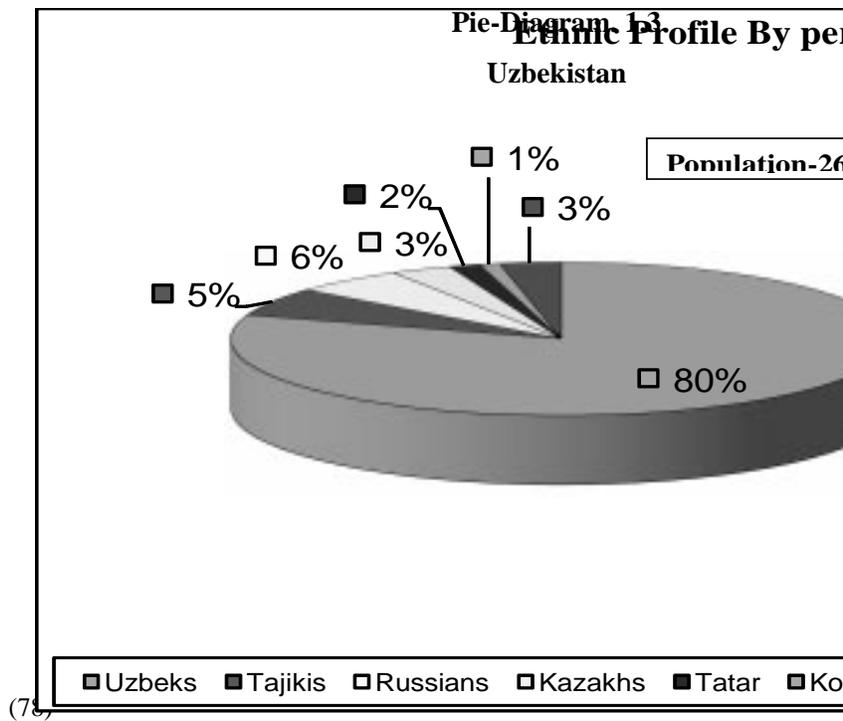
Source- *www.cia.worldfactbook.uzbekistan.com* , 2

societal divisions.

With this in mind, President Islam Karimov has argued for a slow transition to a market economy, stating that thoughtless action may load to conflicts, civil strife, inter-ethnic clashes. President Karimov has also initiated a cult of Rashidov by erecting monuments to him and naming streets and buildings after him. A statue of Timurlane as Uzbekistan national hero has now replaced the statue of Lenin in the centre of Tashkent. In 1996 state-wide celebrations were held for the 660th anniversary of Timurlane, which was followed by the commissioning of a state Museum of Amir Timur at Tashkent has collected and collated all artifacts of the Timurid period (Glenn, 1999: 112). Karimov is deliberately doing this to replace the Soviet structures and to rediscover the glorious cultural and political heritage which the Uzbeks are proud of.

Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan is the only republic in post-independent Central Asia that did not witness ethnic conflict or economic crisis. In fact, Turkmenistan's economic potential is coming to light, which is a source of raw material, oil and gas, cotton and animal husbandry. It is considered by many to be a Central Asian Kuwait with natural gas reserves surpassed only by those of the United States and Russia. Its energy vast resources provide Turkmenistan the potential to diversify and modernize its industry and economy and become the most prosperous republic of the region.

President Sapurmurad Niyazov, adopted on 18th May 1992, the new Turkmen constitution which would reduce the power of Turkmenistan's authoritarian political structure. Although the Constitution guarantees many rights to its citizens, if one looks into the details of the Constitution, it does not appear so. Article 3 guarantees freedom of conscience and stipulates that "exercising the freedom to exercise a religion or other convictions is subject only to those restrictions which are necessary to safeguard public safety and order, the life and health of the people, and morale". So the government manifests its concern for the people's health by increasing control over them. The Constitution also guarantees freedom of speech and the press, but freedom of speech is limited and of the press non existent. Radio and Television are completely under government control and all newspapers must be submitted to the Committee for the Protection of State Secrets before publication. Article 27, for example, guarantees the "freedom of meetings, rallies and demonstrations in the procedure established by legislation". In other words, the legislature is free to pass laws curtailing that right. Article 28 states that "citizens have the right to create political parties and other public associations operating within the framework of the constitution and the law". This same articles also outlines the basis by which political

parties can be banned (Nissman, 1994: 185).

Turkmenistan has a population of 4.6 million; of which 71% are Turkmen, 7% are Russians, Uzbeks 7%, Tadjiks 6% according to 2001 estimates. Figure 1.4 gives a detail profile of Turmenistan's ethnic population. Over 50% of the Turkmen population live in rural regions, whereas Russians numbering somewhere over 3,33,000 in 1989, of which 97% reside in urban areas. In terms of jobs, the Russians are mostly skilled workers, technical personnel, and managers left over from the Soviet period. Turkmen's, on the other hand, are primarily engaged in agriculture, although others are employed in government and the educational system. While the ethnic structure of employment is gradually changing in favour of Turkmens, no effort has been made to pressurise the Russians to leave. The only negative change for Russians is that Turkmenistan has passed a language law that makes Turkmen the official state language. Since Russians did not learn that language, they are now being discriminated in jobs. In due course of time, the language law will enhance Turkmen social mobility and restrict that of the Russians.

Ethnic Profile By Percentage

□Turkmens ■Uzbeks □Russians □Tajiks ■Baluche □Kazakhs ■Others
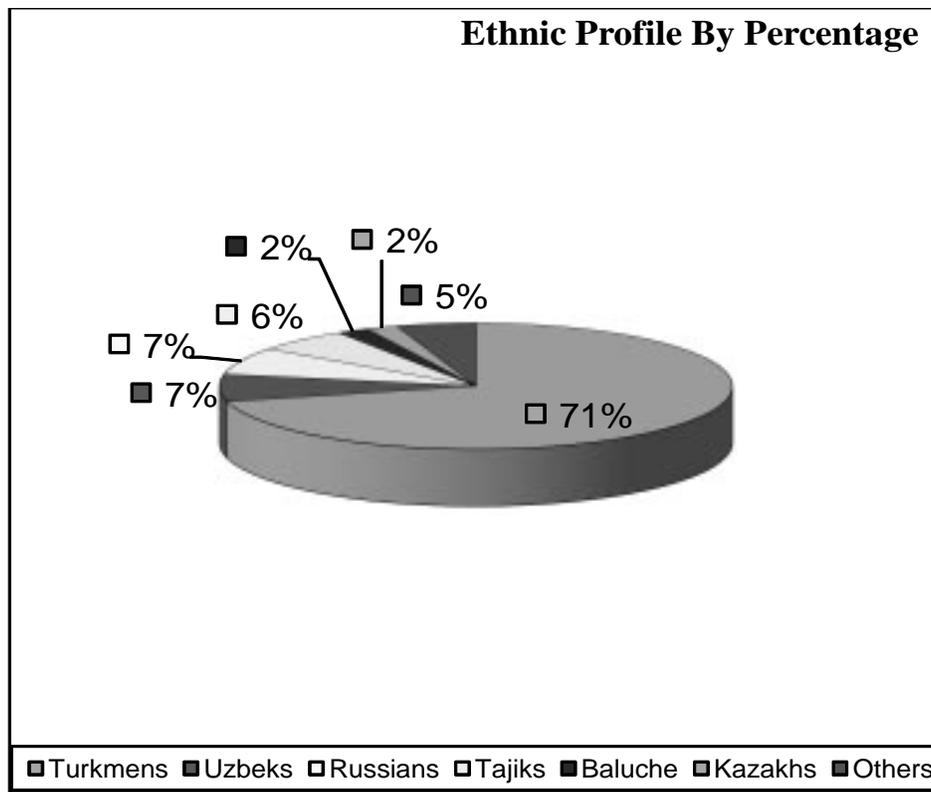
Source- *www.cia.worldfactbookturkmenistan.com,* 2001

Pie-Diagram -1.4
Turkmenistan

President Niyazov has centralized control over government and administration by his authoritarian rule. He has cultivated his own 'cult of personality', designating himself 'Father of the Turkmen' (*Saparmurat Turkmenbashi*). This has been followed by streets being named after him, and on almost every corner of the capital Askhabad there is a portrait of the patriarchal President. To further legitimize his action he sought the help of religious authorities who called on all Muslims to vote for Niyazov in the elections, and by the promise of prosperity for all citizens by the end of a ten-year transitional period (Glenn, 1999: 124-25).

1.6.5 Tajikistan

In post independence period, Tadzhikistan witnessed the most brutal conflict in Central Asia. Since the end of May 1992 civil war raged in the south of Tadzhikistan where the estimates in the loss of life range from 20,000 to 50,000. Within a three year period between 1989-1992, 6, 00,000 Tadzhiks and Uzbeks fled the country and out of a total of 5, 00,000 Russians that were there in 1989, only 1, 00,000 remain (Ibid: 125).

The politics of Tadzhikistan revolves around four main regions. The Khodzhent (Lenninabad) oblast is situated in the north-west of the country bordering Uzbekistan and the Ferghana Valley. This region has dominated Tadzhik politics since the creation of the republic in 1929. In the Kulyab Oblast, there is another faction named after the oblast which is centered on Southern Tadzhikistan. Both these regions are pro-communist and represent the old Soviet government. The Kurgan- Tyube oblast has long been a stronghold of the Islamic Party, and is now dominated by the Islamic Renaissance Party. The region contains many of the Gharmi mountain people who were relocated in 1940's and 1950's by the Russians to provide labour for the cotton fields. The lack of assimilation of these peoples within the region means that a separate Gharmi identity still very much exists. The importance of the Islamic religion to this separate identity divides them even further from the rest of the population (Barnett, 1994-94). The Pamiri people of Gorno- Badakshan feel that they are a completely different ethnic group from the Tadzhiks, their party *Lali Badakhshan*, has demanded greater autonomy.

Tajikistan has a population of 6.58 million in 2001 of which 82% are Tajik, Uzbek constitute 9%, Russians 4.7%. Figure 1.5 gives a ethnic profile of Tajikistan. After the disintegration of Soviet Union, Russia has a very vocal foreign policy towards Tajikistan. The interests of the Russian minorities have become an excuse for increased interference in the domestic politics of Tajikistan. The then Russian Foreign

Minister Kozyrev protested about the discrimination sustained by Russians in Tajikistan.

The mass exodus of Russians is due to the discomfort of living in a war situation and in a country which is engulfed by a wave of nationalist violence. The protection of Russian minorities in Tajikistan has been one of the concerns of the Russian leadership. The Russians have deployed the 201st Motorized Rifle Division within the Tajik territory at the instance of Tajikistan. Further Russia wants international recognition for its peacekeeping efforts in Tajikistan. Kozyrev, the then Foreign Minister of Russia called the protection of the Russian interests in foreign lands a "special role" and not at all an "imperial action".

Ethnic Profile By Percentage

Population-6.58

4%

6%

9%

81%

□ Tajiks ■ Uzbeks □ Russians □ Others

Source- Available at: **www.cia.worldfactbook.tajikistan.com,** 2001
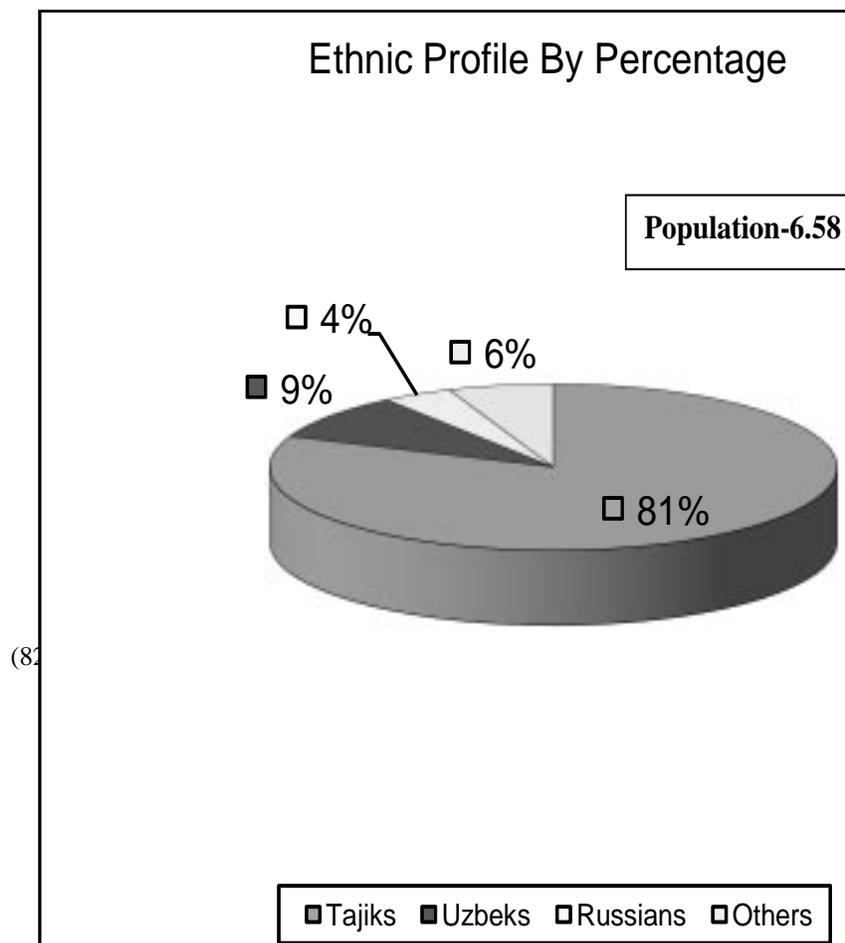
Pie-Diagram-1.5
Tajikistan

The future scenario of Tajikistan due to the civil war which has lasted for more than a decade has become a major irritant for Tajikistan to modernize its economy. At present it is relying on Russian peacekeepers for stability and on the Russian Central Bank for heavy subsidies to its economy. But Tajikistan cannot continue to survive on a Russian subsidy. The peacekeeping mission is also becoming expensive for Russia. Russia is now interested in cooperating with international organizations in seeking a solution to the Tajik conflict.

After making a detailed analysis of five republics in Central Asia, one finds a resurgence of ethno-cultural nationalism in the region. The second aspect which becomes most evident is that former Soviet goals of eradicating the pan-Islamic and pan-Turkic movements have not been successful. The influence of Islam in the region has not diminished despite ruthless Soviet attempts to eradicate it, but there are significant developments which should be noted. Firstly, nationalization of Islam has occurred to some degree, so that being a Muslim is part of the national identity of each of these groups. This is most apparent in areas where the population is only superficially Islamized. In these areas the life cycle rituals have become inextricably welded with the national culture so that whether or not a person is a believer they will still have a religious marriage, have their sons circumcised and ensure they are given a religious burial. The often heard statement 'he who is not circumcised is not an Uzbek (or Turkmen, or Tadzhik etc.)' encapsulates the fusion of nationalism and Islam in these regions (Harmstone, 1983). The places where religion has a strong foothold and 'official Islam' have preserved its role as a greater feeling of belonging to a wider Muslim community (*Umma*) is apparent. The clanic structures which existed within each of the ethnic groups at the turn of the century are still very much apparent in contemporary Central Asia. Uzbekistan, the country which had one of the least developed senses of national identity, is now proud of its independence and ethno-nationalism.

The creation of these Central Asian Republics is clearly based on the pre-existing ethnic groups of the region which were 'prior to and independent of the polities whose creation they legitimated'. What is of interest are the long term effects this 'territorial-political crystallization of nationhood' has had upon the ethnic group that these institutions were said to represent (Brubaker, 1996:24). The nation-building process has started in these Republics. With the emphasis that the building blocks

of each nation concerned consist of a 'central fund of culture, symbolism and mythology' associated with each of these ethnic groups involved. Only time can reveal whether there can be a possible transformation of the Central Asian ethnic groups into nations in which tribal and regional identities have been attenuated.

Notes:

1. ***FBIS – SOV – 96 – 195,*** 3rd October 1996.

2. (2003 estimated) ***www.cia.worldfactbookcentralasia.com***

3. ***www.ciaworldfactbook.uzbekistan.com*** (2004 estimate).

4. Available at ***www.cia.worldfactbook.turkmenistan.com***

5. Available at ***www.cia.worldfactbook.tajikistan.com***. 2001.

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Inter-Religious Dialogue through Social Media in Purview of UNESCO's Declaration on Religion

Dr. Gaurav Shah

Religion

According to Michael E. McCullough and Brian L. B. Willoughby, "Religion is a potent social force. History testifies to religion's ability to focus and coordinate human effort, to create awe and terror, to foster war and peace, to unify social groups, and to galvanize them against each other. In addition to religion's social power, however, religion is a psychological force that can influence the outcomes of individual human lives"(McCullough and Willoughby, 2009). Michael also finds religion to be a "cognition, affect, and behavior that arise from awareness of, or perceived interaction with, supernatural entities that are presumed to play an important role in human affairs" (Ibid). Whereas for American anthropologist, Geertz, religion is "(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic" (Geertz, 1973). Whereas Aloyse Raymond Ndiaye finds religion to be a link that "unites the spirit of piety, belief in God, faith in god and community spirit, that is, the social and historical organization of worship. These two features are essential, so that we cannot give the name religion to a belief in God that is not embodied in an institution, a religious community" (Ndiaye, 2009).

Religion- Cause of Violent Conflict

For most of the 20th century, social scientists thought that religion would have no role to play in modern society and denied the possibility of conflicts due to religion. Processes like urbanization, economic development, modern social institutions, growing rates of literacy and education, pluralism and advancements in science and technology would lead to decline of religion in politics (Fox, 2004; Healy, 2005). But, according to Jonathan Fox

> The acts of Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda, including the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001; the Iranian revolution; the worldwide rise of religious fundamentalism; religious rebel-lions and opposition

movements throughout the Islamic world; religio-political movements like the liberation theology movement in Latin America; and ethno-religious conflicts like those in Chechnya, East Timor, Tibet, Sudan, and Sri Lanka" (Fox, 2004) ruled out the demise of religion and ascertain that still religion is an essential element of modern political and social phenomena.

Famous political scientist, Samuel P. Huntington in his classic "The Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of World Order" explains how religion is still very important and could be major cause of conflicts between states. He says that:

> In the modern world, religion is a central, perhaps the central, force that motivates and mobilizes people. It is sheer hubris to think that because Soviet communism has collapsed, the West has won the world for all time and that Muslims, Chinese, Indians, and others are going to rush to embrace Western liberalism as the only alternative. The Cold War division of humanity is over. The more fundamental divisions of humanity in terms of ethnicity, religions, and civilizations remain and spawn new conflicts (Huntington, 1996).

The statement of Samuel that is still debated across the academicians of social sciences is "clashes of civilizations are the greatest threat to world peace, and an international order based on civilizations is the surest safeguard against world war" (Ibid). By civilizations, he means religion because further defining what he means by civilizations, he says

> A civilization is thus the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes humans from other species. It is defined both by common objective elements, such as language, history, religion, customs, institutions, and by the subjective self-identification of people (Ibid).

Further Samuel clarifies that religion is the epicenter of civilization by saying that "Religion is a central defining characteristic of civilizations' (Ibid). Agreeing to Samuel, Jonathan Fox quoting Huntington and other scholars argue that religion is strongly linked to violence:

> For instance, Huntington argues that historical factors like the end of the Cold War have released the previously muffled potential of religion to cause violence. Some, like Juergensmeyer and Girard, argue that violence is an intrinsic

element of religion. Finally, especially in the wake of 11 September 2001 but also before that date, religion has been identified as one of the major motivations for terrorism (Fox, 2004).

Andreas Hasenclever and Alexander De Juan, cites three reasons for violent religious conflicts, -religious differences, religious polarizations and perceived threats to religious traditions. Describing each one briefly, they state that

> Violence through *religious differences* occurs when religious heterogeneous societies with non-disputable religious dogmas exist rather than religious homogenous societies. Violence through *religious polarizations* takes place because of specific religious constellations, like a bipolar structure, while fragmented religious groups are not that dangerous. Violence through *perceived threats to religious traditions* occurs, if the faithful perceive it to be threatened by either another religion or a secular ideology (Hasenclever and Juan, 2007).

Deeply concerned with the rising religious extremism, UNESCO in its declaration on the role of religion in the promotion of a culture of peace (Smock, 2006) had to admit that "Religions have contributed to the peace of the world, but they have also led to division, hatred, and war. Religious people have too often betrayed the high ideals they themselves have preached". Also religion has an "indispensable role to play in this most critical time". Talking about the religious responsibility, the declaration said "We will promote dialogue and harmony between and within religions, recognizing and respecting the search for truth and wisdom that is outside our religion; We will establish dialogue with all, striving for a sincere fellowship on our earthly pilgrimage." Further the declaration appeals that

> Grounded in our faith, we will build a culture of peace based on non-violence, tolerance, dialogue, mutual understanding, and justice. We call upon the institutions of our civil society, the United Nations System, governments, governmental and non-governmental organizations, corporations, and the <u>mass media</u>, to strengthen their commitments to peace and to listen to the cries of the victims and the dispossessed. We call upon the different religious and cultural traditions to join hands together in this effort, and to cooperate with us in spreading the message of peace.

Thus we can see that UNECSO stresses the need for dialogue between different religions to build peace.

Religion's Peace Building Potential: Conceptual Framework

From the definition of religion defined earlier in this chapter, it can be deduced that religion is something that has to be intrinsically associated to an institution or a community. And community consists of people making religion a powerful entity.

Religious animosities triggered violent conflicts in many parts of the world, especially in late 90's and early 21st century (Fox, 2004). September 11, 2001 became the trigger point of discussion of religion as peace builder or religion as disseminator of religious violence, religious fundamentalism, fanaticism and terrorism (Appleby and Sivan, 2012; Smock, 2006). According to Stephan Healy, "the post-9/11 era has altered the moral landscape, and standard ethical and legal replies to moral questions are not sufficient" (Healey, 2005). Scholars and thinkers in consonance with the UNESCO's theme of peace and religion started thinking about finding a process based on non-violence, faith and tolerance that could help in diffusing religious tensions between different religious sects.

According to Thomas Scheffler, Religious Peacebuilding can be broadly defined as "stabilizing the peace after the end of a violent religious conflict" (Scheffler, 2007). Aloyse Raymond Ndiaye talks about friendly coexistence between followers of different faith and religion. According to him:

> Friendly coexistence implies sympathy with others, understanding of others, love for others. This is what characterizes toleration. Indeed it requires that we go beyond accepting others' existence to the point of acknowledging what makes them different, that is, what makes them have a different viewpoint, a different belief, a different faith, a different origin from ourselves. It implies the need to go beyond simple coexistence in indifference to the point of acknowledging and welcoming others (Ndiaye, 2009).

Aloyse emphasizes on the need of mutual tolerance between followers of different religions. He defines tolerance as "In concrete terms being tolerant means recognizing the plurality of beliefs. It means accepting that other beliefs are possible and that we are not the only ones possessing a truth conceived as the sole truth" (Ibid).

According to famous peace scholar J.Galtung "peace is the elimination of "structural violence," the eradication of unjust conditions of poverty, exploitation and oppression that impede common security, social equality, economic opportunity and human rights, and bring about violent conflicts and war itself" (Vaillancourt, 1991).

Mohammed Abu-Nimer, an expert on conflict resolution and dialogue for peace, is of the view that religion has the potential to build peace. He says that "Religion can also bring social, moral, and spiritual resources to the peace building process. The spiritual dimension in religious peace building can create a sense of engagement and a commitment both to peace conflict resolution" (Nimer, 2001).

Religiocentric to Religiorelative: A Model for Religious Transformation and Inter-Religious Peacebuilding

To initiate the process of religious peace building, Mohammed Abu-Nimer coined terms like religiorelative and religiocentric in order to bring and build peace between two hostile religious communities that are in constant struggle with each other:

A religiorelative person is firm in his/her belief that other religions have the right to exist and be practiced, even if such norms and beliefs are contradictory to one's own set of religious beliefs. Such a person is prone not to engage in violence or discriminatory actions against the others. In contrast, a religiocentric person is a believer who denies other religions' "truth" and who holds an absolute truth that leaves no room for different religious practices. Such a person becomes more prone to dehumanize, exclude, and discriminate against other religious groups and individuals. Often, as a result of negative and destructive exposure and experience with conflict and war, religiocentric beliefs not only are exacerbated and easily translated into violence against the enemy (that is, the different other), but also actually grow and prohibit human and peaceful contact with the other. However, there are conflict resolution and peace-building activities and forums that can assist peace workers in such settings to transform a religiocentric into a religiorelative believer. To address this type of religious exclusion and religiocentrism, two possible frameworks are the interreligious encounter and interfaith activities ((Nimer, 2004).

Inter-Religious Dialogue

To achieve, the transformation from religiocentric to religiorelative, Naber encourages inter-faith/inter-religious dialogue that create an atmosphere so that "the believer does not pass a negative judgment on the other religious beliefs or practices, but observes (or recognizes) the different religious and spiritual values, norms, rituals, and behaviors; understands their meaning; and accepts them as they are in their religious and cultural context" (Ibid).

Explaining the importance of dialogue to bring peace between religions, Thomas Scheffler quotes Hans Kung "There will be no peace between the civilizations without a peace between the religions! And there will be no peace between the religions without a dialogue between the religions"(Scheffler, 2007). However, he is critical

of interreligious dialogue in name of interreligious initiatives in certain situations like:

> In multi-communal settings, religious symbols and doctrines often tend to become part of distinct ethnic identities that cannot easily be exposed to negotiations or to an open-ended dialogue. Under conditions of inter-communal distrust it is far easier to escalate conflicts than to deescalate them .Under these conditions peace-building interreligious initiatives are fighting an uphill battle. A tiny violent minority is sometimes sufficient to undo years of patient peace building and finally once a conflict has reached the stage of massive inter-communal violence, moderate, dialogue-oriented clerics on all sides run a high risk of being sidelined or silenced by more radical members of their own community. For example, in the wake of increasing Hindu-Muslim tensions on the Indian subcontinent, Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated by a radical fellow Hindu in 1948 (Ibid).

However, Stephan Healey, in his paper, "Religion and Terror: A Post-9/11 Analysis", encourages Inter-Religious Dialogue and asks for training of Specialists who can conduct inter-Religious dialogue. He states that:

> To engage in fruitful interreligious dialogue, everyday believers will need to learn how to recognize, challenge, and modify malignant tendencies in their own religions, and to engage with others in discussion about this. All religions possess resources to recognize enduring principles, accommodate change, and engage in self-correction, but too few of these resources have been made broadly available. In our time these potencies will need to be fully utilized. In short, rethinking religions in this manner will require theological analysis combined with broad awareness of the social histories of religions. Communities will do well to train specialists and to equip everyday believers in the area of interreligious dialogue (Healey, 2005).

Andreas Hasenclever and Alexander De Juan cite various examples, where dialogue helped in building peace between hostile religious communities.

> In Israel, for example, the Israel Interfaith Association has facilitated reciprocal understanding and respect between religions and ethnicities since 1959. In the Philippines, different Muslim and Christian clerics have initiated dialogue and education

programs that aim to increase understanding among Christians of the needs of the Muslim minority in Mindanao.Imam Muhammed Ashafa and Pastor James Wuye have established the Muslim-Christian Dialogue and Interfaith Mediation Center in Nigeria. The Center aims to instill mutual respect for the cultural, religious and historical heritage of both religions (Hasenclever and Juan, 2007).

Similarly, Mohammed Abu-Nimer, focuses on Inter-religious Peacebuilding training. He believes that simple events that occur in day-to- day interactions can be used for peacebuilding. For example, during interreligious peace building training "the act of a Jewish person bringing a chair so that a Muslim person could sit down could be perceived as a gesture of reconciliation from Judaism to Islam" (Nimer, 2001). Sharing the same views, Gloria Rubin in her paper tells, how she was able to ease the atmosphere in context of the catastrophic tragedy of fall of twin towers:

> On September 11, 2001 - 1 was scheduled to speak at a state- wide interfaith conference. When I arrived, I was told that participants knew that the Twin Towers had been attacked, but not that they had fallen. I was asked to make that announcement at the plenary session. An imam was to speak on the panel - a man I had not met. I knew the image of a rabbi and an imam together would be important in the days ahead. He agreed. What to do? I remembered a song Halima and I had taught religious school children in Hebrew and Arabic. After sharing the news, the imam and I sang, Hayvaynu Shalom Aleichem; Ji'na Bi Salam 'Alaykum - We Brought Peace to You. The entire conference soon joined us. Over the years that followed, I met or heard from many of the people who were present. They affirmed that our action began the process of healing (Rubin, 2008).

In interreligious peacebuilding, the major objective is to change the participants worldview, particularly attitudes and behaviors towards the 'other' (Nimer, 2001).

Inter- Religious Dialogue on Social Media

During the analysis and survey of contemporary literature regarding this chapter, I found the model of religious transformation and peace building coined by Mohammad Abu Naber very germane and interesting. His theory (Nimer, 2004) of transformation of society or people from *relgiocentric* to *religiorelative* has all the necessary ingredients to build mutual trust and goodwill between hostile religious communities. His idea of organizing training workshops (Nimer, 2001) to process his theory into practice is also seems very relevant and useful but it has its limitations. The limitations

could be 1-workshops are costly affair to organize.2- dearth of responsible conflict managers who can run the workshop, 3- difficult to find a venue with conducive atmosphere to bring aggrieved religious groups and most importantly 4- these workshops can cover very small number of people, while the people who get affected by religious conflicts in India are huge in number. This made me inquisitive about the kind of interactive platform or tool that could help in building interreligious peace and trust between Hindus (censusindia.gov.in), (who constitute the largest religious majority of India) and Muslims (Zakaria, 1988; censusindia.gov.in) (who constitute the largest religious minority in India) in context of Assam riots 2012 (For example). The first platform that came to my mind was mass media. Mass media especially Radio and Television have created a kind of 'techno-religious spaces' (Kong, 2001). Through mass communication an issue can be engendered to a large audience. So, at first mainstream media was explored but the callous approach of mainstream media (Globalpost,2012) during Assam riots discouraged me to go for mainstream media. Moreover mainstream media is more of one-to-many communication (Castells, 2007), where there is possibility of one way dialogue only and the system doesn't have the kind of mechanism which could allow many to voice their feelings or opinions immediately. For example, in newspapers if there is a news report related to religious conflict, the only way to respond to the report is through letter to editor which again can come in the newspaper on next day only and that too depends upon the wish of the editor of the newspaper whether he wants to take it or not. The same goes with the electronic media where there is no mechanism for immediate response or feedback, which nullifies the whole purpose of interactivity despite wide reach of mainstream media.

As Castells writes "The diffusion of Internet, mobile communication, digital media, and a variety of tools of social software have prompted the development of horizontal networks of interactive communication that connect local and global in chosen time" (Ibid). Therefore my focus turned towards social media which facilitates one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-one, many-to-many forms of communication (Ibid). Which Castells define as the reflection of the rise of a new form of socialized communication: mass self-communication- self generated in content, self-directed in emission, and self-selected in reception by many that communicate with many (Ibid). In the spectrum of social media, Twitter having the potential to reach a broader audience at a faster rate (El-Nawawy and Khamis, 2012) was given prominence over other social media sites.

Conclusion

The negative role that social media played during mass exodus of people brought social media into question but I thought if negative messages on social media could

result in big chaos, then definitely this medium could serve not only in de-escalation of conflict but also building trust and peace between conflicting parties.

Through, Twitter, one can tweet his or her own opinion in a concise manner and similar views and expressions can have an inducing effect that subsequently can make the conflicting parties to think again with a fresh outlook and (they can look for more options and choices and unattended pathways that can become handy to resolve the communal conflict) also the bunch of similar tweets act as a pressure on them and since the tweets be posted from many parts of the globe, their heterogeneity could make the people more serious about the graveness of the matter. Flurry of tweets on a contentious religious issue will make international mainstream media to take the matter seriously and responsibly which creates a debate to think about it with more people that have a say into it. Twitter can act as a platform where the aggrieved ones due to religious animosities and communal riots can vent out their anger and frustration that is twitter can act as a platform of catharsis.

One important question arise that penetration of twitter or social media is very less among the 1.2 billion populated India (censusIndiagov.in). Most of the people have no access to the new technology and even if it there, maximum doesn't know how to use it….even those that can use computer finds difficult to express them in Hindi. So how could social media turn out to be a medium that can become the voice of the ordinary?

The possible answer could be that, Twitter or social media can act as a lubricant which facilitates the process of peace reconciliation and building. In itself it doesn't have the power to bring about changes. Literate and intellectual Twitter users could become the opinion leaders (Rogers, 1983) who can diffuse message of peace and harmony among the general masses thus making Twitter to be the platform for inter-religious peace building.

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