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Reconsidering the Partition of South Asia: Government Sources and Oral History

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The history of South Asia was irrevocably altered by the Partition of India in 1947. One of the most significant aspects of Partition was the communal violence that occurred on a broad scale in many parts of the subcontinent. This study will explore how official sources and oral testimonies represented or obscured the experience of violence for the men and women who lived in the region of the Punjab through the tragedy that is Partition. I intend to compare and contrast the different kinds of evidence from both categories of sources, official sources and oral histories, and assess their important role in grasping the violence of Partition. It is the argument of this paper that to improve our current understanding of the experience of violence in the Punjab during Partition, historians must utilize both official sources and testimonies recovered by oral historians. Such a narrative would successfully bridge what David Gilmartin describes as a disjunction between the analyses of Partition performed in the elite high political realm, and the popular histories that represent the subalterns (Gilmartin 1998, 1069).

I will focus specifically on the Punjab in part because as the scholarship has recognized, the violence that engulfed regions of the Punjab was different from the violence in other parts of India during this period. I examine the value of official sources and oral testimonies available to historians for the study of Partition in the Punjab. The official sources scrutinized here are documents of the Punjab Boundary Commission gathered from the Punjab Archives in Lahore; the India Office Library in London; the Quaid-i-Azam Academy in Karachi; the Department of National Archives in Islamabad; and compiled by the Pakistani National Documentation Center at Lahore. Other official documents examined here are *The Reports of the Bengal Boundary Commission and of the Punjab Boundary Commission* (1947) and statistical data from the 1921 and 1941 censuses of India. The oral testimony explored in the final section of this study was described by Urvashi Butalia in *The Other Side of Silence*. When analyzing memory historians must navigate

several pitfalls; two potential issues are the agendas of those being interviewed, and the time elapsed between the event and the recovery of the memory. In examining these sources, I ask three questions. First, what information is put forth in these documents? Second, what evidence do Muslims, non-Muslims, and other testifying groups attempt to obscure? Last, what is the value of these documents as evidence for a historian of Partition, and which historiographic tradition do they lend more support to? The answers suggested by the evidence may help improve our current understanding of a complicated, yet key, moment in an ongoing history linking the state and the arenas of everyday life in South Asia (Gilmartin 1998, 1092).

OFFICIAL SOURCES

Until recently scholars have not revisited the official sources compiled during the Partition of Punjab, which record the political events and atmosphere that surrounded this ordeal. In my study of the historiography of Partition in the Punjab, I have witnessed a distinct trend to emphasize the political negotiations between the elite leaders of the political parties involved, as apparent in a recent article by Ishtiaq Ahmed. Using the official documents of the Punjab Boundary Commission compiled and selected by Mian Muhammad Sadullah, Ahmed states that the purpose of his study is to bring out the main arguments put forth by the actors involved in the complete negotiation process beginning before the Punjab Boundary Commission and ending with the Radcliffe Award (Talbot 1999, 117). Moreover, Ahmed considers the cultural and political implications of religiously dividing the Punjab into eastern and western territories (ibid., 118). While this research is needed, it does not go far enough. While I use the same documents, I explore each represented group's depositions, and highlight why Muslims and non-Muslims chose to divide the Punjab along religious or secular principles. My research aims to clarify how the represented groups gave depositions before the Punjab Boundary Commission to reach a compromise, but ultimately emerged with sharply polarized positions regarding Partition.

In the first part of this study, I examine contemporary official sources about Partition to highlight the experience of violence during the Partition of the Punjab in 1947. These sources are a compilation of official documents from the 1947 Punjab Boundary Commission, the Radcliffe Award, and the 1921 and 1941 Indian Censuses; they include testimony from the representative groups most intimately involved in the political process of Partition. These groups were the Muslim League, the Indian National Congress, the Sikhs, the Scheduled Castes and British civil servants. While this

set of primary sources provides rich information on Partition, two broad questions must be addressed when looking at these Boundary Commission testimonies. First, what information is put forth in these reports by British officials and by each religious community affected by Partition? Second, what information is obscured? Finally what is the value of these documents as evidence for a historian looking at the violence during Partition?

ISSUES CONFRONTING THE PUNJAB BOUNDARY COMMISSION

On June 3 1947, the Governor-General's office sent a telegram to the Radcliffe Boundary Commission, outlining criteria for Partition in the Punjab; the telegram provides the necessary context for the disagreements that emerged at the Boundary Commission hearings. Viceroy Mountbatten's telegram stated:

> The Boundary Commission is instructed to demarcate the boundaries of the two parts of the Punjab based on ascertaining the contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims. In doing so it will also take into consideration other factors. (Sadullah 1993, 78)

Mountbatten listing ambiguous and unspecific other factors as a decisive condition for Partition fast became a point where opinions clashed. Consequently, between July 21 and July 31, representatives of the Muslim League, Indian National Congress (INC) and non-Muslim at the Boundary Commission crystallized the divergent interpretations of what decisive criteria the Punjab would be divided by. The three primary factors highlighted by these representatives at the Boundary Commission were population, economics, and religious landmarks. Not surprisingly, the arguments each religious community set forth served their own particular interests when constructing a newly imagined boundary between India and Pakistan.

The second issue that highlights the inability of the Muslim League, the INC, and non-Muslims to agree upon a boundary was the announcement of a notional boundary, an imaginary border, which separated the Punjab into religiously distinct Eastern and Western territories. Mountbatten announced this too on June 3, 1947:

> It was necessary, in order to ascertain the will of the people of the Punjab, Bengal, and part of Assam, to lay down boundaries between the Muslim majority areas and the remaining areas, but I want to make clear that the ultimate boundaries will be settled by a Boundary

Commission and will almost certainly not be identical with those which have been provisionally adopted. (Sadullah 1993, 2)

Again, the Boundary Commission hearings make it plain that the Muslim League, INC and non-Muslim communities interpreted Mountbatten's statement in the light of their competing agendas. For instance, Indian National Congress Justice Mehr Chand Mahajan notes in the non-Muslim community's report to Boundary Commission Chairman Cyril Radcliffe that the notional boundary dividing the Punjab was intended to be an interim boundary until the final border was decided upon later (ibid., 162). INC representative M.C. Setalvad reasserts this position, by arguing that because the Boundary Commission had been formed, the preliminary notional boundary no longer had any practical consequence or effect on Partition in the Punjab (ibid., 2:2-3). In contrast, Muslim League Justice Din Muhammad argued in his community's final report to Chairman Radcliffe that as the Boundary Commission determined the final boundaries for Partition, without the agreement of all represented groups on what other factors would establish fixed borders, Partition must revert to the notional boundary based strictly on population statistics (ibid., 3:19). This conflict on the status of the notional boundary reveals how each group intended to expound their interpretation as the closest to the intentions of the British chairs on the Boundary Commission, and therefore ultimately correct.

ARGUMENTS OF REPRESENTED GROUPS: RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR

The first task of this study is to distinguish whether arguments of the Muslim League, the Indian National Congress, the Sikhs, the British, and the Scheduled Castes were based on religious or secular considerations. Mountbatten's radio announcement of June 3, 1947, makes clear the intention of the British to establish a border in the Punjab on the basis of religious community and population data. An explanation for this British philosophy, while very useful, will be left unanswered in this study. Religion again pervaded the argument put forth by the Muslim League for the creation of Pakistan during Partition, and the same was true for the non-Muslim Sikh delegation. In contrast, because the Indian National Congress was a secular political party, their depositions deliberately focused on economic considerations and not religious affiliation. These divergent perspectives without a doubt contributed to the incompatibility apparent among the various represented groups as they testified before the Boundary Commission, headed by Cyril Radcliffe.

A conscious decision to establish population as the decisive factor in determining boundaries is evident after analyzing the various Muslim League testimonies at the Boundary Commission. This agenda is transparent in several statements by the Muslim League representatives. Justice Din Muhammad's assertion in the Muslim League's final report that the principal task of the Boundary Commission was to ascertain contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims is a clear example (Sadullah 1993, 3:10). Justice Muhammad argued further that a majority could only be determined in a territory by counting heads and by no other means, as was decided by the Governor-General's office in their June 3 announcement (ibid., 9-10). The basic motivation behind the Muslim League's agenda was the feeling that a non-Muslim-majority Congress was constantly and deliberately under-representing and under-privileging the Muslim community. Din Muhammad thus likened the non-Muslim-controlled Congress in the Punjab to robbers, and argued that the Muslim League's insistence on division was rooted in their tenured status as victims (ibid., 49).

A pivotal document used by the Muslim League to support these territorial claims was the 1941 Census. First, the significant Muslim majority revealed by the Census substantiated the Muslim League's claim that Muslims were in an indisputable majority in the districts claimed by the League, which as a result should be allotted to Pakistan (ibid., 66-67). Justice Din Muhammad argued, therefore, that under no circumstances should either whole or part of these districts be taken out of the Muslim majority category (ibid., 11-12). Second, with a Muslim majority confirmed in these districts, the Muslim League would control significant commercial and transportation centers in the Punjab, such as Lahore and numerous canal ways. While Muslim League representatives at the Boundary Commission acknowledged that non-Muslims might be wealthier or more resourceful in certain districts of the Punjab, Muslim League control of this territory was still justified because Muslims were the majority of workers at the factories and the majority of users of the canal and railway system. For example, in the district of Lahore alone, according to 1941 Census figures, Muslims were in the majority above non-Muslims by over 3.5 lakhs (350,000) (ibid., 35). Justice Din Muhammad argued that given this data, ignoring the Muslim majority of the region would undercut the principles of justice the Boundary Commission was instructed to follow at its inception (ibid.).[1]

In keeping with this emphasis on population data as the decisive criteria in determining boundaries, the Muslim League representatives discounted a

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[1] The principle that the Boundary Commission was to determine Partition according to population is what Justice Din Muhammad states is in jeopardy by ignoring the 1941 Census data.

variety of other factors. Justice Muhammad Munir bluntly asserted that historical, ethnic, religious, social, and cultural factors were secondary to population figures when determining contiguous majority districts, and therefore unimportant unless backed up by population figures (ibid. 112). Munir became an attorney for the district of Lahore following the Government of India Act in 1935, and more importantly, at the outset of the Boundary Commission he was a High Court Judge at the district level in Lahore (Chaudhri 1973, ii). One factor clearly attacked by the Muslim League legal representatives in their testimony was religious considerations: specifically, the location of Sikh shrines, and their relevance to determining final boundaries. Muslim League representatives argued that if the Sikh claims for territory of religious importance were a factor in deciding Partition boundaries, Muslim claims along the same lines needed to be considered as well, resulting in unmanageable circumstances for the creation of a permanent boundary to divide the Punjab (Sadullah 1993, 3:119). Furthermore, Muhammad Munir argued that according to the June 3 plan put forth by Mountbatten, it was not agreed that the Sikhs were permitted to argue that because their religion and religious leaders originated in the Punjab that they were a special case, as it would violate the basic principle of contiguity and majority. It is then clear from these documents that the Muslim League insisted to the Punjab Boundary Commission that contiguous majorities based on 1941 Census data should be the basis for determining boundaries.

Much as the representatives of the Muslim League established a clear agenda in their depositions before of the Punjab Boundary Commission, the Indian National Congress representatives also offered their own distinct interpretation. The Congress representatives, again a team of law officials, also posited population as an important factor; however, in order to construct an equitable boundary between Muslim and non-Muslim communities they emphasized the consideration of other factors. The Congress representatives' deliberate focus on the importance of other factors highlights their attempt to shift the emphasis away from population data alone. The other factor highlighted most often by the INC representatives to the Boundary Commission was economic interests. M. C. Setalvad, a member of the Congress's delegation, argued that in the single case of Lyallpur, where Muslims were in a majority by five percent, non-Muslims held ownership of sixty-five percent of the economic assets in the district such as land, heavy industry, canals, railroads, and factories, and that these interests had to be considered when exploring how to divide the Punjab (ibid., 2:40-41). The Congressional representatives supported their claim with statistics gained from the urban immovable property tax figures of 1945-1946. They pointed out how non-Muslims paid seven times the amount of property taxes as

Muslims in Lyallpur, and sales and income taxes in excess of ten times the Muslim contribution (Sadullah 1993, 2:92).

The Congressional representatives further invoked the historical precedents of how boundaries were determined in the Balkans after the First World War, and the Indian province of Orissa in 1931. Using this comparison, M. C. Setalvad argued that demarcating boundaries between two historically and economically distinct communities must take into account factors such as transportation, communications, and economic livelihood (ibid., 29). One specific comparison to the Balkans that Setalvad asserted was that there economic necessities had supplemented the ethnic and historical preponderance of either Czechs or Slovaks (ibid., 30). Another precedent the Congress used was the drawing of boundaries for the province of Orissa in 1931. Justice Mehr Chand Mahajan highlighted the fact that Orissa's boundary had to be determined not only by population data, but also by linguistic, economic, and geographic considerations (ibid., 3:174). Mahajan was the most qualified INC delegate to the Boundary Commission, and quickly became the INC's counterweight to the justices of the Muslim League (Mahajan 1963, 113).[2] The INC perspective on the event derived from the *Report of the Orissa Committee* which held that language, race, the attitude of the people, geographical position, economic interest, and administrative convenience were all relevant factors to determine Orissa's boundary (Sadullah 1993, 2:31). It is clear Congress would have had the upper hand in many of these other factors in the Punjab. The other factors were, therefore, extremely important aspects of the Boundary Commission's interpretation of the Partition of the Punjab; they were definite alternatives to population as decisive criteria.

In this way, Congress constantly undercut the value of the 1941 Census figures that the Muslim League used to buttress their claims to several districts. In his final report to the Boundary Commission, Justice Mehr Chand Mahajan asserted that in one case the Muslim League's claim of being in the majority in the Shakargarh Tehsil was fictitious, because both the 1931 and 1941 censuses were unreliable as the Sikh and Hindu communities had actively boycotted them in protest to British occupation (ibid., 3:189). These boycotts are documented in the general remarks for the Census of India for 1941. The 1941 Census Commissioner for India stated that the 1931 and 1941 Censuses coincided with widespread civil disobedience in the Punjab and Bengal (Census 1943, 9). Mahajan countered the 1941 population data presented by the Muslim League with statistics from the 1921 Census that had

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[2] Mahajan's background in law started with his education at the Government Law College, which eventually brought him the position of High Court Bench of the Punjab.

the participation of all major religious communities: the Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. He concluded that because prior Censuses up to 1921 had shown a clear non-Muslim majority in Shakargarh this earlier data could not be omitted from consideration (Sadullah 1993, 3:191). The Census of India for 1921 does not give the statistics for the Shakargarh Tehsil; however, non-Muslims hold a majority in the district of Gurdaspur where Shakargarh is located (Census 1924, 192-93).

Exploring the Sikh depositions at the Boundary Commission, the authority of other factors was again the central issue discussed. Here, the value of religion was asserted when claiming territory in the Punjab. According to the Sikh legal representation, the line of reasoning that boundaries were to be determined merely on population data ran counter to the fundamental reason for Partition; religious difference (Sadullah 1993, 3:229). The districts of Sheikhupura, Gurujranwala, Gurdaspur, Lahore, and Amritsar were contested by the Sikh community. However, most important to the Sikh delegation was the district of Nankana Sahib, the birth place of their founder Guru. In the final Sikh report a representative of the Sikh Assembly Party, Sardar Harnam Singh, compares the Sikh community's special position in these parts of the Punjab to the position that the Jewish community was determined to have in Palestine, on the basis of the Balfour Declaration of 1917 (ibid., 133). Indian National Congress representative Justice Teja Singh used his argumentative skills (he was a High Court Judge for the district of Gujrawala) to elaborate this perspective in two significant religious analogies (Singh 1982, 41-44). First, he likened the importance of the ten central Sikh Gurus, all of whom had shrines associated with them in West Punjab, to the status of Christ in Christianity, Muhammad in Islam, and the principal incarnations of Vishnu in Hinduism (ibid., 2:234). Second, he gave the Gurdwaras, the Sikh places of worship, the same religious status as the Muslim shrines in Mecca and Medina (ibid., 174). These analogies performed two tasks for the Sikh community. They were a deliberate attempt of the Sikhs to base their argument on historical precedent, since the British regarded religious factors as essential when constructing boundaries. At the same time, the Sikhs set out to show that the Muslim League claims for a nation based on religious community in South Asia were inferior to Sikh claims, because Islam did not originate in the subcontinent, but in the Middle East. Thus, it is clear the main thrust of the Sikh claims to territory in the Punjab was religiously oriented.

Like the Congress representation at the Boundary Commission, the Sikhs also viewed economics as an important factor, and made it the second thrust of their claims. Economic interests were vital for the Sikhs because much of the capital and investment provided to build the infrastructure of the Punjab was from the Sikh community, and additionally they were part of the non-Muslim

majority landowners in the Punjab before Partition. According to Sardar Harnam Singh in his arguments for the Sikhs on July 24 1947, government data made clear that the Sikh community owned 90,000 acres more than the Muslim community in Gurdaspur, Pathankot, Pasrur, and Narowal tehsils in the Punjab (ibid.). This is significant since the Muslim League based their claim on a population majority in these districts. To counter the Muslim League's stance, the Sikh Assembly Party's Harnam Singh highlighted the Sikh's ownership of more land and thus attempted to shift authority away from population figures by arguing that the economic interests of non-Muslims far outweighed the interests of Muslims (ibid., 175). Another way the Sikh representatives asserted the authority of their claims to territories in the Punjab was by drawing attention to the earlier British decision to allocate land and irrigation resources to demobilized Sikh soldiers who had served in the Imperial Army. Sardar Harnam Singh cited the *Administration Report of the Punjab*, which demonstrated how the Upper Bari Doab Canal had been planned for the benefit of disbanded Sikh soldiers (ibid., 161).

Throughout their depositions, the Sikh representatives attacked the rationale of the Muslim League's claim of a population majority in certain Punjab districts. The Sikhs first highlighted the fact that one-third of the Muslim occupants in Lahore district, according to the 1931 Census, were landless people and menials (ibid., 125). Addressing the Muslim League, Indian National Congress and non-Muslim representatives of the Boundary Commission, Sardar Harnam Singh labeled this population as "floating people" (ibid.). He argued that the mobile Muslim population could not be given the same status as people who owned the land, and that this would undercut the integrity of the Boundary Commission (ibid.). Kingsley Davis substantiates the Sikh claim of a significantly smaller urban Muslim population to a non-Muslim by pointing out that in 1931 6.5 percent of all Muslims living in the Punjab lived in urban settings (Davis 1949, 261). Another issue on which the Sikh representatives contested the Muslim League's claim to population majority in the Punjab was the inclusion of South Asian Christians in the League's data, by the request of the Christians in an earlier memorandum. Both Sikh delegates, Justice Teja Singh and Sardar Harnam Singh, argued that adding Christians to the Muslim League's population figures was contrary to the guidelines of drawing boundaries on the basis of Muslim and non-Muslim communities, as spelled out in the June 3, 1947 announcement by Governor-General Mountbatten (ibid., 155).

The final group who attempted to assert their claims to the Boundary Commission were the Scheduled Castes. However, unlike the Muslim League, the Congress, and Sikh communities whose reports to the Boundary Commission were considered before finalizing boundaries, the Scheduled

Castes were continuously and deliberately disregarded. The central agenda of the Scheduled Castes was to gain recognition as a separate, secular community on the basis of class, which would allow them to be granted territory separate from Muslim and non-Muslim territories. A letter on June 18, 1947, from Sunder Singh, a Scheduled Caste representative of India's new Constituent Assembly, states that it was not understandable how 37.5 lakh (3.75 million) Punjabi Sikhs could receive representation on the Boundary Commission while 16 lakh (1.6 million) Scheduled Caste people could go unrepresented (ibid., 45). The letter further claimed that Crown and waste land should have been set aside for colonization by the Scheduled Caste community (ibid., 45). The Scheduled Castes delegation again sought representation in a July 10, 1947 letter to Mountbatten, in which they argued that to avoid denying rights and justice to their unfortunate community, they must have their case represented before the Punjab Boundary Commission (ibid., 143). The Scheduled Caste representation shows how the drawing of boundaries was far more complicated than the June 3, 1947 announcement by the Governor-General, which declared that Partition would be demarcated primarily in terms of areas of Muslim and non-Muslim majorities (ibid., 6).

THE BRITISH

After exploring the arguments of the major political groups and the Scheduled Castes, I now consider the role of the British officials at the Punjab Boundary Commission hearings. An examination of the relevant documents makes transparent a distinct British agenda, which was to expedite their exit from India and reduce the possibility of India becoming "Balkanized." The first part of this agenda was made clear by the British on June 5, 1947 at the inception of the Boundary Commission, when Mountbatten stated that the paramount reason for the hearings was to speed up the process of giving complete autonomy to the Indians (ibid., 18-19). According to Mountbatten, this concern to accelerate the process of Partition was behind his refusal to invite the United Nations to the Boundary Commission hearings. He argued that the best arrangement for a successful Partition of the Punjab would have included the United Nations; however, due to the British desire to accomplish Partition by August 15, 1947, this would not be feasible (ibid., 30). Additionally, the British announced that unless a compromise was reached by the August 15th deadline, the division of the Punjab would be established according to the notional boundary, thus handicapping the effectiveness of the Boundary Commission hearings in two ways (ibid., 170). Cyril John Radcliffe, chair of the Boundary Commission, labeled the potential disagreements regarding other factors to determine boundaries as impossible hurdles that would

prevent agreement on any on boundary (Radcliffe 1947, 11). First, the primary factor in the Muslim League's argument for Partition was boundaries based on population majorities. Since the notional boundary already followed these guidelines, the Muslim League only had to counter the Indian National Congress's and non-Muslim arguments to obtain their goal. Indian National Congress representative Mahajan in his autobiography supports this speculation clearly. At the outset of the Boundary Commission hearings Justice Mahajan said Muslim League delegate Din Muhammad told him bluntly that the Muslim League would report only their list of demands, and would not compromise with the INC and Sikhs (Mahajan 1963, 115). Second, because non-Muslims, already in a majority in East Punjab, thought that the notional boundary was unsatisfactory, the potential for communal conflict increased markedly as the deadline neared without a compromise between the various groups. This potential for violence later became a reality.

In addition, the British accelerated Partition in the Punjab by refusing to consider statistics collected by individual communities, even if these statistics were based on government data, and they also disregarded the arguments of communities in the Punjab outside of the guidelines of religious affiliation. For instance, in a July 22, 1947 telegram from two British officials, S. E. Abbott and Evan Jenkins, the intentional disregard of data gathered by the communities is apparent. The British officials refused a request by the Sikh delegation to postpone the Boundary Commission deadline. The request, if granted, would have allowed the non-Muslim delegation to collect updated revenue and population figures from other government sources in order to support their claim that the 1941 census figures were flawed. The British argued the process would be time-consuming and pointless since the information might never be used unless agreed to by the Boundary Commission (ibid., 83).

As demonstrated earlier, another community that was consciously denied adequate representation by the British was the Scheduled Castes in the Punjab. The British maintained they would not hear the arguments of delegations beyond the Muslim League, INC and non-Muslim communities because all parties involved had originally decided upon this organizational format for the Boundary Commission, wherein the Scheduled Castes were never intended to be separately represented (ibid., 116). Thus the sources reveal how the British were concerned to speed up the Partition of the Punjab so as to facilitate their departure from India, whatever the consequence for the Punjab Boundary Commission hearings and their legitimacy.

OFFICIAL SOURCES AND ANALYZING
THE EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE

Undoubtedly, an examination of these official sources of the Punjab Boundary Commission enhances our understanding of Partition in the Punjab. However, the information included in these documents fleshes out the historiography of high politics more than it does the histories from the bottom up. We see this in the pervasiveness of an elite perspective throughout the testimonies. Each of the represented communities at the Boundary Commission designated representatives either previously or currently in politics or the judicial system, therefore, the Boundary Commission reports put forth an inherently elite perspective. Thus the Boundary Commission hearings substantiate David Gilmartin's point that the high politics historiography is an analysis of negotiations between the British, the Indian National Congress, and the Muslim League that led to the creation of Pakistan (Gilmartin 1998, 1069). Therefore, if a historian were to base his or her interpretation entirely on this compilation of documents, the Partition of the Punjab would appear to be entirely uninfluenced by the politics of local life (ibid.). Then all the violence during the Partition of the Punjab in 1947 would be presented as a consequence of the political decisions made at the highest level; further, acts of violence would represent not an enduring communal discourse, but merely sporadic riots.

Despite their limitations, these official sources are still valuable for historians analyzing the experience of violence during Partition. The lack of attention to the communal atrocities that transpired during the same time as the Punjab Boundary Commission hearings is striking. Although the official sources spanned from June 3, when Mountbatten announced the creation of a Boundary Commission for the Punjab, through the August 15 deadline establishing Pakistan as a nation in 1947, only six instances of violence were recorded. British officials only discussed the communal conflicts twice; once, in reporting that communal violence between Muslims and non-Muslims had been on the rise since August 1946 (Sadullah 1993, 1:220). Further, in the few instances of violence they documented, only one group was categorized as perpetrators, the Sikh community. A letter dated August 2, 1947, highlighted numerous attacks by Sikh on villages and trains containing Muslims in the Amritsar and Lahore districts. The British stated that this violence was brought on by the Sikhs' disagreement with the final Boundary Commission Award, which did not give them the Nankana Sahib district with their founder's birthplace (ibid., 237-38).

This lack of attention to the pervasive violence raises questions. Specifically, why were Sikhs shown to be the only culprits? Equally

important, why was the escalating communal fighting only mentioned twice by the British? It seems plausible that the disregard of supplemental information from the non-Muslim delegations, as well as the silence about the growing violence as the deadline neared, served the British agenda to withdraw from India immediately.

Much like the selective British recording of Partition violence, the Muslim League's arguments also depicted a very narrow interpretation of the violence in the Punjab by local Muslim communities. In the Muslim League's final report to the Boundary Commission, Justice Din Muhammad gave numerous examples of statements by Sikh leaders calling for violence against Muslims in contested districts in the Punjab. He cited the Sikhs uttering phrases such as "the might of the sword alone shall rule," and "our battle-axe shall decide if the Muslims shall rule" (Sadullah 1993, 3:50-51). The testimony highlighting the Sikhs' violent nature emphasized the concern stated by the Muslim League that a non-Muslim majority would continue to oppress the Muslims if Partition did not occur. However, these statements mark the first time the Muslim League presented such testimony to the Boundary Commission. Equally striking about these statements is the League's failure to mention any retaliation by Muslims against the non-Muslim communities in this tense environment, or the context surrounding the statements that could have led to the quoted statements. Clearly, the Muslim League hoped to portray an image of faithfully following British guidelines for Partition, while simultaneously establishing the Sikh's as an unstable component of the Boundary Commission.

When we consider the violence reported by non-Muslim communities to the Punjab Boundary Commission, the Sikhs are the only represented non-Muslim group in these official sources. The Sikhs, like the Muslim League, gave several depositions about the communal violence against their community. Here, the perpetrators of Partition violence are clearly identified as Muslims. This directly contradicted the Muslim League's report to the Boundary Commission. In the Sikh argument it was Muslim leaders, not Sikhs, who incited their community to violence. Justice Teja Singh describes how the leaders of the Muslim League commonly incited protesters at public meetings to chant, "We shall take Pakistan in the same manner as we took Hindustan, by the use of sword" (ibid., 223). The Sikh report to the Boundary Commission documents the only acts of violence included in the official sources, through a series of appendices. These appendices give statistical data gathered from police in the Multan and Rawalpindi districts in the Punjab, both Muslim-majority districts. According to the information supplied by the Sikhs, more than 2,400 non-Muslims were killed or burnt alive in communal conflicts instigated by Muslims, who in turn suffered only 52 casualties (ibid.,

270). Additionally, the value of non-Muslim property that was destroyed was over 140 million rupees (ibid.). In every category, Justice Teja Singh clarifies that the Sikhs were undeniably target of the Muslim attacks (ibid.).

The first questions to ask when examining the Sikh testimonies of violence is, why did they focus on the cities of Rawalpindi and Multan? The answer may be found in the Sikh argument for the Boundary Commission. The Boundary Commission should consider religion and economics when finalizing a boundary in the Punjab. In Rawalpindi and Multan the non-Muslim community held a majority of the assets, both property and means of production. Thus the Sikh Boundary Commission representatives belonged to the wealthier part of the population, and stood to lose most of their wealth if Partition disregarded economic factors. Another question that must be addressed is why the Congressional report to the Boundary Commission did not corroborate the Sikh assessment of violence, or even mention it. As in the other testimonies of violence from these official sources, the dialectic is primarily between the Muslim League and Sikhs, not the Congress. As seen in the maps of the Punjab included in the Punjab Boundary Commission's final report, the cities of Multan and Rawalpindi are located deep within Muslim majority districts, in the southern and northern regions of West Punjab (Sadullah 1993, 4:2). Because the Muslim League believed population should determine the demarcation of boundaries, whereas Sikhs believed that religious factors should decide Partition borders, both Multan and Rawalpindi were high risk zones for communal conflict. According to Justice Teja Singh, on July 22, 1947, communally motivated Muslim attacks occurred to promote the Muslim League agenda, which was to establish a homogenous Islamic nation (ibid., 3:227).

In this case, the official sources are just as valuable for what was not covered, reported, or documented by the representatives to the Boundary Commission. While acts of communal violence were brought up before the Boundary Commission, they were often characterized as isolated occurrences directly related to the political atmosphere in the subcontinent. Moreover, there is no recognition of the effect that the violence had on the Muslim and non-Muslim communities that were involved. Furthermore, the horrific forms of the violence were grossly underrepresented throughout these official sources.

Most visibly, very little attention was given to the massive forced migrations of population. As late August 12, 1947, British officials in the Punjab did not report any large scale transfers of population, and more importantly, did not anticipate the need to create a plan to respond to mass migrations since they were not considered effective political options (ibid., 1:32). Furthermore, the transfer of Muslim or non-Muslim populations that

occurred in the Punjab before and throughout the Boundary Commission hearings did not receive attention from any delegation in the arguments presented at the hearings.

Another kind of violence insufficiently documented was the widespread atrocities against Muslim and non-Muslim women throughout the region. In fact, throughout the hearings of the Punjab Boundary Commission, not a single instance can be found from any delegation that dealt with the women affected by Partition. The violence against women came from aggressors typically from outside of their religious community, which suggests that such an erasure of the female experience from the official record was deliberate. This hypothesis is strengthened when we consider the oral testimony from Partition survivors in the final part of this paper.

One other aspect of Partition that the Boundary Commission hearings failed to record was the lack of any connection between the Hindu population in the Punjab and the communal violence. The testimonies of violence mentioned during the Boundary Commission hearings essentially focused on Muslims and Sikhs; however, a majority of the non-Muslim communities represented were Hindu. The issue then is why the reports did not mention Hindus as perpetrators of any communal violence in the Punjab.

Finally, what was the root of the polarization between the Muslim League and Sikhs during Partition? One possible explanation is that the Sikhs were present primarily in hotly contested territories, and were not in a majority in any single district. Because of this, the Sikhs routinely competed with the Muslim population for control of scarce resources and territories either sacred or economically important.

ORAL TESTIMONY

In the final part of this study, I consider the oral testimonies of Muslims and non-Muslims who experienced Partition first-hand, and their value as evidence as compared to the official sources. The oral sources used in this section are drawn from Urvashi Butalia's *The Other Side of Silence*; they consist of testimony from individuals personally affected at the local level in the Punjab, from the Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh communities. The impact of gender relations is clear in these interviews (Butalia 2000, 12).

The Place of Oral Histories in Partition Studies

Before analyzing the information available in the oral histories, we must consider the potential pitfalls of such evidence for historians. Urvashi Butalia, author of *The Other Side of Silence*, acknowledges that memory and oral testimony can lack objectivity, and are therefore imperfect sources for historians (ibid., 8). However, because the history of Partition is contested, and its ramifications have continued to shape the political milieu in South Asia, recent Partition historiography has incorporated personal histories to highlight the impact of Partition on the lives of ordinary people, both men and women (Gilmartin 1998, 1069). This focuses on the local experience of violence during Partition returning agency to ordinary people who are more often than not absent in the high politics historiography.

Further complicating this study is the use of oral testimonies coming from a secondary source, Butalia's account. In other words, the oral testimonies explored in this study bear the mark of the researcher's bias. Butalia makes it clear that the testimonies included in her narrative were selected on seemingly arbitrary criteria of which testimonies meant the most to her personally (Butalia 2000, 11). Second, the limited number of oral testimonies included here is not intended to represent the communities of Muslims and non-Muslims affected by the violence of Partition in the Punjab. Still these interviews of Partition survivors are of local events and help to put forth a necessary retelling of this ordeal, while contributing significantly to a history from below of Partition in the Punjab.

Evidence from Oral history

One major benefit of the oral testimony is the reinsertion of a subaltern perspective into the historical discourse about Partition. The experience of violence is multi-layered. Still, clear distinctions are evident between male and female experiences of Partition throughout these oral testimonies. Butalia learned through the testimonies of women the intimate details of their lives, such as what occurred within their homes and to their children. Men, however, predominantly spoke of relations between communities or the broad political realities (ibid., 12). Thus the next part of this study explores the oral testimonies and highlights two particular issues that confronted men and women during Partition: martyrdom, and the movement of people.

The fact that women were particularly targeted by violence as symbols of the opposing religious community was at the core of the Partition experience of martyrdom. "Voluntary" suicides (a label given by Butalia) and organized murders across rural and urban Punjab were the most prevalent forms of

extreme suffering experienced by women, and these experiences are accessible through oral testimonies. In an account from Thamali, a town near Rawalpindi, Basant Kaur described numerous incidents of violence that she asserted were widespread and common during Partition. This Sikh woman states that many other Sikh women were killed because their male relatives and husbands in the community feared what the Muslims would do to their children and spouses physically, in addition to forcibly converting the Sikh women to Islam (Butalia 2000, 159). Basant Kaur highlights one memory of violence from March 1947 in this excerpt:

> My Husband? My nephew killed him, my nephew. Because they had killed the girls, his daughter, sister, grandchildren, with their kirpans, and then my jeth's son had a pistol and he killed his mother, his uncle . . . then my nephew killed my husband with a pistol. He had a small daughter, one-and-a-half years old, she also ate pistol shots. Yes, my husband was killed by my nephew as I told you; he killed him because my husband said he did not want to become a Muslim. (ibid., 160)

Bir Bahadur Singh, Basant Singh's son, elaborates on the experience of violence in his account:

> In Gulab Singh's haveli twenty-six girls had been put aside. First of all my father, Sant Raja Singh, prayed, he did ardaas, saying we have not allowed your Sikhi to get stained, and in order to save it we are going to sacrifice our daughters, make them martyrs. He killed two, and the third was my sister, Mann Kaur ... my sister came and sat in front of my father, and I stood there, right next to him. It was such a frightening, such a fearful scene. My father with his own hands moved her dupatta aside and then he swung kirpan and her head and neck rolled off and fell. (ibid., 163)

From these interviews, it is clear that women were the chief targets of such violence, and that the men believed that they committed these acts of violence to secure the women's honor and ensure the community's purity.

We may infer more from such evidence. First, the gathering of women to be martyred in villages largely happened at the insistence of the men of their communities. It is generally undisputed that men from the other community attacked the women as well. That said, Butalia notices poignantly that women often faced violence both from their own families and from their communities, with their own men lionizing the women who died as heroes

(Butalia 2000, 170). The testimony given by the male perpetrators highlights why such violence was persistent during Partition.

In another interview, Mangal Singh addresses this issue. Singh, a Sikh reputed to have assisted in killing seventeen family members before migrating during Partition, reasoned that the women would not have survived the trek to East Punjab, and their martyrdom would save them from the worse fate of conversion or death at the hands of a Muslim (ibid., 154). Going one step further, Mangal Singh justified the murders as the fulfillment of a final request from his fearless female relatives (ibid.). The question must be asked, why would the men construe these killings as beneficial to their women?

From the interviews, it appears that some women did seek martyrdom rather than a forced conversion. Bir Bahadur Singh recounts the death of several women, again from Rawalpindi, who voluntarily drowned themselves in the local well. One of the women, Sardarni Gulab Kaur, was a Sikh mother who had earlier witnessed the killing of women at the hands of Sant Raja Singh. She insisted her daughters and herself also be saved, and that the men should not allow the women to be abducted by Muslims who would put their lives and honor at risk (ibid., 164). The episode ended with the voluntary drowning of eighty Sikh women from this community. While this interview substantiates the memories put forth by the men, whether or not the women who died perceived matters in the same light as the men is a question left unanswered by these testimonies. This clarifies the problem about many of these testimonies: a majority of the evidence is tinted by a particular, masculine interpretation. Unfortunately, we may never find out more about this issue because of death due to old age of women who survived the violence of Partition.

The forced movement of people during Partition is another aspect addressed in these interviews. Again, men and women were affected differently. The oral testimonies describe atrocities specifically aimed at women, such as abduction. In the oral account of Anis Kidwai, a Muslim social worker from Delhi, the female abductees during Partition faced violence from the very police they sought assistance from. Kidwai remembered:

> In all of this sometimes a girl would be killed or she would be wounded. The "good stuff" would be shared among the police and army, the "second rate stuff" would go to everyone else. And then these girls would go from one hand to another and after several would turn up in hotels, or they would be handed over to police officers, in some places to please them. (ibid., 118)

In the extensive contact that Kidwai had with refugees from the various regions of the Punjab, this was a common occurrence. Her testimony therefore highlights the numerous threats that women confronted during Partition. Kamlaben Patel, another social worker, elaborates on memories she had chosen not to share until Butalia sought her out, because of her refusal to believe human beings could commit such acts of violence (Butalia 2000, 105). Patel describes a broad range of atrocities committed against women unfortunate enough to be captured or abducted by men of the other community, including, but not limited to, mass rapes, physical mutilation, and tattooing of religious symbols from the other community (ibid.). Each of these testimonies detail the violence that followed the abductions during Partition, but how can these horrors be understood? What was the purpose of such violence?

The testimonies do not offer concrete answers to these issues, but they do open up a discussion. A Hindu writer who had met several of these women explains violence as an intent to tarnish the honor of the religious community (ibid., 147):

> Tens of thousands of our pious mothers and sisters who would faint at the sight of blood were kidnapped and sold for many rupees. I have seen some of them recovered from the holy land. Their foreheads bore tattoo mark declaring them Muhammad's wife. . .

> It bristles with difficulties. That is obvious. But no less obvious is the fact that the problem is a challenge to our manhood, no less than to our nationalism. (ibid.)

While this study acknowledges that the testimony of an individual does not represent the opinion of every Muslim and non-Muslim in the Punjab, the information in these oral accounts offers disturbing insights into the experience of violence during Partition.

These oral histories help us to penetrate the human experience during Partition. While the testimonies are from a small sample of individuals and focus primarily on the experience of violence throughout the events of 1947, they expand the possibilities for future studies of Partition. The accounts of martyrdom, abduction and migration attest that the kinds of violence observed in Partition had their basis in social relations that predated the event, and were not solely the reaction of communities to political realities. For individuals involved in and affected by the violence of Partition, the issue may have been merely the exacerbated tensions that permeated society. Thus, Bir Bahadur Singh's recollection of his experiences in Rawalpindi before and during

Partition clearly reveals his conviction that discrimination between the religious communities generated the violence during Partition. Remembering the interactions between neighbors and friends at dinners during his childhood, Singh puts forth:

> No one would ask, but on their own two, three people would bring us things. And they used to say very calmly, you don't eat things cooked by us, but sometimes the utensil they would bring . . . you see we used to drink milk from their houses, but the milk had to be in an unused utensil, a new one. But we never asked what difference it would have made if we had actually drunk out of the same cup. What would have happened? If we had been willing to drink from the same cups, we would have remained united, we would not have had these differences, thousands of lives would not have been lost, and there would be no Partition. Our relations, our attitude should be the same towards Harijans, Sikhs, Muslims, anyone, we should not treat people differently. (ibid., 182-83)

This excerpt suggests how a history from below can expand our understanding of the causes of such extreme cases of violence. Moreover, it shows that the everyday social relationships did affect the political environment during Partition.

Without a doubt, oral testimonies from men and women who survived the ordeal of Partition in 1947 are invaluable to reconstructing and understanding the experience of violence during the creation of Pakistan. Regardless of the pitfall of subjectivity encountered when including oral testimonies in any analysis, such evidence highlights how the atrocities of this period symbolized significantly more than momentary brutality committed by any single community. As Gyanendra Pandey has pointed out, when investigating the history of any society, narratives expressing the experience of violence contribute to the process of reifying the community and asserting its boundaries (Pandey 2001, 4). Furthermore, David Gilmartin correctly argues that centralizing the tension that exists between multiple constructions of identity and the search for a moral community helps integrate the violence and politics that pervaded Partition to create a master narrative of the events during 1947 (Gilmartin 1998, 1069-70). However, a master narrative does not yet exist for the experience of violence during Partition, nor can emphasizing one category of sources over another approach one. But the creation of a single explanation for the experience of violence during Partition is not the impetus of the analysis in this study. This examination of how Partition was represented in both official sources and oral testimonies continues the attempt

by historians to meld an understanding of the violence of Partition with the political narrative of Partition's causes, with the hope of contributing to the creation of an adequate master narrative for this seminal event in modern South Asian history (ibid., 1069).

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Pygmalion: Changes of Class and Culture[1]

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George Bernard Shaw—critic, playwright, novelist, and screenplay writer of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—has had a lasting influence on theater around the world. Shaw's plays, as well as his social ideas and theories of drama, have been incredibly popular in India, far from his native Ireland. Shaw's best-known work is his 1912 play *Pygmalion*, which was made into a film in 1938; Shaw won an Academy Award for the screenplay. In 1956 it was adapted into the musical *My Fair Lady*, which was also made into a film. *Pygmalion* has captured the imagination of the Indian people and has been translated and adapted into many Indian cultures and languages. P.L. Deshpande did a Marathi adaptation, Madhu Rye wrote *Shantu Rangili*, a Hindi musical based on *Pygmalion* and *My Fair Lady*, and the Gujarati version *Punarani* was one of longest running plays in Bombay history with several thousand shows (Contemporary 1989; Richmond 1990, 396). One of the best-loved Indian versions of *Pygmalion*, however, is Cho Ramasamy's 1964 Tamil play *Manam oru Kurangu* (*The Mind is a Monkey*), which was also made into a film. To the best of my knowledge, the only Indian adaptation of Shaw's play that has been translated into English is my own unpublished translation of *Manuam oru Kurangu*. This paper will discuss Ramasamy's adaptation in order to explore the elements of Shaw's philosophy and story that have most appealed to the Indian sensibility.

Pygmalion: A Romance in Five Acts is the story of Henry Higgins, professor of phonetics, who accepted a challenge from his friend Colonel Pickering—the author of *Spoken Sanscrit* and student of Indian dialects—to make good on his boast to pass off flower seller Eliza Doolittle as the "Queen of Sheba" (Shaw 1981, 525). He proposes to do this by teaching her proper English speech, grammar, and manners, and helping her to lose her low-class accent. Shaw had a great interest throughout his life in the New Alphabet,

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[1] An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 2005 American Comparative Literature Association Annual Meeting. It was also nominated for the Horst Frenz Award.

dedicating part of his estate to support its project of developing a phonetic alphabet. Due to the different pronunciations and spellings that are correct according to the English alphabet, Shaw realized that "no man can teach himself what it should sound like from reading it; and it is impossible for an Englishman to open his mouth without making some other Englishman despise him" (Shaw 1981, 513). Henry Higgins could place a man within two miles in London just from hearing him speak.

This background applies perfectly in Tamilnadu as well; although Tamil has a phonetic alphabet, people's vocabulary and pronunciation of the language varies based on region, class, and caste. It is easy to identify people by their speech, and the handicap of a low-class accent is just as stigmatizing in today's Tamilnadu as it was in Victorian England.[2] Ramasamy has adapted the character of Eliza Doolittle, flower seller, to Marudhayi, vegetable seller. In India flower sellers usually have their own corners where they set up a table and chair and quietly sell the beautiful scented chains of jasmine and other flowers that they string together from loose flowers, although some will sell from a basket. It is much more common to see a vegetable seller walking around with a basket and loudly advertising her wares, making this a closer match to the nature of Eliza's original job.

In addition to speech, names are distinct markers of identity in India, and Marudhayi's name is particularly symbolic in this story. Sometimes Eliza is respectably called "Miss Doolittle" by Colonel Pickering and other gentlemen, but she is able to continually use the name "Eliza Doolittle" and be accepted as high or low-class. This is not the case in India, however, where most names will place a person in a certain socioeconomic class, religion, and region. Marudhayi's name changes first to Malathi, when she is pretending to be a London-educated doctor, and later to Mallika Devi, film star. These name changes symbolize Marudhayi's complete removal from the lives and identities she had lived before. Eliza experiences this break nearly as strongly, crying to Higgins once the experiment has succeeded,

> Oh! If only I could go back to my flower basket! I should be independent of both you and father and all the world! Why did you take my independence from me? Why did I give it up? I'm a slave now, for all my fine clothes . . . (Shaw 1981, 595)

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[2] Queen Victoria died in 1901; in 1912, when Shaw wrote *Pygmalion*, George V was on the throne.

The difference, however, is that unlike Marudhayi, Eliza is able to maintain her ties with both of these past lives, attending her father's wedding and eventually moving back into 27A Wimpole Street with Higgins and Pickering.

After hearing Higgins brag that he could train her in three months to speak well enough to get a place as a lady's maid or shop assistant, Eliza decides to take her earnings and approach him for lessons. Eliza is motivated by her career goal to sell flowers in a shop instead of on the street, although Higgins does suggest that she could get married. She had been thrown out of her father's house by her sixth stepmother and lived alone on her earnings for several years, and at the time of the story was eighteen to twenty years old.

In Indian culture an unmarried girl of that age would never live alone. Marudhayi's parents are both dead, but she has been left in the care of her relative Murukesan, who travels to different villages doing agricultural work while she goes to Madras City to sell vegetables every day. Marudhayi and Murukesan are to be married eventually in a typical arranged marriage. The course of Marudhayi's whole life changed, however, when amateur play director Gopinath had a fight with his lead actress and decided to replace her with a real vegetable seller in that role. His young friend Chellappa, who is an adaptation of Shaw's Freddy, saw the play and fell in love with Marudhayi, until he heard her speak outside of the theater and realized her true identity. In response to Marudhayi's indignation and anger at his subjecting her to this humiliation, Gopi bragged that, "I can make him come to you, fall at your feet, and beg for marriage" (Ramasamy 1990, 23). What follows is one of the play's two direct references to Shaw:[3]

Muru: What is this—a new game?

Gopi: No, Murukesan—if you and Marudhayi agree I will show that it can be done like that.

Muru: Will you get some idea like this?

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[3] The second reference comes on page 41, after Marudhayi tells Gopi innocently that she knows Abraham Lincoln. The scene runs as follows:
Gopi: What? You know Abraham Lincoln? What, is he your uncle?
Maru: Oh! I am sorry.
Gopi: Someone at the party is going to mention Bernard Shaw. Are you going to have seen him yesterday?
Maru: What did you say?
Gopi: Nothing at all. Anything else! Abraham Lincoln! This girl...
Maru: Who is Abraham Lincoln?

Gopi: This idea occurred not only to me—do you know Bernard Shaw—Bernard Shaw!

Maru: Who is that Penaccha?

Gopi: Penaccha! The junk shop owner Abdul Paccha's younger brother! Stupid! Bernard Shaw is a great western scholar. This occurred to him.

Muru: Having seen that, you are also saying it?

Gopi: Are you saying that having seen that I am going to copy it?— No, not at all. The idea came to him first; that's all. Now it has come to me. He was born first; it came to him first. That's all! If we change habits and manner of speech just a little, that's enough—people will see Marudhayi and think that she is very learned and a girl from a big place.

Muru: What is all this for, sir—useless speech—if you talk this way four times—Marudhayi will be ready to try to do it.

Maru: Why four times? What he has said now is enough. Let's try to do it.

Muru: Marudhayi! What would we gain from this? Your brain has spoiled. (Ramasamy 1990, 23-4)

Although Marudhayi very much wants to try the experiment, the arrangements must be made between her male guardian, Murukesan, and Gopi.

Murukesan cares deeply for Marudhayi and sees more clearly than either her or Gopinath the potential outcome of the experiment; he is very reluctant to give his permission. This distinguishes him from Eliza's father, Mr. Alfred P. Doolittle, the character on whom he seems to be modeled. Doolittle is a drunk who is happy to sell off his daughter to Henry Higgins for five pounds to buy liquor with. Somewhat ironically, Doolittle, through his "original morality" and a connection to American philanthropist Ezra D. Wannafeller, ends up moving into the upper classes along with, but separate from, his daughter. Murukesan, happy with his way of life and with innocent Marudhayi the vegetable seller, can neither go along with her on her rise through the classes, nor hold her back in poverty and labor with him.

Both Ramasamy and Shaw reveal their socialistic tendencies in their dramatic treatment of these stories about women learning to be (or act) higher class. It is clear from both Shaw's and Ramasamy's plays that they believe class to be accidental, superficial, and subject to change. Their heroes are men who recognize the essential equality of all people, however poorly they may express it:

Higgins: My manners are exactly the same as Colonel Pickering's.

Liza: That's not true. He treats a flower girl as if she was a duchess.

Higgins: And I treat a duchess as if she was a flower girl.

Liza: I see. The same to everybody. (Shaw 1981, 592)

Shaw's lifelong socialist convictions are part of what has continued to attract Indians to his work and thought.

Jawaharlal Nehru—Prime Minister of India from its independence in 1947 until his death in 1964—also held deep socialist convictions, the effects of which are still present in India's constitution and also linger in its the economic policies. The caste divide in India is much deeper and more difficult to overcome than a mere economic divide, and there is a complex system of reservations by which the underprivileged can access government jobs and university seats. It is possible to change status, but usually this entails raising the status of an entire caste within the hierarchy, rather than an individual removed from his community moving up or down the social scale (see Hardgrave 1969).

Although Marudhayi reaches a higher position economically, her social position and relationship with the members of the middle-class (whom she sought to impress through the experiment) change very little. A flower-shop owner has a great deal more prestige than a girl who carries a basket and sells flowers on the street, but actresses in Tamilnadu have always been stigmatized. Women are supposed to be modest and avoid contact with men, but actresses are on stage and on display for male audiences. They are considered "public women" and unfit for association with "good" middle-class women, no matter how much money they earn (see Hansen 1992). The advent of cinema meant that more women were willing to act, since they did not have to do so in front of live audiences. It is true that some film actresses, like the current Chief Minister of Tamilnadu J. Jayalalitha, have gained wealth, fame, and power from the profession, but they are still isolated and removed from normal middle-class society.

That the profession remains suspect is clear from *The Mind is a Monkey.* When she is deciding whether or not to accept Jagadish's offer to star in his films, Marudhayi says to Gopinath:

> If I don't agree to this now, tell me what I will do with my life. Can I go to sell vegetables again? It doesn't seem to me that I can. Wrong or right, it appears to me that it is not suitable. If I go for some other work I cannot read or write. You taught me how to move, except you didn't teach me to read. I can't go back to my old life, but there is no way to a new life: both ways of life are spoiled. (Ramasamy 1990, 56)

When it is revealed in the newspapers that Malathi has agreed to be in films, Chellappa is still determined to marry "only her," even though his father Jambulingam says, "Bah! Will you marry a cinema star?" (ibid., 58) in response to his son's proposal. He mentions that if Chellappa were married to a cinema star he would not be able to take her anywhere in public. Jambulingam treats it all as a bad joke, commenting, "Rather than listen to this, I could pull out my tongue and die" (ibid.). The point, of course, is moot, because the scene ends with Gopinath's arrival and his announcement that Mallika Devi has refused to marry Chellappa. At this point Jambulingam removes all of his objections to the match and blesses all her present and future films.

Pygmalion and *Manam oru Kurangu* are similar in that they contain social commentary on the hypocritical nature of middle-class society; in addition, the two plays are witty and incredibly funny. Ramasamy and Shaw have both earned the distinction of being most famous for being comedy and cultural criticism. Of Shaw, David Bearinger wrote,

> As a self-proclaimed "professor of natural psychology," he enjoyed nothing more than lifting up the pretentious skirts of polite society. He was a merciless critic of moral and intellectual hypocrisy, a joyous iconoclast, irreverent showman, and sometimes bitter cynic. (Bearinger 1981, xiv)

Bearinger also says that Shaw used laughter to make audiences grasp and accept ideas they would normally reject (ibid., xv). He used his comedy to interest audiences in the social issues that he was so passionate about himself, such as "the perils of money, of marriage, of doctors, of women's liberty . . . the perils of the English language . . . ." (Harrison 1981, x).

Cho Ramasamy's comedy works in much the same way as Shaw's. N.S. Jagannathan, in an interview with playwright G.P. Deshpande, credited Ramasamy's plays with actually having concrete social effects: "Now there are political plays of various kinds . . . We also have, admittedly at the level of low farce, plays in Tamil by Cho Ramaswami that are extraordinarily effective in the exposure of the corruption of values in Indian politics" (Contemporary 1989, 107). Low farce or not, Ramasamy is one of the few Tamil playwrights to be mentioned along with the playwrights of a modern Indian theater movement that has been concentrated in Bengali, Kannada, Marathi, and Hindi. He is active politically and has written numerous essays of political criticism; he is also the editor and founder of the political journal *Tughlaq,* and has recently retired as a member of the Rajya Sabha.[4]

Both Ramasamy and Shaw include scenes in their plays that make fun of the middle-class in particular, and especially those who are insecure of their own precarious social positions. At Mrs. Higgins's at-home, Eliza, although earlier restricted by Professor Higgins to two subjects: "the weather and everybody's health" (Shaw 1981, 556), managed to speak of such inappropriate things as an aunt who was possibly murdered for her hat and her father's drinking habit. She then ended her visit spectacularly by swearing "with elegant diction," in response to a perfectly innocent question from Freddy, "[n]ot bloody likely" (ibid., 561). Although the other guests were shocked, they worked hard not to show it, because they believed wholeheartedly that Eliza was speaking the "new small talk" in which they would never admit to not being proficient for fear of being seen as "old-fashioned."

Instead of having a practice run for the test party as in Shaw's play, Ramasamy condensed the two scenes into a single garden party that Gopinath hosted to introduce his friend Malathi, M.D., recently returned from London, to the best of Chennai society. The guest list included Chellappa and his father, a magazine editor, a film producer/director, a painter, a politician, and a doctor, among others. Doctor Sandar, who went to medical school in London nearly twenty years earlier, echoes the character Nepommuck from Shaw's play as the expert most likely to expose the charade. In earlier scenes, just as Higgins did, Gopinath has coached Marudhayi on some English phrases that she should restrict herself to, as well as several topics that are necessary for the "modern girl." Gopinath explained the situation in middle-class India to her when she expressed her reservations about the party based on not being able to speak English:

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[4] This is the Upper House of the Indian Parliament, somewhat equivalent to the British House of Lords.

Gopi: How many modern girls can speak English to a person without mistakes? If you know four words in English, that is enough—only four words! You can manage if you can remember them when moving around high-class people.

Maru: Four words?

Gopi: Yes: Thank you; I am sorry; How nice; How lovely.

Maru: Is that all?

Gopi: But one more thing you need to remember: before saying all these words, you need to make the sound, "Oh!" Modern girls' knowledge of English is only this much. Oh! Thank you!; Oh! I am sorry!; Oh! How nice!; Oh! How lovely!—That's all.

Maru: What if I suddenly forget all four?

Gopi: Not to fear! "Oh!" by itself is enough—if you go to a party that's all you need to know! Half the time these women will just shout, "Oh! Oh!" In truth, you don't need even that. Whatever they say, you just need to smile, and that is enough. A modern girl! It is enough to show your teeth. In this society, many high-class people will show their teeth.

Maru: I don't understand anything. (Ramasamy 2000, 30)

He later adds another phrase to the list: "It was boring." In addition, she learns to drink her coffee very slowly, to look bored, to say she prefers English movies to Tamil ones, and to always claim to be on a diet. As for important conversation topics: "You need to memorize and tell instantly the names of Hollywood stars. Second, you need to know all the names of the dog breeds in two countries" (ibid., 40). She manages brilliantly at the party, fools everyone, and Chellappa falls in love with her again, this time as the sophisticated and cosmopolitan Dr. Malathi.

Doctor Sandar, however, is not fooled as Nepommuck is in Shaw's play. Nepommuck, allegedly a former student of Henry Higgins, fell for the scheme entirely and proclaimed Eliza to be of Hungarian royal blood just as he himself claimed to be, even after Professor Higgins told him that he believed her to be "an ordinary London girl out of the gutter and taught to speak by an

expert. I place her in Drury Lane" (Shaw 1981, 570). Instead of directly confronting the doctor in this way, Gopinath spent a good deal of the party maneuvering to keep him from speaking to Malathi, especially about medicine. He made up an elaborate story about a little girl that Malathi had failed to save with a complicated operation, causing her to give up the medical profession for good and avoid speaking of it at all costs. After several minutes of this, the doctor decided to leave the party, having offered no opinion on Malathi or her medical knowledge. It is Chellappa that Gopinath confronted directly, teasing him about his new love by saying, "Doesn't she look a little bit like that vegetable vendor, Marudhayi?" (Ramasamy 2000, 50).

Ramasamy's play diverges most drastically from *Pygmalion* in its ending. Shaw's play is written as a play to be read, not performed. There are numerous passages of explanation and exposition where it seems that a narrator should be speaking, and that it would be very difficult to portray all that he describes without one. The play technically ends with Eliza saying goodbye to Higgins from his mother's house and Higgins saying to Pickering, "Pickering! Nonsense: she's going to marry Freddy. Ha ha! Freddy! Freddy!! Ha ha ha ha ha!!!!! [*He roars with laughter as the play ends*]" (Shaw 1981, 598).

The play may end there, but the story certainly does not. There are another ten pages of prose that follow, which Shaw says "need not be shewn in action" (ibid.). In these pages, Shaw finishes the story and explains the choices of his characters. Eliza does marry Freddy, and they move back in with Higgins and Pickering. Eventually Pickering loans them money to open a flower shop, which later expands into a greengrocery. Higgins remains a bachelor, quite unlike in the *My Fair Lady* version of the story, which implies that Higgins and Eliza will later marry. Gopinath is as confirmed a bachelor as Shaw's Higgins and fully intended that even after spending these three months studying with him that Marudhayi would still be Marudhayi and marry Murukesan as she had originally planned. Gopinath, however, astonished himself by falling in love with his own creation and asked Mallika to marry him. Marudhayi, although pleased by her marriage proposals from both Chellappa and Gopinath, visible signs that she had truly succeeded in her goals, still wanted to marry Murukesan. The divide between them, however, had become too wide. She offered to give up her wealth and life as a cinema actress and go back to selling vegetables only to have him say:

Muru: If you want to do that type of thing, then put on a costume like that and act it in the cinema as an actress. The people will enjoy it. But in real life that won't happen. Having left and rejected all this completely, you can't come back. If you are determined and come

that way, you will come to hate me! You will think that I have spoiled your life!

Maru: Then what are you saying? Are you going to leave me this way to be an orphan? Isn't this Marudhayi your responsibility?

Muru: My Marudhayi is dead! Life without her is hell for me. Somehow I have passed the time thinking of her. Here I see only Mallika Devi. Ever since I came how much have I been trying? I have been trying so much to call "Marudhayi" one time. But I can't see my Marudhayi in you. As far as I am concerned, you are only Mallika to me. I don't know whether or not it is right for this Murukesan to marry Mallika Devi. But he definitely doesn't want to. Mallika, goodbye. Mallika Devi! I am leaving. (Murukesan goes.) (Ramasamy 1990, 81)

Marudhayi then accuses Gopinath of playing with her life as if she were a doll or a toy, just as Mrs. Higgins accused Henry and Colonel Pickering of playing with Eliza's. She begs him to change her back, just as Eliza begged Higgins, but

Gopi: No one could still do that. Marudhayi's childlike quality did not come through teaching. It came with birth. If it is lost, it cannot be recovered. Innocence is something in-born. It cannot be taught.

Maru: Please tell me, Gopi, if I am still only Mallika Devi! Can't I become Marudhayi?

Gopi: You can't, Mallika! If needed, Marudhayi could change into Mallika. Now, in truth, everything that is Mallika Devi was once Marudhayi. But Mallika Devi is incapable of changing into Marudhayi. (He is going outside. Then he turns.) I am sorry, Mallika. (He is going out. Then the telephone rings.)

Mall: (crying, she picks up the telephone) Yes! It's me . . . yes; Mallika speaking . . . yes; it's Mallika only! Yes! I only am Mallika Devi. (She is crying.) (ibid., 82)

The play ends on this note of despair. Marudhayi, Murukesan, and Gopinath all remain unmarried, but Chellappa, at least, has found his match in the equally fickle Hemalatha.

Cho Ramasamy has taken George Bernard Shaw's classic story and brilliantly adapted it to the Indian situation. As Shaw himself recognized in his criticism of the "well-made play," no matter how well-developed your formula, comedy is difficult "because it requires a sense of humor and a good deal of vivacity" (Dukore 1974, 637). Shaw's jokes about the English language and the social situation of England's middle class would not seem funny in an entirely different cultural context. Ramasamy's genius is to take the basic story and its humor, and adapt it to the social situation his audience is familiar with. The two plays echo each other not only in the stories that they tell, but also in their socialist messages and realistic style of conversation. In an intriguing but unexplored passage, Arundhati Banerjee commented that theater critic Dipendu Chakraborty "thinks that despite quite a few Ibsen productions on the Bengali stage, original Bengali play writing has taken up the Shavian style—if any western style at all—rather than the Ibsenian" (Banerjee 1996, 64). Shaw was a great fan of Ibsen and one of his primary critics. He wrote several essays on Ibsen's work and believed his true genius to lie in the art of discussion. Shaw has very little patience with mere topical farce or simple fables with morals, but believes very strongly that "interesting" plays must discuss problems relevant to the lives of the members of the audience. Ramasamy's play takes Shaw's as a springboard for ideas and transforms it into an original, culturally accurate and relevant portrayal of the Madras middle class through witty, humorous discussions. *Manam oru Kurangu* is a play that is all that George Bernard Shaw most valued and admired about the dramatic form and is a fitting continuation of Shaw's much beloved story.

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The Role of Gender in Conflict: Bombay Communal Riots of 1992-1993

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The 1992-1993 communal riots in Bombay left a distinct mark on Indian society. Despite nearly sixty years of secular rule, divisions along religious lines in India still hold strong. An interesting phenomenon that emerged from these riots is the participation of women. Traditionally, Indian women have played a limited role in wars and physical conflicts; Bombay's riots, however, saw an active participation of women in protecting the "Motherland" from the "brutish" Muslims who have incessantly plagued Indian (Hindu) society. This phenomenon has seen a heightened emphasis on religious divisions to satiate other inadequacies present in Indian society. In this paper I examine two aspects of the role of women in these conflicts: imagery and participation. I focus on the imagery of females as pure, fragile beings that need protection, and also the role of men in this process. Turning to the matter of participation, I determine whether women played an active role in the communal riots, and if so, the nature of their participation, as well as their motivations.

Feminist historiography implies looking at history through the lens of gender to study the way in which history is written. Without making women the sole subject of my analysis, I look at the engendered hegemonic discourse present in the Hindu Right that has been imposed upon men and women. I posit that the Hindu Right—specifically the Shiv Sena—has used gender to emphasize the role of Hindu men in protecting Hindu women, and the role of Hindu women in supporting their men under all circumstances, whether in accepting rigid social rules or in supporting Hindu men in times of conflict. The present form of revivalism follows patterns seen during the nationalist period when the recovery of tradition was likewise a recovery of the so-called traditional woman. Aspects of the traditional woman are highlighted to reflect the changing needs of the present (Sangari and Vaid 1990, 10-12). As Sangari and Vaid suggest, segments of the scriptural texts and canons are universalized to reflect right-wing hegemonic discourse. Everyone outside this realm is made "the other." This convenient reading of Hinduism helps

reinforce existing inequalities in the system and gives them credence. I suggest this process is again at work in present-day Hindu revivalism, and an overwhelming patriarchy is present in this rhetoric even though it was not articulated at the outset.

COLONIAL MASCULINITY IN INDIA

The riots in Bombay were a result of communal tension in the city following the Babri Masjid demolition on 6 December 1992 by Hindu militants from right-wing Hindu groups, including the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Shiv Sena. The Bombay riots had two phases: the first phase was the immediate backlash led by Muslims against Hindus; the second phase was mostly led by Hindus in reaction to the death of four Hindu *Mathadi Kamdar* (unorganized laborers) who were allegedly killed by Muslims. The Hindu backlash led to many more casualties, and the eventual death toll was approximately two thousand. In addition, there was significant property damage and migration of residents out of the city or to areas in Bombay where their co-religionists were in the majority.

The Sri Krishna Commission was convened to investigate the cause of the riots. The commission was disbanded by the Shiv Sena-led government in January 1996, but was later reconstituted in May 1996 due to public opposition. The Commission Report produced in 1998 determined that Shiv Sena's leaders, such as Bal Thackeray, incited their supporters to violence. Ultimately, the report found that the riots were largely motivated by politics rather than inherent religious divides.

> The need for a different kind of credibility sets the historical narrative apart from fiction. This need is both contingent and necessary. It is contingent inasmuch as some narratives go back and forth over the line between fiction and history, while others occupy an undefined position that seems to deny the very existence of a line. It is necessary inasmuch as, at some point, historically specific groups of humans must decide if a particular narrative belongs to history or to fiction. In other words, the epistemological break between history and fiction is always expressed concretely through the historically situated evaluation of specific narratives. (Trouillot 1995, 8)

This passage, from historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot's *Silencing the Past*, describes the construction of historical narrative. In a similar manner, the Hindu Right constructs its version of history by constructing a narrative using

a selection of facts based on their inherent biases against Muslims and other minorities. This project is not a recent phenomenon; rather, it has been in the works since the colonial period.

Colonialists, by using language such as the "effeminate Bengali *babu*," distinguished Western-educated Indian elite, mostly Hindu, from other so-called manly races, such as Europeans. According to the British, the effeminate nature of Hindus made them easier to colonize (Sinha 1995, 2). The emasculation of Hindu men was apparent from the colonial period, during which the colonial ordering of the politically aware Bengali *babu* designated them to an unnatural or perverted form of masculinity (ibid., 5). In her discussion of the Ilbert Bill of 1883-1884, Sinha asserts that colonial economic, political, and administrative strengths were put aside for a direct correlation between the racial exclusivity of "manly" over "unmanly" men. This distinction was drawn because colonial manhood was calculated in terms of property, which was lost to the colozined (ibid., 17).

The impotence of the Hindu male extended to other areas, such as economic prowess, political hegemony, and social progress. In the eyes of the British, the Hindu male lagged behind in these three areas due to their effeminacy and impotence. The male Hindu elite never fully recovered from this humiliation, and the colonial denigration of the elite Hindu male later became the motivation for the Hindu Right's move to reassert the potency of the Hindu male.

THE FEMININE IN HINDU RIGHT'S RHETORIC

Just as colonial discourse led to the emasculation of the Indian Hindu male, Hindu women were also forced into colonial parameters of female emancipation. As Partha Chatterjee notes, Hindu women were subjugated under the patriarchies of both colonialism and nationalism.

> Women from the new middle class in nineteenth-century India thus became active agents in the nationalist project—complicit in the framing of its hegemonic strategies as much as they were resistant to them because of their subordination under the new forms of patriarchy. (Chatterjee 1993, 148)

I suggest that not much has changed since the nationalist period. At that time, women were subject to the patriarchy in their confinement within the private sphere where they were responsible for the stability of the household. Similarly, the present BJP coalition glorifies Hindu women by referring to their fellow members as sisters, rather than wives of party affiliates. The

negative counterpart to this model of Hindu women are so-called modern, feminist, westernized Hindu women who are too self-absorbed to take care of their families. The Hindu woman is portrayed as chaste and nurturing, but with no reference to sexuality. She is to be protected from the harmful world outside the home.

As Rashmi Verma notes in her article on the provincializing of Bombay, nostalgia is more the active production of the present than the production of the past (Varma 2004, 82-83). In Anand Patwardhan's documentary film, *Father, Son, and the Holy War*, celebrations commemorating the Maratha King Shivaji's success against Muslim armies are coupled with scenes of actress Mandaki bathing herself (1994). Legend has it that before the Muslim invasions, Shivaji's aunt bathed openly without fear. Muslims changed the way of life for Hindu women who were no longer at liberty to lead the innocent and carefree lives they once led. Instead, they had to remain within the confines of a patriarchy that would protect their safety and interest. In such legends, women are portrayed as needing the protection of men, and treated like mere property. The deliberate omission of Hindu female sexuality from this narrative project forces it to be imposed on "the other" as well, namely, Muslim women (ibid.). It is crucial to distance the enemy from Hindu women. Just as the nationalist project reconstituted the patriarchy to ensure the constrained participation of women in the nationalist movement, the Hindu Right too refashions its patriarchy to legitimize the participation of women within the parameters of their narrative.

CREATING "THE OTHER"

Security is the pretext used to engage in preemptive violence, killing in the name of protection (Anand 2005, 203). The main premise of the Hindu Right, the *Sangh Parivar Hindutva*, is that because Hindus are in the majority, their rights have to be protected, rather than subverted in an effort to appease minorities. *Hindutva* ideology asserts that there is a basic inevitability for Hindu-Muslim violence in India, because these peoples are so distinct from each other (ibid., 205). I agree with Dibyesh Anand that the 1993 communal riots were largely the result of creating distinct communities through mobilization, purification, and definition of "self" (Hindu) and "the other" (Muslim). Collapsing all heterogeneity into two categories—Hindu and Muslim—forces people to look through the lens of religion only. Patwardhan, in *Father, Son and Holy War*, finds that Muslim women in Bombay who identified their common interests with Hindu women before the 1993 riots,

felt that during the violence they were marked by their being Muslim, while their identities as women became irrelevant.

The creation of distinct Hindu and Muslim identities has recent origins; it is the postcolonial result of the nationalist project. Prior to independence, the term Hindu was used to describe all religions evolving from the Indian subcontinent, including Sikhism, Jainism, and Buddhism, despite their distinct histories, beliefs, and socio-cultural practices (Burlet 1999, 41-42). This all-encompassing definition of Hinduism took on political meaning during the nationalist period, working to the favor of political activists like Gandhi who used the term to unify people practicing various religious and socio-cultural traditions, and linking the majority of Indians during their struggle for national independence. But the connection between religious identities and political affiliations also led to the solidification of boundaries between Hindus and Muslims, and the partition of India and Pakistan can be attributed to divisions created by political leaders, rather than basic religious differences.

Although the Indian government adopted the ideology of secularism, the Hindu Right has argued that successive governments have cynically misused the policy of secularism to gather votes and secure power bases among minority groupings. This misuse has led to corruption and violence, and has plunged Indian society and its economy into deep crises (ibid.).

REPRESENTATIONS OF MUSLIMS

Muslim boys, even married ones, try to have friendships with Hindu girls. I tell you, most Muslim boys are very good looking, and Hindu girls are very innocent—once they give you their heart, its easily broken . . . I personally feel they're spoiling the lives of these Hindu girls. Our blood gets hot. We can't stand them. . . . It's time that the Hindu girls fight violence with violence. – Hindu professional, non-participant (Cohn 2003)

The representation of Muslims had a significant impact on the events leading up to the 1993 riots. Right-wing groups are primarily concerned with the production of an ideal Hindu male identity built around the Hindu male who has shrugged off all other identity models. Their immediate negative counterpart is the so-called unconscious Hindu male, westernized and effeminate, lacking in material wealth and disrespectful of women (Bacchetta 1994, 192-194). The Muslim male easily fits into this alternative category. The Hindu Right depicts Muslim males as the eternal enemies of the Hindu community. It divides them into two categories: foreign invaders and ex-Hindu converts (ibid., 193). It portrays the former as partially responsible for

the downfall of the Hindu nation, and their descendants as the contemporary middle-class leaders of Muslim fundamentalist groups.

According to Bachetta, ex-Hindu Muslim converts are supposedly the invaders' lower class allies, who converted due to coercion or for material gain. They were the weakest of the Hindu stock and traitors to the Hindu Nation. Regardless, the Hindu Right considers all Muslim males to harbor anti-national sentiments, while also disrespecting and violating femininity. The Hindu Right degrades sexuality and disaggregates sexual signifiers from its ideal models for Hindus, but does not expel them from the discourse altogether. Instead it projects sexuality onto "the other" (ibid., 193-94) Thus, the opposite of the chaste Hindu male is the Muslim male polygamist or rapist, while that of the chaste, motherly Hindu woman is the Muslim prostitute or potential wife.

The stereotype of the male Muslim is posed as a danger to the body of the Hindu woman and, through her, the purity of the Hindu nation. Simultaneously, he is seen as a threat to state, national, and international security. These representations of Muslims as a danger to the security of the Hindu body politic facilitates the politics of hate against Indian Muslims (Anand 2005, 207-8). Muslims are presented as a threat at the personal, local, national, and international levels, as well as sites of fear, distrust, anger, envy, and hatred; they therefore generate desires for emulation, abjection, and extermination (ibid., 208).

Dibyesh Anand suggests that in the politics of *Hindutva* the construction of a desired masculinity (ideal Hindu male, virile yet with controlled sexuality) requires the demonizing or destruction of competing masculinities and men. As V.D. Savarkar, one of the premier leaders of *Hindutva*, asserts, the aim of Hindu nationalism is to recuperate manliness and bring militancy to religion while bringing religion to the political forefront (ibid., 207). Evidence of this is seen in *Father, Son and Holy War*, in which Shivaji, rather than Gandhi, is proclaimed as the symbol of Hindu manhood. He is used as a symbol for purging the Hindu nation of debilitating non-violence which has crippled India with Muslims, who are denigrated as "foreshortened" men. Using Shivaji as a symbol to band Hindus together as a brave and united group, followers of the Hindu Right try to destroy the image of Hindus as weak, cowardly, and effeminate people. *Hindutva* ideology creates a myth of Muslims as being morally corrupt, barbaric, violent, rigid, backward, dirty, and fanatic (ibid., 205). To support this rhetoric, Hindus present evidence from the Prophet's sex life, licentious Arabs buying young girls and boys, men with four wives, Muslim prostitutes, the lack of democracy in the Muslim world, thus arguing that Islam and Muslims are violent and barbaric.

GROWTH OF THE RIGHT

According to Burlet, reasons for the growth of the Hindu Right include their use of extra-constitutional tactics, such as paying criminals to initiate riots in order to secure votes. Also, law and order mechanisms remain reticent in ending or condemning violence perpetrated against minority groups, because of corruption or blatant support for one group or the other (Burlet 1999, 40-41). The above-mentioned conditions, however, have existed in India prior to the prominence of the Right in Indian politics. Instead, I believe that it was the Shah Bano case that became the trigger for greater participation in fundamentalist politics.

Shah Bano, a 62-year old Muslim woman with five children, was divorced by her husband in 1978. The Muslim personal code, *shariah*, allows the husband to do this without his wife's consent by repeating the word, *talaaq* (divorce), before witnesses, three times. Upon her divorce, Shah Bano approached the court to request maintenance, similar to alimony, under civil law. The Supreme Court ruled in her favor and granted Shah Bano adequate maintenance. Orthodox Muslims felt threatened by the government's encroachment onto the territory of *shariah* law. The Legislature, then run by the moderate Congress Party, nullified the Supreme Court decision and upheld *shariah* law which allows Muslim men to maintain their divorced wives until the conclusion of the *iddat*, or waiting period (usually three months). With the passage of the Muslim Women Act in 1986, the maintenance of divorced Muslim women fell upon their natal homes. Critics suggest that this act was passed to appease minority opposition and safeguard the Muslim vote bank, in reaction to minority opposition to the Supreme Court decision.

In *Father, Son and Holy War*, interviewees claim that the Shah Bano case made Hindus impotent, and argue that minorities were being given far more rights than the majority. In actuality, the case became the medium through which Hindu and Muslim fundamentalists exerted their authority. The nullification of the Supreme Court's decision raised the concern that fundamentalist minorities could exert pressure on government and judicial decisions. As Lata Mani argues, communalism is inextricably linked to the colonialist project (Mani 1999, 119-21). While Muslim fundamentalists argue that the Supreme Court is meddling in the traditional, private sphere of Muslims, Hindu fundamentalists argue that Muslims have to be civilized, thus taking on the role of the colonialist lamenting the fate of Muslim women and wanting to modernize them.

The Shah Bano case served to legitimize the Hindu Right's position by presenting it as the representative voice of the national consensus against

Muslim personal law. By including a diversity of arguments into its rhetoric, the Hindu Right homogenizes the Right's ideological perspective for the reader (Bacchetta 1994, 208-11). Literature from the right-wing Hindu group, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) reads:

> Even those who were silent on the Muslim communal problem have come out openly against it. As such a collection of such campaign views in the background of communal and divisive Muslim campaign would be a valuable food (sic) for intellectual grasp of the problem. Hence this attempt. (ibid., 211)

This attempt by the RSS to reach out to the public did not entail fighting for women's rights; rather, it became a battle of religion and politics. The Right increasingly found itself fighting alongside mainstream media and feminists, albeit with different reasons than these groups, while working in tandem with the moderate Congress Party, thus bringing the Right's voice to the political forefront throughout the late 1980s and 1990s.

In the 1980s, the Indian government television stations started serializing Hindu epics such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata, which are given scriptural reverence. When the economic crisis deepened and separatist movements proliferated, the government increasingly resorted to using well-worn nationalist strategies to forge a sense of unity. Communalized nationalism had given Hindu nationalist groups legitimacy; in the post-independence period, the attempts to develop Hinduism as a catalyst for a Hindu nation coincided with the uncertainties of capital growth, thus creating fertile ground for Hindu nationalism (Mazumdar 1995, 6).

INVOLVING WOMEN IN THE FRAY

The *Hindutva* project is essentially a nationalist project, which allows women specific roles and responsibilities. Shaping views of sexuality is one of the cornerstones of the fundamentalist project, and is vital to portraying the enemy as "the other." The assertion of patriarchal dominance is an important element in the fundamentalist project. The project helps refashion patriarchies to legitimize the participation of women in the nationalist project while superficially empowering women to attract female followers (Srinivasan 2004, 135-36).

The participation of women in the *Hindutva* project is basically a holdover from participation in the nationalist project; the main difference is the manner in which this participation is taking place. During the nationalist

period most women restricted their participation to boycotts, such as those in the *Swadeshi* movement, and to peaceful protests against the colonialists. The Bombay riots of 1993 saw significant participation of women in the militant actions of the *Hindutva* movement (Bannerjee 1996, 1213). I argue that women's participation in the riots was exaggerated to some extent, and the demographics of the female participants in the riots differed significantly from the women of the nationalist period. The *Hindutva* movement was interested less in the rights of women than in the prevalence of Hindu patriarchal hegemony. This hegemony created a comfort zone for women, giving them protection and community support after the mechanisms of law and order had failed them. At the same time, accepting *Hindutva* demands loyalty to its ideology, and disenfranchised women are easy targets for the *Hindutva*. Women from all walks of life did not participate in the riots; rather, female participation was dependant on a number of factors including class, caste, education, and economic status.

The opening scenes of *Father, Son, and Holy War* show burning cars and charred bodies. When questioned about who is responsible for these acts, interviewees admit that working-class Hindus were responsible for the looting. "The low castes looted and the high castes bought." Although the Shiv Sena professes to bring together Hindus under an umbrella organization, differences across caste and economic status still exist. Despite the Shiv Sena's efforts, participation in the violence during the Bombay riots correlated to class rather than gender.

Feminist scholar Anne McClintock has argued that women's militancy is only possible when men allow it to take place purposefully. In other words, the patriarchal hegemony over women's militancy still exists.

> Where for Fanon does women's agency begin? He takes pains to point out that women's militancy does not precede the national revolution. Algerian women are not self-motivating agents, nor do they have prior histories or consciousness of the revolt from which to draw. Their initiation in the revolution is learned, but it is not learned from other women or from other societies, nor is it transferred analogously from local feminist spontaneity, for women learn their militancy only at men's invitation. Theirs is a *designated agency*—an agency by invitation only. (McClintock 1997, 97-98)

Women's rights and control over their own body and sexuality are intrinsic to the rightwing project because it does not consider women to be autonomous beings, but the property of individual men and the community.

The process of male appropriation of female bodies and sexuality is gradual and begins with the violation of women's rights (Bannerjee 1996, 1215-21). Regardless of reproductive rights, sexual rights, and economic participation rights, the Right has always held that women have to give up their autonomy in the interest of the community (ibid.). This gradual process begins with dress codes, the valorization of family and patriarchal controls, and the regulation of marriage alliances. By setting stringent standards, the Right demarcates between "them" and "us." In the case of the *Hindutva* movement, feminist organizations have failed to capture the support of women, while right-wing movements have taken up all issues central to women's interests, from personal laws to economic empowerment, and have produced an ideology of empowerment subject to patriarchal protection.

Violence perpetrated by women is uncommon in India. Although certain Hindu goddesses, such as Kali, engage in aggression, even these traditions do not condone violence against others. Instead, reports of female involvement in violence have always emphasized the peacemaking role of women, such as the nurturing mother (ibid., 1223).

But the riots of 1993 saw Hindu women play a highly visible role. Women led mobs and dragged Muslim women and children into the streets, applauded their gang rapes, and joined men in stoning and burning Muslim women (Mazumdar 1995, 2). Although the above incidents may be isolated incidents, anthropologist Atreyee Sen's article on Mumbai slums and urban violence corroborate with the Mazumdar's analysis of right-wing mobilization in India. Low-income, working class women who allied themselves with the Shiv Sena were the main female perpetrators of the violence of 1993 (Sen 2004). The *Mahila Aghadi* (women's organization), Shiv Sena's women's wing, transformed themselves from a behind-the-scenes, subservient support group, to a militant, partially autonomous women's task force. Shiv Sena women engaged in various forms of collective violence in the name of delivering social justice. They thrashed eve-teasers (men who harass women) and rapists, chided men who abandoned their wives, and forced businesses to employ poor women. In this way, they became the representative voice of women who could not turn to the established forms of law and order for protection or restitution. To these disenfranchised slum-dwellers, group violence, as practiced by *Mahila Aghadi*, was a means for securing women's honor, mobility, and productivity in the Mumbai slums (ibid.). For Shiv Sena women, collective violence and vigilante justice was necessary for the survival of underprivileged women living in the city. Although female militancy gave these women protection, it could only be legitimized to the public under the guise of religion. Rather than any innate interest in aligning

with the religious Right, women's support for *Hindutva* is due to their search for basic protection.

WOMEN'S ACCEPTANCE OF *HINDUTVA*

Female involvement in the *Hindutva* movement began in the 1960s when the BJP and coalition members led a protest for a constitutional ban on cow slaughter. Today, female involvement numbers in the thousands, and the Bharatiya Mahila Morcha, the women's wing of the BJP, has full time cadres working for the party to help solicit more votes. The *Mahila Mandals* (women's associations) try to gather more recruits and the *Durga Vahini*, an all-female mass paramilitary organization, is reaching out to volunteers (Mazumdar 1995, 3-5). Women involved in these groups are from all sectors and economic backgrounds, but physical violence has tended to be committed by poor, disenfranchised women. As alluded to earlier, the Right includes women in its movement by engaging in topics central to female empowerment, and by giving them a sense of community and protection that feminist organizations cannot provide.

Although Indian women of all social strata have been affected by the nationalists' strategy of tapping the women's electoral base, not all have chosen to participate in the violence. By holding women's prayer meetings, celebrating religious imagery in which female power is portrayed as the source of India's greatness, and promoting female politicians, the ultra-nationalists have gained strong support from women who were not in agreement with the feminist approach to emancipation. These women recognized their chance to rise up the chain of command, with leaders such as Uma Bharati coming to the forefront of the party.

The interpretation of female participation, nevertheless, assumes a lack of forethought on the part of the women, given the fact that the patriarchal implications of the Shiv Sena's ideology still holds strong. The ideology presented in *Father, Son and Holy War* shows that subconsciously the patriarchy still persists. In the film Uma Bharati incites followers to go forth against the Muslims, and when asked to provide bullets to shoot them, she retorts, "Why do you waste bullets on eunuchs?" Although she represents females in such organizations, her presence and speech is always in relation to men. As Mazumdar notes, motherhood and the importance of the mother raising brave and heroic sons takes precedence over the rights of women. Teaching the children the right prayers, taking them to participate in the Right's ceremonies and teaching them about *Hindutva* is the primary responsibility of female followers (ibid., 18-20). The roles of wives and

mothers never come in conflict with the roles denoted by feminist organizations which are disparaged as westernized and modern.

Support for the *Hindutva* movement cannot be explained by ideology alone, however; it is a matter of economic incentives as well. The Shiv Sena draws on icons of religion that speak to men and women in different ways. Take, for example, the Shiv Sena's tiger symbol (Bannerjee 1996, 1217-21). For Shiv Sena women, it may represent feminine power because the tiger is associated with the goddess, Bhavani, Shivaji's patron goddess. For Shiv Sena men, on the other hand, it becomes a symbol of militant Hinduism because the symbol represents strength and aggression.

On an economic level, the Shiv Sena has disseminated incentives through an extensive local network. The Sena's combination of appeals and benefits has been successful because the economic and political patterns in Mumbai provide a context in which the Sena's mobilization tactics become attractive to the ordinary Hindu slum-dweller (ibid. 1220-22). Within Thane, a Bombay locality, a progressive "dada-ization" (*dada* is a colloquial term for a gangster or mafia boss) took place from the 1970s to the 1990s. During this time a crisis of governability and the de-industrialization of Bombay led to residents' economic and political frustration, which was easily exploited by the Shiv Sena. The first generation of leaders were businessmen, who provided jobs for their local constituencies during the rapid urbanization of Bombay during this period (Hansen 2001, 103). At the same time, *Mahila Aghadis* were reaching out to women, offering women the benefits of being part of the movement by running day care centers and income-generating programs (Bannerjee 1996, 1221-22).

The *shakhas* (local offices) skillfully balanced economic and ideological incentives for women. They provided informal gathering places for women, built effective ties and mutual loyalties among them, and sponsored religious rallies to create a sense of belonging to the Hindu community. The *shakhas* became centers to address grievances and organize the daily affairs of the slums. Thus, the residents of the neighborhoods used *shakhas* to settle family disputes, secure water or electricity connections, and obtain help in finding jobs (Shaikh 2005). Hansen has also highlighted the role of *shakhas* in spreading rumors and mobilizing people for action, be it for violence, elections, or festivals (Hansen 2001, 12-13). Their role in working class neighborhoods assumed greater importance when the Right's grassroots organization reached out to multitudes in the slums. The popularity of the *shakhas* not only demonstrates the organizational abilities of the Right, but also the inability of the state, municipality, and other associations to provide these services. The Shiv Sena used the *shakhas* to establish its hegemony over

the neighborhoods and exploited this dominance for its own political agenda (Shaikh 2005).

PROBLEMS WITH CONSTRUCTING HISTORY

Sikita Bannerjee and Sucheta Mazumdar argue that the feminization of violence played an important role in the Bombay riots. Previously, women tended to play a supportive role in conflicts. The Bombay riots were the first time that women actively participated in the stoning. I argue that, for the most part, women were not active in the Bombay riots, and the actions of those involved are sufficient for generalizations about a growing threat in the right-wing movement. Just as women participated in the Bombay riots due to an overarching patriarchy, I suggest that many scholars have fallen into the trap of personal bias against the Right, and that this has led to an exaggeration of the threat posed by the active participation of women in the Bombay riots. While there are women leaders whose rhetoric is inflammatory, they span the political spectrum, and when Hindu women loot and burn, they are motivated by factors beside political affiliation alone (Menon 2003, 20-51).

Madhu Kishwar, a women's rights activist, mentioned in her recordings that women active in both the Right and the moderate Congress Party participated in the riots. She writes:

In Bombay, a woman corporator was killed by a police bullet while she was leading a riotous mob in an attack on Muslim homes and shops...She belonged to that faction of the Republican Party which has an alliance with the Congress(I). (Kishwar 1998, 181)

From Usha Menon's research, it is clear that poor women looted and burned when the opportunity presented itself and they were confident that they would not get caught, but such women were not hardened criminals; they were part of the urban poor who aspired to be part of the middle class and craved durable goods that symbolized a middle-class way of life. Also, right-wing preachers remained ineffective in mobilizing Hindu women. According to Burlet, women often intervened during the Hindu-Muslim riots to protect and save people from other communities. Furthermore, women in some slum dwelling communities set up self-defense militias at the behest of older women to protect local Hindus and Muslims from the effects of nationalist activity in their area. They legitimized such action by arguing that nationalist actors were promoting divisiveness and encouraging violence in their attempt to secure political power (Burlet 1999, 45). Examples such as these show that while there is some evidence that women actively participated in the violence,

it is not necessarily caused by a complete indoctrination by the Right. Rather it is a matter of class and economic opportunities.

That being said, some women did participate in the violence of the riots. The Shiv Sena provided an identity to bring Hindu women together and mobilize them, by limiting the focus to a small, homogenous base, providing economic benefits, and cultivating a mutual relationship of trust with Maharashtrian women. The feeling of belonging to a community enabled women to come out and protest in a violent manner, but it was not as widespread a phenomenon as suggested by Mazumdar and Banerjee. Instead, only relatively small group of disenfranchised women were willing to participate in the violence.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The role of gender and particularly women played out in several ways during the Bombay riots of 1993. On one level, the rhetoric of gender has been used to build the image of the fierce, virile, but self-controlled Hindu male. He is respectful of women and is their protector. The Hindu woman, on the other hand, is portrayed as the chaste mother or pure sister needing the protection of the male. Using these two stereotypes, those outside of this image become "the other," who, according to the rhetoric, is to be eliminated, if needed, to establish the Hindu nation. This rhetoric meshes well with the nationalist project against colonialism. The patriarchal hegemony presents itself in the image of the female who is constructed relative to the male, as a mother, wife, or sister, rather than as an independent woman.

On another level, the practice of this rhetoric has different meanings for males and females. While the focus on males is outside the scope of this paper, I have examined the phenomenon of women's involvement in the Bombay riots. Although the riots saw many women participate in the riots, I have argued that this a phenomenon that should be attributed to class and the need to belong, rather than the acceptance of *Hindutva* ideology. Furthermore, there is little evidence that that women's participation was widespread, while there is evidence to suggest that Hindu and Muslim women both participated and resisted the violence. Some who actively participated in violence were completely disenfranchised and did so for ideological reasons, while others were motivated by pure economic gain. To suggest that female participation in violence is a growing threat, therefore, would be unwise.

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Untangling *Uposatha*:
Indology, Etymologic, History in Buddhist Studies

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If, then, it is the aim of Sanskrit philology to supply one of the earliest and most important links in the history of mankind, we must go to work historically; that is, we must begin, as far as we can, with the beginning, and then trace gradually the growth of the Indian mind . . . Now every one acquainted with Indian literature, must have observed how impossible it is to open any book on Indian subjects without being thrown back upon an earlier authority . . . the Veda. It is with the Veda, therefore, that Indian philosophy ought to begin, if it is to follow a natural and historical course. So great an influence has the Vedic age . . . exercised upon all succeeding periods of Indian history, so closely is every branch of literature connected with Vedic traditions, so deeply have the religious and moral ideas of that primitive era taken root in the mind of the Indian nation, so minutely has almost every private and public act of Indian life been regulated by old traditionary [*sic*] precepts, that it is impossible to find the right point of view for judging Indian religion, morals, and literature, without a knowledge of the literary remains of the Vedic age.
 – Max Müller[1]

Max Müller's words still echo loudly in studies of Indian religions. Heeding them, researchers of Buddhism have mined Vedic texts for the formative seeds of Buddhist thought and practice. Yet Müller's promise has, at times, led scholars astray. While Vedic terms and ideas do filter into Buddhism (e.g. *ātman, karma*), chronologically later rites and concepts do not always have a Vedic pedigree—even if there appears to be a Vedic etymology. Similar words do not always denote similar meanings, and sometimes linguistic analysis obscures rather than elucidates. *Faux amis* leak into history. Müller's

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[1] Müller 1860, 9.

natural growth model of philology too easily construes lexical similarity for conceptual congruence. It confuses etymology and history, and takes linguistic linkage as de facto proof of historical connections. Müller's etymological logic, or *etymologic* refracts the development of religious thought and practice through a lens of lexical growth. It promises to bring researchers closer to the original intent, or embryonic core, of a concept or rite through tracing linguistic roots. In short, it imposes a tidy, evolutionary science of linguistics onto a decidedly messier period of history.

In this essay I hope to suggest a counter vantage with respect to one Buddhist practice, the fortnightly rite of *Uposatha*, where the false promises of *etymologic* are especially apparent. Buddhologists frequently insist that *Uposatha* derives from, and should be understood through, a Vedic antecedent ritual called Upavasatha. Melford Spiro, in his well-known work, *Buddhism and Society*, renders it as follows:

> [T]hese devotional days [Uposatha] were appropriated by Buddhism from the religion of pre-Buddhist India, in which the days of the full and new moons were regarded as sacred. They were, appropriately the sacrificial days. The day preceding the sacrifice was a sanctified day, the sacrificer observing abstinences of various kinds—from food, labor, sexual intercourse and so on. The day of sacrifice (the *upavasatha*) became the Buddhist Sabbath (*uposatha*). (Spiro 1982, 215)

Spiro claims that *Uposatha* arises directly from Brahmanical customs. Buddhists turned the Vedic "day of the sacrifice" into a "Buddhist Sabbath." As I will demonstrate, this is not the case. Although the terms are etymologically related, *Uposatha* derives not from Brahmanical rites but from the practices of other mendicant sects. Buddhist texts themselves call for such a horizontal examination, chronicling the institution of *Uposatha* as part of competition with *paribbājaka*s. Nowhere do Buddhist texts compare *Uposatha* with Upavasatha of the Vedic tradition. I argue that Buddhist methods of begging, eating, meeting, and dressing developed not so much in contrast or conversation with Brahmanical procedures; after all, a highly organized Brahmanical monastic culture did not develop until the medieval period (Olivelle 1992, 16). Rather, Buddhists instated these practices against the *pūrva pakṣa* of other contemporary ascetical groups—Jains, Ājivikas, and other wandering mendicant sects generically referred to as *paribbājakas* (Skt: *parivrajaka*) or *samaṇas* (Skt: *śramaṇa*) (Dutt 1924, 40-44; Shiraishi 1996). To link Buddhist terms to Brahmanical etymology obscures the often larger

contribution of similar terms, practices, and doctrines concurrent in competing mendicant movements.

In order to demonstrate the fragility of deriving *Uposatha* solely from Upavasatha in accordance with *etymologic*, I will explore depictions of *Uposatha* in the earliest available bodies of Buddhist literature, the *Vinaya Piṭaka* and *Sutta Piṭaka*, texts which although scribed centuries after the Buddha's time, nonetheless provide scholars with the only clues (aside from epigraphy) for what early Buddhism looked like.[2] These descriptions point to a historical scene rife with disputing mendicant sects professing contending philosophical doctrines. I conclude by musing on why scholars have, almost compulsively, read Buddhism through Vedism by considering *Uposatha*'s imbrications in the discourses of late nineteenth-century Indology.

UPOSATHA IN BUDDHIST AND JAINA TEXTS[3]

Perhaps the most convincing reason to ignore direct connection between Brahmanical *Upavasatha* and Buddhist *Uposatha* is that Buddhist texts make no mention of Vedic *Upavasatha*. Instead, Pali descriptions contrast early iterations of *Uposatha* with the rites of other mendicant sects, particularly those of Jains' (*nigaṇṭha*). In the *Mulūposatha*, or "Root of *Uposatha*," Sutta,[4] the Buddha disparages Jain *Uposatha* as follows:

> [Jains] thus instruct their disciple on Uposatha as follows: Come and look here man, having thrown down all your clothes, say "I am not anyone, of anyone, or by anyone, and nor do I own anyone, am I of anyone, or by anyone." Yet his mother and father know "this is our son." He also knows "these are my mother and father." His son and wife know "this is my provider," he also knows "this is my son and

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[2] The *Vinaya Piṭaka* and *Sutta Piṭaka* are considered by *Theravādins* to be the two earlier "baskets" of the Pali *Tipiṭika*, originally preserved orally and canonized at the first Buddhist Council after the Buddha's death. The *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, tradition has it, was finalized at the third Buddhist council during the reign of King Aśoka. This essay draws primarily from the *Dīgha* and *Majjhima Nikāyas* and the *Khandaka* of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. For more see Steven Collins' "Introduction" in Wijayaratna 1990.

[3] Admittedly, trying to piece together an evolution of *Uposatha* practice from analysis of *Nikāya* and *Vinaya* passages is a delicate business. It calls into question a number of issues, including the relationship of the Pali *Tipiṭika* to the actual formation of Buddhism (considering its canonizing 400-600 years later). Nonetheless, as mentioned at the outset, these texts also constitute scholars' only non-epigraphical sources for understanding early Buddhism. I would argue that scholars should use these texts to imagine early Buddhism, but do so conscientiously—that is, to consider their contents as plausibilities rather than firm truths. To forego the Pali texts as sources for examining early Buddhism is, in my opinion, to throw out the baby with the bath water.

[4] AN.3.70, Warder 1961, 1:205-14.

wife." His servants and slaves know "this is our lord." He also knows "these are my servants and slaves." Thus, at such a time when he is to be instructed in truth, at that time they [instead] instruct him in false-speech. I speak of this as lying. By the end of the night he enjoys his possessions (*bhoga*) even though they were not given [back to him]. I speak of this as taking what is not given. Thus is the Nigaṇṭha Uposatha, Visākha. Taken up in this way, O' Visākha the Nigaṇṭha Uposatha is not of great fruit nor of great praise nor of great illumination nor expansiveness [5]

In this section, the Buddha prepares for a description of his own version of *Uposatha* by first criticizing Jain practices. The passage disparages *Nigaṇṭha Uposatha* for being more show than substance: theatrical displays of austerity are substituted for genuine moral discipline. While quite severe in the short-term, Jain ascetical practices, according to the Buddha's critique, appear utterly incongruous with the rest of disciples' lives. Although the Jain disciple described is thoroughly a worldly man (he is a father, husband and assumedly wealthy owner of slaves and servants), he nonetheless performs the most excessive acts of poverty and renunciation, such as walking around naked and proclaiming detachment from the world. Before moving on to an explanation of his own *Uposatha*, the Buddha chooses to censure and reconfigure, not the *Upavasatha* practices of Brahmans, but the flawed *Uposatha* practices of other mendicants.

The serious derision to which *Nigaṇṭha Uposatha* is submitted in this section likely results from the fact that Jaina and early Buddhist fortnightly gatherings shared many similar features; it was thus an obvious object of contrast and competition for Buddhists. This is confirmed in early Jaina texts', such as the *Sutrakritanga's*, descriptions of fortnightly gatherings called (in Jaina Prakrit) *Posadha* or *Posaha* and (in Jaina Sanskrit) *pausadha*. Jaina *Posaha* is an all-day assembly where lay patrons and monks meet in specially-erected halls, undertake abstinences and recite doctrine. *Posaha*-observers take up ethical precepts resembling those of Buddhist *Uposatha* and Jaina monks even recite a *Patimokkha*-like confession called the *Pratikrammana* (Deo 1956, 152). The *Sutrakritanga* describes the event as follows:

The Venerable One spoke thus: "There are some followers of Sramanas who have made this declaration: we cannot submit to the tonsure, renounce the life of a householder and enter the monastic state, but we shall strictly observe the Posaha on the fourteenth and

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[5] Translation mine. AN 3.70.3, ibid., 1:206.

eighth days of each fortnight, (on the new-moon, and) full-moon days, we renounce gross ill-usage of living beings, grossly lying speech, gross taking of things not given, (unlawful) sexual intercourse, (unlimited) appropriation of property; we shall set limits to our desires in the two forms and the three ways. They will also make the following renunciation: "neither do nor cause anything (sinful) to be done for my sake." Having (on Posaha-days) abstained from eating, drinking, bathing and using beds or chairs may they, on their decease, be said to make a (righteous) end of their life? "Certainly, they do make such an end of their life." (Jacobi 1968, 2:429-31)

The Jaina texts' description of Jaina *Posaha* resonates unmistakably with Buddhist texts' renderings of Buddhist *Uposatha*. The Buddha describes his own observance, called *brahmūposatha* or *ariyūposatha*[6], as "cleansing of the sullied mind through expedient means (*upakkamena*)."[7] This technique involves observing eight abstinences for one day and night. One abandons taking life, stealing, intercourse, lying, intoxication, eating after noon, "dancing, singing songs, watching performances at fairs, applying garlands, perfumes or makeup, putting on jewelry or adornments,"[8] high or large beds and high, and large chairs."[9] A final verse summarizes:

> Do not kill a breathing-thing nor take what is not given/ Do not speak falsehood or be a drunkard/ One should resist sex/ One should not eat during the evening an improperly-timed-meal/ One should not wear a garland nor indulge in perfume/ One should sleep in a simple bed laid upon the ground/ This very eight-limbed Uposatha/ is explained by the Buddha as the elements for the end of suffering.[10]

Buddhist and Jaina texts describe strikingly similar ceremonies. Both *Posaha* and *Uposatha* mandate abstinences concerning killing, lying, theft, sex, drinking, eating, self-adorning, and the use of beds and chairs. All eight Buddhist *Uposatha* abstinences occur in Jain ritual.

In light of the strong similarities between early Jaina and Buddhist practices, I would argue that one should read the *Mulūposatha Sutta* as the product of direct competition between Jain and Buddhist sects. Other passages

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[6] AN 3.70.4,5, Warder 1961, 1: 206-7.

[7] Translation mine. AN 3.70.4, ibid., 1:207.

[8] Translation mine. AN 3.70.15, ibid., 1:212.

[9] Translation mine. AN 3.70.16, ibid.

[10] Translation mine. AN 3.70.24, ibid., 214-15.

in the Pali corpus confirm this. In fact, parts of the *Vinaya Pitaka* explicitly state that Buddhists not only competed with Jains, but that Buddhists created their own *Uposatha* to compete with Jaina, and *samaṇas'*, *Uposathas*. Thirty-six paragraphs in the second section of the *Mahavagga* detail the formation of *Uposatha*. Perhaps most fascinating of all, the passage credits a Magadhan king, Bimbasāra, rather than the Buddha, with suggesting *Uposatha*'s creation. It is Bimbasāra who, recognizing the need for fortnightly gatherings, implores the Buddha to create a holiday like that of other ascetic sects. The chapter begins:

> At that time wanderers (*paribbājakā*) from other sects (*titthiyā*) gathered on the fourteenth, fifteenth and eighth days of the lunar fortnights and spoke of dharma. People went to them to hear dharma [and] they acquired affection (*pemaṃ*) for wanderers of other sects; they acquired faith (*pasādaṃ*) [in them]; [and in turn] wanderers of other sects acquired adherents. Then when king, general Bimbisāra of Magadha, had gone into seclusion and was meditating, thus a consideration arose in his mind that, "wanderers of other sects now assemble on the fourteenth, fifteenth and eighth days of the lunar fortnight and recite dharma. People approach them to hear dharma. They acquire affection for wanders of other sects; they acquire faith [too]. Wanderers of other sects acquire adherents. Well now, those noble ones, as well, should meet on the fourteenth, fifteenth and eighth of the lunar half-month." (Oldenberg 1977, 1:101, 2; translation mine)

Bimbasāra then asks the Buddha to have his followers (*Sakyaputta samaṇas*) assemble for three days each fortnight. The king's request stems from his concerns about the popularity of other mendicant sects and the laity's growing affection and faith, *pemaṃ* and *pasādaṃ,* for them instead of Buddhist *bhikkhus*. According to this passage, then, the Buddha creates fortnightly assemblies, (1) in order to compete more effectively against other ascetical sects and (2) in response to the urging of a king. Moreover, this passage admits that Buddhist *Uposatha* is modeled on the practices of *śramaṇa* competitors.

The following *Vinaya* passages relate the Buddha's trial and error refining of the nascent bi-fortnightly observances. Initially Buddhist monks assemble and sit silently, but the public demands more:

> People assembled to hear dharma. They got angry, became disillusioned and expressed irritation: "how, truly, can the Sons of

Sakkya mendicants assemble on the fourteenth, fifteenth and eighth days of the lunar fortnight, [and then] just sit there silent like dumb pigs? Surely, they should speak *dhamma* when they are assembled!" (ibid., 1:102, 7; translation mine)

In response to lay admonishing, the Buddha prescribes that *bhikkhus* should recite *dhamma* at assemblies. Up until this modification, the word *Uposatha* is not used. Instead the occasion is simply described as a time when monks came-together (*sannipattitvā*). Only with the Buddha's third stipulation, the inclusion of the Patimokkha monastic confessional, does the word *Uposatha* appear:

What if I were to allow (*anujāneyyaṃ*) the bhikkus to recite the precepts that I have designated for them, the Pātimokkha, [and so] this will become their Uposatha-duty (*uposathakamma*). (ibid.)

This passage, and the subsequent expression *uposathaṃ kareyya*, suggests that *Uposatha* here connotes a type of ascetic behavior that, though known to *bhikkhus*, is not yet associated with their fortnightly observance. Thus, these sections further suggest that the Buddha's institution of *Uposatha* on the fourteenth, fifteenth and eighth days of the lunar fortnight actually constitutes the integration of some already-extent *śramaṇical Uposatha* practice into *Buddhist* fortnightly gatherings.

The remaining *Vinaya* chapter relates the Buddha's adaptation of a general mendicant practice into a format specific to his adherents, particularizing when it is held, who attends and what sorts of performances occur. Thus, *Vinaya* accounts of *Uposatha*'s development, especially viewed alongside passages such as the *Mulūposatha Sutta*, show it to be adopted from the concurrent practices of competing mendicant groups. Horizontal searches through Jaina literature further confirm *Uposatha* as one in a series of Buddhism's conscious borrowings of ritual, conduct and organization rubrics from contemporaneous ascetic sects (see Shiraishi 1996, 201). These borrowings were not capricious; as I will show in the next section, they helped early Buddhism compete for royal and lay support against other mendicant movements, a function vital for its survival in the context of ancient India.

DHAMMA, DEBATE AND DEVOTEES: *UPOSATHA* AND *PARIBBĀJAKA* COMPETITION

Patronage was crucial for early Buddhists. To take Pali *suttas* at their word, in Buddhism's nascence, *bhikkhus* had no permanent residence or cohort of lay supporters. They relied heavily, if not exclusively, on the fickle generosity of

constantly changing population to feed, shelter and clothe them.[11] Early Buddhists did not compete directly with Brahmin priests for public charity, as Brahmins tended to enjoy steady steams of income from providing ritual services. Brahmin ascetics did exist, both as forest-dwelling *vānaprasthas* and peripatetic *parivrājaka*s, both of which are extensively described in Dharmasūtras. However, Brahmanical ascetics were generally lone almsmen, not organized into groups, such as Buddhists, Jains and Ājivikas. Buddhists competed more directly with formalized mendicant sects, *tiṭṭhiyas*, organized into groups (*sanghas* and *gaṇas*), espousing unique philosophical doctrines (*dhammas*), following particular codes of conduct and crowded around well-known teachers (*gaṇācariya*). According to Pali *suttas*, these sects often wandered the same routes as Buddhists, frequenting designated mendicant pleasure parks, *ārāmas*.

The kingdom of Magadha's expansion during the time of the Buddha precipitated increases in wealth and agricultural surplus, which, in turn, allowed large urban populations to flourish. These cities (*nagara*) and market towns (*nigama*) doubled as congregation-points for groups of ascetic wanderers, who camped in tree-groves and nearby parks. The following *Majjhima Nikāya sutta* paints a suggestive portrait of the Magadhan capital city, Rājagaha, bustling with competing *tiṭṭhiyas* crammed into *āramas*:

> Thus have I heard: one time the Blessed One was staying at Rājagaha in the bamboo grove of the Squirrel Sanctuary [literally, the place where squirrels are fed]. At that very time, many very famous wandering mendicants (*paribbājakas*) were staying at the wandering-mendicant pleasure park (*paribbājakāramo*) where peacocks are fed. Among them were: Annahāro, Varadharo, Sakuludāyin and other very famous wandering mendicants. Then in the early part of the day, the Blessed One having dressed and taken up his begging bowl and robe, entered Rājagaha for alms. Then a thought came to the Blessed One: indeed, it is too early to wander in Rājagaha for alms. Now then let me meet with Sakuludāy in the wandering-mendicant pleasure

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[11] I acknowledge Gregory Schopen's recent interventions for studies of early Buddhist monasticism—it seems likely that monks did own property, wealth and, in some cases, fund themselves. Nevertheless, his critique, in my opinion, does not fully deny the centrality—and reality—of begging and poverty in the early *sangha*.

park where peacocks are fed. Then the Blessed One went [there]. At that time the paribbājaka Sakuludāyin was sitting with a great collection of paribbājakas who were noisy and talking up a great din with various kinds of "animal talk" (*tiracchānakathaṃ*); such as: gossip about kings, thieves, ministers, armies, fears, wars, food, drinks, clothes, beds, garlands, perfumes, relations, villages, market towns, cities, *janapadas,* women, men, heroes, roads, rumors at the well, those who are already ghosts, small-talk, the source of the world, the source of the oceans and discourses on being and non-being.[12]

This description occurs virtually *verbatim* in other Pali *suttas*.[13] The Buddha enters a city and resides at one *ārāma* while groups of other mendicants congregate at a nearby park. In contrast to the disciplined, orderly assembly of *Sakyaputta samaṇas*, other *paribbājakas* throng together and gossip about worldly matters.

In this climate of direct renunciant competition, Pali texts describe the Buddha as making every effort to dignify and distinguish his *bhikkhu sangha* as a "field of merit without peers" (*puññakkhetta anuttara*).[14] To do so, the *Vinaya* outlines detailed instructions on monks' appearance and comportment, often crafting regulations from the view-point of potential donors: "monks should do *x* so people don't think *y*." Injunctions particularize *Sakyaputta bhikkhus* from other mendicants in a number of ways: according to *begging conduct*: walking silently, eating what was given, never speaking with donors, eating quietly, never rejecting food; according to *external appearance*: donning three-piece yellow robes assembled from discarded rags and self-dyed, shaving their heads (unlike others who rip their hair out or wear matted locks) and carrying particular accoutrements; according to the *location of their rainy season retreats*: preferring to reside a certain distance from towns and wilderness;[15] and according to the types of *people they associated with*: shunning naked ascetics (*acelakas*) and female wanderers (*paribbājakā*) (see Shiraishi 1996). Such codes of conduct attempted meticulously to distance Buddhist *samaṇas* from other sects, making them appear unmistakably comported and disciplined to the lay public.

Buddhist texts describe competing sects in several places. The *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* gives the most complete rendering of Buddha's six

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[12] Translation mine. MN 77, Trenckner 1888, 2:1, 1.

[13] DN 1.17 (PTS i, 7); 9.3 (PTS i, 178); 25.2(PTS iii, 37); MN 76.3-4 (PTS i, 514).

[14] DN III.5, 227; MN I.446; III.80; SN I.167, 220; V.343, 363, 382 and others. See Davids, Stede, and Pali Text Society (London England), *The Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary*, 464.

[15] DN 25.5 (iii, 38).

major competitors: the nihilistic Pūrana Kassapa, the Ājivika Makkahali Gosāla, the materialist Ajita Kesakambalī, the atomist Pakudha Kaccāyana, the Jaina Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta (generally regarded as Mahāvīra) and the skeptic Sañjaya Belaṭṭhaputta.[16] Other passages distinguish the Buddha's philosophy from those of competing schools of *samaṇas* and Brahmins. The *Brahmajāla Sutta*, enumerates long lists of heterodox beliefs: Eternalists, Non-Eternalists, Finitists, Infinitists, "Eel-wrigglers" (*amarāvikkhepika*) and others.[17] Some *suttas* verify the existence of designated debating halls within imperials cities, *samayappavādakasālā*,[18] where rival ascetic groups engaged in formal debate, doing battle with their mouth-weapons (*mukhasatthihi*).[19] One *sutta* even describes a Jain monk who derides the Buddha as "a magician who knows a converting magic (*āvaṭṭaniṃ māyaṃ*) that charms-away disciples from other sects [to his own]."[20]

The creation of *Uposatha* looks very different when considered in this context of intense inter-sect competition than it does when considered against the backdrop of Vedic ritualism. The practice of *Uposatha* no longer appears as a reconfiguring or ethicizing of Brahmanical practices. It seems to be one of several adaptations from other *śramaṇic* groups designed to help *Sakyaputta bhikkhus* attract patrons and compete with other sects. The Buddha's refining of *Uposatha* was probably part of a larger program which aimed to make Buddhist practices seem unique, disciplined and sincere (vis-à-vis the excessive, but temporary, Jaina practices described in the *Mulūposatha Sutta,* for example) in contrast to other ascetics.

NINETEENTH-CENTURY BIAS,
TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY BUDDHIST STUDIES

I have argued that Buddhist texts themselves corroborate *Uposatha*'s coining in response to Jain practices and that Buddhist institutionalizing took place amidst a backdrop of inter-*samaṇa* competition. If all this holds water, why have scholars repeatedly defined *Uposatha* with reference to *Upavasatha*? More generally, what do *Upavasatha>Uposatha* arguments say about Buddhist Studies more generally and its purported object of study?

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[16] This list appears repeatedly in the *Mahābodhi Jātaka*, the *Milindhapanho*, and the *Majjhima Nikāya* among other places. See also the Sandaka Sutta MN 76 (i, 514) , the *Apaṇṇaka Sutta* MN 50 (i, 401) in Trenckner, *The Majjhima-Nikaya.*

[17] Brahmajāla Sutta DN 1T, Davids 1890, 1:1.

[18] Potthapada Sutta DN 9, ibid., 1:178, 1.

[19] Brahmajāla Sutta, DN 1, ibid., 1:1.

[20] Translation mine. *Samaṇo hi bhante gotamo māyāvī, āvaṭṭaniṃ māyaṃ jānāti. Yāya aññatitthiyānaṃ sāvake āvaṭṭetī'ti.* Upāli Sutta, MN 56, Trenckner 1888, 1:375.

I believe that the popularity of *Upavasatha>Uposatha* arguments and Buddhologists' evident affection for Vedic derivations find roots in the biases, enthusiasms and pragmatic circumstances during Buddhist Studies' nascence in the mid-nineteenth century. Buddhist Studies took its first breaths in Europe at a time of academic excitement regarding the discovery and translation of Vedic texts. Although a substantive translation did not appear until Max Müller's in 1859, the Vedas had existed in the mind of Western scholars since the mid-1700's "in the form of spurious fragments, misattributions and forgeries . . . as an alienated object or symbol in European consciousness" (Figueira 1994, 201). It was idealized in the romantic writings of Voltaire who, using a French forgery (*Ezour Veidaim)*, found the "natural monotheism" that predated European religions. Max Müller saw the Veda as a primitive natural revelation, disclosing ancient peoples' observations about the dawn, changing seasons, thunderstorms and other natural wonders. Müller touted the Ṛgveda as mankind's oldest and least corrupted religious corpus— pure aesthetic insights into nature, un-diseased by linguistically-induced superstitions and polytheisms. By the time of Buddhist Studies' institutionalization in European universities in the late-nineteenth century, Indology (of which Buddhist Studies constituted a subgroup) seemed to connote the study of Indian religions in reference to the Veda. A.A. Macdonell, one of Indology's more notable contributors, commended:

> [The Veda is] an earlier stage in the evolution of beliefs based on the personification and worship of natural phenomena . . . To this oldest phase can be traced by an uninterrupted development the germs of the religious beliefs of the great majority of modern Indians. (Macdonell 1963, 6)

As a consequence of Buddhism's place within Indology, and Indology's prizing of the Veda, Vedic sources were available in a way that Jaina, *Ājivika* and other early Indic materials were not. Perhaps more significantly, many figures who laid the groundwork for Buddhist research had already carved out the contours of Vedic studies. In a span of ten years, Herman Oldenberg published translations of the *ṚgVeda* (1888), *Gṛyha Sūtras* (1886), *Dīpavamsa* (1879), *Therī* and *Theragatā* (1883), and a translation and critical edition of the entire *Vinaya Piṭaka* (1879-1883, 1881-1885). In a similar period, Monier-Williams not only refined his standard Sanskrit dictionary, but also wrote expansively on Buddhism (see Monier-Williams 1964). Considering the limited availability of texts and the large overlap of Buddhist and Vedic translators it is perhaps unsurprising that descriptions of early Buddhism came in large part through comparison and analogy to Vedic traditions.

As a result of Vedism's gravitational pull, nineteenth century scholars imagined Buddhism primarily as a response to Brahmanical religion—a kind of early Indic Protestantism. From the second half of the century, European (especially British and German) scholars treated Buddhism as a fifth century intervention against the priestly excesses of Vedic India. The Buddha was regarded as an Oriental Martin Luther, reforming Indian religions in much the same way as his German analogue: rejecting ceremonialism and priestly privilege; and asserting the primacy of scripture and individual piety (see Almond 1988, 73-74).

In line with this view of formative Buddhism as inheriting and protesting the systems and beliefs of the "Brahmanical Church" (as Herman Oldenberg analogized), scholars contrived *Uposatha* in the context of a transition between Vedism and Buddhism (Oldenberg 1998, 170). *Uposatha* constituted an anti-ceremonial ceremony: Vedic religion whittled down into a non-clerical, introspective form. The most conclusive proof was the name itself: *Uposatha* appeared to be a Pali-ization of the Vedic *Upavasatha*. Therefore, following the promises of *etymologic*, scholars explained *Uposatha* according to the Brahmanical practices that prefigured it. T.W. Rhys Davids writes:

> The corresponding Sanskrit word [for Uposatha] is *upavasatha*, the fast-day previous to the offering of the intoxicating soma, connected with the worship of the moon. Instead of worshipping the moon, the Buddhists were to keep the fast-day by special observance of moral precepts; one of many instances in which Gautama *spiritualized* existing words and customs. To place reliance on any sacrificial rite, or have anything do with the intoxicating soma, would have been quite *unbuddhistic*. (Davids 1894, 141; emphasis mine)

Rhys-Davids' Buddhism transfigures primitive Brahmanical ritualism into a refined system of morality devoid of intoxicants, charms or offerings. It seems that Rhys Davids' use of the word *unbuddhistic* actually stands-in for *un-Victorian*; in being "spiritualized," Buddhism sloughs off those elements offensive to fin-de-siècle British sensibilities: "Thus it was, that while most of the superstition and folly which had encrusted the ancient faith was repudiated or ignored, its beauty, and poetry, and truth were first ennobled and spiritualized and then made subservient to that life of self-control, and wisdom, and universal charity" (ibid.) A footnote to this paragraph further illuminates Rhys Davids' vision. It itemizes those Brahmanical practices that were purged, purified or ennobled in Buddhism: Buddhists convert fire and soma-worship, caste, and ceremonial bathing from ritual practices to abstract moral principles.

CONCLUSION

This strong desire to explain Buddhism with reference to Vedism remains even today. The interpretations and assumptions of Max Müller and other nineteenth century Indologists may still exert an influence on 21st century Buddhology by tempting historians to read early Buddhism through Brahmanism, as a reaction, correction or transcending of Vedic ritualism. While in some cases *etymologic*al queries are warranted, often times scholars should be cautious in immediately linking Buddhist terms and practices to Brahmanical antecedents. *Uposatha* highlights these dangers because although it is a linguistic cognate to *Upavasatha*, its creation and celebration has little to do with fast days before the *Soma* sacrifice. *Uposatha*, it seems, was a common practice among numerous ascetic sects before and during the Buddha's time, and Pali sources acknowledge that *Uposatha* was created in order to compete with Jain and other *śramaṇical* sects. Thus, *Uposatha*'s origins are not, as is commonly assumed, rooted in the Vedic practices pre-dating the Buddha, but they derive from ascetical sects concurrent with the Buddha.

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The Buddha's Biography as a Teaching of the *Bodhisattvayāna*

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The *Mahāvastu* is an ancient Buddhist Sanskrit text of the *Lokottaravādins*, a branch of the *Mahāsāmghika* sect.[1] It is ostensibly a biography of the Buddha Śākyamuni, from his birth as Megha (Sumedha in the Pāli canon) in the time of Dipamkāra Buddha, through his enlightenment and early career as the Buddha Śākyamuni. It is a very perplexing and intriguing text. In addition to the biography of the Buddha, *jātaka* tales, *sūtras*, and *avadāna* stories are interspersed throughout the text.[2] Some of these sections fit well into the overall narrative of the Buddha's biography, but others do not, and scholars are at a loss to explain their presence and function in the text. In fact, many have judged the *Mahāvastu* to be quite incoherent, and to have no overall organization. Moriz Winternitz, a scholar of Sanskrit texts, echoes others when he states: "Far from its being a specimen of artistic literature, the *Mahāvastu* should rather be described as a labyrinth . . . There is no apparent principle of systematic arrangement" (Winternitz 1971, 241).

It is certainly true that the *Mahāvastu* is not a smoothly composed text; there are many repeated and disjointed stories, an almost complete lack of poetic transitions, and older and newer material woven together. A close examination of the text, however, does reveal at least one principle of systematic arrangement. The key to recognizing this is to look closely at the intentions of the authors of the *Mahāvastu*, and examine how they wanted the *Mahāvastu* to be received by other adherents. In the beginning of the text, it is stated that the *Mahāvastu* is part of the *Vinaya-piṭaka* or disciplinary canon of the *Lokottaravādins*. By stating this, the authors of the *Mahāvastu* are

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[1] The *Lokottaravādins* and the *Mahāsamghikas* are both *srāvakayāna* sects (so-called *Hīnayāna* sects, a term that will be avoided in this paper; *srāvakayāna* means "path of the hearer," referring to the traditional goal of becoming an *arhat*).

[2] *Jātaka* tales relate stories of the Buddha's former lives; *sūtras* are religious discourses; and *avadāna* stories are stories, usually about the Buddha's past lives, which have a strong moral message.

signaling that they want this text to be accepted as *buddhavacana*, "the words of the Buddha," and as a *vinaya* text, a canonical genre of texts that focuses on proper conduct and discipline. This claim to canonicity is highly significant in light of the probable date of the *Mahāvastu*. Winternitz assigns it to the 4th or 5th century CE, a time when the Buddhist canons, although not entirely closed, were to a large extent determined (ibid., 247). The *Mahāvastu* is trying to claim canonicity after the fact. This was not an easy thing to do. There were rather strict rules governing later additions to the canon. Many texts were rejected by one sect or another, and the *Mahāyāna-sūtras* in particular were repeatedly attacked for claiming to be *buddhavacana*. To avoid rejection, the authors of the *Mahāvastu* had to adhere to certain principles of canonical texts in order for their text to be accepted as canonical. An examination of these general principles, and their application in the *Mahāvastu*, will help clarify the function of the Buddha's biography in the text, and the function of the *Mahāvastu* in the *Vinaya-piṭaka* of the *Lokottaravādins*.

These general principles must be derived from the existing canonical material. In general, canonical *vinaya* texts teach proper conduct and the practices that lead to salvation. The *Mahāvastu* does the same. However, the *Mahāvastu* is not concerned about the same types of practices as the majority of *vinaya* texts. Rather, the *Mahāvastu* teaches the proper conduct of a *bodhisattva*, and the long road to enlightenment as a *buddha*. It is, in the strict sense of the term, a teaching of the *bodhisattvayāna* (the path of the *bodhisattva*), a tradition of teaching that eventually led to the formation of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism. The *Mahāvastu* combines an enumeration and description of the general stages and practices of the *bodhisattvayāna* with a long retelling of the Buddha's entire biography. The Buddha's biography is crucial to the *Mahāvastu* not only as an example *par excellence* of the *bodhisattvayāna*, but also as a means to claim canonicity. In fact the *Mahāvastu*'s claim to be a canonical *vinaya* text requires the extensive use of the Buddha's biography in order to draw on the innate canonicity invested in that hagiography.

In order to demonstrate this fact, I will deal with several different topics. First, the *Mahāvastu*'s identity as a *vinaya* text must be established. I will then examine the general principles of canonicity, with close attention to the *Vinaya-piṭaka* and biographical stories. Finally, I will apply these principles to the *Mahāvastu*. This will reveal some principles of the *Mahāvastu*'s construction, and help clarify its function as a *vinaya* text. [3]

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[3] I have not yet determined whether there is enough evidence within the *Mahāvastu* to distinguish if it was primarily a descriptive or prescriptive text. In other words, its hard to say if anyone actually did the things outlined in the text.

THE *MAHĀVASTU* AS A *VINAYA* TEXT

Many scholars do not accept the *Mahāvastu* as a *vinaya* text. To Winternitz, for example, the *Mahāvastu* is hardly a *vinaya* text at all. He writes, "apart from a few remarks on admission into the order, it contains next to nothing about the Vinaya" (Winternitz 1971, 241). J. J. Jones, the translator of the *Mahāvastu*, also has doubts: "Although it is styled a Vinaya it almost seems as if, in the course of the period of its compilation, all the elements characteristic of a Vinaya were deliberately omitted" (Jones 1949, xiii).[4] These are serious doubts, especially when the text itself claims to be a *vinaya* text. In the short introduction after the initial benediction, the *Mahāvastu* states:

> *āryamahāsāmghikānām lokottaravādinām madhyadeśikānām*
> *pāthena vinayapiṭakasya mahāvastuye ādi.* (Rahula 1978, 360 2n)

> Here begins the Mahāvastu, which is based on the redaction of the Vinaya Pitaka made by the noble Mahāsānghikās, the Lokottara-vādins of the Middle Country. (Jones 1949, 3)

The sentence itself is quite clear, and is nearly identical to similar sentences found in other *Lokottaravādin vinaya* texts; ones that are not questioned (see Roth 1970). Why, then, did scholars dismiss this claim? The quotes given above indicate that many did not consider the subject matter of the *Mahāvastu* to be "proper" *vinaya* material. This was no doubt based on a comparison of the *Mahāvastu* with the Pāli *Vinaya-piṭaka*. The latter was the best known and most accessible *Vinaya-piṭaka* available to western scholars. In addition, both the *Lokottaravāda* and *Theravāda* (by whom the Pāli *Vinaya-piṭaka* was written) were *srāvakayāna* sects, and therefore assumed to be quite similar.

There is not much in common between the *Mahāvastu* and the Pāli *Vinaya-piṭaka*. With the exception of the *Mahāvagga*, the latter does not contain many biographical stories (that is, complete stories, rather than narrative frames and the like). In the Pāli canon, most biographical stories— such as the biography of the Buddha, *jātakas*, and *avadānas*—are found in the *Khuddaka-nikāya*, a section of the *Sutta-piṭaka*. There is no "*Mahāvastu*-type" text in the Pāli *Vinaya-piṭaka*. Faced with the *Mahāvastu*, scholars could not find a ready parallel. In addition, the *Mahāvastu*, except in the most

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[4] All references to the *Mahāvastu* are from volume one unless otherwise noted.

general sense, is not concerned with the same topics as the Pāli *Vinaya-piṭaka*. It does not discuss legalistic rules and their origins, nor enumerate any of the rules and regulations found in the latter (except rules regarding the most serious offenses, such as killing one's father or an *arhat*). As a *bodhisattvayāna* teaching, the *Mahāvastu* makes different assumptions about the path to salvation, and consequently emphasizes different conduct. It teaches conduct appropriate for one who has voluntarily vowed to stay in *samsāra*, the cycle of birth and death, in order to reach the full enlightenment of a *buddha*, similar to *Mahāyāna* disciplinary texts. This is quite different from Pāli *Vinaya-piṭaka*, which emphasizes *nirvana* and escape from *samsāra* as the highest goal. For example, the *Mahāvastu* assumes that the practitioner will be reborn as a god or layman countless times, usually as a *cakravartin* or universal king, and gives guidance on how to act. It teaches ways to cope with the sufferings of *samsāra*—that is, how to negate bad karma and guarantee a good rebirth—rather than ways to reach *nirvana* as quickly as possible. Thus, the *Mahāvastu* is rather unique in the way it straddles the traditional categories of disciplinary texts. On the one hand, it claims to be a *vinaya* text of a *srāvakayāna* sect, like the *Theravāda* Pāli *Vinaya-piṭaka*. On the other hand, it is a teaching of the *bodhisattvayāna*, and consequently deals with many of the same issues as *Mahāyāna* disciplinary texts. It is no wonder, then, that many scholars questioned the *Mahāvastu*'s placement in the *Vinaya-piṭaka*.

If the Pāli *Vinaya-piṭaka* is not taken as the standard for *vinaya* texts, then the arguments against the *Mahāvastu* begin to fall apart. There is actually much evidence in favor of its identification with the *Vinaya-piṭaka*. I have already quoted the *Mahāvastu*'s claim to be part of the *Vinaya-piṭaka*.[5] In addition, there are many similarities between the *Mahāvastu* and other *vinaya* texts. First of all, the *Mahāvastu* is clearly related to the *Mahāvagga*, a text of the *Khandaka* section of the Pāli *Vinaya-piṭaka*. Early on, scholars recognized the close connection between these two texts. Jones sums it up well:

> That there is a very close relation between the Mahavastu and the Mahavagga is abundantly proved by the close, practically verbal

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[5] Some object that the introduction where this sentence is found is a later addition. Jones himself thought as much. However, in this discussion I am only interested in the present form of the text, understood as an entire unit. It will remain for other studies to peel apart the different layers, a staggeringly complex job. Jones himself said in the prefaces to Volumes I and II that he planned to compile a correspondence chart for the *Mahāvastu* and the Pāli *Tipiṭaka*, but gave up due to the complexities of the text and the difficulties with the language.

parallelism between the last quarter or so of the former with the first twenty-four chapters of the latter. (Jones 1949, xii)

Although the function of the *Mahāvagga* and *Mahāvastu* may differ, they are clearly closely related. Many have even suggested that the *Mahāvastu* was the "*Mahāvagga*-type" text of the *Lokottaravāda Vinaya-piṭaka*. Nalinaksha Dutt called the *Mahāvastu* the "the first book of the Vinaya of the Lokottaravādins," referring to the placement of the *Mahāvagga* as the first book of the *Khandaka* section of the Pāli *Vinaya-piṭaka* (Dutt 1998, 64).

There is also a curious Chinese colophon at the end of the *Fo-pan-hing-tsi-ching* (another biography of the Buddha, which Beal called the *Abhiniṣkramana-sūtra*) that connects the *Mahāvastu* to the *Vinaya-piṭaka*:

> It may be asked, "By what title is this Book to be called?" to which we reply, the Mahāsānghikas call it "Ta-sse" (great thing, Mahāvastu). The Sarvāstivādas call it "Ta-chong-yen" (great magnificence, Lalita-Vistara). The Kāśyapīyas call it "Fo-woug-yin-un" (former history of Buddha). The Dharmaguptas call it "Shi-kia-mu-ni-Fo-pen-hing" (the different births of Śākya-Muni-Buddha). The Mahīsāsakas call it "Pi-ni-tsong-kan" (Foundation of the Vinaya Pitaka). (Beal 1985, 386-87)

In this quote the *Mahāvastu* is identified with several other biographies of the Buddha (The *Lalita Vistara* is usually considered a *Mahayana sūtra*, but it was originally the biography of the Buddha for the *Sarvastivada*). At the end of the list, we see that the *Mahīsāsakas* also had a biography of the Buddha, called the *Pi-ni-tsong-kan*. Here it is explicitly related to the *Vinaya-piṭaka* as a foundational text. It was also probably a "*Mahāvagga*-type" text, relating the emergence of the Buddhist *Sangha* (community of believers). This suggests that, at least according to the author of this colophon, the *Mahāvastu* was connected to the *Vinaya-piṭaka* (albeit perhaps obliquely). Incidently, Chinese translations of all these *Vinaya-piṭakas* were available when the *Fo-pan-hing-tsi-ching* was translated, and were thus available to the author of this colophon.[6]

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[6] One possible argument against this point, however, comes from the journal of the famous Chinese monk Fa-hsien, who traveled to India in the early 5th century. He claimed to have obtained a complete manuscript copy of the *Mahāsāmghika Vinaya*, but his translation did not include or mention the *Mahāvastu*. This ambivalence suggests that the *Mahāvastu* was not necessarily accepted by all adherents as a part of the *Lokottaravāda* or *Mahāsamghika Vinaya-piṭaka* (the difference between these two sects is unclear). Or perhaps the *Mahāvastu* was not circulated at Bodhagayā at that time (the place from which Fa-hsien took his manuscripts).

A final piece of evidence linking the *Mahāvastu* to the *vinaya* is that the *Mahāvastu* is closely related to *avadāna* literature. The *Mahāvastu* regularly calls itself an *avadāna* at the end of stories where titles are given. The following titles are found throughout the text: *Srī Mahāvastu-avadāna-kathā*; *Srī Mahāvastu-avadāna*; and *Mahāvastu-avadāna* (Rahula 1978, 6). *Avadāna* stories have always been closely associated with *vinaya* texts. Their function is nearly identical: to show how proper conduct leads to good rewards and salvation. E. B. Cowell and R. A. Neil, in the preface to their edition of the *Divyāvadāna*, state: "Many of our legends belong to the Vinaya-pitaka" (Cowell and Neil 1886, viii). Winternitz, citing S. Lévi, says that over one-half of the *avadānas* in the *Divyāvadāna* are from the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya-piṭaka* (Winternitz 1971, 284-5). Likewise Bhikkhu Rahula, in his critical study of the *Mahāvastu*, comments: "the *avadāna* class of literature originally belonged to the Vinaya itself" (Rahula 1978, 2-3).

The most in-depth study of this topic is Akira Hirakawa's *A Study of the Vinaya-Piṭaka*. He found *avadāna* stories in all the versions of the *Vinaya-piṭaka* (in Indian languages and Chinese translations). Although the bulk of the study is in Japanese (and thus inaccessible to me), the English introduction summarizes many of his conclusions. First, he found that all six categories of *avadāna* literature listed in the *Mahāprajñāparamitāśāstra* are in some of the *Vinaya-Piṭakas*. Secondly, the Pāli *Vinaya-piṭaka* had the fewest *avadāna* stories: only nine in total. The *Mahāsāmghika-Vinaya*, with which I am primarily concerned, had thirty-one. At the high end, the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-Vinaya* had over one-hundred and seventy (Hirakawa 1970, 12-14). This further illustrates a point stated earlier, that the Pāli *Vinaya-piṭaka* does not contain many biographical stories. It is now clear that this is not the case with all *Vinaya-piṭakas*, and that there is a whole spectrum of possibilities. Although the *Mahāvastu* may not be consistent with the *Theravāda* Pāli *Vinaya-piṭaka*, it would fit well into the *Mahāsāmghika* or *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya-piṭaka*, at least in terms of biographical stories. Given this, and the other evidence cited above, it is reasonable to assume that the *Mahāvastu* is a *vinaya* text, or perhaps more importantly, that the authors worked hard for it to appear as such.

PRINCIPLES OF CANONICITY
AND THE USE OF BIOGRAPHICAL STORIES

As a *vinaya* text, the *Mahāvastu* had to conform to various principles of composition in order to establish canonicity. Many of these principles revolve around the use of the Buddha's biography. In the broader canon, the most common and extensive use of biographical stories is in narrative frames. All

canonical texts use biographical narrative frames (with one important exception that I will note below). Their main function is to authorize teachings as *buddhavacana* or "the words of the Buddha," the key to canonicity. Lamotte, quoting from scripture, gives this explanation of *buddhavacana*:

> The word of the Buddha is "whatever reaches us as such through the succession of masters and disciples, whatever is found in the Sūtra, appears in the Vinaya and does not contradict the nature of things (*dharmatā*)." (Lamotte 1988, 164)

According to this, there are two ways that a teaching can claim to be *buddhavacana*: (1) it is already in the canon (*sūtra* and *vinaya*); and (2) it is demonstrably connected to the Buddha Śākyamuni through a "succession of masters and disciples" and does not contradict the existing canon.

Although the process of canon formation is not well understood, Buddhist tradition states that teachings already in the canon (criteria 1) are those that were recited at the First Council, and recited again at subsequent Councils. The First Council was held after the Buddha's *parinirvana* (the death of a *buddha*) to recite the teachings of the Buddha, and establish an authoritative body of teachings, which they called the *Tripiṭaka* (literarlly, "the three baskets," consisting of the *Sūtra-Piṭaka*, *Vinaya-Piṭaka*, and *Abhidharma-piṭaka*.). It was this tradition—as opposed to actual historical connection— that mattered to the authors of the *Mahāvastu*, who were trying to present the *Mahāvastu* as a canonical text. The common narrative frame "Thus have I heard..." is the standard way of invoking a connection to the First Council, and is found in nearly all canonical texts. This frame "proves" that the teaching was spoken by the Buddha Śākyamuni, and later retold by his attendant Ananda at the First Council (the "I" of the above quote). Ananda was a direct witness to the teaching, and thus a direct connection to the Buddha Śākyamuni (criteria 2). Ananda also related the location, setting, and circumstances of the teaching given by the Buddha, and this provided further "proof" of the canonicity of a given text.

It is hard to overstate the importance of this narrative frame. Woodward, in the context of the *Theravāda*, has called this sort of reasoning the "biographical imperative" of the canon (1997). He cites a particularly illuminating example from the *Atthasalini*, a *Theravāda* text written by Buddhaghoṣa, wherein the authority of the *Abhidharma* came into question.[7] He states: "Biographical frame stories are so common in Sutta and Vinaya

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[7] The *Abhidharma* is the third and final section of the *Tripiṭaka*. Buddhaghoṣa, in the *Theravāda* tradition, is the monk largely responsible for the formation of the Pāli canon.

texts, that according to *Atthasalini* "heretics" pointed to their absence from Abhidhamma texts as a sign that they were not truly spoken by the Buddha" (ibid. 47). The *Abhidharma* texts lacked the standard biographical narrative frame, and thus could not be definitively linked to the Buddha Śākyamuni through an unbroken chain of disciples. They were, therefore, deemed spurious by some monks, who feared that they were merely the works of unenlightened poets or philosophers.

Some texts were rejected from the canon even with biographical narrative frames. This is where the second criteria of *buddhavacana* came into play. The text in question had to broadly correspond to *dharma*, which in practice meant the other texts already in the canon, and it could not contradict any of their basic tenets. The rejection of the *Mahāyāna sūtras* by the various *srāvakayāna* sects is a clear instance of this. Almost all *Mahāyāna sūtras* have narrative frames, both the phrase "Thus have I heard . . ." and a description of the specific location and setting of the teaching. However, the teachings of the *Mahāyāna sūtras*, at least in the eyes of the *srāvakayāna* sects, did not correspond to their idea of *dharma*. They were dismissed as merely the compositions of poets, working for Māra—the evil god of *samsāra*—in order to lead the monks astray. The *Mahāyāna sūtras* were so plagued by these accusations that for the most part they abandoned any aspirations to *srāvakayāna* canonicity and established alternative means of authentication, such as appealing to other transmission lineages or *buddhas*.

A second way biographical narrative frames are used in the canon is to describe specific circumstances from the Buddha's life that led to general rules of conduct. This type of frame is found most often in the *Sūtra-Vibhanga* of the *Vinaya-piṭaka*. The general pattern is this: there is a story about how a problem arose within the *Sangha*, the participants report the problem to the Buddha, and the latter pronounces a general rule. The rule is thus legitimized by the narrative story, which describes how the rule is the direct word of the Buddha (*buddhavacana*). The chronological relationship between the story and the rule is not always clear. The various *Vinaya-piṭakas* do not always agree on the story, although they usually have the same rules. This suggests that the stories are later than the rules, and were added after the *Sangha* had already split into sects. Many scholars cite this fact to argue that the *Pratimokṣa*—a text found in the *Sūtra-Vibhanga* that is a list of the rules without the stories—is earlier than the *Sūtra-Vibhanga* (the rules with the stories). The *Pratimokṣa* is a purely liturgical text, used in the fortnightly recitation of the rules and confession of sins. It is significant that the *Pratimokṣa*, although perhaps older in age, is nonetheless non-canonical. The canonical version is the *Sūtra-Vibhanga*, the version with biographical stories. In addition, the *Pratimokṣa* of the *Mahāsāmghikas* deviates from the Pāli in

an interesting way: it preserves the biographical stories for the *pārājikas*, the four most serious offenses requiring expulsion from the order. All this suggests that the biographical stories were considered to be of utmost importance. A bare list of rules, while useful in ritual, seems to lack canonical authority. It is the biographical stories that give the text canonicity. In the case of the *Mahāsāmghikas*, the *pārājika* stories were so important that they were included in the ritual recitation of the *Pratimokṣa*.[8] In fact, it is likely that the only reason the *Pratimokṣa* could exist as an independent, bare list of rules was because there was always the *Sūtra-Vibhanga* to check it against.

These biographical narrative frames, all of which take the Buddha's last life as Śākyamuni as their setting, were not the only ones endowed with canonical authority. The Buddha's past lives were also considered canonical. This is clearly shown by the inclusion of the *jātakas* and *avadānas* in the Pāli *Sutta-piṭaka*. This case is interesting because the stories of the Buddha's past lives do not usually have biographical narrative frames. Buddhaghoṣa's refutation of the heretics mentioned above from the *Atthasālinī* is illuminating:

> But if a heretic should say, had the *Abhidhamma* been spoken by the Buddha, there would have been an introduction prefatory to it, just as in many thousands of the *Suttas* the preface generally runs as, "One Day the Blessed One was staying in Rajagaha," etc. he should be contradicted thus: "The *Jātakas, Suttanipata, Dhammapada,* and so on, have no such introductions, and yet they were spoken by the Buddha." (Woodward 1997, 47)

The stories of the Buddha's past lives were considered to be canonical for different reasons than *sūtras* and *vinaya* texts, which relied on the use of narrative frames. In some way, they were authoritative by themselves. This may be due to the close connection between the Buddha's past lives and the enlightenment experience. One of the traditional descriptions of the enlightenment consists of the Buddha being able to perceive all beings' past, present and future lives, including his own. The *Mahāvastu* has this description:

> In the first watch of the night, the Exalted One...comprehended the different comings and goings of men. In the middle watch he called to mind previous existences of others and of himself, and came to

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[8] These same *pārājika* offenses are also some of the few *Pratimokṣa* rules found in the *Mahāvastu*.

know the various occasions of former existences. In the last watch . . .
[he reached enlightenment]. (Jones 1949, 5)

The enlightenment experience gave the Buddha ultimate insight into all his
past lives, and therefore the actions that led to his enlightenment. The efficacy
of those actions in his past lives was in a sense proved by the enlightenment
itself. It is not an overstatement to say that the enlightenment process allowed
the Buddha to perceive the *bodhisattvayāna*.

This made the stories of the Buddha's past lives, in texts such as *jātakas*
and *avadānas*, the most important and extensive canonical source for
teachings on the *bodhisattvayāna*. In fact, these stories were nearly the only
source, along with a few mentions scattered throughout the canon. Any
teaching of the *bodhisattvayāna* that sought to claim canonicity, therefore,
needed to make use of these stories. This is precisely what is found in the
Mahāvastu, where stories of the Buddha's past lives are used to illustrate and
legitimize the *bodhisattvayāna*.

The *Mahāvastu* is not the only text that uses this strategy. A *Theravāda*
text named the *Cariyā-piṭaka* of the *Khuddaka-nikāya* follows this same
pattern. This text enumerates the Ten Perfections of a *bodhisattva*. The Ten
Perfections are those qualities that a *bodhisattva* must perfect through
meritorious action and thought, over countless years and lifetimes, in order to
become a *buddha*. They are common to nearly all sects of Buddhism
(including, of course, *Mahāyāna* sects), although they are not always
elaborated in the same way. The *Cariyā-piṭaka* is similar to the *Mahāvastu* in
that it is ostensibly simply a collection of biographical stories—here *jātaka*
tales—organized according to the Ten Perfections. These *jātaka* stories are
identical to those found in other parts of the Pāli canon, but they are in verse
instead of prose. The stories are used to illustrate the characteristics of the Ten
Perfections of a *bodhisattva*. Besides the chapter names, there is nearly no
additional information or narrative framing; the stories are told immediately
after the chapter name, and stand alone to illustrate the Perfections. The only
added material is at the end of some of these stories where there is a short
summary phrase, such as: "This was my perfection of morals" (Law 1938,
114). All this suggests that the construction of the *Mahāvastu*, a
bodhisattvayāna text based on biographical stories, is not unique or aberrant.
There were other attempts to use the Buddha's biography to create a canonical
text about the *bodhisattvayāna*, even if it was a *sūtra* instead of a *vinaya* text.[9]

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[9] How texts ended up in certain *piṭakas* in the various *srāvakayāna Tripiṭakas* is a question that
needs more research.

Significantly, the *Cariyā-piṭaka* is from the Pāli canon, traditionally considered the most "non-*bodhisattvayāna*" of the *srāvakayāna* sects.

In contrast to this method of composing a *bodhisattvayāna* text to maintain canonicity, the *Mahāyāna* disciplinary texts do not make much use of biographical stories (excluding simple narrative frames). Take, for instance, two *Mahāyāna* disciplinary texts roughly contemporary with the *Mahāvastu*: the *Ugra-paripṛcchā* and the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra*. Both of these *sūtras* describe the proper conduct and discipline of a *bodhisattva* in a straightforward manner without the use of biographical stories. There are biographical narrative frames, but they are different in the two texts, illustrating the range of *Mahāyāna sūtras*. The format of the *Urga-paripṛcchā* is a series of questions and answers, as its name, "The Inquiry of Ugra," implies. The story is that Ugra, a householder, goes to the pleasure garden of Anāthapiṇḍika in Śrāvastī and asks the Buddha questions about the proper conduct of both householder and renunciant *bodhisattvas*. The Buddha replies by stating general principles, not by telling stories. The teaching is remarkably restrained and down-to-earth for a *Mahāyāna sūtra*. There is little space devoted to elaborate miracles, hyperbolic statements about merit, or praise of various named *bodhisattvas*.[10] The *Daśabhūmika-sūtra*, on the other hand, has all these features. The teaching is set in heaven, where the Buddha Śākyamuni is sojourning after his enlightenment. The assembled practitioners are all *bodhisattvas*, and it is a *bodhisattva* who actually gives the teaching. Once again, no biographical stories are used to illustrate the teaching, which in this text is the Ten Stages of a *bodhisattva* (*daśabhūmi*). In this text, the Buddha only plays the role of authorizing the teaching after the fact.

These examples show that although the *Mahāvastu* deals with many of the same topics and issues as *Mahāyāna* disciplinary texts (such as the Ten Stages, see below), it is much closer to the *Cariyā-piṭaka* in its construction. This demonstrates the intention of the authors of the *Mahāvastu* to claim canonical authority for their text. The *Mahāyāna sūtras*, in most cases, did not try to claim canonical authority, at least within *srāvakayāna* sects. Rather, they employed a variety of other authenticating strategies, such as creating separate transmission lineages coming from the Buddha Śākyamuni, or appealing to the power of *buddhas* other than Śākyamuni. This left the authors of the *Mahāyāna sūtras* free to write anything they wanted. The authors of the *Mahāvastu*, on the other hand, made a choice to conform to the canonical

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[10] By miracles I mean the ones that are standard tropes in *Mahāyāna sūtras*, like the smile of the Buddha that lights up the cosmos, not miracles in general, which are found in all types of teachings.

strictures of *buddhavacana*, and thus ended up with a text similar to the *Cariyā-piṭaka*.

PRINCIPLES OF CANONICITY
AND BIOGRAPHICAL STORIES IN THE *MAHĀVASTU*

The conditions of *buddhavacana* and canonicity had a profound affect on the composition of the *Mahāvastu*. To restate, in order for the *Mahāvastu* to be accepted as *buddhavacana* it had to demonstrate that: (1) it was tied to the Buddha Śākyamuni, at least "through a succession of masters," and (2) it was broadly in agreement with the rest of the canon. This is done in the *Mahāvastu* mainly through the use of biographical narrative frames and stories, parallel to the examples given above.

The authors of the *Mahāvastu* must have asked themselves how they could create a canonical teaching on the *bodhisattvayāna*, and settled on a strategy similar to the *Cariyā-piṭaka*. This entailed basing their teachings largely on the one type of canonical literature that dealt with the *bodhisattvayāna*: the biographical stories of the Buddha Śākyamuni's many lives. This type of literature is found in many parts of the canon, and the *Mahāvastu* seems to have drawn from most of it. According to the divisions of the Pāli canon, the *Mahāvastu* contains *sūtras* from the *Majjhima-nikāya, Digha-nikāya, Samyutta-nikāya,* and *Khuddaka-nikāya*; sections from the *Dhammapada, Suttanipāta, Mahāvagga,* and still other parts of the canon; around forty *jātaka* tales, some not extant elsewhere; and a few unique sections.[11] These identifications with the Pāli canon are not always verbatim, and there is no doubt that some parallel sections in the *Mahāvastu* are both older and younger than their respective twins in the Pāli canon. However, it is clear that the authors have not tampered much with their source material. The various *sūtras, jātakas,* and *avadānas* are presented as discrete units, usually with a title given at the end. There is little attempt to make smooth transitions, beyond grouping sections together by broad themes. For example, before a *jātaka* story it is common for the Buddha to declare something like this: "This was not the first time, monks, that Yaśodharā here was displeased. There was another occasion also when she was displeased" (Jones 1949, 2:62). Sometimes two or more versions of the same story or text are given. For instance, in the middle of the enlightenment story the so-called *Avalokita-sūtra* is twice recited with significant variations. Several scholars have suggested that the lack of poetic re-composition is due to a hypersensitivity to

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[11] See Winternitz, 239-248 and Rahula, 6-13. The "unique sections" are very interesting because it has not been determined if they were from other parts of the canon or original compositions.

the sacredness of the source material. This hypothesis is compatible with the supposition that the authors of the *Mahāvastu* wanted to appeal to canonicity. The canonical material is naturally the most sacred, and was not to be tampered with. It is also possible that the authors wanted their audience to be able to readily identify the various sections as belonging to the canon, thus strengthening the canonical authority of the *Mahāvastu*.

These biographical stories were used in the *Mahāvastu* in the same way as other canonical texts: as tools to establish *buddhavacana* and canonicity. The *Mahāvastu* uses narrative frames on several levels. On the macroscopic level, there are frames for entire sections. The clearest and most interesting example is from the beginning of the section on the Ten Stages of a *bodhisattva*. This section is particularly significant because the idea of the Ten Stages is arguably the most non-canonical part of the *Mahāvastu* (at least from the viewpoint of the Pāli canon); and clearly composed by the authors of the *Mahāvastu* (as opposed to borrowing from other texts). Therefore, it was of utmost importance for the authors to establish the canonicity of this section. To do this, the authors composed the longest and most elaborate narrative frame of the entire *Mahāvastu*. This frame tells the story of the Buddha's *parinirvana*, narrated from the perspective of Mahā-Kāśyapa, one of the Buddha's great disciples (Jones 1949, 53-61). It starts with Mahā-Kāśyapa perceiving that the Buddha had passed away because of an earthquake omen. Mahā-Kāśyapa rushes to the funeral and pays his respects. Then the body is burned.[12] Immediately after this, Mahā-Kāśyapa draws together the First Council, of which he is traditionally considered to be the leader. After the recitation of the "*dharma*" (presumably the *sūtras*), Mahā-Kāśyapa asks Mahā-Kātyāyana to recite the section on the Ten Stages. The former states:

> Tell me now the manner of the transitions from bhūmi [stage] to bhūmi, and how the glorious Bodhisattvas lapse as they pass from one life to another. And how do these choice beings advance? This tell me. And say what their dispositions are. How do they who are endued [sic] with the essence of being convert beings? How do they give alms? All this explain to me. Do you, who have seen Buddhas and can speak with charm, tell me their names and origin. (Jones 1949, 60)

This narrative frame appeals to canonicity on many different levels. First, Mahā-Kātyāyana, who has "seen Buddhas" and plays such a prominent role at

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[12] Up to this point the story is pretty much the same as other versions. After that, however, it is completely different. The *Mahāparinirvana-sūtra* is the most important source for this story.

this version of the First Council, is himself an authority.[13] In fact, all five hundred monks at the First Council were *arhats* or liberated saints, and therefore authorities on the Buddha's teachings (*dharma*). Their liberated knowledge and experience of hearing the *dharma* from the Buddha himself satisfy both conditions quoted above for *buddhavacana*. That is why everything spoken at the First Council is *prima facie* canonical. Here, the *Mahāvastu* is part of that recitation. Not only that, but the *Mahāvastu* is the second recitation, after the *dharma* or *sūtras*. According to tradition, the second recitation at the First Council was the *Vinaya-piṭaka*. The *Mahāvastu* is, in a sense, the whole *vinaya*, or at least the most important "first book of the Vinaya of the Lokottaravādins," to quote Dutt again.

It should also be noted that the account of the First Council is usually found in *vinaya* texts. In the Pāli canon, it is found in the *Cullavagga* of the *Vinaya-piṭaka*, a text closely related to the *Mahāvagga*. The latter text, as pointed out above, is very similar to the *Mahāvastu*. So the *Mahāvastu*'s target audience probably would not have found an account of the First Council introducing this text out of place.

There are many other minor details that tell us interesting things about the *Mahāvastu* and its authors, for there is little doubt that they composed this narrative frame. We find, for instance, this curious scene with Mahā-Kāśyapa giving the various saints jobs to do before the recitation of the Ten Stages:

> To the holy Pralambabāhu Kāśyapa said, "Create at once an arena on the summit of Mount Gridhrakūta. Eighteen thousand have come together for the assembly. Call up your magic power to scrutinize them all." . . . To the holy man named Haryaksha, Kāśyapa said, "O son of the Sugata [Buddha], quickly exert your concentration to prevent the goods of householders being lost." To the holy man Varuna Kāśyapa said, "Keep away from men baneful flies and gnats." (Jones 1949, 59)

This short passage raises important questions; for example, were there more than just the five hundred saints at the First Council, perhaps also householders? Does the "eighteen thousand" refer to the eighteen thousand at the Great Assembly (*mahāsāmghika*) at which the *Mahāsāmghika* sect was formed? I won't explore these questions here, but this example shows the

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[13] It would be interesting to see how Mahā-Kātyāyana is portrayed in the other sections of the *Mahāsāmghika* canon that survives.

myriad ways that the *Mahāvastu*'s narrative frames interact with tradition, and ultimately other texts, in order to establish some sort of canonicity.

The *Mahāvastu* also uses biographical stories to justify statements *within* a particular section, similar to the *Sūtra-Vibhanga* or *Cariyā-piṭaka* discussed above. For example, in the "*Sūtra* on the Many Buddhas," a section before the Ten Stages section, the Buddha describes another scheme for understanding the path of the *bodhisattva*: "the four stages in the careers of *bodhisattvas*" (Jones 1949, 39-46). After briefly naming the four stages, the Buddha tells a series of stories, in chronological order, about the various *buddhas* that he worshipped, and to whom he made the *bodhisattva* vow. Each of these *buddhas* are associated with one of the four stages. The biographical stories illustrate and authenticate the general scheme of "the four stages in the careers of *bodhisattvas*" by tying them to specific events in the past lives of the Buddha (and, significantly, the lives of other *buddhas*). Without these biographical stories, the scheme would presumably lose its claim to canonicity, like the *Pratimokṣa* of the *Sūtra-Vibhanga*.

The same pattern is found in the Ten Stages section, sometimes quite clearly, and at other times much less so. One clear example is in the Seventh Stage. After a brief description of *bodhisattvas* who do not lapse on the path, Mahā-Kātyāyana tells a series of five *jātaka* tales. Following this, Mahā-Kātyāyana declares that these stories described "some of the hundred thousand difficult acts of body, speech and thought which are performed by Bodhisattvas who do not lapse" (Jones 1949, 105). Here there is a clear link between the *jātaka* tales and the description of *bodhisattvas* who do not lapse on the path. The former authorizes and shows examples of the latter. Once again, by tying the general rule to biographical stories of the Buddha, the general rule shares the canonicity of the story.

But there are also times where the connection between rule and story is not very clear. In the Third Stage, for example, after describing the miracles that take place after the declaration of a *bodhisattva* vow, a *deva-bodhisattva* recites a hymn of praise containing a short version of the birth of the Buddha in his last life. It is unclear how the birth and the teaching about the *bodhisattva* vow and miracles are connected, especially because the miracles surrounding the birth are different. Perhaps it does not serve a function in establishing canonicity, but rather has an aesthetic or poetic function. This again illustrates the myriad, sometimes confusing ways in which biographical material is presented in the *Mahāvastu*. What is clear, however, is that biographical stories are often used to justify a general rule.

The last way in which biographical stories are used to communicate and authenticate teachings is through the story itself. In this case the story is not authenticating any external description or rule; it simply functions as a

didactic story that teaches proper conduct. Often these mini-teachings have nothing to do with the greater theme of the section. They teach proper conduct in a number of different areas, such as advice for universal kings, the "five obligations of a Buddha," the "ten right ways of behavior," or the various ways to worship a *buddha* (Jones 1949, 39-46). Since these mini-teachings are presented as the actual actions of the Buddha in his past lives, they need no outside authentication; they are, in fact, already canonical. The authors of the *Mahāvastu* were able to exploit the canonical status of these stories to teach various aspects of the path of the *bodhisattvayāna*. It remains to be determined whether it is possible to trace any changes made to these stories by the authors of the *Mahāvastu*. Perhaps in the process of borrowing them from the broader canon, the authors changed them in some way. Unfortunately, a detailed comparison of the *Mahāvastu* with the canon has not yet been done.

These are some of the many ways that the *Mahāvastu* utilizes biographical material to teach the path of the *bodhisattva*. Much more work is needed on this topic, but I have shown that the *Mahāvastu* is not as chaotic as others have thought. The authors of the *Mahāvastu* had specific intentions when they composed the *Mahāvastu*. I tried to explore one of these, namely that the *Mahāvastu*'s authors wanted their text to be accepted as a canonical *vinaya* text. This discussion brings up some very interesting questions about the emergence of the *bodhisattvayāna*, both as a teaching and a social movement. There is an emerging view among scholars that the *bodhisattvayāna* originated within monastic communities, spearheaded by monks, as opposed to a lay-dominated "reformation." The *Mahāvastu* certainly agrees with this hypothesis. There is no doubt that it was composed by monks, who were the only ones who had such a detailed knowledge of the canon. It was probably composed by so-called *vinaya-dhāras*, the keepers and transmitters of the *Vinaya-piṭaka*. If I am correct in my interpretation, then the *Mahāvastu* may be some sort of "missing link," a *bodhisattvayāna* text within a *srāvakayāna* sect. There are many possible reasons for its composition by *srāvakayāna* monks. The *Mahāvastu* may have been composed by monks before the *Mahāyāna* split off as a distinct social group, which happened around the same time (c. 5th century CE). Or the *Mahāvastu* may have been a reaction to the proliferation of *Mahāyāna-sūtras*. As the popularity of the *bodhisattvayāna* increased, perhaps the *srāvakayāna* monks felt pressure to respond to interest in *bodhisattvayāna* teachings, whether from monks or laymen. Once the *Mahāyāna* became a distinct social group, the older sects may have started to lose patronage by *bodhisattvayāna* adherents who were previously still within the fold. Perhaps the *Mahāvastu* was an attempt to create a canonical text that would satisfy those practitioners that followed the

bodhisattvayāna, and keep them within the sect, for both religious and economic reasons. Answers to these questions have plagued Buddhist scholars for decades, and they won't be answered any time soon. However, this study has contributed to our understanding by showing that texts like the *Mahāvastu*, which were dismissed because of the dominance of taxonomic categories like *Hīnayāna*, *Mahāyāna*, or *vinaya*, have much to teach scholars about the emergence of the *bodhisattvayāna*.

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A Bibliography of Death and Dying
in Ancient Indian Religions

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I compiled this bibliography while preparing to teach a class entitled Death and Dying in Indian Religions. In this course, I sought to introduce undergraduates to the basic concepts relevant to life and death, and the process of dying and rebirth. I included surveys on death and dying related to several cultures. My dissertation, at the time of its genesis, involved comparing Buddhist and Hindu notions of the afterlife, and I had a keen interest in commemoration of the dead, the *śrāddha* ritual, and the city of Gayā. These areas in particular, and ancient Hinduism and Buddhism in general, are well-represented here.

This bibliography will be most useful to people interested in a cross-cultural perspective on issues related to death. Additionally, I have included sources which reflect a variety of disciplinary approaches to the issue of death, including anthropology, literature, and medicine. Of these, Humphreys, Huntington and Metcalf, and Reynolds and Earle stand out as excellent anthologies. I have also included several books on general issues of Hinduism—such as the Purāṇas and rituals—to compliment more detailed studies. These will be most useful to those seeking to familiarize themselves with general trends in Hinduism or to introduce students to the basic concepts needed to understand responses to death in Hinduism.

Sources related to my research present a more focused approach. My interest lay in comparing Hindu and Buddhist ideas and practices in dealing with death. I chose to focus on two cities, Gayā and Bodh Gayā, in order to compare two cities that are geographically close to one another, but are associated with different traditions. Several books address how these two traditions influenced one another; Barua's *Gayā and Bodh-gayā: Early History of the Holy Land* offers a good starting point. Because both cities are popular pilgrimage sites, I have included several general sources on pilgrimage, a few on death and pilgrimage, and a handful on these two particular pilgrimages.

Few scholars have written on the *śrāddha* ritual exclusively. It is mentioned in sources on religious ritual or death, but works on the ritual itself are scarce. Kane's *History of Dharmaśāstra* includes some details necessary for exploring *śrāddha*, but the most useful resource are the primary sources. I have included those Purāṇas which address *śrāddha* in the greatest detail.

Another important topic is the commemoration of the dead. I have included sources on commemoration through literature, architectural memorials, and ritual traditions that keep the memory of the deceased alive. Each of these has been placed in a separate sub-heading below. Settar and Sontheimer's *Memorial Stones* is an invaluable resource on hero-stones, an understudied phenomenon in South Asia.

Turning to physical monuments, I recognize the significance of the *stūpa* as a symbol of death, life, and the conquering of death. Here I include many sources on the role of the *stūpa* in early Buddhism. For further resources on Buddhism, Strong's comprehensive bibliography is an excellent resource.

Archaeological works from ancient India are frequently overlooked, but they are the only physical evidence available to scholars of religious practice to determine what ancient Indians—Buddhist or Hindu—actually did. Inscriptions are likewise an invaluable resource and reveal a surprising amount of material on the thoughts of the donee about the afterlife and how one should commemorate the dead.

The popularity and fame of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* led to my inclusion of sources on Tibetan Buddhism. I have not listed the various translations of the book, since these are easily located; instead, the sources I include illuminate many aspects of the Tibetan practices concerning death.

Because my course involved introductory material, the sources included below which do not deal with my dissertation topic are, for the most part, introductory. I excluded some topics altogether. For example, although the issue of *satī* is a major topic of interest in death and dying, I have only given a few related sources here.

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