

Chapter - 4

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Kumar exposes his country's complex interiors in *Husband of a fanatic*- a work replete with provocation. It is a challenging and at times eloquent rumination on Hindu -Muslim tensions in India and its diaspora. Amitava Kumar's research is both concentrated and comprehensive, supported by sensitive documentation of telling details. Kumar organizes his material like a novelist, in patterns of counter points and situational correspondence. It is a sensitive blend of personal and political issues.

Amitava Kumar, a professor of English in the US, is a well-bred Hindu boy. Having grown up in Bihar, India's poorest state, he is now the eponymous husband of a Muslim woman with Pakistani roots. This book began as an essay on the idea of the enemy

engendering a series of journeys over the India-Pakistan border and the interior boundaries of love and hate, as well as to South Africa, New York and London.

To say anything simple about India is to say almost nothing and Kumar resists this with distinction. His trajectory is from Partition carnage, through the destruction of Ayodhya's 16th century mosque by the new Hindus in 1992, towards the nadir of resurgent India: Gujarat's "state pogrom" against Muslims. Kumar tells densely wrought stories about forbidden love, his own marriage, trans-racial border tensions and the poisonous issue of conversion. He confronts his own "contradictions and complicities," most impressively in a story about the blind men of Bhagalpur in Bihar. Here, supposed criminals were criminally blinded by policemen who became high-caste politicians henchmen and went about killing with impunity.

The most substantial chapter concerns "long-distance Nationalist" non-resident financiers of the sangh parivar: Nazi-inspired groups of "new Hindus". He contrasts their insularity with the self-scrutiny of a young Gujarati lawyer -MK Gandhi. Kumar follows Gandhi to South Africa to restage his development of a portmanteau nationalism which inspired the independence struggle. Gandhi's robust sophistication represents Gujarat better than the extremists who regard it as the vanguard for an exclusively Hindu nation. Kumar's return to the state is compelling, but cannot avoid slip comments - most obviously an assertion that no Muslim business survives there. The cumulative insights come from Kumar's equally frequent returns to Bihar, where nuances are brilliantly elaborated.

Amitava Kumar is greatly influenced by Naipaul. Naipaul has an outsize influence on the subsequent generation of post colonial writers and critics, especially South Asian diasporic writers. Kumar who's self-consciously Naipaulian in his approach to mixed-

genre travel writing, has critiqued Naipaul's posture of detachment specifically regarding religious fanaticism. As Kumar puts,

Naipaul's *Finding the centre* was one of the first literary autobiographies I ever read. I was barely out of my teens, and it appealed to me as a story about a literary beginning. To believe seriously in what Naipaul had written about his influences was to find oneself linked to a wider literary circle. *Finding the centre* allowed me to imagine, through Naipaul's example of mentoring, an idea of a community of writers and readers. (HF 53).

This book chronicles the complicity that binds the writer to the rioter. More than a travelogue which takes the reader to Wagah, Patna, Bhagalpur, Karachi, Kashmir and even Johannesburg, this book, then becomes a portrait of the people the author meets in these places, people dealing with consequences of the politics of faith. In the prologue he discusses his meeting with Mr. Barotia, the Bigot. Mr. Barotia was the secretary of the Indian American Intellectuals form. He was also the organizing secretary of the Hindu Swayam Sewak Sangh, the overseas wing of the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh or National Voluntary Organization) a militant group to which the murderer of Mahatma Gandhi once belonged.

The article written for an Indian news paper brought the writer to Mr. Barotia's attention. The issue between them is not personal, it is political. In the summer of 1999, the writer had got married to a Pakistani Muslim, Mona. The writer's name had appeared on a hit list put on a web site in the year 2000. The web site belongs to a group called

Hindu Unity. The writer also wants to see Mr. Barotia because he founds the idea of a faceless enemy unbearable. Mr. Barotia's family had been massacred during the riots in 1947, during the partition of India and Pakistan as told by the BJP leader to the writer. But after the meeting it was learnt that his family had rather left Sindh and crossed the border quite safely. Mr. Barotia invited the writer to his home, saying that after going through all the facts he would change his mind about Muslims. Mr. Barotia began with the names of all the male Indian film stars who were Muslims and married to a Hindu girl; "These women had been forced to convert and the Muslims were having sex with them, thereby defiling them." (HF Prologue).

Mr. Barotia described how the Hindu rioters in Gujarat raped and slaughtered more than a thousand Muslims and taught the Indian minorities a lesson. Mr. Barotia sputtered with rage. "I was a liberal with no space for your secularism. There is no humanity in it. They extol the virtue of violence, they want to kill infidels Islam is not a religion, It is a political ideology to capture land and rape women." (HF Prologue) Mr. Barotia was a strong opponent of Gandhi. He said that when Hindu's were being killed in Pakistan then Gandhi was giving speeches. He said, he felt relaxed when Gandhi was killed. About Gujarat riots he boasted. "Yeh garmi jo Hai, main India mein phaila doonga." (HF Prologue).

After social issues, he turned personal in tone. He said about the writer's wife, "It is okay. You fuck her. And you tell everyone that she is Muslim, and that you keep fucking her! And through her, you keep fucking Islam!" (HF Prologue) According to Mr. Barotia Nehru has "Muslim" morals while chasing and pursuing a married woman (Edwina Mountbatten) and professing love to her. Mr. Barotia explained two kinds of bastards:

those who are “born of Illicit sex” and those who are “despicable in word conduct!” Mr Barotia said that Gandhi was bastard on both counts.

Mr. Barotia had given the writer a set of typewritten sheets on which were printed emphatic bold letters about the tragedy of September 11. There is a strong contrast of views between the writer and Mr Barotia. Both of them were born in small towns in India. Both of them moved to large cities but the move for the writer means that he learnt English and imbibed the values of secularism, Universal rationality and liberalism. While Mr. Barotia remained true to his roots and retained his narrower values. He became a fanatic.

Mr. Barotia had told the writer that he was ungrateful if he forgot how Hindu warriors had saved motherland. Mr. Barotia in his typewritten sheets gave a bogus disquisition on the etymology of the name for Muslims. The Prophet, in order to avenge the lack of respect shown him, founded gangs of powerful youth, offering them girls of their choice, food and wine. For every mishappening in the world, Mr. Barotia blamed Islam and declared: “It was ISLAM, ISLAM and ISLAM the every valiant villain .” (HF Prologue) Mr. Barotia is also a member of the group that claims success in raising funds in the West including investments made by expatriate Indians, to support the Indian government after economic sanctions had been imposed on India following the nuclear tests in 1998.

Mr. Barotia nurses a special anger against people like the writer who were Hindus but were traitors to Hindutva and Hindu cause. According to Mr. Barotia “I am a supporter of Hindu unity and all the organizations which support the Hindu cause”(HF Prologue) According to Mr. Barotia people like the writer were not secular in fact they were confused. He explained that we would learn a lesson when the Muslim population

would increase in India and chop our legs off. He said that Hindutava can be saved through internet. He sent out an e-mail and could talk to 5,000 Hindus at once.

In the first chapter of the book "Wedding in a Camp", the writer visited Shah-e-Alam camp with Shama -his college mate. It was the biggest camp for those who had lost their homes in Gujarat riots. She is now a prominent political activist. Shama got money from a political party in Delhi to distribute among the sufferers of the riots. There was a lot of anger among the children and the women who had witnessed the deaths and the rapes. One of the women asked her nine year old daughter to explain the miserable death of Ehsan Jafri, the congress party legislator. The little girl explained how Jafri had been cut into pieces and burnt.

Shama asked the women to get their children enrolled in the "New Age School". She asked them about songs. A little girl recited a song. From the house, the writer and Shama had gone to the Indian Institute of Management where a meeting was planned for Hindus who were critical of what had been done to Muslim neighbours. They watched a CD which contained a pirated video made by the men who were killing and raping Muslims. It was a sanitized documentary with the camera passing steadily over rows of corpses. At first glance, the burnt bodies resembled the rich customers at expensive spas, covered with ugly mud. The burnt bodies were discovered only when the camera moved closer. After watching the CD Shama insisted on returning to Shah-e-Alam camp. In the camp was a row of metal toilets donated by UNICEF. The camp was housed in the larger space of a mosque. A canvas ceiling had been prepared to provide cover from the summer sun. A makeshift clinic had also been set up and about a dozen patients were standing in a line. Shama distributed money among the campers.

The writer asked the women in the camp to describe their daily routine. A quiet dark-skinned woman with very short hair wanted to show him her wounds. She has been burnt after being raped. Her son was twenty days at that time. Her name was Razia Bano. With her hair burnt, she seemed to have a recently shaved head. While returning from the camp, the writer explained the misery of the women to Shama. She said that he was still unaware of the facts. She said that, "it was very difficult to talk about what had happened. The women described their misery by taking the names of another woman because of shame. Reshma will tell you that this is what was done to Farzana and Farzana will tell you this is what happened with Reshma." (HF 30).

When a fact-finding team visited the camp and asked a little girl if they understood the meaning of the word "balatkaar". Then a nine-year-old girl replied, "Mein Bataoon Didi. Balatkar ka Matlab jab aurat ko nanga karte hain aur phir use jala dete hain." (HF 25) The writer has given a reference of the book *underground* written by Japanese writer Haruki Murakami on the gas attack in the Tokyo subway. Twelve people died and five thousand were injured when some devotees of the Aum Shinsikyo cult released the deadly Sarin gas in the trains. Over nearly a year, Murakami interviewed sixty victims of the attack and presented their stories. He wrote: "Time for me to be heading back to Japan, I thought. Go back and do one solid work, something other than a novel to probe deep into the heart of my estranged country." (HF 41)

In the same way the writer reinforces his purpose in visiting Gujarat which had witnessed unimaginable violence. Murakami had said that "the media had not provided adequate information. The people were only interested in "Who did it" and "Why did they do it." To know the truth, one has to use a fresh perspective.

Amitava Kumar explained how a little boy in the camp had been turned into an agony machine. Whenever he is asked about the terrible story of his mother and sister's killing. He mechanically recited the details. In the office of Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the writer meets Mr. Keshavram Shastri, the chief of the Gujarat VHP. He was ninety seven years old with light coloured watery eyes. Mr. Shastri's office was decorated with photos of the burning railway carriage in Godhara. On 28 February 2002, the train carrying Hindu karsevaks or religious workers had been set alight in Godhra, killing fifty eight persons including women and children. There were pictures of the misery brought down upon the Muslims. Mr. Shastri justified the violence saying, "Karvum Ji pade, Karvun j pade," (It had to be done it had to be done). (HF 71)

Mr. Shastri told the writer that he was working on a paper entitled "Language and Art in Navajo Universe." Mr. Shastri rather spoke at length about the Native American, the intricacies of the active voice and passive voice in Sanskrit, the discovery of gold, silver, glass and Panini's grammar.

Amitava Kumar visited the camps of sufferers of Gujarat riots and the head of VHP in Gujarat to analyse the real situation from different angles. "Mr. Shastri is an intelligent person having a good knowledge of different aspects of grammar but in case of religion he is true to his roots and justified the violence done by Hindus." (HF 68) He blessed the writer with the word "Shubhasheesh" only because of being a good Hindu in front of him.

Mr. Azad who was a tall, middle aged man, with a clipped moustache, was providing the daily basic needs to the sufferers. He was running a small relief camp. Mr. Azad and his wife Uzzma had given up their jobs to do relief. The couple had earlier planned to retire in New Zealand but riots had forced them to change their minds. Mr.

Azad was dissatisfied with the Government's attitude towards the victims of riots. The government had given a sum of Rs. 1250 to those who had lost their movable property.

Mr. Azad remarked that "soon after September 11, George Bush had made a public appeal that innocent Muslims citizen should not be targeted." (HF 81) While in Gujarat, after the Train burning in Godhra, the ruling Bhartiya Janta Party leaders had exhorted people to do the opposite. Gujarat had become a graveyard. Ahmedabad's Hotel Aaram where the writer was staying had also been targeted by the rioters. On 1 March, 2002 a mob had broken down the old door and the rioters had carried away what they could. Abid Ali Aljibhai, the young owner of Aaram told the writer that he was hiding in the hotel with five of his hotel guests. All his guests were Hindus but the murderous crowd would not have waited to find out such details.

In some parts of Ahmedabad, like Naroda - Patiya, the rioters used petrol and kerosene along with cooking gas cylinders. Only the damaged walls and burnt roofs remained. If anyone in Ahmedabad is asked why had that happened then they would very likely give you one of two answers. They would say that "the killing and the destruction was a response to the torching on 27 February in which fifty eight karsevaks had been killed." (HF 82) Or they would answer that particularly in Gujarat where Muslims are a minority and any excuse can be used to kill them. Next door to the Aaram was Hans Inn which had also been destroyed. The Inn was attacked by a mob of at least 5000. The owner of the inn had to flee.

The writer went to Dewan Ballubhai School to take an opinion from the students. He read the news report on how Muslim passengers travelling on Gujarat trains were concealing their identities by adopting Hindu names. He asked them how they felt about

the phenomenon. All the students except one recommended that, “passengers with false names should be chastised or given harsh punishment.” (HF 131) Only one student had written that a passenger should be allowed to go on his way. That student was a Muslim. In mid- April 2002, the Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee Said, “Wherever Muslims are they do not want to live with others peacefully.”(HF 65) His remarks were condemned and the Prime Minister said in response that he was misquoted.

A few days later, Siddharth Varadarajan, a newspaper editor in *Delhi Public* publishes a commentary about an incident that had occurred in Gujarat on 25th March. A Hindu named Geetaben has been murdered by a Hindu mob because she had married a Muslim. When the attackers attempted to kill her husband she had stood in the way. Geetaben had shown more courage and fidelity to the Hindu religion than the Prime Minister. Muslims in Gujarat were so much terrified that mothers told that their children not call them "Ammi" on the street.

The writer wanted to have the opinion of Hindu -Muslim couples in the city. He had taken the phone numbers of such couples from a friend. The friend made him promise that his identity would not be revealed. The writer talked on phone to Aziz, a Muslim who was married to a Hindu and asked about his experience about marrying someone from another religion. But Aziz was so much scared that he refused to share his experiences. Then the writer tried to contact another person Sagar Rao who was a Hindu married to a Muslim. Sagar Rao was the advertising manager of the Newspaper. He was a heavy person with a beard and red - tilak on his forehead. He dressed up like a politician. He asked the writer about the purpose of his coming the writer said that his wife was also a Muslim and he was writing about the Hindu Muslim relationship.

Amitava Kumar is ambivalent about the view whether he is Hindu or Muslim.

The ambivalence is appealing from the position of a writer. Writing allows you to inhabit different points of view and, in this context, the task of mediating the contradictions of belief and secular existence calls for the accommodation of opposed worldviews. Not having to choose one identity over another can actually be a salutary response to a situation where there is a murderous zeal prompting you to choose an identity to the exclusion of all else. Particularly as a writer, it appears to me that in a world where belief is being taken hostage by fundamentalists and where secular or worldly reason is the weapon of the powerful, the exploration of doubt or what I would call the benefits of half-faith holds a promise that one cannot possibly ignore. (HF 222)

When the writer asked Sagar Rao about his marital relations then he replied that both he and his wife are comfortable with each other's relation. According to him both of them worship their Gods and Allah. But during the time of riots things can go wrong. Sagar Rao wants to emphasize that in Hindu-Muslim marriages, even if the husband and wife respect each other's values the society is not satisfied with their relation. The problem is not at the individual level but at the social level. Sagar Rao invited the writer to come home for a cup of tea the next evening. He also said that he had not asked his wife yet and so avoided the writer. The writer could not even get the chance to ask Rao and Aziz if they felt afraid and if not, why not.

The writer shares his experiences about visiting Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad. In front of the office, in an advertisement Gandhi is shown talking to some one. In our country no body follows the values of Gandhi but Gandhi can be used to sell almost anything in India. Gandhi had established Sabarmati Ashram in 1915 and had lived there till 1930. From there he started Dandi March and decided to come back only after India's freedom.

At midnight on 15 August 1947, Gandhi was asleep in the wreckage of Muslim's house. He was in Calcutta, appealing for peace between Hindus and Muslims. On 2 September, Gandhi began fast to death. He did not eat or drink anything for seventy three hours and broke his fast only after he received promises of peace from the members of both communities in Calcutta. In late January 1948 he was shot dead by a Hindu man who believed that he was on the side of Muslims. Gandhi had not returned to Sabarmati since his departure in 1930.

One of Gandhi rules printed on the walls of Sabarmati Ashram titled "Equality of religion" states that everyone should entertain the same respect for the religious faiths of others as one accords to one's own. But these times values mean nothing in contemporary India. Gandhi lived and sacrificed his life for his respect for all religions but could not maintain these values in free India. Once in Calcutta while addressing the crowd, Gandhi had said that Hindus should not object to the cry Allah -u-a-Akbar which was raised by Muslims. In fact he was asserting that everyone is bound to God and not to religion and simultaneously we are all Indians. Gandhi's openness is frankly visible on the walls of Sabarmati Ashram in his words, " I want the cultures of all land's to be blown about my house as freely as possible." (HF 152).

When the writer visited Dorya Kham Gumbat relief camp, he met one Noorjahan who said that she had lost her pets on the very first day of the riots. She showed the cuttings from English and Urdu newspaper which had carried her story about someone who had entered her house hit her at the back and gang raped her. Noorjahan received some money from an agency that was helping women who had been raped. She said that she would use the money to buy back her pets. The camp had been set up in an old high school. The writer attended a wedding for twenty young women in the camp. The grooms sat in a square. The qazi went around to each groom collecting signatures on marriage certificates. The couples were given one Aluminum Trunk which had a blanket, A bedsheet, One or two utensils and a copy of Quran. These wedding gifts had been provided by Jammāt -i -Islami. After taking signatures from all the grooms, the writer was requested to put a few drops of perfume on each of the grooms. The qazi read a short prayer and the ceremony was over. The person sitting there were interested to know the writer. One old man asked his name. The old man assumed that the writer was a Muslim so instead of telling him that he was a Hindu, he answered that, “my name is Safdar Ali.”(HF 241).

Young women in their homes were fearful of further violence. Those who had lost their homes were now marrying so that they would have a roof over their heads. Photographs of mass wedding in the camp were printed in the newspaper Gandhi would have wanted weddings to take place between Hindus and Muslims. He would have found other imaginative ways to break the wall between the victim and the victimizer. Chief Minister Narendra Modi reviled for its involvement in the riots rather rode to power with a clear, sweeping majority. The self justifying logic of the hate mongers was that Muslims

must be annihilated because they are anti-nationals and they are anti-national because they are Muslims. The leader of the VHP, Praveen Bhai Togadia, declared at a press conference that, “after the successful experiment in the Hindutva laboratory of Gujarat, the exercise would be repeated in the rest of India”(HF250).

The writer along with his sister visited a women's remand home. His sister was a doctor. From his sister the writer learnt that there had been charges of prostitution at the remand home. Cars would be sent by ministers and senior officers to pick up girls. There had been a report in the newspaper that women would sometimes parade naked on the roof during the evening. The warden was a dark skinned lady with her hair pulled tightly back was offset by a hint of fashion. The writer wanted to interview those women who had married a man from a different religion. According to the warden those women who were under twenty did not know the difference between right or wrong. They thought only of sex. For them, “Love was lust”. If the women had run away from home or had been kidnapped and if the women were unwilling to go back home they were brought to the remand home for rehabilitation.

Mrs. Das the warden said that, “there were many examples of marriages between men and women of different faiths one Hindu and the other Muslim. Hindu girls often ran away with Muslim boys because Muslim culture is more soft and cultured but it starts fading away after marriage”(HF238). Mrs. Das called a young woman named Nazrana with red sindoor in the parting of her hair. She had married a Hindu youth in a small town in Bihar. Nazrana said that she now had a Hindu name Munki Devi. Her husband's name was Ramkaran Das who was in jail on the charges of abduction and rape of Nazrana. But Nazrana claimed that she was adult and wanted to stay with her husband. Nazrana's

parents claimed that she was not yet sixteen years old. Nazrana had watched the Hindi Film *Gadar* in the company of her lover and had been inspired by the experience.

Gadar portrayed the love story of a Jat truck driver and a Muslim girl, Sakina, who belonged to a rich family. The film is about the trauma of partition when Sakina goes to Lahore on the other side of border and is not allowed to return, Tara Singh her husband follows her there and brings her back to India after defeating half the Pakistani Army. The reunion of the lovers suggests the possibility of the better relations of two nations. Nazrana said about the film's hero and heroine, “ If they could get married a Hindu and A Muslim so can we.” (HF 240).

In Urvashi Butalia's novel about the partition, *The other side of silence* the protagonist was a Muslim named Zainab who was abducted from a refugee's caravan and was sold to Buta Singh, who later married her. After some years a search party looking for abducted women came from Pakistan and took Zainab away. Buta Singh sold his property to raise money for his journey to Pakistan. He found out that Zainab had been forcibly married to a cousin. Buta Singh told his story to the magistrate in court, the official summoned Zainab. In the court because of the pressure from the relatives, she rejected her former husband. The next day, Buta Singh threw himself under a train. A request note found in his pocket wished that he be buried in Zainab's village. It shows that border could exist not only between the countries but also between two loving persons. Mrs. Das the warden also shared her story with the writer that she had adopted a parentless child. Her affection for the boy knew no bounds. She had never told her son that he was adopted. The writer wanted to ask her a question, if she would accept the child if someday she is told his father was actually a Muslim?

“The border that divides the Hindu and Muslim communities in India also divides the two nations”, (The Making of India 112) Akbar puts. The presence of the border is a concrete reality but because it must perform an abstract function barbed wire, serves as an actually existing border even though the maps of each nation dispute the territory. The physical border is a proxy for the profound cracks inside civil society, namely the divisions between Hindu and Muslims. Alter states “ The border cannot easily be rescued either from poetry or even a more ordinary pathos.”(Amritsar to Lahore 42) According to a report in a local newspaper, because of the exchange of fire across the line of control, between India and Pakistan forces had led to a sharp drop in the number of birds, including Siberian cranes, that came to the reserve. The migratory birds do not have any border disputes or they conflict.

The commonest signs on the border are uniforms, guns and imposing fences. On one side of border is written "Mera Bharat Mahan." On the other side, the sign is written in Urdu, "Pakistan Zindabad". The border is rather prosaic flatly representing the language of command used by the state.

The writer had arrived in Lahore. When he reached the Pakistan International Airlines, one man asked for his papers. He had recognized the writer's Indian passport. After a forty minute drive from Lahore, lies the Wagah border . The road to Wagah goes through a small village; full of brick kilns, buffaloes and mustard fields. There were cattle, bullock carts, decorated buses and turbaned men on foot. Anwar Muhammad, the driver had served for fifteen years in Pakistan Army.

Anwar explained that the only vehicle allowed to cross the border was a bus which ran between New Delhi and Lahore. The route was opened in 1999 when Atal Bihari

Vajpayee had made the inaugural trip . The words "Sada -e -Sarhad" were painted on both side of the bus. After a few months, war broke out. The battle was fought in the vicinity of a town called Kargil among snow covered Himalayan peaks. The bus service was stopped after the break up of al l relations between the two countries following the attack on Indian Parliament on 13 December 2001. A guard protects a white line across the tar road. This is the Zero Point. The border between India and Pakistan is approximately 1250 miles but the zero point is the only place where you are allowed to cross. It has arrows on it- so that you could not cross it.

When the writer had first applied for a visa in the US capital, there was a report in Pakistani papers about a change in visa policies. The mili tary government of General Pervez Musharraf had decided to allow tourists from all over the world to visit Pakistan without clearance from the country's consulates abroad. The only exceptions were tourists from India and non-resident Indian's.

The form which the writer downloaded from the web-site carried a warning that you must report for the police registration with in 24 hrs of entry in Pakistan. The writer had brought a green card, proof of permanent employment in the US, a copy of marriage certificate and the faxes from my wife's family in Karachi and Lahore. One part of the form said “ I belong! do not belong to a MILITARY/SEMI MILITARY/POLICE ORGANIZATION.” The writer completed the form and submitted it in the office.

Shabnam the writer's friend described her experience to the writer. She wanted to see her friends in India. When she filled the form, she was asked to fill a form. She was required to write down the names of the places along with Tehsil. She was also asked to write down the names of two people in India who would be her referees and also write

down their parentage. Shabnam said about it, “ These people have found a strategy. If you stop friends from visiting, you also keep folks hating each other.”(HF 251).

The writer ’s trip to Lahore was arranged by his aunt through Pakistani Commissioner. In the month of Ramzan the author went to the office. There were coloured pamphlets with titles like “ Days to Remember in Indian Occupied Kashmir” and “Tell Tale of 1996 Elections in Indian occupied Kashmir. ” He waited for an hour. The official with moustache appeared. The official asked for papers. One man in Khaki Uniform said that he was a driver of a staff car in the Prime Minister's office. He was going to Pakistan to meet his uncle who was close to death. The writer returned in the afternoon. There he had seen waiting around the windows in the wall marked "Ladies" and "Gents." Most of the applicants were Indian Muslims wanting to go to Pakistan to meet relatives. Most of them were squatting on the ground five men spread their mats and began prayers facing Mecca. An older women was reading the Quran under the shade of a tree. A blue dupatta covered her head. The writer ate the chocolate guiltily because others were having Ramzan fast. When religion was asked then the writer has written “ Hindu converted to Islam during marriage.”

The Wagah border reminds us of the Partition the monumental act that carved Pakistan out of India in 1947. The idea of a separate Muslim country was given first by the poet Muhamad Iqbal. The partition precipitated the largest exodus in the history. Nearly one Million people died. The British announced the plan of partition in June of 1947. Three weeks later a boundary commission was set up to separate the Muslim Majority areas from the Hindu Majority ones. Little thought was given to the millions who lost their homes. The principal architect of the partition Cyril Rad cliff, had never been to

India before. However neither Radcliff nor the British can be held responsible for the mad killings that followed.

Saadat Hasan Manto's classic short story "Toba Tek Singh" tells the story of Bishan Singh, an old inmate of a lunatic asylum, who is called by the name of his village: Toba Tek Singh. When he is told about partition he exclaims, "Uper the gur gur the mung the dal of the laltain." That is neither Punjabi nor English nor Hindi nor Urdu - It is just gibberish. His insanity reveals the fundamental absurdity of maps and nations. At the end of the story he dies at the line which is neither Pakistan nor India. In India the writer met Gulzar- an urdu poet and filmmaker from Bombay at a literary festival in Delhi. Gulzar recited a poem to him: I have to go to Wagah and meet Toba Tek Singh's Bishan /I have heard that he is still standing on his swollen legs exactly where Manto had left him. He still mutters, "Uper the gur gur the mung the dal of the laltain.'"(HF232)

According to Stephen Alter:

Nothing separates the two nations. Toba Tek Singh captures the meaning of partition Bishan is the fool who does not know whether he belongs to India or to Pakistan. No Mans land is the symbol; of doubt and despair. Bishan Singh is defining a claim who had no name(Amritsar to Lahore 331).

On 11 May, 1998, India had conducted a test of its nuclear weapons in the desert of Rajasthan. By the end of the month Pakistan also exploded its own nukes realizing the dream of an Islamic bomb. India has named its missile "Prithvi" Hindi for earth. But

Pakistan assumed the Prithvi in question was Prithvi Raj Chauhan a twelfth century Rajput king who resisted the Afghan invader Shahabuddin Gauri. Pakistan named its missile after the aforesaid Afghan invader. After the development of the nuclear weapons in both the countries, the need for the border seems meaningless. There is no need to guard the border when one can destroy a whole city with a push of remote button. The white line at the border seems almost obsolete. The border line remembers the era when fighting means moving soldiers and troops across each other's boundary. The writer Bhisham Sahni in his novel *Tamas* has described the misery of partition.

The riots of partition, were ascribed to the policies of the British and that this would not occur again. But for the last fifty years, there has not been any peace. Riots have continued to take place. Babri Masjid was demolished in 1992. During the partition, leaders like Gandhi and Nehru could not control violence. Sahni shared his experience of Partition with Amitava Kumar. When the train started from Pakistan, a clerk was being teased by the Muslim Pathans. But when the train reached Amritsar, Babu the clerk lost his fear and turned upon the Pathans. The Babu had actually hit a Muslim couple with a rod and did not allow them to board the train to escape the riots. Sahni was the only one among the sleeping passengers who had witnessed Babu's act. This phase of our nation is very important. Instead of fighting each other we should fight against illiteracy and disease. If we keep fighting with each other life for the coming generation will become tough.

The writer narrated his experience when he was a small boy. In the writer's parents home, there was a ceramic plate and a glass. "That plate and glass was used only by the

writer's uncle who suffered from tuberculosis in his youth or a Muslim driver who sometimes ate at our house''.(HF72).

In Abdul Bismilla's short story "Guest is God" a Brahmin woman shows courtesy to a stranger. She serves him very well. During dinner when she discovers that he is Muslim, immediately she picks up the steel tumbler and replaces it with a glass one. A person who follows an insular, closed and uncompromising brand of religious faith's is "Kattar." The English word "Fanatic" would be a close translation for it. A large section of Hindus believe that, "if the Muslims cannot be killed, they should go to Pakistan. Anger and suspicion are a part of Muslims''.(HF251).

After the September 11 attacks, a leader of an Indian group that practices a militant form of Hindutava had made offensive statements about Muslims. He declared, "I did not say that all Muslims are terrorists. I only said that all terrorists are Muslims." (HF 84) The literature of partition has a sense of belonging. Partition recall a sweetness that is precious because, it is recalled from a moment when a streak of happiness emerged from gloomy atmosphere. Rustom once said, "The literature of partition could be called our first national literature, because it is the first literature after the birth of nation''(53).

In Reza's *Aadha Gaoh* the protest against nation is being made in the name of the village. Tannu who returned from battle of World War II, narrates when he had a close shave with death, instead of Mecca or Karbala, he remembered his village. Reza himself wrote the popular television script of the ancient epic Mahabharat. This serial united the whole nation. The serial was so popular that the people delayed cremation of their relatives and the streets became deserted on Sunday mornings. It is matter of pride for our

country that in the holy city of Varanasi the masks for Lord Ram during the Ramlila festival were made by Muslims.

An Urdu writer in Bihar wrote a story about the arrival of a brick from the destroyed mosque in Ayodhya. Two neighbors one Hindu Shivpujan and the other Salamtullah the Muslim lived side by side. When the Hindu Shivpujan brought a brick and arranged a festive ceremony for the brick. But because of the raids of the government Shivpujan could not celebrate the festival. He asked his neighbor to keep the brick. From here we are reminded of those Muslims who had kissed the sandals of Lord Ram accepting them as the footprints of the prophet.

The borders are of two types, one visible and the other invisible. Amit Chaudhary puts, "The border that exists between Hindus and Muslims in our country is invisible but the well defined border on the boundaries of India and Pakistan is visible".(12) The writer narrated his experience from his childhood, when a girl tried to commit suicide after her parents refused to marry her to a Muslim man. This is invisible border, but the border at Wagah is spectacular and well defined. Spectators all over the world come to watch the ceremony. Soldiers on both the sides shout their country's slogan. Soldiers from both India and Pakistan present arms. Then the national flags are lowered and commanders from the two border patrols march up to one another and shake hands. Spectators on both sides are allowed to gaze at each other from a distance of about fifteen feet. But the two enemies make sure not to cross the line. After watching this ceremony, one wonders how hard we work to remain enemies.

In his childhood, the writer was in the habit of posting his scrap book with heroes from the society. When Sunil Gavaskar scored 774 runs the writer posted different

pictures of Gavaskar from different newspapers. Once he posted a picture of two army officers signing on a white sheet of paper in front of them. One is lieutenant General J.S. Aurora and the other is General A.K. Tiger of the Pakistan Army and the scene represented the birth of Bangladesh.

The war between India and Pakistan had started on 3 December, 1971 but the actual fighting had begun when India began to support the liberation struggle. After the end of the war 93000 Pakistan soldiers came to India as prisoners of war. All the men in the Pakistan Army appeared to be Muslims. While the Indian Army was made up of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians. When the war ended, highest gallantry awards were given to members of armed forces. The highest military honour given to a member of the armed forces is the Param Vir Chakra. One of the PVC medals was awarded to Lance Naik Albert Ekka, a christian tribal soldier. He had bayoneted two Pakistani soldiers who had been firing at his unit with a light machine gun. Ekka entered the bunker from where the Pakistanis were firing. He secured a place for the Indians, but due to loss of blood he died as a result of injuries. At the central chowk of Ranchi, a statue of Albert Ekka was installed.

Once the writer's father who was the district Magistrate of Ranchi gave him a Pakistani medal. He would show the medal to his friends and made up stories about the Pakistani gunner from whose body it had been plucked by a brave Indian soldier. The writer's childhood memories of war came to him again in Feb 2000 when there was an attack on a teacher in Goa. The teacher had been attacked by a mob in a town where he had passed a question in test based on a story. The story was in such a way that an Indian soldier injured during the Kargil war in 1999, finds himself in a Pakistan hospital. The

soldier is surprised to be alive. A Pakistani soldier replies that they are both soldiers and human beings. The teacher who narrated this story to students was given a punishment to show the Pakistan soldier in good light. The men beat Kholkar and painted his face black.

Remembering his childhood days Amitava Kumar says:

This question would not have occurred to me in my childhood. Hinduism was simply the faith of my ancestors and my parents. Till I was well into my teens I prayed to Hindu gods and goddesses. Even when I felt faith dropping away from me, and I was left only with the encumbrance of minor superstitions and doubts, I still didn't have any reason to ask the question I have posed above. There were more important questions to be addressed. When I was in college, the world of secular struggles opened in front of me, and the personal drama of faith did not possess its hold any more. It had become important for me to name injustice in the society around me as evil, not my tiny little contacts with my personal gods about whether I could resist temptation or not. (HF 321)

Murli Manohar Joshi, minister in BJP government emphasized that text books should be enthused with National spirit. The ninth grade history text book of Gujarat describes Muslims, Christians and Parsis as foreigners. In an examination question paper

in Uttar Pradesh a question was asked, “If it takes four karsevaks to demolish one mosque, how many does it take to demolish twenty.”(HF 221).

The Pakistani curriculum wants a child to understand the Hindu - Muslim difference, to know evil designs of India, to identify forces working against Pakistan and to make speeches on Jihad. In BJP ruled schools 20,000 Vidya Bharti Schools were opened where students are taught that Indian culture is Hindu culture and that the members of minority groups are foreigners. Such type of claim is absurd in a country where the constitution is secular.

Anthropological survey of India states that there are 4635 communities and homogeneity is along the lines of religion. This research identified 775 social traits relating to settlement, identity, food, marriage, and economy etc. All religious communities share 80 to 90% traits with each other. No body can claim as the original inhabitant of India. The students in Vidya Bharti Schools are taught that Homer adopted Valmiki's Ramayan into an epic called the Iliad, Plato and Pythagoras were based on Indian Tradition, Jesus Christ roamed the Himalayas and the Languages of native American Indians evolved from ancient Indian languages.

Before visiting Pakistan the author went to his former high school and asked the students to write letters to Pakistan students assuming their names and what they feel about the students across the border. The same thing was done to Pakistani students. Students constructed imaginary lives for each other but many of the kids repeated what they had heard from the political leaders and from the media. It means that without judging the right and wrong on both sides all of us have made a pre-assumed approach to each other.

One Pakistani child writes to his unknown Indian friend that he liked Indian culture, people and Indian channels. He wrote that the best thing about Indian dramas is harmony and peace in joint families. Indian should not make films like *Border* fighting Hindu and Muslim. If there were some misconception between two countries that should be sorted out. One Indian student asked her Pakistani friend that why Muslims are very strict about their lifestyle and why Muslim ladies cover their faces all the time. One of the students hopes that both the countries should live again together without any difference. Some of the students showed unfriendly feeling towards each other and stated that India and Pakistan are two very different countries in all aspects and can never be one.

Some Indian students directly blamed Pakistan for sending intruders in India and stated that Pakistan should not cast an evil eye on Kashmir. One Pakistani student shared his experience with a Hindu friend and asked not to be befooled by the political leaders to come in the way of friendship between Hindu and Pakistani students. One of the Indian Muslim student wrote to his Muslim Pakistani friend that both of them belonged to the same creed and culture but he loved India the most and felt sorry for both of them because they have to suffer because of the mistakes of elders. One of the Pakistani students criticized the romantic scenes in Indian movies and asked for good homely comic movies.

One of the Indian students advised Pakistani student to change the attitude of mind and to think in a positive way to create something good. One Pakistani student advised that there is a common trait in their looks, attitude, culture and language. So both the countries should work towards peace. An Indian student advised that the people of both the countries should try to cross the border and share a more friendly relation. One Pakistani

student said that he liked Indian culture and jewelry but hated Indian Army because they fight with Kashmiri friends.

The Hindi film *Border* was based on the fifteen day conflict in 1971. An armored column of the Pakistani forces had crossed the border in the desert of Rajasthan. *Border* pays tribute to the military triumph and the nation's pride. This film was well known in both the countries so the writer made it a common point of discussion among the students in Pakistan. The writer asked the students if they felt that both the countries shared a common culture and history. Some of the students replied what was common between the two countries, film stars like Hrithik, Shahrukh, Aishwaraya and Kareena. In other words the strongest source of history and culture was Bollywood. The song *Ke Ghar Kab Aaoge* pays homage to the home, the aged mother and young wife or beloved. The song was immersed in the emotion of patriotism, sacrifice, pain and glory. A major in the Indian Army showed the letter from his wife. Their son was only twenty one days old. The letter said, "You have another one to look after now..... This is a prayer, an appeal and a request. Come back in one piece, life is so difficult. It was bearable with you around." (HF 98).

On May 28, 1999, the writer was on his way from New York to Toronto to meet the parents of his girlfriend Mona - A Pakistani Muslim whom he was to marry after some days. Kargil war had broken and his in-laws spoke of the war in grim tone. Amitava Kumar thought of those women in India and Pakistan whom war was turning into young widows.

In a village Kukurwar about three hours drive away from Patna, the writer met Muni Devi the widow of Sepoy Hardeo who was killed in Batalik during the Kargil war.

He was a soldier in Bihar Regiment. Munni was twenty eight years old having three children, two daughters and a little son who was six months old when his father died. She showed the writer framed picture of Hardeo Parsad. He was a tall, well built man with dark skin and a light moustache. In Indian Army first he served in north east, mostly Assam and then Somalia before going to Kashmir. Munni said that it was through the news bulletin that they heard of Hardeo's death. The radio had mentioned the village wrong and regiment right. Then the sub divisional magistrate came and confirmed the news of his martyrdom. Soldiers in an Army truck brought Hardeo's corpse wrapped in the National flag. The District officials had told that funeral would be after the arrival of Bihar's C.M. Rabri Devi and her husband. The Chief Minister offered a few words of support to Munni and gave her a cheque.

Munni showed the writer the letters exchanged between them. In the letters written by Hardeo, he had enquired about Munni's health and instructed her to take care of the children. The letters were addressed as "Dear Mother of Manisha" Manisha was their elder daughter. Munni's way of addressing her husband was playful. "Priya Patiji, Namaste, Namaste". She had written that, "a wife's life is incomplete without her husband. She had informed him about the potato and rice harvesting." (HF182) Munni also brought an album of photographs. There were only a handful of pictures in the album showing Hardeo in Somalia, standing in front of a temple in Bhutan, a picture of his funeral including one of the dead body, washed and laid out on the ground and a picture of Hardeo and Munni taken in their happier times.

When the writer asked Munni if she had something to say to war widows in Pakistan. She remarked that she would say nothing to a person who had taken her

husband. Munni had not only lost her husband, she had also lost a link to the broader world which shared her suffering. The writer met other Kargil widows and requested them to say something to war widows on other side. But they refused because for them it was only the grief that was real, little else mattered.

Three years after Kargil war, *The Indian Express* published brief interview with the families of men killed in the fighting. In each interview there was a sense of the emptiness. All parents felt proud that their sons sacrificed their lives but war should be a decisive one as they wanted it to be. Political leaders who spoke belligerently of the enemy had lost no one in the war. They cannot experience the grief of parents unless they lost their son in war. Those who call for a war to end all wars forgets that as nuclear nations, both India and Pakistan can destroy the world. According to a Journalist Praful Bidwai, “both the countries have exchanged about thirteen nuclear threats during the Kargil crisis. We have to teach children about peace not only because our leaders are hypocritical but a large sum of 137 billion dollars was spent on defense in India during the year following Kargil war”.(HF99) Both the countries should make use of this money to fight poverty, illiteracy and unemployment.

During a conversation and essay writing assignment in the state of Rajasthan one of the students asked his teacher what India has achieved by doing nuclear tests? The teacher answered, “after doing nuclear tests India has become a powerful country and the powerful are listened to. Now India can talk about peace aggressively.”(HF151)

In April 2002 US signed an agreement with India to sell eight long range weapon - locating radars for about 146 million dollars .France sold to Pakistan the Agosta submarine and the technology to build. France also sold six Scorpene submarines, a generation ahead

of the Agosta to India at a higher price. Britain had made a successful bid to sell sixty Hawk jets to India. According to a Newspaper report, "India is likely to emerge as the biggest importer of arms in the world".(web) Such transactions raise the spectre of corruption. It was not only that the Kargil war cost 2.3 - 3.5 billion dollars but some shocking truths were also revealed after an audit. According to audit high prices were paid for the metal coffins, bought from a company in US at a cost of 2500 dollars each.

The Defence Minister George Fernandes had been forced to resign but after some time the Prime Minister had re-appointed him. The Government was glorifying the death of a dead soldier and was using funeral as a weapon to arouse national emotion. The writer went to meet Sharmila Pundir. She was the widow of a young pilot, Squadron leader Rajiv Pundir, who had been killed on 28 May 1999 at the start of Kargil conflict. Pundhir had been flying a MI-17 helicopter gunship. Two Pakistani soldiers had been given medals for shooting down the Indian helicopter. Sharmila was a school teacher but she had given up her job. The Government had provided her a licence to operate a gas station. Sharmila was in her early thirties, Rajiv had served India's interventionist war in Sri Lanka, he had been an instructor in nuclear-biological chemical warfare and in addition he had flown missions in the troubled areas of Kashmir.

Sharmila told the writer that she had lost her faith in religion and prayer after husband's death. Her husband's death would have been meaningless if the war in which he had sacrificed his life had not led to peace. A professor of education, Krishna Kumar has written that, "as a topic of study Pakistan is taboo in Indian schools and the same applies to India in Pakistan." (Prejudice and Pride 100).

Nuclear bombs on both sides have granted our obsessions greater legitimacy and also allowed the hysteria to be turned to an unprecedented pitch. The technological threat by itself would not be so immense were it not for the volatility of the emergent fundamentalists movements in both countries. The fundamentalist turn is primarily responsible for the youth especially in non -elite schools - being served the staple diet of poisonous prejudice. According to a liberal group in Pakistan the textbooks used in schools run by Jamaat ud - Daawa teach that, "Muslims alone have the right to rule the world and are allowed to kill infidels that stand in the way of Islam. "(HF 211).

India is presented as Pakistan's sworn enemy and Saudi Arabia as its best friend. Kashmir is presented as Pakistani territory forcibly snatched by Hindus and Pakistan as a country created only for Muslims. The same can be seen on this side of the border. The BJP government has also gone about systematic doctoring the school history books. National steering committee on textbook evaluation reported that Black Stone in Mecca is falsely requisitioned as Shiva's phallic symbol for the greater glory of Hinduism. In these textbooks which are taught in 6000 RSS -run Vidya Bharti Schools matter is modified in such a way so that it promotes bigotry and religious fanaticism in the name of culture .

One writer named P.N. oak has been claiming for some years that the Taj Mahal is in reality an ancient Shiva Temple called Tejo Mahalya which was not built by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan but only commandeered from the hindu King of Jaipur. There is a difference between testimony and rumour. According to Howrence Langer's contention "testimony is a form of remembering while rumour is a form of doing of making happen - by telling". The riots between Hindus and Muslims in India are spread through rumours.

It is responsibility of an efficient administration to take steps to awaken its citizen to the dangers of these rumours.

Amitava Kumar visited a school in the Muslim area of Jahapura in Ahmedabad. Almost all the students had witnessed violence during the riots. Students prepared for their exams with bombs exploding outside their windows. The writer was moved by the undisguised pain of the students. A fourteen year old girl named Reshma said that she didn't understand why the Hindu's called the area in which she lived as Mini Pakistan. The girl said that they were also Indians and should have the same rights as Indians.

The author visited the Little Flowers school in another area of the city. Mr. Jani in his sixties a tall, grey haired man, was the Deputy Principal of the school. When the writer told him his name to repeat it to confirm his religion. Mr. Jani Said, "These matters are very sensitive And in particular, the Muslim Community is a little bit aggressive, a little bit fanatic." (HF120) Mr. Jani told that there was a Muslim boy on the school cricket team. There was some talk of the boy being given the captaincy but Mr. Jani put his foot down. After some years the same Muslim boy appeared with a gun to shoot him. Mr. Jani felt aggressiveness is in their blood.

The writer visited the Mishriwala Camp where five thousand Kashmiri Pandits lived. It was a refugee camp for the Hindu families that had fled the Kashmir Valley because of the fear of Islamic militants at the starts of the insurgency in 1990. Kashmir's entire population is nearly ten million. The Hindu pandit population is nearly ten million. The Hindu pandit population that migrated from the valley is said to be around 135,000. The number of Hindus remaining in the Valley is not more than a few thousand. The writer went to meet Ramesh Pandita, who had worked as a quality control inspector in Sri

Nagar. After leaving Kashmir, he had joined as a sales officer in a processed food company. He told about the attack on the Khir Bhavani Temple in Tula Mulla Sri Nagar. According to Ramesh Pandit a, "Pandits had suffered a lot in Kashmir and still they are undergoing torture in various cities of the country".(HF121) Kumar Said, "Our birth rate is zero per cent. Our death rate is hundred per cent."(HF125).

People were complaining about lack of toilets and power. They needed home and civic amenities. People complained of the suffocating heat in the rooms. An old woman in Delhi camp said that she told herself that it was the cool Kashmiri rain on her face while sitting in front of the cheap coolers. She passed the days with the memories of Kashmir in her heart. The misery was so much worst with them that it was difficult to select which the worst form of loss: "To lose a beloved, to lose a father or a son, or to lose one's entire universe".(HF 142).

People in the camps lived like Chicken in a Coop. The writer asked a student of literature in the camp as to which book he liked most. He answered that he liked Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* as they were waiting for someone to come and help them but no body comes to help them.

In the Rajiv Nagar area of Kashmir, twenty five were killed and thirty five injured by a group of unidentified men with automatic weapons. There was no electricity in that area. The Home Minister was expected to be the scene. The chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir also visited the site. The dead from Rajiv Nagar were being cremated at Jogi Gate. Rajiv Nagar was a colony of makeshift shelters built on a dry and stony river basin. The houses were flimsy structures of wood. Raika forest spread by the side of colony. The killers had vanished in this forest. The people who lived in the settlement were

migrant labourers from Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Sikh gentlemen who had lost his small daughter in the incident said that he was from the congress party and was paying one thousand rupees to everyone from the congress party and everyone who had lost a family member .

A woman Maya Devi had already received Rs. 100,000 from the Government as compensation. She showed the writer the black ink on her right thumb. According to one person there is a natural division that exists between Hindus and Muslims.

There are so many examples in society where Hindus and Muslims maintained relation with each other after marriage. It has happened in society since recent times. Akbar and other members of the Mughal family married Hindu princesses. Shahnawaz Bhutto, grandfather Benazir Bhutto married a Hindu woman after she converted. Asaf Ali a congress leader married Aruna Ganguli. Arbaaz Khan married Mallika Arora. Sohail Khan married Seema Sachdeva. Saif Ali Khan married Amrita Singh. Shahrukh Khan married Gauri.

There is a community in Rajasthan who respect the values of Hindus and Muslims equally. These intriguing people who defy conventional notions of Hindus and Muslims belong to little known Cheeta Merat. Some 400,000 people live in this community. This community inhabits some 160 villages in the vicinity of Ajmer and Beawar towns in Ajmer district. They call themselves Chauhan Rajputs and identify their religion variously as Hindu Muslim.

The writer headed for a village called Dagh and close to the DCB, the letters stood for the military term ditch cum bundh -where the army had dug its trenches and artillery shelters. The border with Pakistan was only a hundred meters' away from there. The

writer was going to the border because he wanted to see evidence of the new mines that had been laid on both sides by the Indian and Pakistani armies. That was a new development. The villagers with land next to the international border were earlier able to farm their land. But the mines changed all that once Delhi papers had reported that the Army was moving the villagers out of their homes, they were no longer able to farm their land.

The soldiers were asking questions when the bus stopped at the check point. If the Soldiers looked at my passport, they would have found out that I had travelled to Pakistan and the trip would suddenly become inconvenient. A journalist in Jammu had told me that if questioned the purpose I was to answer - visit to the shrine of Baba Chamliyal. This shrine was maintained by the soldiers of the Border Security Force. The journalist said, "In India and in Pakistan, you are allowed to do anything in the name of religion".(HF150)

Two younger boys told me about the shrine. The shrine was worshipped on both sides, by both Hindus and Muslims. People take the blessings of the shrine to cure skin ailments. Baba Chamliyal's grave was covered with a green cloth in the manner of Sufi saints but the decorative tiles all around showed Hindu gods and goddesses. Lance Naik Kumar who was guarding the post was an amiable man and told the writer about his self-loading rifle and AK-47s. He talked about the stress during the patrols every day and night and also the boredom. The soldiers at the post there maintain a logbook in which they record all the movements seen on the other side of border, Then BSF commander of the post came and asked the writer to leave. He enquired the writer about his visit, place of birth, marriage and relatives. He asked his purpose to come. The author lied that he had

come to seek the blessings of Baba Chamliyal to have a child. Then the officer handed the writer a sheet which was titled 'Brief History of Religious Place Chamliyal.'

The mela at this place is celebrated by Indians and Pakistanis but for security reasons Pakistanis are not allowed to cross the border, however the pious water of the shrine is placed at the border. The mines were placed there at the border. The effect of the new mines was evident in a small town called Samba which was about a thirty-minute bus-ride away from Jammu. There were many displaced people who were to leave their place because of the mines. Their fields had been laid with mines. Their homes had been destroyed by shelling. Over 1,20,000 villagers have been displaced since 2001 in India alone. Nearly fifty schools have been shut down and thirty-seven health centers closed. Fields were full of the wheats of the last season which was not harvested. Eight to nine hundred families had been uprooted. The farmers were not given any compensation money for their crops and homes. The government provided them eleven kilos of grain and two hundred rupees in cash every month.

One man Joginder Pal of a village near the mining site told the writer that even a five year boy understood what it meant to live on the border in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The children were taught at school how to lie on the ground when there was shelling. The presence of the army means that the disputed border between India and Pakistan exists everywhere in every office, in every street and at all levels. Because of the relations of the two neighboring countries, people has to suffer on both sides. Some people who have migrated to Pakistan during partition cannot come back to attend funeral and weddings of their relatives in India because the neighboring countries had cancelled

diplomatic relations. It was devastating for the people on both sides. There was a fort built by Mughal emperor Akbar atop the hill. It was used by the army for torture.

The writer visited a psychiatry hospital. There was only one clinical psychologist Dr. Sadaquat Rahman. When Dr. Rehman was asked whether there was a rise in the number of patients after the violence in the valley, she answered that 'within next coming 10 years there would be only psychiatry, no medicine'. In fact she was providing me gentle assurance that after a few years the world would go mad. Many BSF soldiers suffered from the effects of trauma. The violence does not spare anybody whether a common man or an army man. The graffiti on the wall outside saying 'Indian Forces Go Back' can be seen. There was a deep-seated suspicion experienced both by the Kashmiris and India soldiers. Everybody was suffering from stress and depression.

The writer went to meet a Kashmiri woman Parveena Ahangar who had founded the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons in 1996. Her son Javed had been missing since 1990 when the soldiers had picked him up during a raid. She waited outside jails and interrogation centers and filed petitions in the court but nothing came out. Parveena said to the writer, "I do not want money. I want my son." (HF 321). Another woman Shafiqua whose husband disappeared in January 2000. To take care of her three small children, she has to wash dishes in nearby homes at a small income of Rs.150 each month. She was now a 'half-widow'. The Indian Muslim Personal Law does not allow remarrying for seven years whose husband has disappeared.

The journey of the Kashmir starts and ends with the same scene that of the sight of soldiers in bunkers and streets. 'Please Prove Your Identity' was a painted sign board

outside a police station. This was the demand and threat under which Kashmiri's lived. The reality of Kashmir's post is that it is shaped both by Hindu and Islamic influences.

Ajay Raina's documentary film *Tell Them the Tree They Had Planted Has Now Grown* is about Raina who is a Hindu and in the film he returns to Kashmir after more than a decade and the film's title comes from a statement that the wife of an old family servant makes when the film-maker returns to home. This film exhibits the images from Charar -a-Sharif. The Charar is the shrine of Sheikh Nuruddin and ordinary men and women can be seen weeping at the shrine shared by both faiths

A small story titled *Terrorist is very popular in Kashmir* . A woman named Farz Ded is walking down a narrow street. From the opposite end of the street, a police patrol approaches her. Her young son starts crying. The commander thinks that the kid is scared but his mother says that he is not afraid . The child cries, “ I want a gun I want a gun ”. (HF 320).

The author met Professor Dalmiya who was in a University in New Jersey where he taught engineering. He belonged to a small town Sambhal in Uttar Pradesh. He was the head of 'Overseas Friends of the BJP'. In Sambhal, most of the people who were converted were Brahmins. After the Partition, only 40 percent population was Muslim but now they were 83 percent. According to Professor, “ Muslims were illiterate, uneducated and with a ghetto mentality. ” (HF161) There were three Hindu Temples which were converted to Mosques by Ba bur. One Hindu Temple converted to Mosque is still called by its earlier name Harihar Mandir by Hindus. According to Professor “if someone would pour milk and Ganga water on the linga inside one of the locked rooms in the temple then an avatar of God Kalki would be born and would slay all those who defy religion.”(HF165).

Another long-distance nationalist that came to the mind of Amitava Kumar is a young Indian barrister who went to South Africa to help with an important lawsuit that was pending in the courts there. That well-dressed lawyer was thrown out of the train by a police constable and left shivering in the cold. The events of journey set into motion a process of political discovery that will allow the young Indian to develop the doctrine of satyagraha.

Gandhi had been hired by Gujarati Muslim businessmen in Pretoria for a fixed period of one year. The ruling white minority was exploiting the Indians. By May 1894, he had helped found the Natal Indian Congress whose members included 'Hindus, Musalmans, Parsis and Christians'. In 1904, a journal called *Indian Opinion* was launched and Gandhi was the main force behind it. He began to develop and communicate to others around him the principles and practice of Satyagraha. An ordinance was passed according to which every Indian would need to register with the registrar and take out a certificate of registration. The government's proposal came to be called the Black Ordinance and members of the community pledged resistance.

Gandhi gave it the name 'Satyagraha' because as he explained it, "Truth (Satya) implies love and (Agraha) engenders firmness and thus serves as a synonym for force. I thus began to call the Indian movement "Satyagraha" that is to say, the Force which is born of Truth and Love or non-violence..." (101) Gandhi studied other religions. When his Christian friend asked him to study Christian religion, he studied it thoroughly. But did not change his faith because he could not accept that Christianity was the perfect or the greatest religion, nor was But Hindu religion with all its irrationality. He was especially critical of Hinduism's sanction of untouchability and its elaborate caste hierarchy. The

battle for the freedom of Indian Nation was not fought by men and women of one religion but by Indians irrespective of their faith.

The people of India contributed in the South African struggle. In Winnie Mandela's *Part of My Soul went with him*, a fellow-prisoner of Mandela's on Robben Island named Maharaj and Laloo Chiba is mentioned. Ahmed Kathrada was also imprisoned with them. The writer met Chiba's niece and she showed the letters that Chiba had written. A letter written to Meena when she was in her teens showed the stamp of the Robben Island Censor office; the writer remembered the letter chiefly because Chiba had noted that when he had last seen Meena she had been only two years old. Meena's parents had a shop. Her father, Mr. Parbhoo was a tailor. Mr. Parbhoo and Chiba had been room-mates. When Chiba came out nearly two decades later, he was elected to parliament in the first democratic elections.

Not only people like Dadoo, or Kathrada, or Chiba, and Timol contributed in the struggle but many ordinary, less-celebrated people had also struggled a lot during the long struggle against apartheid. People like Mr. Parbhoo cooked for Chiba and his comrades. The men who came to his house were from all races, black, white, Indian and coloured. But they did not have an inflated patriotic emotion for justice. Meena's sense of the past is focussed only on the outrage of the imprisonment of the leaders whom she reveres. "They kept them in for so long, so that when they came out they were so old." (HF178).

It was the RSS Shakha from where Professor Dalmiya in New Jersey had picked up beliefs as a kid and how as an adult he saw himself as a part of a fraternity of Hindutava warriors. In his childhood, he used to play in the evening at the Shakha and it provided him bond with the Hindutava.

An Indian Film-maker, Lalit Vachani, has made two films, *The Boy in the Branch* and *The Men in the Tree* exhibiting the process by which little boys were indoctrinated to the Hindutava ideology. The first film centred on a nine-year-old boy Kali who went to the Shakha in evening to play. The games that were played were not the ordinary ones, but the games were like that one man asks: 'Who owns Kashmir?' 'We do, we do,' the children shout collectively. The second film was a sequel to the first. Sripad who acted in the first film as a physical instructor has now turned into a building instructor. According to Sripad, "demolition of Babri Mosque was well planned and involved in sending a fixed number of people from different towns and cities to Ayodhya" (HF221). Kali who had been the focus of the first film, now manages a small shop not interested in Shaka anymore. When asked about his opinion on Babri Mosque, he answered, "They shouldn't have broken the Babri Mosque. It is the ordinary people that get killed." (HF182) Everyone had lost his sense of human touch just because of surroundings. The film-maker visited the Shaka which had been torn down. One of the former member of RSS Shakha told the film-maker that while working in the Shakha, they used to fabricate letters and posters ostensibly written by Muslims. The RSS would suggest that Muslims were planning an attack on Hindus and that aroused riots between the two communities. Because of these fake texts, innocents had to suffer.

When Amitava Kumar visited his old house in Patna, he noticed a RSS Shakha under construction there. He contacted the youths working there to know their point of view. They were chanting a prayer that began with words "Hindus Sashttra ki anant shakti jag rahi/Arya desh ki swadesh bhakti jag rahi....." (HF189) When asked about their

aim, they answered that they wanted everybody to become a shreshta nagrik or good citizen.

Professor Dalmiya had given the writer the number and names of his party members in London. But he asked around for names of those who had written about long - distance nationalism. The writer met Chetan Bhatt who is a political scientist who has written a book on Hindu nationalism. According to him in the late 1980s and early 1990s RSS presence became very explicit. In 1989, 55000 Hindus gathered for the viraat Hindu Sammelan in London. Large part of Hindus were Gujaratis, who had come from Kenya. But after the Rushdie affair and demolition of the Mosque in 1992, the mood among the diasporic Hindutava had changed. People were only talking of Hindus and Muslims.

According to Bhatt 'the VHP started its organization as international, they never forget the diaspora.' In the Indian context any perception of one's faith was cast only in a narrow and antagonistic relation to the other. If there was reason for hope, there was also enough evidence to make one pessimistic. There were several members of parliament and mayors who in the name of multiculturalism, provided support to the most reactionary immigrant groups.

The struggle in which the Ahmed Timol unit was involved brought together Hindus and Muslims, in a fight for social justice. It had united the religious-minded and the secular alike. A three member group is a very tiny part of the universe, and two of the threesome were already dead. But their story was effective. It reminded of the weavers in Bhagalpur in Bihar who observed Shaheedi Divas 'Martyrdom Day' to commemorate the day on which two weavers - one Hindu and the other Muslim, Shashi Kumar and Jahangir-were killed by a single bullet from the police who fired on the weavers demonstration against

the government. They were very poor. Their looms had been destroyed in the Hindu - Muslim riots. The police had fired on workers who could not be divided by religion. On the relationship between the Hindus and the Muslims in their community one weaver said, "was like that between the wrap and the woof." (HF191).

Amitava Kumar's wife's grandparents invited him in Pakistan to attend the party given to celebrate the writer's marriage. Nani wanted him to meet everyone in the family. Nani said that people congratulated her for Mona's wedding. When the author applied for visa to Pakistan then in the column of religion, he had written Hindu. His visa application could not go through then second time in place of religion he had written 'Hindu converted to Islam during marriage'. And his application was accepted.

When people came to dinner, they did not call the writer by his ordinary name but called him Safdar. One of the guests asked him that how his parents had taken the news of getting his converted to Islam. The writer was in a dilemma what to answer. First he had never thought that he was converted and at the same time he was not opposed to being considered a convert either. He did not know the reaction of his parents because he had not told them about his conversion.

Mahatama Gandhi in his autobiography writes, "Marriage among Hindus is no simple matter." (21). But in case of Amitava Kumar distance had made the matter simple. His parents were in India and his younger sister was in America. The writer was living in New Haven in US. He had made the decision himself to marry and told his parents about it. His wife's parents were in Toronto. They were not much happy in marrying their son to a Pakistani Muslim but gave their blessings. Then he informed his parents that he and Mona would get married in a simple ritual arranged by Mona's parents.

On the wedding day, several of Mona's relatives came but he was alone on the groom's side. Both of them signed the marriage certificate in North York in Toronto. Then at Mona's residence they had undergone a brief Islamic ceremony. One week before marriage, his mother-in-law asked him to choose a Muslim name because in Pakistan the marriage of a Muslim to non-Muslim is not recognized.

Amitava Kumar decided the name 'Safdar' after Safdar Hashmi, a dynamic, young theatre activist in India who had been killed on Delhi streets by political goons. When his friend heard about his conversion, he called it a muslim design to covert him. Raza Mir, his Muslim friend after learning this said, "Of course, this is a conversion, bastard.... yaar, these Muslims...."(HF 207) And he laughed. He was a little disturbed by all this and thus had not pressurized his sister to come for the wedding.

In a Pakistani school, when a school boy asked if he had converted then he repeated the lines of a poet; "Main Aadha Hindu hoon, Aadha Musalmaan hoon/ Main pooraa Hindustan hoon."(HF 210). Before his departure to Pakistan Mona's mother had told him the basics of Islam. She told him five types of prayers and five parts of faith.

Amitava Kumar's article describing his marriage and conversion appeared in *Outlook* magazine. His parents have accepted his marriage to a Pakistani Muslim but were unaware of his conversion. He decided to tell his parents through the article in the magazine. After reading that article, he got his mother's letter and realized that he had not offended but hurt her. She had written in the letter that they had not asked Mona to convert her religion and she was wondered that why I was not given that freedom. His mother had written, "Please don't glorify your marriage as one between a Hindu and Muslim; it was a

marriage between a Muslim and a Muslim". (HF 213) His mother had written that he had broken her heart.

Everyday was having a different opinion about my conversion including me. The writer was having a secular claim to it that all religions are a part of our lives. The writer Intizar Hussain described himself as both a Hindu and a Muslim in contrast his parents showed a modern political identity being citizens of a democratic India that allowed a Hindu and a Muslim to marry and accepted their daughter-in-law lovingly.

Mona's parents also took pride in their adherence to a modern political identity as citizens of an Islamic state where marriage between a Muslim and non-Muslim was banned. Mona's mother in her classroom in America told the students about their daughter's marriage to a Hindu man. She said that she could not do this in Pakistan without fear.

During his visit to Pakistan, he read a special section on minorities in Pakistan. One brief story was on Hindus. The story's opening page was a black-and-white image that showed a temple being demolished. There are 2.7 million Hindus in Pakistan and the story was about the deaths of young Hindu women there. The story mentioned a young woman named Mohini who had married a Muslim man. She had declared in court that she had converted to Islam. But soon after she was divorced. Mohini married another Muslim man from the neighborhood. It was rumored that she was sold by her husband. The marriage again ended and Mohini married third time. Six months later, she was dead. It is rumored that she had been killed. While reading the report about the treatment of Hindus in Pakistan, the writer had felt threatened. The writer thought Hindus in Pakistan and Muslims in India feel the same kind of feeling.

When the writer met Mona's Nana and Nani , they had explained to him their departure during Partition. They were living in Lucknow in India. They bribed different Muslim politicians, to get a place in a plane to go to Pakistan but in vain. They went to a hotel in Delhi which was now in Hindu hands. Nani put a bindi on her forehead and registered their names as Mr. and Mrs. Kapoor. One day a woman passing in a car saw Nana enter the hotel and called him by his original name and they were thrown out of the hotel. After sixteen days wait, they got a place in plane and moved to Lahore.

Urvashi Butalia in her book *The other side of silence* had written about her uncle who had stayed behind in Pakistan while rest of the family moved to India during Partition. His name was Rana. Rana said that he listened to the Indian news everyday. He secretly cheered for the Indian cricket team. Rana said that he had not slept even for one night in these forty years without regretting his decision.

No body wants to convert by choice. All the people in history who converted had done this because they were only given one choice whether to choose Islam or to choose death. A mini-series Tamas based on the novel by Bhisham Sahni was broadcasted telling the story of the ninety Sikh women of a village near Rawalpindi, who had jumped into a well to preserve their religion and honour. The women who were abducted are lost in history and drowned in silence.

As many as 75,000 women are said to have been raped and abducted on both sides of the border during Partition. Mountbatten's United Council for Relief and Welfare made a list of such women. The Prime Ministers of both India and Pakistan met and both the governments agreed that forced marriages and conversions will not be recognized. The abducted women must be restored to their families. In December 1949, the Abducted

Persons Bill was passed. Ten years after the Partition about 30000 were re -located from both countries. Some of the women had settled in their new lives so well that they did not want to go back. Moreover there was a fear of rejection. In India, the emphasis on purity and the fear of pollution meant that many Hindus might not take back their daughters and wives who had been with Muslim men. They were no longer pavitra.

Amitava Kumar puts:

The terrible events of September 11 had made it necessary for Americans to ask this question. The logic of that questioning meant, however, that answers were already in place -and rarely were these answers provided by Muslims themselves. On those rare occasions when we saw the Muslims on our television screens, especially Muslims from other countries of the world their responses were predetermined by what had happened on that September morning. It was as if the Muslims of the world were being asked to explain the sum total of their lives and their daily realities in relation to that singular event. (Often, even this chance was not given to them(HF 110).

The mother of a young woman who had died at the World Trade Centre, when asked to speak about Muslims in an HBO documentary said, "I want them tortured...men, women, children." The morality of a Hindu and a Muslim woman can be compared as,

A Hindu woman who had been with a Muslim man. They were no longer pavitra. A Muslim woman did not feel like this. A Hindu woman feels polluted and are no longer worthy of showing their faces in public. Because traditional values are so much deeply ingrained in them. And Muslim women were not stigmatized by society.(HF 106)

Prime Minister Nehru made a public appeal through the newspapers in 1948 saying that the objectionable behaviour of those who did not accept in their homes their abducted relatives will not go tolerated. Mahatma Gandhi made a similar plea that it was a matter of great shame to treat the abducted women as impure.

The most celebrated story about partition and abduction in literature is the story of "Lajwanti" by the urdu writer Rajinder Singh Bedi, Babu Sunderlal who is a social -worker is elected as the secretary of the committee. Sunderlal wins by a majority of eleven votes because his own wife Lajo -Lajwanti has been taken away. Then after some time Lajo returns in the group of women who are exchanged at the border by both sides Lajo is afraid because Sunderlal had always mistreated her. But Sunderlal takes Lajo's hand and brings her home. But he does not ask about her past life and home , nor does he enquire about her feelings whether she missed him or not. He no longer calls her Lajo and thinks of her as a goddess and accordingly calls her. Lajo feels that her husband does not divide the burden of her pain. He is not at ease with her sexuality and can deal with what he experiences as her violation only by turning her into a goddess.

Amitava Kuma's own story took one more turn two years after his marriage in Canada. He got married again in India. A Hindu ceremony was organised by the writer's parents. A priest chanted the shlokas in Sanskrit. His wife Mona enjoyed the wedding very much. Many decades back in 1942, Jawaharlal Nehru's daughter Indira wanted to marry Feroze Gandhi, a Parsi. There was a great controversy. Jawaharlal Nehru was certain that such a marriage would be regarded as a "Betrayal of Hinduism". His conscience did not allow him to forbid the marriage. Then Nehru made a public appeal that though the marriage was against his principles but he had to accept it. He also mentioned that Gandhi had blessed the proposal. The marriage ceremony was held according to vedic rites and for this purpose Feroz had to go through the process of becoming a Hindu.

In Vikram Seth's well-known novel *A Suitable Boy* the protagonist Lata falls in love with a young man whose name is Kabir. When asked by her mother about the cast of the boy, she felt so 'alarmed and miserable' even before some conversation had started. She ends her relationship with Kabir. On being asked the reason, she replies, "Because of my family. However much they irritate me and constrain me, I can't give them up. I know that now. I can't give up my mother" (web). At last she ends up marrying a suitable boy, someone who is from her own Hindu Khatri community.

Cultural studies scholar Hanif Kureishi writes that though "romance is presented as the main motive for conversion, the play of human desires and feelings has no place here." (21). As the example of mixed marriages. Viswanathan only finds "examples of exile, excommunication and existential isolation, as marital union is achieved only by conversion of one partner to the religion of the other."

It is not the impulse of desire that prompts Hindus to convert to the religion of their spouses but instead the more depressing fact that they lose their place in their own community because of their romantic choices. The criminal here is caste. Conversion can be seen differently, not as violence but as movement and fluidity. Viswanathan's argument is that the great political leader of the untouchables or Dalits in India and the architect of the Indian constitution converted to Buddhism in 1956. In Ambedkar's case conversion was break away from the inhumane hierarchical structure of Hinduism.

Hundreds of villages in Meenakshipuram in southern India converted to Islam in 1981. Dalits of Meenakshipuram were fed up with oppression. When asked by a journalist whether the offer of money lured the Dalits away from Hinduism. They totally denied it. Oppression alone was the reason. Conversion was a step towards gaining respect. One of the remarks of the converted were, "Nobody worried about us when we were miserable within Hinduism. No one protested when we suffered untouchability. But once the conversion took place, they were all worried about us." (HF 67) The same village which had been fully neglected was now filled with facilities.

There are so many reasons for conversion sometimes it happens for the sake of love and sometimes for self-respect and dignity. The cancer of caste afflicted people of all faiths in India and conversion was the only way. The question about who is a Hindu did not occur to author's mind in his childhood. For him Hinduism was simply the faith of his ancestors and his parents. In his teens he used to pray Hindu gods and goddesses. When he came to college the world of secular struggles opened in front of him. He realised that most of people were praying to God just for the fulfillment of certain needs. The more corrupt were more religious. His identity as a Hindu was given to him despite his rejection.

The realization about Hindutava did not come to his mind suddenly. The realization arrived as a shock. On 6 December 1992 a mob of Hindu karsevaks demolished the Babri mosque in Ayodhya. The destroyed mosque was built by first Mughal emperor Babar. The Hindutava leaders claimed that it was built there after destroying a temple. In late December 1949, the intruders placed the idol of an infant Lord Ram inside the mosque. This development was regarded by the Hindus as miracle and an act of sacrilege by the Muslims.

The government officials directed to remove the idols from the temple but it could not be done. The officer who was directed to do so could not execute the orders as his own wife had organized an akhand kirtan. After sometime that official joined the BJP and also wins a seat in the national parliament. In 1989 a campaign was started to collect a small amount of Rs.1.25 from each family door-to-door to build temple in Ayodhya. The BJP - VHP was preparing a grassroots support-base as well as a strong electoral bank. In Bhagalpur more than a thousand people mostly Muslim died after one such procession reached there.

The Prime Minister V.P.Singh of the Janta Dal who made government in coalition with the BJP and communist party, announced that 27 percent of all jobs would be reserved for other backward classes. His only aim was to cut the growing base of BJP - VHP. The BJP took the initiative and the senior BJP leader L.K.Advani undertook a rath yatra. The rath was designed to resemble the Chariots driven by warriors in the Hindu epics was actually a DCM -Toyota Van. It was decorated with the Hindu Om and a profusion of lotuses with eight petals. Advani was accompanied by young men dressed to resemble the monkey-god, Lord Hanuman. It was looking like a mingling of religious and

militancy fervor. People welcomed the chariot with their hands folded and sacrificed their blood and money to the leader. This projected an image of a militant and masculine Ram.

They had completely transformed the image of my theological character Ram and made it a revengeful character. Bernard commented: “The transformation of the Ram image from that of a serene, omnipresent, eternally forgiving God to that of an angry, punishing one, armed with numerous weapons, wearing armor and even shoes, is truly remarkable.” (13) The procession was stopped in Bihar when Advani was arrested. On the day when the procession was to reach Ayodhya more than 300000 people had assembled in Ayodhya. The mob destroyed the old mosque. In total 1700 people were killed and about 5500 injured.

After the destruction of the Babri mosque, an Indian news magazine asked for suggestions as what to build on the disputed site. Some people suggested a temple and a mosque facing each other surrounded by fields of marigolds and date palms. A humble auto-rickshaw driver suggested making a Ram-Rahim hospital on the disputed site.

One summer after the Babri mosque had been demolished, Amitava Kumar visited the site. Visitors were standing in line to catch sight of Ram's birth place. There was pride and devotion among the people who visited the birth place of Lord Ram. After a survey it was found that the mostly Kar-Sevaks were poorly educated youth, with little knowledge of English, who were either unemployed or frustrated with meager jobs.

The author feels ambivalent about the phrase that whether he is a Hindu or not. The ambivalence is appealing from the position of a writer. Not having to choose one identity over another can actually be a salutary response to a situation where there is a murderous zeal prompting you to choose one identity to the exclusion of all else. In a world where

belief is being taken hostage by fundamentalists and where secular or worldly reason is the weapon of the powerful, the exploration of doubt or what would be called the benefits of half-faith holds a promise that one cannot possibly ignore. As Mukul Keshavan puts, "The VHP and its cohorts needed to be condemned by the Hindu middle ground, the millions of thus far silent Indians who have seen their ancestral religion taken over and grossly distorted by a bunch of power-hungry individuals." (43).

It does not matter whether a person belongs to a particular religion. The main thing is the human feeling. A rose is a rose, no matter what you call it. Will a change of name lessen the brightness of the Morning star. In July, 2001 the Indian and Pakistan leaders met in Agra. The Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee played host to Pakistan's President General Pervez Musharraf. The summit was a failure because no joint statement could be issued regarding the concrete proposals that included the demand that India and Pakistan not deploy the nuclear weapons, both countries should agree to keep their bombs at reasonable distance from missiles to allow time for mutual consultation and both countries should sign a no-war pact. But this did not prevent the expression of more medieval gestures of enmity. Ten members of Shiv Sena used Gangajal to purify Raj Ghat which Musharraf had visited. It was a retaliatory move because after Atal Bihari Vajpayee's Lahore trip in 1999, a ritual was performed on the Minar-e-Pakistan to purify it.

What is desirable is that the countries should develop a healthy relation. The countries should be like good neighboring friends and people of both countries should be like Israelis. They greet each other with a "Next year in Jerusalem". We should say "Next year in Lahore."

But there is another side to this relationship. Both the countries exchange a large number of goods through business and it is on an increase every year. But the people remain trapped in the situation as described in the film *Gadar* “Hindustanni Cheeni Hamari Khaagenge Our Hum Paan Ke Patte Unke, Magar Uggenge Dono Nafrat.”

(web)Pakistanis are fed up with the Kashmir issue and would much prefer that the money spent on the 500000 strong Pakistani Army be spent on roads, schools and hospitals.

According to Maulana Husain Ahmed Madani, a distinguished scholar and political spokesman who played an important role in *Jamiat Ulama -i-Hind*. According to him the citizens of a desperate faith should fight together for justice and against exploitation. Madani also condemned Hindu nationalists like Vinay Damodar Savarkar who were giving expression to a theory that India was a Hindu land. He wrote in a book that India's minority Muslim and Christian communities do not look upon India as their holy land. Their holy land is in Arabia and Palestine. Jawaharlal Nehru in 1955 made a statement that Muslims can certainly look to Arabia but as the country which was the fountainhead of their religion. But politically and culturally they should look to their own countries.

Madan's response to the writings of the likes of savarkar was especially novel. He had described Muslims as the original inhabitants of India. This was because Adam, the founder of the Islamic prophetic tradition, after his expulsion from paradise, had descended on Adam's Peak in Ceylon. His descendants-which would mean all humans-were in a sense also Indians, with Muslims certainly claiming pride of place in that land Muslims stayed in India even after their deaths because they buried their dead.

The question of being a Muslim had become central after September incident thereafter, the meaning of terms like 'Islam' or Muslim earlier assumed to be transparent,

came to be equated with terrors. Qasim and Sultan aren't asked to explain what they believe in, what their needs are, and how their dreams are like billions of other human beings the world over. Quasim was Amitava Kumar's driver in Lahore with his priase for workers being paid overtime in America. Sultan used to work at the windows on the world restaurant in world trade centre.

Albert Camus, in his Nobel lecture had said:

The writer cannot serve those who make history: he serves those who have to live it. In all the reports that were published after the events of September, I must confess that I would read newspapers and look for stories that would tell me about people, ordinary people whose lives had been overtaken by forces that they were powerless to anticipate or oppose.(HF 261)

In 1893, Swami Vivekananda travelled to Chicago to speak at the parliament of world religious. During one of his interventions, he presented the assembled delegates a fable. A small frog lived in a well. One day, another frog which lived in the sea fell into the well. The small frog said, "The sea. How big is that? Is it as big as my well?" The frog from the sea laughed at the question and explained that the well was tiny when compared to where he had come from. But said the frog of the well, "nothing can be bigger than my well, there can be nothing bigger than this. This fellow is a liar, so turn him out. Vivekananda told his audience that the Hindu, the Christian, the Muslim each person was sitting in his 'own little well'.

Pankaj Mishra informs us that,

after the destruction of the Babri mosque, the Hindus in Southern California, describing themselves as concerned NRIs' could do no better than take out an advertisement in the Indian Express deploring the government's short lived nationalistic (Hindutava) organizations and urging their 'brothers and sisters in India' to aim at the restoration of common sets of values and laws based on the 6000 year heritage.(119)

There was no concern shown for the nearly 2000 Indians killed in the riots. Lal writes, "As if in anticipation of questions about their entitlement to intervene in the politics of the homeland, the California Hindus argued that of the one million NRI's living in the United States, over 900,000 call Bharat (India) as (sic) their Mother. Hindus have only one place (other than Nepal) to call home. Their roots are in Bharat." (web) But about the remaining 100,000. Our remote-control nationalists are claiming the right to call Muslims from India anti-national.

What is also being increasingly observed is the translation of the old fundamentalism into a more fashionable one. Hindus needed to unite throughout the world. On September America suffered the first onslaught by the jihadis, we have been suffering this onslaught for the last 1000 years. She bought sewing machines with the money that the government gave her neighborhood to cut and sew. Rasheeda said that she had no money for dowries for their marriage. Rasheeda asked the writer to search for a young idealistic Muslim men' who would not demand dowry.

Hundreds of Hindu students had been massacred in the muslim localities. The army had been fired upon by Muslim in a mosque Pakistani as well as black flags had been hoisted over Muslim homes. Muslims had planned to molest Hindu women and the principal of a women's college had ordered the students to leave and thereby saved them from 'a fate worse than death.' Despite being false, these rumours had been widely reported, and the government had remained paralyzed.

Mallika the fourteen-year old girl whose right leg had been cut off by a Hindu mob with a machete. But she survived. She had thrown herself into a pond that was covered with hyacinth. Later she had been fished out by a passing army patrol. Sixty-one people were killed in a village called Chanderi and Mallika was the only witness to the crime.

The author had visited Bhagalpur where riots had started on 24 October 1989. More than 11,500 houses had been damaged in a large area covering 200 villages. The total death toll was about 1000. The riots were said to be worst in the country since the riots of 1947.

Amitava Kumar met the sufferers of the riots. He met Sheikh Nazim who was a thirty-five-year old farmer and lived with his wife and two children. His first wife and children were among those who were killed in the riots. During the time of riots, Nazim fled to another village and stayed there for twenty-two days. He discovered his wife's and children dead bodies. As a compensation for the killing of his wife, he was given Rs.350,000 and money that he got used to buy lands. He remarried and produced again and recreated the world that he had lost. In a sense he prospered from his misfortunes.

The writer met Rasheeda who was a well-spoken, beautiful widow with three college going children. Her husband had been the moinin at the mosque close by and he

was stabbed in the neck during riots. She had got only one-third of the amount that Nazim had got because she had lost only one family member. Mallika, the attacked girl, had been offered money and later threatened by those she had named in her witness report of the massacre. They had wanted her to withdraw their names. But Mallika had decided that she would seek justice instead. In February 2001, more than a decade after the tragedy, the court had delivered its judgment. The killers of Mallika's parents, Bijli Singh and Rameshwar Prasad had been sentenced to life imprisonment along with a third man, Shambhu Pandit, the one who had wielded the machete and married Mallika. In Chanderi, all the houses were empty; they had shiny new tin roofs. The roofs were a gift from the government. In the absence of the inhabitants, the only evidence of the violence was offered by charred clothes, blackened utensils and burnt paper soaked by the rain. Mohammed Suleiman, a man from Chanderi, said that when he had returned to his gutted home, he had been threatened. His former neighbors said to him, "This time when we hit you, tin roofs were given to you; next time we will hit you so much that you will get silver roofs." (HF 201).

Amitava Kumar met Mallika in the Chanderi village; she saw her father being beheaded like a goat. People were murdered and pushed into the pond. Mallika's leg was chopped at the very moment when she fell in the pond because she was held up by the corpses beneath her. After seven to eight hours passed and the army patrol rescued her. The major was very kind. He had asked the soldiers in his patrol if any one of them would volunteer to marry her. Mohammed Taj, of 3 JK rifles, married her. But after three years, he disappeared with a good part of the money that she received as a compensation for her

parents deaths. According to Mallika Taj became a separatist militant in the Kashmir valley she was left alone with two small children.

In 1980 twenty -five under-trial prisoners had been blinded by the police. On the wounded eyes of the prisoners, the policeman had poured acid. The men had actually been blinded in the thanas, the police stations and then brought to jail to be admitted as under trials. The author met the men blinded by the police. Their pink eyeballs still showed how the acid had burnt the flesh beneath their eyes. One of the blinded man was Anil Yadav. He was the Kidnapper of that area. The other blind man was a 'rape master' as explained by the people. He would rape his victims on the road, the girl lying on the tarmac beneath him. The police had taken such step to control over the crime in the area.

Amitava Kumar wanted to meet the police officer who had been held guilty of blinding criminals. Parmeshwar Prasad who was the officer in charge of the Sanhaura police station. When the blinding came to light, he was suspended from duty and subjected to an inquiry from the intelligence wing of the government. For ten years, he was without job. He was not a very well-educated man and he was already in his sixties but he remembered the ranks of all the policeman who were indicted in that case and the details of the judgements that were read against them. He felt that his life had been made a part of a farcical political tamasha.

He recalled the politician from Bihar who had appeared in parliament in Delhi with a bandage tied on his eyes. When he was asked about the tools used for blinding. He smiled and said, "Sir, I had used the needle used to sew jute bags. I kept the acid in a small bottle which has its own rubber dropper." When asked what type of acid they used. He answered that they used the weaker liquid that jewelers use to clean gold.

Prasad the hawaldar lost his levity when asked him if any of his superiors knew what he was doing. According to him, he was turned into a scape-goat by all his senior police officials. He has lost his job and social reputation. He would have retired on a higher rank. A hundred thousand people turned up on the streets of Bhagalpur to show support for the policemen. When he was asked how he justified taking a man's eyesight. He said that all of those victims were villains.

When the writer was about to leave, Prasad's eyes became rheumy and he hugged the writer's feet to seek him a help either from the government or from his side. After having been under an order of suspension for nearly ten years, Prasad had been admitted back into the police force. Riots had broken out in Bhagalpur. The blood bath during these riots was so widespread that it said to be the most serious after partition. Prasad started another story about his toughness.

There was a young Muslim man in town who had eloped with a Hindu girl. Prasad had caught them and given the young man a good thrashing in front of her father. The girl recanted. Her father was very grateful and later on married her to a Hindu of their own caste. The name of the Muslim youth was Rupu Khan and that of Hindu girl was Pinky.

The writer decided to know the story from a different angle. So he met Bunni Begum. She had been the mother of the murdered Muslim youth. She was a widow and a survivor of 1989 Bhagalpur riots. During the riots the Muslim women had been hiding themselves in the house of a neighbour, a Hindu Politician. But the leader was not able to protect the ladies whom he had given shelter. The politician was an upper class Hindu whose daughter later fell in love with Bunni's son. The same couple discussed earlier. When both of them ran away from home, the politician came to Bunni's house with a

police officer. The police threatened her that her son would be taught a lesson. When her son came back, the politician's son came down the street with a gun and called Rupu Kalan out of his house and murdered him. The murderer was not punished because it was clear that the police was with the politician.

When Prasad narrated the story to the writer he knew that he was a Hindu but was unaware of the fact that he was married to a Muslim. In his mind, he was the right person to appreciate his deeds. Oddly enough, Bunni had also misunderstood him she thought that Amitava Kumar was a Muslim because he was talking to her in Urdu. She made everytime a remark about the kafirs, the unbelievers who mistreated her son. Amitava Kumar felt the need to declare that he was a fake and a counterfeit Muslim.

We had inherited the modern idea that in the governance of our country there would be a separation of the state and religion, but what it really come to mean in our hearts was that we were to be suspicious of religion itself. Our names marked us as belonging to a particular religion and we signaled this affiliation to those around us, but in our own minds we regarded ourselves as free from the biases of our religion and indeed even the entrapment of faith. Ordinary people applied even the entrapment of faith. Ordinary people applied tilak and poured water over their stone -gods, and then murdered their fellow humans who practised another faith. In the name of religion, the people killed each other during riots. As left minded secularist, we resisted ritual. We wanted to stand between the people and the riots. Religion is a dubious source of modern identity. It was much easier to follow the path of the other secularist and simply focus on the violence and speak against the inhumanity of murder.

The writer met the headmaster of a local school. He had no legs and small stumps for hands. The writer mistook him for a beggar but when he saw pens in his pocket it came to know that he was educated. He said that he had been given an award by the government. An article had been written about him in the magazine printed by the public relations department. He had tried to bring peace between Hindus and Muslims. He had been given a local award for having provided shelter to Muslim students in his own house during riots. He wanted the writer to write an article on him so that he could fetch a government award.

Prasad had wanted his stamp-vendor's license. The headmaster wanted an award for his kindness during the riots. Bunni was in need of a telephone connection in her house. Rasheeda was looking for eligible bachelors for her unwed daughters. Anil Yadav wanted a more generous stipend from the government. They wanted the writer to fulfill their needs. Amitava said that he could do nothing except writing about man's injustice to man. His job only is to record the pain of the people faithfully.

Amitava Kumar learnt that violence adds insult to injury of the victims by causing a painful financial setback. The frustration was reflected clearly on the faces of victims. How they had quickly come to despise their experience because it had rendered them helpless or had imposed on them the frustrating burden of having to weakly say no, over and over again, to offers of charity. The penalty of privilege affects all of us even to witness it silently is to experience the erosion of one's humanity. A vacuum grows in the middle-class soul. The emptiness gets filled up with the sewage of guilt -guilt over one's lack of charity, or patience or love or even the absence of more essential shame or culpability.

One blind man came to meet the writer with his two younger girls. He described to him how the policeman had made him blind. The acid had left burn marks on the man's face. It had also damaged his hearing power. He was made blind by Prasad. He wanted to have a license to sell oil. Prasad also wanted to have a license. It is bizarre to imagine that both of these men, the victim and the victimizer, have the same desire. He emphasized the writer to take him to America or to give him financial help. Human rights add respect to our lives because they make life worth living. They are based on the principle that all persons have a right to lead a life of dignity, free from fear and deprivation. These riots violated all these norms.

In India, we have Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Jains and Buddhists as minorities among others. India's partition in 1947 evokes bad memories. Though the Indian Constitution assures the minorities that they and their identity would be secure (Articles 25-28 and 29-30), the minorities still feel insecure. Is this insecurity a result of other reflections? The undercurrent is that the minorities feel that the majority is waiting to gobble them while the latter feel that too many concessions have been given to the minorities. What is the real situation? There is a general impression that the issue of minorities has become an issue of convenience politically, socially and economically. It is a guaranteed vote bank for many leaders who become minorities champion just before elections.

The leaders hail from their respective communities and wish the community members to vote for them in the name of religion. The promises are soon forgotten, rather brushed under the carpet to be dusted and used in the next elections. Meanwhile, the common man, irrespective of being a Muslim, Sikh or Christian, continues with the day-to-

day business of living. The political leaders make various combinations and permutations to attain power. Vote bank politics does not allow assimilation of the minorities into the national mainstream.

Why do we not have an identity crisis in Canada or the US? We take pains to be Americans, Britons, and Canadians and try to fit in their culture, adapting to their norms and way of life. The minorities or the majority have no qualms there. Why this insecurity in India, which is our own land? The question of minority's insecurity has got a lot to do with development. There is nothing in India to hold back the minorities. They have ample opportunities to grow.

A good education can do wonders for anyone as it can for the minorities. English is an international language. Every person who wants to move ahead in life needs to be proficient in it. But many among the minorities fail to understand its importance. Talking about the Sikhs and Muslims, why is English education not imparted in a big way in the educational institutions run by the respective religious bodies? People from Punjab go abroad, realise the importance of the language as lingua franca. They learn it when they realize that they cannot do without it. But the people in the villages don't understand this. There is nobody to enlighten them on this though there are plenty of saints and deras in the rural areas. Many bright students of these communities suffer in life because they don't know English. Why can't English be taught in the madrasas or in the SGPC-run institutions at the school level? A handsome salary to the teachers would draw the best of talent to the villages.

It would also solve the problem of unemployment and migration to foreign lands. In such schools, English, scientific study and curiosity should form the cruse of education.

Our culture needs to be preserved but a sensible approach needs to be adopted so that our children move positively towards the future. These religious institutions should spend less on marble floors in the temples, gurudwaras or mosques and more on establishing internationally acclaimed schools which would produce world-class students as well as citizens. In Punjab's border areas many youths are seen steeped into drugs and other vices. There are no good schools, colleges or employing agencies. What would we do with an ostentatious display of our wealth in our religious places when our next generation is sinking in mire, the minorities should first put their house in order. With ample funds in our basket, the minorities need to gear their lives towards positive development.

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Husband of A Fanatic is abbreviated as H F