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Year of India: Introduction to the Special Issue

Dan Paracka

The Year of India marked the 34th anniversary of Kennesaw State University’s (KSU) award-winning annual country study program. The program has been a major force for internationalizing our campus introducing thousands of students to the rich diversity of world cultures that make up the human family and helping them to develop a complex understanding of today’s interdependent world. The program draws upon the expertise of our faculty to offer special courses, organize lectures and events, engage in collaborative research, partner with Indian universities and community groups, and mentor and assist students interested in learning about India and its place in a global society.

Rather than simply continue the program’s traditional format, the Year of India witnessed the implementation of several new features including the integration of a new organizational model that seeks to empower academic colleges by providing them with a more active role in program development and more focused intentional curricular connections. The new model also provides enhanced leadership opportunities for faculty with expertise related to the country of study. Finally, the new model provides a very exciting and unique opportunity for students to enroll in an interdisciplinary team-taught course with a very affordable study abroad component.

As a way of introducing our campus community to India, I published the following essay on-line making it widely available before the program began. The essay is reprinted here as a way to help readers, especially those unfamiliar with Indian history and society, have a valuable entry point for further learning, inquiry, and understanding of India, as well as to provide a useful introduction to the issues examined in this volume.

Unity in Diversity

North, South, Central, East, and West across India the winds of change constantly blow. While Indian history, like all great civilizations, is replete with wars and violence, India is remarkable for its emphasis on non-violence and peaceful coexistence across religious and cultural differences. Boundless in its diversity, too big for one deity, it is a land of deep spirituality and mundane inanities, a place where sages abandon worldly possessions seeking liberation and where maharajas erected exquisite pleasure palaces. Home of the Himalayas and life-giving rivers—the Saraswati, Ganges, Yamuna, Narmada, Brahmaputra, Kshipra, Godavari, and Kaveri, as well as the monsoon seasons of the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean, India is a crossroads and fertile land.

The world’s largest secular democracy and the second most populous country in the world (soon projected to be the most), with more than 400 ethnic groups and languages, India is the birthplace of four major world religions (Buddhism,
Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism), boasts large numbers of Muslims (2nd largest Muslim population in the world – approximately 170 million) and long-standing Christian communities (approximately 24 million) as well as many other religious groups including Jewish and Parsi. The Apostle Thomas is said to have arrived on the Malabar Coast of India around 50 CE. Approximately 80% of Indians are Hindu but only 36% speak Hindi as their first language. There is no national language of India, but the official languages of government are Hindi and English. The Indian Constitution also recognizes 22 languages, of which the most widely spoken are Telugu, Bengali, Marathi, Tamil, Urdu, and Gujarati. India’s diversity of religious practices, languages, and ethnic origins is remarkable (including for example people of African origin who have lived in India for at least the past eight centuries). Devoted to the divine, Hinduism, at its core, recognizes the sacredness of life reflecting its complexities and the notion of unity in diversity.

**World Heritage**

The ancient Indus valley civilization of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro (in present day Pakistan) dates back over 5,000 years and was larger than that of Egypt’s Nile Valley or Mesopotamia. There are 35 (27 cultural, seven natural, and one mixed) World Heritage Sites in India that are recognized by UNESCO. The most famous is the architectural marble splendor, the Taj Mahal, built by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his wife Mumtaz who died in childbirth in 1629. Other treasures include places such as the Ajanta and Ellora caves or Rajaraja’s red sandstone temple complex at Tanjore with its ancient Cholan Empire murals.

The great books of India or four Vedas include: the *Rig-Veda* which comprises more than 1,000 hymns in praise of 33 gods and refers to rituals associated with these gods; the rich epic narrative tales of the *Brahmanas*; the *Aranyakas* with rituals for the spiritually advanced; and the *Upanishads* that focus on the relationship of the self with the cosmos (McGee, 1996, p. 20). The Vedas introduce the concepts of Dharma (divine, social, and ethical order of the universe) and Karma (cause and effect of individual action), and the basis for the caste system. These include works such as: the *Mahabharata* with its tragic battles, where good people on both sides die, the longest poem ever written (15 times longer than the Bible); the *Bhagavadgita* (Song of the Lord) with its wisdom and story of Lord Krishna advising the warrior Arjuna; and the *Ramayana* with its timeless and popular story of the husband Rama, wife Sita, and the monkey Hanuman. Adding the story of Prince Siddhartha and the founding of Buddhism, India has gifted the world a remarkable literary and philosophical legacy.

Another unique and important cultural heritage of India that has found proponents all over the world is yoga. Yoga refers to disciplined activity that aims to promote mental concentration as a path to spiritual liberation. It helps the practitioner move self-awareness away from an entanglement with worldly objects to perceive deeper truths of the divine (McGee, 1996, p. 32). Describing yoga as the freedom of discipline, Donna Farhi (2004) notes: “Sadness is moving through me, but sadness is not who I am; excitement is moving through me, but excitement is not who I am; grief is moving through me, but grief is not only who I am” (p. 72).
In the West, yoga has become a popular system of physical exercises aim at harmonizing the body with the mind and breath that is touted for having many health benefits. The Year of India at KSU will kick-off on International Yoga Day with an opportunity for faculty, staff, and students to learn more about the practice. KSU also offers regular courses on yoga.

**Invaders, Trade, and Empires**

Would-be conquerors such as Darius (Persians), Tamburlaine (Mongols), and Alexander the Great (Greeks) could not defeat the Indian spirit. Instead, as in the case with the Mughal empire, “a hybrid Indo-Islamic civilization emerged, along with hybrid languages—notably Deccani and Urdu—which mixed the Sanskrit-derived vernaculars of India with Turkish, Persian, and Arabic words” (Dalrymple, 2015, p. 65). Generally, in the wake of military conquest, Hindus have tended to prefer religious syncretism over religious exclusivism (Gier, 2014, p. 4).

The Greek defeat and departure around 327 BCE was soon followed by the rise of Chandragupta Maurya, one of the greatest leaders and organizers of Indian history (Wood, 2007, p. 71). Chandragupta’s famous Athashastra is an important early text on the art of statecraft, power politics, and diplomacy. Even more famous than Chandragupta is his grandson Ashoka whose violent rule is said to have been transformed after converting to Buddhism and adopting a peaceful and compassionate stance. He established rules of good governance that included religious tolerance and non-violence and made many practical infrastructural improvements such as roads and water wells for the well-being of society. Buddhism, India’s most successful cultural export, spread far and wide during the reign of Ashoka and became a major influence on the cultures of China and East Asia (Wood, 2007, p. 97). The golden age of the Guptas was a pluralist time that saw the founding of the world’s first residential university at Nalanda drawing students from Persia and East Asia. It was also during the reign of the Guptas that the famous Kama Sutra exposition on erotic love and human sexuality was composed.

India has been at the center of vast overland and ocean-going trade routes for more than 2,000 years. Cultural exchange over these routes was extensive. The Spice Route brought Arab, Greek, and Roman seafaring merchants to India, and the Silk Road established contact between China, India, and Europe. Tamil poems dating back to the 2nd century BCE tell of Greek and Roman visitors. The Khyber Pass and the Hindu Kush connected, by what became known as the Grand Trunk Road, the overland route between India and China (over 1,600 miles passing through Kabul, Afghanistan; Lahore, Pakistan; and Delhi, India). But ships also sailed between these great empires and throughout Southeast Asia. Indeed, Muslim and Hindu traditions spread successfully to Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam primarily by sea traders, not overland conquerors (Gier, 2014, p. 6).

Illustrating the importance of trade in cultural exchange, British historian Michael Wood (2007) notes: “The Roman craze for pepper was all about food, of course. Nothing better underlines the idea that the story of civilization is also the history of food and cooking; and Indian cooking … was perhaps the first
international cuisine…. In the Roman Empire the celebrity chef Apicius wrote a famous cookbook in which 350 of the 500 recipes … used pepper and southern Indian spices” (p. 103). Courses and programs featuring Indian cuisine will be an important part of introducing students to Indian culture during the Year of India program. Indian vegetarian cuisine and its nutritional health benefits will be studied as well as connections to Ayurveda, a holistic system of healthcare (diet, nutrition, exercise) that emphasizes prevention and is the world’s oldest school of medicine having been practiced in India for more than 5,000 years (Arnett, 2014, p. 22).

It was sea trade that first brought Islam to India but the Muslim Mughal Empire, which ruled vast territories of northern India from 1526-1857, came over land. Mughal is the Arabic and Persian form of Mongol but the Mughal Empire was actually founded by Zahir-ud-din Muhammed Babur, a Chaghatai Turk born in 1483 in today’s Uzbekistan (Kaplan, 2011, p. 121). Babur’s grandson, Akbar the Great, known for his rule of reason and tolerance of diversity, is said to have reflected: “It cannot be wisdom to assert the truth of one faith over another. The wise person makes justice his guide and learns from all” (Wood, 2007, p. 194). He held weekly seminars and conferences with representatives of Hindus, Muslims, Jews, Christians, Jains, Sikhs, and Zorastrians to discuss the tenets of these faiths and built a “City of Yogis” (Gier, 2014, pp. xv, 2).

The Sufi mystics associated with the peaceful spread of Islam in India often regarded the Hindu scriptures as divinely inspired. As William Dalrymple (2015) explains, “In village folk traditions, the practice of the two faiths came close to blending into one. Hindus would visit the graves of Sufi masters and Muslims would leave offerings at Hindu shrines” (p. 65). Religious syncretism was a common practice in pre-colonial India as evidenced by circumstances surrounding the founding of the Sikh Golden Temple at Amritsar as the foundation stone is said to have been laid by a famous Muslim saint Mian Mir and the murals of the interior walls depicted stories of Hindu mythology. At its dedication in 1588, Guru Arjan explained the four cardinal doors: “My faith is for the people of all castes and creeds from which every direction they come and to which ever direction they bow” (Gier, 2014, pp. 208-209). It was the British in the second half of the 19th century who first regarded Sikhism as a separate religion from Hinduism (Gier, 2014, p. 210).

Akbar initiated tax reforms, reorganized the civil service, and called for equal treatment before the law for Muslims and Hindus. However, the sixth ruler of the Mughals, Aurangzeb, who Reigns from 1658-1707, reinstated shari’ah law and re-imposed a tax on non-Muslims. The Mughal Empire granted the British East India Company permission to trade in India in 1612. In 1765 the Treaty of Allahabad gave the East India Company the diwan, the rule of Bengal (including the states of Bihar and Orissa), and the right to collect taxes, marking the beginning of British rule in India. Between the 1760s and 1799, the British fought four wars with the Muslim rulers of Mysore ending in the East India Company’s 50,000 strong armed forces besieging the fortress of Seringapatam and the death of Sultan Tipu (Wood, 2007, p. 225). Most importantly, British control of the seas’ rich trade routes was extremely lucrative. As they gained military and political control over the territory, Britain further exploited India’s natural resources, agricultural outputs like cotton and tea, and manpower including extensive use of Indian soldiers in its army.
(Chatterjee, 2001; Sen, 2017). As its most valuable possession, India truly was the jewel in the crown of the British Empire. And if political and economic subjugation was not enough, Lord Macaulay’s 1835 minute on Indian education proclaimed English as the superior language of instruction.

The Caste System

Traditionally, Indian society consists of four varnas or classes: the Brahmins (priestly people), the Kshatriyas (rulers, administrators, and warriors), the Vaishyas (artisans, merchants, tradesmen, and farmers), and Shudras (labor classes) with an implicit fifth element, being those people deemed to be entirely outside its scope, such as tribal people and untouchables or dalit. Occupational specialization has long been an important aspect of caste and traditionally may have contributed to a sense of interdependence within communities as economic ties served to cut across caste barriers (Srinivas, 1957, pp. 529-530).

Such distinctions have been understood as contributing to a hierarchical segmentation of society into groups whose membership is determined by birth and kinship with numerous gradations and various restrictions of diet and social interaction. However, scholars acknowledge that the social stratifications of caste do not adhere to a strict hierarchy, that there are multiple hierarchies, based not only in religious rituals of purity and pollution, but also secular issues of class and political power that are constantly changing (Gupta, 1993). Nicholas Gier (2014) asserts that caste discrimination led many Hindus to convert to Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity (p. 7). The concept of caste was also reinforced and used as a mechanism of social division for the purpose of maintaining colonial rule. Many observers blame the British for fueling divisions between castes and religious groups. Gier (2014), a scholar of religious conflict in Asia, observes that most religious conflict in India came after colonial incursions (p. xi). While caste traditions and social divisions persist, changes in legal protections, the educational system, economic opportunities, gender relations, and rural/urban migration have contributed to greater mobility and fewer restrictions.

The British Raj

The 1857 Mutiny by the Bengal Army, also known as India's First Nationalist Uprising, saw the end of the Mughal Empire and the replacement of the East India Company with the British government in full control of India. It was the greatest uprising against any colonial power in the Age of Empire, uniting both Hindus and Muslims, but it was a war of horrific violence. As described by Peter Marshall (2011), “In May 1857 soldiers of the Bengal army shot their British officers, and marched on Delhi. Their mutiny encouraged rebellion by considerable numbers of Indian civilians in a broad belt of northern and central India - roughly from Delhi in the west to Benares in the east. For some months the British presence in this area was reduced to beleaguered garrisons, until forces were able to launch offensives that had restored imperial authority by 1858” (n.p.).
For approximately 200 years, the British controlled vast territories of the Indian subcontinent (East India company, 1765-1858; British Raj, 1858-1947). Under the British Raj, the territory stretched from Burma to Baluchistan and Kerala to the Khyber Pass with approximately 50,000 troops and 250,000 of its own administrators relying primarily on Indian cooperation. Rudyard Kipling’s 1865 poem “Gunga Din” perhaps best summarized the loyalty and ultimate sacrifice of Indian soldiers in its epitaph “you’re a better man than I, Gunga Din!” During this period, as a result of the massive export of resources and other colonial policies, India’s economy was decimated. The economic drain from India “has not only been a major factor in India’s impoverishment … it has also been a very significant factor in the Industrial Revolution in Britain” (Alavi, 1982, pp. 62-63).

Following World War I, in which a million Indians fought for the British and 50,000 died, the 1919 massacre of Sikh demonstrators at Amritsar occurred. At least 379 unarmed demonstrators meeting at the Jallianwala Bagh Park were killed, most of whom were Indian nationalists meeting to protest the British government’s forced conscription of Indian soldiers and the heavy war tax imposed on the Indian people.

During the Second World War, the British Raj sent over 2.5 million Indian soldiers into almost every theatre of the war. Over 87,000 Indian soldiers died in the war and a major famine in Bengal in 1943 led to over 5 million deaths by starvation. Rice and other crops from Bengal were prioritized to aid the war effort, leading to acute shortages and exorbitant prices. The Indian National Congress (founded in 1885), demanded independence before it would back Britain, but London refused, and the Congress announced a "Quit India" campaign in August 1942 with tens of thousands of its leaders imprisoned by the British for the duration of the war.

Colonial rule in India served the British Empire. However, British rule instilled, through both cooperation and resistance, an emphasis on secular law, education, and constitutional government. It served to build a modern infrastructure of railway linking a vast network of people, products, and trade between India and the world. Unfortunately, India received little if any of the immediate material benefits of such developments. Nonetheless, modern observers may reflect: “India cheerfully welcomed every new influence from the West, absorbing them all into a crazy-quilt mix that was Indian and nothing but Indian” (Iyer, 1988, p. 358). More critically, subaltern historians of India have played a leading role in rewriting Indian "history from below" to emphasize the role of peasants and the working classes (Guha & Spivak, 1988).

**Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948)**

Known as the Mahatma or “great soul,” Gandhi drew many of his beliefs from India’s spiritual traditions especially Jainism’s concept of *ahimsa* or non-violence. For Gandhi *ahimsa* was not just a moral doctrine but a guiding principle for social and political life. He viewed non-violence as a critical means for actively and responsibly engaging the world (McGee, 1996, p. 53). In his autobiography, he famously wrote: “there is no other God than Truth.” It was this realization in the
power of truth (\textit{satyagraha}) and non-violence (\textit{ahimsa}) that guided him to be involved in law and politics. Setting an example by engaging in and promoting courageous acts of civil disobedience, peaceful protest, long marches, and hunger strikes, Gandhi was instrumental in leading India’s independence movement. Following India’s partition in 1947, he was assassinated in 1948. His non-violent strategy was the inspiration for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s civil rights movement in the United States.

**Partition of India**

India’s independence in 1947 came at great cost. The partition of India which followed on the immediate heels of independence is one of the most tragic events in modern history, as William Dalrymple (2015) summarizes:

In August, 1947, when, after three hundred years in India, the British finally left, the subcontinent was partitioned into two independent nation states: Hindu-majority India and Muslim-majority Pakistan. Immediately, there began one of the greatest migrations in human history, as millions of Muslims trekked to West and East Pakistan (the latter now known as Bangladesh) while millions of Hindus and Sikhs headed in the opposite direction…. Across the Indian subcontinent, communities that had coexisted for almost a millennium attacked each other in a terrifying outbreak of sectarian violence, with Hindus and Sikhs on one side and Muslims on the other—a mutual genocide as unexpected as it was unprecedented. In Punjab and Bengal—provinces abutting India’s borders with West and East Pakistan, respectively—the carnage was especially intense, with massacres, arson, forced conversions, mass abductions, and savage sexual violence. Some seventy-five thousand women were raped, and many of them were then disfigured or dismembered (p. 65).

By 1948, as the great migration drew to a close, more than 15 million people had been displaced, and more than 1 million were dead. An estimated 20 million Hindus left West Punjab and East Bengal and 18 million Muslims went to Pakistan (Das, 2000, p. 27). The long-term impact of partition has been significant costing untold waste, on-going violence, and tremendous military expenditure. Again, as Dalrymple (2015) reflects: “Today, both India and Pakistan remain crippled by the narratives built around memories of the crimes of Partition, as politicians (particularly in India) and the military (particularly in Pakistan) continue to stoke the hatreds of 1947 for their own ends” (p. 65). At the same time, the suddenness of Partition, the destructive force of rapid change, the painfulness of dislocation, and genocidal violence have also led to a history of denial as much as an apportioning of guilt to opposing sides (Pandey, 2001, p. 3).

There have been many other tragic incidences of violence in India since Independence. Several that should be mentioned are: the decades-long insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir, Indira Gandhi’s 1975-77 Emergency (which started with
1974 railway workers strike and expanded with protests over electoral misconduct), Indian troops attack on the Golden Temple in 1984 and subsequent assassination of Indira Gandhi, the destruction of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya in 1992, and the Gujarat riots in 2002. Often, in these cases and others, the rationale and tendency has been to portray the underlying causes and issues in terms of national security rather than human rights.

The World’s Largest Secular Democracy

It is remarkable that India’s secular democracy has stood the test of time given its very shaky beginnings and the on-going tensions it faces. Its extraordinary heterogeneity of ethnicities, languages, religions, and cultures is a constant reminder that differences matter and that intercultural understanding is critically important to the modern nation-state.

One of the most powerful examples of how India’s democracy has worked effectively to improve peoples’ lives is its efforts to prevent famines. Under British rule, prior to India’s independence, famine and mass starvation as a result of grain exports was a regular occurrence, causing between 12 to 29 million lives lost. Charitable activities and relief works were forbidden, for fear of interference with laws of the markets (Davis, 2001; Monbiot, 2005). Since independence, despite severe crop failures in 1968, 1973, 1979, and 1987, respectively, there has been no substantial famine in India (Sen, 1999, p. 180). Averting famine is not achieved simply by opening up markets, as disaster victims do not have the means to buy the food that the market and modern transportation infrastructure can deliver. There have to be collective economic policies that bring employment opportunities in providing relief in disaster areas.

As the above case demonstrates, the greatest problems facing the planet and humanity today are shared problems that require collaboration and cooperation. India’s focus on trade, education, science, and technology as part of a global network points the way forward towards a better future. Because India is long accustomed to pluralism, it may be better prepared to negotiate the diversity of the global economy (Das, 2000, p. 15).

Persistent Inequalities

Despite some successes, the extraordinary deprivation of the underprivileged in India reflects an overall poor performance regarding issues of social justice. India’s government spends just 1.2 % of GDP on public health and the literacy rate in India is about 74%. The greatest threats to India’s stability and future are its vast inequalities, especially gender and income disparity. The poor’s vulnerability often leads to exploitation. Income levels among India’s poor do not afford them even basic necessities and essential public services in education and healthcare are missing for a huge proportion of the Indian population. Infrastructure such as reliable electricity, clean drinking water, and adequate roads are often lacking. As Dreze and Sen (2013) report: “in 2011 half of all Indian households did not have any access to toilets, forcing them to resort to open defecation on a daily basis (p.
In 2015, around 170 million people, or 12.4% of the population, lived in poverty - defined as under $1.90 (IndiaSpend, 2015).

For women, too, while opportunities exist at all levels of society for the privileged few, most women and girls do not have the same access that men and boys do. Women’s workforce participation (29%) is extremely low and their representation in Parliament and state assemblies is generally at or below 10% (Dreze & Sen, 2013, pp. 225-226). One of the persistent and troubling statistics is the mortality rates for female children. According to a 2011 United Nations report on childhood mortality the rate for female children between the ages of 1-4 was the highest in the world. Another troubling issue is the rate of sex-selective abortions (although illegal continues to be practiced). There also growing concerns about the incidence of rape which is vastly underreported and for which very little support or protections are provided by police and the legal system (Dreze & Sen, 2013, p. 228).

Finally, there is a great divide between rural and urban India. Seventy percent of the population lives in rural areas where almost three-fourths of the rural households live with a monthly income of less than Rs 5000 or $75. The rural literacy rate is much lower than that of urban areas and gender disparity, where the urban female literacy rate is almost 20% higher than for the rural female, is significant. Illiteracy is a major obstacle in combating poverty and social oppression. Attendance rates in school are lower and infant mortality rates are higher. Rural India lags behind urban India in all the indicators including health indicators and access to basic services (Mukunthan, 2015). However, there is some recent evidence that the gap between rural and urban India is narrowing (Hnatkovska & Lahiri, 2013).

**Global Economy**

From 1947 through the mid-1980s, India operated under a planned economy with a massive bureaucracy nicknamed the “Permit Raj” (Iyer & Vietor, 1988, p. 8). Describing the economic policies of India at the time of independence, Gurcharan Das (2000) explains, “Gandhi distrusted technology but not businessmen. Nehru distrusted businessmen but not technology. Instead of sorting out the contradictions, we mixed the two up. We had to deal with holy cows: small companies are better than big ones (Gandhi); public enterprises are better than private ones (Nehru); local companies are better than foreign ones (both)” (p. 11). India embraced democracy before capitalism.

However, over the past two decades, India has been moving from a domestic agenda, from a closed to an open economy, from public to greater private investment. Politically, it has transitioned from a highly centralized democratic system to a more regionally, locally controlled, decentralized one. The process of wide-ranging economic reform in India began in 1991, including trade and investment liberalization, industrial deregulation, gradual privatization of public enterprises, and financial and tax reforms, and has continued despite several changes in government (Europa World, 2017). In 2004, Manmohan Singh (former Finance Minister) became the first non-Hindu Prime Minister of India. Serving as
Prime Minister for 10 years, he played a crucial role in the economic liberalization of India. India is now among the fastest growing of the major global economies and forecasts predict that this growth will continue. The economy of India is the 7th-largest in the world measured by nominal GDP and the 3rd-largest by purchasing power parity, with an average rate of approximately 7% over the last two decades. India is the world's largest sourcing destination for the information technology (IT) industry helping to lead the economic transformation of the country and altering the perception of India in the global economy (India Brand Equity Foundation, 2017).

But as noted above, India’s success in the global economy has primarily benefitted a privileged few. Issues of high-profile corruption (mobile phone spectrum and coal mining licensing) have also plagued the country and a new anti-corruption institution called Lokpal was established in 2013 (Iyer & Vietor, 2015, p. 1). Still, India has largely succeeded at competing on the highest levels. Its focus on trade, education, science, and technology as part of a global network points the way forward towards a better future but only if it can find ways to share such benefits with a broader segment of its society.

The BJP and the Rise of Hindu Nationalism

The current Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, was elected in May 2014. He came to power pledging to tackle corruption, cut excessive business regulations, and revive the economy (Iyer & Vietor, 2015, p. 2). He served as Chief Minister of Gujarat from 2001 to 2014, and is the Member of Parliament for Varanasi. Modi, a member of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), is a Hindu nationalist and member of the right-wing Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. Since taking office, Modi’s administration has tried to raise foreign direct investment in the Indian economy and increased spending on infrastructure, but reduced spending on healthcare and social welfare programs (Kalra & MacKaskill, 2015). Trying to improve efficiency in the bureaucracy, he has begun a high-profile sanitation campaign, but weakened or abolished environmental and labor laws (Ninan, 2017, pp. 203-205). Modi is a controversial figure due to his Hindu nationalist beliefs and criticisms of inaction during the 2002 Gujarat riots (Human Rights Watch, 2012). Nonetheless, he enjoys high levels of popular support.

Indian Americans

There are approximately 3.2 million Indian Americans and it is one of the fastest growing communities in the United States. According to a 2012 Pew Research Center report, many are recent arrivals. In 2010, 87.2% of Indian-American adults were foreign-born and only 56.2% of adults were U.S. citizens. Indian Americans are also among the most highly educated racial or ethnic groups in the United States with 70% of Indian Americans aged 25 and older having college degrees in 2010. Indian Americans generally are well-off with the median annual household income for Indian Americans in 2010 at $88,000, much higher than for all U.S. households ($49,800) — perhaps not surprising, given their high education
levels. Interestingly, only about half (51%) of Indian Americans are Hindu (DeSilver, 2014). For a fuller understanding of the Indian Diasporas’ efforts at immigrant advocacy as well as their rights and challenges as citizens, see Monisha Das Gupta’s (2006) work on this topic. As part of the Year of India, KSU organized monthly community tours to the Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Sanstha Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Atlanta as well as the Global Mall, a large shopping mall of South Asian goods and services. These tours provided faculty and students the opportunity to interact directly with the local Indian American community.

Globalization, Inclusion & Sustainability

The theme for this volume, *India: Globalization, Inclusion & Sustainability* has as its basis several papers that were delivered at the Year of India international conference held in March 2018 titled “Envisioning the Future and Understanding the Realities of India’s Urban Ecologies.” The papers also reflect wider issues of India’s historical place in the on-going processes of globalization. As such, all the papers help demonstrate how much India has changed as well as how much the world outside India has changed. Generally, I might add, these changes seem to be mostly for the better as humanity slowly learns how to live together, more peacefully, inclusively, and sustainably.

The first article in this volume reveals the terrible start that characterized early intercultural exchange and the aggressive nature of empire building. The second article examines the complexity of interpretations that accompanied growing recognition in the West of India’s unique contributions to human thought, science, and spirituality. The third article deals with India’s self-perception of its own cultural values in today’s global society. The last three articles provide different perspectives on the historical process of urbanization in India examining different influences and issues during the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-independence eras. India’s urban growth and development embodies a paradoxical mix of globalization, modernity, and advanced technology with regionalism and tradition accompanied by importunate poverty and inequality. As these works show, a holistic understanding of India’s complex urban ecologies is extremely important to developing more sustainable and healthy cities not just in India but around the world.

Perhaps no one sums up the empowering spirit of India better than the Nobel Prize winning laureate Rabindranath Tagore (1910):

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   “Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high,
   Where knowledge is free;
   Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
   Where words come out from the depth of truth;
   Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
   Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
   Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action –
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"Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake””
(Radice, 2011, p. 184).

The enduring narrative of India’s wise insistence on non-violence, peaceful coexistence, and religious tolerance will surely defeat the narrow interests of those that would divide communities for their own benefit or past sins. In today’s modern world, perhaps more than ever before, the well-being of our lives and communities are intertwined and interconnected in ways that are clearly inseparable and that require shared problem-solving built upon mutual respect and understanding. We hope this volume helps readers appreciate the challenges and importance of working together to develop solutions to the world’s most pressing issues.

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Vasco da Gama’s Voyages to India: Messianism, Mercantilism, and Sacred Exploits

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Abstract

The Portuguese explorer, Vasco da Gama (1460-1524), was the first European to sail from Portugal to India. Accolades for this achievement have long obscured the messianic motivation for the 1498 voyage, “to invade, capture, vanquish, and subdue all Saracens (Muslims) and pagans and other enemies of Christ; to reduce them to perpetual slavery; to convert them to Christianity; [and] to acquire great wealth by force of arms from the Infidels,” as sanctified by various Papal Bulls, together called “the Doctrine of Discovery” (*Dum Diversas*, 1452; *Romanus Pontifex*, 1455; *Inter Caetera*, 1493). The other key motive in this enormous undertaking was to displace Arab control of the spice trade and establish, instead, Portuguese hegemony that eventually resulted in colonialism/imperialism. The main instrument in this effort was extreme violence, sanctioned by the Church, inflicted upon the natives, and predicated on the Portuguese Inquisition and earlier crusades. The paper concludes with some cautionary remarks about the current Islam-West clash environment.

Introduction

Not long ago, a historian published a paper that pointed out to the readers, especially other historians, that “the explorers in the ‘Age of Discovery’ have been so firmly canonized” and “when the central problem of world history is seen as the ‘rise of the West,’ the often hesitant, discordant moments of European exploration, settlement, and conquest are easily forgotten” (Wolff, 1998, p. 298). This is especially true in the case of Vasco da Gama. As this paper will demonstrate, numerous well-established scholars, upon consulting the original sources of chroniclers, diarists, recorders, letters and eye-witness testimonials of those who accompanied the voyages, and others who documented the events soon after, clearly describe the horrific violence perpetrated in the name of God and king (see Boxer (1969), Cliff (2012), Crowley (2015, 2016), David (1988), Disney (1995, 2009), Hall (1998), Jayne (1910), Panikkar (1959), Subrahmanyan (1997, 2012), and others). With the not uncommon Eurocentric gloss, much of the mainstream literature tends to glorify da Gama’s voyages, with only a scant reference to the atrocities he committed (see, for example, Ames (2005), Calvert (2005), etc.), and mainly pointing to his “unquestionable greatness” (Diffie & Winius, 1977, p. xx).

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To be sure, however, in recent years, some even in Portugal have attempted to change the narrative and “the myth of Vasco da Gama has been quietly resisted” (Subrahmanyam, 1997, p. 367). This article primarily focuses on the literature on da Gama’s violent “onslaught on India” in an effort to counter the persistent narrative of unquestioned aggrandizement that continues to take precedent despite its violent circumstances.

The term “Gama epoch” is often used to describe the era of European commercial and imperial expansion in Asia and its particular relevance to India’s political fate where da Gama first established a foothold. As Charles Boxer (1969) has summarized, “the main impetus behind what is known as the Age of Discovery evidently came from a mixture of religious, economic, and strategic and political factors. They were by no means always in the same proportion; even motives primarily inspired by Mammon were often inextricably blended with things pertaining to Caesar and to God” (p. 17). Bailey Diffie and George Winius (1977) further explain, “the mysteries of the Atlantic Ocean and the African coast challenged those adventurous in spirit. The young fighting class found a place to win honors and new lands. The religious saw an opportunity to convert infidels to Christianity. For the merchants and seamen there was opportunity for profits in a new era of trade” (pp. xiii-xiv). Although hailed as a “discovery,” the Portuguese were well aware of the lands of the Far East, but what they lacked was direct access to the region. Traveling the ocean route allowed the Portuguese to avoid sailing across the highly disputed—and costly—Mediterranean and traversing the dangerous Arabian lands.

From the early 15th century, Henry the Navigator (1394-1460) had been extending Portuguese knowledge of the African coastline. Also known as Henry the Crusader, his ventures were united not only by geographical curiosity but also by the combined zeal of his “militant Christian mysticism and bitter hatred of Islam” (Panikkar, 1959, p. 25). He hoped to conquer Islam in the East by joining forces with the mythical “Indies” Christian kingdom of Prester John and thus capture Indian Ocean trade for Portugal. Henry embarked on “Portuguese expansion into North Africa in 1415 with a massive military expedition against the Moroccan port-town of Ceuta” (Disney, 2009, Vol. I, p. 1). As Crowley (2015) notes, the “Ceuta campaign was conceived in secret as an outlet for religious, commercial, and nationalistic passions, fueled by a background hatred of the Islamic world” (p. xxiii). The southern extent of the continent, however, remained elusive for him, until 1487 when another Portuguese voyager, Bartholomew Diaz, rounded the Cape of Good Hope. “We came to serve God and to get rich,” Diaz declared upon arrival (Crowley, 2015, p. 221). For Europe, this journey showed that a sea route to India might indeed be feasible, a goal fulfilled later by Vasco da Gama.

Vasco da Gama (1460-1524) is Portugal’s most renowned historical figure who was the first European to travel by sea, via the southern tip of Africa, from Portugal to India, thereby having circumvented the land barrier that long separated the East from the West. The voyage remains one of the defining moments in maritime history. Little is known of da Gama’s early life; his father was governor of Sines, Portugal, where he was born. He first came to historical notice in 1492 when King John II commanded him to lead raiding flotillas to seize French ships in Portuguese
ports as reprisal for piratical raids. For his success in daring raids, he was commissioned and assigned to the court of King Manuel I.

In two epic voyages that spanned six years, da Gama would fight a running sea battle that would ultimately change the fate of three continents. The story has taken mythical proportions in the literature. The Portuguese national epic poem, *The Lusiads*, penned in Homeric style by soldier-poet Luis Vaz de Camoes in 1572, celebrated the voyage in biblical terms. Wherever da Gama lands, the poem “divinizes” him “as surrounded by twelve apostles, in an obvious comparison to Christ and twelve apostles” (Subrahmanyam, 1997, p. 157). Similarly, Christianity’s encounters with “pagans” were presented as in the fictional *Song of Roland* that expressed a popular sentiment of the early Crusades era: “pagans are wrong, Christians are right” (Darling, 1998, p. 2237).

For his achievements, there have been many attempts to “build the cult of Vasco da Gama,” for example, a century after his voyage, in 1597, there were suggestions that “this part of Asia be called Gama in order to preserve by such an illustrious name the memory of the greatest feat that there has been since God created the world until now” (Subrahmanyam, 1997, pp. 16-17). And among the numerous symbols of glory (including naming a crater on the moon, a railway station in India, football teams in Brazil, Gama City in Goa, etc.), the most recent is the Vasco da Gama Bridge, linking Lisbon to Europe, inaugurated in 1998, in celebration of the 500th anniversary of the voyage. However, as will be noted later, suggestions to celebrate the occasion in India and elsewhere were rebuffed.

The “divine” sanction for the messianic explorations was grounded in Papal bulls, aimed at "universalizing" Christianity as a prelude to an apocalyptic “end-of-the-world” theology. Further, economic considerations called for seizing control of markets in spices, silks, and precious gems from Muslim traders (also displacing Venetian intermediaries) and to claim for Portugal all the territories “discovered” and establish Portuguese control over Afro-Oriental trade.1 Indeed, “Vasco da Gama had sailed east with the express purpose of subjugating all of India” (Subrahmanyam, 1997, p. 227; also see Cliff, 2012, p. 355). Da Gama succeeded in his mission and thus began an era of eventual European domination through sea power and commerce, and 450 years of Portuguese colonialism that brought wealth and power to the Portuguese crown. As for the success, Hobson (2004) points out that “had it not been for the diffusion and assimilation of Eastern science as well as nautical technologies, Vasco da Gama would not even have got as far as the Cape let alone India. The Portuguese borrowing of Islamic science began in the twelfth century, and was to an extent initiated by the royal family” (pp. 140-141).

In order to thoroughly examine the rationale, context, and circumstances of da Gama’s voyages, the paper is divided in three sections. First, it will explain the messianic mission that inspired the da Gama voyage, based on several Papal Bulls,

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1 Much like Middle-Eastern oil today, spices represented the premier commodity in Europe at this time. Aside from food flavoring and preservation, there were multiple other uses - for religious rituals, witchcraft, remedies and elixirs, fragrances, and even sexual stimulation.
together called “the Doctrine of Discovery.” It will also consider the economic motives, i.e., trade-based mercantile pursuits that spurred the effort. Second, it will discuss the considerable religious fanfare that accompanied the preparation and launching of the voyage. Third, more importantly, the paper will discuss acts of organized violence in the Indian Ocean, in India, and en route that were unleashed in the name of the Catholic Church. Significant pieces of the story, especially da Gama’s brutalities, are often among the missing elements in the literature. Thus, says an eminent scholar, historians generally “had the temerity, in the late 1980s, to produce a programmatic text on Portuguese expansion, which wholly excluded both Asian and African source-materials, and even Asian and African historians” (Subrahmanyam, 1997, pp. 366-367). While the Portuguese arrival is presented as the unfolding of an historic saga, “the darker side of this process was overlooked, and probably deliberately suppressed” (Disney, 1995, p. 11). Yet, it might be noted as Disney (1995) suggests that da Gama was "not quite the monster he is so often painted as being" (p. 19). According to Disney (1995), the atrocities da Gama is "alleged" to have committed are "exaggerated" and his actions "more understandable if viewed in their contemporary contexts," where cruelty is a "manly virtue;" thus,  "crueldade (meaning a harsh, unyielding attitude to one's enemies, with no or little room for mercy, especially when they were Muslims) was often presented as a manly virtue in sixteenth-seventeenth century Portuguese chronicles" (pp. 20, 24). However, despite “exaggerations,” Disney (1995) concludes that “it is equally obvious that Gama’s actions were ruthless and violent enough” (p. 28).

This paper argues that the use of violence, sanctioned by the church, to establish control of trade, set the tone throughout the Age of Discovery around the world. In conclusion, brief remarks will be offered on the da Gama legacy, with some contextualization of this history in reference to what seems to be an Islam-West “clash” environment presently.

Messianism and Mercantilism

During the era of Portuguese voyages (including the 1492 Columbus expedition), the dominant ideology was a curious combination of messianism and mercantilism, the former inspired by the apocalyptic fervor of the time and the latter driven by commercial interests.

The key impetus for messianism was embedded in what has become known as "the Doctrine of Discovery," defined by several Papal Bulls that called for annihilating "Muslims and all other pagans" and "Christianizing" the world.² Beginning with the Papal Bull, Dum Diversas, issued in 1452, there were several others - Romanus Pontifex (1454), Inter Caetera (1493) and Precise Denotionis (1481), each reinforcing the Crusade mission (see Ghazanfar, 2016). Specifically, the 1452 Bull called for the King,

² At the initiative of various Native American scholars, the Doctrine of Discovery was repudiated by the World Council of Churches in February 2012; however, repudiation at the Vatican level has not yet happened.
to invade, search out, capture, vanquish, and subdue all Saracens (Muslims) and pagan whatsoever, and other enemies of Christ wheresoever placed, and ... all movable and immovable goods whatsoever held and possessed by them and to reduce their persons to perpetual slavery, and to apply and appropriate to himself .... and to convert them to his and their use and profit. (Dum Diversas, 1452)

Scriptural texts were foundational to the Doctrine: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them ... and teaching them everything that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20; also, Romans 13:1). And according to the theological and legal doctrine, Terra Nullius (“empty land”), any “‘discovered’ lands were devoid of humans if the original people who lived there, defined as ‘ Heathens, pagans, and infidels,’ (and) were not ruled by a Christian prince” may be possessed (Friesen & Augustine, 2014). And, “non-Christians were considered enemies of the Catholic faith, and as such, less than human” (Newcomb, 1992, p. 18). Thus, “it was the duty of the Portuguese to snatch them—however much they might resist—into the arms of the Christ and His salvation" (Edwardes, 1971, p. 171). Some historians, to be noted, view these Bulls as extending the legacy of Pope Urban II's Crusades that premised, along with battling the "infidels," European expansionism into the "lands of milk and honey," accommodating "both the marketplace and the yearnings of the Christian soul" (Bown, 2012, p. 75; see Atiya, 1962).

Further, as in earlier Crusades, the faithful "went into battle armed with an ironclad guarantee from Christ's representatives on earth: mass indulgences for those who died, which absolved them of doing penance for their sins and guaranteed immediate admittance to heaven" (Cliff, 2012, p. 26). With Papal Bulls as the sacred authority, some saw the voyage to India in an apocalyptic context, "having calculated the coming of the Anti-Christ and predicted that the world would end in 1646/1648 and all humankind would then be baptized" (Fried, 2000, p. 235).

As he assumed the Crown in 1485, King Manuel inherited a messianic destiny. Christened with the luminous name Emmanuel, "God is with us," he saw “mystical significance into his coronation” (Crowley, 2015, p. 36). As the 1500th anniversary of Christ's birth approached, apocalyptic fervor occupied Europe, particularly the Iberian Peninsula, where the Spanish Reconquista and “the expulsion of Muslims and Jews was taken as a sign” (Crowley, 2015, p. 36). Manuel believed that he was "predestined" to exterminate Islam and achieve the worldwide spread of Christianity under a universal monarch (Crowley, 2015, p. 36). Further, "after accession to the throne, these Messianic beliefs enabled Dom Manuel at times to

3 While the Crusades were driven mainly by religious zeal, there were also colonial and economic motives. Thus, as Pope Urban II launched the First Crusade on November 27, 1095, he said: “This land you inhabit … is too narrow for your large population; nor does it abound in wealth; it furnishes scarcely enough food for its cultivators … Enter upon the road to Holy Sepulcher, wrest the land from the wicked race, and subject it to yourself that land which, as the Scriptures say, ‘floweth with milk and honey’” (See Munro, 1895, pp. 5-8).
act in a highly autocratic fashion, since he believed that he was directly inspired by the Holy Spirit" (Subrahmanyam, 2012, p. 54). Moreover, the sacred-secular mix of the voyage was instanced by some Italian merchants, “who headed all the pages of their ledgers with the invocation: ‘In the name of God and of Profit’” (Boxer, 1969, p. 18).

If the voyage was forged in the spirit of a crusade, “it also had a material dimension: not only to wrest trade from the Muslims but also to replace the Venetians as the mart for the luxury goods of the Orient” (Crowley, 2015, p. 37). Mercantilism provided the basis for trade expansion for the Crown through capturing the trade from Muslims. A Portuguese writer calls it "monarchical capitalism;" another scholar calls it “royal mercantilism” (Subrahmanyam, 2012, pp. 48, 54). Within this framework, there were the British quasi-private East India Company and the state-sanctioned Dutch Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie. Similarly, "from earliest Portuguese voyages to Asia, the state's involvement was considerable" (Subrahmanyam, 2012, p. 48).

The Portuguese "saw trade as the obvious key to prosperity, given Portugal's, and especially Lisbon's, position at the cusp of the Mediterranean and the Atlantic" (Subrahmanyam, 2012, p. 48). Maritime activities were an "important aspect of the royal household's interests in the fifteenth century: [especially] the trade conducted on royal ships. From at least as early as 1373, there is sporadic evidence of the Crown's direct interest in trade" (Subrahmanyam, 2012, p. 50). Subsequently, the "royal merchant-capitalists ... traded in slaves and sugar, sold the grain, wine and fruit produced in their estates" (Subrahmanyam, 2012, p. 51). Even the "Duke of Beja” (the future King Manuel I) engaged in trading enterprises in the early 16th century and some called him "the grocery-king" (Subrahmanyam, 2012, p. 51).

In 1485, King Manuel appealed to the Pope to bless exploration of Africa, and suggested that "once this region is explored, we will see an enormous accumulation of wealth and honor for all the Christian people and especially you, most Holy Father" (Crowley, 2015, p. 12). As Subrahmanyam (2012) notes, "the phenomenon of Portuguese royal mercantilism reached its apogee in the period from the 1480s and 1520s, under Dom Joao II and his successor Dom Manuel I” (p. 51). However, "royal mercantilism itself cannot be seen in Dom Manuel's reign without its strange bedfellow--royal messianism" (Subrahmanyam, 2012, p. 52). Indeed, "royal mercantilism was in part a necessary condition for putting into effect messianist plans: making war required resources, especially a war that was unlikely to enthuse the nobility” (Subrahmanyam, 2012, p. 54).

The Voyage: Preparation and Launching

In order to launch the Crusade, King Manuel of Portugal commissioned Vasco da Gama in 1497. His messianic “foreign policy” was based on “a divine mandate to fight Islam,” to launch “a Last Crusade to recapture Jerusalem, the great event from which, the Scripture foretold, the Last Days of the world would follow as light follows dark” (Cliff, 2012, pp. 160-161). Further, there will be enormous economic gains; “in addition to the expansion of the Christian religion, it would be possible to acquire unheard quantities of pearls, spices, and gold” (Noonan, 2007, p. 284).
The preoccupation with “the conquest of the Holy Land…. came to be seen as the potential climax of overseas expansion, indeed the crowning achievement that would enable Dom Manuel to claim the title of Emperor of the East” (Subrahmanyam, 1997, p. 57). Further, “India was a means to an end. That end was Manuel’s ambition to install himself as the king of Jerusalem, and the first step in that Crusade was not the conquest of India but the expulsion of its Muslim merchants” (Cliff, 2012, p. 355). He believed that after the extermination of Islam, there will be “worldwide spread of Christianity under a universal monarch” (Crowley, 2015, p. 36).

Manuel was convinced, da Gama was the one who would "negotiate alliances that would oust Islam and entrench Portugal as an Eastern Power.... He would inspire, cajole, and threaten, and if argument failed, he would have to persuade at the point of a gun ... a Crusader fit to carry the standard of Christ" (Cliff, 2012, p. 161). Known as short-tempered, “he had an outstanding charge of violent affray against his name. The obdurate nature of his personality would unfold in the voyage ahead: implacable speed in the crusading tradition of hatred of Islam … bold in action, severe in his orders and very formidable in his anger” (Crowley, 2015, p. 39). Further, he was reputed to have a “surly disposition; unlettered, brutal, and violent. For some assignments, he would have been useless, but for this one he was made to order. The work lying ahead could not be accomplished by a gentle leader” (Newell, 1954, p. 32). Besides, “the novice Crusader was schooled in the warrior monks’ malice toward Muslims,” for his credentials also included induction into the “Moors-slaying” society, the Order of Santiago (Cliff, 2012, pp. 163, 359).

On July 8, 1497, the day “chosen by astrologers as auspicious,” the historic expedition set sail from Lisbon, amid parades, pageantry, and intense religious fanfare, similar to earlier Crusades. Da Gama and his crew spent the previous night in prayer and vigil. Hall (1998) writes, “An aura of messianic fervor infused this moment, for oaths had been sworn that death was the only alternative to success; the ships would never return without having borne the sacred symbol of the Order of Christ through the oceans of the East” (p. 160). With a gilded cross on his chest, he was undertaking a voyage of discovery “which was also a holy crusade” (Hall, 1998, p. 160). And his “mission was both sacred and secular, with overtones of crusade mixed with commercial rivalry” (Crowley, 2015, p. 39). Wrote Crowley (2015), “Gama led his men in a devotional procession from the chapel down to the beach, organized by the priests and the monks of the Order of Christ” (p. 41). By such means, declared the Pope, the “Christian Empire would be propagated” (Newcomb, 1992, p. 18). Panikkar (1959) maintained, “The Portuguese during the age of discovery were undoubtedly animated by the spirit of the great Crusades - essentially an anti-Islamic spirit” (p. 15).

The young da Gama sailed from Portugal, leading in his flagship San Gabriel, so named, “for the archangel Gabriel was Heaven’s messenger, bearer of divine truths” (Hall, 1998, p. 159). The fleet circumnavigated Africa, crossed the Indian Ocean, and “discovered” the maritime route to the Indies and, thereby, obtained access to the fabled wealth of the East. The mission was to launch a "sweeping counter offensive against Islam and inaugurate a new era in which the faith and
values of Europe would be exported across the earth" and "fighting the Infidel was the highest calling (Cliff, 2012, p. 6). Vasco da Gama’s arrival in the East was seen as a turning point in the centuries-old struggle between Islam and Christianity. Vasco da Gama (and his archrival, Christopher Columbus) was "obsessed with the idea of a Crusade against Islam" (Hobson, 2004, p. 136). Furthermore, as Plumb (1969) has described, the zeal of these endeavors knew no bounds, it was,

[the] mixture of deeper passions—greed, wolfish, inexorable, insatiable, combined with religious passion, harsh, unassailable, death-dedicated—that drove the Portuguese remorselessly on into the torrid, fever-ridden seas that lapped the coasts of tropical Africa and beyond. The lust for riches and passion for God were never in conflict ... Prince Henry trafficked in slaves and did not despise the wealth that he regarded as God’s blessing. As with Prince Henry, so with the rest: the Portuguese pioneers plucked the naked blacks out of their canoes, traded their horses for nubile young women and shipped them back to Lisbon’s slave market where they found eager buyers. This combination of greed and godliness has always been regarded as the major driving force not only of the Portuguese, but of the Spanish too. (p. xxii)

Indeed, “the development of slave trade also helped to finance the cost of Portuguese voyages down the West coast of Africa after about 1442” (Boxer, 1969, p. 24).

What is clear is that the Papal Bulls represented clear examples of how the "Christian Powers" viewed indigenous peoples as "the lawful spoil and prey of their civilized conquerors" (Newcomb, 1992, p. 18). In fact, the Christian "Law of Nations" asserted that Christian nations had a divine right to claim absolute title to and ultimate authority over any newly "discovered" non-Christian “pagans” and their lands; indeed, the natives were perceived as “non-human” (Newcomb, 1992, p. 18); if they were not Christians, they did not “exist.”

In sum, the Papal Bulls launched the “Age of Discovery” with the “divine mandate to fight Islam, and eventually to fulfill the call for the Second Coming and Last Judgment” (Cliff, 2012, p. 2). Indeed, the venture was the continuation of earlier Crusades, and “the Church’s acknowledgment that fighting and killing in the name of God was a worthy enterprise (which) justified the holiness of their endeavor to the crusaders” (Pfeiffer, 2011, p. 1).4 By the time of Vasco da Gama’s second voyage in 1502, however, “there was no distinction between the trading mission and crusade against Islam, and da Gama proceeded with atrocious brutality to secure an exclusive market” for Portugal (Fleming, 2003, p. 305). Further, “To a

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4 As for the historic Crusades that began in 1096, on the occasion of the 900th anniversary, Christians from around the world undertook a 2,000-mile “Reconciliation Walk,” from Cologne, Germany, to Jerusalem, “apologizing to Muslims and Jews for the atrocities committed against their forebears,” for having “committed the equivalent of modern-day ethnic cleansing,” seeking “to build bridges of understanding and to reverse a legacy of animosity among three of the world’s most prominent religions” (Wright, 1996, p. 90).
devout and patriotic Iberian, the fight against Islam was a stern imperative. Islam was the enemy and had to be fought everywhere. Much of the Portuguese action in Asia will remain inexplicable unless this fact is constantly born in mind” (Panikkar, 1959, p. 24). More importantly, “It is essential not to confuse the cause with the result. The end result was colonization and a commercial revolution; the motivating cause was the pursuit of holy war against the Muslims…” (Hamdani, 1994, p. 277). And, in the process, massive brutalities were inflicted on the natives—all in the name of the Church.

**Da Gama’s Sacred Exploits**

As to our main focus, the following pages will document some of da Gama’s “sacred” exploits. As the Papal Bulls ordained, da Gama always tried to convert the natives to Christianity. He brought monks along with him in his journeys to preach. He would be very cruel to Muslims who didn’t listen and would often use torture. One of the accompanying soldier-diarists notes the torturing of “Moors, by dropping boiling oil upon their skin,” and “the torture had an additional anguish for Gama’s Muslim victims: he used boiling pork oil.’ (Hall, 1998, p. 166)

Another scholar notes, “what is known of him, however, indicates a violent and bitter hatred of Muslims” (Pearson, 1987, p. 13; also see Polk, 2018, p. 542). An Indian scholar recounts, “da Gama would take captives, chop off their limbs and string them in pieces on the masts of his ships to intimidate others” (Alvares, 1997, p. 2; also see Cliff, 2012, p. 327). The dehumanizing notion that their enemies were somehow not real people was too deeply ingrained to be shaken.

Commenting on these encounters, a French-Indian historian insists that “Vasco da Gama indulged in some of the most heinous crimes; he needs to be tried for crimes against humanity” and since he "was acting under the orders and blessings of the Portuguese royalty and the Church, they should be held accountable for these crimes and for colonialism" (More, 2013 p. 1). Some strident voices have surfaced even in Portugal, where “a ‘Black book’ on Portuguese expansion has appeared, alleging that the Portuguese expansion is no different from Nazi Germany’s genocide of Jews and Gypsies” (Subrahmanyam, 1997, p. 367).

**The Journey: Destination India**

Vasco da Gama and his fleet sailed from Lisbon on 8 July 1497. To assist the voyage, vital “reconnaissance” information on the ports of east Africa and Indian coasts was obtained. In 1487, one Pedro da Covilha, disguised as an Arabic-speaking Muslim merchant and familiar with Muslim rituals and customs, undertook an overland “espionage/scouting” journey to India (Cliff, 2012, pp. 128-142; also see Winser, 2012). During 1489-90, Covilha had visited the ports of Malindi, Kilwa, and Safala, gathered vital information and delivered his scouting
report back to Lisbon. That knowledge was available to da Gama, along with latest maps and navigational instruments.

Out of sight of land for 13 weeks and having traveled over 4,500 miles, on November 7th they landed at St. Helena Bay, 125 miles northwest of the Cape of Good Hope. On November 27th, they rounded the Cape of Good Hope and landed at Mossel Bay, where they traded trinkets with local people in exchange for an ox for food. Sailing in unknown waters, on Christmas day 1497, they proceeded northward along the east coast of what is now South Africa and called the country “Natal.” By January 11, 1498, they were exploring the mouth of Copper River, named after the copper ornaments worn by the local population. When da Gama tried to establish trade links with the ruling Sultan, his products were rejected as unworthy (Winser, 2012, p. 3). Moving northeast against a strong south-westerly current, the fleet travelled 1,700 miles up the coast until, on March 2, 1498, it sailed into the port of Mozambique. Misled by scouting reports, the visitors thought they were among Christians, the land of spices and Christian kingdom of Preston John. And da Gama and his men "wept at the thought of riches within their grasp. The European conquest of Indian Ocean was about to begin" (Hall, 1998, p. 161-162). Wrote the chronicler, Alvero Velho, "We shouted with joy" (Hall, 1998, p. 162). Their joy was short-lived, however.

Mozambique was one of a chain of Muslim city-states, often with mixed religious affiliations, along the east African coast. Fearing hostility from the local population, da Gama impersonated as a “Muslim from Morocco” gained audience with the Sultan of Mozambique, whom he saw as magnificently dressed, decorated with gold and emeralds. Da Gama found that the Sultan customarily received gifts of gold from visiting merchants. However, da Gama hardly had anything suitable to offer. The Portuguese had totally underestimated the quality of goods being traded in this part of the world–cotton, ivory, gold, and pearls. Sheppard (2006) wrote, “With their glass beads and tin bells, the Portuguese could afford to buy only fruits, vegetables, and pigeons to eat. This fresh food cured the scurvy, but the Portuguese mistakenly credited the ‘very good air’ of Mozambique for their recovery from the disease” (p. 4).

Soon the local populace began to see through the subterfuge. When politely asked of his copy of the Qur’an, da Gama responded he left the holy-book in his homeland (Hall, 1998, p. 162). After several other deceptions, the Sultan concluded the newcomers were not really Muslims, but "a gang of Christian pirates" (Hall, 1998, p. 162; see Sheppard, 2006, p. 4). The locals brawled with Portuguese seamen, and the Sultan ordered da Gama to leave the port. Da Gama vengefully inflicted death and destruction by firing several cannonballs into the town, and then departed north toward Mombasa (modern Kenya).

Around Mombasa, the expedition resorted to piracy, looting Arab merchant ships. Unlike da Gama’s ships, the Arab vessels in the Indian Ocean usually were not armed and the explorers “were delighted to discover that they could easily intimidate and rob any ship they could outrun” (Sheppard, 2006, p. 4). Here, too, they had assumed they were among Christians and they did not disguise themselves but later discovered they were among Muslims (Subrahanyam, 1997, p. 117).
Da Gama hoped to enter into a lucrative trade agreement with the Sultan of Mombasa, but here, too, he was unwelcome. Again, after inflicting violence on the natives, the fleet departed further north toward the port of Malindi another Muslim principality with indigenous character. In Malindi, da Gama observed some ships with strange-looking, long-haired men, whom he assumed to be Indian Christians. He showed them a figure of Virgin Mary, and courteously, they bowed. Confidently, he pronounced he had found Indian Christians, disciples of Prester John. In reality, they were Hindus (Sheppard, 2006, p. 4). Since “Europe’s with-us-or-against-us world picture allowed for two religions: Christians they had to be” (Cliff, 2012, p. 236). The Portuguese “were convinced they were in the land of some sort of deviant Christians, anything that was not explicitly Islamic appeared, residually, to be Christian” (Subrahmanyan, 1997, p. 133).

As to the economic motives, da Gama took advantage of conflicts between Mombasa and Malindi, and he found the Sultan of Malindi, more conciliatory; besides, the Sultan was aware of the havoc caused by the visitors at previous stopovers. Da Gama managed to sign a trade agreement with the Sultan. Further, ignorant of the monsoon patterns of the Indian Ocean and deterred by mighty waves, da Gama found himself stranded in Malindi (present day Kenya) unable to cross the Arabian Sea. Fortunately, the Sultan was persuaded to provide da Gama with the services of a knowledgeable Muslim pilot-navigator, Ahmed Ibn Majid. 5 Harnessing the seasonal monsoon winds, the seafaring expertise of Arabian sailors had long-established extensive patterns of migration, trade, and social relationships between India, the Arabian Peninsula, and East Africa. It was the knowledge and guidance of this pilot that enabled da Gama’s success in his ultimate goal--sailing across the Indian Ocean and reaching the Malabar Coast of India. King Manuel’s instructions also required construction of coastal watchtowers, with a cross on top, throughout the journey. In Malindi, there is one, known as the “Pillar of Vasco da Gama.”

**Mission Accomplished: Arrival in India**

On May 20, 1498, the fleet reached the mighty port of Calicut, an international emporium bursting with oriental riches, the hub of the busiest trade network in the world, sprawled in front of the sailors’ eyes. Small native boats came out to welcome and to offer the Portuguese transportation to shore, but Vasco da Gama did not trust the native boatmen. India's Malabar Coast was at the center of the spice trade; it was the main outlet for Kerala's large pepper crop and the place where ships from the Indonesian Spice Islands came to trade cloves with Arab merchants from the Red Sea and Persian Gulf. Da Gama’s entourage included monks, priests, interpreters, and convicted criminals with sins forgiven and promise of heaven. Vasco da Gama ordered one of the convicts, a Jewish convert, João Nunez, to make

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5 Whether Ibn Majid was the navigator who guided da Gama is disputed by some, who argue that it was a Gujrati Muslim at Malindi who assisted da Gama (Hobson, 2004, p. 143).
the first trip to shore (really the *first* Portuguese to reach India, not da Gama). When his local hosts asked the reason for his visit, Nunez answered, “We have come in search of Christians and spices” (Cliff, 2012, p. 4). The reference was to the lost Christians from the ancient past whom the Portuguese hoped to find and build an alliance against Muslims.

This was the beginning of disharmony in “a polyethnic world, in which trade depended on social and cultural interaction, long-range migration, and a measure of mutual accommodation among Islam, Hinduism, local Christians and Jews: it was richer, more deeply layered and complex than the Portuguese could initially grasp” (Crowley, 2015, p. 52). The Muslim community “lived in harmony with their high-caste Hindu overlords to the mutual benefit of both religious groups” (Crowley, 2015, p. 61). The state of Kerala included several religions and was known as a tolerant and “peaceful community, subjects of the Zamorin of Calicut and other Kerala kings, until the arrival of Vasco da Gama and the Portuguese, followed by other Europeans” (More, 2013, p. 3).

The next day "a turning point in the history of Indian Ocean is crystallized. Patterns of life and commerce which had held good for centuries were about to be shattered" (Hall, 1998, p. 173). The emissary had an audience with the Zamorin, who welcomed him and invited da Gama to visit and discuss trade possibilities. Though a bit unsure, Vasco da Gama decided to risk going ashore with 13 men. He was greeted by an honor guard of 200 Indians holding muskets and unsheathed swords. They lifted him onto a palanquin and set off, with trumpets playing and muskets firing into the air, on a tour of the city. The Portuguese were impressed by this extravagant welcome (Sheppard, 2006, p. 5; also Cliff, 2012, pp. 222-223).

At this point, there occur several incidents of cultural confusion. The procession stopped at a Hindu temple, which hardly looked like a church. However, da Gama assumed this to be the local version of a Christian Cathedral. Inside the temple was an idol which the Indians mentioned as Mata Mari, the name of a Hindu goddess. Da Gama heard it as “Maria, Maria,” and assumed it was the statue of the Virgin Mary; and he bowed and prayed. Another was identified as that of Hindu god, Krishna; da Gama thought it was the local version of “Christ” and again performed the rituals. Painted on the temple walls were many images of Hindu gods and goddesses, which da Gama assumed to be saints of local “deviant” Christianity. Da Gama saw a wall painting of a dove and thought it was the Holy Ghost (Cliff, 2012, p. 204). Since they knew of only two religions, Christianity and Islam, the Portuguese thought the Hindus around them were really Christians, the disciples of the legendary Apostle Thomas or Christian subjects of the mythical King Prester John, and the odd statues and paintings merely represented a corrupted form of Christianity.

The welcoming group arranged a meeting between Vasco da Gama and the Zamorin which initially went well. Vasco da Gama presented himself as the

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6 Following convention, this paper refers to the Hindu Ruler of Calicut as "Zamorin." More properly, however, he was called "Samundri Raja," meaning "Lord of the Sea" (Crowley, 2016, p. 2). In Hindu/Urdu languages, the word "samundar" means "the sea;" and "Samundri" means "belonging to the sea." "Raja" means "Lord."
Portuguese ambassador and described the great power and wealth of King Manuel I of Portugal. The Zamorin expressed his regard for the king and offered to exchange ambassadors. Sensing some cordiality, da Gama pressed his position and “demanded nothing less than the complete banishment of every Musalman in Calicut” (Jayne, 1910, p. 65). Da Gama insisted, “it will be better for you to have truck with so mighty a king (as the King of Portugal) than with the dogs of Mecca” (Disney, 1995, p. 22). However, there was a long-standing compact of religious accommodation between the Hindu ruler and Muslim population where the Zamorin King had reputedly stated: “You do not eat the ox; I do not eat the pig; we will reciprocally respect the taboo” (Crowley, 2016, p. 2). Da Gama’s ultimatum was rejected, however.

The atmosphere became less friendly the next day, when Vasco da Gama laid out some presents. Zamorin's courtiers laughed at the gifts. In fact, the potentates of the East were at that time far wealthier than the Western kings, and the Zamorin naturally had looked for the standard tribute of gold, as was customary. India’s economy was about 30% of the global economy at the time. And upon return, da Gama informed King Manuel of India’s “large cities, large buildings and rivers, and great and prosperous populations. He talked admiringly of spices and jewels, precious stones and “mines of gold”” (Tharoor, 2017, p. 219). The Zamorin ruler was unimpressed by the goods da Gama brought and, suspicious of the motives, he refused a trading pact with him.

Unable to arrange another meeting with the Zamorin, soon after, Vasco da Gama burst into the throne room unannounced and demanded that he be allowed to unload his goods and engage in trade. The Zamorin agreed to their storage in a warehouse. However, the Portuguese merchandise did not sell well, and the local merchants convinced the Zamorin that he stood to gain nothing by concluding a commercial agreement with the visitors.

During his three-month stay in Calicut, da Gama failed to buy more than a few handfuls of spices. Relations between him and the Zamorin became increasingly strained. Further, Zamorin's men arrested some Portuguese for failure to pay the customary harbor tolls. In retaliation, da Gama took some Hindus hostage. After winning the release of his men, Vasco da Gama abandoned his attempts to trade and set sail for Portugal. While he contained his wrath at this time, he was determined to seek revenge later.

The homeward journey was quite arduous. The pilot who guided the voyage to Calicut could not be found. The 2,300-mile journey back to Malindi took 93 days, compared to 23 days to reach India (Crowley, 2015, p. 78). Da Gama's crew suffered from scurvy and 30 men died. Only the kindness of the Sultan of Malindi saved the rest of the crew, with his gifts of fresh food. Of the 170 Portuguese who had set sail for India in 1497, only 54 were still alive when Vasco da Gama's two surviving ships returned to Lisbon on September 18, 1499 (Winser, 2012, p. 4; also Sheppard, 2006, p. 6). Although the expedition had been a financial disaster, bringing home only tiny quantities of spices, King Manuel of Portugal was delighted by Vasco da Gama's claim that he had made contact with the “the Christians of India.” The king built a new cathedral as a thanksgiving for Vasco da
Gama's success, and struck new coins commemorating the voyage. King Manuel was very pleased. What had been done once could be done again, the King thought.

**Interlude: Cabral’s Expedition, 1500**

Soon after, early in 1500, Manuel dispatched another expedition, led by Pedro Alvares Cabral, in order to secure the sea route to India and “to deliver a stark Crusading message to the Muslims and pagans of the Indian Ocean: convert, or die” (Cliff, 2012, p. 282). As his fleet traveled southward, however, Cabral sailed so far west of the African coast that he accidentally crossed the Atlantic and discovered Brazil--and claimed the new land for Portugal. Once he resumed his route, the fleet reached Calicut in less than six months. This time the Portuguese were better prepared and brought lavish goods with which to tempt the Hindu ruler Zamorin into a trade agreement. Suspicious as he was from previous encounters with da Gama, he also saw it as an attempt to disrupt the harmonious coexistence between Hindus and Muslims. The Muslim merchants were outraged at yet another attempt to steal their trade; there was no trade agreement. Cabral was driven out of the city, and during the clashes, several of his men were killed.

In retaliation, as his fleet was departing from Calicut, Cabral seized a dozen Muslim cargo vessels and “killed, drowned, and imprisoned hundreds of men. He carted off their cargoes of spices along with three elephants, which were slaughtered and salted for food, and he burnt the vessels” (Cliff, 2012, p. 286). At night, the Portuguese boats “lined up in front of the city, and at day break they opened fire. Cannonballs plowed into the crowds on the seafront and tore through houses and temples, killing hundreds more” (Cliff, 2012, p. 286). Cabral then moved on to Cochin, where he found another Hindu raja, who had conflicts with Calicut’s Zamorin ruler. Exploiting this discord, Cabral found him more cooperative. Here, he was able to establish the first Portuguese trading post in India. He returned home on June 23, 1501, with his ships loaded with enough spices sufficient to disrupt the spice trade held by Arab and Venetian merchants.

**Da Gama’s Second Voyage, 1502**

Buoyed by the general success of Cabral’s journey, King Manuel now planned for an even more successful campaign, equipped with an overwhelming display of force and commanded by his valiant knight, Vasco da Gama. On February 15, 1502, Vasco da Gama’s launched his second journey to India. Exploration accomplished earlier, this was a voyage of conquest, backed by a bristling armada. Da Gama immediately launched a campaign of terror and pillage against Muslim shipping.

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7 Harmonious interreligious environment is further corroborated by observations, such as “Islam had been spread, not at the point of a sword, but by missionaries and merchants from the deck of a dhow” (Crowley, 2015, p. 52); and “Islam came to Kerala … through traders, travelers and missionaries, who brought its message of equality and brotherhood to coastal people. The new faith was peacefully embraced and encouraged” (Tharoor, 2017, p. 115).
The task now was to consolidate Portuguese dominance of the route to India. After plundering raids on ports along the east African coast, da Gama established several trading posts. The well-armed armada was indisposed to take no for an answer. Noted Cliff (2012), “Gama was under orders to take proud Kilwa down a peg” and he was keen to avenge the killing of Cabral's men in Calicut in 1501—and for Kilwa Sultan’s “misbehavior” with da Gama in 1497 and with Cabral in 1500 (p. 303). As Nigel Cliff (2012) has emphasized, earlier, "Gama was a pathfinder; now he was a Crusader, and had designs far darker than simple extortion” (p. 309).

Upon reaching Kilwa, messages were sent to the Sultan to submit to the terms demanded by da Gama. According to the chronicler, Gaspar Correa, "the admiral harrangued the hapless ruler." He said, “I command and that if I choose, in one single hour your city would be reduced to embers, and if I chose to kill your people, they would all be burned in the fire." And, he "would fetch him by the ears and drag him to the beach .... and show him throughout India, so that all might see what would be gained by not choosing to be the captive of the king of Portugal" (Crowley, 2015, p.103).

The Sultan, aware of Portuguese violence elsewhere and weakened due to conflicts with other chieftains in his federation, was cautious. The Portuguese, aware of these local conflicts through their previous visits and scouting reports, exploited these divisions by supporting both groups, and offered the Sultan protection against his adversaries. The Sultan capitulated and surrendered. He “himself came to meet da Gama in his boat. He was told in no uncertain terms that the Portuguese wanted not only gold by way of trade, but a tribute of ten pearls a year for the Queen and 1,500 misqals of gold (yearly) and the ruler of Kilwa was henceforth obliged to fly a (Portuguese) flag as a sign of subordination” (Subrahmanyam, 1997, p. 202). And he wanted all but Portuguese ships to carry trade to the coastal towns, effectively putting many Kilwa merchants out of business.

Once the negotiations were completed, da Gama issued a hand-written proclamation, dated July 20, 1502, about the new vassal status of Kilwa and its ruler. Da Gama boasted that he was “determined to destroy him” if he would not submit, and further, that “he ‘treated him much more discourteously than he had behaved with me,’ taking an evident pleasure in his humiliation” (Subrahmanyam, 1997, p. 203).

Kilwa’s conquest accomplished, "on July 27, Gama sailed on toward Malindi, where he was received warmly, if nervously, by his old friend the sultan" (Crowley, 2015, p. 103). After coasting along southern Arabia, then da Gama reached Goa (later, the focus of Portuguese power in India), before proceeding to Cannanore, a port in southwestern India. Near to the Malabar Coast, he found several Muslim vessels which were plundered and targeted by da Gama’s cannons. And, "there was also the matter of revenge for the massacre at Calicut, and many were doubtless interested in the chance for personal plunder" (Crowley, 2015, p. 105).

**Massacre of Pilgrims: The Meri ship**
On September 29, 1502, da Gama got his chance. A large dhow (an Arab lateen-rigged boat with a long overhang) was sighted coming from the north. It was a ship loaded with pilgrims returning from Mecca. And he engaged in one of the most gruesome massacres of his voyages. This was the most heinous destruction of the Muslim pilgrimage ship, Meri.

Da Gama captured the unarmed passenger ship, carrying Muslim families, returning to Calicut from Mecca. Among the approximately 700 pilgrims (men, women, and children) were some of the influential Muslims from Calicut. Aware of sea piracy not as unusual, the Meri surrendered without a fight. Initially, the pilgrims took the capture lightly but as things deteriorated, they offered considerable money and merchandise to da Gama; they even offered to arrange friendship and trade links with the Zamorin. However, da Gama demanded all wealth in the ship, or else, he threatened, everyone, with hands and feet bound, would be flung overboard. The chronicler, Thome’ Lopez, noted that "the wealth on board would have sufficed to ransom every Christian slave in the kingdom of Fez (Morocco), and even then to have a handsome balance" (Jayne, 1910, p. 65). However, da Gama was determined.

Even from a distance, da Gama “could see the women pleading for their lives, holding out jewelry and precious objects, begging the admiral for mercy. Some took their children and held them out and asked for pity” (Crowley, 2015, p. 106). To intimidate the rest, he had one of the passengers thrown into the sea; and pilgrims immediately delivered everything they had. Aside from plunder, this piracy also was driven by the missionary zeal--to kill the 'infidels.' And, “the holy duty of the armada’s Franciscan fathers received its due: Twenty children were spared to be turned into Christians” (Hall, 1998, p. 197).

Then followed the massacre. With all pilgrims aboard, da Gama ordered the ship set on fire. No pilgrim escaped, and he remained callous to the wailing women, holding their babies in their arms, imploring for mercy. Instead, he would watch the inferno through a spy-hole on his ship, as though relishing the scene. As the flames would diminish, he would come back to finish the job. The inferno lasted for four days, till all pilgrims perished. Clearly, “the dehumanizing notion that their enemies in faith were somehow not real people was too deeply ingrained to be shaken” (Cliff, 2012, p. 313). Writing in 1910, K. G. Jayne asserted, “there can be little doubt that the burning of the Meri and similar achievements were regarded in Europe as laudable manifestations of religious zeal,” and if challenged, da Gama “would assuredly have answered ‘that he was only doing his duty as a Christian in exterminating the vile brood of Muhammad; that his acts of piracy and pillage were authorized by letters of marque from God’” (p. 66).

The Meri tragedy is “often cited as a particularly conspicuous act of early Portuguese violence in Asia, and has troubled both contemporary and modern-day commentators” (Subrahmanyam, 1997, p. 208).

**Brutal Encore at Calicut**

Next, da Gama moved on to the port of Calicut—his second visit and prepared for more revenge. He began with capturing 30 fishermen, dismembered them and
let their bodies float in with the tide for their families to find. Then, he found 20 trading ships in the harbor; he plundered them all and took the crews as prisoners. He ordered his men to parade the prisoners, and ordered them to “cut off the hands, ears and noses of some eight hundred ‘Moorish’ seamen” (Wolpert, 1989, p. 136; also see Jayne, 1910, p. 65).

Soon, King Zamorin sent a Brahmin emissary to protest and negotiate peace. However, da Gama demanded “nothing less than the banishment of every Musalman in Calicut,” and “to emphasize the mandate, he seized and hanged a number of helpless traders and fishermen, whose vessels were in the harbor” (Jayne, 1910, p. 65). Further, he insisted, that "as a precondition of peace," not only "all the Moors of Mecca" must be expelled, but, further, in future "no Mecca ships should stop or trade in its ports" (Disney, 1995, pp. 21-22).

The 15th century Portuguese historian corroborates the event, “More than eight hundred Muslims, Correa declares, were so murdered; more were strung by their feet and were used by the Portuguese for target practice” (Cliff, 2012, p. 494). Gaspar Correa is further quoted as to what Vasco da Gama did next; thus,

"When all the Indians had been executed...he ordered them to strike upon their teeth with staves, and they knocked them down their throats; and they were put on board, heaped on top of each other, mixed up with the blood which streamed from them; and he ordered mats and dry leaves to be spread over them and sails to be set for the shore and the vessel set on fire ..., and the small vessel with the friar (Brahmin), with all the hands and ears, was also sent ashore, without being fired" (Hall, 1998, p. 198).

And to further demonstrate his barbarity, da Gama attached dog ears to replace the Brahmin’s own, and he was asked to carry a message to the Zamorin. Hall (1998) continues,

A message from da Gama was sent to the Zamorin. Written on a palm leaf, it told him he could make curry with the human pieces in the boat. And the atrocities committed by Vasco da Gama and his men live in infamy. The story is one of brutality, betrayal and colonial ambition. (p. 198; also see Cliff, 2012, p. 495)

Still, however, “not satisfied with this, da Gama bombarded Calicut from the sea for three consecutive days and razed it to the ground, killing several hundred people. All these crimes have been recorded by Portuguese chroniclers” (More, 2013, p. 6). Da Gama was furious to take revenge and determined to let the Zamorin know the consequences of his earlier belligerence.

Once invaders were in the city and under control, another incident of visitors’ barbaric greed happened, as recorded by a chronicler, Jean Mocquet. The Portuguese entered a temple to steal gold statues and they found several women engaged in dancing rituals as part of the Hindu worship. Wrote Cliff (2012), "They snatched jewelry from women's ears, [and] hacked their fingers to get the rings" (p.
After stealing the statues, they set fire to the temple and all the women were burned to death.

**Aggressive “Christianization”**

The Portuguese often claim, quite erroneously, that their arrival in the East stopped all of India from succumbing to Islam; Islam was already present in India since the Mughul Sultanate in Delhi. However, they had certainly overcome the Muslims of the Malabar Coast. And, according to Papal Bulls, the messianic mission called for “universalizing” Christianity and conversion of all “Saracens (Muslims) and other pagans.” Given “the intense certainty and exclusiveness of its religious convictions .... the lust for souls was as avid as the lust for gold and spices in da Gama: but to kill the unconvertible, to punish the heathen, was always righteous: other races were base, slavery for them just” (Plumb, 1969, p. xxvi).

Thus, the Church expansion in Asia became a part of the colonial enterprise, along with imposition of culture and language of the new rulers. Soon, the Portuguese resorted to a familiar strategy, borrowed from Spain, of forced conversions, and the dark forces of Inquisition arrived to roam the streets of Goa, conquered in 1510 by another Portuguese, Afonso de Albuquerque (1453-1515), the Duke of Goa. Also known as Albuquerque “The Terrible,” his suppression of the natives was just as brutal in his killing: “The bodies of men, women, the pregnant, babes in arms, were thrown to the crocodiles; the destruction was so great that the river was filled with blood and dead men, so that for a week afterwards the tides deposited the corpses on the banks. Evidently the reptiles were unable to cope with the glut” (Crowley, 2015, p. 253). Their aggressive method of proselytization was hardly conducive to winning converts and contrasted with “the basic nature of the Gospel based on compassion, humility and understanding” (David, 1988, p. 2). Indians who “failed to bow down to the new rulers or doff their caps were slashed with swords, cudgeled with bamboo poles, or beaten with long sandbags” (Cliff, 2012, p. 392).

When the Catholic Church deemed the conversion process was rather slow, material incentives were extended and “the colonial government offered rice to poor Hindus and jobs to the higher castes if they submitted to baptism. Many of the ‘Rice Christians’ were dunked under water, took their reward, and carried on with life as normal” (de Souza, 1988, p. 18; also see Cliff, 2012, pp. 398-399). Indeed, “intolerance of things Indian became henceforth the characteristic feature of missionary zeal in India. Any compromise with Hindu life or religion was avoided, e.g., the eating of beef was held to be necessary as it would put the convert altogether out of the pale of Hinduism” (Panikkar, 1959, p. 281).

Under the Portuguese Inquisition in India's Goa region, Hindus, Muslims, and Jews were forced to convert; or else suffer the fate, familiar from Spain: brutal death

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8 With respect to Spain, recent scholarship disputes the ‘Reconquista’ notion; instead, it was a Crusade, like others. Here too, successive popes “were granting remission of sins, the hallmark of crusading bulls, to those exposing their lives in combat against Islam” (O'Callaghan, 2003, p. xi).
or expulsion. And, “children under the age of 14 were to be forcibly baptized; many were dragged screaming into the churches for the ceremony” (Hall, 1998, p. 158). The Inquisition prosecuted non-converts who broke prohibitions against the observance of Hindu or Muslim religious rites or interfered with Portuguese attempts to convert non-Christians. Aside from being an instrument of social control, it was also a method of confiscating property and enriching the Inquisitors. When the Portuguese arrived, there were 40,000 Jews living peacefully with their Hindu, Muslim, and Christian neighbors. During the next few decades, Portuguese (and Dutch) warships destroyed the Jewish settlements; and now only a few Jews worship in Asia’s oldest synagogue in Kerala (Gier, 2008, p. 1; also see, Cliff, 2012, pp. 158-159).

“Forced baptisms” were viewed by the Portuguese Jesuits as a favor to the natives, for their souls were saved. Thus, as David (1988) has narrated,

A particularly grave abuse was practiced in Goa in the form of “mass baptism” and what went before it. The practice was begun by the Jesuits and was later initiated by the Franciscans also. The Jesuits staged an annual mass baptism on the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, and in order to secure as many neophytes as possible, a few days before the ceremony the Jesuits would go through the streets of the Hindu quarter in pairs, accompanied by their Negro slaves, whom they would urge to seize the Hindus. When the blacks caught up with a fugitive, they would smear his lips with a piece of beef, making him an “untouchable” among his people. Conversion to Christianity was then his only option. (pp. 18-19)

During his earlier visit, da Gama was surprised to find some Christians in India, who claimed to have been converted by Apostle Thomas and their priests were married. During the second trip, the Portuguese had Inquisitors on board who not only ensured their allegiance to the Church (or die), but, also “forced the priests to divorce their wives” (Gier, 2008. p. 1).

Further, an Indian historian, Sita Goel (2010), comments on St. Francis Xavier:

Francis Xavier had come to India with the firm resolve of uprooting paganism from the soil of India and planting Christianity in its place. His saying and doings have been documented in his numerous biographies and cited by every historian of the Portuguese episode in the history of India. St. Francis Xavier, whom the Catholic Church hails as the Patron Saint of the East, participated in this meritorious work, wrote back home: “As soon as I arrived in any heathen village, when all are baptized, I ordered all the

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9 Concerning the Goa Inquisition, in September 2015, there were protests by Hindu nationalists in New York, when Pope Francis led a Catholic mass at Madison Square. One sign said, “Vatican must apologize for Goa Inquisition and your torture and murder of Hindus.” See www.justiceforhindus.org/vatican.
temples of their false gods to be destroyed and all the idols to be broken to pieces. I can give you no idea of the joy I feel in seeing this done.” (p. 10; also see Shouri, 1985)

Another historian quotes a Portuguese chronicler, Filippo Sassetti, who lived in India from 1578 to 1588:

The fathers of the Church forbade the Hindus under terrible penalties the use of their own sacred books, and prevented them from the exercise of their religion. They destroyed their temples, and so harassed and interfered with the people that they abandoned the city in large numbers, refusing to remain any longer in a place where they had no liberty, and were liable to imprisonment, torture and death if they worshipped after their own fashion the gods of their fathers. (Sewell, 2012, p. 211)

Therefore, it is no surprise that one chronicler of the era, Gaspar Correa (1495-1563), who lived in India for 50 years, “deplored the Portuguese Government in India,” administered by “murderers who go home without any fear of punishment” (Woolf, 2011, p. 236).

Feared and hated, the carnage da Gama inflicted upon the local people throughout his voyages was inhuman and fully sanctioned by the Portuguese King and blessed by the Church as “God’s work.” Once the Indians had been subdued, he left behind the first European naval force in Asian waters, primarily to “intercept Muhammadan merchantmen and pilgrim transports…. He then headed for home, leaving behind him the trail of blood and ashes” (Jayne, 1910, p. 66). In Lisbon, the more gruesome the violence, the greater the glory; da Gama’s sacred exploits were viewed “not to indict the admiral but to glorify him and his Crusade” (Cliff, 2012, p. 394). Upon return home in September 1503, da Gama rode in triumph through the city. King Manuel extended numerous honors for his achievements, and in 1503, da Gama was appointed Viceroy of India.

500th Anniversary Celebration

As a sequel to the preceding narrative, events relating to Portugal’s proposal to celebrate the 500th anniversary (May 20, 1998) of da Gama’s arrival in India are worth noting. A 1998 news report, "Explorer or Exploiter," written by Archana Masih (1998), covered the story. The Portuguese government had proposed a year-long celebration, in Portugal, India, and elsewhere. Soon, however, there was an eruption of protests, even riots in India, reminiscent of 1992, the year of 500th anniversary celebration of Columbus Day, when in the United States many challenged the day. While celebrated as a peerless symbol of glory in Portugal, the da Gama story has a notorious content elsewhere. And, 500 years later, the Portuguese were sucked into a whirlpool of controversy.

In India, da Gama’s effigies were burnt, black flags were waved about and politicians protested angrily: "Vasco de Gama is associated with colonialism and repression. The Portuguese came here and established their colony, which lasted for
450 years," Masih quotes a Mumbai MP. Further, "It is shameful to celebrate the arrival of Vasco de Gama who began the most torturous colonial era in the country. His arrival unleashed an era of cruelty and exploitation" (Masih, 1998, p. 1). Others agitated with statements, such as, "we can't forget that Gama came to India with a sword in one hand and the Bible in the other. His main purpose was to colonize and spread Christianity. Britshiers were much better than Portuguese, who tried to destroy local religion and culture" (Goa News, 1997, May 29). A Goan politician, asked, "How can I forget that my father was shot dead and my brothers were imprisoned by the Portuguese Police when I was just 9 years old?" (Goa News, 1997, May 29). Others demanded a public apology from Portugal for its past misdeeds. In Calicut, a special committee was formed to formulate a program of year-long demonstrations and marches. In Mozambique, Angola, and elsewhere in Africa, there was universal rejection about “celebrating” a man associated with slave-trade and colonization. Relatedly, there is a recent Indian movie that showcases the cruelty of Vasco da Gama and attempts to read history from the side of the vanquished.10

Concluding Remarks

Deified by some and vilified by others, nevertheless, there is almost universal acknowledgement of Vasco da Gama’s expedition as historical in terms of linking the three continents of Europe, Africa, and Asia, as they had never been linked before. While some European writers are inclined to view the colonial expansion as “the inevitable expression of a civilization on the march,” others view the experience as “the early European invasion of Asia.” The march “challenged the basis of Asian societies; it imposed its will on them and brought about social and political changes in Asia which are of fundamental importance” (Panikkar, 1959, pp. 16-17). For Muslims, the “European age of expansion was an increasingly bitter time. As the nations of the North gained in relative power, they thrust into the South, destroying native states, uprooting societies, suppressing religious orders” (Polk, 2018, p. 60). Da Gama’s legacy, thus, despite the distinction of being the first European to reach India by sea, becomes severely tarnished in light of the systematic violence inflicted upon the native peoples throughout the voyages. The Portuguese plunged into the world of the Indian Ocean, and da Gama and his successors “had come to spread the Christian faith. For nearly a century, they traded, pillaged, raped, and killed throughout the Indian Ocean. Such orgies of piracy and plunder served to secure Portugal’s direct route to the East" (Polk, 2018, p. 60).

The Age of Discovery enabled vast wealth in resources (natural, human, bullion, and, of course, spices) to fall under Christian control. The world order founded in the wake of this era is often viewed in the Islamic world as an ongoing

Western endeavor to impose an alien way of life. While the events discussed here occurred over 500 years ago, recent Islam-West conflicts remind us that the rhetoric of the crusades, holy war, and jihad, with all the intensity those words conjure, is a powerful weapon that is still with us. And the "war on terror" is viewed as a new Crusade by some Muslim ‘terrorists,’ "an affront to mainstream Islam" (Cliff, 2012, p. 418). Some historians wonder if the age-old conflict has come back to haunt us again. Indeed, whatever other forces are at play, current battles for Middle East oil are reminiscent of the earlier Portuguese expedition for spices.

Presently, many scholars point to a “Clash of Civilizations” where a Christian West is portrayed as the protector and guarantor of human rights and the Islamic East as responsible for fueling terrorism, and the distinction between “state-terrorism” and “liberation-terrorism” are blurry. For others, it is modernity and a godless West that threaten the religious and cultural values of traditional societies. The atrocities laid out in this narrative perpetrated in the name of God with the blessing of the Catholic Church underscore how religion was used to rationalize and defend violence, something that should never be the case. It is most instructive to recall this history in order to underscore that “might” does not make “right.” The tragedies of the past should not be forgotten; we should learn from them.

There is another way, however, as history further informs us. The history of peaceful coexistence and cooperation among diverse peoples far outweighs the episodic eruptions of conflict and violence that have plagued humanity. It was the Islamic scientific centers of learning in Baghdad and Cordoba that collected and disseminated much of the knowledge that later enabled Europe’s ascendancy. And it was the three Abrahamic monotheistic religious traditions that informed the basis of law for large portions of human civilization. It is to a shared legacy of community building in creative relationship that we should look for exemplars of human civilization and not to the brutalities of lawlessness that occasionally raise their head to take by force what could not be obtained through fair and equitable interactions.

Certainly, if the “age of exploitation” was founded on religious intolerance, then the evolving “age of peaceful coexistence” must be grounded in religious pluralism and freedom. Documents such as the Magna Carta, the Petition of Rights, the Bill of Rights, and other such legal treatises are critical parts of the human heritage and are not the product of one culture, society or civilization (Obama, 2018). Rather, they come from a multicultural, intercultural, and grassroots experience forged in the ashes of oppression and violence to assert the power of freedom and shared responsibility.

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11 The Charter of Medina, also known as the Constitution of Medina, is another influential early document that emphasized individual rights within a community.
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The World Parliament of Religions, the Swami, and the Evangelist: Contextualizing Late 19th-Century American Responses to Hinduism

Anne R. Richards

Abstract

This article explores how Hinduism and other religions and philosophies outside the Christian traditions were received by Americans influenced by secularism, science, globalization, and expanding U.S. imperialism in the late 19th century. The article also explores the role of two missionaries, John Henry Barrows and Swami Vivekananda, arguably the most influential participants in the World Parliament of Religions of 1893.

Get Karma, good—well rubbed into you—absorb it, wallow in it, and then you will batter down all the obstacles of life.

A journalist writing four years after the shuttering of the World’s Columbian Exposition described Chicago’s Lake Front Park as a “barren waste” (The New York Times, 1897, p. 13). Dominating this “eyesore” and “source of annoyance” was the building that had housed the 1893 General Committee on the Congress of Religions, which came to be known as the World Parliament of Religions. The fire-ravaged park also contained a tangle of railroad tracks; a sculpture described as “a nightmare in bronze, supposed to represent the late Mr. Columbus as he appeared to the distempered visions of the artist”; and “a varied assortment of men out of
work, and men to whom work [was] only an abstract proposition” (*The New York Times*, 1897, p. 13). In 1897, Chicago’s population of nearly 2 million had been increasing by 50,000 annually although in many neighborhoods, such as those surrounding the park, water could not be pumped above the first floor of buildings.

During six months in 1893, more than 20 million visitors from around the globe streamed to the park’s “White City” (Rydell, 2005), and thousands crowded into the Hall of Columbus in the Memorial Art Palace to witness “the birth of formal interreligious dialogue worldwide” (*Parliament of the World’s Religions*, 2015b). Delegates to the World Parliament of Religions, which took place from September 11–27, represented 41 spiritual traditions (Berkeley Center, n.d.), including “Confucianism, Taoism, Shintoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam” (Michaud & Adiprasetya, 2004).

The Parliament inspired a wide range of religiously inflected responses. One attendee planned to establish a similar parliament in Jerusalem. A Mr. Kiretchjiam was reported to have “distinguished himself and his people [Armenian Apostolic Christians] on the platform of the world’s fair parliament of religions by a remarkable speech, which was entitled ‘A Voice from the Young Men of the Orient’” (*The Atlanta Constitution*, 1897, p. 6) and which was said to be the “first cry of Armenians” heard in the United States. Soon after the Parliament, Kiretchjiam addressed the church clubs of New York City, which consisted “of men prominent in business and professional circles,” and through such outreach he founded the Armenian Relief Association (*The Atlanta Constitution*, 1897, p. 6). According to historians of the Baha’i faith, practice of their religion on American soil can be traced to the Parliament (Abdu’l Bahá in America, 2011).

Catholic speakers at the Parliament had traveled from as far away as Australia, Brazil, and Belgium. And many Christian delegates, like delegates from other traditions, traveled extensively in the United States before and after the event. In summer of 1894, *The New York Times* (1894b) reported that “Momolu Massaquoi, an African Prince from Vei Territory, Liberia, West Africa, son of King Lahai Massaquoi of the Salinas, called at Police Headquarters . . . and paid his respects to Superintendent Byrnes. Prince Massaquoi has been doing missionary work in this country. He was a delegate to the Parliament of Religions at the World’s Fair. He is going back to Africa soon” (p. 8). One of the founders of the Brotherhood of Christian Unity, which was an “outgrowth of the religious parliament of the fair,” Massaquoi signed his name to this statement: “For the purpose of uniting with all those who desire to serve God and their fellow-men under the inspiration of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, I hereby enroll myself a member in the Brotherhood of Christian Unity” (*The New York Times*, 1893a, p. 1). Headlining the list of signatories to the new Brotherhood was the chairman of the World Parliament of Religions, John Henry Barrows (1847–1902). In New York City, immediately after the event concluded, an individual identified as “Professor Richey” read the paper he had presented “at the Parliament of Religions, on ‘The Anglican Communion and Its Claims’” (p. 5). According to *The New York Times* (1893c), “Prof. Richey also gave a short review of the work accomplished at the parliament” (p. 5). In addition to delegates and visitors, documents regarding the Parliament circulated;
most notably, cheap copies of the 1,000-plus-page proceedings were quickly made available throughout the United States.

As chairman of the Parliament, John Henry Barrows traveled more extensively in the United States and around the world than any other Christian associated with the Congress. An established Presbyterian clergyman at the time of the Parliament, he had been ordained a Congregationalist minister some decades before, when Congregationalist orthodoxy was being reshaped to reflect a more liberal perspective on human possibilities. Christians embracing liberal religious organizations such as Congregationalism, Unitarianism, and Universalism were likely to agree that “a belief in Christ has nothing to fear from the developments of science” (The New York Times, 1896c, p. 10). In this, the Transcendentalist and Unitarian Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) and similarly oriented individuals were continuing on the path of Reformation clergy who had painstakingly constructed Christianity as a religion of reason.

It is quite possible that the extended encounter with India had been playing a substantive role in shaping western understandings of Christianity. Both Transcendentalism and modern science emerged during a time of deepening western encounter with what many of the faithful perceived as pantheistic or atheistic easterners. Missionaries working outside the West had long been challenged to make Christianity palatable to potential converts not overly concerned with the influence of a unitary God on humankind or inclined to commit to the exclusive worship of a father god/trinity. In efforts to make all potentially effective arguments for Christ, missionaries had developed rhetorics of western progress, western science, and, for good measure, western democracy. Secular discourse thus had become part of the rhetorical toolkit for people simultaneously espousing an indispensable faith and would have been used alongside distinctly religious discourse.

When the World Parliament of Religions threw open its doors, eastern philosophy and spirituality already were sources of profound interest to westerners. Arthur Schopenhauer’s (1788–1860) appreciation for the Upanishads is well known. Read throughout the West for a century or more, translations of eastern texts had likewise helped shape the Transcendentalist movement, whose adherents and others in turn promoted the “scientific” study and comparison of religions, including Christianity. According to Nathaniel Preston (n.d.), Walt Whitman (1819–1892), who often incorporated Hindu concepts and imagery into his poetry, owned copies of many texts on India although he likely was neither a devoted Hindu nor an expert on the religion. The Transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862), in contrast, was a “serious student of Eastern religion and philosophy” (Andrews, 2014). Raised and baptized a Unitarian, he had severed relations with the church as a young man (Higgins, 2017). Attempting, instead, to “[model] his life at Walden Pond on the instructions given to adepts of yoga” in the Bhagavad Gita (Andrews, 2014), he described his morning rituals in this manner:

I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonical philosophy of the Bhagavat Geeta, since whose composition years of the gods have
elapsed, and in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seem puny and trivial; and I doubt if that philosophy is not to be referred to a previous state of existence, so remote is its sublimity from our conceptions. I lay down the book and go to my well for water, and lo! there I meet the servant of the Brahmin, priest of Brahma, and Vishnu and Indra, who still sits in his temple on the Ganges reading the Vedas, or dwells at the root of a tree with his crust and water-jug. I meet his servant come to draw water for his master, and our buckets as it were grate together in the same well. The pure Walden water is mingled with the sacred water of the Ganges. (Thoreau, 1854)

Scholarship undertaken primarily by westerners fluent in eastern languages and in philological methods thus was contributing to Americans' increasing fascination and discomfort with the East and was destined to play a key role in the unfolding of the Parliament.

At the same time, newspaper reports published during the decade of the Parliament demonstrated widespread irreverence towards Christianity. In February 1896, a Jersey City journalist reported that a certain Julius Feicke had been elected a member of the Hudson County Liquor Dealers' Association. The “ex-pastor,” the reporter observed, “had left the pulpit to become a saloon keeper” (The New York Times, 1896a, p. 8). The same column recorded that “a sneak thief got into the house of Charles A. Johnson, 546 Newark Avenue, yesterday and stole the family Bible. As nothing else was taken, the theft is supposed to have been the work of a religious crank” (p. 8). Contemporary books also indicated the iconoclasm of the age. A December 18, 1893 New York Times column dedicated to books recently published highlighted, among other titles, Evolution in Science and Revolution in Religion; Honoré de Balzac’s Two Young Married Women; and Ambrose Bierce’s Can Such Things Be?; as well as two volumes on the Parliament (1893b, p. 3). On May 28, 1894, the paper noted publication of The Jungle Book; The Lowell Lectures on the Ascent of Man; Was the Apostle Peter Ever in Rome?; Roger Williams: the Pioneer of Religious Liberty; and Judaism at the World’s Parliament of Religions, along with Christian Unity Proved by Scriptures (1894a, p. 3).

As a result of the World Parliament of Religions, the frequently irreconcilable rhetorics of speakers outside the pale of Christianity were, at the turn of the 19th century, being featured in discussions from the parlors and pulpits of Boston to those of Atlanta and San Francisco and beyond. But Americans who rejected rationality as the basis of true religion and who, as a result, could be exasperated by the spirit of the age, were likely to resist not only the premises of the Parliament, but also cultural changes such as the fashion among contemporary preachers to discourse upon topics that struck critics as worldly. In a sermon titled “Christ Crowded Out,” reproduced at length in The Atlanta Constitution on October 13, 1902, a popular evangelist named Ostrum delivered a sermon that included an unexpected encomium of Barrows and that lambasted the fashion of considering secular themes during Sunday service. The evangelist counseled his audience at the Baptist Tabernacle that “[d]iscussions about the Philippines and Cuba and Mars and the moon, the form of which magazine editors and statesmen ought to be able to
manage better than religious leaders,” should not “take the place of an ungloved hand of mercy reaching to uplift every needy man” (p. 9).

As *The Atlanta Constitution* recorded in an editorial comment published on September 24, 1893, there had been substantial opposition to the tolerant tenor of the Parliament. The writer stated that “[t]he Baptists . . . withdrew from the world’s fair congresses” because the fair was not closed on Sundays and were “particularly exacerbated by the apparent success of these gatherings. [One critic said] that the coming together of the creeds remind[ed] him of the witches in Macbeth, who each brought something to the pot—an adder’s skin, babies’ fingers and other unsacramental things, and then danced around the fire, waiting to see what would come out of the steam” (p. 18). In May of 1894 at the Lexington Avenue Baptist Church in New York City, J. L. Campbell gave a series of lectures on “The Parliament of Religions, or Christianity and the World’s Great Faiths.” Titled “Christ and Confucius,” “Christ and Buddha,” “Christ and Theosophy,” “Christ and Mahomet,” “Christ and the Hebrew Problem,” and “Christ the Light of the World” (*The New York Times*, 1894c, p. 8), these lectures had the evident objective of installing Christianity at the apex of a religious multiverse. Such rejoinders were to be expected, for detractors of the West and of Christianity had been given a well-publicized platform at the Parliament. Kinza Riuge M. Hirai (dates unknown; a distinguished Japanese Buddhist), Mohammed Alexander Russell Webb (1846–1916; one of the earliest prominent European-American converts to Islam [Curtis, 2008]); and Swami Vivekananda (Narendra Nath Datta; 1863–1902; student of and successor to Ramakrishna) all delivered widely publicized, critical addresses there.

Interest in Oriental religions and cultures was already at a pitch in the United States when Vivekananda arrived in 1893. Although the iconic minarets of what is now the University of Tampa had been gleaming in the Florida sun for a few years when the Parliament convened in Illinois, *The Atlanta Constitution* suggested that the Northern United States was especially prone to Oriental mania. Wrote one *Constitution* journalist in 1893, in an article concerning the Parliament of Religions and titled “What Is the Matter?”; “Boston is in a spasm of delight because Protap Chunder Mozoomdar is coming to that city to lecture. Perhaps it would be a good idea to fence in this Republic of Bedlam before its madness spreads to the rest of the world” (p. 2a). The journalist lamented that

. . . cultured Boston listens enraptured to the heathenish jargon of Protap Chunder Mozoomdar. . . . This gifted son of thunder is not the only religionist from India’s coral strand who has been welcomed in Christian circles at the north during the present year. There seems to be a craze in that section over Buddhism, Mohammedanism, Confucianism and every ism outside of our orthodox lines of faith. (*Atlanta Constitution*, 1893b, p. 2a)

Vivekananda, whose adopted religious name means, roughly, “joyful conscience,” was widely regarded as the most influential and popular of all the speakers to address the Parliament. He arrived in the United States about 30 years
after the publication of *Walden* and its laudatory passages concerning the *Baghavad Gita*, decades after the Transcendentalist movement had passed. Crucially, he arrived when a resurgence of faith within the United States, following the intense confusion occasioned in large part by the publication of Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* (1859), was underway.

William W. Kinsley, author of *Old Faiths and New Facts* (1896) asserted that, “The first effort of modern scientific inquiry had been to weaken faith and make . . . ourselves but processes in a vast evolution, parts of an unchangeable order, wheels and pinions, merely, in a mechanism whose movements reach from motes to sun-clusters” (*The New York Times*, 1896d, p. 16). Likewise, as the Evangelist Ostrum would inform his Baptist audience, the secularization of society made

man a kind of adjunct to a yard stick, or a motor, or a bank account.
Hardened with what we call exclusive business, we would refuse the very oil on the axle of life, scarce take delight in a bunch of calla lilies because we wish it were celery so we could eat it. We would become a race without music and a people without life. (*Atlanta Constitution*, 1902, p. 9)


Vivekananda’s very timely themes were compassion and spiritual evolution, and thousands of listeners at the Parliament were said to have been moved, if not “mesmerized,” by his talks. Vivekananda had studied with Ramakrishna and was chosen by the dying saint to promulgate his spiritual ideas and methods. In India, his teachings resonated with a burgeoning nationalism (Sharma, 2013) although mention of this seems absent from the American newspapers of the day, which typically characterized his thought as inscrutable, sophistic, or impracticable. In addition to the proceedings of the Parliament, in which his speeches were faithfully reproduced, *Eight Lectures by the Swami: Vivekananda on Karma Yoga* was published by the Vedanta Society and yawningly reviewed by *The New York Times* in 1896 (1896c).

Presumably as a result of both his popularity with the American public and his missionary zeal, Vivekananda did not return to India immediately but spent four years after the Parliament traveling across the United States, staying with families and speaking with religious and spiritual groups. In spring of 1894, Vivekananda gave talks at private homes in New York City. According to one recorder of the social whirl, “A large number of invitations [to these talks] had been sent out, and the many guests present showed great interest in the discourse of the Hindu lecturer” (*The New York Times*, 1894d, p. 8). The column suggested the type of society the Swami often kept while in the East, a society concerned with the activities of the secretary of the British Embassy, of Bishop Neely of Maine, of Sir Julian Pauncefot and the Count and Countess de Festetico. These luminaries rented villas and cottages for the summer, traveled to “their charming country place on the Merrimac River,” spent “the autumn and the winter in the south of France,” had “not yet
Anne R. Richards

returned from their yachting cruise in the South Pacific Ocean” or had just sailed “to Bar Harbor on the Sultana” (The New York Times, 1894d, p. 8). In 1894 in Maine, Vivekananda stayed at the Green Acre Hotel at the invitation of Sarah Jane Farmer of the city of Eliot (Maine Memory Network, 2018). The hotel, now associated with Baha’i education, provided a salon for philosophers and religious teachers from around the world during summers in the late 19th century. Vivekananda also traveled among the humbler classes, and in February 1895, The New York Times reported that he was delivering public lectures in Brooklyn, then the third largest city in America. He was so popular among the working men and women of the metropolis that Monday talks were being added to his itinerary. His second tour of the United States took place between 1899 and 1902, the year of his death. In 1900 he traveled to California and stayed with friends at their home in Pasadena for six weeks (American Vedantist, 2018). During that final tour, as he gave lectures and founded centers for the propagation of Ramakrishna’s teachings, his celebrity became firmly established.

Vivekananda had a great deal to say about American society and about westerners’ intellectual and spiritual habits. Consider this brief example of his critique of western science, a critique not entirely unlike that offered by many Christians of his—and our—day:

For practical purposes let us talk in the language of modern science. But I must ask you to bear in mind that, as there is religious superstition, so also there is a superstition in the matter of science. There are priests who take up religious work as their speciality; so also there are priests of physical law, scientists. As soon as a great scientist’s name, like Darwin or Huxley, is cited, we follow blindly. It is the fashion of the day. Ninety-nine per cent of what we call scientific knowledge is mere theories. And many of them are no better than the old superstitions of ghosts with many heads and hands, but with this difference that the latter differentiated man a little from stocks and stones. True science asks us to be cautious. Just as we should be careful with the priests, so we should be with the scientists. Begin with disbelief. . . . Even in such a science as mathematics, the vast majority of its theories are only working hypotheses. With the advent of greater knowledge they will be thrown away. (Vivekananda, n.d.)

Not to diminish the significance of the venture, and to state the obvious, the World Parliament of Religions failed both to embody and to achieve respect for the world’s diverse spiritual traditions. Patriarchy, racism, ethnocentrism, and imperialism were among the values influencing American society in the late 19th century, and, by extension, the format of the Parliament. Only 19 of its 400 official delegates (Berkley Center, n.d.) had been women, for instance. Although not located in the American South, where Jim Crow was taking shape in the wake of Reconstruction, Chicago in the 1890s nonetheless would have contained racially distinct neighborhoods in which “blacks separated themselves not merely as a
matter of choice or custom. Instead, realtors and landlords [would have] steered blacks away from white neighborhoods[,] and municipal ordinances and judicially enforced racial covenants signed by homeowners [would have] kept blacks out of white areas” (Lawson, n.d.). In *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), the U.S. Supreme Court, in upholding an “equal but separate” provision of a controversial Louisiana law, reflected “scientific judgments of the time that light-skinned people had greater intelligence and a higher degree of civilization than darker-skinned groups, opinions that fueled U.S. imperialism in the 1890s” (Lawson, n.d.). Unsurprisingly, the European-American Chicagoans who planned and organized the Columbian Exposition were perceived as imperialistic, paternalistic, and ethnocentric by many of the African Americans hoping to participate in the project (Paddon & Turner, 1995). And although African Americans were represented well at other religious congresses during the Exposition, Fannie Barrier Williams was the only official presenter at the World Parliament of Religions who was African American.

Native Americans, then widely considered “ignorant, lazy, low, cunning,” and “treacherous” (*The New York Times*, 1896c, p. 10), were excluded entirely from the Parliament (Michaud & Adiprasetya, 2004). A contemporary book reviewer stated, “The Indian [Native American] question appears to be everlasting. It will certainly continue to be discussed until the Indians are exterminated or merged in the white population of the country, and under the present system of Governmental care of them neither issue seems within the realm of the possible” (*The New York Times*, 1896c, p. 10). In contrast, Pandita Ramabai, a Hindu convert to Christianity and a favorite on the American mission circuit in the 1880s, had been known to confront Christian audiences with the story of U.S. genocide against Native Americans and the horrors of U.S. slavery, and to insist that the characterization of Native Americans and African Americans as inferior was a strategy intended to promote the political objectives of the powerful (Arora, 2014).

Ultimately there were multiple reasons, including the Sublime Porte’s disinclination to participate, for incorporating minimal information about Islam into the final program (Michaud & Adiprasetya, 2004). In large part because of the West’s centuries-long conflict with the Ottoman Empire, most American Christians held negative views of Islam. Barrows himself, about to leave for India, informed his audience that he would not pass through Turkey to missionize. He said, “I will not be permitted to do so” because “The Turks are a cruel people, lower than the Arabs in intellect and civilization, and they will be intolerant to Christians so long as they have dominion over them. The only remedy is to reduce them to subjugation” (*The New York Times*, 1896d, p. 12). A secretary of the Armenia Relief Association invited to speak at a meeting of philanthropic organizations in Atlanta in 1897 demonstrated a similar style of apocalyptic thinking, which characterized and characterizes many Christians’ understanding of Islam, when she announced that “[t]he eastern question is the great question which shall rule the earth, God and the devil” (*Atlanta Constitution*, 1897, p. 6). *The Atlanta Constitution* faithfully recorded the woman’s denunciation of Islam, a discourse indicating familiarity with then-fashionable constructions of the Ottoman Empire as the sick man of Europe:
The great dragon of Mohammedanism—I mean that institution in which no home is possible, no honor to women, no sanctity of Christianity, no reverence for motherhood and therefore no kinship in fatherhood. This dragon of evil power wreaks with pestilence by which the atmosphere of the whole world is becoming contaminated. Anarchy in Europe, and commercial corruption and political intrigue are expressions of a moral palsy which is the result of this miasmatic curse, of this great loathesome [sic] monster which lives to destroy moral sense among the millions of the orient. (p. 6)

According to the same article, the plight of Armenian Christians—whose ethnic cleansing would, upon the destruction of the Ottoman Empire, already be well underway—was first brought before the American public’s eye at the World Parliament of Religions.

Notwithstanding failures of nerve and imagination, the Parliament’s organizers, it is fair to say, acted remarkably by inviting “a variety of spiritual leaders from around the world . . . to share their perspectives and engage in dialogue” (World Parliament of Religions, 2015a). Planned by individuals aligned with Transcendentalism, an offshoot of American Unitarianism, itself shaped alongside liberal Congregationalism and deeply influenced by Romanticism and by the Biblical scholarship of Herder and Schleiermacher (Goodman, 2011), the Parliament reflected liberal 19th-century sensibilities driving or attempting to drive social change in the United States. In summing up the meaning of the Parliament, Max Müller compared it to his own scholarship in comparative religions, work that aspired to encourage appreciation for spiritual beliefs and systems outside of Christianity.

Many contemporary critics, however, considered the organizers, including Barrows, Christocentric. Following the Parliament, which categorically failed to achieve consensus regarding the superiority of Christianity among the religions of the world, Barrows undertook a rehabilitation of his reputation as a Christian exceptionalist by embarking on a widely publicized global missionary tour culminating in South Asia.

“I will speak for historic and non-sectarian Christianity,” he told an audience before departing. “My idea is not to present a fully developed system of Christianity, but to hold up Christ as the ideal, and to show that Christ is the fulfillment [sic] of all the best aspirations, and loftiest truths of the non-Christian nations”:

I will teach that Christianity presents the only scheme of redemption from sin and that is effective and satisfying. I will hold that other religions teach important ethical truths, but that these truths are all summed up in Christ, who is the one leader and only Savior of men.

At the Parliament of Religions many things were said against Christendom, but no criticism was made on Jesus Christ. His name stands out peerless and supreme, and will yet be the one watchword and
rallying cry of all who come to believe in the brotherhood of man, and the fatherhood of God.

Buddhism does not satisfy the chief need of the soul, which is the deliverance from the love and guilt of sin. Buddha was pessimistic. The Buddhist nations have never been the chief nations of the earth, and the laws of progress and of hope have not belonged to their life. (The New York Times, 1896d, p. 12)

A notice published in The New York Times on February 21, 1896, stated he would be sailing in the next week “to conduct the lectureship in India, as endowed by Mrs. [Caroline E.] Haskell,” who had donated money for that purpose to the University of Chicago (p. 8). Staying in New York before setting sail, Barrows delivered to Presbyterians a talk titled “India Lectureship and the Triumph of Christianity.” A February 25, 1896 New York Times headline announced that on this tour he “Will Not Discuss Indian Philosophy But Sets Forth Truths Centered in the Christian Religion” (p. 16).

It can be inferred that many Christian readers were pleasantly surprised to discover that Barrows had undertaken this reparatory work. He had been an unlikely favorite among American Baptists insofar as he was a Northerner instrumental in organizing the pantheistic and at times atheistic Parliament. An article published in The Atlanta Constitution on October 13, 1902, three months after his death at the age of 55, suggested that not only had Barrow’s subsequent missionary work abroad restored him to the good graces of certain conservative Christians, but the Parliament continued to trouble some of these same individuals nearly a decade after it concluded. “When the world’s parliaments [sic] of religion was held in Chicago I was opposed to it,” stated the evangelist Ostrum to his audience of about 1,000 Baptist men:

I said the expressions about Mohammedism and Hindooism given there would mean a misrepresentation of Christianity before the young men of America. But when John Henry Barrows came back from India after delivering the Haskell lectures, I said thank God for the parliament of religions, because it brought John Henry Barrows so before the whole world that when he spoke everybody gave attention. (p. 9)

According to the speaker, Barrows had “repeatedly emphasized upon the thoughts of the people that the most reliable opinion in India and China and Japan agreed with the most reliable opinion in Great Britain and America that the only hope of this lost world is the Christian Christ” (p. 9).

Three years after the World Parliament of Religions took place, a New York Times review of Eight Lectures by the Swami: Vivekananda on Karma Yoga exemplifies the enduring skepticism directed by Christian Americans towards practitioners of “foreign” religions. This review, published in a newspaper read by the nation’s elite, concluded, “Vainly you wander through the many pages found in this volume, which has no possible connection of thought, which teaches nothing, which maunders on in a swash of words, and lands you nowhere. Why should
anyone read such drivel? You can blow soap bubbles, and that is a harmless occupation, and such is the function of the Vedanta Society” (The New York Times, 1896c, p. 10).

One of the last mentions of the 1893 World Parliament of Religions in The Atlanta Constitution is that of a journalist writing under the headline “Buddhists Are Menace Says Religious Worker” (1912, p. B2). The author expressed disgust that Bibles in the United States were being printed in 70 foreign languages, including four Indian languages, and were being distributed among laborers on the West Coast. He made a distinction between immigrant Indians and the visiting priests of India, the former, meek and neglected, the latter “educated,” “shrewd,” “subtle,” and “sagacious,” conducting “operations . . . in the drawing rooms of American women, giving breathing exercises”:

This veneered Hinduism has headquarters for its work in southern California at San Diego. There are 60,000 Hindus on the Pacific coast. There are twelve centers of Buddhist and Hindu propaganda there. These are at Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, Sacramento, Stockton, Bakersfield, Vacaville and other principle cities. At San Jose there are two Buddhist temples, and one is at Oakland. At Los Angeles there is an institutional Buddhist work, somewhat on the lines of the Y.M.C.A. (The Atlanta Constitution, 1912, p. B2)

The author concluded, “The World Parliament of Religions, back in 1893 in connection with the World’s fair that year is responsible for the most dangerous men in this country today. These are the Hindu priests, who seek here to propagate the heathen faith of India” (p. B2). Commentary such as this illustrates the passionate responses occasioned by the Parliament, even decades after it had closed its doors and much of the White City had burned to the ground.

References


Connections and Disconnections: The Making of Bombay/Mumbai as India’s “Global City”

Ravi Ghadge

Abstract
Scholarly literature on “global cities” has been criticized for ignoring the long-term historical context within which cities articulate the relationship between the global and the local. Employing a longue durée globalization perspective, this paper historicizes the unequal and uneven nature of contemporary urban development in Mumbai, India’s “global city.” The paper uses two analytical frames: the “port city” and the “colonial city” to highlight two essential dimensions of Mumbai’s contemporary transformation of interconnectedness and segmentation based on unequal power.

“I will not claim to possess the prophetic insight to foresee what is in store for Bombay. But as it has adopted the happy motto of Urbs prima in Indis, it may be hoped that this will prove of good augury, and that among other privileges Bombay will own that of priority among the Indian cities for longevity in undecaying prosperity” (da Cunha, [1900] 2004, p. 6).

“Urban landscapes come to refract various layers of sedimentation—of past uses and organization—as well as to embody a range of possible meanings and actions falling outside the shifting levels of specification brought to bear on these landscapes by the prevailing and…. often fragmentary apparatuses of control” (Simone, 2004, p. 14).

Introduction
Contemporary globalization is marked by an “urban turn” with the city becoming important both as a place and a site of discourse in the social sciences and policy-making (Prakash, 2002; Sassen, 1991, 2001). Moreover, with the shift of global trade toward Asia, there is a renewed interest in urban development in this region (Amin & Thrift, 2002; Roy, 2009). Asian states are systematically orchestrating national growth by “reinventing” their cities through extensive centralized political and economic investment (Ong, 2011, p. 2). In the post-reform years, India too has adopted a dominant city-centric growth strategy (Kennedy &
Zérah, 2008). The city of Mumbai (India’s “global city”) is of particular importance to the political and business elite in India who view it as the driving force of India’s economic integration in the world economy.

Mumbai is hailed as India’s most modern (Patel, 2004) and global city (Nijman, 2011). The modern view of Bombay/Mumbai is based on its economic vitality and its cultural appeal as India’s most cosmopolitan city that nurtures diverse arts, theater, literature, music, and films. Bombay/Mumbai has been the birthplace of modern Indian painting and progressive modern theater in both English and native languages. It is home to the radical Dalit literature, produced primarily by the historically most oppressed castes. It also houses Bollywood, India’s premier film industry. However, the city is also notorious for its seamy underbelly of crime and the underworld as well as a regressive anti-migrant and anti-Muslim urban movement since the 1960s in the form of the Shiv Sena. Mumbai is also India’s “global city” as it is the most globally connected city in India having the largest share of international trade and foreign direct investment in India (Nijman, 2007, p. 239). Given its unique status, one project has taken center stage and captured the hearts and minds of the middle classes and the elite in the city since the mid-1990s. Urban planners are obsessed with entrepreneurial and technocratic visions of transforming Mumbai into a “world-class city” modeled on cities such as Shanghai.

Mumbai’s post-reform urban transformation since the early 1990s has been a focus of considerable research in recent years (Anjaria, 2009; Banerjee-Guha, 2002; Gandy, 2008; Ghadge, 2010; Harris, 2008; Nijman, 2008; Zérah, 2007). However, there is a relatively less nuanced historical discussion on long-term global processes impacting the city and its emergence as a privileged site of concentrated economic activity and investment in India (Nijman, 2011, p. 450).

New urban experiments are not introduced tabula rasa in the city but jostle with inherited institutional frameworks, patterns of socio-spatial development, and power geometries. In the context of cities and globalization, scholars employing path-dependent analysis have demonstrated how the global reach and the internal social and spatial polarization of world cities are based on their particular histories of hegemony (Chakravorty, 2000; Nijman, 2011). In Nijman’s (2011) words, “each phase [of historical development] produces an urban space on top of that which is left behind by history” (p. 451). For example, Grant and Nijman’s (2002) study demonstrates a correspondence between the new corporate geography of Mumbai post-1990s and the earlier colonial period. The study shows that there is a high concentration of business activity with sizeable Indian and foreign-owned companies in South Mumbai where the old European town existed. On the other hand, the old Native town of the colonial period retains a bazaar atmosphere (Grant & Nijman, 2002, p. 330). Thus, contemporary efforts at urban redevelopment of Mumbai confront grave challenges posed by the historical, social inequities and built environment in the city.

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1 Bombay was officially renamed as Mumbai in 1995 by the Hindu fundamentalist Shiv Sena-led state government. In the paper, the region is referred to Bombay or Mumbai alternatively depending on the historical period.
Therefore, to achieve a deeper understanding of contemporary urban transformation in Mumbai, we need to examine the long-term historical factors that shaped the city employing a *longue durée* globalization perspective. The paper does this through the use of two analytic frames to highlight two essential dimensions of Mumbai’s contemporary transformation of interconnectedness and segmentation based on unequal power. The first emphasizes Bombay/Mumbai as a “port city” where human interconnectivity is based on trade and how port cities evolved as key nodes in various trade networks (Rennstich, 2006). The second emphasizes Bombay/Mumbai as a “colonial city” where the dimension of inequality based on the unequal nature of colonial power in which colonial urban development primarily served the interests of the colonial elite (King, 1976).

**Cities and Longue Durée Globalization**

One of the critical features of the contemporary phase of globalization is the re-emergence of cities as central nodes in the world economy.² It is recognized that urbanization can no longer be understood solely by the political economy of regions or within the boundaries of nation-states and that there is a need for an “analytic disarticulation of cities and nations” (Davis, 2005, p. 97). The world systems theory provides a framework to understand how processes of urbanization connect with structural changes in the world economy (Braudel, 1986; Wallerstein, 1994, 2004). Influenced by this approach, the “world city” (Friedmann, 1995) and the “global city” (Sassen, 1991, 2001) have emerged as critical theoretical constructs informing the discussion of cities and contemporary globalization. However, the world/global city paradigm has ignored the long-term historical context within which cities articulated the relationship between the global and the local and therefore exaggerate the historical uniqueness of contemporary urban transformations.

Scholars advocating a *longue durée* globalization approach have shown that cities, as key “nodes,” were engaged in wider circuits of production, exchange, and culture throughout history (Abu-Lughod, 1989; Arrighi, 1994; Braudel, 1986; Brenner, 2001; Gills & Thompson, 2006; King, 1990). According to Brenner (2001), the *longue durée* historical analysis places “standard interpretations of contemporary urban restructuring in the broad geohistorical context of earlier rounds of globally induced transformations within each city” (p. 127). This enables us to understand how certain locally specific factors, processes, and developments have enabled cities to acquire specific world city functions in the contemporary context. Therefore, rather than understanding global forces as macrostructural background conditions, the long-term historical perspective incorporates a “path dependent” analysis where earlier historical events provide a causal context for subsequent development (Brenner, 2001, pp. 127-128).

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² The emphasis on the term “re-emergence” is to highlight the fact that if one takes into account a longer historical approach of understanding globalization, cities have remained critical sites of cross-cultural exchanges.
Network Systems, Maritime Trade, and Port Cities

Rennstich’s (2006) *longue durée* approach understands globalization as an “evolutionary process in the making for an extended period of human history rather than a unique occurrence that started in the latter part of the twentieth century” (p. 185). According to Rennstich’s path dependent approach, each new long wave of global change builds upon past patterns of change and is carried forward through an “evolutionary logic” driven by the human agency through the innovative use of resources, thereby “strengthening the global layers of interactions” (Rennstich, 2006, p. 185). According to Rennstich (2006), in the evolution of the global system, world cities have constituted the major nodes of connection. However, this evolutionary logic of change does not have a linear dynamic of an ever-increasing level of global interaction. This historical evolution is marked by periods of “punctuation” brought about by political and military “blockages” of trade forcing agents to adapt either by developing new connections, or reconstituting existing nodes, or even develop new nodes and consequently a new system. As a result, within this evolutionary dynamic, the system can alternate between inward and external-oriented phases (Rennstich, 2006, p. 188).

Rennstich (2006) finds that broadly there have been three distinct network systems in the modern global system: the commercial maritime system, the industrial production system, and the emerging new digital commercial system. Both the commercial maritime and digital system displayed external network relations, whereas the industrial phase was more internally-oriented (p. 190). In terms of the path-dependent analysis of the development of the modern global system, Rennstich (2006) describes a “three-step” path-dependent evolution of the global system in which the Phoenician maritime commercial system contributed to the growth of a global maritime external commercial system that is currently transforming into an external network system based on digital communication. According to Rennstich (2006), the Phoenician network system (1100 BCE-850 BCE) centered on current regions of Lebanon and Syria was the first truly transcontinental system based on maritime nodes of world cities in three different continents. This system led to the emergence of cities such as Byblos, Tyre, and Arward with the larger Assyrian Empire. However, it was around 900 CE that the modern era of globalization began, driven by the expansion of maritime trade by Sung China. In the Indian Ocean, harnessing seasonal monsoon (in Arabic *mawsim*) winds, Arabian sailors and traders established extensive patterns of migration and social relationships further intensifying linkages between diverse civilizations including Ethiopian, Arab, Egyptian, Harappan, Persian, Somali, Swahili, Indian, Malay, and Chinese (Paracka, 2015, p. 3). Later these maritime links were widened by maritime powers of Portugal, the Netherlands, and England. Through the voyage of Vasco da Gama in 1497-1499, the Portuguese were able to link the Asian maritime trade with the Atlantic. During the 17th century the Dutch, along with the trade with the East, were engaged in an Atlantic triangular trade between Europe, Africa, and the Americas, which was later contested and extended by England after 1650 through trade in mass-consumed goods, resulting in London becoming a major financial node in the world economy (Rennstich, 2006, pp. 193-194).
The externalizing tendency was punctuated at around 1850 with the introduction of a relatively internal-oriented industrial system. With the growth of digital technologies in recent years, there is a re-emergence of an external-oriented global system, the momentum for which was set in the late 20th century through a transformation in the communication technologies through the invention of the telephone, typewriters, and the electrical telegraph (Rennstich, 2006, p. 197).

The emerging digital system marks a return to an external-network system replacing the internal-oriented industrial system in place since the mid-19th century (Rennstich, 2006, p. 197). It is precisely its digital nature and the possibilities it opens up that differentiate it from the previous external network system. This new system, based on the use of digital technologies powered by the internet, enables much deeper integration and a broader organizational and institutional change. The United States due to its wider reach of digital infrastructure is a central node in this new information system with other countries linked to the United States. It is in this context that we need to understand the current re-emergence of cities ("global cities") as essential nodes that articulate transnational flows of goods, capital, and people.

The Colonial City and Unequal Urban Development

The above discussion on nodes and networks helps us in understanding the historical evolution of contemporary "global cities," thereby problematizing the supposed novelty of some of the discussion on contemporary urbanization. However, this network-based analysis does not adequately address the role of power and ideology in shaping global change. Even though Rennstich (2006) acknowledges the role of human agency in driving global systemic change, the agency is assumed to be power-neutral. In this context, the analytic frame of the "colonial city" is more suitable for understanding the historical role of power in shaping contemporary inequalities in postcolonial cities such as Bombay/Mumbai.

According to (King, 1976), a "colonial city" is "that urban area in the colonial society most typically characterized by the physical segregation of its ethnic, social, and cultural component groups, which resulted from the processes of colonialism" (p. 7). King (1976) prefers to use the term urban "development" as opposed to urban growth while discussing urban change. For King, urban growth presupposes a non-agential, evolutionary nature of urban change that does not take into account the role of power in shaping urban processes. On the other hand, urban development refers to urban change as a conscious, planned, and directed process circumscribed by the uneven power of human agency. As discussed later in the context of Bombay/Mumbai this is evident by the role played by the state (colonial and post-colonial) and the elite in transforming the city.

The period between the 18th and 20th century was particularly crucial in the Indian context, as it is the introduction of the "modern," industrial phase of colonial urbanization. This period led to the disruption of traditional market structures and the colonial city, segregated from its hinterland, and employed in the service of the metropolitan economy. Castells (1977) uses the term "dependent urbanization" to
characterize the relationship between the colonial city and the metropolitan economy. The urbanization of the colonial society was dependent upon the industrialization of the metropolitan society, or as Simone (2004) puts it, it was in the context of an “enforced engagement with the European world” (p. 139). This dominance-dependence relationship is visible at the city level in the separation between the native and the European areas of the city where the European quarter was dependent on the labor of the native quarter. This segregation between the two areas is visible even today in the architectural landscapes of post-colonial cities. Even the provision of services, amenities such as roads, recreational space, water, electricity lines, sewers, housing, shopping, and hotels were concentrated in the European sector. In contrast, there was severe neglect and underinvestment in the native quarters of the colonial city (King, 1976, p. 282). Scholars have used the term the “dual city”(Abu-Lughod, 1965) or the “unintended city” (Nandy, 1998, p. 2) to describe this uneven legacy of the interdependence between the urban elites and the urban poor.3

Simone (2004) argues that the historical legacy of dependence is also visible in the relationship between the colonial state and the urban elite, reproduced in the post-colonial contexts. Simone (2004) further argues that in the contemporary context, this transfer of metropolitan values continues through various “development models,” whereby, “cultural categories are assumed to be universal,” giving rise to “new modes of dependence” (p. 280).

Colonialism not only shaped a particular nature of urban development, but also led to considerable structural and organizational changes in the systems of production, governance, and knowledge creation. As Simone (2004) observes in the case of Africa, the colonial project of urbanization involved a kind of “remaking” of pre-colonial cultures in a mostly rural continent and “cities would act instrumentally on African bodies and social formations” (p. 18). Simone further argues that this urbanization set the framework within which Africans began to relate to each other within cities, as well as how they interacted with the outside world. He states,

… the present emphases on decentralization, local management, the exigencies of poverty alleviation, and regionally articulated local economic development are all in significant ways a reformulation of instruments used to evolve urban life according to the conditions that would ensure a very specific engagement with nonlocal worlds. (Simone, 2004, p. 19)

Post-colonial cities in the Global South are a product of colonial economies and the constant migration of people to cities. Cities become “places of refuge” to the multitude of people displaced from rural areas as a result of the colonial economy (Simone, 2004, p. 20).

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3 The term “unintended city,” originally used by Jai Sen (1976), has been used by Ashis Nandy (1998) to describe the world of the urban poor as a city “that was never a part of the formal ‘master plan’ but always implicit in it” (p. 2).
Drawing upon insights from the two analytical frames emphasizing both interconnection and segmentation, the following section presents a historical account of the evolution of Bombay/Mumbai from a small fishing hamlet in the mid-16th century under European dominance to India’s post-colonial global city in the 20th century. Scholars have pointed before in the context of Bombay/Mumbai that the city does not demonstrate a linear global dynamic, rather a cyclical evolutionary history marked by periods of internal and external (global) orientation shaped by broader world-historical processes (Nijman, 2011).

The Making of Bombay/Mumbai as India’s “Global City”

Based on the insights of Rennstich (2006), this section traces Bombay/Mumbai’s historical trajectory becoming India’s “global city” through several stages where each new stage adds layers of global interaction marked by periods of “punctuation” or “blockages” that either offered an opportunity for the city to extend outward or become inward-oriented. Table 1 summarizes this discussion.

Table 1: Historical Evolution of Bombay/Mumbai

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Commercial Maritime System

Precolonial maritime trade. Bombay, unlike some of the other cities of India such as Delhi, Agra, Lahore, Varanasi, Hyderabad, or Ahmedabad, has a relatively
short history of urban settlement (Patel, 2004, p. 333). The word Bombay itself was a corrupted Portuguese usage of the island’s indigenous name derived from Mumbadevi, a patron goddess of the Kolis (the indigenous people of the region). However, to appreciate Bombay’s growth as a port city during the British expansion in the 19th century, one has to take into account a much earlier history of adaptation and expansion of maritime networks of trade and cultural exchange in the Indian Ocean region. The earliest archaeological evidence suggests that the region around Bombay had pre-colonial trade connections with Persia and Rome. It is speculated that Ptolemaeus’s Heptanesia (Seven Islands) were the seven islands of Bombay (Kooiman, 1985, p. 207). The original seven islands that became present-day Mumbai had been a part of the Magadha Empire ruled by Ashoka in the 3rd century BCE. The seven islands were later under the control of the Hindu Silhara dynasty until 1343 until the Islamic sultanate of Gujarat annexed them (Pacione, 2006, p. 231). However, some scholars attribute the 13th-century pre-colonial maritime networks in the region extending from the Red Sea to the South China Sea for the dominance of Asian trade connections in the world economy (Duara, 2010; Sen, 2010). The later European colonial trade and power expanded and built upon these older pre-colonial networks of mobile merchant communities of Asia constituted by the Arab, Chinese, Indian, and (Baghdadi) Jews, involved in long-distance credit networks.4 Chaudhuri (1990) argues, “India” in the pre-colonial period provided a vital junction point to three different networks of trade and civilization: the first linking its West coast to Arabia, East Africa, and the Levant; the second its North-West to Central Asia and Iran; and the third its South-East to South-East Asia.5 Washbrook (1997) argues that until the 16th century, Europeans played a marginal role in this Asian world dominated by the Arabs, Ottomans, Mughals, the Ming and the Ch’ing (p. 426).

**Early European maritime expansion.** As explained by Rennstich (2006), from the 16th century, beginning with the voyage of Vasco da Gama in 1497-1499 and the subsequent linking of the Asian maritime trade with the Atlantic by the Portuguese (later expanded by the British through trade in mass-consumed goods), the European powers began to dominate these pre-colonial trade networks through imperialism by expanding and building upon these older pre-colonial networks. Duara (2010) argues that the British Empire in the 19th century “had the effect of intensifying some of the old relationships and generating new linkages between cities (and hinterlands) of Aden, Bombay, Calcutta, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Shanghai as entrepôts and financial centers for Asian trade” (p. 964).

Bombay was one of the 25 islands along the Konkan coast of western India (da Cunha, 2004). Six other islands were united together with the island of Bombay through land reclamation to form a larger entity called Bombay. The Portuguese

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4 For more on pre-colonial Asian networks refer to the seminal study on the subject by K. N. Chaudhuri (1990).
transferred Bombay to the British in 1661 as part of a dowry of Princess Katherine. Even during the late 18th century, Bombay was primarily a marine post with very few linkages with its hinterland. However, Bombay possessed several promising geographical advantages that led to its emergence as India’s leading port city in the 19th century. It possessed a safe, natural harbor that suited the maritime interests of the British East India Company (EIC) (Kooiman, 1985, p. 209). It was predominantly under the British Empire that Bombay emerged as an urban center.

As discussed earlier, King (1976) understands colonial urbanism as urban development as opposed to urban growth. This fact is especially relevant in the case of Bombay. Even though it possessed a natural geographical advantage as a port, Bombay’s rise to prominence as a port city was not inevitable, but a result of conscious planning. Apart from harsh living conditions on the island itself, Bombay was also inaccessible to its hinterland as it was surrounded by the mountainous topography of the Western Ghats, preventing the formation of land-routes. Thus Bombay’s late emergence as a vibrant port city has not only to do with its global linkages in the world economy but also with its local linkages (or lack thereof) with its hinterland. In this context, Kooiman (1985, p. 212) argues, that Bombay’s history confirmed the general trend that port cities only grew after their surrounding countryside was commercialized. As a result of Bombay’s inaccessibility, much of the trade along the western coast was restricted in the Gulf of Khambat, north of Bombay, in places such as Khambat, Bharuch, Daman, and Diu, and more importantly Surat, which was the principal port along the western coast in the 17th and early 18th century. Surat had been a significant trading site of the Mughal Empire connecting the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, and regions beyond Cape Comorin. In the 17th century, Surat possessed the largest merchant fleet in the Indian Ocean. Moreover, Surat was also an important connection point for pilgrims going to Mecca. The Mughal Emperor allowed certain European companies to set up their factories. The British EIC set up a factory in Surat in 1612 after obtaining a license from the Mughal Emperor and since then much of its trade in the 17th century was centered in Surat. The Dutch and the French Companies too followed later (Kosambi, 1993, p. 211-212).

However, toward the middle of the 18th century, Surat’s importance as a port had declined, and Bombay later replaced it as the leading port along the west coast. However, historians argue that Bombay’s rise as a port city after Surat’s decline was not inevitable, considering its inaccessibility with its hinterland. Although the shift from Surat to Bombay occurred in 1687, it was not until the mid-18th century that Bombay became commercially bigger than Surat (Kosambi, 1993, p. 212). Surat’s decline and Bombay’s subsequent rise has to be understood in the context of the broader world-historical changes at that time marked by a period of “punctuation” leading to the reorientation of trading networks in the region.

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6 During the transfer, Bombay was considered to be of minor importance and “notoriously unhealthy” and thinly populated. Charles II was more "embarrassed than pleased by this part of the dowry" and later rented it to the East India Company at an annual rent of £ 10 in gold (Kooiman, 1985, p. 209).
Das Gupta (1979) argues that the decline of Surat was affected by the declining influence of three empires: the Mughal Empire in India, the Safavid Empire in Iran, and the Ottoman Empire in West Asia. This historical juncture acted as a key “blockage” (to use Rennstich's [2006] term) that led to the decline of Surat and reconfiguration of the trading networks in the region. The weakening of the Safavid and Ottoman empires disrupted Surat’s trade with West Asia, and the decline of the Mughal Empire affected Surat’s long-distance trade with Agra, Lahore, and Banaras. Thus, as argued by Farooqui (2006), the decline of Surat was a “part of a general crisis in the western Indian trade” (p. 5), contributing to Surat’s declining trade relations with Europe. In addition to these changes, there were also local strategic reasons for the British EIC to consider a move away from Surat to an alternative site along the western coast. The company was becoming weary of competition from rival European mercantile companies. Moreover, it was also looking for a more secure location, especially after its wars with the Dutch in the 1650s; in this context, Bombay’s inaccessibility proved to be a significant advantage (Kosambi, 1993, p. 212).

It was only after 1784 that Bombay began to grow significantly due to the export of cotton to China in exchange for Chinese tea. However, cotton exports could not keep up with the increasing import of Chinese tea. This difference was compensated with trade in a product that paved the way for Bombay’s makeover—opium. The opium trade operated within the triangular relationship between India, Britain, and China since the 18th century. While the role of cotton in Bombay’s transformation is well documented, the role of opium in capital accumulation in Bombay is relatively under-researched.7

The opium trade and the emergence of the indigenous capitalist class. Opium was of immense importance for the Indian economy, the Indian Empire and, ultimately for the global economy of the 19th century. Because of its high-profit margins, opium was one of the primary export products of colonial India until the end of the 19th century. This trade was sustained by increasing consumption of Opium by China and other parts of Southeast Asia (Richards, 2002). We can gauge the importance of opium for the colonial economy from the fact that from the early period of the EIC until the end of the British Empire, opium earned one of the highest revenues along with revenues from land and salt monopoly (Richards, 2002, p. 153). The income from opium steadily increased from about ₹17.2 million per year in the 1830s to ₹50.3 million in the 1850s and was the highest at about ₹93.5 million in the 1880s (Richards 2002, p. 155).

It is argued that it was the opium trade that led to the emergence of an indigenous capitalist class in India engaged in the opium enterprise around the port (Farooqui, 2006). The opium trade not only linked Bombay to the world economy, especially China, but also to other regions along the west coast of India, including Rajasthan, Sind, and Malwa. The British government had a monopoly over the opium trade which was mainly concentrated in Bengal ever since they gained control of Bihar and Bengal in the 1750s. Opium was grown in the eastern Gangetic

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7 For more on the opium trade, see Farooqui (2006), Richards (2002), and Siddiqi (1982).
plain, processed in Bihar and Bengal and auctioned and exported from Bengal. However, the control of the British EIC in western India was relatively weak throughout the 18th century, partly due to the dominance of the Maratha power in the western region which did not relinquish complete control of the region to the British EIC until the early 19th century. This lack of control of the British EIC in the western region enabled Indo-Portuguese traders to expand illegal trade of opium produced in western and central India from Bombay. Through the patronage of local rulers, these traders thwarted the monopolistic control of the British EIC over the opium in western and central India (Farooqui, 2006). Thus, Farooqui (2006) argues that “modern Bombay has its genesis in the poppy fields in Bihar” (p. 18).

Realizing its inability to control the illegal opium trade in the western and central regions, the British EIC allowed private and mainly Indian enterprise (mostly Marwari and Parsi merchants) in opium along the west coast in 1846. Thus, along with the Gangetic opium, opium from Malwa in central India was directed to be shipped to the world market from Bombay. In the mid-19th century, syndicates consisting of wealthy native merchants (especially the Parsis) operating in the Opium trade purchased Opium auctioned by the government and transported them through ships to Canton China (Richards, 2002; Siddiqi, 1982). These entrepreneurial communities later reinvested their profits from opium trade in the emerging textile industry in Bombay from the mid-19th century after the trade in opium became unfeasible after the Chinese ban on Opium trade and its suppression in the early 20th century.

The Industrial Production System

Cotton textiles. Previously, Bombay’s economy was centered on the export of cotton to China to settle EIC’s unfavorable balance of trade with China. However, in the middle of the 19th century, indigenous entrepreneurs started manufacturing cotton textiles in Bombay, aided by road and rail development projects between 1830 and 1860 that linked Bombay to its hinterland. Some scholars have argued that Bombay’s commercial and industrial development was also shaped in significant ways by its internal economy (Chandavarkar, 1994). The commodity markets in this internal economy were linked to more extensive relations of production and exchange in the hinterland through the newly established road and railroad infrastructure. The textile mills of Bombay relied increasingly on its domestic market. Thus, as argued by several scholars in the context of other India cities, the growth of Bombay is not solely due to colonialism, but due to a combination of global and regional/local processes (King, 2004).

Due to specific colonial economic, military, strategic, and political considerations, the involvement of the colonial state in matters of Bombay’s urban development was often artificial and uneven (Farooqui, 2006). This unevenness is most visible in the built environment of Bombay, ever since its emergence as an industrial city in the mid-19th century. Reflecting the growing importance of Bombay as a port, the southernmost tip of the island facing the harbor—the Fort area—became the nucleus of European settlement in the city. Just north of the Fort,
separated by an esplanade, was the native settlement. The Fort area itself was segregated, with the native Indians concentrated in the northern sections and the European population concentrated in the south. The Europeans and the natives were separated not only physically, but also socio-economically. The Fort with the Central Business District, symbolized the sphere of western capitalism, whereas the native quarter with the domestic bazaar economy reflected the caste-based residential patterns (Dossal, 1991; Kidambi, 2007). However, as the Fort area became overcrowded, the colonial elite began to move to the southwestern tip of the island which over a period became the upscale neighborhood of Malabar Hill, an exclusive conclave of the Europeans. However, several wealthy Parsi families too settled in that area (Farooqui, 2006).

Colonial urban planning primarily benefitted an elite minority in the city. There were massive investments in grand architectural projects at the expense of critical issues such as housing, transportation, health, and public services that concerned the majority of the city residents (Hazareesingh, 2001). Therefore, as Hazareesingh (2001) puts it, “the economy of Bombay was reasonably affluent in the early twentieth century: only its people remained poor” (p. 255). The systematic anti-poor bias of the colonial officials was especially evident at the time of the bubonic plague that hit the city in 1896. With inadequate knowledge about the etiology of the disease, the colonial plague policy was driven by class and race-based assumptions about the disease related to sanitation and hygiene. This lead to draconian acts that regularized forced eviction and demolition of overcrowded tenements of poor people in the city. The plague also provided an opportunity for the colonial state to pursue larger urban renewal strategies in the early 20th century under the City of Bombay Improvement Trust formed in 1898. Rather than carrying out necessary sanitary improvements, the Trust was responsible for creating an “orderly city” and to improve the image of Bombay as a center of imperial and commercial power (Kidambi, 2007, p. 71). By 1909, the Trust had evicted over 50,000 people from their demolished one-room tenements; however, only 2,844 new “sanitary” tenements were constructed (Hazareesingh, 2001, p. 240).

The uneven urban development was also reflected in access to essential services in the city. Despite the mid-19th century population boom, there was no proportionate rise in the public facilities provided by the colonial state. The city constantly grappled with appalling sanitation, high mortality rates, poor roads and transport infrastructure, and inadequate and over-crowded housing (Dossal, 1991, p. 30).

The development of spinning and weaving mills facilitated the migration of mill workers, from the southern coastal areas of Konkan. In 1856, the first textile mill was established and by the end of 1875, Bombay had 27 mills, and by 1900 this number grew to 82. By the end of the 19th century, Bombay had established itself as an important commercial center in India. The growth of cotton mills also led to growth in various ancillary small-scale industries that led to the emergence of Bombay as a major financial center in India by the end of the 19th century (Kidambi, 2007, p. 20).

All this economic activity attracted many people to the city, and Bombay’s population grew dramatically. The city’s population more than doubled from
232,032 in 1833 to more than half of million in 1849. Bombay’s population continued to increase in the latter part of the 19th century due to an increase in migration caused by the speculative boom in cotton triggered by the American Civil War in the early 1860s (Kidambi, 2007, p. 22). In 1891, Bombay’s population was about 800,000 out of which only a quarter was born in the city (Kidambi, 2007, p. 22). The interwar period is a critical period for the growth of the city. The relaxing of the colonial tie during the interwar period led to increased profits within the textile industry and extended its reach in its domestic market (Patel, 2003). The textile industry became the largest employer in the city as its employment grew from 136,000 in 1921 to 147,000 in 1931 (Kooiman, 1985, p. 215).

The textile mills of Bombay relied increasingly on the domestic market. Migrants from different regions were recruited as labor for these mills. However, interestingly, these migrants maintained close ties with their villages and contributed to the rural economy through their remittances (Chandavarkar, 1994, p. 29). These continued links with their host villages played a crucial role in sustaining the workers in the city and their labor struggles (Ghadge, 2016). Gradually, there emerged a unique working-class culture and the area where the mills existed came to be known as Girangaon, or the “village of mills.” The people who came to work in the textile mills were mostly rural migrants who migrated from the hinterland of Maharashtra, mainly the Konkan region on the west coast (especially Ratnagiri) and the Deccan Ghat or plateau region in central India (mainly Pune, Satara, Sangli, and Nashik). All those who migrated were essentially small land-owners and not landless rural poor. Thus migration and the possibility of earning quick money further strengthened their rural power base (Chandavarkar, 1994). To sustain themselves in the city and to meet their material needs like employment, credit, and housing they had to rely on social networks based on ties of caste, region, and kinship. Thus, it was essential for the rural migrants to maintain their rural links and they did not assimilate in the city by completely losing their rural identity. These rural links forged various working-class institutions in the city such as tamasha (working class theater), krida mandals (sports clubs), vyayam shalas (gymnasiums), gramastha mandals (village organizations), khanavalis (dining houses), and path pedis (credit societies) that not only catered to their cultural needs, but also existential needs such as housing, food, and finance.

Post-colonial Bombay/Mumbai. Several factors had a profound impact on Bombay/Mumbai’s post-colonial development—post-independence demographic change, deindustrialization and informalization, and a shift from manufacturing to finance and producer services—leading to increasing social and spatial polarization in the city.

From 1941-1951 the population of Greater Bombay grew more than 5% due to a growing influx of refugees from Pakistan and migration from other parts of India post-independence and partition. Furthermore, from the 1960s, Bombay experienced significant industrial restructuring constituted by growth in decentralized state-supported small-scale power loom sector. This profoundly impacted the textile industry. The spurt in the growth of capital-intensive power
looms resulted in a loss of market share of the labor-intensive mills (van Wersch, 1992). Along with declining share of production, the technological backwardness of textile mills further aggravated the situation. The obsolescence of machinery used in spinning, weaving, and processing has been identified as one of the main causes of “sickness” in the industry. However, this technological backwardness is not new. The mill owners’ refusal to modernize the mills facilitated their eventual closure. Thus, frequent textile strikes proved to be a blessing in disguise for the mill owners enabling them to shut down the mills and reinvest the profits in more lucrative sectors of the new economy.

The Bombay Textile Strike of 1982-1983 accelerated the decline of the textile industry. At the end of the strike, almost 100,000 workers were retrenched, and a considerable amount of units were shut down. In 1976, 27% of the city’s organized workforce was employed in the textile industry. This figure dropped to 12.5% by 1991 (Patel, 2004, p. 335). Most workers who lost their jobs have joined the informal economy. Employment in the informal sector of the urban economy grew from 49% in 1971 to 66% in 1991 (Pacione, 2006, p. 234).

Some scholars argue that what happened in Bombay cannot be called deindustrialization, but spatial reorganization combined with an increasing expansion of the boundaries of the city (Patel, 2003, p. 11). Due to this process of spatial reorganization, the central parts of the city ceased to be the dominant regions of manufacturing as production was dispersed to the suburbs and other satellite centers (outside Greater Mumbai, but within the Mumbai Metropolitan Region) such as Thane, Kalyan, and Navi Mumbai. Because of this, the central parts of the city (including the mill district in Mumbai) have now become the epicenter of the new economy in Mumbai based on service industries including finance, tourism, retailing, and entertainment.

By early 1990s, this shift in the Mumbai’s economy toward jobs related to producer services becomes more visible as seen in the following quote from Patel (2003):

By 1994, Bombay accounted for 61 per cent jobs in India’s oil sector, 41 per cent in domestic air traffic. Its airport handled 75 per cent of the country’s imports and 64 per cent of exports. Employment in financial and business services had increased by 43 per cent between the 1970s and 1980s. Bombay collected 25 per cent of India’s income tax revenues and 60 per cent of custom revenues. Its banks controlled 12 percent of national deposits and a quarter of the country’s outstanding credits. The number of issues listed on the Bombay’s stock exchange grew from 203 in 1991-2 to 694 in 1993-4, and the amount of fresh capital in old and

8 In this context Patel (2003, p.11) argues that even though much of formal sector production shifted to informal and small-scale sector, older capital-intensive high-value production through subsidiaries of multinational companies continued due to a demand from domestic consumption in Mumbai. This was largely achieved due to large resources of skilled labor in the city.
new companies increased from Rs 54 billion to 213 billion between these years (p.17).

The decline of manufacturing witnessed a rise in finance and producer services in Bombay aided by the significant economic reforms in India by the mid-1980s. In Greater Mumbai, the employment in finance and services increased from 52.1% in 1980 to 64.3% in 1990, whereas employment in manufacturing decreased from 36% to 28.5% during the same period (MMRDA, 1995). The formal introduction of the structural adjustment policy in 1991 (popularly referred to as liberalization) further accelerated the process of urban restructuring in the city.

Digital/Global Mumbai

India announced official reforms of economic liberalization and deregulation in 1991. Further, in 1992, as part of the structural adjustment program to facilitate economic liberalization, the central government announced a policy of political devolution of authority through the 74th Amendment Act to enlarge the scope of municipal institutions. These reforms have transformed the institutional framework of urban governance in India and have created the conditions for the growth of finance and producer services and increasing private sector involvement in policy-making and implementation. Reforms have also prompted the entry of foreign-owned companies in Mumbai leading to a speculative increase in real estate values (Nijman, 2000). Most of these new foreign companies were finance and producer services (Nijman, 2007).

Post-reform, urban planning in Mumbai is self-consciously geared toward reorganizing city space to render it a “global” or “world class” status and to convert the city into a significant financial and service center (Banerjee-Guha, 2002). Informally, this is referred to as the “Shanghaization” of Mumbai, alluding to Shanghai as the preferred model of development for Mumbai (Ghadge, 2010; Mahadevia & Narayan, 2005). One of the central components of “Shanghaization” is to increase the supply of land for commercial and high-end residential purposes through deregulation. The logic behind deregulation is that it will lead to convergence of the real-estate market in Mumbai with other global cities. The Draft Regional Plan for the Mumbai Metropolitan Region 1996-2011 envisaged Mumbai’s role as an international city driven by financial and business services which would facilitate the integration of India's economy with the rest of the world (D’monte, 2002; MMRDA, 1995). In order to do this, the plan recommends increasing the role of the private sector in infrastructure and deregulating land. This plan marked a severe departure from earlier 1973 plan that emphasized dispersal and decentralization of industry and provision of broader employment to large sections of the city (Ghadge, 2010, p. 65).

In 2003, the international consultancy firm McKinsey & Company drew up a comprehensive plan to transform Mumbai into a “world-class city.” Some of its recommendations include increasing land availability by 50-70%, creating islands of excellence (upscale residential and commercial spaces), and redevelopment the
city block-by-block (Bombay First, 2003, p. vii). These visions of the *Bombay First* report were later endorsed in 2004 by the Government of Maharashtra its report (D’monte, 2002). Following these reports, in 2004-2005, the state government violently demolished 94,000 homes to “free-up” 288.8 acres of land for development. This demolition drive was described as “Operation Shanghai” in the newspapers (Mahadevia & Narayan, 2005).

The impetus of post-reform urban planning on increasing land availability for upscale residential and commercial spaces brings into focus the question of the redevelopment of the older built environment in central parts of the city constituted by the textile mills district. Today there are 58 functional mills—33 privately owned, 25 managed by the central government, and one owned by the state government. The “vacant” mill lands were keenly sought for redevelopment after the boom of real estate prices from the late 1980s to early 1990s. The total value of the 600 acres of the mill lands in the 1990s was estimated to be around ₹ 50 billion (Paul, Shetty, & Krishnan, 2005, p. 399). The Development Control (DC) Rules of 1991 were amended to facilitate modernization of the mill lands. As per the new rules, a part of the excess mill lands could be redeveloped. One part of the profits from redevelopment was to be invested in the revival of the mill, and another part was to be used to generate employment for the workers. The unviable undeveloped parts of the mill were to be distributed in three parts: one-third for low-income housing, one-third civic amenities, and one-third for development by the mill owner. However, in practice, the mill owners exploited loopholes in the law to entirely redevelop or sell the mill lands (Fernandes & Pinto, 1997). Some of the mills were converted to upscale malls such as the Phoenix Mall in Lower Parel (see Figure 1). In addition to the DC Rules, the sale of mill land was also subject to guidelines of the Urban Land Ceiling and Regulation Act (ULCRA) which set limits on the development of surplus mill land. However, in 2011, as a result of a sustained campaign of developers, ULCRA was scrapped. The developers argued that scrapping of ULCRA would free up 25,000 hectares of land needed to attract foreign investors.

I have used the term “globalizing marginality” elsewhere to describe this Janus-faced nature of contemporary urban transformation in Mumbai, whereby, “on the one hand, the globalizing impulse of the new world economy has subjected the city to new strategies of urban development and regulations; while on the other hand, this very process of globalizing caters exclusively to certain key economic sectors and elites, marginalizing most of the population” (Ghadge, 2010, p. 72). However, these new global visions have engendered a new form of local politics in the form of poor people’s movements in the city involving slum dwellers, erstwhile textile mill workers and street vendors who lay claim to alternative visions of the city that draw on the earlier inclusive histories of urban experience.
Figure 1. Mills to Malls: High Street Phoenix Mall. A former textile mill converted into a mall. It is consistently listed as one of the top three malls in Mumbai. Source: Thirani (2011).

Figure 2. Rehearsing for the Ganesh festival in Girangaon, the mill-district of Mumbai. Source: Author (2009).
In contemporary globalization, cities have (re)-emerged as critical entities in the organization of the world economy. However, dominant urban theories such as the “world city” or “global city” have ignored the long-term historical context, thereby exaggerating the global context of today’s urban transformation. A longue durée perspective has shown that cities, as key “nodes,” were embedded in broader circuits of production, exchange, and culture throughout history. Based on a longue durée perspective, this paper maps a long-term historical development of Bombay/Mumbai, taking into account the global and local dynamics of the region. The paper used two analytic frames of the “port city” and the “colonial city” to facilitate our understanding of the connections and disconnections in the making of Bombay/Mumbai that has a profound bearing on the nature of contemporary urban transformation.

Bombay’s emergence as a port city is the result of both its global linkages in the world economy as well as its local linkages with its hinterland. Although Bombay’s growth as a port city took place during the British expansion in the 19th century, one needs to take into account a much earlier history of adaptation and expansion of maritime networks of trade and cultural exchange in the Indian Ocean region. Before Bombay, Surat was the preeminent port city within a 13th-century pre-colonial Asian maritime network that was later expanded by European colonial trade. It was only with the decline of Surat due to a decline of various Islamic
trading empires in the world that Bombay’s rise as an essential port city along the west coast of India was made possible. The opium trade led to the emergence of an indigenous capitalist class, who later reinvested their profits from opium trade in the emerging textile industry in Bombay from the mid-19th century. With the introduction of the textile mills and the railroad infrastructure, there was a systematic linking of Bombay to its hinterland as migrants from different regions were increasingly recruited in the mills. The post-independence period saw much of the profits from the textile industry reinvested in new industries including chemicals, pharmaceuticals, consumer goods, engineering, and automobile production, further consolidating Bombay/Mumbai’s role as India’s commercial capital.

Since 1980s, deindustrialization and policies of liberalization and deregulation have transformed the economic landscape of Bombay/Mumbai enabling its integration into the global economy. This is evident in the growth of foreign corporate presence in the city (Nijman, 2007), as well the growth of information technology led industries comprising of finance and producer services, mass media and entertainment, and communications. But at the same time, the city continues to rely on the ever-increasing informal labor of poor migrants in the small-scale workshops of electronics, garments, plastics, and consumer goods (Pacione, 2006, p. 234). The existence of this dual economic world is also reflected in the polarized visions of the city’s future. The elite and the middle classes in the city are enamored by emerging global visions of prosperity and connectivity, while the poor majority cling onto the historical promise of Bombay/Mumbai as the city of the working classes.

The process of Bombay/Mumbai’s integration into the world economy has been and remains far from even. Historically, it was a “colonial city” whose development catered to metropolitan interests in Britain and the elite minority in the city. Colonial urban planning starkly reflected elite interests that produced inequities resulting from an uneven built environment and unequal access to essential services among its residents—problems that are at the heart of Mumbai’s contemporary global transformation.

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India’s Unbalanced Urban Growth: An Appraisal of Trends and Policies

Purva Sharma

Abstract

India is considered as a low-level urbanized country. However, the country has experienced a sharp increase in the number of towns and peri-urban areas during the last decade. Despite India’s efforts in planned development, the urban sector has generally remained unplanned and chaotic. It appears that policy interventions have not been able to achieve the desired goals and needs of the urban sector fully. This paper examines the urban policy measures taken since independence and highlights the inadequacies and dilemmas in the urban context of India. This analysis shows how metropolitan areas are spreading outwards due to shifts in population and economic activities from city cores to the peripheries and considers the policy implications of such trends.

Introduction

The main purpose of this article is to review the processes and policies behind the urbanization pattern of India. The process of economic and social change is an important aspect of urbanization in India (Turner, 1962). At the time of independence, the country’s economic condition was deplorable. In order to improve the structural and economic conditions India adopted a five-year planning model influenced by the Soviet economic planning model. The initial phases of planning stressed mainly on agricultural and industrial development (Pangannavar, 2015). Subsequently, the Mahanalobis model was adopted which was based on the assumptions of a closed economy and stringent regulation of private and foreign companies and this economic model continued until the early 1990s (Becker, Williamson & Mills, 1992). During this period, the economic growth rate of urban centers was slow and investing in urban areas was considered a herculean task due to large unemployment, in-migration to cities, and deteriorating or inadequate urban infrastructure (Batra, 2012; Shaw, 2012).

While regional development and industrial policies favored the rise of large cities in order to contribute to national income, substantial urban development was only realized after the 1990 economic reforms when the country’s development strategy was substituted by export-orientation (Richardson & Bae, 2005). The shift in economic policies also resulted in significant changes in the urban growth pattern and urban policies. Currently, India’s urban sector contributes 63% of the GDP.
while representing only 31.2% of the country’s total population (Business Standard, 2014). Moreover, it is argued that policy measures during pre- and post-economic reforms have created urban and regional disparities across the states in India. These disparities are often exacerbated as high-income states grow faster (Chakraborty, 2012). It has also been found that the new urban corridors and clusters are mainly concentrated around major cities such as Delhi, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Mumbai, and Pune (Shaw, 2012). Rapid increase in the number and share of small and intermediate towns along such corridors during the last decade with their weak governance and economic bases has become a major concern. In addition, the role of governance reforms in formulating city-related policies is an important determinant for the disparities in the urbanization pattern of India. Indeed, the unbalanced growth of urban sectors in India has become a major concern.

With this background, this article reviews three lines of questions. Firstly, what has been the trend of urban growth in India? Secondly, what are the main determinants of city growth in India? And finally, the overarching question of this study, how do urban reforms and municipal governance processes and policies shape the urbanization pattern in India? This article is divided into two sections. Section one presents an analysis of urban growth trends in India. It focuses on the major components of this growth, especially between 2001 and 2011. Section two reviews the theoretical underpinnings and policies and contextualizes the implications of urban reforms and governance on the urbanization process of India. It concludes with a summary of key findings from the analysis of urban trends, determinants of city growth, and urban policies that aid in understanding the gaps in the urban system of India.

**Urbanization Trends in India**

The aim of this section is to critically examine the growth trends in the urbanization pattern of India over the last five decades. The population totals from 1961 to 1981 reveal a significant acceleration in the urban growth of the country. However, this rate declined slightly after 1990, and between 2001 to 2011 the growth rate of the urban population again increased. In absolute numbers, the urban population of India has increased almost fivefold in the past five decades. Presently, about 32% of the total percentage of population is classified as “urban” in India. This rate is much lower than in other major developing countries; for example, rates are 45% in China and 87% in Brazil (Ministry of Urban Development, 2011). Even though the level of urbanization is comparatively slow, India is still considered as having an “urban avalanche” with the shift of urbanization being most pronounced in developing countries (Kundu, 2014; Mathur, 1984; Planning Commission, 1983).

A major problem in interpreting the urban data in India is the definition anomalies of the “urban area.” The Census of India defines an urban area as “places which meet the following criteria; a minimum population of 5,000; at least 75 percent of male working population is engaged in non-agricultural activities; a population density of at least 400 persons per square kilometer.” The arbitrariness of this definition arises in terms of administrative notions in two main ways. First, large towns and cities extend their boundaries to include villages. Second, with the
increase in population large villages grow and acquire the status to town. This generic problem of defining an urban area has impacted the spatial distribution of population across the size classes of cities and towns in India. The full definition of urban areas in India is given in Table 1.

Table 1

What is defined as “urban” in India?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urban areas are classified as:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statutory towns:</strong> All places with a municipality, corporation, cantonment board, or notified town area committee.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Census towns:</strong> Places which meet the following criteria; a minimum population of 5,000; at least 75% of male working population is engaged in non-agricultural activities; a population density of at least 400 persons per square kilometer.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Metropolitan cities:</strong> are those which have a population of at least 10 lakhs (1 million)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Urban agglomerations (UA):</strong> are defined as continuous urban spreads constituting a town and its adjoining urban outgrowths, or two or more physical contiguous towns and any adjoining urban outgrowths of such towns.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>City – size classification (based on population size)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class I: 100,000 or more</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class II: 50,000 to 99,999</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class III: 20,000 to 49,999</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class IV: 10,000 to 19,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class V: 5,000 to 9,999</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class VI: Fewer than 5,000</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Census of India, 2011.*

The smaller towns (Class IV, V, and VI) are generally referred to as census towns in India (Ramachandran, 1989). Until 2001, the number and share of census of towns remained relatively constant. However, between 2001 and 2011 the increase in the number of “census towns” was remarkable, increasing from 1,362 in 2001 to 3,894 in 2011 (Karmakar, 2015; Kundu, 2011; Pradhan, 2012). These settlement units often lack basic services and infrastructure. In addition, many are administered under rural government or absorbed into larger urban agglomerations. Therefore, due to the sudden increase in the census towns during the last decade Indian urbanization has been described as “sudden, hyper urbanization, phenomenal

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1 Census towns are supposed to be smaller than 5,000 people. However, the term census town is often used erroneously to include Class IV and V towns contributing to confusion and lack of precision.
and unprecedented” (Sircar, 2017). While India experienced a sudden growth in its urban population in absolute numbers, the percentage growth as compared to the overall population is much lower. Between 1951 and 2011, while the urban population increased fivefold, the percentage of urban to rural population increased only from 17% to 31%. The growth rate of the urban population only increased by 3.79% from 1971 to 1981, after which it decelerated continuously until 2001. During 2001–2011 the decline in the urban growth rate halted and the level of urbanization in the country increased from 27.7% in 2001 to 31.1% in 2011. This increase of 3.4% during 2001–2011 was considerably higher than the increase in each of the preceding two decades.

The unbalanced structure of urban settlements is another important feature of the urbanization pattern in India. It is a fact that the urbanization classification of India does not indicate any cities as primary cities (Mathur, 2014; Ramachandran, 1989; Schafer & Dimou, 2012). As per Census 2011, there are 7,933 cities and towns in India. In this total share, the growth rate of towns has been increasing since 1961. In absolute number, the total number of towns have increased from 3,984 in 2001 to 5,705 in 2011. However, the percentage distribution of population across different size classes shows the greatest share of population growth occurred mainly in Class I cities.

![Figure 1.1: Growth of Cities and Towns (1971 - 2011)](image)

*Source: Census of India (2011).*

It is evident from Figure 1.1 and Table 1.1 that it is erroneous to assume that the number of cities is growing faster than the number of small towns. However, the proportion of the total urban population that lives in cities continues to increase (Mohan & Pant, 1982). Notably, overall policymaking may be seen as indicative of a general bias towards larger urban centers, mainly due to the considerable demands on infrastructure, service delivery, and governance made by large cities and
metropolitan areas. In this way, small towns that get absorbed by large cities have very little control over their development.

Table 1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cities</th>
<th>Towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class I</td>
<td>Class II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>52.58</td>
<td>10.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>58.15</td>
<td>10.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>62.47</td>
<td>10.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>65.98</td>
<td>10.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>69.94</td>
<td>9.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>70.20</td>
<td>8.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kundu (2017)

The unbalanced urban settlement structure of India is also evident in the form of regional growth centers leading to fragmentation and disparities in the levels of urbanization. The regional urban system of India is centered on its four largest metropolitan cities: Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Kolkata. This urban system forms a functional entity and their importance is mainly due to its high manufacturing base and technologies (Thakur & Thakur, 2016). However, in recent years their importance has been tapering off due to newly emerged metropolitan towns. Currently, there are 52 metropolises located in 16 states of India. Table 1.2 shows regional distribution of metropolises in relation to percentage variation in their area and population.

Though these large metropolitan cities are scattered all over the country, their concentration is more in the northern, southern, and western states of India. The variation by area over population is most pronounced in the metropolitan cities located in the southern and western states. For example, Malappuram (436.71), Kollam (364.05), Vasai-Virar (328.42), Thrissur (219.41), Vijayawada (180.22), Kozhikode (171.63), Kota (133.33), and Thiruvananthapuram (111.76) metros have registered highest increase in areal expansion during last decade, 2001-2011. When examining the phenomenal increase in these urban areas, it is evident that the metropolitan areas are spreading outwards due to shifts in population and economic activities from the core city areas to the peripheries.
Table 1.2

Distribution of Metropolitan Cities in India (2001–2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>Ghaziabad (63.32), Amritsar (0.00), Kota (133.33), Jodhpur (47.19), Allahabad (34.74), Srinagar (25.42), Delhi (24.87), Lucknow (16.62), Ludhiana (0.00), Jaipur (0.00), Kanpur (0.05), Meerut (1.62), Faridabad (2.64), Varanasi (3.82), Agra (11.27)</td>
<td>Ghaziabad (95.13), Amritsar (17.98), Kota (42.46), Jodhpur (32.23), Allahabad (16.33), Srinagar (27.93), Delhi (26.79), Lucknow (29.28), Ludhiana (15.76), Jaipur (31.15), Kanpur (7.55), Meerut (21.23), Faridabad (33.91), Varanasi (17.75), Agra (28.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Raipur (50.37), Indore (41.43), Jabalpur (15.60), Gwalior (1.97), Bhopal (12.59)</td>
<td>Raipur (51.12), Indore (43.07), Jabalpur (15.56), Gwalior (27.42), Bhopal (29.33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>Malappuram (436.71), Kollam (364.05), Thirssur (219.14), Vijayawada (180.22), Kozhikode (171.63), Th’puram (111.76), Kochi (76.88), Vishakhapatnam (57.63), Kannur (57.08), Bangalore (38.63), Hyderabad (26.46), Chennai (18.23), Coimbatore (-0.09), Madurai (5.51), Tiruchirapalli (6.53)</td>
<td>Malappuram (445.31), Kollam (165.24), Thirssur (140.60), Vijayawada (42.08), Kozhikode (84.21), Th’puram (59.38), Kochi (50.26), Vishakhapatnam (28.40), Kannur (35.29), Bangalore (49.44), Hyderabad (27.22), Chennai (29.42), Coimbatore (12.87), Madurai (20.04), Tiruchirapalli (15.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>Vasai–Virar (328.42), Ahmedabad (72.85), Surat (48.71), Vadodara (45.10), Rajkot (13.63), Pune (- 25.59), Gr. Mumbai (-6.31), Aurangabad (0.00), Nashik (0.00), Nagpur (0.00)</td>
<td>Vasai–Virar (135.71), Ahmedabad (29.41), Surat (62.79), Vadodara (22.21), Rajkot (38.65), Pune (34.21), Gr. Mumbai (11.93), Aurangabad (33.69), Nashik (35.54), Nagpur (17.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>Jamshedpur (15.37), Durg – Bhilai (-1.50), Kolkata (0.92), Asansol (4.95), Patna (5.38), Dhanbad (7.89), Ranchi (8.39)</td>
<td>Jamshedpur (21.25), Durg – Bhilai (14.70), Kolkata (6.09), Asansol (16.49), Patna (20.68), Dhanbad (12.29), Ranchi (30.48)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India, A – 4 Tables, 2011.

Many studies on India, this one included, show that large cities are experiencing a declining population growth in the core and a higher growth in the
It can be pointed out here that Gilbert’s (1993) polarization reversal theory is a common feature of developing countries’ urbanization. The theory explains that the diffusion of jobs opportunities and economic activities takes place from the core city to the peripheral areas due to rapid industrialization and improvement in transportation. This phenomenon has ultimately led to polycentric urban form in India that is described as subaltern urbanization (Denis, Mukhopadhyay, & Zerah, 2012). The term subaltern urbanization refers to the growth of settlement agglomerations that are independent of the metropolis and autonomous in their interactions with other settlements (Denis, Mukhopadhyay, & Zerah, 2012). These settlement units are in between the countryside and the city where they are generally left out of larger policy questions related to economic and social transformation. The main concerns of these smaller settlement units is providing urban – rural linkages, supporting indigenous economic activities, and negotiating or flouting a mix of ever-changing and unpredictable regulations. Due to such pressures, small and medium towns and villages are often overwhelmed and encroached upon (Denis, Mukhopadhyay, & Zerah, 2012).

Table 1.3

Components of Urban Growth in India (1991–2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components of Urban Growth (Percent)</th>
<th>1991</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural Increase</td>
<td>62.3</td>
<td>57.6</td>
<td>43.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Rural-Urban Migration</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reclassification of rural into urban settlements and boundary changes of settlements</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>35.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate of urbanization</td>
<td>25.49</td>
<td>27.81</td>
<td>31.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The most salient features of urbanization in India are closely related to the city growth determinants. The apparent increase in urban growth during the last decade is mainly due to the addition of new towns moving from a rural to an urban classification. It is found that this component has been increasing for the last three decades. The extension of the municipal limits and reclassification of settlements indicates spatial expansion of urban population and dynamics around the existing cities and towns (Bhagat, 2015; Kundu, 2011).

While it might seem like a contradiction where recent studies show a declining trend in the rate of migration to urban areas, urban areas continue to see a rise in population occur mainly through the above mentioned reclassification of urban areas (National Sample Survey Office, 2010). Nonetheless, migration has declined because there are not enough jobs despite an 8% growth in the Indian economy.
What little job creation exists has occurred in the informal sector that makes up 90% of the workforce in urban areas. The repercussions of informal jobs are that workers do not have safeguards like social security, health and medical benefits, and work under worse conditions with little job security and working environment protection. In part, because migrants are increasingly aware of these issues, rural-urban migration did not increase between 2001 and 2011. At the same time, while the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) launched in September 2005 aimed to provide greater rural employment opportunities in India, because the program provides only a short period of relatively high wages, migrants can easily stay back in the villages for these short periods and migrate later back and forth to take advantage of informal opportunities in the cities and peripheral urban areas (Imbert & Papp, 2014).

To summarize, it is evident that expanding metropolitan areas that encroach on small cities and towns is a major feature of India’s urbanization. The population in urban areas is growing mainly because of the reclassification and morphology of the urban settlements. Small and medium towns are growing largely due to the definition anomalies of “urban” as per the Census of India. In the urban classification system of India, the categories of towns comprising populations of fewer than 20,000 are grouped together and shown as small towns, and this category has grown faster than any other during the period from 2001 to 2011. Just as there is a need to reexamine classifications for small towns, there is also a need to reclassify mega-cities that are incomparable to the broader category of Class I cities.

There is a need to fully review and revise India’s urban classification system.

**Urbanization Policy in India**

The national economic development of India started with the establishment of a Planning Commission in 1951. The successive plans focused on massive investments on core sectors like industry, agriculture, power, and irrigation but the issues of urbanization were largely ignored. During the first three phases of planning (1951–1966) there was a lack of vision for urban processes. The focus was on housing and land development, preparation of master plans, development of new towns and cities, and new industrial policy (formulated in 1956) and not necessarily the strengthening of more integrated rural-urban linkages. Therefore, the problem of spatial imbalances subsequently became visible. The new industrial policy led to the rapid growth of large metropolitan cities. The development of large cities incurred higher costs of urban infrastructure and industrial development. Due to higher levels of employment in industries, in-migration to urban areas increased the growth of slums and put increased pressure on basic services. On the other hand, small and medium towns received little attention or investments.

In order to release the employment pressure on large cities, the industrial policy of 1956 then shifted to the development of lower order towns by promoting small-scale and agro-based industries. Small and medium towns began to see the relationship between dispersed urbanization and rural development. Hence, these towns increasingly became growth foci, generally acting as market centers through various functions like marketing of the agricultural produce, distribution of
consumer goods, and other services (Nath, 1986). Basically, the third five-year plan focused on “balanced urban and regional development” through the development of small and medium towns. However, this goal was not achieved due to a wider range and higher quality of infrastructure, greater growth potential, and more investments in large cities. The multi-service role of small and medium towns was not recognized, and the little attention given was generally focused on the importance of agriculture, which led to their stagnation. Hence, effective planned development of urban and rural areas was not achieved due to this fragmented approach (Gnaneshwar, 1995).

Post-1970s urban development and policy formation gained attention in India. The first National Urbanization Policy was formulated in 1975. This policy focused on balanced development of settlements ensuring functional linkages, optimum utilization of resources, distribution of economic activities, and the maintenance of a minimum level of basic services. In the sixth plan (1980-1985), the scheme for the integrated development of small and medium towns was formulated (IDSMT). The components of the scheme included land acquisition and services, construction of new markets, provision of industrial estates, provision of other services, and processing facilities for the benefit of agricultural and rural development in the hinterland, and low-cost sanitation (Various plan documents, Planning Commission of India, 1983). The IDSMT scheme continued until the eighth plan (1992-1997) when it was dismantled, a topic that will be further discussed in subsequent paragraphs of this section.

The constitution of National Commission on Urbanization (NCU) in the year 1985 was an important step towards urban policy formulation in India. This commission identified 329 cities called GEMs (Generator of Economic Momentum) which were further divided into NPCs (National Priority Centers), SPC (State Priority Centers), and 49 Spatial Priority Urban Regions (SPURs). It was expected that the future growth in urbanization would take place in these centers and adjacent areas (Batra, 2012). However, the Commission failed to order its priorities and did not advocate proper solutions. Moreover, the Commission excluded any analytical assessment of the processes of urban growth or forces behind this growth. They did not analyze the impact of urban policies or assess the adequacy of investments made in basic services such as water supply, electricity, transport, and other necessities (Kundu, 1989; Mehta & Mehta, 1989).

The economic liberalization period of India had significant implications for urban development. The emphasis on urbanization and economic development continued; however, the focus was towards involvement of private sector for city infrastructure development, accessing capital markets and initiation of funds for structural changes in the city (Richardson & Bae, 2005). To fulfill the purpose of economic liberalization, the eighth plan (1992-1997) introduced the mega-city scheme (Mahadevia, 2011). Much of the investments were concentrated in major cities of Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, and Ahmedabad. The new economic development model had a profound impact on the urban and regional geography of India. First, there was selective migration instead of common migration since the growth of service sector and ITES had less demand for unskilled
labor. Second, large investments in infrastructure led to the emergence of urban corridors. These corridors are generally composed of adjacent smaller cities or towns that are attractive locations for industries, manufacturing, and services. This pattern of urban growth raised questions about the city size limits (Mahadevia, 2011). Third, due to the decentralization of new industries and economic sectors the spatial structure of cities changed and led to the development of peri-urban areas and suburbanization (Colmer, 2015). The effect of information and communication technologies and their agglomeration economies also promoted the growth of new urban corridors like Ahmedabad-Pune, southern urban triangle of Bengaluru-Chennai-Coimbatore, northern region centered upon Delhi, and new hubs of growth in the south focusing on Hyderabad, Vishakhapatnam, and Kochi. The remaining urban centers seem to have been neglected thus creating urban and regional disparities (Shaw, 2012). Hence, the skewed nature of urban development was concentrated in a few parts of the country and the IDSMT scheme that was launched mainly for balanced urban regional development never materialized.

In 1992, the enactment of 74th Constitutional Amendment Act marked the start of an era of decentralized governance in which a constitutional status to urban (municipal corporations, municipal councils, and nagar panchayats) areas was given (Qaiyum, 2004). The salient features of the Act included the devolution of fundamental duties such as planning, regulation and development aspects, formation of district planning committees and metropolitan planning committees, formation of ward committees, and constitution of state finance commission (India Infrastructure Report, 2006). The intention was that cities would have greater say and control over their own development.

However, the impact of decentralization was partial. The 74th Constitutional Amendment Act has been challenged mainly on the functions performed by urban local bodies. An important provision of the Act are the 18 urban functions as laid in its 12th schedule. The Act clearly states that these functions should be taken up by urban local bodies. However, due to financial constraints and lack of capacity, some of these functions were shared with state governments or performed concurrently by the urban local bodies, state governments, and parastatal agencies (Ministry of Urban Development, 2011). This mainly favored the development of large cities that were already major destinations of investment and external assistance. Whereas, smaller urban local bodies were largely unable to utilize their legal powers in improving their towns and thus maintained a weak administrative, institutional, and financial basis (Nandi & Gamkhar, 2013).

During the second decade of the economic reforms, a massive urban program was launched by the central government of India called the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission. The program covered a period of seven years (from 2005-2012) for infrastructure creation and improvement in urban governance (Shaw, 2012). The mission was divided into four sub-missions: urban infrastructure and governance (UIG), urban infrastructure development of small and medium towns (UIDSSMT), basic services to the urban poor (BSUP), and integrated housing and slum development program (IHSDP).

The overall funding of JNNURM was biased towards infrastructure development in large cities (Khan, 2014). UIG was allocated the biggest share
(42%), BSUP (21%), and UIDSSMT and IHSDP together just 37%. The funding allocation also shows that seven metropolitan cities Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata, Bangalore, Hyderabad, and Ahmedabad received 36% of the funds from the total UIG allocation. This allocation was based not only on the existing share of urban population, but also their economic and developmental potential (Kamath & Zachariah, 2015; Khan, 2014). The Renewal Mission also entailed two types of reforms (mandatory and optional) to avail the central government funding. Mandatory reforms were those which the urban local bodies were bound to complete. However, many cities were largely unable to complete the reforms due to a lack of technical and administrative capacity of the local government (Ministry of Urban Development, 2011). It has been argued by Mahadevia (2011) that the Mission was launched to promote the cities as “engines of growth.” However, the rapid transformation and creation of infrastructure and housing was not adequately achieved due to ad hoc planning, hasty proposal preparations, and undemocratically prepared city development plans.

At present, India is in the last year of its 12th five-year plan. The present ruling government launched another initiative in 2015 called the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT). According to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India, this program is “impact-oriented” where states and urban local bodies are responsible for the implementation and sustainable maintenance of urban infrastructure rather than rely on central assistance. Since, the mission is recently launched it is too early to measure its impact, but it is hailed as a means for maximizing the economic and infrastructure development impact on cities.

Conclusion

This paper has reviewed the trends, processes, and policies behind the urbanization pattern of India. It is evident from the review that there is a strong relationship between these factors. There are a few important points that can be inferred about India’s unbalanced urban growth. First, India’s urban system is comprised of a top-heavy structure of large cities even though there has been a sharp increase in the number and share of intermediate and small towns. The spatial distribution of population between different size classes of urban centers shows that majority of the urban population lives in or near large ever-expanding cities. It can be argued that the development dynamism in the larger settlements is responsible for attracting higher population growth, economic investment, and better social infrastructure. This process is absent in smaller settlements that are, in part, hampered by their classification under the Census of India criterion.

Second, the planning policies of both the pre- and post-economic liberalization periods have mainly favored the development of metropolitan and large cities. The new industrial policy of 1956 focused both on the industrial development of large and small and medium towns. However, the small and medium towns were unable to grow due to their role as growth foci for rural markets and agricultural development. In the post-reform period, new economic activities such as foreign
direct investment, ITES, banking, financing, and real estate are concentrated mainly in large urban centers. These cities are mainly driven by the process of agglomeration economies due to access to both capital and skilled labor. However, the impact of economic liberalization was limited, and it led to unprecedented urban expansion and growth of tertiary and service sectors of the economy. This pattern of urbanization in India increasingly links the core to periphery development that is expanding metropolitan areas. Conceptually it is also referred to as “peripheral urbanization,” “suburbanization,” “exclusionary urbanization,” and “rurbanization” by various scholars (Denis, Mukhopadhyay, & Zerah, 2012).

Third, decentralized municipal governance was introduced to change the bureaucratic system in India. However, decentralization is only partially successful in providing functional responsibilities to the urban local bodies. Smaller towns continue to face the challenge of weaker financial basis and social capital, and thus are unable to compete. Lastly, from the evaluation of the massive NURM mission (covering a span of seven years) it can be interpreted that it was mainly finance-driven and large city biased.

To conclude, the morphology of urban settlements has changed drastically in the past two decades in India. Detailed investigations on the role of small and medium towns will be a significant step for the future of urban research of India. It is important to understand the importance of small and medium towns in the settlement structure since a complex relationship exists between city growth determinants and city systems. Hence, research on the relationship between the economic and social dimensions and hierarchical structure of urban settlements will help practitioners, planners, and scholars to understand better India’s unbalanced urban growth.

References


Housing for All in India and Its Future in Sustainable Development

Nadia Shah

Abstract

This paper presents a historical and critical evaluation of the housing policies in India since 1947, within the global housing policy context. It investigates the causes and consequences of the housing shortage in India focusing on government policies regarding adequate housing. It discusses future alternatives based on the past efforts and guidance of the United Nations Sustainable Development goals and objectives. Understanding housing as a core component for sustainable development, this paper poses that the ongoing process of self-help housing in India, as in most countries of the global South, can be bolstered as a sustainable solution for overcoming the housing gap with the provision of adequate and affordable housing for all.

Introduction:

After the Second World War, global demand for housing increased dramatically. India, in 1947, was faced with the challenge of housing about 7 million people, who had migrated from Pakistan.1 Like other recently decolonized countries at the time, India developed housing programs with foreign aid. These programs were guided by policies rendered with western solutions. An historical analysis of the number of houses required and the population growth in India reveals a widening housing gap since independence to the present time. This demand continues to be filled by people building shelters for themselves on unauthorized land in unconventional ways.

The settlements that are formed through this process are called “informal settlements” or bastis in Hindi. Research on the negative connotation of such terminology, has shown that the dichotomy between the “formal” and “informal” city, contributes to further marginalization of the inhabitants (Lombard, 2009). However, most scholarly discourse continues to use the term “informal” for the settlements that are formed through illegal occupation of land. However, many such settlements have acquired legal status through “title ownership” in the past decades. This has contributed to the acceptance of the settlements as a viable solution to the

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1 India was partitioned creating two independent countries (Pakistan and India), when the British receded from the sub-continent.
problem of housing demands in many countries of the Global South (John, 2002; Ward, Guisti, & Souza, 2004).

An Historical Analysis of the Housing Demand in India

India is the most populated country in South Asia with a total population of 1.3 billion and the second most populated country in the world after China. In 50 years, from 1951 to 2001, as the total population of India grew from 360 million to 1 billion, so did the country’s total housing demand increase from 9 million to 22 million.

Table 1
Population Growth and Housing Gap in India in Millions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Households</th>
<th>Housing Units</th>
<th>Housing Gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>360.9</td>
<td>73.4</td>
<td>64.4</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>439.2</td>
<td>83.5</td>
<td>79.1</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>547.2</td>
<td>97.1</td>
<td>90.8</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>685.2</td>
<td>112.6</td>
<td>114.4</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>846.3</td>
<td>160.6</td>
<td>129.6</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1025.3</td>
<td>209.2</td>
<td>187.1</td>
<td>22.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Figure 1. Population Growth and Housing Gap in India.
Source: Based on Census Reports from Government of India.
There has also been a trend of growth in India’s urban population since 1951, and decline in the rural population. More than 30% of India’s population is now considered to live in urban areas, and with India urbanizing at a rate of 2.8%, it is estimated that by 2050 almost 50% of the country’s population will be considered urban. This has increased the number of million plus cities in India from 35 in 2001 to 53 in 2011, accommodating 43% of the urban population. It is estimated that by 2050 there will be more megacities in India with concentrated populations of more than 10 million people (United Nations, 2014).

India’s rapid urbanization has been linked to rapid industrialization and a shift in its regions’ economic base from agriculture to industry. This process has generated new urban towns in many parts of India, whereas direct migration to existing urban areas accounts for only 20 to 25% of increase in the country’s urban population. The main population growth of urban India is considered mainly organic, resulting from the reclassification of rural areas and expansion of city boundaries. To understand the process of urbanization we need to understand what urban areas are. But there is no single definition for urban areas. Urban areas are defined by a country’s national statistical offices, usually, using World Bank’s population estimates and urban ratios from the United Nations World Urbanization Prospects. There is no consistent and universally accepted standard for distinguishing urban from rural areas, in part because situations vary across countries. Most countries use an urban classification related to the size or characteristics of settlements.

The land of India is divided into 29 states and seven union territories that are further divided into smaller organizational districts, that added up to 707 in 2016. The basic category of an urban unit in India is considered a “statutory town” with a minimum population of 5,000 people having a minimum density of 1,032 people per square mile (400 per square kilometer), a municipality structure or cantonment
board and an economic base other than agriculture. Based on India’s definition, “urban agglomerations” constitute areas that spread from at least one or more statutory towns with combined populations not less than 20,000 people. However, all Indian states have a slightly different criterion of defining urban agglomerations. The number of cities and towns increased from 5,161 in 2001 to 7,936 in 2011. The number of towns has increased by 2,775 since the last census. A closer look at the share of the urban population by districts in the states shows concentrated urban population with high densities in particular districts (DESA, 2015). Delhi city in Uttar Pradesh and Mumbai city in Maharashtra are the two most densely populated urban areas in India and also two of the world’s most populated cities.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking in the World in Terms of Population</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Urban Population</th>
<th>Annual Rate of Urbanization</th>
<th>Housing Demand</th>
<th>Urban Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.34 billion</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>43.67 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: RGI on the basis of Census of India, 2011-India Environmental Portal.

Literature on the subject of urbanization reveals that the basic pull factors for in-migrations into cities are better economic opportunities, access to better infrastructure and education, whereas push factors are defined as lack of economic opportunities and poor health and education structures in other places. However, most recent estimations show that only 20% of urban growth in India is from rural-urban migration while 80% is from natural growth of the population in urban areas as well as absorption of neighboring villages into urban agglomerations or redefining existing villages into statutory towns (Sen, 2017).

It is reported that there is a housing demand of almost 19 million housing units in India’s urban areas, according to 2011 census. Within existing city centers, a breakdown shows that 80% of the demand comes from the need for replacement houses among people living in overcrowded or congested conditions (conditions deemed as unfit for living), and only 5% of it comes from homeless people (Kundu, 2012; Tiwari & Rao, 2016). This demand when analyzed at a state level reveals that the states of Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra (home states of Delhi and Mumbai) are most in need of urban housing.

Government Policies Regarding Adequate Housing

This paper analyzes policies regarding housing in India at two levels: the global and the local, and goes on to describe how global policy has always impacted local policy in India. At the global level, the mechanism of funding from major
international financial institutions such as the World Bank has the power to influence the fiscal policy of its member states. At the local level the housing policy has always been a part of India’s Five-Year Development Plans since independence.

Figure 3. *Categories of India's Urban Housing Shortage in 2012.*

Source: RGI on the basis of Census of India, 2011-India Environmental Portal.

Cheryl Young in her PhD research at Berkley in 2016 inquired how the World Bank’s policy direction most influenced India’s housing policy and deduced that development capital through aid lending mechanisms can heavily influence national policy formation. Her study shows that projects from 1973 to 2016 funded through the World Bank demonstrate a shift in policy from aided self-help programs (like slum upgrading to site and services) to housing finance and policy formation, which was also the global trend in other parts of the world specially in the Global South (Young, 2016).

Literature on global policies for housing groups them into three phases since World War II to the present. A snapshot of India’s policies on housing with respect to the global policy trends following independence shows that: in the first phase, the international policy direction was toward slum clearance and new construction; in the second phase, it was about providing aid, in the form of site and services, to self-help efforts for upgrading and new construction; and the third phase was about providing financial aid and developing local policies to allocate funds.

**Global Housing Policy-Phase One (Public Housing 1945-1960)**

The first phase of global housing policy viewed the role of the government as that of the provider, where housing was constructed by the government and then rented to the public. In this product delivery model houses for low income groups
were mass produced with the underlying assumption that all people could live in the same way, devoid of any cultural context.

**India’s Approach in Phase One of Housing Policy and Limitations:**

During the time period between 1947 and 1964, with Jawaharlal Nehru as the prime minister, Indian policies were focused on the development of capital goods industries, with the objective to make India a self-reliant country. All resources were channeled for this purpose into the industrial development projects through five-year plans. These policies augmented the trend of rural urban migrations, increasing the demand for urban housing and contributing to an even greater housing shortage.

However, there was a trend of the public sector industrial employers providing housing for their employees in India, before independence under the British rule. This type of housing was called “chawls” with a one-bedroom unit, a kitchen, and shared amenities, laid out in five-story high mid-rise buildings that are still standing in cities like Mumbai. Common social spaces such as balconies and courtyards are characteristic features of chawls. The provision of chawls continued in post-colonial India. Through this approach, public-sector employees belonging to the lower income group were provided with housing through subsidized public programs, but other low and middle-income groups outside the public sector were left with no housing options other than turning to the ongoing squatting process. This shortfall in housing was compensated by the people settling informally in and around cities, creating crowded and unplanned settlements, which in the absence of any public infrastructure and support often turned into slum-like conditions (Tiwari & Rao, Housing Markets and Housing Policy in India, 2016).

The other major shortfall of this product delivery model was that the high demand of building materials and resources out-paced government plans and predictions contributing to on-going shortages and increased costs. Therefore, employers with limited resources were not able to fill the housing demand for their workers. This scenario also put added pressure on the existing housing stock raising the prices and making it unaffordable to the poor. The government tried to control prices by introducing regulations like the legislative control act on rent (the Rental Control Act). This act also backfired in the sense that the private sector seeing no monetary incentive or growth in the rental opportunities refused to invest in them, which led to limited rental options for the poor. The other government strategy that often backfired in India was clearing settlements where people had been constructing informally on illegally occupied land. This process involved forceful evictions that often resulted in resettling the evicted in remote areas outside cities or on the periphery. This relocation made life more difficult for the already economically disadvantaged population as they were disconnected from their work places and public infrastructure, therefore, they often returned to squatting within the city limits (Tiwari & Rao, 2016).

Allocation of funds toward housing was 35% of the total budget in the first five-year plan (1951-1956), when provision of housing was a high priority for the Indian government. However, in the second five-year plan, housing was to be
extended to all poor through policies that focused around clearing of the deteriorating living conditions and creating new housing for the masses. A number of schemes were introduced for this ambitious approach, which paved the way for the development of the formal housing finance sector in India during the 1960s. It was through this sector that the third five-year plan (1961-1966) tried to reach the low-income groups with subsidized rental housing schemes.

Global Housing Policy-Phase Two (Sites and Services and Aided Self-Help 1960s-1980s)

The philosophical debates about self-help housing emerged in the 1950s as governments around the world continued to experience problems in meeting housing demands. John Turner and Charles Abrams are the often-quoted experts in this realm. They both worked on United Nations funded programs as consultants in the Global South. The ideas that emerged from their work greatly influenced the policy of the two core institutions spearheading development projects around the world at the time, i.e., the United Nations and the World Bank. John Turner (1976) penned the experiences from his work in Peru in the 1950s on a USAID funded project, in a book *Housing by People*, in which he promoted the role of government as a facilitator to housing instead of a provider. He argued that the government should only help citizens in their self-building process and assure that such homes had access to basic infrastructure. John Turner explained the significance of self-building by comparing two alternate systems, autonomy (a self-governing local system) and heteronomy (subjection to centralized institution and authority). In heteronomous systems the government or the public sector is involved in all facets of the project; planning, construction, and management. This results in the service cost exceeding the reasonable limit that is affordable by the users. According to Turner, the government also ends up exceeding the limit of expenditure from national income upsetting the country’s economy. He posited this situation as the biggest reason leading to failure of the heteronomous systems.

While Charles Abrams (1964) in his seminal work *Man’s Struggle for Shelter* concluded that slums appear because no nation can provide housing at a cost, workers can afford. The second phase of global housing policies was geared toward providing aid so that people could build for themselves rather than the government building for them. In this phase, the government resolved to provide land with services like water, light, and gas connections. The model weighed heavily on free market forces and affordability. This approach, of “sites and services,” was endorsed by the UN and the United States and later joined by the World Bank in the early 1970s. The World Bank took a project-based approach, navigating policies that would generate replicable affordable housing with cost recovery plans. These policies guided the selection of building materials, methods, and standards within the affordability and replicability frameworks. However, the magnitude of the housing demand was still not taken care of, due to the complications of macroeconomics.
India’s Approach in Phase Two of Housing Policy and Limitations

During this phase India experienced a shift in the government’s approach toward housing and introduced programs that aided self-help building projects by providing land to build on and service connections to the sites. The previous failed attempts of replacing the squalid living areas of the urban poor with new construction led to a new scheme of “in-situ upgrades,” aimed at ameliorating the dire conditions of these urban areas without replacing the residents.

The two most prominent programs of that time period were the Environmental Improvement of Urban Slums Scheme in 1972 and the Sites and Services Scheme in 1980. The government policies in these schemes focused on providing infrastructure and land through state governments’ housing boards. To finance the site and services programs a housing finance institution called the Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO) was set up. In the pre-1970s era the government was the sole provider of financial support for public housing schemes it implemented through the state boards for housing. This centralized system began to change after the creation of HUDCO and other housing finance institutions like, Housing Development Finance Corporation and the National Housing bank.

The strategies of this time period required extensive professional supervision and training. Due to an inadequate number of trained professionals, the self-help housing of the site and services programs were not properly designed, facilitated, or effectively managed. Moreover, there wasn’t enough development or production of inexpensive building materials and technology that the poor could afford. On top of it all, the lack of political will to involve the community in the design and implementation of the projects as well as the lack of research and coordination on self-help construction best practices hindered the success of this model in filling the housing gap effectively.

Global Housing Policy-Phase Three (1980s-present)

The third phase of global housing policy (from 1980s to present) elevated the status of housing in public policy as an economic good by linking the housing sector to national economies. This phase gave rise to a housing development sector that channeled loan assistance through housing finance programs, mobilizing household savings into housing capital (World Bank, 1993).

The UN General Assembly established the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation with the objective of dealing with the issues related to urbanization on January 1, 1975. From there onwards, the United Nations became officially engaged with the human settlement programs. In 1976, the first UN conference held in Vancouver, under the name Habitat I, resulted in the creation of United Nations Commission on Human Settlements and the United Nations Center for Human Settlements also called “Habitat.” The center (Habitat) focused on issues relating to urban growth in developing countries with financial and political support.
In 1996, the second conference on cities, Habitat II, was held in Istanbul. As fresh goals for the new millennium were set, a new agenda was formulated, that was adopted by 171 participating countries. However, it was not until the United Nations Millennium Declaration of 2000 that “sustainable urban development” surfaced as a concept. As the governments were not able to fulfill their commitments because of increasing poverty, the conditions of human settlements were worsening. Therefore, poverty eradication strategies became a part of the Habitat mandate on settlements in 2002, when the mandate was adopted under the official name of UN-Habitat or the United Nation Human Settlements Program. Efforts were to be made to provide urban dwellers with housing finance and savings mechanisms in the informal sectors and support legal frameworks for housing finance. Member countries were prompted to invest in sustainable and low-cost materials and make them accessible to the urban poor at affordable rates. “Cities without Slums” by 2020 initiative was also declared as a goal.

In this ongoing phase, housing development has taken center stage in the global discourse on anti-poverty policies for sustainable development solutions. Such a holistic approach of the United Nations’ connects shelter and housing of the poor to sustainable development policy at the local level (UN Habitat, 2015).

India’s Approach in Phase Three of Housing Policy and Limitations

The decentralized model of providing housing finance to Low Income Groups (LIGs) and Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) through HUDCO that funded state governments and their housing boards changed the way these houses were financed. While the subsidies were earmarked for infrastructure or sanitation facilities, residents were encouraged to invest in their houses (Wadhwa, 1988). The reliance on subsidies was reduced and the programs were designed to meet affordability levels of beneficiaries. HUDCO provided loans to state governments, which supplemented internal funds of these governments in financing their programs. However, cost recovery became a key feature of the programs. It was realized that housing programs needed to be linked to other programs that were addressing issues like the lack of employment opportunities and access to basic services. That way, they could be made more productive, otherwise the housing programs were not able to deliver in isolation. Therefore, from the 1980s onwards,

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2 The Local Agenda 21 adopted at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro (1992) and the Habitat Agenda launched at the City Summit in Istanbul (1996), both promulgated the increased role of the private sector and involvement of the civil society in providing adequate housing for all.

3 The Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation defines the poor population of India into categories as: The Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) that are households with yearly incomes less than 100,000 rupees a year and Low Income Groups (LIGs), with yearly income between 100,000 to 200,000 rupees a year.
programs gradually began to take a more holistic approach by integrating poverty alleviation with shelter schemes (Hingorani, 2011).

India in 1988 adopted the first National Housing Policy changing the role of the government from that of the provider of finished houses, finance, or sites and infrastructure to that of a facilitator, that channeled private sector investments in housing and encouraged private sector led construction. The government now provided a legal, regulatory, and financial framework that allowed the private sector to develop and provide housing. Nevertheless, the efforts made in this period did not meet the requirements of the EWS or the LIGs, but they did filter down to high income group (HIG) and middle income group (MIG) households. As urban poverty alleviation programs remained isolated from other related programs, their effectiveness was reduced and the integrated approach though promulgated in policy, remained ineffective (Hingorani, 2011).

As the progress in addressing deteriorating housing conditions in cities remained sluggish, the importance of managerial and policy approach for urban centers was realized (Hingorani, 2011). The power distribution between the three levels of government (central, state, and local) was realigned with the 74th Constitutional Amendment in 1992. The responsibilities for urban poverty alleviation, slum upgrading, housing, management of urban services, and the protection of weaker sections were slowly transferred to the urban local bodies; however, the lack of financial resources restricted their performance to design and deliver programs. This led to numerous urban reforms in the following years (Hingorani, 2011). The continuous dependency of municipalities on financial resources from higher levels of government made it more challenging for the local bodies to do their job due to varying political scenarios. Especially in the slum improvement programs, the range of agencies involved like slum boards, housing boards, development authorities, and municipal bodies posed more problems in implementation.

A new program called Urban Basic Services for the Poor was launched by integrating Environmental Improvement of Urban Slums program with an urban basic services scheme. This program focusing on health and education, also realized the importance of secure tenure and cost-recovery mechanisms for shelters for the long-term sustainability of any scheme. In 1997, the National Slum Development Program (NSDP) for upgrading slums was launched with state and central funding. Later, two other programs, Nehru Rozgar Yojana (the Nehru employment scheme) and the Prime Minister’s Integrated Urban Poverty Eradication Programme, were integrated in the NSDP for a more holistic approach with three components: shelter, employment, and education. In 2001, a central government program, Valmiki Ambedkar Awas Yojana, was launched for the construction and upgrading of houses for Below Poverty Line households. The program also included the provision of basic amenities through the construction of community toilets. The central government provided a 50% subsidy, while the remaining contribution came from state or local governments or through a loan from HUDCO. However, HUDCO only provided the loan in proportion to the size of the slum population that was to be upgraded. The implementation was the responsibility of the state
governments who were required to arrange land and organize debt (Hingorani, 2011).

The Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) launched in 2005 aimed to construct 1.5 million houses for the urban poor in the mission period (2005-2012) in 65 cities. The two policies under JNNURM that targeted housing are Integrated Housing and Slum Redevelopment Programme and Basic Services for the Urban Poor (BSUP). Both policies aim at providing entitlements such as security of tenure, affordable housing, and services like water, sanitation, health and education, and social security to low-income groups (Mathur, 2009). This followed the introduction of market solutions such as the Affordable Housing in Partnership (AHP), involving private players. Another program called Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY) that aimed at providing affordable housing to the urban poor (MoHUPA, 2012) was rolled over into the Housing for All (HFA) by 2022 policy on May 2015 (MoHUPA, 2015).

The evolution of a housing market supported by an established housing finance system led to increased housing supply for the high and middle-income groups. The rigidity of the land regulatory system and the finance mechanism of the free market that required the borrower to have a monthly income flow, title to property, and construction drawings with government approval completely cut off the poor from these opportunities. Based on recent statistics it is to be noted that 99% of the urban housing shortage in India is in the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) and the Low-Income Group (LIG) categories (Report on Trend and Progress of Housing in India, 2012).

The International take on Sustainable Development with Adequate Housing as a Central Component

In 1947, the international community agreed unanimously that shelter, along with food and clothing should be considered as one of the basic needs of human beings, highlighting the importance of shelter for an individual’s physical and psychological well-being. Therefore, housing was made a human right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by the world in 1948. However, the constitution of India has not yet included adequate housing as a human right.

Later in the 1970s and the 1980s, when the international activism for environmental concerns paved the way for the holistic concept of sustainable development, the right to adequate housing became a part of the international

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4 MoHUPA stands for Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, which is a division of the Ministry of housing and Urban Affairs. The JNNURM mission was initially launched for a seven year period but then was extended up to March 2015 to complete ongoing works in 65 Mission Cities identified based on urban population (Census 2001). See MoHUPA, 2015a.

5 The Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation defines the poor population of India into categories as: the Economically Weak Sections (EWS) that are households with yearly incomes less than 100,000 rupees a year and Low Income Groups (LIGs), with yearly income between 100,000 to 200,000 rupees a year.
development policy agenda. Sustainability as a concept was no longer considered solely as an environmental concern but was known to incorporate economic and social dimensions as well. The term sustainable development was first coined in the Brundtland Report, published in 1987 by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development. It was defined as the kind of development that does not impact the physical and ecological environment adversely and sustains the population economically and socially. Since then, “sustainable development” has been a widely used term, and has been increasingly influential in formulating housing and urban policies in recent years. However, research shows that the holistic view of sustainability is still vaguely understood when it comes to application in architecture and city planning especially among the social and economic complexities of informal settlements (Taher, Prasanna, Mutafa, Muhammad, & Omer, 2016).

India, yet again aligning local policy with international policy, as set forth in the United Nations agenda and its Millennium Development Goals for sustainable development, in Habitat II (1996) and Habitat III (2016), expressed its desire to eradicate poverty and provide adequate housing for all. Both the country’s housing initiatives RAY and HFA 2022 are evidence of this commitment (Habitat II, 1996) (MHUPA, 2016). In addition, as one of the 190 countries that signed the 2030 agenda for sustainable development in the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit of 2015, India agreed to adopt the new UN framework that would guide all development efforts in the country between 2015 and 2030.6 The 2030 Agenda, which emerged from the UN Habitat summits, provides a framework based on 17 overarching Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets. The goals were developed with economic, social, and environmental objectives embedded in them, covering most aspects of the sustainability spectrum. Goal 11, however, specifically focusing on cities, is about making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, and resilient. Each target has its own City Prosperity Initiative (CPI) dimension and is supposed to allow nations to monitor their progress towards the goals. The SDG11’s first target 11.1 is to achieve “Adequate, Safe and Affordable Housing” with the associated CPIs as: economic equity, social inclusion, and gender inclusion (11 Sustainable Cities and Communities, 2016) (UN-Habitat, 2016).

Even though the “social sustainability” aspect is getting more importance in the development debate, especially after the UN summit of 2015, it is still not clearly defined. Nonetheless, the sustainable development concept has linked housing to the economic prosperity of people.

**Affordability and the Housing Gap**

Affordability is a critical component in filling the housing demand gap. In most places affordability of housing is gauged as a comparison of housing expenditure to the income of the household. Housing is considered affordable if it costs less than

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6 Entitled “Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”
30% of the household budget in the United States (CTOD & CNT, 2006). The government of India renders housing as affordable based on the income level of the family, size of the dwelling unit, and/or ratio of the house price to annual income (High Level task Force on Affordable Housing for All, 2008).

The average monthly household income of the low-income groups (LIGs) and the middle-income groups (MIGs) is between 25,000 to 75,000 (or 300,000 to 900,000 annual) in Indian rupees. The Equated Monthly Installments (EMI) between 10,000 to 30,000 rupees for 15 to 20 years makes the debt to income ratio 30 to 40% which can be considered somewhat affordable (Arya, 2016). However, based on the estimates of the Ministry of Housing and Poverty Alleviation in 2016 the urban housing shortfall is 18.6 million dwelling units, 95% of which is in the economically weaker section (EWS) and low-income groups (LIG) with the EWS at 56%, the LIG at 39.4%, and only 4.38% for the middle-income groups (MIGs). This makes the EMI of 10,000 to 30,000 rupees unaffordable for at least 56% of the households in need of housing.

In the housing market, the continuous increase in construction costs, besides other complexities of land acquisition and fees, contributes to the unaffordability of adequate housing for these groups (LIGs and EWS) (The Economic Times, 2016). Therefore, in today’s market driven economy, the inability of the poor to afford adequate housing remains as one of the major factors that lead to the creation of informal housing, filling the demand gap in the urban areas of India. However, the economic reforms that began in 1991 in India, are continuing to improve the economic conditions of the population. In 1985, 93% of the population lived on a household income of 90,000 rupees a year that is equivalent to about one dollar a day per person, but by 2005 this was reduced by half, to only 54%. Such economic growth is creating a huge middle class concentrated in the country’s urban areas. The McKinsey Global Institute Analysis report on India of 2007 estimated that by 2025 about 41% of India’s urbanites will be part of the middle class (defined as having annual income between 200,000 to 1,000,000 Indian rupees) (Beinhocker, Farrell, & Zainulbhai, 2007). However, 58% of India’s urban population is still projected to remain in the LIG and EWS groups by 2025.

**Informal Settlements as a Means to Fill the Housing Gap through Self-help Efforts**

The unaffordability of legal housing in India gives rise to the practice of poor people illegally occupying public land through self-constructed housing, without services and infrastructure or any legal titles. These informal settlements are built with cheap locally available building materials, local skills, ad hoc designs, and technology without proper professional assistance, standards, and legal building codes (Akhat & Khan, 2011). This process has been going on at least since the time of independence and the informal housing stock in India, from the early post–World War II era has aged and deteriorated significantly. The settlements are also overbuilt and overcrowded so much so that they are officially recognized as slums.
Although most official discourse after the 1970s avoids terminology such as “slums” and “ghettos,” the United Nations Human Settlements Program, after reviewing the definitions used by local governments’ statistical offices and institutions dealing with inadequate housing issues and public perceptions, compiled the following list of characteristics describing slums (Habitat, 2003).7

The UN definition of slums:

a) Area lacks basic services (clean water, sanitation, energy)

b) Housing/building structures are substandard or located in illegal sites, with inadequate structures

c) Housing is overcrowded (as many as 5 persons in one-room unit)

d) Unhealthy living conditions and hazardous locations (open sewers, uncontrolled dumping of waste, polluted environments, etc. or in areas subject to natural hazards)

e) Insecure tenure (absence of legal document entitling occupant to use of site)

f) Irregular or informal settlements (do not follow land-use plans)

g) High levels of poverty and social exclusion

Slums in India are referred to as those living places that are characterized by insecure residential status, poor structural quality of housing, overcrowding, inadequate access to safe water, sanitation, and basic services (Unger, 2007). Based on this criterion, the first complete census report on Indian slums in 2011 described that 1 in 6 city residents of India live in slums under conditions deemed as “unfit for human habitation.” These 64 million urban dwellers nationwide account for one third of India’s total population. Based on these statistics a poor in-migrant to an Indian city is most likely to live in an urban slab. Such a situation is a direct result of unequal distribution of resources. In addition, many outlying areas not integrated into the urban transportation system and other infrastructure also fall into the category of slums. However, all informal settlements are not slums such as, some areas have been integrated over time and developed into middle and lower middle-class neighborhoods with their own commercial centers (Westendorf, 2010).

Globally, around 1 billion urban dwellers live in urban informal settlements which are built largely by their residents’ efforts. Urban informal settlements are estimated to be home to around one-third of the world’s urban population mostly located in the cities of the Global South (UN Habitat t. P., 2016).8 These cities, including Delhi and Mumbai in India, include whole generations who have lived

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7 UN Center for Human Settlements (UNCHS), UN Habitat and UN Human Settlements Programme (UNHSP) are names for the same United Nations family organization concerned with urban settlements. The change in the name and acronym of the organization over the years reflects subtle changes in the governance arrangements within the UN than in the nature of the institution’s mandate.

8 It is acknowledged that this term, which denotes what have also been labelled “developing countries” or “the Third World,” is problematic. It relates to low- and middle-income countries which are generally located in the Southern hemisphere, as opposed to Europe and North America.
their entire lives in the informal settlements creating unique social dynamics where many well-educated youths have new aspirations and goals. However, because cities are still facing the challenge of housing less educated rural migrants the social dynamics of slum dwellers remains very complex. In this regard, informal settlements with slum conditions are often considered as being an accurate yet complex reflection of society’s economic conditions and disparities among its social classes.

Charles Abrams following up on his philosophical debate on the self-help process of housing in the 1960s, concluded that slums appear because no government can provide housing at a cost that all workers can afford. In confirmation, India’s own and internationally renowned architect Charles Correa asserted that historically societies have always been able to produce adequate housing indigenously and naturally, and that housing was never dependent upon outsiders’ interventions. He believed housing to be the end result of an organic process of a society and if a society was not able to produce housing naturally then the malfunction in the process needed to be identified (Abrams, 1964; Correa, 2000).

Lefebvre (1996) posited that due to industrialization, mass production, and exchange value, replaced the creativity of people which he called “the oeuvre” or “use value.” In light of Lefebvre’s (1996) stance on the disappearance of “the oeuvre,” it can be argued that the capability of a society’s poor to build and sustain their own housing in adequate ways has been shunned by the functionalities of capitalism.

This malfunction is also identified as “the class phenomenon” of a city by other economists such as David Harvey (2003), who posits that the vulnerable populations are exploited by the capitalist class through their predatory practices of dispossession and so their housing needs are also exploited. The ownership of land, its exchange value, and use rights or use value are all reflective of class disparities among wealthy land owners and the urban poor. In this view the privatization and commodification of housing and land is seen as the power of monopoly of private owners and speculators over assets, which he calls a predatory practice of capitalists against the low-income classes (Harvey, 2003). Therefore, the ownership of land and the related issues of increased land values need to be considered as structural problems for policy reforms in housing (Jauhiainen, 2007).

When John Turner (1976) used the term “housing” as a verb, he meant a process with non-quantifiable social value attached to it - a process based on human and social capital - whereas the term as a noun refers to a quantifiable number of dwellings. He explained the significance of the process of self-building through “dweller control” comparing two alternate systems, autonomy (a self-governing local system), and heteronomy (subjection to centralized institution and authority). He claimed that, heteronomous systems mostly fail in providing adequate dwellings to fill the housing gap because the government is involved in all facets of the project (planning, construction, and management), which exceeds the service cost, making it unaffordable to the users. According to Turner (1976), the government also cannot exceed the limit of expenditure from national income in order to provide
dwellings on a massive scale without upsetting the country’s economy. He posited this situation as the biggest reason for the failure of heteronomous systems. Also, in a market economy, bureaucracy, and waste prove to be counterproductive. Based on this view, the dependence on the hierarchic supply system of centralized resources results in a bigger gap of supply and demand of housing. Other observers have also adopted a positive perspective on informal settlements, who, like Turner, think that these settlements are a successful solution to the housing deficit because people have long shown the ability to manage and create shelter and employment with limited resources. They claim that, despite the low-quality of the buildings, informal settlements might be an effective starting point for solving the problem through self-building schemes with available resources.

The critique of Turner’s model of self-help housing is that it lifts all responsibility from the shoulders of the government agencies, land owners, speculators, and construction companies, while it holds the poor responsible for their conditions, making them believe that they alone should solve their housing problems (Burgess, 1982). However, Turner did not advocate that the public sector should not support the housing process by not providing funds, resources, affordable building materials, and required infrastructure to support the self-help process of housing (Turner, 1968).

**Self-help Housing: A Step toward Sustainable Development**

By agreeing on the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030, India agrees with the United Nation’s philosophy that the housing sector is central in achieving sustainability that is linked to environment, economic, and social stability. Prosperity studies show that when sustainability is paired with affordability and maintenance cost, the impact of adequate housing (new construction or upgrades) is the greatest on low- to middle-income households (Litman, 2010). Sustainable methods of construction have proven to improve energy and therefore cost efficiency of maintaining housing. Research on the link between sustainability and affordability of housing and informal settlements upgrading can lead to new local policies that will help in reducing the housing demand in India (Menshawy, Shafik, & Khedr, 2016). When housing projects are compliant with sustainability dynamics that balance the needs of the planet, its people, and their prosperity, then highly productive solutions can be reached.

India has come a long way in forming its national policy and strategies on housing the poor, from expensive ready-made, cookie cutter solutions of public housing, destruction and removal of slums, and displacement of the inhabitants, to providing more financially viable avenues. But the analysis of the policies shows none of the policies were ever formulated to foster an organized self-help housing process. Therefore, it could be stated that policies have overlooked human and social capital and have mostly depended upon economic capital. Among past strategies, the most effective and inclusive seem to be the ones that focused on Sites and Services and Core Housing Upgrading; however, the only drawback was that these efforts also tended to be too dependent upon outside aid with little dweller control. The following analysis examines how the self-help housing model
comparisons with the three components of the sustainability triangle that are people, planet, and prosperity, so that India can move toward a more sustainable direction in respect to “adequate housing for all,” keeping up with its Housing for All by 2022 policy.

**Prosperity, People, and Planet:**
**Sustainability Aspects in Self-help Housing**

Based on the recent World Bank statistics, Forbes magazine’s reports that India is the 7th largest economy in the world. However, the fact remains that only 1% of the country’s population owns 53% of its wealth. It is also reported that one-third of the world’s population living under U.S. $1.90 resides in India. Therefore, the challenge for India is to come up with policies and tools that can better address the needs and demands of the 20% of its population living under less than $2 a day in order to achieve greater equity and social stability as well as less waste and greater sustainability. Policies should be geared toward socio-economic development that propagates ecologically sound management of resources and environment (Sachs, 1977). Growth in a sustainable development model is not based upon social inequality, where rich people indulge in wasteful use of resources while the poor resort to the overuse of the few resources that they can access. An alternate model of Organized Self-Help Housing (OSHH) is based upon self-reliance and fulfilling human needs as discussed by many countries in the Global South (Arroyo, 2013). These needs are not merely material ones like food, shelter, and clothing, but also include well-defined social goals, such as the ones proposed by Manfred Max–Neef (1992) in the Human Scale Development that include: subsistence, protection, participation, creation, and freedom.

The process of organized self-help housing (Arroyo, 2013) as some scholars call it also depends upon sweat equity. Through the direct engagement of sweat equity participants are most likely to learn and acquire skills in building construction, management, and leadership which leads to capacity building in the community. These skills allow the participants who are also the owners to seek better employment opportunities and may lead to new entrepreneurial opportunities. The United Nations Development Programme has adopted a similar concept calling it “capacity development,” which is a move toward human development through transformation of a community. It is based upon skill building and transmitting knowledge (UNDP, 2015). This has become a part of the UNDP agenda on development. The intentional capacity building process through self-help construction was evident in Pakistani architect Yasmeen Lari’s experimental work with a beggar community that lived in makeshift shacks. The house building process required community members to learn construction in bamboo and stabilized clay, allowing them not only to improve their living environments, but also get jobs in the construction of other dwellings and training centers (Lari, 2015). There are many other similar examples to study and learn from in self-help housing especially in the Global South. The most significant component of such projects’ success is
dweller control, where the role of the professional is that of a facilitator and all decisions regarding planning, housing design, self-construction, and settlement management after occupancy are made by the dwellers (Rodríguez & Astrand, 1996).

The Uruguayan model of cooperatives presents some valuable insights about how to organize the self-help process of housing. The cooperative housing movement began in Uruguay when the Cooperative Center of Uruguay (CCU)\(^9\) started a new chapter to overcome the shortage of housing in the aftermath of the 1950s economic crises in the country. The main objective was to make resources on housing accessible to the disadvantaged communities. The housing chapter of CCU helped the prospective settlers organize into resident committees and self-governing bodies. The CCU helped create links to NGOs in the housing movements and municipal authorities. The connections among cooperatives allowed experienced personnel from one cooperative project to assist in the formation or training of new cooperatives. Through this mutual aid housing model many lessons can be learned such as: the organization of communities; resolution of social and economic hurdles that arise in the way of self-build projects; and the role of professionals and formal institutions such as banks. Most importantly, the model shows that the concept of housing as a right and a public asset and not just a market commodity can be implemented even within the framework of a country’s liberal market economy. The cooperatives showed the wisdom of employing architectural models and modes of construction that are suitable to their needs and skills. Within 30 years from the conception of cooperatives, the transfer of construction skills across generations was evident. By the 1990s, multiple generations were adept in using prefabricated tiles for roofing and flooring, demonstrating that an inexperienced but motivated workforce of self-builders can develop and transfer valuable skills. A large percent of the builders were women who were trained as tilers and bricklayers. Along with them a number of builders were trained as

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9 CCU was an institution that was established in 1961, to develop and promote agrarian and credit cooperatives in Uruguay.
builder’s mates and officials to carry out the required paperwork in the cooperatives. This model has been repeated in Brazil and many other Latin American countries. However, the available literature shows that there is a need for a systemized research and evaluation of these models to be able to gauge their overall success and long-term impact in the development and empowerment of such disadvantaged self-builder communities.

The key components required to build a house are land, material, labor, and technology, all of which may also require capital for purchasing materials, labor, and land. In informal settlements low income households are able to minimize their labor and material costs through production of goods for communal consumption.

Literature on informal settlements suggests the biggest reason behind squatting activity that leads to informal urbanism is the unavailability of affordable land for the poor (Hasan, 2003). In the absence of access to affordable land, the poor occupy land illegally to build their homes; therefore, the land they get is mostly undesirable land, prone to natural or manmade disasters. This makes their community even more vulnerable.

Since the existing dwellings in informal settlements mostly are made from materials locally at hand, like, tin, cardboard, plastic sheets, paper, etc., it is structurally not possible to build additional stories and expand vertically. The limitation of the material dictates the methods of assembly as well, and the resultant settlement is mostly a low-density sprawl. While some families with steady incomes and savings are able to gradually replace the temporary materials of their first structures using walls of brick and mortar, paving tiles, glass windows, and doors, the resultant buildings built incrementally are usually not very energy efficient nor are they necessarily strong enough to support additional stories. The drawback of this situation is such that the self-help and self-build efforts do not result in adequate building structures that can support high density. Nevertheless, the households in informal settlements, to generate extra income, often indulge in the practice of renting out rooms and carrying out other commercial activities from their homes, in the absence of any regulations (Abramo, 2007; Friedman, 2000). This results in overcrowding of the limited living space. The average per capita living space in the world’s densest slum located in Mumbai is 29.38 square feet as compared to the 86 square feet average per capita space for a Mumbai resident outside the slums (Ashar, 2016).

Relatedly, the practice of relocating the poor on the outskirts of the city in order clear out uninhabitable living conditions resulting from overcrowding in the settlements within the city puts added burden to their monthly expenses. Often, they either lose their jobs due to an inability to commute from the new location or they have to pay extra to commute. This is the reason why most scholars and practitioners have argued that the more sustainable solution to urban housing for low income groups is midrise buildings within city limits, most preferably through in situ upgrading efforts of existing buildings. For this approach, new technologies need to be introduced that can allow building heights to reach at least four to five stories.
There is a move toward, “greening the buildings and neighborhoods” and “Net Zero Housing,” which marks a positive shift in the urban planning paradigm internationally. By identifying more locally available materials for construction and developing cost efficient techniques of utilizing them, more sustainable solutions can be reached to construct mid-rise buildings for high density neighborhoods that are structurally sound and energy efficient. However, this is a turf left unexplored in India for low cost housing solutions.

Vernacular practices in construction using natural materials, such as mud bricks, bamboo, and thatch in India, are almost always environmentally friendly. But the potential of vernacular ways and the employment of vernacular materials in safe and efficient ways have never been explored by Indian policy on housing. In fact, the practice of typecasting vernacular as “Kachcha” meaning “raw” and in need of replacement, in the official language of policy, has negatively impacted the vernacular ways of construction in India. The negative connotation of such terminology deems these cost effective and environmentally sustainable practices as backward and linked to poverty. After the Tsunami destruction of 2004, in Tamil Nadu India, the state government, announced that 130,000 houses needed to be replaced. This number included even those houses that were not damaged but were constructed in the traditional ways, but not following the prevailing building codes. This resulted in channeling disaster recovery foreign funding into the construction of row housing in cement and concrete removing all undamaged vernacular housing and trees on site. The resultant town of mass-produced cookie-cutter houses in concrete did not sit well with the traditional Tamil Nadu fisherman community at any level. Concrete construction, the identical closed plans of the houses, and the absence of the trees were all factors that severely affected their livelihoods and quality of life (Duyne, 2010). In the self-help and self-build model in urban areas, there is a risk involved in using flammable materials like thatch; however, there is ample room for further investigation and research into the choice of material and planning for urban housing. India’s own architect Laurie Baker, who spent his lifetime researching Kerala’s vernacular architecture and indigenous ways of building has produced simple to read publications and easy to follow instruction guides that can be a great asset in bringing the environmental, social, and economic elements of sustainability into the construction of houses (Nair, 2015).

Sanitation is another major concern in most informal urban settlements where formal infrastructure is missing. Where does clean water come from and where does the sewer water go? One billion people around the world mostly in the Global South live in conditions where they do not have access to adequate sanitation and clean water. In the 1990s, in New Delhi alone, less than 40% of households were connected to sewers (Khan, 1997). Research shows that in the urban areas of India it is the poor who are deprived of sanitary conditions that results in failing health and increased medical expenses, putting more fiscal burden on poor households, and lowering productivity. This is why in-situ upgrades are important and some NGOs in India committed to this work have shown positive outcomes with low-income communities in India. Some prominent names among the NGOs are The Indian Alliance, The Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres, National Slum Dwellers Federation, and Mahila Milan (Arroyo, 2013).
Conclusion

The dearth of affordable housing in India poses great challenges, particularly for the big cities to develop in more sustainable, livable ways. Local policy on housing in India has been heavily influenced by global policies since 1947. This paper argues that the international approach toward housing, although well intended, does not always translate well at the local level in catering to the housing demand. As a consequence, the practice of squatting and self-building by poor households creates unplanned settlements in and around Indian cities that often times result in unsafe living environments. The self-help and self-build efforts of the poor often end up creating a supply of inadequate and unsafe housing when they have the potential of doing the opposite, that is creating adequate housing in the most cost-efficient ways by using environmentally friendly materials of construction and mobilizing human capital.

Focusing on upgrading the already existing unplanned built up areas of the cities has proven to have some positive social impacts because such projects do not destroy social capital; however, their cost efficiency and sustainability is questionable and calls for further research and analysis. Such research can help the government to develop affordable programs aimed at securing a more sustainable and livable future for the cities. India needs to develop cost-effective and equitable public policies and investing in OSHH projects seems to provide viable solutions. These policies need to be geared towards providing easy and affordable access to land with easy commute to work, identifying and promoting better means of construction with eco-friendly and energy efficient materials, and supplying all necessary infrastructure like sewerage, water, roads, electricity, etc. By promoting self-help processes of building, housing can be made more affordable, efficient, and sustainable for both the government and the user. Policies promoting self-help efforts that use locally available materials, vernacular architecture practices and capacity building through training of locals are likely to result in more sustainable housing solutions.

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Is India Becoming More Liberal? Globalization, Economic Liberalization, and Social Values

Tinaz Pavri

Abstract

Globalization and economic liberalization have created new opportunities and dislocations in India. Less is known about whether these phenomena have had an impact on changing traditional social values to reflect liberal global millennial norms. The article examines available survey data on social values on key indicators of gender, caste, religion, LGBTQ and immigrant rights, and concludes that in some areas, Indians have moved away from traditional representations towards an embrace of liberal global attitudes.

Introduction

India’s economic opening is now approaching the end of its third decade. After the post-independence adoption of the mixed economy model initiated by India’s first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in 1947, the first steps towards economic liberalization were taken in the early 1990s. In the aftermath of India’s independence in 1947, the country adopted an economic framework that integrated elements of capitalism and socialism. It was a “mixed economy” model. Foreign direct investment was restricted to buoy Indian businesses, and the government owned key sectors of the industry, such as transportation and communications. The government initiated “five-year plans” to meet key targets across different industries.

Since that time, India has seen many years of rapid economic growth and an increased volume of foreign direct investment (FDI). In 1990, India’s rate of growth was 3.8% in constant prices. In 2005 it was 9.5%. In 2018, it is projected to be around 7.4% (Government of India, 2015).

Industries like telecommunications and infrastructure (held by the public sector for many decades) are being transferred in whole or some measure to the private sector. In the new millennium, the fruits of decades of economic liberalization are becoming more and more visible as multinational companies establish their presence and global brands have permeated most Indian cities large and small. Urbanization continues apace, and what were once sleepy towns are becoming metropolises. Provincial cities that remained in the shadows of megalopolises now themselves have several million residents.
The new openness fostered by economic liberalization and globalization have brought the world to India after a long period of enforced economic barriers that kept the world out for the first four decades after independence (Gottipati, 2012). A recent Pew study noted that India is a top source in both receiving and sending international migrants. In the past 25 years, India has doubled its number of migrants to other parts of the world (Connor, 2017).

The range of media and television has exploded, reaching first the middle classes and now India’s impoverished masses with hundreds of channels available from all over the world in addition to accessible, widely used Internet service. A recent study shows that all Indian millennials will own smartphones in the next few years (Jain, 2017). As more Indians enter the middle class and travel all over the world (something not possible for previous generations), and enjoy long-sought access to an ever-expanding number of global franchises and digital and social media, the question arises as to how this transformation has altered and liberalized Indian social values.

While the meaning of the term globalization, including its time frame and its perceived winners and losers, has been debated and contested, for the purposes of this article, I use the term to refer to the rapid and unprecedented technological, economic, and social transformations in the last several decades that have inevitably (voluntarily and involuntarily) integrated the world’s countries on different levels. One useful description refers to globalization as the “integration of economies and societies through cross country flow of information, ideas, technologies, goods, services, capital, finance and the people” (Naidu, 2006 p. 1).

Globalization and Indian Values

In this article, I ask questions regarding India’s levels of social tolerance and the spread of liberal global millennial values in the context of globalization and economic liberalization. Has economic liberalization and its concomitant allowance of access to an explosion of media, global brands, and ideas also aided the country in confronting and addressing questions of equality, women’s rights, race, caste, and religion? Have global debates and strides made on issues of gender, inclusivity, and diversity begun to impact and be reflected in values expressed in India?

The literature on the impact of globalization on values and attitudes, particularly in developing world countries, is sparse. Arnett (2002) has noted that as globalization has spread, younger generations across the world have developed “biculutural identities” that incorporate global trends and values and that sometimes lead to “identity confusion,” particularly in non-western cultures.

Although great chasms still exist between rich and poor, and upper and lower caste, I hypothesize that the overall economic transformation has served as a great leveler, if not in actual incomes, then at least in social expectations and beliefs. On the one hand, it would seem logical to assume that economic transformation might also bring about a sea-change in India’s tradition-bound culture and social mores, propelling them towards progressive global norms—diversity, inclusion, gender equality, and LGBT rights – and the Indian versions thereof. On the other hand, as some authors have noted, globalization might lead to dislocations that propel some
Indians to exaggeratedly hold on to what they perceive of as “traditional” (BBC Four’s Storyville, 2015). Steve Derne has argued that globalization has affected the classes differently, with the upper classes in India embracing new values while the masses, to whom the fruits of globalization are not apparent, have resisted change (Derne, 2008).

To determine which of these phenomena might be occurring in India, I examine available recent survey data to see what attitudes Indians, and particularly young Indians, hold on inclusion and tolerance on this range of issues. The data come from five surveys published between 2010 and 2017. They are the highly-cited CSDS-Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Survey (Madan & Freidrich, 2017); the Deloitte Millenial Survey (DMS) (Fernandez, 2015); the Gallup 2010-2011 Survey (Muslims in India); The Global Attitudes Pew Survey 2015 (Spring 2015 Survey); and the Ipsos Global Trends Survey 2017 (Ipsos Global Trends, 2017). These will be examined in detail in a later section.

Many issues of inclusion and tolerance have always faced India, but in their Indian versions – how Indians look at deep class and caste divisions, for instance, or religious intolerance and women’s discrimination. These issues are now necessarily viewed within a globalized Indian context, which forces Indians to grapple with global norms in these arenas, as well as in those that Indians have chosen to ignore in the past, such as LGBTQ rights.

Post-Independence India and Economic Liberalization

Jawaharlal Nehru led the quasi-socialist Indian National Congress Party (INC) as prime minister from independence in 1947 to 1964, when he died in office of a heart attack. As the beloved first prime minister of independent India, Nehru and the Congress had wide latitude to put their imprint on the fledgling government and economy. The Congress Party won large majorities in national elections, and opposition parties were marginalized on the two ends of the political spectrum – the socialist/communist end and the right-wing/Hindu fundamentalist end. For decades after Nehru’s death, the Congress continued to be the dominant party without major opposition.

In 1966, Nehru’s daughter, Indira Gandhi, became Prime Minister. Groomed at the side of her father, Indira shared a similar outlook on life, politics and the economy as Nehru. Nehru’s interest in Fabian socialism was echoed by Gandhi, and indeed the quasi-socialist policies of the Congress government were dominant until her own death in 1986. Congress’s redistributive bent and secular politics assured it a wide range of support from the poor to the lower castes and the religious minorities. Despite Gandhi’s political missteps and authoritative bent, this wide-ranging coalition of support did not begin to fray until the late 1980s, when hitherto marginalized Hindu-oriented and fundamentalist parties started to assert political clout and garner electoral support.

Ironically, it was the Congress Party government of P. V. Narasimha Rao that took the first steps towards economic liberalization in the early 1990s. By 1991, the
Indian economy was in peril. India was deeply in debt and its foreign currency reserves had dropped precipitously. Against this backdrop, Rao and his finance minister Manmohan Singh (who would later become Congress (I) Prime Minister from 2004-2014) initiated bold new economic reforms (Baru, 2016).  

India had remained relatively isolated from global influences in previous decades (Panagariya, 2005). For decades after independence, television had just one channel, the official one, and global films came to India years after their actual release. Even international news magazines, with their prohibitively expensive subscriptions, arrived weeks or months after their publication dates. With the economic opening and the increasing pace of globalization in the next two decades, Indians became exposed for the first time to an onslaught of foreign ideas and influences, in the arenas of business, economy, culture, and media. The average Indian was becoming aware of the extent of global diversity, including racial diversity, for the first time. Women were entering the workplace at a greater pace and connections to tight family structures were fraying (Raina, 2016). Indians were also more mobile than ever before, with millions traveling from remote villages to globalizing Indian cities for jobs, displaced from lives that were familiar but closeted.

Indeed, some scholars, such as Maria Misra, have explained the recent uptick in violence against different populations in India – women being violently raped, foreigners attacked and discriminated against – as a backlash against a fast-changing world that challenges the parameters of what was established, known, and accepted in the past (BBC Four’s, 2015). The National Crime Records Bureau has released statistics for crime in India since the 1980s, and these data are broken down along a number of parameters, including crimes targeting lower caste Indians and women. In 2016, there was a 12% increase in crime against women over the previous year (Government of India, 2017). In 2018, the Thomas Reuters Foundation survey of experts found that India was the most dangerous country in the world to be a woman, because of wide-ranging crimes against women, including in the traditional context of demanding women’s obedience and violent punishment for lack thereof (Thomas Reuters Foundation, 2018).

**India’s History of Tolerance**

Much has been written about the tolerant nature of India’s majority religiocultural identity, Hinduism. Scholars have pointed to the diversity of belief existing within Hinduism itself, the different gods and goddesses in all their physical and behavioral manifestations, and noted that it has bred widespread societal tolerance over the centuries (Dasa, 2012). Of course elements within Hinduism, such as the rigidly defined caste system, have also bred intolerance. But despite this, India has seen conquerors like the Muslim invaders of the 15th century and subsequent waves of Muslim converts become a part of the fabric of the country itself. It has played

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1 The Indian National Congress fragmented over the decades into smaller Congress parties, including the Congress (I), with the “I” standing for Indira. This moniker reflected Indira Gandhi’s consolidation of power within her own party.
the role of welcoming host to refugees like the Parsis who have settled on its shores for a thousand years.\(^2\) For over half a century, it has given shelter to the Dalai Lama and over a hundred thousand Tibetan refugees in Dharamshala, in northern India. After Tamils were targeted in Sri Lanka during the civil war lasting from the 1980s to the new millennium, India took in Tamil refugees. In reality, the country has had amicable ties with the outside world even before the conquests of northern India and Afghanistan by Alexander the Great’s armies in 327 BCE: there is evidence of scholarly exchange with Chinese and Japanese scholars since ancient times (Liu, 2010).

The non-violent legacy of Mahatma Gandhi, which defined the Indian independence movement, underlines the generally pacific nature of the country’s response to international provocations. Nehru continued this tradition of seeking the moral high ground in becoming a founder in 1956, along with Josip Broz Tito of the former Yugoslavia, and Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, of the Non-Aligned Movement. The movement sought to place its members outside of the destructive sphere of the developing bipolar world, looking instead to maintain neutrality (although in reality many members were more sympathetic to the Soviet Union than the United States) in their dealings with the world, and therefore assuming a role of “honest broker” between the two developing Cold War camps.

India has, then, certainly seemed to have been proud of a history that was more tolerant than intolerant—of outsiders, visitors, immigrants, refugees, and others. Its vast and cacophonous borders have allowed for the representation and co-existence of disparate cultures, religions, languages, and ethnicities. Why, then, has India seen a recent increase in violence against women and minorities?

And (Its History of) Intolerance

India has by no means been free of violence in recent history. Indeed, the partition of British India into independent India and Pakistan was one of the most violent historical occurrences, with millions dead and displaced. Women were targeted for violent acts, and many have written about trains full of carcasses arriving from India or Pakistan into the other country with women’s bodies having breasts cut off.\(^3\)

By many accounts, in the last few decades, as globalization has intensified, as jobs are being created and the world is increasingly represented in India, there is much evidence that life for women, immigrants, and religious and sexual minorities has not necessarily improved and that in fact these subsets of the population have become high-profile victims of a new and naked violence. Hostility to non-Indians, and particularly to visibly foreign immigrants like those from Africa, seems to have increased. As women’s profiles in public life have risen in India’s globalized cities,

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2 Refers to Zoroastrian refugees who fled Persia for India after the first Arab invasions.
3 One famous account of Partition and its violence is the classic novel Train to Pakistan by Khushwant Singh (1956).
there has been an increase in violence towards them in cities and villages. The last few years have seen the rape of young girls becoming a national crisis. For instance, there were widespread demonstrations and a deep national soul-searching in 2012 after the brutal gang-rape of a young medical student in a Delhi bus. The national conscience was aroused as Indians began to seriously ask what had gone wrong with the soul of India (The Guardian, 2017). A documentary, “India’s Daughter,” made with interviews of the unrepentant rapists, received international attention, and the conversation about Indian traditions, patriarchy, how men view women and how the country values them, is ongoing. Heart-wrenching rape cases have repeatedly ignited debate in ensuing years. In 2018 an 8-year-old, Asifa Bano, was brutally gang-raped in Kashmir. Again, there was national outrage and spontaneous demonstrations took place all over the country (Fareed, 2018). In response, the legislature passed a law imposing the death penalty on child rape cases (Gowen, 2018). However, activists have viewed this as more of a political move by the ruling party than one inspired by a commitment to women’s rights.

There have been cases of violence and discrimination against and intimidation of African immigrants reported in cities/regions where one finds the largest concentrations of them, for instance in Delhi, Mumbai, and Goa (BBC, 2018). Two cases that became flashpoints for the African community were the murder of an African in Goa and the arrest and humiliation of several African women in Delhi for supposed drug smuggling, a charge later dropped for lack of evidence (Al Jazeera, 2017).

The last two decades of globalization and liberalization have also coincided with the slow decline of the long-ruling Congress Party, the party that led India to independence and shaped its post-independence polity and economy. As pointed out earlier, it was also the party of secularism and a professed commitment to progressive values with regard to class, caste, religion, and gender. Replacing the Congress as the single largest political party and one that has met with resounding success in the last few years, is the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), a party with its roots in Hindu fundamentalism. It has a troubling history of encouraging adherents who engage in minority-baiting, gender discrimination, and sometimes violence. There is little doubt that the strong majorities that the party won in the 2014 national elections have emboldened regressive elements within India. With the BJP’s leadership and approval, a national ban on the sale of cows for slaughter was imposed in 2017. Although officially enacted to prevent animal cruelty, the law in reality sought to appease fundamentalist Hindus who take exception to the sale and consumption of beef by other religious communities, lower caste Hindus and indeed, other beef-eating Hindus. Many states had already initiated anti-slaughter laws prior to this bill. In the last two years, anti-beef zealots with the tacit approval of certain BJP government elements, have imposed vigilante-style justice on those suspected of slaughtering or eating beef, killing the suspected perpetrators (Sinha, 2017).
What Do Indians Believe? Insight from Recent Survey Data

Within the context of India’s past history of tolerance and recent upheavals brought by economic liberalization and globalization, one is interested in finding out what India really believes. I examined available survey data to see what Indians, and particularly young Indians who have known the full fruits of economic liberalization, believe on important social issues, particularly with regard to issues of gender, religion, caste, and LGBTQ rights. In the last several decades, survey data on Indians’ opinions and values have been scarce, and those that exist tend to be centered around consumer, economic, or political values, including surveys conducted by financial and economic powerhouses like PriceWaterhouse Coopers and Deloitte. It is only in recent years that we are seeing social values surveys beginning to be conducted. Hence, while comparative data across time-frames are not readily available, the data that are available provide a snapshot of Indian values in the new millennium. Below, I present data from the five surveys listed at the beginning of the article.

One in particular, the Youth Report by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) is wide-ranging and comprehensive, and has an extensive reach. The 2016 CSDS/KAS surveys 6,000 respondents from 15 to 34 years of age in 19 states. Although CSDS/KAS have conducted opinion surveys in 2007 and 2011, the questions asked have been different, so it is not possible to conduct a scientific comparison to account for change in values (Madan & Friedrich, 2017). Another 2015 survey, the DMS was more limited (Fernandez, 2015). Yet another survey, from Gallup in 2010/2011 was illustrative in capturing Muslims’ attitudes towards life in India.

Because India is slated to become the “youngest country” by 2022 with more millennials (those born between the years of 1980 and 2000) than any other country, their opinions become even more important in making predictions about the future. Their opinions are captured in the CSDS-KAS survey in particular. Here are opinions on key “values” issues, which I have grouped under the headings of women’s rights, minority religion, caste, and LGBTQ issues.

Women’s Rights

The results for attitudes on women’s rights and opportunities are mixed. In general, women in the workplace don’t believe they will be held back, with 76% believing that they will be given top jobs in their offices compared to a global average of 49%. However, 74% of women also felt that opportunities for the sexes were not equal (Fernandez, 2015). In a 2015 global attitude Pew survey, 71% of Indians believed that women have the same rights as men, the second highest in the Asia-Pacific region (Pew Research Center, 2015). This seems to be reflected in the CSDS-KAS survey, with only 8% of women reporting gender discrimination. The number is only slightly higher for lower caste women.
In other areas, the CSDC-KAS survey found less encouraging results, with 51% of young Indians agreeing that “wives should always listen to their husbands” and 41% believing that women should not work after marriage (Madan & Friedrich, 2017). Even less encouraging is the finding in the 2017 Ipsos Global Trends Survey that 64% of Indians believed that the role of women is to become a good mother and wife (Dutt, 2017). On the other hand, comparative data from CSDS/KAS are available for attitudes on marriage, and from 2007 to 2017, the percentage of young Indians who said that marriage was important in life had declined from 80% to 52% (Madan & Friedrich, 2017). In the same vein, 81% of Indian men now believe that men should take on greater responsibility in the home and in the raising of children (Dutt, 2017), reflecting modern values.

Religion

The Pew Global Attitude Survey 2015 found an astonishing 83% of Indians believe it is very important for people to freely practice their religion (Venkatachalam, 2015). The CSDS-KAS 2016 survey found that while only 5% reported discrimination on the basis of religion, 13% of Muslims did, and 27% of Muslims living in small cities reported it. It further finds that almost half of respondents were opposed to inter-religious marriages, while only 28% supported them. As previously mentioned, a poll conducted by Gallup in 2010/11 of 9,518 Indians found that Muslims were more likely than Hindus or other religious minorities to report dissatisfaction with their lives and economic situation and less likely to experience “positive experiences” in daily life. Their confidence in India’s judicial system is also lower (Muslims in India, 2011).

Caste

The 2016 CSDS-KAS survey found that 48% and 46% of respondents, respectively, support the government’s efforts to reserve seats for government jobs and college admissions for lower castes.4 However, there is not as much support for extending a similar system of benefits to Muslims. Only about a third of respondents found nothing wrong with inter-caste marriages, with another third finding them completely wrong.

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4 Through its post-independence period, the Indian government has followed a system of “reserving” certain seats in college and university admissions and in government bureaucracies, for lower caste Indians. These castes and sub-castes are listed on a “schedule,” thereby prompting the term “scheduled castes,” which is also used to denote lower castes. This system of reservation has sometimes met with opposition from elements of the upper castes, and in recent times, there has been greater vocalization against reservation among BJP voters.
LGBTQ Rights

In 2013, India’s Supreme Court de facto reinstated a colonial-era penalty for homosexuality activity. This has galvanized gay rights activists all over the country, and there is a proposition for the court to take up de-criminalization again in 2018. In the meantime, India constitutionally recognized a “third gender” in 2014, in part a result of the acceptance of the traditional/historical roles for India’s “hijra” or transgender community. Public opinion continues to reflect pervasive homophobia against the gay community in India, with 61% of respondents to the CSDS-KAS survey believing same-sex relationships to be wrong and another 10% considering them to be only “somewhat right.”

What Do the Survey Data Show?

What the survey data show appears to be out of sync with the horrific incidents of violence against marginalized communities and the general increase in violence coming out of India on a regular basis in the last decade. The data also run counter to the sentiments that often go hand-in-hand with the large-scale support given to the BJP in general and Narendra Modi in particular in recent elections at the national and regional levels. Both the party and the prime minister have fostered a climate of impunity within upper-class male Hindus, and incidents of violence against minorities and women that sicken and outrage many Indians are often met with silence from the top, until they are forced to issue statements that seem weak. For instance, the organization India Spend reported that 25 Indians have been killed in 60 separate incidents surrounding vigilante justice against purported “beef eaters” since 2014, the year Modi came to power (Saldanha, 2017). Of the 25, 84% are Muslims. This kind of beef-related killing was unheard of prior to recent times, despite the fact that many states ban beef.

In the surveys, however, in general Indians appear to hold more tolerant attitudes on caste, religion, and women’s rights than the numerous incidents of violence and discrimination have led us to believe. The extremely high percentage holding progressive views on the supporting role of men in marriage, for instance, is surprising. Further, many of the economic surveys also show that India’s millennials share socially conscious attitudes on environment and employment goals with global millennials. Indians seem tolerant of reservations for lower caste Indians, and astonishingly high levels purport to uphold freedom of religion for all Indians, which recent incidents of intolerance against the Muslim minority would seem to belie.

This disconnect between what Indians are saying in surveys on gender, caste, and religious issues and the evidence of continued violence against marginalized Indians could be occurring for a number of reasons. For instance, pollsters universally caution against respondent bias, where survey respondents answer in ways that they believe the researchers want them to and that are socially more
acceptable. Hence, Donald Trump received a higher percentage of the final vote in the 2016 election than almost every poll had indicated he would; one explanation for this polling failure was that given Trump’s politically incorrect profile, many voters may not have wanted to reveal that they intended to vote for him. However, because of the general lack of pressure to voice politically correct opinions in India, I don’t believe this to be the case. What may be more likely is that these incipient surveys are inadequate in terms of representation of the sheer numbers and diversity of Indians that they need to include, and may not be a true reflection of what Indians believe.

It may also be the case that the surprisingly small percentages of women who report feeling discriminated against in the workplace might reflect a context in which many women are not aware of the full extent of their rights in the first place, and have no expectation of complete equality in the workplace, in any event. This might therefore actually reflect a pervasive climate of low expectations for women’s opportunities and the acceptance thereof, rather than genuine gender equality in the workplace.

The more optimistic analysis of these survey responses, and one that we must also consider, is that Indians, and especially young Indians, do in fact hold opinions that reflect moderate and inclusive values on critical issues of caste, religion, and gender (although not sexual orientation). If this is the case, then we will see fewer of the horrific acts of violence and marginalization that have become a sad and regular recent commentary on life in contemporary India. These acts may constitute the dying gasps of a patriarchal society that has seen an upheaval in its social structure from the forces of globalization and has lashed out in ways that they thought would push the new forces back. Indian media, for the most part bold and independent, have continuously exposed each act of violence against marginalized communities and provided multiple and continuous fora for discussions. Collective outrage has been expressed on numerous television shows and in newspaper editorials even though historically during the Emergency period (1975-1977), significant restrictions were placed on the media. And, in recent times, there have been complaints both of big business influence on the media, as well as some sections of the media pandering to the ruling BJP party, thus compromising their independence. Overall, Indians seem to be constantly examining themselves and their values to understand recent acts that have shamed the country. If so, it is not impossible that the moderate values exhibited in these survey are actually held by many Indians.

The New India: “Miles to Go”

India has undergone an unprecedented transformation in the last 25 years, resulting in rapid economic growth, a growing middle class, a sea-change in the variety of jobs available, migration from rural to urban areas, and access to global ideas. It has also achieved a consolidation of democracy as the long-ruling Congress Party has lost badly in recent times and moved out of the centrality of Indian politics to allow for new actors on the political stage, even if the new actors hold regressive views. We have already noted that one of the new political parties, the ruling BJP
(and its partners), has had a troubling track record that has touted the notion of Hindu supremacy. Prime Minister Modi has himself flirted with these extremist ideas, emboldening the extremist fringes of his own party and other right-wing Hindu parties and organizations. This is one of the less salubrious consequences of democratic politics.

The country still has “miles to go,” as Nehru was often fond of saying, especially in the area of human rights and civil society (Gandhi, 2016). The old mindsets, biases, and stereotypes that discriminated against women, religious and ethnic minorities, and lower castes and classes, continue to exist, but are being confronted and challenged by the new forces of growth and globalization. These new forces, in their turn, have created new displacements and new scapegoats of their own. Dislocations from the new economy have inevitably created economic winners and losers, and the losers have legitimate grievances that must be addressed. For instance, the last few years have seen an epidemic of suicides by farmers in key agricultural states who have felt pummeled by the new economic forces and hopeless to change their situation of indebtedness and inability to compete.

Although there is not much current research into this question, I believe that the tolerant nature of India’s history and culture will eventually reassert itself as Indian society becomes increasingly acclimated to the ongoing process of globalization-induced mobility and transformation. The process of questioning and examination has already begun and will hopefully move the country in directions where not just legislation protects the rights of all, but also the political culture and societal values do so. However, it can’t be denied that until then, globalization has created hitherto unknown tensions in India that are often resulting in the denial of the civil and human rights of women, religious and sexual minorities, immigrants, and groups that are conceived of as out of the mainstream and the “other.”

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