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Institute of South Asian Studies
National University of Singapore
29 Heng Mui Keng Terrace
#08-06 (Block B)
Singapore 119620
Tel: (65) 6516 4239 Fax: (65) 6776 7505
www.isas.nus.edu.sg
http://southasiandiaspora.org

Religious Fundamentalism in South Asia: Some Preliminary Considerations

Riaz Hassan[1]

Religious fundamentalism is a distinctive set of beliefs and behaviour pattern in most modern religious communities. It is a religious way of being that manifests itself as a strategy among the believers to preserve the authenticity of their identity based on doctrines, beliefs and practices from a sacred past. This religious identity becomes the exclusive basis for a reimagined political and social order. There are numerous fundamentalist movements in South Asia. This paper focuses on four main movements namely: Arya Samaj, Rashtriya Svayamsevak Sangh or the RSS, Jamaat-i-Islami and Tablighi Jamaat. The first two are Hindu and the last two Muslim. It is argued that the genesis of these movements lies mainly in the challenges posed by modernity, political and cultural subordination, nationalism and colonialism. Like nationalism religious fundamentalist movements are intellectual projects led by charismatic intellectuals seeking to reform and remodel society using the sanctity and authority of sacred texts. All four movement have had significant impact on social and political processes in India, Pakistan and

[1] Professor Riaz Hassan is Visiting Research Professor at the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), an autonomous research institute at the National University of Singapore; Director, International Centre for Muslim and non-Muslim Understanding, University of South Australia, Adelaide (Australia); and Emeritus Professor of Sociology, Flinders University. He can be contacted at isasriaz@nus.edu.sg and riaz.hassan@flinders.edu.au.

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Bangladesh, some of which are highlighted in the paper. The paper concludes by suggesting that religious fundamentalist movements are new form of traditionalisms. These movements use tools of modern science and technology to advance their goals but reject some of the key features of modernity such as secular rationality, individualism, religious and cultural pluralism and tolerance.

Religious fundamentalism resists easy definition. The American Academy of Arts and Sciences in its seminal five volume exploration describes fundamentalism as: A tendency found within all religious communities which manifests itself as a strategy adopted or sought by beleaguered believers to preserve the authenticity of their religious identity as a group. Feeling this identity to be at risk in the contemporary era they fortify it by resorting to a selective retrieval of doctrines, beliefs and practices from a sacred past. These retrieved 'fundamentals' are refined, modified, and sanctioned in a spirit of shrewd and contrived pragmatism to serve as a bulwark against the perceived threats to their identity emanating from the surrounding cultural milieus. These fundamentals are accompanied in the religious portfolio by unprecedented claims and doctrinal innovations. By the strength of these innovations and the new supporting doctrines, the retrieved and updated fundamentals seek to regain the same charismatic intensity by which they originally forged communal identity from the formative revelatory religious experiences of the past. (Marty and Appleby 1991:835-36)

Thus the most important attribute of modern religious fundamentalism movements is that their genesis lies in the social, political and cultural changes posed by modernity. Modernity is a code word for a set of forces that fundamentalists perceive as the threat requiring response and reactions. The defining character of modern societies is that they privilege doubt and reason and not conviction and truth. More specifically, modernity invariably entails a preference for secular rationality, religious tolerance and cultural pluralism with accompanying tendencies towards relativism and individualism. From this perspective, fundamentalisms are forms of new traditionalisms. Fundamentalists do not reject all features of modernity. They in fact use tools of modern science and technology to advance their goals but reject the key ideological features of modernity, namely: secular rationality, religious tolerance, individualism, cultural pluralism and relativism. This paper will outline the social, political and cultural conditions underlying the rise of Hindu and Muslim fundamentalists in South Asia. It will focus on their character, ideological features and political influences and conclude with a discussion of their impact on regional integration.

The Genesis of Hindu Fundamentalisms in South Asia

The Muslim conquest and subsequent establishment of the Mughal Empire in the Indian subcontinent in 1526 and its eventual demise in 1857, followed by the British Raj from 1858 to 1947, were two cataclysmic traumas for the indigenous inhabitants and their leaders and rulers. Islam had arrived in India three centuries before the establishment of the Mughal rule. It was brought to India by the Sufi missionaries in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The Hindu society of the time was structured along caste lines. Hindus with their complex caste system have been historically aware of themselves not as a single religious group, but as many discrete communities living together in various states of domination, cooperation and distanced alienation (Nizami 1957:64). The low-caste workers and artisans were treated as outcasts in the deeply hierarchal caste system. They were deprived of all amenities of civic life and not allowed to stay in cities after sunset. They could not recite the Hindu holy texts and were denied access to the temples (1).

In contrast, the centres of Muslim life were the Sufi shrines called the khanqahs. They were egalitarian and non-discriminatory organisations. It was perhaps for this reason that many early khanqahs were sited outside or near caste cities in the midst of the lower caste Hindu populations (Nizami 1957:64). The unassuming ways of the Muslim mystics, their human sympathies and the classless atmospheres of khanqahs attracted low-caste untouchable, indigenous inhabitants to their fold. In khanqahs they found social and religious organizations free of discrimination and the distinction of Hindu society. Visitors and residents of khanqahs lived, slept and ate together. At the same time the practice of Islam also began to absorb some of the local customs and traditions to lay the foundation for a distinct character of South Asian Islamic tradition distinct from Arab and Persian traditions.

The social organization of the khanqahs had a profound effect. It influenced the rise of the Hindu reformist movements such as Bhakti in fourteenth century. The religious leadership of the Bhakti movement came from the lower strata of Hindu society which has been deeply influenced by Muslim mystics and their khanqahs. Many saints of the Bhakti movement had passed some time in a khanqah. The history of the development and spread of Islam in fact runs parallel to the growth and expansion of khanqah organizations. Since people belonging to different religions and regions, and speaking different languages, assembled in khanqahs this became the birth place of the Urdu language spoken by the mystics and their devotees (Nizami 1957).

The ideological impact of Islamic ideals and their practice in the Indian context had another profound impact. In juxtaposition to the Hindu society of the time, Islamic ideals were remarkably 'modern'. By various obvious criteria – universalism, scripturalism, spiritual egalitarianism, the extension of full participation in the sacred community (not to one, or some, but to all), and the rational systemization of social life – Islam encapsulated the ideals of 'modernity'. Some centuries later these ideals were to be supplemented by more ideals of modernity, namely secular pluralism and an organic notion of nationhood by the British when they replaced the Mughal rule and established the British Empire in India. It may have taken centuries for the ideals of modernity, secular pluralism and nationhood to gestate in the Indian context but they were to have a profound impact on the rise of two of the most powerful and enduring Hindu fundamentalist movements: Arya Samaj and Rashtriya Svayamsevak Sangh, commonly abbreviated as RSS. These two movements have deeply shaped and influenced the Indian political, cultural and religious milieus in the succeeding centuries but especially in the past two.

Arya Samaj

The term 'Arya' refers to all Indo-Aryans who settled in the Indian subcontinent in the second millennium and brought with them the revered Hindu Vedic scriptures. Arya Samaj, literally the 'society of Aryas', arose in Mumbai in 1875 as a religious movement seeking to reform ancient Hindu doctrines and practices. Its founder, Swami Dayananda Sarasvati, was born in 1824 into a well-to-do Brahman family in rural Gujarat. As a young person he began to question the ritual validity of Hinduism practiced by his family. He left his family and, after leading the life of a holy man as a Swami, Dayananda concluded that the gods and godesses of Hinduism were mere figments of the human imagination. The true divinity was the invisible one known to the seers of the Vedic sacred texts and worshiped through pristine rituals whose secret Dayananda claimed he had discovered (Rai 1915; Baird 1981).

Dayananda's teaching laid the foundation for Arya Samaj as a religious reform movement among the upper caste Hindus in the 19th Century. But as a Hindu reform movement, the Arya Samaj had a precursor in the Brahmo Samaj movement of Bengali aristocracy in the middle of the nineteenth century that offered a religion compatible with Western rational thought. Dayananda invoked over two thousand years old golden era of Vedas, and urged that revitalization of the Hindu community should be rooted in a revitalization of the Vedic texts. Thus, crucial to the foundation of the Arya Samaj was the idea of reviving the ancient Vedic

canon for building the modern Hindu nation as an organ of Hindu nationalism during the political tensions of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Among the important doctrinal rules drawn from the Vedas and affirmed by Dayananda, the first three asserted that God the creator is the source of all knowledge and the Vedas are the books of all knowledge which the Aryas should read. Most Aryas shared a conviction that Hinduism needed reform to be able to meet the challenges of the modern world successfully. They differed, however, with regard to how drastic that reform should be and what its primary personal, political and social direction should be (Jones, 1981; Baird 1981; Gold 1991; Kopf 1979).

The Arya Samaj found its greatest support among the educated classes of the Punjab and northern India. This region had large Muslim and Sikh populations. It grew rapidly and established an extensive network of educational institutions. With the Arya Samaj, organised Hinduism became solidly established among upper middle classes – bourgeoisie professionals and merchants. At its core, Arya Samaj was and is a nativist reform movement, with a distinct Hindu identity grounded in a specific vision of the fundamentals of Vedic tradition.

In the early twentieth century, Arya leaders were instrumental in the establishment of the All India Hindu Mahsabha which nurtured the growth of the RSS. Through Hindu Mahasabha, the Arya Samaj and the RSS find historical continuity as Hindu communal movements. This period also coincided with the outbreak of communal violence between Muslims and Hindus in India. The Aryas were active both in communal causes and the independence movement. Maintaining the distinction between religion and culture, its leaders began to assert that the Arya Samaj has a 'double mission'. On the one hand it is a world religion based on the ancient Vedas, with its moral precepts applying to all humanity without distinction of creed or colour, and offering the best solutions to the world's difficulties. On the other hand, it has a special obligation to the Hindus; the people who have from time memorial believed in the teachings of the Vedas. In this respect the mission of the Arya Samaj is national, with strong concerns for communal Hindu unity (Rai 1915).

The Arya Samaj thus shares a core belief with Hindu fundamentalists of all persuasions about the unity and primacy of a broadly-based Hindu community rooted in the national culture of the subcontinent and incorporating all Indic religions including Islam, Christianity and Sikhism. Being a good Hindu does not depend on what individuals think or what scripture they revere, but it depends on what they do and on proper interaction with both human and divine beings.

To counter the caste and religious diversity the Arya doctrine enunciated that individuals are born into groups and each has a special role, and there is no superior or inferior hierarchy

among groups. It is through these well-ordered and well-defined divisions that Hindu society becomes an organic whole. Furthermore, divisions of caste and religion can be overcome through ancient rites of purifications to reclaim Indians lost to Islam or Christianity and caste groups. According to the Aryas unlike Hinduism, Christianity, Islam and Sikhism were proselytizing religions with active mechanisms for conversion. The conversion of indigenous populations to these religions was a form of defilement by association with impure outsiders. These past defilements could be rectified through the ancient rites of purifications to bring them back into the organic Hindu nation.

This practice became a source of simmering communal tensions and conversion of Muslims led to widespread violence. The Aryas regarded all religions as offshoots of Hinduism except Islam. This hostility was on display with the publication of 'Rangila Rasul' which focused on the Prophet Muhammad's sexual exploits. This evoked a violent response from Muslims leading to the murder of Swami Shraddhananada in 1926 by an Indian Muslim. Since Indian independence, Aryas have continued to make converts from non-Hindu groups, although they have become a sedate affair. But the central tenet still holds that Muslims and Christians should not remain fully culturally apart from the body of the Hindu nation. They should instead become fully integrated into the national Hindu culture.

The Arya Samaj appears not as a cohesive, broadly based organization but as an ardent vanguard of a national reform movement. Not all Arya beliefs and practices are universally accepted by all Hindus, nor their stance toward the Hindu community, especially their disdainful rejection of image worship. But some of the Arya reforms have received wide acceptance. They pioneered the practice of Hindu conversion and this has become widely accepted even by the orthodox Hindus. Because of their popularity among educated Hindu groups, Aryas remain in the forefront of communal affairs. Since the Indian independence Arya Samaj has become not only an Indian but a global Hindu movement, with a membership of millions. Members of Arya Samaj adhere to what they perceive to be the pristine traditions of the ancient Vedic texts and reject much of the later Hindu tradition as degenerate practice that is best forgotten. In this respect the Arya Samaj presents one of the closest parallels to Christian and Muslim fundamentalist movements (Gold 1991).

The rise of Arya Samaj also coincided with the emergence of Rashtriya Svayamsevak Sangh or RSS. The RSS emerged as a vision of an individual political activist for Hindu cultural renewal through personal discipline. The two movements present contrasting assertions of Hindu identity. The RSS was grounded in cultural and national loyalties. Arya Samaj was a national

reform movement of Hindus seeking internalisation of the traditions of the ancient Vedic texts. Both arose as narrowly based sectarian organizations and were transformed into mass movements encompassing wide segments of Hindu populations.

Rashtriya Svayamsevak Sangh

Like the Arya Samaj, the genesis of Rashtriya Svayamsevak Sangh, or RSS as it is commonly known, is also intertwined with the challenges posed by religious diversity and foreign political domination. It emerged during the period of political tensions of the early twentieth century as a movement of Hindu cultural renewal and national loyalties through personal discipline. It was the vision of an English language-educated, individual political activist Keshavrao Baliram Hedgewar, a physician by profession.

Hedgewar believed that what Hindus needed was communal discipline and cultural revitalization to counter the challenges of political domination and subordination. He was deeply influenced by the writings of the radical and well-known revolutionary V.D. Savarkar, the author of *Hindutva*. The name Rashtriya Svayamsevak Sangh literally means the 'National Union of Volunteers'. Its members do not regard it as a Hindu religious organisation, but rather a Hindu cultural organisation. However, the vast majority are followers of conventional Hinduism. Its top leaders are Maharastrian Brahmans but its greatest strength and support base lie among the lower-middle classes who see its mission and activities as an enrichment of conventional Hindu life and a pathway to upward social mobility. One of its members assassinated Gandhi. While the founder of the Arya Samaj sought revitalization of the Hindu community through the Vedic texts, Hedgewar looked not to the Vedic scriptures but to the legends of Shivaji, the 17th century Maharastrian hero, the son of a military officer of peasant origins, who led a successful revolt against the Mughal emperor Aurungzeb (Gold 1991; Savarkar 1969).

The two ideological pillars of RSS drawn from Savarkar's are: Hindurastra (Hindu Nation) and Hindutva (Hinduness or Hindudom). The idea of Hindurastra stands in stark contrast to the idea of a pluralistic, territorially defined political entity of secular nationalists enshrined in the Indian constitution. According to RSS ideologues, the modern Western idea of nation does not do justice to the ancient glory of the indigenous, numerically dominant Hindu population of the Indian subcontinent. The culture of the Hindu Nation developed and covered the area of greater India - from the Himalayas to the southern seas stretching from Iran to Singapore. The

subcontinent is their motherland, and Hinduness is the quality of their national culture (Golwalker 1966; Savarkar 1969; Gold 1991; Ahmad, I. 2009).

One of the defining features of Hinduness is that, in addition to the religion of orthodox Brahmans, it has given birth to the religions of Jains, Sikhs and Buddhists and therefore they are all Hindus. This notion thus distinguishes the Hindu Nation from the orthodox Hinduism that acknowledges the authority of the Vedas by including all Indic religions. The RSS regards Muslims and Christians as non-Indic and thus foreign religious elements in the Indian subcontinent which rightfully belongs only to Hindus. Hindus should, therefore, actively strive to reject this alien dominance. They have done so in the past and should renew their struggle to do so again in order to reclaim the glory of their homeland. For the RSS, the idea of Hinduism as national culture justifies the logic of calling itself a Hindu cultural organization while in fact promoting the culture of the Hindu Nation. This broad-based notion of Hindu community rooted in the subcontinent and incorporating the spirit of all Indic religions is the foundational belief of RSS as well as of all Hindu fundamentalists. The idea of an organic Hindu Nation is also consistent with caste hierarchy where different castes serve their complementary functions (Gold 199). While the RSS preaches against caste pride through slogans like 'One well, one temple, one crematorium', it does not actively seek to abolish the institution of caste.

The RSS is a hierarchal organisation. While the authority in the organisation emanates from the centre, its vital strength lies in the branches called *Sakhas*. It is estimated that nationwide it has over 40,000 branches. The *Sakhas* are neighbourhood organizations of Hindu men and boys divided by age groups but with a median age under 25. The recruitment starts at a young age, with social attention given to boys aged twelve to fifteen. The volunteers meet once a day for an hour of games and training in Indian and martial arts and finishing with a prayer to the motherland. The activities at *Sakhas* are called sadhana; a term meaning personal religious practice like worship or meditation, which is understood to shape the volunteer's character. The institution of local organizers in RSS is modelled after that of renunciates in Hindu society. They are generally young unmarried men in their twenties. They are expected to abandon family ties and pursuit of material wealth and live an ascetic life. They receive no pay but are provided with support to perform their activities by the local branch. Although many Hindus approve of its nation-building, more are suspicious of its ideological mission. Liberals see it as a fascist organisation that wants to take over the country and demote all non-Hindus to second class citizenship (Gold 1991; Curran 1951; Anderson and Damle 1987; Malkani 1980).

The bonding experience offered by the RSS is only between males. Women are not permitted membership in the organisation except in smaller, informal groups. The physical contact between sexes at *Sakha* is regarded counter to Hindu norms. Part of the success of the RSS is that it does offer a moderately egalitarian vision of Hindu society. Furthermore, RSS workers are known for their polite and conciliatory manners. These features have made the RSS attractive, especially among the lower castes Hindus. However, the paradox of the RSS, like the other fundamentalist movements, is that within their own larger traditions they are in fact distinct minorities, attempting to shape the majority after their own ideals and image.

For the RSS ideologues like Golwalker, the foreign elements – and by that he meant Muslims and Christians – had two courses open to them: either merge themselves in the national race and adopt its culture, or live in the country at the 'sweet will of the national race', wholly subordinated to the Hindu Nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges and no citizenship rights. This he thought was the only way for them to experience a common sense of belonging as the Hindus do. If after fulfilling these requirements anybody still wants to follow their faith, they are free to follow it as Hindu Muslims or Hindu Christians (Golwalker 1939). Golwalker was impressed by the examples of European fascism claiming that Germany has shown 'how well-nigh impossible it is for races and cultures, having differences going back to the roots, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindustan to learn and profit by' (ibid p35).

Rashtriya Svayamsevak Sangh and Politics

According to Subramanian Swamy, an eminent economist-turned Indian politician and a lifelong devotee of the RSS, the RSS has always been less pro-Hindu than anti-Muslim. Other commentators have also suggested that the raison d'etre of the RSS is the assiduous cultivation of hatred for the 'other'. The RSS's active involvement in the destruction of the 16th century Barbri Mosque in the town of Ayodhya in 1992, which resulted in the deaths of over 2000 people following demolition of the mosque in the communal riots between Hindus and Muslims throughout India, lends support to Subramaniam Swamy's claim about the RSS stance. The RSS claims to be a religio-cultual organisation, but it exerts an active influence on national life by maintaining unofficial links with a host of civil society groups including students groups, labour unions and professional organisations.

The RSS and Arya Samaj both have lent support to influence specific government policies. Despite its claims that it is non-political, the RSS has been known to be a political affiliate of two political parties: the Bharatiya Jan Sangh or Jana Sangh, and its successor the Bharatiya Janata Party or the BJP, now the ruling party in India. The names of both parties have the same meaning: The Indian People's Party. The political ideologies of the BJP are consistent with the RSS ideology. The official philosophy of the BJP is 'integral humanism', meaning indigenous economic development that puts the human being as centre stage, self-reliance and Indigenisation. It is committed to the Hindutva and the ideology of cultural nationalism favouring Indian cultures over westernization, which theoretically extends to all Indians but in reality it is an ideology which recast India as a Hindu country to the exclusion of others religions, making it a Hindu nationalist party.

Its prominent national leaders, L K Advani, A B Vajpayee and the current Prime Minster of India Narendra Modi, have risen from the ranks of RSS pracharaks (organisers). The idea of Hindutva, meaning 'Hinduness' or 'Hindudom', stands in sharp contrast to the idea of a composite, political entity of secular nationalists defined by territory and enshrined in Indian constitution. The RSS members are actively involved in Hindu revival organizations such as the Vishva Hindu Parishad – the 'World Hindu Society'. The BJP government is seeking to revise the school textbooks, described by its critics as an attempt to 'saffronise' Indian history. It also supports a uniform civil code that will apply a common set of personal laws to every citizen regardless of their personal religion. These are all consistent with the RSS Hindutva ideology. The BJP and the RSS also maintain close ties with other like-minded parties such as Shiv Sena. Since the BJP election there has been a visible and significant increase in religious intolerance leading to violence against minorities (See 'Against the Dying of the Light', *The Week*, November 2015).

Some commentators have openly claimed that the BJP government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has reached an agreement with the RSS to allow it to implement its cultural policy. According to one of India's most respected scholars of interethnic relations:

> The arrangement that Modi has struck with the RSS — implicitly or explicitly — is becoming obvious. He has surrendered culture and education to them, while keeping foreign and economic policy to himself. If he thought this arrangement would ensure a peaceful equilibrium, it has not happened. The cultural right, represented most of all by the RSS, now threatens to overwhelm the economic right. Is Modi afraid of the RSS or does he, even after taking a constitutional oath, continue to be an RSS ideologue at heart? Those who only looked at the economic right component of Modi's political persona are beginning to wonder. They should have known better.

> When Modi came to power, an entire ecosystem was empowered, including the cultural right. When you do that, the outcome remains uncertain. For the "thuggish" cultural right to be reined in, there has to be resolute action from the top. Unless Modi speaks in a forthright constitutional manner, the cultural right will keep coming back, receding only temporarily. An *andarooni ishara* (internal hint), expressing disapproval, may not do. (Ashutosh Varshney 2015).

As mentioned in the above observation by Varshney, ascendancy of the BJP to power has galvanised cultural policies of the RSS and its sister organisations like VSP. One plank of their policy involves politicisation of the ethnic and religious diversity of Indian population. The RSS has been agitating against the rising proportion of Muslims in the population. Under pressure from the RSS and its allied organisations, the previous UPA government did not release the 2011 Indian census figures related to the religious composition of Indian population until 2015. Why did the Indian government delay the release of the population data for four years? One plausible answer is that the previous UPA government was seen as 'pro-minorities/-Muslims' and did not want the BJP to politically exploit the religious composition data showing a decline in the Hindu and an increase in the Muslim proportion in the population. The political support base of the Congress-led UPA government is/was among people who can be described as the 'Indian Nationalists'. They are comprised disproportionately of rural, SCs/STs, OBC castes, poorly educated, agricultural labour, semiskilled, skilled, Muslims and Christians. Whereas the political support base of the BJP-led NDA government can be described as 'Hindu Nationalist' comprising disproportionately of urban, more educated, business, white-collar professional Hindus and Sikhs of upper caste and class backgrounds (CSDS 2004 cited in Mitra 2011: 251).

Given that the Hindu nationalist fervour is becoming a potent force in India, the UPA government's reluctance to release the religious composition of India's population makes political sense. Nationalism and fundamentalism are primarily intellectual projects and are strongly influenced by education, urbanization and rising economic aspirations. With all these factors gaining momentum in India, the 'Hindu nationalism' is gaining ascendancy. The release of the Census 2011 religious composition data by the BJP-led NDA government would appear to be politically and sociologically expedient to consolidate political support among its core constituency. It also feeds into the movements such as 'Ghar Vapsi' spearheaded by BJP-affiliated groups such as Vishva Hindu Parishad (VSP) and Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) and their offshoots. The Ghar Vapsi movement is portrayed not as a conversion program but as a 'purification' ceremony for bringing home Christians and Muslims minorities seen as polluting the majority Hindu population. It is also an overt strategy of communal polarization

using religion as a tool for boosting majoritarianism (Teltumbde 2015; Katju 2015; Herdia 2015).

Above all, movements like 'Ghar Vapsi' are demeaning and humiliating strategies seeking to devalue and deny Muslims and Christians the 'authenticity' of their religious identities. The everyday degradations; experiences of discrimination and repression; the sense of collective grievances; violation of culturally grounded codes of identity; the economic and social dislocations, ghettoization, anxiety and helplessness – these are powerful ways to inflict humiliation. Humiliation is a complex and intense emotional personal experience when historically and culturally grounded definitions or perceptions of self-worth, self-respect and dignity are destroyed and revealed as apparently false and illegitimate affectations. They create feelings of lowered self-respect, which in turn inspire a willingness to obey the humiliating authority, or overt rebellion or simmering resentment. Some political theorists argue that humiliation is one of the principal modern modes of maintaining social order and hierarchy and go so far as to suggest that it is becoming ever more prevalent (Saurette 2006; Miller 1993).

Humiliation has been labelled as the central vice of modern societies. The prominent Israeli political philosopher Avishai Margalit argues that modern institutions play a central role in the generation of a feeling of humiliation. Humiliation arises from the maltreatment of people by society's institutions. A society whose institutions practice this could not be a decent and good society. Margalit describes a decent society as one in which its institutions do not humiliate its citizens, and a civilised society is one in which citizens do not humiliate each other (Margalit 1996).

The available evidence suggests that discrimination, marginalization, ghettoization and humiliation are potent ingredients for the rise of radical political movements (Hassan 2011). If such developments materialise they will pose a serious challenge to the Indian democracy and would have not only national but global ramifications. The Indian state and its political infrastructure have been relatively successful in countering challenges presented by the diversity of its population. India thus has the capacity and the ability to deal with these new challenges given the political and collective will.

Islamic Religious Fundamentalism in South Asia

The genesis of Islamic fundamentalism in South Asia shares many features with the rise of Hindu fundamentalism described above but it also has several distinct features. Firstly, while

Muslims of the subcontinent were confronted with the challenges arising from loss of political power, colonialism and modernity, they also faced additional challenges posed by their demography and the nature of South Asian popular Islam. In terms of demography, although Muslims had ruled India for several centuries they remained a demographic minority, accounting for around 20 percent of the subcontinent population until its partition in 1947. Secondly, South Asian Islam had evolved its own distinct character by combining Islamic and local traditions.

Islam was brought to the subcontinent between 7th and 11th Century byArab traders and invaders but its spread in India largely followed the arrivals of Muslim mystic-Sufi saints in the thirteenth century after the destruction of the Islamic Empire by the Mongols (Arnold 1961; Schimmel 1980; Eaton 1978; Nizami 1955). The Sufi response to these conditions was to mobilise spiritual power and apply it to the regeneration of Muslim society. The world was divided into spiritual territories and different Sufi orders took up the responsibilities for revitalising spiritual life of their respective territories. Muslim mysticism reached India almost simultaneously with the foundation of the Delhi Sultanate through the mystic orders of Chisttiyya and Suhrawardiyya. In the fourteenth century these orders were well established, with extensive networks of khanqahs (Nizami 1955; Arnold 1961; Hassan 2013).

Khanqahs were Sufi shrines where the mystic resided with his devotees. As noted earlier, they were egalitarian and non-discriminatory organisations. The dominant ethos of the khanqahs was that its residents should establish cordial relations with the common people and maintain an ascetic life. They should concern themselves with God through prayers and meditation. Khanqahs became an important institution of Muslim and non-Muslim life in medieval India. Besides spiritual, they performed educational, social welfare and cultural functions.

The unassuming ways of the Muslim mystics, their human sympathies and the non-discriminatory, classless atmospheres of khanqahs attracted low-caste untouchable, indigenous inhabitants to their fold. Visitors and residents of khanqahs lived, slept and ate together. At the same time the practice of Islam also began to absorb some of the local customs and traditions to lay the foundation for a distinct character of South Asian Islamic tradition distinct from Arab and Persian traditions. Consequently the Sufi-Mystic Islam of khanqahs and the shrines became the centre of the popular tradition of Islam practiced by the vast majority of the subcontinent Muslims who resided in the countryside. It was characterised by the pir-murid paradigm and not the scripturalistic Islam of the city based ulema-Islamic scholars (Hasan 1987; Mayer 1967).

Ernest Gellner's characterisation of these two traditions of Islam aptly describes South Asian Islam. According to Gellner the most important feature of Islam is its internal divide between the high Islam of scholars and the folk or popular Islam of the people. High Islam is primarily urban and folk Islam primarily tribal and rural. High Islam is carried by the urban scholars recruited largely from the trading and bourgeoisie classes and reflects the natural tastes and values of urban middle classes. Those values include orders, rule observance, sobriety and learning along with an aversion to superstition, hysteria and emotional excess. High Islam stresses the severely monotheistic nature of Islam, is mindful of the prohibition of claiming mediation between God and individual, and is oriented towards puritanism and scripturalism. Folk or popular Islam is superstitious and mediationist. It stresses magic more than learning and ecstasy more than rule observance. Common people encounter writing mainly in the form of amulets and manipulative magic. Far from voiding mediation, folk Islam is centred on it. Its most characteristic institution is the saint cult, in which the saint is more often living than dead. This form of faith generally is known as the religious brotherhood of Sufi orders (Gellner 1983).

In the South Asian context both traditions performed valuable functions for their followers. The Popular or Folk Islam of saints (pirs) and shrines pervaded the countryside, providing a valuable service to its followers by mediating between groups, facilitating social and economic exchanges and providing symbolism that allows rustics to identify enthusiastically with a scriptural religion. The Folk tradition through its ecstatic rituals provides the poor with an escape from their miserable conditions. High Islam provides the urban populations, and to some extent the whole society, with its charter and constitution entrenched by the sacred texts, which can mobilise resistance against an unjust state. The two traditions coexisted in a symbiotic but tense relationship.

Muslim Responses to Colonialism, Modernity and Hybridity

The conditions of colonialism, powerlessness and economic backwardness of Indian Muslims gave rise to two broad responses which had a powerful influence in shaping Muslim fundamentalism. These are Apologetics and Salafism.

Apologetics: The loss of political power, colonialism and European dominance was accompanied by a culture of Orientalism: an assumption of Western superiority combined with a condescending trivialization of Islamic cultural achievements. The onslaught of these processes led not only to a loss of power by political and religious elites but also to the

devaluation and depreciation of Islamic beliefs and institutions. The dominant intellectual response of Muslims to this challenge from around the middle of the 18th century came from the apologetics. The apologetic approach was an impressive and elegant attempt to offer interpretations and construct meanings about this challenge.

Apologetics attempted to defend and salvage Islamic beliefs and traditions by simultaneously emphasizing the compatibility between Islam and modernity and adopting pietistic fictions about the supremacy of Islamic traditions. Such fictions eschewed any critical evaluation of Islamic traditions and celebrated the presumed perfection of Islam. A key argument of apologists was that most meritorious and worthwhile modern institutions were in fact invented by Islam. Islam liberated women, created democracy, endorsed pluralism, protected human rights and introduced social welfare long before these institutions ever existed in the West. One implication of this was that, since Islam had invented most modern institutions, there was no incentive to engage in any further thinking or analysis, except on very marginal issues.

Apologists embraced the idea of resisting the destructive effects of modernity and Western and Hindu hegemony, affirming self-worth and attaining a measure of emotional empowerment. The main effect of their efforts, however, was to contribute to a sense of intellectual self-sufficiency which often descended into a moral arrogance similar to that displayed by the orientalists. The apologists produced an arrogant culture that eschewed self-critical and introspective insight, instead embracing fantasy and projecting blame as a way of instilling self-confidence.

The decline of traditional institutions of Islamic learning and authority under the yoke of colonialism virtually ensured the irrelevance of true Islamic intellectuals. By undermining the authority and authenticity of Islamic institutions, this disintegration produced an intellectual vacuum. Under these conditions, virtually any Muslim could regard himself or herself as an authoritative spokesperson for Islamic tradition. Using the rhetoric of apologetics, these self-proclaimed experts, whose knowledge of Islamic tradition and law was very superficial, sought to position themselves as authorities in Islamic theology and law by proclaiming such vacuities as ‘the Islamic world is backward and powerless because it is devoid of the practice of true Islam’. Such symbolism, driven by the desire to overcome a pervasive sense of powerlessness in the face of Western political and cultural hegemony, became a means of voicing nationalistic aspirations for political, social and cultural independence. Islam thus came to be seen as a kind of anti-colonialist resistance ideology capable of restoring Muslim pride and political power. Political liberation anchored itself in a religious orientation that was puritanical, supremacist

and opportunistic. The Pakistan movement came out of this kind of consciousness. The second broad response can be described as Salafism.

Salafism: Salafism was an intellectual response that developed to fruition under colonial but largely under post-colonial conditions. It self-consciously blamed Muslim leaders for Muslim backwardness. Salafism maintained that Muslims ought to return to the original pristine textual sources of the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet and interpret them in the light of modern needs and demands without being slavishly bound by the interpretive precedents of earlier Muslim generations. In this respect, it was a distinctive intellectual project. Salafism advocated a kind of mindset in which anyone was qualified to return to the divine texts and interpret their messages.

A great impetus for the rise of Salafism came from Muslim intellectuals who were influenced by the tradition of apologetics and who were eager to argue that modern developments such as democracy, constitutionalism and socialism were embedded in the foundational texts of Islam. Salafi intellectuals were more interested in demonstrating that Islam was compatible with modernity than in maintaining the integrity of the juristic tradition and method. Salafi ideology concerned itself with making Islam into a political force that might transform the *ummah* (the universal community of Muslims) and with providing a solid basis for Islamic identity in the Muslim struggle against colonialism, neo-colonialism and the underdevelopment of Islamic lands. As a result, it became essentially a part of Muslim identity and identity politics.

Salafis imagined a golden age of Islam, a historical utopia they claimed was entirely retrievable and reproducible. It remained uninterested in critical historical inquiry and responded to the challenge of modernity by retreating to the secure haven of the sacred texts. Salafism placed such strong emphasis on the self-sufficiency of Islam that their viewpoint bordered on arrogance, and the egalitarianism and anti-elitism they advocated was so extreme that rational enquiry and intellectualism were viewed as corruptions of the purity of Islam.

Two fundamentalist movements in South Asia which encapsulate these two forms of Muslim religious and intellectual consciousness are: Jamaat-i-Islami and the Tablighi Jamaat. These two movements represent two very different approaches to Islamic revivalism in South Asia. Their ideological rhetoric corresponds to the mindsets of Salafism and Apologists respectively. The Jamaat-i-Islami's main emphasis is on the resacralization of political and the establishment of an Islamic state with the Quran and Sunna as its constitution and the sharia as its basic law. The Tablighi movement focuses its activities on the moral and spiritual uplift of their followers,

asking no critical stance on the issues facing the Muslim community and urging them to fulfil their religious obligations irrespective of the character of the state.

Jamaat-i-Islami

By the nineteenth century, most of the Muslim countries had come under the colonial rule of European powers following a steady decline in their intellectual and material capabilities. Colonial rule had dual effects on the Muslim community in South Asia as elsewhere. It subjugated Muslims politically and shook their self-confidence as people who had dominated the subcontinent politically for several centuries. For Muslims of South Asia there was an additional dilemma. Despite ruling the subcontinent for several centuries demographically, they still were a minority. The loss of political power to the British was a devastating blow to their historically grounded sense of cultural and political superiority. Another unsettling reality was that their Hindu compatriots were making significant advances politically and economically by their readiness to acquire Western education, which was opening up new professional opportunities in the economy and society.

The first and seemingly instinctive response of Muslims was to withdraw from the mainstream of contemporary developments and seek respite in Islam's past glory. They clung tenaciously to the history and memory of a brilliant civilization which for them at least was irreplaceable by anything the west had to offer. The main concern of a great many orthodox ulema from theological seminaries like the Deoband was to safeguard and preserve the normative and institutional structures of traditions from the aggressive onslaught of Western ideas and institutions. To achieve this, the ulema set up a network of madrasas throughout the subcontinent to preserve the purity of the tradition. Soon the Deoband seminary became the centre for the reassertion of Sunni orthodoxy and a focus of conservative opposition to modern Western thought and institutions (Hay and Qureshi 1958; Ahmad 1999; Ahmad, I. 2009).

While the majority sought the security in the memory of past achievements of Islamic civilizations and Islamic texts, a small number did light the modernist flame but they had limited impact. They were unable to counter the fundamentalist Muslims who advocated for self-assertive Islamic nationalism and the promise of recapturing the pristine purity and political glory of Islam. Many fundamentalists were indigenous Muslims who were well informed about the Western ideas to confront them but who remained rooted in their own heritage. They were defenders of Islam against the inroads of foreign political and intellectual domination. Maulana

Abul Ala Maududi, the founder of Jamaat-i-Islami, was one of the most definitive representatives of them.

Malulana Adul Ala Maududi (1903-79) is regarded as one of the most important and influential Islamic thinkers of the 20th century. He was an eminent Islamic scholar and public intellectual, a prolific writer, dynamic orator and a skilled politician. Born into an upper middle class family in Hyderabad (India), Maududi was educated at home under the supervision of his father – a lawyer who had given up the law practice because it did not accord with his religious beliefs. He distrusted both the English medium schools as well as the traditional Islamic madrasas. At home young Maududi received excellent groundings in Islamic theology and languages including Arabic, Persian, Urdu and English. He began his public career as a journalist/writer in 1920 before turning to Islamic studies covering areas from Islamic law to exegesis of the Quran, and was a critic of modern Western thoughts and political movements (For works on Mududui's influence see: Zebiri 1998; Nasr 1996; Ahmad, I. 2009).

In 1941 Maududi founded the Jamaat-i-Islami or the JI and within a short time it became the prime representative of Islamic fundamentalism and revivalism in South Asia. The JI was critical of conservative ulema and their essentialized notions of Islam focusing on the five pillars (2). Since its foundation the JI has been at the forefront of movements of Islamic resurgence. It is one of the most organised and disciplined religio-political organizations in the world. It is a tightly organised cadre party along the lines of European fascist/communist parties. Maududi was impressed not by their ideals but by their methods and organisational strategies. The JI strategy for gaining power is similar to Lenin's strategy of vangaurdism. The JI stressed the need for awakening the Islamic consciousness of the masses from without through a tightly organised cadre party. The core ideas of JI include: a. A desire to restore Nizam-e-Islam – the original teachings of the Quran and Sunna – and re-create the socio-religious system established under the guidance of the Prophet and the first four caliphs; b. Rejection of later innovations in Islamic theology and law that evolved during the periods of empires; c. Unlike the conservative ulema the JI upholds the right to *ijtihad* (the process of deriving the laws of the shari'ah from its sources.) and fresh thinking on matters not directly covered in the teachings of the Quran and Sunna; d. For JI Islam is not only a religion but a complete way of life covering the entire spectrum of human activity; e. JI rejects all practices associated with folk/popular Sufi Islam; f. Unlike the conservative ulema and the modernists, the JI as a fundamentalist movement is primarily a political rather than religio-intelllectual movement (Ahmad 1991).

In order to achieve its objectives the JI set out the following five programmes for itself:

1. To construct human thought in the light of the ideas, values and principles derived from divine guidance;
2. To 'reform and purify' individual members of society so as to enable them to develop a truly Islamic personality;
3. To organise these individuals under the leadership of the Jamaat and to prepare and train them to invite humanity to the path of Islam;
4. To take all possible steps to reform and reconstruct the society and its institutions in accordance with the teaching of Islam;
5. To bring about a revolution in the political leadership of society, reorganising political and socioeconomic life on Islamic lines and, finally, to establish an Islamic state.

Maududi was not in favour of the creation of Pakistan because he believed that, as a universal ideology, Islam is not compatible with the idea of the nation-state and Muslim nationalism. He was also critical of the Islamic character of the leadership of the Muslim league. He was equally critical of the ulema of the Deoband School who supported the Indian National congress and espoused the case of territorial nationalism and secular democracy. This opposition of Maududi to the creation of Pakistan became an enduring embarrassment for the JI and its founding leader. In 1947 Muadudi moved to Pakistan. Besides Pakistan, the JI now has a presence in India and Bangladesh.

In Pakistan the JI has had the greatest impact. It has been successful in getting the Objectives Resolution incorporating a key demand of JI that "sovereignty over the universe belongs to God Almighty alone and the authority which He had delegated to the state through its people for being exercised within limits prescribed by Him". It also succeeded in opposing the Ayub government for introducing innovation through laws such as the family law, which it deemed un-Islamic. It continued its opposition to the socialist agenda of the ZA Bhutto's government. But these successes did not translate into electoral successes. In almost all national elections, the JI did not succeed in obtaining a small fraction of the popular vote. But its fortunes changed with the regime of General Zia Ul Haq. Zia's Islamization program was lifted directly from the writings of the Maududi and the JI's blueprint for making Pakistan and the Islamic state (Hassan 1985; Ahmad 1991).

Islamization and the Rise of Sectarian Militancy in Pakistan

After assuming power through a military coup in 1977, General Mohammad Zia ul Haq embarked on an Islamization program. Lacking political support from the country's main political parties, Zia turned to Islamic parties, mainly the Jamaat-i-Islami, to legitimise his martial law administration. In return he adopted the Jamaat's Islamization program of institutional reform and introduction of shariah (Islamic law) in the country. The main aim of this program was to enhance the role of the state in giving direction to the religious discourse in the country (Abbas 2005; Hassan 1985). Zia was also attracted to the Islamization program because it suited his own religious background and personal inclinations.

The Islamization program claimed to manifest a universal Islamic vision, but in reality it was based on a narrow interpretation of Islamic theology and law propounded by the orthodox Sunni Deobandi-Hanafi school and consequently was vigorously opposed by the Shias. Buoyed with pride from the Iranian Revolution of 1979, Pakistani Shias, constituting around 20 per cent of the population, asserted the validity of their own religious interpretations. The Shias were deeply suspicious of the Islamization program and saw it as a threat to their social position and religious status. In fact, the program produced a siege mentality among the Shias and led to their rejection of Sunni prescriptions in matters of religious conduct such as laws pertaining to inheritance and *zakat* (tax for the poor) (Nasr 2002).

In the face of ardent Shia opposition, Zia's regime capitulated and granted Shias exemption from all those aspects of the Islamization program that contravened Shia law. The capitulation to Shia demands was seen by Zia's Sunni political allies, including the Jamaat-e-Islami, as nothing short of constricting their vision of a universal Islamic state based on Sunni theology. This perception exacerbated the latent sectarian divisions in Pakistani society and paved the way for the rise of militant sectarian organisations, such as Sunni Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) or Pakistan's Army of the Prophet's Companions. Established in 1985, the organisation was dedicated to the physical elimination of the Shias. The organization was established under the name Anjuman Sipah-i-Sahaba (ASS) but when they realised what the acronym meant in English, the name was changed to Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan. Sunni Terhrik (Sunni Movement), Tehrik Nifaz Shariat-i-Muhammadi (Movement for the Protection of Mohammad's Religious Law), Laskhar-e-Jhangvi (Jhangvi Army), Laskhar-e-Taiba (the Army of the Pure), the Shia Tehrik-i-Jafaria Pakistan (Pakistan's Shia Movement) and Sipah-i-Muhammad (Army of Mohammad).

Over time these organizations splintered into various groups and became involved in sectarian violence to safeguard and assert the interests of their respective communities. Zia's Islamization policies politicised sectarian religious identities in Pakistan and gave rise to sectarian activism and violence, including suicide bombing (Nasr 2002; Abbas 2005; Hassan 2010). Except for the Shia Sipah-i-Mohammad Pakistan, all main militant sectarian organizations are of orthodox Sunni-Deobandi-Wahhabi theological persuasion.

Another significant development arising from the Islamization policies was the privileging of the orthodox and puritanical sects Deobandis and Ahle Hadees. These had close theological affinity to Wahhabism and their political parties, Jamaat-e-Islami and Jamiat-e-Ulema-i-Islam, and received funding and government patronage at the expense of the moderate Sufi sect, the Barelvi, which represented folk or popular Islam still practiced by vast masses in Pakistan. The government patronage sought to strengthen the orthodox Sunni institutions by providing government funds to their existing madrasas and for the establishment of the new ones. Zia's government saw the expansion of the orthodox madrasa sector as an instrument of entrenching Sunni identity in the public sector, especially in government institutions. The madrasas and their students were part of the government strategy to contain Shia political activism and the political and geostrategic threat of Shia Islamism, which was linked to the Islamic revolution in Iran (Nasr 2002; Malik 1989; Abbas 2005).

This policy accelerated the growth of madrasas across Pakistan. The number of madrasa students (who mainly come from poorer backgrounds) increased from approximately 100,000 in 1975 to 570,000 in 1998. Many madrasas began to provide their students with military training combining sectarian vigilance with a jihadist outlook (Nasr 2002: 90). Consequently this led to a serious escalation in sectarian, especially Shia-Sunni violence, in Pakistan. Since 1990 sectarian organizations have started to employ suicide bombing as a weapon in terrorising and killing their opponents. The sectarianism received a further boost from the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in 1979.

The Hudood Laws in Pakistan

The Islamization policy introduced a series of laws known as the Hudood Ordinances, governing offences against property, consumption of intoxicants, *zina* (fornication and adultery) and *qazf* (bearing false witness). In Islamic jurisprudence, *hudood* refers to punishments prescribed by the Qur'an or Sunnah. The policy was presented as necessary to fulfil one of the

fundamental obligations of the Islamic state to create a just and equal society. But behind these platitudes, however, the real reason was to bolster the regime's legitimacy among the Pakistani masses, and they were widely regarded as a cynical attempt to exploit the common people's devotion to Islam.

The Hudood ordinance regarding *zina* covers fornication, adultery, rape, kidnapping, abducting or inducing a woman to commit illicit sex or compelling her to marry against her will, enticement or detention of a woman with criminal intent and the selling or buying of a person for purposes of prostitution. The law provides *hudd* punishments that are fixed, and the rules of evidence are stringent. It requires the confession of the accused before a competent court, or evidence of four pious adult male Muslim witnesses. Non-Muslim males can be witnesses only when the accused is a non-Muslim. Such evidentiary rules clearly discriminate against women and non-Muslims.

Under the laws that existed before the introduction of the Hudood laws, premarital sex was a crime only in the case of adulterous sex between a married woman and man; it carried a punishment of five years imprisonment or a fine or both. The crime of adultery was bailable. Complaints of adultery could be made only by the husband of a woman or, in his absence, by someone who had care of such a woman on his behalf. Women could not be punished and, if the complainant chose to drop the charges, criminal proceedings against the accused were stopped.
After the Hudood laws were implemented, the situation changed fundamentally. These laws have converted *zina* from an offence against an individual to one against the state. Anyone can make a complaint against anybody else, and the police are authorized to initiate a criminal case. The accused individuals are considered guilty until proven innocent, and both the woman and her male partner are liable to punishment.

In a society like Pakistan, with its deeply embedded patriarchal beliefs and attitudes, the Hudood laws in general and the law pertaining to *zina* in particular have been widely and recklessly abused. In particular, they have become an instrument of oppression against women. As long as only the husband could register the case and only the male accused could be punished for adultery, husbands were reluctant to prosecute in order to save or protect their family honour. The Hudood laws have become a tool used to victimize and humiliate women. A man accused by a woman of sexual assault or rape frequently escapes prosecution by simply swearing innocence on the Qur'an and the woman, particularly if she is pregnant, then faces the full weight of the *zina* law. The vast majority of *zina* allegations are either false or based on

suspicion. True, a large majority of *hudood* cases in the superior courts have been decided in favour of the women involved, but only after the accused has suffered long periods of incarceration and humiliation while awaiting trial.

The supposed Islamization of the Pakistan Penal Code did not stop with laws that disadvantaged women. Between 1980 and 1986, Zia's regime made five amendments to the Code that introduced new punishments for blasphemy and insulting the sentiments of Muslims. Thousands of people, especially from religious minorities, have been imprisoned under these laws. Many have committed suicide, and others, even after having been acquitted by the courts of any wrongdoing, have had to flee the country for their own safety. In early 2011, Salman Taseer, governor of Pakistan's most populous province Punjab, was assassinated by one of his bodyguards for his opposition to blasphemy laws and for supporting a Pakistani Christian woman who has been jailed under the Blasphemy laws. Amidst widespread mourning for the governor there were people who publicly announced that his death was a punishment for insulting Islam. Within weeks of his assassination, the country's Minister for Minority Affairs Shahbaz Bhatti, a Christian, was shot dead by gunmen also for his opposition to blasphemy laws. Pakistani media, especially the Urdu media, played a very provocative role. Instead of providing proper context and infusing awareness about the law and its misuse, it catered to religious passions by giving credence to the extremist views that Taseer was a blasphemer who deserved to be punished by death, and portrayed his murderer as a hero and defender of Islam (Hassan 2013).

The Hudood laws and their successors have severely eroded and undermined the constitutional guarantees of life and liberty for all citizens. Instead of protecting 'honour, life and the fundamental rights of a citizen', these laws have become instruments of oppression. They have made adultery or fornication—a consensual act between two adults—a crime against the state. At the same time, they too often redefine rape—in reality a non-consensual, violent act *against* women—into a consensual act *initiated* by women, since a woman who is unable to prove that she has been raped opens herself to prosecution for adultery. The complainant thus becomes subject to *hudd* punishments.

Since the promulgation of the Zina Ordinance, allegations of *zina*, instead of declining, have increased dramatically. *Zina* cases now run into thousands. In some places, they constitute the majority of cases dealt with by the police. The Hudood laws, far from creating a just and equal society, have succeeded only in imprisoning half of the country's population 'in a web of barbaric laws and customs'. According to some Islamic scholars, the introduction of these laws

represents an ugly blot on the divine purity of Islamic doctrine. In a carefully researched book, Dr Mohammad Tufail Hashmi, a well-known Pakistani Islamic scholar, argues that, in conferring supposed 'divine' status on the Islamic *hudd* laws as well as on supporting laws laid out in the Pakistan Penal Code, the Hudood Ordinances violate the sanctity of the divinely ordained laws of Islam. They also convey a flawed and unworthy image of Islam to the world. In Islamic juristic tradition, punishing an innocent is a greater and more serious sin than acquitting a guilty person (Hashmi 2004).

Conflict of conscience in contemporary Pakistan: The legacy of Islamization

The cases and consequences described above are symptomatic of a deep conflict within the religious and social conscience of Muslims in Pakistan today. While these practices and laws do not enjoy universal acceptance, the fact that a significant proportion of Pakistani Muslims at least tolerates them indicates a troubling level of moral lethargy. It is also important to emphasize that the examples described above coexist with a pervasive sense of common humanity, kindness and genuine concern for the well-being of others and the underprivileged. One only needs to reflect on the outpouring of generous financial assistance provided by ordinary Muslims and the personal anguish and sympathy they felt for the victims of the December 2004 Asian tsunami, which devastated Aceh and the destruction wreaked by the 2005 South Asian earthquake in Pakistan. Other examples of generosity and a genuine concern for the well-being of the underprivileged can be found in the institution of *waqf* (charitable trusts). Spread across Pakistan and the Muslim world and numbering in the thousands, the *waqf* deliver educational, health and welfare services to millions of poor people.

Then there is the celebrated Islamic institution of *zakat* (obligatory charitable giving), through which billions of rupees are raised in Pakistan each year and applied to the well-being of impoverished and disadvantaged Muslims. In addition, there are countless privately funded non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the country working to promote activities ranging from the advancement of human rights to caring for the welfare of the disadvantaged.

Do the laws and practices described above negate not only the humanitarian traditions of Islam but also the essential message of the Qur'an, which enjoins believers to establish a viable social order on earth that will be just and ethically based? Only the most deluded or self-absorbed Muslims could remain unconcerned by the sheer quantity and ugliness of the incidents

described earlier. The hudood and blasphemy laws of Pakistan, the seriously flawed judicial system and the rampant oppression of women and the poor (who are the main victims of the hudood ordinances and other similar laws) cannot be attributed to an aberrational fanaticism considered marginal and unrepresentative. The evidence suggests instead a pattern of abusive practice. All these suggest a very mixed legacy of Jamaat -i-Islami for Pakistan and its people.

The Tablighi Jamaat

The Tablighi Jamaat as a missionary movement is one of the most successful grassroots movements in the Indian subcontinent. It was also a product of rising communal conflicts and consciousness and political struggles of the early 20th Century between the colonial rulers and indigenous populations of the subcontinent. It began as *da'wa* or Muslim missionary movement in 1926 in Mewat in Northern India as an initiative of a non-political, relatively uncharismatic religious scholar Maulana Muhammad IIyas (1885-1944). From its very modest beginnings it has now become one of largest *da'wa* movements in the world. This is reflected in the fact that its annual conference at its Pakistani headquarters at Raiwind near Lahore attracts over a million followers, making it the second largest gathering of Muslims after the Hajj in the world. Its influence has reached millions of people throughout the Muslim world.

An important but often unacknowledged fact about Islam in the subcontinent is its syncretic character. The Muslim peasants who had been converted to Islam long ago had retained much of their Hindu past. Many even kept their Hindu names. Their birth, marriage, and death rituals and other social customs were governed by local customs rather than by sharia and had very little to do with orthodox Islam. They were in many ways like the Indonesian Abangan Muslims studied by Clifford Geertz. They venerated saints and followed a host of magical and superstitious beliefs shared by Muslims and Hindus. They had very little knowledge of basic Islamic doctrines and most of them lived in villages which had no mosque or religious school.

The emergence of religious and communal tensions in the beginning of the twentieth century had given rise to right-wing Hindu revivalist movements like *shuddi* (purification) and *sangathan* (consolidation) influenced by the RSS and Arya Samaj. These movements sought to convert the so-called 'fallen away' Hindus who had converted to Islam in the past. The Tablighi movement was a response to these militant Hindu missionary movements. Its main goal was to 'purify' these nominal Muslims from their Hindu accretions and to educate them about their

Islamic belief and practices so that they would not become an easy prey to the Hindu proselytisers. Its aims was not to convert non-Muslims but make 'better' and 'purer' Muslims under the slogan '*Ae Musalmane Muslaman Bano'* (Oh, you Muslim, be good Muslim).

The strategy to achieve this mission Maulana Ilyas followed was not through establishing the madrasas, which he found ineffective and unproductive, but through organising mobile units of ten or more persons and sending them to various villages. These taglighi units visited villages and asked local people to assemble in mosques or other suitable meeting places to hear their message (Ahmad 1991).

Their message focused on submission to God's commands, regular observance of *nimaz* (prayer); learning basic teachings of Islam and doing zikr (ritual remembrance of Allah); being respectful and polite to fellow Muslims; taking time away from worldly pursuits for forty days to preach Islam to others; and inculcating honesty and sincerity of purpose in their endeavours. Hundreds and thousands of groups were organised and sent to every village in Mewat. These efforts delivered the desired results, with a majority of local people becoming practicing Muslims. The secret of the Jamaat's success lay in its direct, simple, and personal appeal as well as the limited religious demands which it made on Muslims. Another feature accounting for its success is the Tablighi Jamaat's workers itinerancy. Itinerant preaching has been a hallmark of the Jamaat and also the most important factors in its growth. The small tablighi units developed strong psychological bonds with each other based on their shared religious experiences. They became fertile training grounds for training aspiring laymen from all walks of life.

In its theological approach, the Tablighi Jamaat followed the Deobandi orthodoxy in many areas including segregation and exclusion of women. It rejected the key features of Popular or Folk Islam such as veneration of saints and shrines and observing rituals associated with Sufism. It also rejected modernist ideas propagated by the JI. Notwithstanding this orthodoxy, it is not against secular education. This approach is consistent with the TJ ideology that reform of the society must begin with the individual and not at the levels of political structures or the state. Consequently the TJ does not involve itself in issues of political significance. Unlike the Jamaat-i-Islamic TJ has always remained aloof and indifferent from the divisive socio-political issues in Pakistan and India. As a result most Pakistani governments and even Indian governments have indirectly facilitated and even patronised TJ missionary activities. In this regard the critics of TJ, especially those from the JI, have been its vociferous critics for its political apathy in conflicts around the introduction of an Islamic constitution in Pakistan, the

communal riots in India in 1970s and 1980s, agitation against the Ahamdiya and the JI-spearheaded movement for the introduction of Nizam-e-Mustafa in Pakistan. And they accused Tablighi Jamaat of lending support to the secularization policies of Pakistani governments. But the TJ considers political neutrality as an asset in its *da'wa* work. The TJ's apolitical stance has been attributed to the trauma of the partition of India – and the religious and ethnic carnage and dislocation of millions of people that followed it – and to the politicization of politics by the JI.

The leaders of TJ have justified its apolitical stance on the grounds that, firstly, religion is a personal and private matter of the individual and, secondly, politics is a morally inferior activity and hence not worthy of the time, energy and efforts of an Islamic movement. It regards the propagation of religion among the masses as a much higher level of *ibada* or worship. This stance of TJ has delivered important dividends because it has been allowed to pursue and expand its missionary work unimpeded in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and internationally. At the same time, however, the individuals influenced by the TJ's work have the opportunity to exercise their choice in the political domain of their respective countries.

In Pakistan, the Brelvi ulema and their political party the Jamiyat Ulma-i-Pakistan have been its vocal critics. They have accused the TJ of being the hidden face of the Wahabi ideas of the Deoband School. The Brelvi Islam is the TJ's main adversary in rural areas and small towns of India and Pakistan. The puritanical and reformist zeal of Tabilighi workers is regarded as a threat to the Popular and Folk Islam of the Brelvi School. Consequently they have written extensively against the TJ. The TJ assemblies are completely banned in the Brelvi mosques. In recent times, some of the Tablighi ulema have also been mired in controversy with the shite ulema for being vehement critics of the Islamic revolution in Iran and accusing the Iranians leaders for sowing the seeds of dissension within the umma and weakening solidarity amongst the Islamic world. Historically, the collusion between the Islamic ulema and the Muslim ruling elites prevented penetration of orthodox Islam among the masses of Indian Muslims. The Tablighi movement is the most important attempt to bridge the gap between orthodox Islam and the popular syncretic Islam prevalent among the Muslim masses. And this development has not received universal approval from the religious leaders which is contributing to a heightening of sectarian conflicts in Pakistan (Ahmad 1991, Hassan 1985)

Concluding Remarks

Religious fundamentalism is a distinctive tendency of mind and a pattern of behaviour found within modern religious communities and embodied in certain representative individuals and movements. It is a religious way of being that manifests itself as a strategy or strategies by beleaguered believers to preserve the authenticity of their identity as a people or group. Feeling this identity to be at risk, fundamentalists fortify it by resorting to a selective retrieval of doctrines, beliefs and practices from sacred past as well as modern times. This renewed religious identity becomes the exclusive and absolute basis for a recreated political and social order. Their endeavours to establish the religious and political order relies on charismatic and authoritative leadership.

There are numerous fundamentalist movements in South Asia but this paper has focused only on four main movements namely: the Arya Samaj, Rashtriya Svayamsevak Sangh or the RSS, Jamaat-i- Islami and Tablighi Jamaat. The first two are Hindu and the last two Muslim. The genesis of these movements lies mainly in the challenge posed by political and cultural subordination, nationalism, modernity and colonialism. The Arya Samaj and the Jamaat-i-Islami are elitist movements led by intellectuals and seeking to reform and remodel the society from the top using the sanctity and authority of the sacred texts. The RSS and the Tablighi Jamaat are grass root mass movements seeking to reform individuals as agents of religious revival and change. All four movements have had significant impact on the social and political structures and political processes in India and Pakistan. Some of these achievements have been highlighted in the paper.

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Notes:

1. This account is based on Nizami (1957). For a detailed account of caste system and conditions of Hindu society in India in the 11th century, see *Albreuni's India* (English translation by E. Sachau 1910). Accounts of the status and position of workers in Hindu society given by Alberuni is borne out by *Manu,* Chapter x, section 51-55)

2. Shahadah: sincerely reciting the Muslim profession of faith; Salat: performing ritual prayers in the proper way five times each day; Zakat: paying an alms (or charity) tax to benefit the poor and the needy; Fasting during the month of Ramadan, Hajj: pilgrimage to Mecca.

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