THE INVISIBLE HAND OF THE INDIC

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Scholars have thoroughly reexamined the nature of the secular, noting that the secular is, as Talal Asad writes, "neither continuous with the religious that supposedly preceded it (that is, it is not the latest phase of a sacred origin) nor a simple break from it (that is, it is not the opposite, an essence that excludes the sacred)" (2003, 25).[1] Instead, Asad has asked us to consider how the secular functions as a "concept that brings together certain behaviors, knowledges, and sensibilities in modern life" even while remaining unstable in both form and origin (25). Though recognizing the constitutive nature of the secular in shaping our world, scholars of South Asia have also drawn our attention to different habitations of the secular in South Asia, which, some argue, provide a source for an ethical mode of being in the subcontinent (Bhargava 1998). Others, however, argue that the secular dismantles the possibility for, what Ashis Nandy terms "the religious basis of ethnic tolerance in India" (1995, 52). These contestations about the meaning and malleability of the "secular" and its grammar have created a conceptual muddle, which is further entrenched by what scholars term "a crisis of secularism" in South Asia. This crisis is most visible, scholars argue, in the Hindu majoritarianism of the Indian nation-state.

These contestations, however, though varied and fraught with ambiguity, often stipulate that history become the ground from which claims are adjudicated. Or, as Saba Mahmood poignantly argues, "secularity flattens religious incommensurability, forcing religious traditions to confront one another in the uniform space of history, all equally vulnerable to the questioning power of the secular" (207).[2] In this uniform space of contextualization and recovery, there have emerged two distinct histories of South Asia, one, the communal, that emphasizes discrete communities and, the other, the secular, that emphasizes

fuzziness. In these histories, Neeladri Bhattacharya explains, "Where communal historians can only see the hard lines of the boundaries that separate communities, secular historians have emphasized the porosity and open-endedness of these boundaries (58). Where communal historians look at the communities as homogenous and unitary, secular historians point to the heterogeneity and fragmentation within them."

But scholars have drawn our attention to another central aspect of communal histories in the present. Communal histories do not simply disavow historical heterogeneity. Instead advocates for Hindutva, supporters of Hindu nationalism, also mobilize the emphasis on porosity, accommodation, and open-endedness to make claims about Hindu superiority. Therefore, though Bhattacharya is quite correct to note that "communal histories of India are premised on one fundamental assumption: that India is a society fractured into two overarching religious communities—Hindus and Muslims" that are "not only separate and distinct but also irreconcilably opposed," we also find communal histories foregrounding Hinduism's assimilative and accommodative capacities that are rejected by Islamic orthodoxy (58).[3] In other words, Hindu nationalists also gesture toward tolerant plurality through historicity, rather than simply functioning in contradistinction to any singular secular or religious "essence."[4]

To rearticulate, Hinduism and Islam are presumed to be irreconcilably opposed not because they have different boundaries. Instead, as the argument goes, Islam refuses heterogeneity in its cultivation of authoritative coherence. This production of coherence in a unified tradition then is considered foreign to a decidedly fragmented and complex religious terrain—an Indic world to which Hinduism is autochthonous. The Indic is the Hindu home. In this sense, as Christophe Jaffrelot argues, Hinduism is constituted by a "strategic syncretism," which collapses and constructs distinctions not only theologically but through historical claims lauding Hinduism's tolerant capacity (2011, 58).[5] Or, as Peter van der Veer notes, "both radical Hindus and their opponents claim that Indian culture is basically tolerant because it is pluralistic" and, in so doing, both create a total harmonious economy, a history of the Indic (1994c, 209). This mirroring points us to an essential aspect of the Indic—that even though this claim is deployed in different ways, it is premised on an initial plurality, the absence of

limits and boundaries, for which both sides then strive to account, either through Hinduism or Indian culture. This gesture forecloses the possibility of alterity in an all-inclusive hold under a singular albeit fragmented Indic form.

This essay attempts to mutate our thoughts and questions in relation to the Indic by considering divergent interventions in South Asian history of religions. This is not to say I examine the Indic only as a discursive formation; rather, I explore the Indic as an operation—located in space, as a practice and a discourse.[6] I argue the use of the Indic is not the typical essentialist nationalist narrative in which the Indic is the base to imagine a positive entity of the nation against the chaos of a fluid grouping. That is, the Indic is not an essence, "a unitary self and singular will"; it eludes easy definition as a cypher and therefore lends itself to ubiquitous scholarly usage.[7] But I want to argue that the deployment of the Indic still produces a foundational myth of the subcontinent, a narrative of relation, through the appropriation of the absence of a relation itself. Put another way, the Indic sutures the gap of its own impossibility by claiming plurality, fluidity, and complexity. This proclaimed complexity secures the Indic, rather than bringing the very concept into question. The Indic cannot be challenged or abolished because its very failure, its own impossibility, provides endless grounds for autochthonic self-renewal.

I begin by explaining this premise of relation and absence of relation through the work of Alenka Zupančič and Slavoj Žižek. But my question is concerned not only with the functioning of the Indic but also with how the Indic both produces and accounts for its own exclusions and inconsistencies. I argue that the Indic produces religious orthodoxy as a *generic* problem, which, in turn, fortifies the Indic's own harmonic functioning. I do not argue that orthodoxy in general needs to be redeemed, nor do I uphold a sacred victim. Rather, I argue that considering the specificity of cohering an orthodoxy pushes us toward the question of contradiction, limit, and failure. Grappling with the possibility of failure, the political is a contested question, requiring struggle, rather than a problem to be foreclosed through an appropriation of non-relation. Foreclosure is central to the Indic's inclusive governance since it incorporates contestations in a preexisting historical frame that constitutes tradition and its institutions—debates, for example, central to orthodoxy—into an always already defined mediation.

Then I turn to the question of the historical, since historical context is a central ground from which the Indic mediates. History, as well, is a discourse and practice embedded in a space, which, I argue, mirrors the Indic form—accounting for the possibility of a gap while first positing it. Therefore, methodologically, there are key continuities in relation to secular and "nonsecular" histories both of which generate complexity and heterogeneity as a required answer to historical analysis, which, paradoxically, annihilates the possibility of difference—an understanding then mirrored in analyses of Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism in the present. Then, I examine this point by considering the use of Indic in relation to these traditions by exploring a strand of post-Orientalist, postcolonial scholarship. I highlight the conceptual premises in the work of Elaine Fisher, Shahab Ahmed, Arvind Mandair, and Ashis Nandy in order to consider the inclusive range of the Indic as a site to account for non-relation. I demonstrate how this operation works through an invisible mediating point of the Indic, in which fluidity is posited and then a higher synthesis, the Indic, accounts for that very non-relation.

WHAT IS INDIC?

The Indic mediating point appears through a twofold procedure. First, scholars note that the relationship between religions, a religious Relation, does *not* exist in the subcontinent, that tradition is fluid, not closed, and without limits.[8] There is no base, which, in turn, undermines the notion of total and discrete traditions existing within defined contours. But then we get the second operative move, that this non-relation is constituted by a historically defined, inclusive, and complex Indic context—the Invisible Hand of the Indic, which becomes a higher Relation. This mediating point, in its variety of incarnations, tells us a relation does not exist between religion, that religions of the Indic are internally disrupted, and that the Indic, which includes the Hindu, Islamic, and so forth depending on how one wishes to redeem it or oneself, accounts for this very non-relation through its self-regulatory and complex tendencies. In so doing, the Indic stabilizes conflict and contradiction in a wide range of analyses while utilizing the constitutive negativity that is, as Alenka Zupančič argues, "at the very core of the social order" (26).

Following Jacques Lacan, Slavoj Žižek has drawn our attention to how "*il y a du non-rapport (sexuel)*" [There is a non-relationship] is not a variation on the "old motif of the eternal conflict between sexes" but signals a fundamental difference, or deadlock, that "precedes the two sexes" (2012, 796). But neither is the non-relation simply preventive or oppositional to a relationship. Instead, it is the structuring principle that allows the relationship to exist. Therefore, as Alenka Zupančič clarifies, "The non-relation gives, dictates the conditions of, what ties us, which is to say that it is not a simple, indifferent absence, but an absence that curves and determines the structure with which it appears" (24). In other words, as Zupančič continues, "the non-relation is not the opposite of the relationship, it is the inherent (il)logic (a fundamental 'antagonism')" that structures existing and possible relationships—which are themselves only messy attempts to suture this gap, the non-relation (24).[9]

The Lacanian notion of "There is a non-relationship" is not simply about sex or sexuality. Instead, it develops, as Zupančič argues, a mode to think about how different social ties and discourses are dictated by drawing our attention to a fundamental impasse of being (22). The form of our social order is absent; it is marked by a non-relation. There are multiple ways to provide stability to this absence, to suture the gap. Whereas most authoritarian social orders in the promise of harmony, Zupančič writes, "aim to abolish the non-relation (and replace it with a Relation)," there are also narratives of the Relation that are premised on exploiting the non-relation rather than simply eliminating it (30). That is, Zupančič continues, "Power—and particularly modern forms of power—works by first appropriating a fundamental negativity of the symbolic order, its constitutive non-relation, while building it into a narrative of a higher Relation" (31). The famous example Zupančič provides is of capitalism. It has, Zupančič contends, two revolutionary ideas: "'The economic Relation does not exist' and 'the non-relation could be very profitable'" (31). As Adam Smith and other economists challenged the mercantile doctrine of a closed economic totality, that there is no relation, this non-relation became narrated into a higher Relation: the invisible hand of the market, which promises profit and inclusion for all in spontaneous moral order.[10]

To explain even further, the question is about the circular logic of economy. As Jacques Derrida famously notes, "economy implies the idea of exchange, of circulation, of return," which is marred by its own

unassimilable elements, its own interruptions and divisions (1992, 6).[11] In Christian theology, the gap in economy is between an omnipotent and omniscient God and the world, which is closed by an understanding of Christ's incarnation (God as immanent and transcendent, God as sovereign coupled with a Divine administrator). In the Enlightenment, the problem of immanence and transcendence became an epistemological problem between the subject and the world sealed by the promise of knowledge to come (Funkenstein; Agamben; Singh; Rose). And yet there is no irreparable conflict between the two either, for example, since the invisible hand of the market correlates, as Agamben writes, "a transcendent principle with an immanent order"—a totalized, and what remains, a secure theological *and* secular economy (284).

Žižek, Zupančič, and the Slovenian school teach us that the question of economy and its ruptures is not an epistemological one and not between transcendence and immanence but an ontological one that must be conceptualized materially. The subject and world are marked by an inherent trauma, an impossibility at their very core.[12] It is these very gaps that make the ethical possible. As Žižek writes, "The very fact that our lives are forever out of joint, marked by a traumatic imbalance, is what propels us towards permanent creativity," unable to be sutured into a closed economy (2012, 132). The Indic, however, functions to stitch this gap in economy by making its impossibility the very condition for its reconciliation by proclaiming the Indic's porousness, its non-relation. The Indic assimilates all into itself by making its gaps a part of its functioning, thereby fortifying a harmonious economy. It is precisely the appropriation of failure through its proclaimed complexity, rather than its abolishment, that secures the smooth running of the Indic economy. As such, appearing as a congruent totality, the Indic elides its own production—it is both a discourse and a practice that is marred by an inherent impossibility, its own failure.

It is no surprise then that the deployment of the Indic to account for the non-relation mirrors a circuitous political economic relation in the present. The Indic, too, is, as Jean-Pierre Dupuy argues in the economic context, a "spontaneous social order" that regulates itself in which "determinations cannot be anticipated" or ordered—all logics central to capitalist production and its circulatory universality (162). Scholars have indeed called attention to how our historical moment produces a historicity that upholds fluidity and plurality, fundamental

concepts that undergird the Indic. Zygmunt Bauman, for example, demonstrates how a new form of power emerged centered around flows, liquid modernity, that privileges the unmoored. Within liquidity, Bauman explains, "any dense and tight network of social bonds, and particularly a territorially rooted tight network, is an obstacle to be cleared out of the way" (14). In its place, we find fluidity, a labyrinth, that is "the master image of the human condition" in which chance and surprise regulate life (138). Such chance and flow then mask salient categories of analysis such as "work" and "labor" (Sedgewick,143).[13] Put another way, spontaneity, fluidity, and fluctuation, though alluring like the Indic, rather than undermining the regulatory force of current historical moment, fortify its very logic.[14]

But, as Žižek argues, the incompleteness or impossibility that is at core of being is not simply masked (1989). Instead, it is displaced onto an abject threat whose existence prevents an internal harmony, thereby promising a congruent total system once the threat is removed.[15] The Indic, too, even while appropriating non-relation, still produces vast exclusions and inconsistencies. That is, the Indic produces problems. As Ian Hacking reminds us, "philosophical problems are created when the space of possibilities in which we organize our thoughts has mutated" (14). Or, to rephrase, if neoliberalism, as Brown argues, is "a peculiar form of reason that configures all aspects of existence in economic terms," how does this particular form of reason not only inflect into the writing of history, but also create distinctive historical problems? (17)[16] Therefore, rather than simply locating how the Indic works in this conjunction with a fluid logic, my concern is also with the striations within this overflowing form that endeavors for homeostasis and the problems that are produced, not simply masked or pushed aside, in this striving.

Inhabiting this space, we are reminded that though the Indic and the complex relations it foregrounds remain generalizable, it is, to appropriate Gil Anidjar's work, unable to produce a "world of oceans without shores, power without borders, blood without walls" (2014, 30), encountering a limit—a limit that further tightens the need to reinforce as well as continuously recast and redistribute itself as an answer in order to, one day, in its becoming, annihilate the problems it generates. Considering this generalizable Indic: what then of those that impede, those that still sit at the shores, embodying limits to an

engulfing sea of complexity and heterogeneity? What then of those inhabiting limitations, existing as an imposition and violation of a natural spontaneity in a complex social ordering that, in its teleological end, regulates itself?

The elusive Indic, in its multiple guises, functions to produce religious orthodoxy as a *generic* problem, which, in turn, fortifies the Indic's own harmonic functioning.[17] As Talal Asad contends, orthodoxy emerges as an abstract problem because it is presumed that orthodoxy not only "reject[s] any change in the status quo, because refusal to change is the essence of tradition," but also because orthodoxy attempts to cultivate authoritative coherence in relation to difference (1993, 209). But what constitutes this coherence is not so clear. Orthodoxy strives, as Asad writes, "to construct a relation of discursive dominance" within a terrain of disagreement which is not *a priori* tied to obliterating difference as we are often told (210).[18] To quote Asad at length:

> It is too often forgotten that the process of determining orthodoxy in conditions of change and contest includes attempts at achieving discursive coherence, at representing the present within an authoritative narrative that includes positive evaluations of past events and persons. Because such authority is a collaborative achievement between narrator and audience, the former cannot speak in total freedom: there are conceptual and institutional conditions that must be attended to if discourses are to be persuasive. (210)

This attempt at producing a narrative within particular conceptual and institutional conditions, a relation to the Divine, for example, refuses complexity as a historical answer since narrator and audience collaborate through persuasion and rival arguments in order to try and generate authoritative claims about practices in a discordant present.[19] It is this irresolvable struggle at the heart of tradition, in which contradiction does not simply disappear or dissipate but appears as a necessity, that troubles the Indic's required mediation through self-regulation.[20]

That is, our choice, as Zupančič reminds us, is not "between relation and non-relation" in which we abandon the third mediating point to the Indic or to a so-called fundamentalism (26). Instead, Zupančič continues, we must consider the "different kinds of relations (bonds) that are being formed in the discursive space curved by non-relation" in which there exists a twist in the elements themselves (26). Inhabiting this twist, we should refuse the tendency to acknowledge the impossible and then

render it complex, which functions in tandem with, rather than against, the violent harmonious totality of the Indic. The Indic form, too, conceives human life "as (more or less precious) singularities, 'elementary particles,' trying to make our voices heard in a complex, non-totalizable social network'" since it denies, and this is key, negativity in favor of, as we mentioned above, self-regulation and self-reflexivity (26). But neither do we simply accept contradiction against this self-regulation. Instead, we must actively engage the contradiction (72). This is precisely Asad's point. Our goal cannot be to look for harmonious relationships between traditions but must be to think about a discursive tradition in itself and its own dislocations. And, in this view, orthodoxy is a struggle between narrator and population, who actively engage in the contradiction itself, to argue over the meaning about what is essential and necessary to a tradition (Asad 2018, 95).

THE QUESTION OF SECULAR HISTORICITY

History is essential in the use of the Indic (Chatterjee 1992). And history, as Qadri Ismail argues, has two indispensable categories: subject and past (213). With these two cardinal categories, history functions homologously to the Indic. History too posits a foundational gap, a non-relation, between the past and the present, which the historian then accounts for, eliminating the very limit it originally posits by appropriating it—the invisible hand of the historian is the balm. To write history, therefore, as de Certeau argues, is to inter; writing is a tomb. It both honors and eliminates the dead (1988, 101). Or, to return to economy, as Robert Young writes, "History, with a capital H, similarly cannot tolerate otherness or leave it outside its economy of inclusion" (4).[21]

The question then is not whether Hindutva or the secular historians manipulate facts or interpret them more correctly. We need to let go the assumption that good or bad histories give rise to good or bad politics (Scott, 104; Chakrabarty, 97). Rather, the question is about how history functions as representation within a coherent present. [22] Instead of asking who has the better interpretation to secure our present, we must consider: What does history require? How does it operate? How does history itself discipline facts and time even prior to their interpretation? These questions reorient our concern from recoverable

content in a cohered present that accurately represents a corresponding past—a consistent time that promises to fill the gap between past and present, to present a total history. My aim, therefore, is not to demonstrate easy breaks between historical periods, to parse past from present, from an authentic precolonial to inauthentic colonial, which, in turn, offers the possibility of burial and salvation. Instead, I want to consider how the Indic functions in conjunction within already existing operations like history and how there remain impediments to its temporal functioning.

The secular today is central to this historiographical operation. Secular historicity dislocates tradition itself, simultaneously placing tradition within history while making the individual the locus of a possible act. This is so because the secular, Saba Mahmood writes, is most seriously articulated at the level of sensibilities such as the "modern emphasis on individual conscience and experience as the proper locus of religiosity and in the relative diminution of the phenomenal forms of religion (rites, rituals, attire, and scriptures)" (181). Once the individual becomes the central object of investigation, then, as de Certeau writes, "instead of a rational and spiritual interpretation of *tradition*, one seeks observable *fact*" (1988, 132). And, here, history verifies by tracing innovations through individual acts. Individual acts allow the historian to differentiate past and present endlessly while dissociating the acts "from a tradition in order to consider this tradition an object of knowledge" (36). Foregrounding the fact measured through individual intention as the site of religiosity, history's questioning and suspicious tendencies fragment tradition into individual units in time. Arbitrating these individual units into an always complex past, in turn, continuously liberates the past from the contentious site of tradition and, instead, secures it within a cohered present. As we are told, historicize, fragment, and then take account. The question then becomes who best seals a past by bringing it into the dominion of the present.

Claims on the past are authorized. The continual search to bury a past by marking complex conditions and heterogeneous effects historically, therefore, emerges as the authenticating code, which legitimates the claims to tolerance on both sides of the presumed divide between "communal" and "secular" histories as we saw earlier.[23] For this history, and it is singular no matter how complex, takes a very particular form. It first posits a non-relation between past and present,

so the historian can provide an organic unity in their temporal reach. Tying together past and present, accommodations and assimilation flow teleologically to a desired history, upholding, we must recall, "one intricate economic game. One elite-serving apparatus, namely the secular nation-state" (Anidjar 2008, 51). History then, doubling as a prior inchoate Indic as well, is the mediating point for the Indian nation-state, which, as is inscribed on the scarred landscape of South Asia, arbitrates difference in the present.[24] Dangerously, then, in maintaining history, History and the Indic it recovers affirm rather than dislocate inequality. Especially so, since such histories posit a generalized orthodoxy as a problem that does not abide within this complex contextual landscape.

The question then is about history itself rather than its myriad content—about history as an operation rather than the facts it produces. Both Hindutva and secular histories provide enjoyment as a historical promise, a fulfilled and articulable relation between past and present, offered by the historian and their excavation of context. There is, as de Certeau writes about space, a "pleasure of 'seeing the whole,' of looking down on, totalizing the most immoderate of human texts" (1984, 92). In history, this creates an interpretative delirium that seeks to close the gap between an initially posited past and present that dissociates interpretation from tradition.[25] Rather than see this gap itself as an impossibility, the difficult question of inheritance, the historian strives to interpret and thus enjoy the making of history itself. In this enjoyment, the theoretical problem of history dissipates in the production of meaning as both sides mine the past to bury the dead. What is left unanswered, however, is as Young asks, "Why, after all, history at all?" (23).

THE INDOLOGICAL OPERATION

Upholding history and its attendant temporality, therefore, does not unravel this structuring underlying economic logic even though scholars continue to maintain that the historical provides opportunity to challenge virulent nationalist claims. The examples of the tendency to produce a smooth circuitous economy are too numerous to list, and Indic is cathected in variegated ways. Still, I am interested in the unified

interpretative architecture of the Indic—both as practice and as discourse—and its ability to simultaneously posit a non-relation, a lack of boundaries, while asepticizing it, suturing it in its very illusory complexity. Most notably, Sudipta Kaviraj argues that in the precolonial period there were "fuzzy" communities. This does not mean that people did not have a sense of community; rather, it would overlap and create "a lack of clarity of where one's community, or even one's region, ended and another began" (1992, 25). These circles overlapped, refusing neat boundaries. Kaviraj then accounts for this fuzziness, a non-relation, by asserting they are a pre-modern or traditional form of Indian society writ large. Kaviraj writes, "Since colonial authority could not be legitimized in terms of the *constituted common sense of traditional Indian society,* the proper course of action was to try and reconstitute this common sense" by producing enumerated identities (2010, 18).[26]

Here, an important question arises. How is fuzziness non-relation? Or, more precisely, is fuzziness "non-relation," since, one could argue, blurred boundaries do not constitute a non-relation? The key is to recall that the Indic is an appropriation of non-relation and not non-relation as such. It is precisely the undoing of a stable and balanced relationship between discrete enumerated traditions into "unclarity" and "blurring," as Kaviraj writes, that constitutes the appropriation of the non-relation, since the very unclarity becomes codified as a defining feature of, as Kaviraj terms it, an Indian society. The impossibility of a relation, that traditions include twists in themselves, becomes the very premise from which to imagine an Indic totality. This understanding challenges the idea that there are discrete traditions premised on the elimination of non-relation through the enumeration of tradition—a project traceable to the colonial state. Yet, still, blurring and unclarity become the logic of the Indic since the non-relation is appropriated into defining Indian society. In so doing, fuzziness obfuscates and exploits the founding constitutive crack within community (Zupančič, 116).

To return to the economic, though both mercantilism and capitalism are exchange relations, mercantilism is a restricted form of exchange premised on balance. If mercantilism is restricted, capitalism undoes the balanced relationship, appropriating a fundamental non-relation into its very structure though the logic of the market. Kaviraj, too,

undoes the notion of discrete balanced traditions by proclaiming their fuzziness. And, then, this fuzziness, which could also indicate an impossibility, becomes secured through the Indic. Fuzziness, therefore, becomes an appropriation of the non-relation, rather than a denial, that secures the Indic's economic functioning. It produces a fantasy of wholeness that portends indestructibility since it is an appropriation of non-relation itself—indestructible because a gap cannot emerge from within to disrupt the smooth fuzzy flow of things.

Let us see how Kaviraj's ideas are utilized. Elaine Fisher makes great use of Kaviraj's understanding of fuzzy communities and asks us to consider how emic Hindu pluralism, an inclusivist tendency, is "often tarred with the same brush that condemns the sanctioning of communalist violence" since tolerance also became used to consolidate Hindu majoritarianism (192). Against this quick judgment, Fisher foregrounds an "emic religious pluralism, one that is at once neither founded upon universalism or exclusivism, nor modeled as a modular transplant of European civil society" but instead is "a conceptual, and institutional, approach to internal diversity that cannot be reduced to a singular axis of hegemony" (193). To rephrase, Hinduism is too composite to select "any doctrine, practice, or identity as a Hindu 'ideal type'" (194). Though composite, it remains plural, which, Fisher continues, "can be most accurately described not as the absence of conflict but as its effective resolution—a process that in Hindu early modernity was facilitated not by the removal of religion in public, but by its active publicization, by the shared performance of plural religiosities" (27).

Fisher makes her case by appealing not only to Kaviraj, but also to Niklaus Luhmann, the famed theorist of complexity. Fisher notes that a sectarian community within this plural Hinduism mirrors "an autopoietic system, creating and maintaining its doctrines, ritual practices, and modes of religious expression from within its own boundaries" (13). A sectarian community, therefore, functions, in many ways, as an individual cell (13). Nevertheless, Fisher continues, "when viewed macroscopically, the aggregate of such mutually independent systems, whether sects or cells, facilitate the balance of an entire ecosystem— or, as the case may be, an entire society," mirroring, again "discrete biological systems" (14, 98). This complex ecosystem is inherently contingent, refusing ideal types as Fisher brilliantly notes, since it is always producing, one could say, a vibrant history.

For Luhmann, however, the positing of resolution in pluralism would deny the very logic of complexity. Complexity, as he writes, is "not an operation, something that a system does or that happens within it" (1990, 82). It is not, in other words, "the "actual processing of the reproduction of the system" and its attainment of an equilibrium as Fisher presents Hindu pluralism. Instead, Luhmann argues that complexity is "an understanding of observation and description" in order to distinguish and create information (2012, 78). This creation is fundamentally contingent and risks the possibility of an otherwise. It creates a surplus of possibilities, rather than producing historical certainty and continuity of, for example, pluralism. That is, the becoming of non-pluralism is also a possibility since complexity is a way to *describe* what happens, an act of distinguishing for the creation of information (Luhmann 1990, 82). Complexity, consequently, must necessarily refuse resolution, since, as William Rasch explains, "a discipline, any system, which could adequately and finally answer the question it poses for itself would cease to exist" (49). Or, as Luhmann contends, "anything is contingent that is neither necessary nor impossible. The concept is therefore defined by the negation of necessity and impossibility" (1998, 45). Hinduism, put another way, if it is a complex system, must be contingent and, therefore, cannot *necessarily* tend toward pluralism.

Moreover, even if contingent, radical disruption or becoming nothing remains a lingering question not subsumed into the unified ecology, which must perpetuate itself in its overarching transcendent inclusivity mirrored immanently. Neel Ahuja, as well, critiques this logic, like Luhmann's, which "introduce[s] [its] own reductionism by systemizing everything, putting everything into relation despite the possibilities of segregation, expulsion, individuation, or dimensional phase shifts" (xv). Negativity, the impossibility of a coherent historicity, marked by an antagonistic sexual relationship, rather than the fantasy of continuous asexual reproduction, is masked within this ecology (Zupančič). There is no bone in the throat, and, therefore, history flows onto the page as subjects speak without interruption, accumulating a now sealed past. Within this finished history, what Dipesh Chakrabarty terms "a structure of generality," Hinduism—or is it the Indic?—always maintains itself, remaining determined without any sense of determination except that, as Jean-Luc Nancy argues in

relation to our present historicity, it is "a complex, interacting, even unstable network of causalities" (75, 146).

It would seem Islam demonstrates the failure of such histories, requiring that we abandon the extensive reach of this complex history since Islam exists in relation to its transcendent foundation, outside the demands of the complex Indic form. Islam, to rephrase, requires that we consider the cultivation of orthodoxy within the impossible parameters of tradition rather than a plural immanent ecology. Islam would be, then, a problem for the regulatory might of complexity— a point which Hindutva supporters continually make. However, arguments abound that Islam, too, is complex, much like Hinduism, and that Hinduism is not alone in its capacity for assembled diversity. For example, Shahab Ahmed, in his *What Is Islam?*, poses precisely such a conclusion. Ahmed argues that Islam remains an analytical category even while affirming a diversity of meanings without recourse to any "essence" or "religion" (135). This is possible, Ahmed continues, if we foreground Islam's internal contradictions and its expansive ability to incorporate oppositional logics against any singular orthodox position. It is central to discover the "logic of internal contradiction" alongside its "coherent dynamic" (109). This coherence within the contradiction emerges from the engagement with Pre-Text, Text, and Con-Text, which includes a "whole lexicon of meanings that is the product and outcome of previous hermeneutical engagement with Revelation, which are already present in the context of a given time and place as Islam" (435).

In this sense, Islam is complex and constituted by a continuous exploration of its meaning in which the self becomes the authority in this exploratory process. Ahmed argues, in conjunction with our times, that the "historical *bulk* of the normative discursive tradition of Muslims is non-prescriptive and non-orthodoxizing—instead, it is *explorative* of a multiplicity of truths" (285–86). For Ahmed, the lack of any institutional authority comparable to the Church in Christianity means "there is no institution invested with the epistemological authority to affix the imprimatur of religious truth upon a statement and send it forth as such into society" (192). This lack means that, as Ahmed writes, "the discourses encompassed by the phenomenon 'Islam' needs to be expanded to accommodate the capacious historical reality of explorative discourses" (284–85 fn. 84). In other words, this

lack is not structuring as such but rather reveals behind it a wealth of content and context.

This is a mutual explorative process between Muslims and non-Muslims, since, Ahmed claims, "meanings produced by non-Muslims can also be part of a Con-Text" and, moreover, non-Muslim actors can take up "units of meaning from the field of meaning of Islam" and incorporate them into their existence as non-Muslims (444). Indeed, Ahmed forcefully contends, "conceptualizing Islam as meaning-making for the Self in terms of Pre-Text, Text, and Con-Text also enables us to recognize that *all* acts and statements of meaning-making for the Self by Muslims and non-Muslims that are carried out in terms of Islam, that is, in terms of any of Pre-Text, Text, or Con-Text—should properly be understood as Islamic" (544).

By stretching boundaries to this extent, Islamic institutions can be continuously recoded outside prescriptive authority itself, remaining only nominally Islamic, producing more conceptual incoherence. The Hindu Mahasabha in Aligarh, for example, released a Hindu New Year calendar that recoded Mecca as Macceshwar Mahadev temple. Alongside Mecca, the *Times of India* reported, "Madhya Pradesh's Kamal Maula Mosque has been referred to as 'bhojshala' and Kashi's Gyanvyapi mosque has been called the 'Vishwanath temple,' Qutab Minar 'Vishnu Stambh,' Jaunpur's Atala mosque 'Atla devi temple' and the demolished Babri Masjid in Ayodhya as 'Ram Janam Bhoomi'" (Jaiswal). The Mahasabha appealed to history, arguing that "all names mentioned in the calendar have been verified by historian BP Saxena, a retired professor from the history department of Varshney College, Aligarh." Saxena, in turn, argued that "facts can prove beyond doubt that these seven religious heritage sites belong to Hindus," which required their demolition to reveal an original and authentic context hidden below (Jaiswal). Reworded, Saxena was simply trying to procure an ever-elusive primary source to properly adjudicate a historical event—to bring together past and present through a historical investigation of the fact.

Following Ahmed, the Mahasabha is exploring the multiplicity of truths in an Islamic Con-Text, which, in turn, makes such statements Islamic. After all, denying the claims of prescriptive authority opens the terrain of the Islamic tradition to a wide range of nebulous claims that can be adjudicated properly only through a complex historicity that itself refuses to allow for authorizing gestures that do not appeal to

the archive and primary sources. We need only to remember the wide scope of Con-Text Ahmed centers, asking us to consider how "Islam is a process, that it is a process of human discursive and social activity, and that the discourse is characterized by a multiplicity of voices," which includes non-Muslims who engage with that context, for instance, the historical nature of Mecca (297). Alireza Doostdar, then, is correct in pointing to how Ahmed "misses the opportunity to integrate a theory of power into his model: not just of 'prescriptive authority,' as he calls it (which, by the way, cannot be so easily disentangled from the 'explorative authority' that Ahmed valorizes), but also of what Foucault called the productivity of power, how power makes it possible for some jokes to be funny and others to fall flat" (281–82).

Or how power makes it possible for Hindu organizations not only to lay claim over Islamic practice but to discipline and regulate Muslims in order to prescribe their own authoritative historical explorations.[27] History and the interpretation of fact here are not helpful. Hindutva historical investigation enables destruction of the fact as it discovers an even more primal factual source.[28] This is a problem of preservation and its attendant archivization, since history requires evidence for what is given; history requires a separate past to what is a time in which past, present, and future are convivial (El Shakry 2019). Against historicization, then, we would have to think beyond the restraint of proof and interpretation of Con-Text. This is especially important, since Muslims, too, would reject the demand to contextualize Mecca immanently—a demand central to both the secular and Hindutva historian.

Ahmed, however, gives only Islam this incorporative capacity and, therefore, the capacity to be incorporated. This incorporative capacity mirrors the logic of the Indic, except that Ahmed stretches it to a Balkans-to-Bengal Con-Text. For Ahmed, the refrain is: complexity is on our side, upholding Islam, rather than making its claims dubious or a problem within our current historicity. We can think of this through Ahmed's brief encounter with Sikhism. Ahmed asks us to consider Sikh wrestlers, who, before going into the pit to combat, shout "Ya Ali" (445). Ahmed writes, "the Sikh wrestler *gives meaning to his Self by his engagement with the Con-Text of the Revelation of Islam*" and, though he is not Muslim, "his act is *precisely* an Islamic act—it is meaningful in terms of Islam" (445). In this complex space of religious engagement, a process takes place whereby "the Islamic is being made by the Sikh,

and the Sikh is being made by the Islamic" (446). Within the Islamic's incorporative capacity, even the refusal of Islamic revelation by the Sikh Gurus and Sikh institutions, as expanded by Bhai Gurdas in his *Vāran*, the Sikh remains Islamic because of the final judgment arbitrated by complex historical context mediated, in this case, by Islam.

Islam, accordingly, in Ahmed's complex rendering, functions like the Indic, incorporating other traditions into the wider exploratory world of Islam in which boundaries are blurred and inclusive in a wider historical ecosystem that is now an Islamic Con-Text. The dangers are apparent. For example, Ahmed, strangely, follows V. D. Savarkar, the ideological foundation for Hindutva. Savarkar, too, argued, "Sikhs are Hindus in the sense of our definition of Hindutva and not in any religious sense whatever. Religiously they are Sikhs as Jains are Jains, Lingayats are Lingayats, Vaishnavas are Vaishnavas; but all of us racially and nationally and culturally are a polity and a people" (125).[29] Though racializing unlike Ahmed, even though, we must remember, religion and race are co-concealing categories, Savarkar is asking us to consider the broader Con-Text of Hinduism.[30] This Con-Text provides a frame from which to claim Sikhs are Hindus while, simultaneously, Sikhs are Sikhs, repeating the logic Ahmed presents us. Even today, a Hindu nationalist paramilitary organization, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), claims Guru Gobind Singh Ji as its own—though Sikh is Sikh but also Hindu, subsumed historically in the shared and inclusive traditions of Hinduism. In this sense, scholars, in their attempt to combat Hindtuva, have made Islam occupy a similar space—a complex space of interactions and explorations, always producing the conjunctural "and" that incorporates difference into their fold—an Indic economy, now structured through Islam.

Scholars of South Asia have indeed used Ahmed's argument in such a manner. As the argument goes, Islam too works seamlessly in relation to the Indic, since the Indic overwhelms all to reproduce its own harmony. Anand Taneja follows this line of thought, arguing that we can hear whispers of the "long histories of translation that have made Islamic ideas and concepts an indistinguishable part of Indic life and ethos" (9). Taneja continues, "The exemplary life of the Islamic warrior-saint blends seamlessly into the Indic landscape and its ethical world while at the same time transforming both of them" (172). In this analysis, the Indic contains multitudes, incorporating all

seamlessly in its fluid and undulating form—including the Islamic. The relation between traditions is not as such, and the Indic both stabilizes and accounts for it. There is no relation, but it is the Indic. Through this invisible hand of the Indic, we get a higher synthesis, a foundational myth, a pluralistic neutrality, that is both complex and historically justified.[31]

Not to be outdone, of course, scholars of Sikhism have made similar claims. Even in challenges to the fuzzy world, such as the Sikh tradition, the Indic mediates its presence through its continuity, which ends, as with Kaviraj, with colonial rule. Arvind-Pal Mandair, for example, writes that Sikhism functions "in conformity to broadly Indic patterns" (2006, 653). The appearance of the ontological argument during colonial rule, in contrast, demonstrates, Mandair contends, "a fundamental departure from precolonial Indic ontologies and a concomitant accession to the ontology of modernity" (670).[32] Mandair thus is able to trace how Bhai Vir Singh, the famed Sikh scholar, is colonized, since he departs from a prior Indic formation while leaving the Indic formation itself undefined—marked by a non-relation except by noting, Mandair writes, "in the broader Indic context, though there are venerable traditions of analysis and argumentation about the nature and reality of 'God,' all of these traditions differ from the ontological argument as it is known in the West" (669).

Mandair, later on, argues that Sikhism is precisely this Indic form since it provides this mediation between two "disjunctive religious ideologies, practices, and logics (Hinduism and Islam)" (2018, 441). Sikhism, in its original historical form, Mandair continues, "fostered the ability to enable incommensurate traditions / concepts / languages to coexist in close proximity without the need for conflict" (449). This logic was inspired, Mandair argues,

> By statements such as *na koi hindu, na koi musalmān* (No Hindu, No Muslim), an utterance often attributed to Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, which indicated Nanak's desire to associate disjunctive religious ideologies, practices, and logics (Hinduism and Islam). The tenor of this disjunctive affirmation suggests that the two traditions / ideologies could coexist without one replacing or dominating other, or needing to be replaced by a third tradition. (449)

Sikhism, in conclusion, constitutes the real pluralist and, today, decolonial position, which is revealed through its historically defined

orginary moment. As the in-between cell, to continue with our bio-
logical model, Sikhism allows for a passing between what previously
was incommensurable without negation. A negation, which is pre-
sented in the Guru Granth Sahib, *na hum hindu na hum musalmān*,
alongside a rejection of Hindu and Muslim practices such as the hajj
and Tirath Puja, becomes instead only a disjunctive affirmation, a
positivity allowing for the continual mutual reproduction of a com-
plex landscape that had lost its way and brought back through Guru
Nanak's teaching, which we can call *Sikhi*, though perhaps also Hin-
duism and Islam as well.[33] The Indic landscape, once again, is one of
non-contradiction, able to mediate between discrete traditions—as
the Sikh tradition proves.[34]

Critiques of the secular too uphold the complexity of historical
life worlds to challenge the hegemony of nationalist, communal, and
secular sensibilities. Ashis Nandy, for example, famously notes how
Western Man remains the invisible reference point, annihilating other
forms of being by tying religion to a hardened ideology (1990). Nandy,
in contrast, poses to think of "the way a religion can link up different
faiths or ways of life according to its own configurative principles"
(71). These configurative principles are not a set of contestations about
orthodoxy; rather, Nandy points to the "more fluid definition of the
self" that coincides with "religion-as-faith" challenging the secular's
attempt to bind religion to a strong distinct sense of self. Deconstruct-
ing distinct notions of the self, Nandy posits a fluid self, which depends
upon the non-self and anti-selves, that structures the self in South Asia
broadly, remaining irreducible to the secular Western reference point.
This interplay between the self and anti-selves alongside the non-self
provides the ability to consider "a complex self-definition" that is an
appropriate "form of self-definition in South Asia," challenging the dis-
tinctions placed by the secular (73).

At this juncture, Nandy posits another mediating point for the sub-
continent against Western Man: Gandhi. Nandy argues that Gandhi's
anti-secularism demonstrates both a "tolerance of religions but also a
tolerance that is religion" that "locates itself in traditions, outside the
ideological grid of modernity" (91). Then, tellingly, we learn of Gan-
dhi's tolerance—one that is incorporative. Nandy writes, "Gandhi used
to say that he was a *sanatani*, an orthodox Hindu. It was as a *sanatani*
Hindu that he claimed to be simultaneously a Muslim, a Sikh and a
Christian and he granted the same plural identity to those belonging

to other faiths" (91). Nandy continues, "Traditional Hinduism, or rather *sanatan dharma*, was the source of his religious tolerance" (91). Nandy here makes the same gesture of incorporative plurality that we saw earlier through the productive capacities of Hinduism. The orthodox Hindu Gandhi provides opportunity for Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians to be pluralist, recognize the complexity of their self.

Nandy disregards the cultivation of orthodoxy within those traditions and instead reaches a desired end to history itself in the resolved relationship between self, anti-self, and non-self within the subcontinent. Gandhi's Hinduism, therefore, for Nandy, demonstrates indigenous accommodations even while it continually incorporates multiple different forms and traditions—eliminating the possibility of incommensurability.[35] This is the very definition of Indic Civilization to Nandy, who writes that the Indic is "an edifice built on layers of civilizations and a plethora of cultures, it is a confederation of lifestyles and life-support systems. The different strands within it are telescoped into each other, so that none can be described adequately without reference to others" (2005, 543). To understand Islam is to consider Hinduism and vice versa. Refusal is an impossibility; non-relation is appropriated into a higher synthesis of the Indic.

LESS THAN INDIC

Yet this mediation of for the non-relation also requires state intervention to clear the impediments that create obstacles to that self-regulation, as the Indian state's violent incursions in Assam, Kashmir, Punjab, and numerous other examples make clear. And, here, we must pause and recall that it is not just history that mediates through complexity; as Anidjar writes, "the state is another scene, another stage, upon which discursive traditions, collectives of different sorts, vie for recognition and are forced to make themselves into the state's image (2016). But which image, which minority, does the state want?" This is an especially important question since, as Talal Asad teaches us, the nation-state, with its monopoly on legitimate violence, must "establish and maintain a convenient language that includes words and mathematical symbols for enabling its projects," which, I have argued, in the case of India, demands historical plurality and complexity (2018, 142).[36]

To rephrase, as Chakrabarty writes, "nation states have the capacity to enforce their truth games, and universities, their critical distance notwithstanding, are part of the battery of institutions complicit in this process" (41). Discourses and representation have a material reality—especially since history is an operation that is located within an institutional space. And, as I mentioned, though the Indic does not provide a positive base from which to imagine the nation, it still coincides with the national project by eliminating contradiction within the national space through its appropriation of non-relation. We can see this entanglement in the oscillation between claims to an integral unity within complex Indic relations such as Hindu pluralism and the need to regulate these possible differences through both repressive and ideological state apparatuses of the secular Indian state. Again, the homology to capitalism might help. As Žižek notes, there is a radical tension between two aspects of capitalist modernity: "the dynamic interaction of desiring and producing individuals self-regulating itself through the market [the invisible hand of the market], and different forms of social control and regulate whose emblematic figure is Bentham's Panopticon [the state]" (2017, 260).[37]

To see how the Indian nation-state functions similarly in conjunction with the Indic, we need only turn to Nandy's counterexamples to Gandhi, who, defying Indic tolerance embodied by Gandhi, render themselves, to borrow Nandy's language, "weak." For Nandy, this position is exemplified by Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. Bhindranwale was the head of one of the five temporal authorities in the Sikh tradition [Damdami Taksal] from 1977 until 1984, when the Indian state killed him during Operation Bluestar, the assault on Darbar Sahib, which led to the coordinated slaughter of Sikhs across India later that year. Cultivating an orthodoxy to inhabit limits, refusing Indic pluralism and complexity, after all, can be again met with tremendous violence. Nandy, however, argues that the attempt to cultivate an orthodoxy through Sikh institutions becomes an attempt to fully homogenize community. This attempt at homogenization demonstrates failure unlike Gandhi's laudable achievements in that very same direction. In the desire to homogenize faith, as Nandy writes, people in public rely on the notion of classical versions of their faiths to underplay, marginalize, or even delegitimize the existing ways of life associated with their faiths" (1990, 77). That is, attempts to cohere an orthodoxy through

both struggle and argumentation by appealing prescriptively to tradition is considered an impediment to the inclusive Indic tendency.

Nandy is usually much more careful in his analysis. But, as is the case in South Asia Studies more broadly, this fastidiousness goes awry in relation to Sikhs, who must be disciplined into the Indic context and Indian nation-state. For example, even though Nandy has warned how communalism creates a "comfortable sense of distance between 'sane' modern citizens and 'irrational,' bloodthirsty, atavistic fanatics who riot," one could argue this is precisely the opposition he posited in his earlier work between the strong Gandhi and weak Bhindranwale (Nandy 2002, 103; 1990). Bhindranwale, we must remember, did not have the secular state machinery on his side, which, as Nandy himself teaches us, is central to politics of homogenization—the guarantor of the civilizing mission, demanding total subservience (1990, 71). Gandhi, however, as Nandy notes, is appropriated by the modern state. Gandhi statues, to give one example, are gifted by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations to cities across the globe. Or, to return to our early question, which Sikh does the state want, and why is it so similar to the Sikh that Nandy also wants?

This is all the more strange since Nandy argues that both Gandhi and Bhindranwale occupy the same position in the hidden political hierarchy within secularism as "believers in the private as well as public domains" (77). As a believer in both private and public, and giving "his belief spectacular play in politics," Gandhi is to be celebrated and remains, as Nandy writes, strong. On the other hand, Bhindranwale, even though refusing the secular distinction between public and private abhorrent to Nandy, becomes a sign of "weakness" since he attempts to homogenize co-believers against the required image of theological polycentrism (77). Put another way, Bhindranwale, in his attempt to create authoritative institutions outside the Indic logic as a believer in the private and public within a contingent conjuncture of the Sikh tradition, manifests as a contradiction in the complex terrain required by the Indian state.[38] Bhindranwale, in this rendition, becomes a *sant* that does not know his place in a harmonious non-totalizable multiplicity that is the Indic and, for Nandy, is therefore weak. Especially so, since to be properly indigenous is to make sure all faiths have a place in the Indic and to make sure the borderlines between the faiths become porous (Nandy 2010, 147). Bhindranwale,

therefore, demonstrates an inconsistency, a disavowed element to the landscape, and therefore, Nandy is right, the Indic's weak point.[39]

Here, then, Nandy's analysis and labeling of strong and weak coincides with the Indian state's. The problem accords with a longer problem Sikhs have faced in the Indian nation-state in which Sikhs have functioned as an impediment to the inclusive gestures of the nation-state and the Indic economy. As Gurharpal Singh and Giorgio Shani (2015) write, "the systematic attempts by the Indian state to promote its own nation-building have led to unsophisticated efforts to disarticulate Sikh identity by encouraging fissures and factions with the community while simultaneously rejecting its legitimate constitutional, economic, social, and political demands" (279). This was prior to any militant activity, any armed challenge to the state's monopoly on violence. Therefore, the Indian nation-state did not violently intrude upon Sikhs because it could not tolerate an armed challenge to its monopoly on violence. Instead, Sikhs, in the non-dual paring of saint/soldier (*sant-sipahi*), spiritual/temporal (*miri-piri*), and dispensation of justice/eradication of injustice (*deg-teg*), as Balbinder Singh Bhogal argues, function as an obstacle to the Indian nation-state's stabilizing language (64). By situating Operation Bluestar alongside the "governmental, media and police trial of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and the Sikhs in *general* by the Indian state," one can begin to see how the Indian state's confrontation with Sikhs as a broader part of the Indic's incorporative gestures (Bhogal, 64).[40]

This line of thought is certainly not limited to Nandy; as we saw above the complexity of a shared South Asia landscape is much too alluring in our times, functioning as an easy-to-reach object eliminating contradictions through a fantasy of wholeness and resolution that continually resuscitates desire through the archive. As the structuring object, the subcontinent itself is precisely the mediating point—the Indic as Gandhi, Hinduism, Islam, or Sikhism—able to translate and function across time and traditions, always rendering sensible in our current historicity. The Indic, fortified by the long, albeit complex, *durée* of historical unity, becomes the superior positivity, through the very appropriation of the negative, for us to consider the possibility of difference in subcontinent. And, yet, in this appropriation, we are asked to divide between those who reject the Indic and those who understand its democratic parameters in order to teach pluralism.

There is no irresolvable contradiction. Rather, the only contestations left are reduced to defining the Indic mediation: whether or not Hinduism defines the non-relationary Indic and, therefore, the nation, as the supporters of Hindu nationationalism argues; whether this point is much more complex and inclusive of all religious traditions in South Asia, undoing the nationalist rhetoric of Hindutva itself while resuscitating a lost and shared past; or whether Hinduism is the nominal Indic center incorporating contestations in its own form in a continually available longer history without possibility of rupture. And, not to be lost in all of this is the assertion that Islam or Sikhism too are this Indic mediating point.

Here we should recall, as Chakrabarty notes in relation to the category of religion, though these positions are different, they are incapable of bringing the master category into any crisis (78). As this overarching amorphous category, the Indic, revealing the symbolic richness of our world, can never be brought into crisis as it incorporates all possible contradictions into itself. This, in turn, discloses the self-regulatory complexity central to the Indic landscape. In short, with the Indic, there is no possibility for a revision of what can possibly constitute politics, economics, or historicity writ large or undo the proclaimed universality of the Indic historical context, since the wealth of empirical detail renders impossible such a historical intervention, requiring, instead, that one always return to nestle in one's historical home, the Indic.

CONCLUSION

My point is not that scholarly attempts to organize religious life are an impossibility, that all forms of orthodoxy require redemption, or that stark divisions between forms of life are inevitable. Rather, to recall, I am arguing that orthodoxy becomes a *generic* problem that serves a particular power in the present. As Russell McCutcheon notes, rather than adopting a "more humble scholarly approach," liberal humanist scholars often assume "their language and their interests are coterminous with reality, allowing them unimpeded access to the grieving widower's heart," an already assumed aligned interest (745). The Indic performs this conceptual labor noted by McCutcheon and denies attempts to cultivate a particular embodiment and sensibility

within a discursive tradition. Following McCutcheon, the use of the Indic and its porousness is one such methodological tool that functions as, he writes, a "cleverly disguised paternal strategy that enables scholars to portray themselves as being in solidarity with the Other while retaining the right not only to distinguish Others from other Others but also to inform both groups where their stories ought to start and end" (744). Or, put another way, the self-regulating market-place of historical reality is too complex to allow for contestations about coherence in the face of contradiction, forming an orthodoxy that mandates a change within those very conditions—to suspend and dismantle the world we know, to make the world what it is not.

Instead, the struggle that constitutes orthodoxy, a struggle that is not simply a detour to a known place or time, is eliminated, since it is always already rendered sensible by the Indic. But we should not let go the struggle to cultivate authoritative coherence, orthodoxy within particular traditions that are unable to be incorporated within the complex and harmonious logic of the Indic. And that requires that we consider the possibility to declare oneself unreasonable when facing the flexible braiding of the Indic (Chatterjee 1994, 1775). For, in opening the question of what constitutes difference, orthodoxy also reopens the questions of power and production, this presumed historical end and its diffusion, allowing for a passionate intervention into the contingent, rather than self-regulating, terrain of historicity.

In this sense, cultivating orthodoxy is neither a debunking nor an assembling. It is rather a cracking of the historical itself. As the historical cracks, orthodoxy is not simply oppositional to a known end in pluralism, but, as Asad concludes, "represents both the historical field and the objective of ideological struggle" (1976, 19). Orthodoxy thus is historical and non-historical, a site of discord through "doctrinal conflict." Such an approach is not one that simply debunks or protects people within a particular historical arena; it opens the cracks inherent in historicity itself, an ahistorical placelessness, an ontological gap, as Žižek and Zupančič remind us, that haunts the historical record. Orthodoxy in its relation to this lack remains a perilous space as a struggle for coherence becomes an unreasonable impediment within this flowing Indic world and to our historical recovery of heterogeneity and complexity, which creates a deadened self-efficiency governing past, present, and future.

This essay has examined how orthodoxy becomes an abstract and generic problem when fluidity takes precedence as a hopeful sign for a shared future that transcends presumed irreconcilable difference. Hindutva presents itself as such, drawing upon this logic, displaying itself as having a synthesized inchoate existence in a tolerant Indic space. Looking to challenge these claims, scholars such as Shahab Ahmed, Arvind Mandair, and Ashis Nandy have presented Islam, Sikhism, and Hinduism, respectively, as having the same fluid incorporate tendency. I call this move the positing of a non-relation and then the accounting of the non-relation, the invisible hand of the Indic. Such an invisible hand creates a problem: that which refuses to be pleasured, the struggle to cultivate an authoritative coherence, orthodoxy. The Indic strives to eliminate this problem through history itself, in which contestations are always reducible to a complex historical field—the non-relation as symbolic wealth.

Against this suspicion and accounting of all possible exceptions and problems, I asked whether it is possible to be impotent when approached by the always encroaching invisible hand of the Indic? Can we inhabit our own failure to risk a different relation to the non-relation—a project that requires, as Omnia El Shakry argues, that we encircle while "highlighting the modalities in which other traditions have brought this abyss, this gap or béance into view" without closure (2020, 174). This intimate struggle, theological, analytical, and historical, requires that we inhabit our very failures—to listen without recuperating or resuscitating, all the while remaining at risk rather than perpetually incorporating.

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Notes

2. Asad too notes how "the time of tradition must always be vindicated by the time of history, that the question of 'historical fact' is always integral to the constitutive work of tradition" (2003, 242 fn. 82).

3. Also see Tomoko Masuzawa.

4. As Partha Chatterjee notes, in this sense the Hindu right can locate itself "quite firmly within the domain of the modernizing state" and "can even use the arguments for interventionist secularization to promote intolerance and violence against minorities" (1994, 1768).

5. This would be different from Paul Hacker's understanding of Hinduism as marked by inclusivism, which is considered opposed to tolerance (1995).

6. I borrow "operation" from de Certeau 1988.

7. For example, the nationalist interpretations of both Nehru and Hindu chauvinistic historians, as Gyan Prakash argues, rest upon "the assumption that India was an undivided subject, that is, that it possessed a unitary self and a singular will that arose from its essence and was capable of autonomy and sovereignty" (1990, 389).

8. Relation is capitalized since it signals the coalescing into a proper relationship.

9. Also see Joan Copjec, who argues that sex is "the impossibility of completing meaning," not simply "a meaning that is incomplete, instable. Or, the point is that sex is the structural incompleteness of language not that sex is itself incomplete" (206) Therefore, "sex serves no other function than to limit reason, to remove the subject from the realm of possible experience or pure understanding (207).

10. Also see Nicole Bracker and Stefan Herbrechter, eds., *Metaphors of Economy* (New York: Rodopi, 2005).

11. Such as, for example, the gift.

12. The difference between Žižek and Derrida is then the impossible satisfaction of deconstruction, a continuously deferred closure, contra Žižek's affirmation of the impossibility, failure, itself. As Žižek writes, "Derrida's notion of 'deconstruction as justice' seems to rely on a utopian hope which sustains the specter of 'infinite justice,' forever postponed, always to come, but nonetheless here as the ultimate horizon of our activity" (2012, 121).

13. Sedgewick astutely draws our attention to the interjection of liquidity and flow into historical writing, noting how flow has "emerged as a master trope of the transnational turn in historical analysis," which, in turn, consigns the category of 'work' to the anxious margins.

14. I borrow this from Anidjar 2014, 248.

15. Žižek's preferred example is that of anti-Semitism. For Žižek, "the anti-Semitic idea of Jew has nothing to do with Jews; the ideological figure of a Jew is a way to stitch up the inconsistency of our own ideological system" (1989, 49).

16. But, as Samuel Chambers notes, we must take "neoliberalism seriously as a political project that produces the very form of subjectivity that leads us to conceive the world narrowly in terms of problems and solutions" (731). For another

critique of Brown through political theology that recognizes and excavates the risk of Brown's economic-political binary, see Kotsko 2018, 42–52.

17. I borrow from Anidjar, who demonstrates how religion emerges as a "(generic) problem" (2008, 51).

18. Markus Dressler writes that "one should also note that Asad did not conceptualize 'orthodoxy' with reference to 'heterodoxy' as its binary other." Rather, Dressler continues, as a "'relationship of power,' his notion of orthodoxy contains that which is disputed within itself, rather than projecting it outside of itself as dichotomized other (i.e. as 'heterodoxy')." I am indebted to Samira Haj's work on orthodoxy in configuring this point. Bandak and Boylston have informed my thinking as well.

19. For a brilliant analysis of Asad's concept of discursive tradition, see Abeysekara 2018.

20. Though it is important to recognize that, as I delve into later, not all traditions are the same.

21. This is intimately tied to Christian theology—the question of Divine Accommodation. Therefore, as Singh 2018 writes, "History as such becomes a source of revelation: not only does God's work in the world reveal what God is like, but God's appearance in material historical form sacralizes and sacaramentalizes this sphere" (40). Also see Agamben, 45. This then creates the belief, as Chakrabarty writes, "that everything can be historicized (73).

22. We must also keep in mind, as Ananda Abeysekara argues, the present itself is "separated from and non-contemporaneous with itself (2008, 204). Also see Scott 1999, 71.

23. This, of course, has a long and fascinating genealogy brilliantly excavated by C. S. Adcock.

24. This literature is, of course, vast. See, for example, van der Veer 1994b; Jaffrelot 1996; Dalmia 1999; Gould 2004; Nigam 2006; Tejani 2007; Bapu 2013.

25. We can consider this a continuation of Hegelian logic in which *aufhebung* is, as Derrida writes, "the economic law of absolute reappropriation of the absolute loss" (1986, 133). It is "the amortization, of death" (133).

26. Italics are mine.

27. Or, in van der Veer's argument, "When anthropological outsiders label saint workshop syncretistic, they affirm one position in a Muslim debate about orthodoxy" (1994c, 210).

28. If we follow Marc Nichanian, the genocidal will to destroy the fact coincides with the historical will to procure the fact (2009, 1, 70).

29. Also see Pandey.

30. I borrow the co-concealment of race and religion from Anidjar 2008, 27–28.

31. For more on superior positivity, see Chakrabarty, 83–90.

32. Islam, of course, troubles these easy divisions, especially considering Muslim relations to Greek philosophy, in particular Ibn Sīna's work. The goal, however, should be not to incorporate Islam into the Indic but to consider possible conversations, contestations, and refusals.

33. For Mandair, a focus on the "not" upholds identity; hence his hesitation. Negation, however, as Slavoj Žižek reminds us, is not necessarily wedded to the mediation of identarian concerns. Critiquing Deleuze, for example, Žižek argues, "What remains unthinkable for Deleuze is simply a negativity that is *not* just a detour on the path of the One's self mediation" (2004, 52).

34. This is not just an issue within Mandair's work. Louis Fenech writes that, even when including Islamicate, the Indic remains central. He argues, "While the Sikh tradition is clearly an Indic construct its Islamicate (rather than Islamic) dimension is often relegated to the margins" (xi). Sikhism is clearly an Indic construct even though it is not, since it also has Islamicate dimensions. The Indic, however, is what accounts for differing unbounded dimensions of the so-called construct of Sikhism.

35. Scholars have pointed to this in Nandy's work. For example, Aamir Mufti notes, "For despite gestures towards 'everyday' forms of 'Islam,' what emerges from this search is an identification of national culture as *Indic,* an identification that, of course, has a long history in the conflict, now over a century and half old, over the meaning of modern nation and community in South Asia" (116). See van der Veer 1994a; Sarkar; Bhakle.

36. We must note, as Partha Chatterjee argues, "The majoritarianism of the Hindu right, it seems to me, is perfectly at peace with the institutions and procedures of the 'western' or 'modern' state" (1992, 1768). Though I do not have space to get into Chatterjee's arguments, his position leaves much room to consider the cultivation of orthodoxy through nonstate institution such as the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC). As Chatterjee writes, "there will be political contexts where a group could insist on its right not to give reasons for doing things differently provided it explains itself adequately in its own chose forum (1775).

37. This is a continuous problem for the regulation of a harmonious society that emerged in colonial rule as well. As Scott notes, for Jeremy Bentham the arrival at a "identity of interests requisite for a harmonious society could not be left to the spontaneous working of Adam Smith's hidden hand, but rather depended upon a calculus of pleasures and pains artificially established by the legislator and magistrate" (48).

38. I borrow contingent conjuncture from Ananda Abeysekara, which is, as he argues, "a period of a few years, if not months or days, in which competing narratives and debates conjoin (and converge) to make centrally visible particular authoritative knowledges about what can and cannot count as Buddhism" (2002, 4 fn. 10). I should clarify my goal is not to uphold Sant Bhindranwale's arguments about *Sikhi*. Rather, I am arguing they are serious and legitimate arguments about the Sikh tradition, drawing upon the long-standing contestations about the meaning of *Sikhi*. To label him a "fundamentalist" in order to legitimate one set of arguments in a particular conjuncture is to enter the terrain of the discursive tradition. That is to say, it is to authorize a particular way of being within *Sikhi* that, again, we must ask ourselves, upholds an identity similar to the one demanded by the Hindu secular state. For more on "conjuncture," see Scott. On Sikh militancy, see C. K. Mahmood.

39. I borrow harmonious non-totalizable multiplicity from Zupančič. For how Bhindranwale challenged injustice in the Indian state, see Bhogal 2011.

40. This even leads to the appropriation of parts of *Sikhi* and militancy into the Hindtuva mission. As Arvind Rajagopal notes, "*Kar seva* is a form of worship through work, performed collectively, prominent in the Sikh community but hitherto absent in Hindu worship. Its appropriation by the Hindu nationalists as a form of political activism follows its use by Sikh militants in the mid-1980s" (317, fn. 123).

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