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*Angana P. Chatterji, Thomas Blom Hansen
and Christophe Jaffrelot (eds)*

Majoritarian State

*How Hindu Nationalism
is Changing India*



ANGANA P. CHATTERJI, THOMAS BLOM HANSEN
and CHRISTOPHE JAFFRELOT
(*Editors*)

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*How Hindu Nationalism
is Changing India*



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QUEER PRESENCE IN/AND HINDU NATIONALISM

Paola Bacchetta

In this chapter, I attempt to open up a space for a discussion of the place of specifically queer gender, sexualities and relationalities, in a postcolonial nationalist formation: right-wing Hindu nationalism in India. However, throughout, it will be helpful to keep this in mind: instead of particularising Hindu nationalism or any other form of Indian nationalism, or even postcolonial nationalisms more widely, we might consider how this analysis, or perhaps parts thereof, resonates well beyond this immediate national, regional and specific geo-political context.

At present, a number of insightful feminist and queer analytics address the place of gender and sexuality in nationalisms, empire, colonialism and (post) coloniality. Many explain how dominant (internal elite and/or colonial) sectors of society impose heteronormativity in colonial and colonised sites. To date, most analytics of nationalism either explicitly state or carry the underlying presupposition that heterosexuality is integral to nation formation. In general, the nation is understood as an oppressive family writ large.¹ For some scholars, the nation-family is primarily characterised by sexism;² and for others

mainly by heterosexism.³ In turn, Lisa Duggan, writing about the US, highlights the construction of new models for homonormativity in which LGBT subjects can be incorporated into the US nation as citizen-subjects and condition that they emulate models of heteronormativity.⁴ She gives as examples the homonormative reduction of queer relationships to gay marriage and gay enlistment in the US military. Following that, Jasbir Puar, in *queer disability*, she defined as a new period in which the state constructs a model for acceptable national homosexuality, and deploys the status of homosexuals as a standard by which to judge the level of civilisation of countries in the global south. These are not just discourses, but rather homonormative times, which foreign policy in much the same way as the status of women in the global south, operation, newly assimilate-able LGBT subjects are deployed in subjects, especially Muslims, and from hyper-queer subjects who do not conform to the national homosexuality model; these latter are further demonised and excluded from the nation.⁵ Drawing on these insights to consider contemporary Europe, Jin Haritaworn and I proposed the notion of homonormativisms to account for how multiple States affiliate (a phenomenon we called homotransnationalism1), and/or a plurality of civil societies align (or homotransnationalism2), in order to mobilise their now common notion of homonormativity against one or several global southern states.⁶ While studies of homonationalism and the collective efforts Haritaworn and I refer to as homotransnationalism currently abound, paradoxically, to date there is not one study of the place of queer sexualities specifically in postcolonial nationalisms. This chapter hopes to contribute to opening that area of inquiry through a focus on Hindu nationalism.

Hindu nationalism is perhaps most renowned in India and transnationally for its high profile, extremist anti-Other practices. That is, in contrast to Indian nationalism (India's official nationalism) which self-identifies as pluralist and inclusive of Indians of all faiths as citizens, Hindu nationalism seeks to eliminate all who do not conform to the Hindu nationalist notion of Hinduism from the Indian citizen-body: nearly all Indian Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists, Parsis, Jains, Christians, Jews, etc. But, Hindu nationalists also reject all Hindus who are not in line with Hindu nationalist definitions of Hinduism. How they represent their Others has shifted in time, often according to which Hindu nationalist organisation most monopolises the public discursive space, and additionally, in relation to (and not always in conformity with) changes in normative values in India and various parts of the world.

QUEER PRESENCE IN/AND HINDU NATIONALISM

QUEER PRESENCE IN/AND HINDU NATIONALISM

BJP, RSS and HSS leaders that appear in a variety of kinds of media. Elsewhere I demonstrate that there are gendered differences, and even incompatibilities, between Hindu nationalist men's and women's discourse and practice.¹¹ So I will specify that this present chapter concerns exclusively Hindu nationalist men's discourse and practice, not women's. The RSS provides the bulk of my data for earlier periods because in the times concerned it was the central organ for the production of Hindu nationalist men's ideology, with its publishing companies, bookstores, and massive distribution networks. In contrast, today, as the BJP holds national and often local political power in India, it appears more extensively in the media scape in our times.

In what follows, I will begin with a first section that contextualises the traffic (from Britain to India) in various forms of queerphobia that later surfaced and queer-ambiguity in Hindu nationalist discourse. In the second, I discuss queerphobia the paradoxical queerphilic and queer-ambiguous reinsertion of queerness in Hindu nationalism, before arriving at some concluding remarks.

The traffic in queerphobia: genealogies

Indian repression of dissident gender and sexuality certainly pre-dates colonialism, as should become evident below. But, precolonial repression differs from current forms in extent and in content. Precolonial queer repression occurred only rarely and only in localised, limited time/spaces that co-existed with queer acceptance elsewhere within the borders of the territory currently delineated as India. Colonialism introduced queer repression across the sub-continent. The British inscribed prohibitions against homosexuality in Indian national law (see below) that have only recently been overturned. In the post-colonial period, across the political spectrum, the discourses, practices and policies that denigrate queers carry the weight of colonialism's discursive and institutionalised baggage.

The colonial genealogy of current forms of Hindu nationalist queerphobic xenophobia is vast and multi-dimensional. However, here I will point to two areas: orientalist discourse and colonial law.¹² As Prakash has remarked, Indian orientalism was a European enterprise, formed in colonial relations of power, from its inception.¹³ Beginning in 1757, it operated to reconstruct knowledge of India. This process was multifaceted. But what concerns us here is that orientalism, as it constituted, reconstituted, and redefined the Hindu symbolic, worked to condemn or marginalise what now are designated as dissident Indian genders and sexualities.

It is interesting to consider how this process operated. To make sense of the multitude of Hindu sacred texts, oral traditions and practices, orientalists divided them into two categories which are still reproduced today in some circles: a 'Great Tradition' (comprised of texts of the Brahmin elite, or 3 per cent of the Hindu population); and a 'Little Tradition' works and left the masses). Orientalists selectively translated 'Great Tradition' and Nandy have argued, 'Little Tradition' works by the wayside. As Chakravarty and Nandy have argued, 'orientalists' selectivity centred texts in which male subjectivities could be understood in conformity with British notions of proper masculinity, and wherein femininity and women could be marginalised. In doing so they put in place forms of misogyny that would underlie both colonial and postcolonial queerphobia. Some examples are the colonial use of the epics the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, wherein wars provide a backdrop for colonial interpretive procedures regarding colonial-normative masculinity.

However, the same 'Great Tradition' texts that circumscribe 'proper' colonial gender, also marginalise, condemn or propose punishment for queer conduct and figurations. This, for instance, is the case of the two epics, and some of the *dharmashastras* (law books) such as the *Manusmriti*. Orientalists ignored the vast array of sources that accept or even celebrate queer within their own categories of 'Great Tradition' and 'Little Tradition'. Some examples are: the *Kamasutra* which includes a chapter entitled '*Auparishtaka*' (oral congress) valorising same sex relations; lesbian folk tales from Himachal Pradesh;¹⁵ practices such as *maitri karar* (friendship agreement, a form of marriage between women); and iconography such as in the Tara-Taratini temple of Orissa.

Orientalists selectivity proceeded, yet coincided with, administrative efforts to maintain colonial rule; they were based in a common field of intelligibility. As Nandy demonstrates, to sustain their rule the British discredited Brahmins (who held symbolic power), co-opted *rajās* of princely states (who held material power), and formed a class of Indian collaborators for the army and civil service.¹⁶ To this effect, the British constructed Brahmin men as effeminate, and created a category of Indian 'martial races' as the ideal of Hindu masculinity based on *kshatriya* (warrior and princely caste) manhood.¹⁷ To justify colonialism to their own people in England, the British framed their colonial presence in terms of a civilising mission, a notion that rested in part on the construction of upper-caste Hindu men as oppressive to women and Dalit Bahujan men as sexually promiscuous and out-of-control. This British invention was part of a wider British colonial field of intelligibility, with its own set

of categories, logics, presuppositions and conclusions. Through it the colonisers conceptualised the colonies, and here colonial India, along lines that McClintock describes as the porno-tropics, wherein colonised space and subjects serve as 'a fantastic magic lantern of the mind onto which [the colonisers] projected its forbidden sexual desires and fears.'¹⁸

Colonial administrative policy queer sexuality was an exemplary Foucauldian operation involving surveillance, deterrence, repression and punishment of men's queer conduct, albeit in a reworked order. Women, punished passionless and sexually passive in the British colonial field of intelligibility, and thus without sexual subjectivity, were not encompassed in these operations. The first targets of what we could today call 'queerphobic queer cleansing' were the British themselves, beginning with the Imperial Army. For instance, as Ballhatchet notes, British administrators officially organised an Indian female prostitution apparatus to prevent same-sex acts between British soldiers.¹⁹ They preferred that British men engage in intra-racial extra-marital heterosexual instead of intra-racial homosexual. When the prostitution solution proved ineffective to deter their peers' queer practices, British administrators passed the Army Act of 1850 which punished British homosexual with imprisonment of up to seven years.

It was not until 1861, with the imposition of the British legal system in India (again, IPC) that sodomy and thus same sex acts (again, among men) were outlawed among Indians across the whole of British-held subcontinental territory (via IPC article 377). Soon thereafter the colonial administration organised surveillance of upper=class Indian men with whom the British were in frequent contact. As Ballhatchet remarks, Lord Curzon, Viceroy from 1899 to 1905, 'had grimly drawn up a list of princes with homosexual tastes' to survey and attempt to dissuade them.²⁰

Subjects of queerphobia and queer-ambiguities

Against that backdrop, here, I will discuss two large zones of queerphobia and queer-ambiguities: collective and individual internal and external subjects of the Hindu nation as Hindu nationalists conceptualise them.

The Hindu nationalist-citizen-body

Historically, the RSS describes its citizen-body, the Hindu people, in masculine terms: 'the men born in the land of Bharat' and 'sons of the soil'.²¹ Where

QUEER PRESENCE IN/AND FILM

Let us approach every son of this soil with the message of one united nation—hood and forge discipline. Such an alert, organised and invincibly powerful natural life alone can hope to stand with its head erect in the present turmoils of the world.

'Hindu nationalist men' was historically a subgroup, an avant-garde, a vanguard, a group of men who lived a life alone, apart from the rest of the war-torn world.

[illegible]

Hindu nationalist man

For the RSS the central individual unit of the Hindu people and of the RSS always was and remains the ideal rank-and-file Hindu nationalist man. In earlier days the RSS described him as: a hypermasculine, chivalrous warrior along *khatriya* lines; celibate along Brahmanical *sannyasin* (wanderer detached from material world) lines; and 'respectful of women'.²⁸ This model

actually disrupted colonial-induced heteronormativity because it posited a-sexual hypermasculinity as ideal, but reinserted heteronormativity at the level of gendered identity, insofar as hypermasculinity itself rests on a hetero-gender-sex-sexuality binary. Several operations underlie this construction: 1. RSS resistance to colonial representations of the Brahmin as effete through positing Hindu male hypermasculinity; which coincides with 2. the RSS reproduction of the colonial *kshatriya* model; and finally 3. RSS resistance to the colonial notion of Indian hypersexuality through its opposite, a-sexuality, which intersects with 4. RSS selectivity of the *sannyasin* model of a-sexuality in the dominant 'Great Tradition' Hindu symbolic.

The RSS has always assigned the unacceptable Hindu male the negative characteristics it split off and rejected from itself. Thus, the unacceptable Hindu man is anti-national, sexually promiscuous, materialistic, westernised and worse: he embodies physical and mental characteristics readable as feminine in contemporary bi-lingual elite discourse informed by western notions of gender and sexuality.²⁹

For the RSS, all Hindu men could be ideal if they would peel away the layers of *maya* (illusion) which blind them to their essential Hindu nationalist selves. This processual concept of achieving the ideal identity reproduces Brahmanical Hindu discourse on spiritual realisation as a process of unknowing the material world. It also re-inscribes, albeit in reverse, the western liberal notion of 'Progress' as it operates in Enlightenment and current development narratives of third world 'progress'.³⁰ That is, for the RSS, the ideal is to be achieved through a linear movement back to a point in time prior to colonialism.

M.S. Golwalkar presents this processual transformation in his major text, *Bunch of Thoughts* through the use of a gendered analogy in a story entitled 'How "Woman" Became a Soldier'.³¹ It takes place in World War I when the English recalled retired Indian soldiers back to the army. One such soldier does not wish to return, so the police search for him. Golwalkar writes:

When the soldier came to know of this he put on a woman's clothes and hid himself in the house. When the police came, his wife told them that he was not in the house [...] But the police suspected deception. They called out that 'sister', found out the truth and took him away. The soldier was sent to his old platoon. He was then given the army dress and made to join the ranks. When he stood there with the soldier's dress on, he was asked whether he would like to return home. He replied with a new resolve in his voice that he was now a soldier [...]; he would now only go to a battlefield. Indeed the dress had made all the difference!

In this almost to husband, to a man in feminine drag and back to soldier in this soldier to sex trajectory is made to be dependent upon clothing in the gender element. The attainment of the ideal via shedding feminine gender-sex-sexuality binary. Several operations underlie this construction: 1. RSS resistance to colonial representations of the Brahmin as effete through positing Hindu male hypermasculinity; which coincides with 2. the RSS reproduction of the colonial *kshatriya* model; and finally 3. RSS resistance to the colonial notion of Indian hypersexuality through its opposite, a-sexuality, which intersects with 4. RSS selectivity of the *sannyasin* model of a-sexuality in the dominant 'Great Tradition' Hindu symbolic.

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377). De-homo-ing re-conversion is coherent with other RSS re-conversion schemes such as the 'Sanskritisation' (Hindu nationalisation) of Dalit Bahujan, Muslim, Christian and other non-Hindu and non-Hindu-nationalised subjects. Religious re-conversion presumes Hindu nationalism's Others as culturally and religiously deficient subjects, a section of which can be properly re-trained. De-homo-ing therapy, like re-conversion, is based on the idea of possible re-education. Just as cultural and religious re-conversion reinforces the notion of Hinduism as the sole religion-culture of the nation, so does de-homo-ing therapy clearly establish both heterosexuality and asexuality as the exclusive sexualities of the nation.

A second position on homosexual subjects is that there are now too many of them in the public space, and so they need to be accepted. This idea arose after the annual gay pride marches across India made it impossible to ignore the numbers. However, it also came about in the present age of homonationalism at a time when India is massively inserted into capitalism and needs to prove its good treatment of queers if it is to avoid boycotts and compete in today's world. Thus, in late 2015, the BJP Minister of Finance Arun Jaitley referred to 'the jurisprudential development on gay rights the world over' and maintained that 'when millions of people the world over are having alternative sexual preferences, it is too late in the day to propound a view that they should be jailed'.³⁵ For Jaitley criminalisation is 'archaic' 'in the present era when there is a universal movement towards their acceptability'.³⁶

Yet another Hindu nationalist position is to continue to reject homosexuality as not Indian. Thus in 2016 the International Secretary General of the RSS' cultural-religious wing, Champat Rai, said the 'practise (homosexual acts) was influenced by western culture and it is against Indian culture. [...] Bharat will not accept this as it is a country with a glorious past and a thousand-year-old tradition'.³⁷ Having equated homo subjects with the West, the Rajya Sabha MP from the BJP, Subramanian Swamy, also expressed disdain over gays who 'flaunt' their queerness, and warned against the proliferation of 'gay bars'.³⁸

Finally, there is a great difference across all these positions between attitudes towards homosexual and transgender subjects. Across the board, there is transgender recognition and transgender tolerance-to-acceptance. A BJP-led parliamentary panel affirmed transgender rights in 2017.³⁹ Under the BJP Government, following both Nepal and Pakistan, third gender became a recognised national legal status. In contrast, there are no such rights in the US, a country that imagines itself as more humane and more democratic than thou.⁴⁰

Muslim men

The ideal Hindu nationalist citizen-body rests upon the exclusion of a series of Others who embody, albeit differentially, 'improper' (also 'impure?') gendering, sexuality, and nationalisation. Thus, in an operation based on auto-referentiality, in the sense of Guillaumin,⁴¹ the RSS has long projected the gender of Indian Muslims as masculine, parallel to the Hindu nationalist homosocial citizen-body. Historically, the RSS has divided Indian Muslim men into three categories:⁴² 1. Muslims-as-foreign-invaders, which designates upper class and political leadership; 2. Muslims-as-ex-Hindu-converts, as lower caste; and 3. Hindu-Muslims, a more recent invention, designating hypothetical Muslims who, insofar as their conduct would be consistent with Hindu nationalism's religious, nationalist, gender and sexual normativity, could be re-assimilated back into the Hindu nation. Underlying the first two categories are three common characteristics: hypermasculinity, hypersexuality and anti-(Hindu)nationalism. The RSS has long maintained that Muslim men engage in 'riots, rapes, looting, raping and all sorts of orgies' as they seek to undermine the Hindu nation.⁴³

The RSS has produced its notion of Muslim men as excessively masculine and excessively sexual by re-assigning orientalist and British administrative discourse about Hindus to Muslims. Here, the RSS reiterates the colonial idea that Hindu and Muslim 'communities' are incompatible, an idea that, as historians Chandra, Pandey, and others have amply demonstrated, served Britain's official divide and rule policy.⁴⁴ The RSS also projects onto Muslims the promiscuity and aggression that the British had earlier assigned to lower-caste Hindus, and diverts its anger towards them. The RSS states about Muslims: 'Times without number we had to gulp down insult and humiliation at their hands'.⁴⁵ Here, the RSS portrays active-hypermasculine Muslim men rendering Hindu men passive-effeminate in a not-so-disguised homosexualised relation. To elaborate, Golwalkar states:

The more our leaders tried to appease the Muslims, the more their separatist and aggressive appetite was whetted. The British too, set about to sharpen their separatist teeth and claws in a bid to set them against nationalist forces. The Muslims were placed in a position in which they were wanted by both the British and the nationalists and their price was rising higher and higher.⁴⁶

In some versions, the RSS presents Muslims as hypermasculine ('aggressive') to the point of animality (with sharp 'teeth and claws') and as subjects of both British and Congress Party men's attraction. Yet, the terms of the

homosexual relationship are displaced. In this new threesome, Muslim men feature as male prostitutes whose price rises as the British and Congress men bid for their favour, while RSS men are positioned as voyeurs.

Today, the earlier construction of Muslims-as-foreign-invasaders remains constant. We see, however, with the BJP's electoral desire to obtain Muslim votes, a major shift in the models for Muslims-as-ex-Hindu-converts and Hindu-Muslims. For example, in a demonstration of Hindu-Muslim figuration and Hindu-national-incorporation, the RSS decided to publicly honour the poet-laureate of Bangladesh, Kazi Nazrul Islam, in Bengal in India on his birthday (25 May) and more, to translate his works into all Indian languages. The RSS gave as its rationale that Kazi Nazrul Islam opposed British rule, united Hindus and Muslims, and even wrote about Durga Puja and the goddess Kali.⁴⁷ This sudden glorification of Kazi Nazrul Islam directly followed public conflict between the BJP and the state government of Bengal over what Hindu nationalists deem a vote bank policy that disadvantages Hindus. It also appeared in the wake of some Muslim clerics' call to ban the RSS.⁴⁸ Again, the redrawing of boundaries of 'Us' vs. 'Them' to enlarge the 'Us' and reposition Hindu nationalism as inclusive both serves BJP electoral designs, and aligns modern India more fully with discourses of dominant neo-liberal democracies (good and bad Muslims, good and bad queers).

Western men and westernised Hindu elites

Historically and into the present the RSS has constructed the nations and citizen-bodies of the West in hypermasculine and heterosexual terms.⁴⁹ 'The insatiable hunger for physical enjoyment does not allow one to stop within one's own national boundaries. On the strength of its state power, the stronger nation tries to subdue and exploit the other in order to swell its own coffers. [...] Moral bonds are all snapped.' Here, in an inversion of the coloniser's construction of India as the porno-tropics, the RSS and other Hindu nationalist organisations represent the West as the porno-west. In Hindu nationalist logic, the unleashed sexuality of the western world threatens to feminise and engulf the Hindu nation in a scenario that reads like rape.

The Hindu nationalist construction of a porno-west also serves as a backdrop for representing and denouncing so-called 'westernised Hindu men' as sexually out-of-control. Let us hear, for example, the Hindu nationalist response to Deepa Mehta's film *Fire*, in which two sisters-in-law in a joint family develop a lesbian relationship. The film was released in India in

December 1998. It was condemned by all Hindu nationalists. After it had circulated for a few weeks, Hindu Shiv Sena activists protested by trashing the cinemas in which it was shown. The RSS declared:

The Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray may be accused of using force and 'lumpen methodology' to suppress the voices that do not suit his cultural worldview. But the attack on the indigenous value-system by the ultra-westernised elite, who regard the nation as not more than a piece of land with a bundle of cultural and political rights, is more appalling than the action of the Shiv sainiks.⁵⁰

Further, the RSS stated that Indian 'ultra-westernised elite' leftists had resorted:⁵¹

to explicit lesbianism and other perversities to challenge the traditional set up. That way one day all the pornographic flings of Mona [sic] Lewinsky-Clinton duo may become the role model, if the aim is to disintegrate the family *a la* western society. The method may not appeal to the female fraternity in general but Deepa Mehtas and Shabana Azmis of the day must have their fling even when western feminist prophets like Germaine Greer, the writer of *The Female Eunuch*, are returning to sober, civilised, domesticated ways, accepting even male superiority as a natural course of things.⁵²

Here the RSS proposed some interesting equations: the dangers of anormative heterosexuality (Lewinsky and Clinton) and lesbianism; 'civilisation' (Western and Hindu nationalist) and 'male superiority'; but also domestication as the desirable 'sober' reincarnation of feminism (through the figure of Greer).

This earlier position on lesbianism is interesting to consider alongside the current complexities of Hindu nationalist positions on homosexuality as mentioned above, including acceptance motivated by neo-liberal and capitalism desires.

Congress party men and their queer nation

The RSS has historically constructed its Indian political opponents, especially those of the Indian National Congress Party, as internal Others who are queer because they are improperly (Hindu) nationalised. Congress men 'woo and appease the anti-Hindu communities thus encouraging them in their aggressive designs'.⁵³ If in an above quoted passage the RSS feels that 'Muslims were placed in a position where they were wanted' by Congress secular nationalists, here the RSS figures Congress men in turn as seductive effeminates who actually encourage their own rape by Muslim men. In an operation that links queer gender, sexuality and secular nationalism, the RSS locates Congress

alist ideologues draw. Here, I will
queer-ambiguous re-inscription.

Hindu nationalist leaders

We could begin with Dr Hedgevar, the deceased RSS founder, whom M.S. Golwalkar describes as 'the Hindu ideal of man in flesh and blood'.⁵⁹ For Golwalkar Dr Hedgevar is 'irresistible', 'childlike', full of 'sweet words' which appeal to the heart' such that 'the more one came near him the more one would love and adore him'.⁶⁰ Golwalkar elaborates:

what an ocean of love he was to us! [...] The boundless affection of the mother's heart, the sleepless care and diligence of the father and the inspiring guidance of the guru found their culmination in that single bosom. [...] The worship of a soul transcends the worship of an individual and becomes the worship of an ideal itself. He is verily my chosen deity.⁶¹

Here, we find a bi-generated Hedgevar ('mother's love' and father's 'diligence') who is guru and finally a divinity ('my chosen deity'). This figuration is possible in Hindu nationalism insofar as it relies on the highly valorised image of bi-generated Hindu divinities. In fact it is consistent with representations of other highly respected human bi-generated figures, including those whom the RSS despises: Mahatma Gandhi, whom Hindu nationalists assassinated, is a case in point.

Similarly, the public image Hindu nationalists have constructed for India's former prime minister from the BJP, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, is bi-gendered. His 1998 official biography by a BJP member C.P. Sharma, entitled *Poet Politician: Atal Bihari Vajpayee*, insists on his sensitivity; he learned as a child that he had 'the right to cry' and that lesson was 'permanently etched on his mind'.⁶² He loves children and 'becomes a child amongst them'.⁶³

More importantly, in the title of Sharma's book, the terms poet and politician are thickly semiotic. I will point to only two most pertinent associations for each. First, poet is aligned in colonial discourse with feminine flakiness and dreaminess in contrast to prized hard male rationality, and in dominant Hindu discourses with the esteemed Brahmin as opposed to illiterate masses. Politician in India often retains an off-putting association with British rule or by extension corrupt postcolonial governments, and yet in Hindu nationalist discourse politician is joined to the respected *kshatriya*. While Vaipayee's biography is primarily about his political exploits, Sharma positions a poem at the beginning of every chapter and weaves the Vaipayee-the-poet thematic

QUEER PRESENTATION. For Hindu nationalists the production of Vajpayee as both poet throughout. For Hindu nationalist (*kshatriya*) correlates him as a *rishi* (seer, sage) throughout and politician (political) inspiration, thus capable of predicting the divine (divine) nation.

[illegible]

Today in Vajpayee, Hedgevar and Modi's representations, qualities which could be read as queer gender in a colonial grid are instead read through the Hindu symbolic as attributes of bi-gendered divinities. But this is only possible because all three men are always already powerful political symbols, unconnected to weakness, ideal Hindu nationalists, and most importantly their queer gender is totally a-sexual. In contrast, Balgandharva is unacceptable to Hindu nationalists because he is perceived to be apolitical and highly sexual. While Hedgevar and Vajpayee are specifically read through a Hindu principle of bi-gendered political leaders might be wider.

While Heughebaert's nationalist lens, the principle of bi-gendered political leaders might be wider. For example, we can find analogies with other extremist right-wing representations of 'visionaries': Hitler as a sensitive artist who wished to make the world of 'visionaries'; Mussolini as an 'artist' moulding the people;⁶⁷ Maurras as creative, vegetarian; and George Bush who combines fumbling effeminacy (as pampered son) with cowboy machismo ('hunt 'em down and smoke 'em out'). Thus, while Hindu nationalism draws on particular traditions of bi-gendered beings, there is a general trope of attaching normative notions of male and female to strong male political leaders.

Materialised enactments

But what of queer sexuality? Hindu nationalist leaders and rank-and-file perform it in violent anti-other events. Queerphobic xenophobia supplies the motivating energy for Hindu nationalist enactments of queer-ambiguity. The riot situation as a liminal space of panic that stretches the present seemingly onward forever is an exemplary locus for this acting-out operation.⁶⁸

A plethora of studies have documented what I would call the Hindu nationalist reordering of Muslim gender, sex and sexuality under the surgical

knife as weapon in such conditions. To evoke two examples: in the 1947 Partition violence and in the 2002 Gujarat pogroms, Hindu nationalists cut off Muslim women's breasts and then gang raped them.⁶⁹ In the 2002 turmoil they cut Muslim women's foetuses from their wombs before murdering them. By laying the Hindu nationalist mark onto a Muslim woman's flesh and removing breasts, they transform her into a eunuch. They then used the eunuch as a conduit for their own male sexual bonding through gang rape. The ripping out of foetuses ensures the dis-continuation of Muslim rapists in future time. But more, in both instances, 1947 and 2002, Hindu nationalist men castrated Muslim men before murdering them, thereby producing the cathartic reversal of the fantasmic Muslim-as-hypermasculine, hypersexual. Dismemberment frees up the now sexless Muslim ex-male body for a deferred religious-reassignment and gender and sexual reordering that cannot take place (for he is dead). But it also separates and annihilates that body parts that, in a passage above, were fantasised as fused in a deadly hybrid Congress-inspired citizen-body. In these *passages à l'acte* Hindu nationalists move from the metaphorical-discursive queering of Muslims to their material queering. Paradoxically, far from guaranteeing Hindu nationalists their material queering, these crimes queer the perpetrators as makers and rapists of eunuchs and other bodies generally considered ambiguously anormative.

Some concluding remarks

To conclude I would like to make two points. First, I want to signal that in India, critical peoples of many political persuasions, faiths, genders and sexualities have consistently and skilfully resisted Hindu nationalist anti-Muslim and anti-Queer discourses, across all scales, including the village, city, region, nation, and transnationally in the diaspora. Such work is done daily but also at specific conjunctures. To cite just one historical high-profile example, while Hindu nationalists were protesting against Deepa Mehta's 'lesbian' film *Fire*, mentioned above, activists formed a counter force, an immense alliance, to defend the rights of Indian queers. This counter-mobilisation converged as part of the larger struggle against (Hindu nationalist or other) repression, censorship and exclusion.⁷⁰ In recent years, Dalit movements and LGBTIQ movements have become increasingly more visible in India. In fact they are also intersecting at certain points. Gay Pride marches now include Dalit contingencies. If earlier some lesbian activists carried signs in the *Fire* defence demonstrations stating 'Hindu and lesbian', today one can observe signs in

Gay Pride marches reading 'Dalit and queer.' Insofar as Hindu nationalism is off caste based and oriented movement, the radical wings of current Pride marches and Dalit movements, and their new intersections, function as upper movements against Hindu nationalism and also invoke the idea of a totally queer movements against present and future society.

As inoculation of present and future society, I have alluded to practices of queerphobia as a different kind of queerphobia, queerphobic idealisation, selective queer different throughout, and to the presence of queer-ambiguity, that exist in Second, xenophobic queerphobia, and to the presence of queer-ambiguity, that exist in xenophobic, xenophobic idealisation, and to the presence of queer-ambiguity, that exist in national-normalisation beyond India. Hopefully, further research will national-normalisation beyond India. Hopefully, further research will bring to visibility their extent and forms across the globe. In this way, perhaps, we can configure local to transnational political strategies expansive enough to undo queerphobia, xenophobia and all anti-Other discourses and practices in their many identifiable forms and dimensions, from multiple fronts, for all. But, also, perhaps we will be able to complicate the current binary in which queer acceptance is imagined as always already a good thing and is systematically associated with the left, while queer repression is assigned to the right. In fact, in many places across the globe queer acceptance to date has been conditional upon the violence of queer-normalisation, in which queer-normality is upheld to construct ever more unacceptable others. Thus, instead of hoping for queer-inclusion in any context of ongoing inequalities, in the global north or south, across the left or right, perhaps we can create and converge in radical struggles that enrich and support practices of freedom for all.