THE JOURNAL OF INDO-JUDAIC STUDIES

Volume 1 Number 1 April 1998

THE JOURNAL OF INDO-JUDAIC STUDIES

Subscriptions begin with the current issue or may be backdated. Journal rates listed below are effective with the current issue:

Canada	$15.00 (Can. funds)
U.S.A.	$15.00 (U.S. funds)
Elsewhere	$15.00 (U.S. funds)

Cheques should be made payable to:

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Department of Religious Studies
University of Saskatchewan
9 Campus Drive
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
CANADA S7N 5A5

Manuscripts and books for review should be sent to:

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University Park
Miami, FL 33199
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The Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies is subsidized by grants from the Publications Fund Committee of the University of Saskatchewan, and the College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Religious Studies, and Institute for Judaic Studies of Florida International University. Additional support is entirely welcome.

ISSN 1206-9330

From the editors

Welcome to the first issue of the *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies*.

This annual journal is dedicated to analyzing the affinities and interactions between Indic and Judaic civilizations from ancient through contemporary times.

It is an ambitious intellectual undertaking. Not only are these interactions and affinities little explored, but when one views our world from their standpoint, everything looks rather different. For example, our understanding of the concept of 'religion' is modified when our cases in point are Hinduism and Judaism. Similarly, the way we view patterns of commerce in the ancient world shifts perceptibly when our reference points are India and Israel.

This new journal, then, seeks to develop a new field of inquiry. Not only are our data new, but these data compel us to view familiar patterns of interpretation with a fresh, critical eye.

By 'Indo-Judaic studies' we mean not only exercises in the history of religion or comparative philosophy, although these two modes of analysis will be well-represented in this and future issues of this journal; but 'Indo-Judaic studies' includes literature, sociology, political science, linguistics, anthropology and economics.

Several of these methods are represented in our first issue. It begins with companion pieces by Norbert M. Samuelson and Bibhuti S. Yadav, both of the Department of Religion at Temple University. Samuelson studies Franz Rosenzweig's understanding of Indian religious thought, and Yadav presents a Buddhist response to Rosenzweig. The two essays provide an anchor for 'Indo-Judaic studies' in the methods of comparative philosophy and philosophical dialogue.

The third article by Gary J. Jacobsohn, a political scientist at Williams College, addresses the rise of religious nationalisms in modern India and Israel. No doubt, as modern Asian democracies, Indian and Israeli experience ought to be comparable and mutually edifying, even if, as Jacobsohn concludes, the cases of India and Israel in this regard are more different than alike.

Jael Silliman of the Women's Studies Program at the University of Iowa presents a study of a middle class woman merchant of the Baghdadi Jewish community of Calcutta, who happens to be her grandmother. With rare access to family documents and memories, Silliman's ethnography challenges many of the images of the Baghdadi Jews of India presented in modern scholarship, which, she claims, focuses on elite males to the neglect of women and of the sizable middle class. Surely the study of Jewish experience in India is another staple of 'Indo-Judaic studies', this time approached from the perspective of women's studies and anthropology.

The fifth essay is a translation of a Tibetan philo-Semitic pamphlet by the contemporary fiery nationalist, Jamyang Norbu, by Nathan Katz of Florida

International University, the co-editor of this journal. We hope to present translations of otherwise inaccessible Asian-language writings about Jews and Judaism in order to explore the image of the Jew in Asian cultures.

A review essay by Maurice S. Friedman, professor emeritus at San Diego State University, explores the phenomenon of contemporary Jews who practice Hinduism and/or Buddhism. Part of the field of 'Indo-Judaic studies' is the experience of Jews with Indian spiritual traditions, those who have been dubbed 'JuBus' in a recent popular book.

These six articles are followed by four book reviews, three dealing with the Jews of India and one with intercultural dialogue.

An extended discussion ensued before we agreed on the name for this journal, and for this field. We had considered a linguistically rooted title, reflecting the prominence of Sanskrit and Hebrew in defining the cultures whose interactions we propose to study. We decided that such a title was too classicist to include contemporary political, economic and literary studies. We considered Hindu-Judaic and Hindu-Jewish, the former focusing on the religions and the latter on ethnicity, but felt these were too confining as well, in part because they neglected the very vital Buddhist-Jewish encounters we wish to explore. Eventually we opted for Indo-Judaic, a name which we hope invites analyses of all of the cultures of the Indian subcontinent, Buddhist and Parsi as well as Hindu, in their interactions with Jews, Judaism and Israel.

The first issue of our journal, then, introduces but does not exhaust the disciplines, issues and methodologies which will comprise the field the journal seeks to help define. In the future, we will present studies rooted in the discipline of the history of religions, linguistics and so on. We anticipate essays which explore the image of the Jew in modern Indian novels and of Hinduism in traditional Judaic literature. We remain interested in medieval Jewish travelers to India, as we do in the experiences of Jewish communities on the subcontinent. We welcome submissions which compare the ethnicity of 'Indo-Americans' and 'Jewish Americans'. How Hindu revivalists relied upon the 'Old Testament' as a rhetorical weapon against Christian missionaries falls under the purview of 'Indo-Judaic studies' too. Studies of diplomacy between India and Israel, of the Jewish contribution to the Indian cinema industry, of commercial links between west and south Asia during ancient times, and of Jews who played significant roles in the government, economy and culture of India, are all appropriate for this journal.

The editors are grateful to their institutions, the University of Saskatchewan and Florida International University, for the support which has been indispensable in launching a new journal and a new field.

ROSENZWEIG'S PHILOSOPHY OF BUDDHISM

Norbert M. Samuelson

In the fall of 1995 Bibhuti Yadav and I were invited to participate together in a workshop of Jewish and Buddhist philosophy that was held by a Philadelphia Conservative synagogue, the Germantown Jewish Center, as part of a general conference on the significance of the contemporary interface between Jews and Buddhists. The workshop appealed to me personally for a number of reasons. First, Bibhuti and I have been colleagues in the same Department of Religion for more than two decades. During that time we have developed a great respect for each other as both persons and philosophers, but we have never talked as seriously as we should about what matters to us most, viz., our respective religious commitments, mine to Judaism and his to Buddhism. Second, Buddhism today has great appeal to many Jews, especially in North America, but Judaism has yet to develop any serious theology of Buddhism.

In the past, when Islam and Christianity challenged Jewish religious identity, serious Jewish thinkers entered into serious religious and philosophical discussions with serious thinkers from the other religions. In the course of these discussions Judaism changed both in its practice and thought, and Judaism developed a fairly clear understanding of precisely what it means to be a Jew in relationship to the thought and communities of these other two religions. Yet, although Buddhism has made significant inroads into the the lives of many contemporary Jews, many of whom have adopted Buddhist practices and beliefs as an enrichment of, rather than a denial of, their Jewish identity, no serious Jewish philosopher has yet tried to come to terms with what this interaction means for a genuine, authentic, viable Jewish religious and communal identity in our times. No one, that is, with one exception — Franz Rosenzweig, who gives considerable attention to Buddhism and other Asian religions in his magnum opus, the *Star of Redemption (Der Stern der Erlosung.* Frankfurt a. M.: J. Kaufmann, 1921. Translated into English by William W. Hallo. *The Star of Redemption.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1971, henceforth referred to as *The Star.*)

Now, I have a reasonably good understanding of what Rosenzweig says in *The Star*, but I have practically no knowledge of Buddhism, so I am in no position myself to evaluate whether or not Rosenzweig's fairly critical evaluation of this religion from his perspective as a Jewish philosopher is just. Bibhuti, on the other hand, has wonderful critical ability to deal with Buddhism as a philosopher, but limited knowledge of Judaism and no knowledge of *The Star.* So we decided to do the following: while reading *The Star* I would provide him with a fairly detailed summary of Rosenzweig's words. That discussion is still

in progress. Is Rosenzweig's understanding of Buddhism correct, or has he merely inherited the prejudices against and misconceptions of Buddhism that were commonplace in the German universities of the early twentieth century, where Rosenzweig obviously learned whatever it is that he knew about Buddhism? Beyond historicizing Rosenzweig, is there any validity to what he says? Does Rosenzweig have any insight into what it means to be and think as a Buddhist, and, if he does, is his Jewishly rooted critique of Buddhism sound? Ultimately we can ask, are Judaism and Buddhism conceptually compatible, or are they clearly in opposition to each other? To what extent can Buddhist teachings be incorporated into Jewish life without negating that life? What can Buddhist thought add, if anything, to enriching the ever-changing tradition of Jewish belief?

What follows is a record of the beginning of this discussion. It is simply my summary (without value judgement) of what Rosenzweig says in *The Star*. It will be followed at a later time by Bibhuti's initial response to the summary, which should, in turn, produce a response by me to what Bibhuti publishes. Neither of us knows where our discussion will lead us, but we are both anxious to find out. We thank the editor of this journal, Nathan Katz, for giving us the opportunity to share our discussion in public. Our hope is that it will be as interesting to the readers as it is to us.

ROSENZWEIG'S *STAR OF REDEMPTION*, I:1

In Asian Religion

A very different picture of the universe emerges when we turn to the world-view of Asian religious texts. Here there is still no grasp of any source of knowledge beyond that which is naturally accessible to human beings. But the view that emerges from this data, rooted in the same exclusively empirical observations, is radically non-mythical. Here Rosenzweig has in mind the combined major religious texts of both India and China.

ASIA: THE NON-MYTHICAL GOD

India and China posit deities who simply are abstractions of power. As such they swallow life, rather than (as in the case of the Greek deities) live it, and in so doing they reduce what is to what is not. In other words, while the empirical world from which their thought begins is something (*Etwas*), the Indians and the Chinese reduce it to nothing (*Nicht*). In so doing they extend thought beyond the empirical, but the extension is a regression rather than progress. The world, as we shall see in Book Two, is a movement from a source in nothing towards an end in something, but Asian religion reverses the direction of thought back to the original nothing. In this sense, as regression, it is inferior to the static religious thought of ancient

Greece. Greek thought goes nowhere in the sense that it never transcends the world of objects given to human experience. But at least it does not move back into the womb from which that world, and all thought about that world, is born.

Specifically in the case of Indian religion, the regression occurs ritually by vocalizing syllables[1] that express divine essentiality (*Wesenhaftigkeit*) in order to invoke a power that negates into itself all that is. By this way of recitation Indians affirm a deity in form, but what they are really doing is negating a negation, i.e. affirming a *Nichtnicht*, beyond which nothing remains. This nothing-that-remains is the God of Buddhism. It is a deity that is absolutely, purely nothing.

China

In the case of China the main religion in consideration, Taoism, is a kind of atheism, for here God is not a nothing, but is nothing at all. In Taoism the "power of heaven" is identified as the source of all activity, but its act is nothing, *viz.* it is the concept of *Wu Wei*, which is a nothing act. Hence Chinese religion presupposes a non-act as the foundation of all action. In this way it is, no less than Indian religion, a regression, for it is a reverse motion, *viz.* a motion from the something (action) perceived in this sensate world back to an original nothing (non-action). One (final) step beyond the regression of Asian religions is to what Rosenzweig calls the "primitive atheism" of the people whom he identifies at "heathens."

C. Primitive Atheism

Again, primitive atheism is a step beyond the absolute irrecoverable negation of the Asian religions. Heathens are not able fully to enter into the empirical realm of the living precisely because there is a living voice closed off to them, *viz.* the voice of God. But they are not totally non-living or dead because they are not, as a people, nothing. They live collectively on into the future through producing art. In their art they preserve for history what was their life and the laws of their life, although that life is severly limited by its self-containedness, i.e. by its non-openness to the voice of deity from beyond the confines of the sensately perceivable.

With his discussion of the most deprived form of human life in society, that of heathen primitive atheism, Rosenzweig introduces what will become the central methodological concern in his discussion of religion in Part Three, the realm of aesthetics. It will not be fully developed until Part Three because, as revelation brings human consciousness beyond the limits of human logical reason, so art enables the religious to reach beyond what they can believe exclusively from revelation. Art is able to be introduced here in Part One, because even those human societies most deprived of divine presence still have art. But the art considered at this level is itself very limited.

ROSENZWEIG'S *STAR OF REDEMPTION*, I:2

ASIA: THE NON-PLASTIC WORLD

Rosenzweig's general thesis is that, as in the case of metaphysics and God, by recognizing the problem of the limitations in the move from nothing to something, Asian religion again moves backward from the initial nothing of cosmology and world, rather than forward to the new negation that makes possible a new something in creation. He illustrates his claim in the religions of both India and China.

India

In the case of Indian religion, the focus of attention is on Buddhism (rather than Hinduism). Rosenzweig argues that Buddhism begins properly with the self as a unique particular (*Besondere*) , and then Buddhism correctly moves on through the universal (*Allgemeine*) to the world essence (*Wesen*) as a concept (*Begriff*). However, in the end Buddhism collapses back into its original negation of both the human self and the world. The source of its misdirection is its error in determining world essence as a concept. What it affirms is a concept of spirit (*Geist*), but it affirms it to the exclusion of anything else, which, as such, entails the negation of the material world.

China

In the Chinese religion the focus of attention is on Confucianism (rather than Chinese Buddhism). It has the opposite problem of Indian Buddhism. Confucianism affirms the material world in its full particularity to the exclusion of the general world essence that is the spiritual world. The problem here is the world acknowledged is so individual that it leads Chinese religion in the end to move to its own negation (*Nicht*) by raising inward directed action to the status of highest action, which leads Chinese religion to lose all of the external world, for it submerges (*eintauchen*) itself into the inner world of the individual, material human self. Rosenzweig labels this two-fold abandonment of the world — into its general spirit in India and into its individual matter in the case of China — "primitive phenomenalism".

Primitive Phenomenalism

Rosenzweig condemns Asian religion's primitive phenomenalism as an escape from the world. It escapes from, rather than discovers, the reality of the world because it lacks the courage (*Mut*) to raise its philosophy to the needed new level of thinking where it can grasp the true structure or order (*Gestalt*) of the world. In this sense Greek civilization carried thought beyond the level that

Asian civilization achieved. While the former's philosophical insight remained inferior to that of Asia, *viz.*, Greek philosophy never adequately grasped the inadequacy of thought limited to the plastic world of sensible objects, Greek civilization developed forms of art that transcend the limitations of its philosophical view point. The source of that insight is the inner form of the central foundation principle of Western aesthetics.

ROSENZWEIG'S *STAR OF REDEMPTION*, I:3

ASIA: THE NON-TRAGIC HUMAN

The analysis of ancient Greek religion is divided into two parts, corresponding to the two movements from origin to end that characterize the elemental human. On one hand, Greek philosophy (particularly in the case of Aristotle, and especially when he defines the human as "a political animal") emphasized the human movement from individuality to personality, and in so doing, placed the human almost exclusively within the physical world of politics and relations with other individuals. On the other hand, Attic drama emphasized the human movement of its heroes from initial character to final distinctiveness, and, in so doing, placed the human almost exclusively outside of the worlds of both the physical and the moral. (It is this isolation from others that makes it "tragic.") In the case of the religions of Asia, these two tendencies are divided between the religions of India and China.

India

On one hand, the religions of India attribute too much to character and distinctiveness (*die Besonderheit*) and nothing to individuality and personality. For example, Indian Buddhism posits a radical, unconditional ideal of the heroic, perfected, redeemed self, free in character from all forms of relation, including caste, family, sex and age. This perfection is a constant, ever-increasing immersion into the original nothing (*Nichts*), which is most complete in death where the last remnants of any individuality, including the distinctiveness of being redeemed, is stripped away. By placing exclusive emphasis on the one pole of the new thinking's analysis of the elemental human, Indian Buddhism becomes a total, destructive (in the terms that Nietzsche reserved for Judaism and Christianity) nihilism.

China

In contrast, the religions of China attribute too little to character and distinctiveness, and too much to individuality and personality. Rosenzweig

gives two examples. First is the way Chinese religion pictures the sage, especially Confucius. Second is the way Chinese poetry portrays humanity, especially the verses of Li Po. However, he notes one important exception to his generalization, and it is with this exception that he concludes the paragraph. He notes that Lao-Tzu transcended Chinese radical individuality in the direction of Indian radical character when he posited the concealment of the self as the ideal of the perfect one. This exception brings us back to Indian and Greek religion and to the primary philosophical lesson that Rosenzweig draws from all of these so-called elemental religions, *viz.*, the form of philosophy that he calls "primitive idealism."

Primitive Idealism

In general, the philosophy implicit in all of Asian religion is that the human, in marked distinction to Greek religion, is described as "pathos" rather than tragedy. "Pathos" is that art form whose subject matter is the self-suffication of the hero through misfortune in the world. It stands in marked contrast to "tragedy," where the hero asserts a defiant will in the face of worldly adversity rather than succumbing to it. According to Rosenzweig, Asian art has no tragedy for two reasons, one consequent upon the one-sided view of India, and the other consequent upon the opposite myopia of China. First, in the case of India, character is too conditional (*Bedingung*), because of the ideal of self-overcoming (*Selbstüberwindung*). Second, in the case of China, there is not sufficient individual volition because of the ideal of self-concealment (*Selbstverheimlichung*). Once again, Rosenzweig concludes by judging the Greek forms of religion and philosophy, despite their inability to think beyond the level of the elemental, superior to those of Asia, despite their correct initial philosophical insight that the origin of everything is in nothing rather than in something. Only Greek thought, especially in its drama (and not in its philosophy) grasped both kinds of elemental movements that describe human life, and in so doing, because they had not yet recognized that there is more to reality than the elements, reached the more advanced judgment that human life is tragic. It is in the characterization of the tragic hero that elemental new thinking tells us all that there is to learn about human life.

[1] For example, when practicioners of at least one Indian religion recite "Hare Krishna."

BUDDHISM ON ROSENZWEIG

Bibhuti S. Yadav

I

I must begin with a couple of admissions. First, I read *The Star of Redemption* only recently, and that too in a semi-professional sort of way. My reading of *The Star* is selective, focused as it is primarily on the sections that deal with the civilizations of India and China. These sections are sub-texts at best, but they do illustrate the coherence of the whole text. The second admission follows from the first. My reading of *The Star* is subjective, since it is a response from a reader who is adressed by the text as a "Thou". The text is not an inert object, a silent presence that could be manipulated by the reader who is a living subject. It rather is a karmic body, an act-subject, that incarnates in words the person whose body it is. It affirms and denies, claims and reclaims. The text speaks, the reader speaks, and meaning occurs in the betweeness of the two.

I must say that *The Star* is an honest and therefore a unique text. Most of the western discourse on Asia is basically of two sorts. There are texts that are conceived in active ignorance of the other, and they range from theology of religions to history of religions. Whether sacred or secular in frame of reference, they all seem somehow to be driven by a missiological project. They silence the other, in this case Asia. Then there are texts that are conceived in innocent ignorance of the other, and range from a mystical non-comprehension of Asia to the liberal tolerance of the same. Insufferably guilt-ridden, they subconsciously assume the rational superiority of western identity. Both sorts of texts dualize civilizations in a self-referential game. They either silence Asia in the name of rational speech or reverently equate Asia with mystical silence in defense or difference. In either case, Asia does not speak.

The Star is a different sort of text. Not that it does not misunderstand Asia; indeed it does. But what is unique about it is that it is highly positional and exhorts its readers to be the same. It loves dearly the historical particularity of its theme and method, saying: this is how I speak about what I do, and thou, too, shall espouse a method in defense of who you are. *The Star* is a creative and provocative text on the difference that commitment to civilizational difference makes. It also is a complete text, embodying coherent reflection on aesthetics and ethics, cosmology and ontology, law and logic, religion and politics, love and prayer, God and man, freedom and slavery, history and destiny of nations. Being in the world means being different in communion with others, and that alone is the argument for doing philosophy. *The Star* thematises two of the greatest existential questions: Who or what am I? And who or what are you?

The question determines the method and theme of thought. All discourse has to do with the relation of identity and difference, both bearing historical bodies. Rosenzweig has no faith in a disembodied *cogito*, in the idea of philosophy as a phenomenological description of the world. Philosophy is a reflective activity of the embodied I, and the I is burdened with history. Memories of the past inevitably await in the future, and in the present the I can only review the past in order to reclaim it for the future. Philosophy is an argument for difference - historical difference. Rosenzweig has no faith in metaphysical idealism, the totalitarian ideology that was conceived by Parmenides and perfected by Hegel. Idealism reduces the I to an It, the life and voice of a concrete self to an abstract universal, difference to death and silence. Idealism entails a metaphysical ordering of the world, a hubris from which reason must emancipate itself for its own good. Reason is authentic only if it has the world of difference as its home, if it does not supplant the existential with the metaphysical, and if it is embodied in a thinking I that must discover its identity in the face of a real Thou. Philosophy must serve the cause of life and speech, not of death or silence. Philosophy is conceived in the cry and language of the historically immanent. There is no point in empty abstractions, no meaning in silence.

Rosenzweig thinks as a convinced man. He situates the cogito in his embodied self and lets the historical identity and the bodiliness of being Jewish incarnate itself in categories of thought. His philosophy is a formulation of the cry, the anguish and hope of a people. But he does not like to cry alone, freezing his anguish in a contemplative void, speech in solitary silence. Rosenzweig likes "actual conversation". He wants to cry before God, the wholly other, and in the community of real difference, in this case the civilizations of Buddhism and Hinduism. To his dismay he finds that the gods of Asia like silence. So do its philosophers, who have reduced the I to an It, speech to silence, and salvation to metaphysical presence. Rosenzweig's text is a treatise on world civilizations. He is convinced that Christianity sold out monotheism to paganism in the name of missiological expedience. Situating himself in 19th century German Judaism, he formulates the purity — and greatness — of monotheistic civilization in the context of world history. He reflects on the civilizations of Asia, in this case Buddhism and Hinduism, in a critical, courageous and coherent way.

A fundamental irony haunts *The Star*. Its author thinks as a concrete self, his text a categorical embodiment of his historical identity in words. The text is an invitation to do actual conversation, conceived as it is in a language that necessarily generates a speaking I in search of difference, a Thou, that speaks back on its own terms. Rosenzweig's project is admirable. He places the question —and reality — of identity and difference at the heart of civilizational discourse. But he does precisely what he vows not to do: he essentializes the non-Biblical other. True, he resists the Hegelian trope, the

"Christological concentration" that seeks to fulfill and thus silence difference. It is also true that he has no faith in a theological justification of imperialism, in the Hegelian idealism that spiritualizes history and arrogates to itself the right to redeem the world in concept. That is no small relief. Rosenzweig defended the indigenous difference, i.e., the difference of Judaism from Christianity. But he claims to be "already, with God", and essentializes Asia by virtue of being there. The biblical closure keeps him from discerning the textual bodiliness, the thickness of claims and counter-claims, and concrete particularities of Asian civilizations. Confucius, for example, could never seriously converse with Lao-Tzu or Patanjali's army of yogis, and Kumarila spent a lifetime refuting not only the Buddhism of Vasubandhu and Nagarjuna, but almost everybody else in Hinduism as well.[1] There are not two civilizations as far apart as those of India and China, just as there is no continent that houses greater historical contradictions than Asia. Rosenzweig could not quite escape the Hegelian trope. He paints Asia with the same brush and thus ends up ordering a world through concepts. As a consequence, his remarks on Buddhism and Hinduism are insightful but misplaced. I wish they were both insightful and true, or, for that matter, false and shallow. But they are not. They are misplaced and profound. Hence the burden of new discourse.

Rosenzweig is a world-class thinker. His reflection on civilizations is important for the contemporary discourse on identity and difference, self and other. The Hegelian trope in Rosenzweig is evident, especially in the way he orders the civilizations of Asia, ancient Greece and Judeo-Christian Europe. But there is an important difference. Hegel would never listen to the other—Rosenzweig would, his severe critique of Asia notwithstanding. He insists upon thinking as an embodied self and exhorts others to do the same. Therein lies the relevance of Rosenzweig today. No soothing euphemisms and clever evasions, no interreligious smile that denies a textual and historical body to the difference, and no neo-Vedantic platitudes like the "synthetic unity of religions." More importantly, no mystical nonsense, especially the kind that "Jewish meditators" espouse out of their love for the yogi Buddha. They all reduce I to It, suppress difference in a slick ecumenical smile; they are all discourses of death and silence. They forget that Buddhism was conceived and sustained in speech. The Buddha is so because he excels in speaking ordinary language face to face (*vadatāṁ varaṁ*). Buddhists are so because they have heard the words of the Buddha, and Buddhism because it is a textual body that incamates the reciprocity of speakers and hearers. The key to Buddhism is: "Thus have I heard."

Unfortunately, Western mystics are driven by a self-referential game. They all kill the Buddha, the everyday Budddhists and Buddhism itself. The need of the hour, as Rosenzweig said, is a movement away from death to "entry into life," from silence to speech, from ecumenical cunning to actual conversation. The need is for an embodied self to confront a Thou who cannot

be conceptualized *a priori*, who is just as embodied and cannot be erased in mystical experience. *The Star* exhorts all civilizations to stand up and speak in defense of difference, speech and life. The point is to do cross-cultural reflection in an honest and critical way, to cry at the folly and predicament of human existence, and to review identity in the face of difference. The conflict — and cooperation — of civilizations is already at hand. The world of difference has come to stay. There is no escape from a speaking I confronting a Thou who speaks just as well, and in all their difference. History is a house of difference, real difference.

In the following pages I first present Rosenzweig's remarks on Asia to establish the context. I then offer an Indian Buddhist response in order to show that Buddhism too equates philosophy with coherent reflection on embodied existence. It too rejects the metaphysical discourse of essence. I conclude observing that there are things about which Buddhist and Jewish philosophers may think and cry together.

II

Rosenzweig's discourse on Asia stems from a Jewish frame of reference. Three categories constitute the reference: creation, revelation and redemption. God creates the world out of concern for his accessibility to humanity. He then reveals himself in love, calling each human being by his first name, making him aware of his being an embodied I and obligating him to a life of concrete selfhood. Naming, being named and facing a neighbor who also bears a name — they all are ethical events, not metaphysical abstractions or linguistic fictions. Bearing a name is the key to being a moral agent; it obligates man to love others in their difference. The sociality of love is redemptive, since it liberates man from the despair of loneliness, fear of isolation and finally of death.[2] God has time for man, man has time for God, and each human being, by virtue of bearing a name, has time for all others. There is just time and time, history and more history. The temporality entails moral mutuality, an interminable betweeness of God and humanity, person and person, nations and nations. Saying "I" and bearing a name means being in the thick of the world. It names the Jewish vision of the middle way.

The problem with Buddhism and Hinduism is that they have no idea of the middle, the betweeness that the faith in creation, revelation and redemption entails. Not that they don't believe in God. Indeed, they do, especially Hinduism. But India's god, by which Rosenzweig means Vedantic Brahman, is displaced in a "salt solution," the metaphysics of essence. "India's god exhausts itself on the road between naught and the pure, all-pervasive silence of essence, the divine physis. Never has the sound of divine freedom penetrated the tacit circle of the Brahmin [Brahman], thus it itself remains dead, though filling all life and absorbing all life into itself."[3] Brahman is a nameless presence in which dwells a radical alienation of essence and existence,

universal and the concrete particular, identity and difference. It is an abstract spirit that is both blind and deaf and can see or hear no other, a metaphysical purity from which is exiled the possibility of all difference, the world itself. Difference pollutes, as it entails being with others. But Brahman is so pure and shuns the very thought of touchability. So delicate is Brahman's purity that it cannot even be self-conscious for that would entail the difference of subject and object, self and the body. So fearful is Brahman of pollution that it cannot see or be with anything different, or hear a voice that emanates from the otherness of the other. The purity is metaphysical, not moral, and is achieved by abstracting the self from the body. "Thus everything is prepared for the world to become a system of concepts, a system, it is true, of reality, but without any of the independent right of the particular, which is ascribed to illusion."[4] Not even a metaphysical right, let alone an existential one. Rosenzweig discerns an irony in it all. Brahman (Being) is the essence, the very Ātman of all beings, including human beings. But in it there is no trace of difference, no relationality or moral mutuality, no voice of the concrete particular, no speech and no life. The purity of essence is achieved through concepts, and the concepts still truth in tautology. Being cannot affirm or deny anything, nor can anything be meaningfully affirmed or denied of it, except the tautological fixity: "Being is Being". Everything else that can be said about it is not it, and affirmation of the truth entailed in the negation of all non-tautological speech is the only "yea" permissible in regard to it. "The infinitely countless 'not thus, not thus' was therewith inserted into the one infinite Thus. The negated naught was the essence of the deity."[5] The silencing power of concepts is total, their affirmation of death just as complete.

Such, then, is Being, or Brahman, the reigning deity of India. Incompetent to say I, it is unable to face difference, a Thou; unable to bear a name itself, it finds unbearable the idea of another being or person with a name. Language means mutuality of identity and difference. Because speech pollutes, Being keeps its purity in silence: *upaśānto 'yaṁ ātmā*. It is so perfect, conceptually, that it can have no longing for human existence, no desire for moral agency driven teleologically toward perfection but not quite being able to be there. It is beyond all existential anguish. It cannot create, it cannot love, and it cannot redeem. It does not let a human being say "I," bear a name in concrete selfhood, and discover the moral worth of being in being with others. Fearful of difference, the sound and smell of embodied humanity, Being protects its purity in tautological perfection, in a timeless and speechless "thereness" (*sattāmātra*). So complete is the idea of world as a taboo that it prefers being forever glued to itself, like a stone, (*pāṣāṇavat*). Devoid of teleological destiny, of the reciprocity of being and doing, and the desire to bear the world as its body, Being cannot do or undo anything. Nor does it let itself be the reason why human beings should be inclined to do, undo, or re-do anything at all *(kartuṁ, akartuṁ anyathā-kartuṁ śakyaṁ)* Being is not in time, time is not

in Being, and it certainly has no time for human beings. The reigning god of India does not care. "He does not give of himself, does not love, does not have to love. For he keeps his physis to himself, and therefore remains what he is: the metaphysical."[6] The gap between essence and existence, self and the body, silence and speech — is total. Hinduism is a monistic tyranny, a house of silence where a God who cares and speaks cannot live. "It is not by coincidence," Rosenzweig sighs in relief, "that revelation, once it started on its way into the world, took the road to the West, not to the East.[7] Asia received it, but did not deserve to keep it. Hence the flight of revelation from Asia, especially India.

Then, says Rosenzweig, came Buddhism, not to do anything different, but to do more of the same. Hinduism had perfected the world in concept, in depositing identity in a lifeless spirit, and thus ending up by negating the reality and value of difference, the body and the concrete particular. Buddhism elevated the conceptual ordering of the world to a further height, and made life even more unbearable for "the living self of man and the living world of nations"[8]. Buddhism went on to reject both identity and difference, self and the body, universal and the particular. Unlike Christianity, it could not find salvation in a missiological identity. Instead it found salvation in a metaphysical emptiness, in the cold void called *nirvāṇa*. "Buddha teaches his followers to suspend the world, already become concept, in comprehension of non comprehension and thus beyond comprehension."[9] The passion for abstraction discovered itself in the realization that reason cannot know or tolerate anything, not even itself. Reason moved beyond the difference of truth and falsity, cognition and non-cognition, self and not-self, good and evil, being and nothingness. Silence is the limit of abstraction, essencelessness the greatest name of essence. The name of the game is *śūnyatā*, the freezing emptiness in which the project of the conceptual ordering of the world found its own completion. With a tone both sad and sarcastic, Rosenzweig notes that Buddhism placed salvation in the "soundproof chambers of nirvāṇa"[10].

The chambers reflect the motif of those who built them, those who cannot bear the sounds and echoes of the toiling world and are looking for a place to hide. Nirvāṇa is such a place, or better, a palace. Walls, soundproof walls, separate the chambers, and namelessness reigns. The enlightened self is nameless, the other is nameless, and the two, or better, the non-two, stay stilled in meditative "thereness". There is thereness, but nobody in particular is there. There is no need to say or hear anything, nobody to call, nobody to be called out, nothing to call out about, and nothing with which to call. The silence is total. So is the "escapist blandness of abstraction." There is no sign even of a speaking Buddha, or Buddhists who hear the words, let alone the echoes of the voice of a living God. There is no movement of any sort whatever, just endless sitting stilled in cement. The enlightened ones are gone so far beyond the world, so beyond the beyond itself, so beyond the beyond and nonbeyond — that they cannot *go* anywhere anymore, or return somewhere else (*oṁ gate,*

gate, pāragate, pārasaṁgate, bodhi svāhā). Such is the enlightenment experience, the limit of fleeing the world, the heartless mantra of an empty heart. "The terror of God, which could not muster courage to become fear of God, flees into the vacuum of the non-idea, and there the voice loses itself in the void."[11] The void is a stilled naught, a tautological absence so glued to itself that it entails the impossibility of all possibilities. Such is the eschatological completion, the end of all history, including Buddhist history. Having overcome everything actual and possible, it negates the possibility of its own overcoming. Nothingness is nothingness, it cannot be turned into anything else. Thus is man, in the name of enlightenment, robbed of his concrete humanity, his desire to say I and the longing to meet a Thou face to face, proper name to proper name, person to person. Thus is man, in the name of enlightenment, robbed of his concrete humanity, his desire to say I and the longing to meet a Thou face to face, proper name to proper name, person to person. Thus is man robbed of his right to concrete particularity, his desire for identity in the face of difference, his worldliness and his imperfections that obligate him to strive for a human world order through prayer and love.[12]

Such is Rosenzweig's reading of Buddhism and Hinduism. He does not speak the language of political correctness; he calls it as he sees it. Buddhism and Hinduism, in his view, are obsessed with metaphysical extremity, with a conceptual ordering of the world wherein salvation is salted away in abstract perfection. Such perfection is formally correct but materially empty. It has spirit but no body, essence but no existence, presence but no persons, ideas but no time. It also is exclusive and secretive, enclosed as it is in a secret mantra that ordinary people cannot utter. The enlightened experience is a monopoly of the meta-ordinary and the perfect, those who know everything but need to do nothing. It is not for the ordinary people, those who are illiterate and weak. Rosenzweig is amused by the irony of it all. One would think that religion is for the imperfect, and not for those who are already perfect by virtue of their mystical union with Brahman, or for those who are enlightened and say "I am God." But God needs no religion; human beings do.

Rosenzweig sees no good in *nirvāṇa* and union with God. Both are movements away from ordinariness, the human order of the world. The truth is that the enlightened realm of Asia, the culture of abstract perfection, is not "spiritual" at all. The realm is actually a vault in which the privileged elite have placed their difference from ordinary humanity, the mystic his conceit of immediacy, the ascetic his arrogance toward embodied selfhood, and the philosopher his fear of facing human existence.[13] Freedom from contact with humans is construed as freedom. All this stems from the absence of a monotheistic reading of history, from lack of faith in the total otherness of God that alone can make the difference in suffering and salvation, slavery and freedom. Rosenzweig historicizes his critique of abstract perfection, the notion that salvation entails immediacy of the self with itself. He associates

such immediacy with the civilizational anomalies of Asia, saying that "India is a nation dreaming with closed eyes, and China a nation dreaming with eyes open"[14]. Whether dreaming or day dreaming, Asia stands for the loss of mediated difference.

III

I have indicated earlier that Rosenzweig's critique of Asia, especially Buddhism and Hinduism, is total and, for the most part, misplaced. I cannot propose a total response, for that would be just as misplaced. I therefore preface my response with a series of qualifications. Obviously I cannot speak on behalf of all Asia, a locus of civilizations so complex that no single human being is competent to speak for it. I do not propose a Hindu response here, except to say that Hinduism is a massive house, and just as divided. It is much more than what filtered through the imagination of nineteenth century German romanticism, and which apparently is the basis of Rosenzweig's critique. The German imagination reduced Hinduism to the elitist Vedanta of Śankarācārya. The truth is that even Vedanta has been a house divided. Eminent thinkers in the Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva traditions, despite their significant differences with Rosenzweig, would have loved The Star. They would have been thrilled at Rosenzweig's critique of monistic Vedanta, wondering whether The Star is not a text much closer to Hinduism than any of the works of Śankarācārya. Suppression of difference is not a Hindu idea; neither is silence. Thinking is an act of embodied self, and the self can think only about the lived world (*anubhava*). Vaiṣṇava thinkers, in particular, gave voice and body to difference in the name of God, who names himself as the preeminent I, who brings human beings to existence by giving each a name, and who turns the world into *nāma līlā*, into a circle of addressive discourse. There can be no silence or emptiness, only names and names in the thousands, and much more (*sahaṣra nāma*). God orders the world in the reciprocity of saying and being, making the self bear a name as the condition of its concrete being (*rūpa nāma vibhedena*). Existence, especially human, can be recognised only through names. The world is affirmation of freedom through speech, the rights and obligations to bear names, an addressive circle where an embodied self confronts the other person as a thou (*tvaṁ*), and where all of them, individually and in unison, face God as the greatest Thou.[15] God is mischievous as well, for he promises to be seen wholly and yet escapes in the process of being seen and named. A Vaiṣṇava has no taste for the salt solution of Śankarācārya, nor does he have the time to visit the soundproof chambers of nirvāṇa. He finds them both as disagreeable as the bitterness of a neem tree. He prefers being in the world instead, tracing in awe and love the signs of the living God. The love leads to the predicament of facing a God who names himself again and again, to the exuberant exhaustion of living between names and names, and to the delight of an accusatory question: by how many more names can God be

named? Being in the world means committment to speech acts. Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism contributed massively to ontology, epistemology, aesthetics, literature and music. Above all they rescued religion from the secretive elitism of Śankara's Vedanta. They enclosed religion in radical ordinariness, in the practice of love and prayer.

My response to Rosenzweig is even more modest. I do not even propose to speak on behalf of all of Buddhism. I limit myself to *Tevijjā Sutta*, an important discourse of Śākyamuni in Pali and is part of a large text called *Dīgha Nikāya*.[16] "God," "fear," "dream," "union with Brahma," yea," "naught," "essence," "existence void concrete," "particularity," "name," "I," "thou," "face to face," prayer," "love," "neighbor" — these are the recurrent terms in Rosenzweig's discourse of Asia. I have picked The *Tevijjā* for three reasons. First, it provides my response with a concrete particularity and textual body. An abstract conversation performed without a context is just that: empty. Secondly, it affords me an opportunity to persuade Rosenzweig and his legacy to witness just how fundamentally Buddhism and Hinduism are far apart, let alone the rest of Asia. Rather than being more of the same, India is a civilizational locus — and active agent — of the voices of difference. Thirdly, and most importantly, it takes me directly to the heart of Rosenzweig's concerns, especially the question of "union with God".

The *Tevijjā* discourse is staged wisely. Śākyamuni has been walking throughout the land, spreading the truth of the middle way. There is no efficacy in metaphysical abstractions, in empty categories like being and nothingness, soul and substance. Nor is there any good in the notion of the self (*Atman*) that excludes the body, or a body that is construed as a thing-in-itself. There is no self without a body, just as there is no body that does not belong to somebody in particular. Śākyamuni rejected both idealistic and materialistic essentialism —and monism. He placed meaning in concrete particularity, insisting that critical reflection emanates from being in the middle of the world. He dismissed as nonsense any questions regarding the beginning and end of the world. Metaphysical genealogy, the causal deduction of the world from Being (God), is useless. The point is to do diagnostic thinking, to thematize human existence on its own terms, and to discern how the lived world has come to be what it is (*nidāna kathā*). An entity equals the conditions of its existence; what a thing actually is depends on how it has come to be. Discovering the howness of whatever exists makes for a *Tathāgata*, the enlightened one. A disembodied being, one that is believed to be before and after the world, is a phantom, and the discourse about it just as empty and useless (*āmūlakaṁ niratthakaṁ*). The need is to think through the middle of the world. The need is to do embodied reflections.

Śākyamuni, of the *Tevijjā*, has arrived in Manasākaṭa, a village of wealthy Brahmins on the banks of river Achiravatī. He is resting in a mango grove north of the village. Two Brahmins, Väseööha and Bhäradväja, are out

strolling and debating the question dearest to them: which path truly leads to union with Brahma (God)? Each claims emancipatory exclusivity to his respective path, citing scriptural justification and the weight of the tradition in support. Stuck with antinomies, they finally place the issue before the Buddha: which is the best way to union with God?

Śākyamuni, of course, discerns the tilt toward a"salt solution" in the question, an invitation for empty talk. He has a distaste for the metaphysical discourse basically for two reasons: it is a cover for the fear of facing human finitude (*āvaraṇa*), and it displaces the fear in abstractions, in questions about an eternal being from which the world originates and to which it returns (*vikṣepa*). Fearful consciousness needs false comfort. It believes that Brahman or God was there in the beginning of the world, it still is there, and returning to it is the essence of salvation. Because the question of origins is symptomatic of an existential malady, Śākyamuni raises a series of counter-questions to clear the malady. His intention is two-fold: first, to help Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja face the reasons why they have come to formulate the question; and secondly to bring them back to the middle of the world, to muster courage to face human existence and find meaning in the concrete particular. Is there any evidence that a single one of the Brahmins, learned in Vedas and Upaniṣads, has seen God face to face? Have any of their ancestors, going back to seven generations, seen God face to face? Have any of the *rishis*, the composers of the secret mantra called AUM seen God face-to-face? Aṇgīrasa? Bhṛgu? Vāmadeva? Vaśiṣṭha?[17] Seeing face to face presupposes being face to face, a concrete person facing an entity or person that is just as concrete by virtue of bearing a name.

Śākyamuni's counter-questions are not innocent. They incarnate a radical shift in the method and theme of thought, a new thinking and a new vision of the world. They make a shift from the metaphysical to the existential. Given to "salt solutions", the Upanisads exile existence from essence. Brahman (God) is a being in-itself, autonomous and independent of everything else. It needs no other, and union with it too means seeing or hearing no other. Brahman, in Śākyamuni's view, is a phantom, and union with it just as much a phantom. Śākyamuni exiles essence from existence, eternity from time. Existence is interdependent difference, a radical relationality governed by the law of cause and effect. An entity is concrete because some other entities precede it causally, and because it is a causal antecedent of entities subsequent to it. An entity exists concretely because, and only because, it is both cause and effect simultaneously. To exist means to function causally — it means to change, to come to be and then cease to be. That which does not change does not exist. That which is uncaused or causes nothing is fictional; so is an uncaused entity, the first cause, that is believed to cause everything. If God creates the world without being a creature of something else, then it can not exist. God is an abstract phantom.

Śākyamuni's point is clear. It is the logic of interdependent difference that accounts for concrete existence. And concrete existence alone can be thought and spoken about. If Brahman (God) is omnipresent, if it is everything everywhere, then it is not a particular entity; there is nothing that it is not, and therefore nothing that can count against it (*pratiyogī*). A concrete entity, say, a cow, is so by virtue of being similar to entities that bear the name "cow," and because it is dissimilar to all the entities bearing different names, say, "horse." That which admits of no difference, internal or external, is not different from nothing. Because it is not a concrete existence itself, it cannot be the argument for the existence of things from which it could be shown to be different. God is naught, null and void.

The argument that God is wholly other to everything in the world is fundamentally flawed. God does not answer the description of difference in Śākyamuni'ss view. "God" is not a demonstrative symbol, it does not signify an entity encountered as *this* in sense-experience (*idantā*). Nor is the word a proper name signifying embodied selfhood like "John" and "Joe" (*nāma kalpanā*). Nor again is the word a descriptive symbol of class properties, like "cowness", goodness", "humanness" (*jāti kalpanā*). "God" is an empty name, a deceptive signifier, a word without actual reference. But it is in this empty signifier that the monotheistic imagination has hit its own limits. In its own efforts to flee the real world, the imagination uses "God" to name an entity so different from everything in the world that none more different than it can ever be conceived. Such is the abstracting power of the ontological argument, the greatest escape from existential finitude, the real world. God is perfect by default, only because of his difference from anything known or lived. The truth is that God does not answer the description of difference. "God" is the name of a non-idea, a naught that cannot create, cannot love, and cannot redeem. The nought is so perfect conceptually, and so alien to the human order of the world, that it cannot recognize a cry in the face of old age and death. "God" does not name a being that can be met or seen face to face, nor a concrete presence to which one can say "Thou art God." Absolute otherness means lack of actual conversation. God, and for that reason Atman or Brahman, does not have a human face, man does have a God-like face; and the two would not be able to recognize each other even if they ever could meet. Not having a face himself, God cannot confront a human being with a face and say "Thou art man." The problem with Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja, and Rosenzweig, is that they believe in a God who is eternal, who is not born and thus does not grow old and die. This God can have no empathy with tragic existence, especially old age and death. An abstract phantom, it cannot cry, it cannot scratch, and cannot rise and talk about the lived world. Bhāradvāja and Vāseṭṭha place salvation in union with a God that has not seen a real man, and whom no man has met face to face, person to person, proper name to proper name. Monism, including monotheism, is an historical obsession with a phantom. Fearful of human existence, it

returns to a non-idea and calls it Brahman or God. Śākyamuni illustrates it all with a sadness. "Just as a file of men go on, clinging to each other, and the first one sees nothing, the middle one sees nothing, and the last one sees nothing, so it is with the talk of these Brahmins learned in the Three Vedas: the first one sees nothing, the middle one sees nothing, the last one sees nothing. The talk of these Brahmins learned in the Three Vedas turns out to be laughable, mere words, empty and vain."[18]

Two questions are in order here. Why name a being that is not there to be named in the first place? And why do philosophers, the supposed agents of rational discourse, chase phantoms? Śākyamuni's answer is simple: desire (*vāsanā*). Desire differentiates itself into a subject that says "I" and an object about which one can say "mine." Names, naming and being named — they all are conceived in a desire that incarnates itself in the duality of self and body, I and other. Conceived in desire, the self is chronically erotic (*kāma mūlaṁ*). It seeks the other not to affirm the otherness of the other; it seeks the other as an attributive sign, something about which it can say "mine" on the way to objectifying its own identity (*ahaṁ mame'ti*). So erotic — and thus possessive — is the I in its desire for the other that it even names objects that are not there to be named. The self finds comfort in false consciousness, in altering imagination into perception, wishes into reality. It finds truth in a category mistake, turning the world into an epistemic field where "I perceive X" is actually a cover for "I wish X". Epistemology is covert egology. Whatever the self encounters in seeing, hearing, touching, etc., is ordered by its desire for identity . Its sense organs are not passive, inactively receiving data from the outside. Goaded by desire for identity, sense organs actively look for objects, seeing them even when they are not there to be seen, hearing voices coming from nowhere in particular. Epistemology is conceived in an egological cave. Perception is covert imagination, and the claim "I know this" is actually the tool through which the self certifies itself as "I am this."[19] Saying "I" is the reason why there is the good old world.

The greatest incarnation of such self-deception, this ordering of wishes into reality, is the belief in Brahman (God). Śākyamuni illustrates it with characteristic simplicity. Suppose, he says to Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja, there is a man who believes he is in love with the most beautiful woman in the land (*janapada kalyāṇī*). When asked whether he knows her name or caste, the complexion of her body, whether she is tall, short or of medium height, slim or heavy, or whether she lives in the city, the suburbs or a remote village — to all these the man says "no." The man loves the other, the woman so perfect and different, that he does not even know her name or place of dwelling. The man is an embodied self, and the reason why he loves the woman is real. But the other, the object of his love, is so transcendent and perfect, so different from everything he knows, that she cannot be known or met face to face. She can only be worshipped precisely because she is a phantom, an imagined entity.[20]

So geometrically correct is the human imagination. So also is the case with man's love for God, the wholly other. No individual, nor any of his ancestors seven generations back, has seen God face to face, person to person. Yet, he espouses love for God in the name of his tradition, his believed identity. The truth is that the otherness of God is none other than what the I has imagined it to be. The ego's love of itself is so chronic — and so persistent — that it can love the Other, no matter how holy, only as its own alterego (*ātmīyākāra*). Hence the idea of "my God", "our God", "my Atman". The I even sublimates its finitude into the idea of a soul which is believed to be in union with God from eternity to eternity! This deception is at the heart of spiritual discourse, including theological discourse.

Śākyamuni had no faith in the spiritual discourse of the Upaniṣads. He even exited the city of Kapilvastu, his birth place, to discover the meaning of human finitude on human terms. In search of the meaning of being in the world, he walked through the world. Under the bodhi tree he inaugurated the discourse of dependent origination, the concrete and the particular. He also discovered the erotic roots of the metaphysical imagination, establishing the causal relation between the self-loving I and the other it claims to love. He has arrived in Manasākaṭa village with a mission: how to convince the self-centering ego that the God (Brahman) it talks about is none other than the self that does the talking.[21] Śākyamuni has no desire to quarrel or disrupt the spiritual discourse; he only wants the self to face itself in the mirror.

Just whose face does the I encounter, its own or God's? The irony is that metaphysicians and theologians do not thematize the self-projecting activities of the I; they do not face themselves. Instead they seek shelter in the transcendent, thus doing more of the same that the I does. They sublimate eros into logos, fantasy into a conceptual ordering of the world, thus constructing an abstract highway to the transcendent chambers where God is believed to dwell and from where he commands man's prayer and love.[22] Śākyamuni likens the metaphysician and theologian to an engineer who is out to build stairs to a palace without knowing where the palace is, what it looks like, or in which direction its gates open. The metaphysical, theological construction of the world is downright nonsense; it also is escapist. For it finds solace in false consciousness, in mistaking imagination for valid perception, eros for logos, the wish that "X be" with the claim that "X is" is true. Desire edits itself into the language of truth claims.[23]

Śākyamuni urges Bhāradvāja and Vāseṭṭha to please not misunderstand him. He is only against the claim that "God" names a transcendent, omnipotent being who is unlike everything else, and commands man's prayer and love by virtue of his absolute otherness. His critique of the metaphysical-theological God is on ethical and existential grounds, in defense of a human order of the world. Man must face *saṁsāra*, the finitude entailed in old age and death, on his own terms. Love and redemption have little to do with the doctrine of

creation, with the belief that God created the world and that on Him we must call in times of distress. If in need of crossing a river, such as Achiravaté, one needs to build a raft or a boat. Being human means doing things human, enlightened existence means action. There is no point in doing *zazen* in the soundproof chambers of nirvāṇa. or in offering prayers to a God who is just as silent in his transcendence, or yet again in sublimating problematic existence in a mystical union,with Brahman. These are all varieties of self-deception, ways of solving problems by denying them away. They all smell of a "salt solution." Man cannot afford to sit mystically on this side of Achiravaté and deny the other side in a non-dualistic trope, or call out prayerfully and say, " Come here, other bank, come here."[24] Glued to his metaphysical otherness, God would not come to the world, no matter how much human beings pray or address him by however many names. After all, why should man offer prayers to a God who is omnipotent and perfect and yet has created a world where evil reigns and good human beings suffer, where people are dehumanized in a society of formalized purity, and where man is born to face humiliation in old age and death? How can God have the courage to face man? And why should man be face to face with a God who has already lost his moral face? It makes sense if man, in loneliness and death, calls on God for help. But it makes no sense for God to create human beings so they are forced to look for his help. That is like saying human beings must fall sick because there are hospitals to help, and not that there should be hospitals because human beings are sick and need help.

The monotheistic imagination is ethically flawed. It first posits a system of salvation from which it then derives sin and suffering. It cannot explain human imperfection on human terms. It must transcendentalize. The world that the imagination constructs may be theologically correct, but morally empty. It cannot muster courage to turn the terror and tragedy of finitude into a moral fear of human existence. It flees instead into a holy vacuum, landing into a moral void signified by the word "God." The monotheistic imagination excels in the discourse of power, not compassion and love for the frailty of human existence. It centers the world in a God who says to man, do as I say and never ask whether I myself practice what I say. God is so perfect that he need not practice, or obey, the moral law which he himself has authored. Not only is the idea of God morally empty, it also is logically flawed. If God obeys the law, he is imperfect like human beings; if he does not, he is beyond good and evil. There is a chronic alienation of saying and doing in God, his perfection so complete that it excludes the possibility of interdependent existence. Śākyamuni believed that moral authority is an achievement, not an a priori idea. It results from the reciprocity of saying and doing, action and speech (*yathāvādī tathākārī*). If moral hypocrisy is the price of saying "I" before God, then Śākyamuni will have none of it, neither the I nor God. Both smell of false selfhood. Śākyamuni feared that the alienation of speech and

action in God would filter into religious life. Prayer becomes ritualized, words replace action, and hypocrisy becomes institutionalized into the hierarchical society and priestly life. This is precisely what Śākyamuni has in mind when he says, "Well, now, Vāseṭṭha, those Brahmins persistently neglect what a Brahmin should do, and persistently do what a Brahmin should not do."[25]

The key word is "persistently". It suggests a way of life. The Brahmins have elevated the alienation of speech and action to a sacred institution, to the scriptural justification of why the elite should recite mantra and not share their power with the ordinary folks. Mantra and mysticism are ideological gates. And the Brahmins use the gates to spiritualize salvation in a mystical union with God, but they do this to sanctify their material and political privilege. They ask others to practice self-denial and sense-control, while they themselves are driven to a life of greed, ill-will, and jealousy, to egocentric appropriation of pleasurable form, sound, and smell (*rūpa rāgotpanna*). Enclosed in sensuous slavery, to the pleasures of the body, the *Brahmins* have no interest in exiting the gate to a life of material and moral freedom for all. They cannot make an exit from the *saṁsāric* cave. They cannot bear the truth that "God" names an ethical idea, evoking an exit from Kapilvastu, the city of bondage, to a human order of the world beyond the gate, (*niḥsaraṇaṁ*).[26] That is the world of moral embodiment (*śīlakāya*), of concrete personhood devoted to compassion, friendship and self-sacrifice. "God" names not a metaphysical dream, but *śīla*, the pursuit of moral existence and social dignity in the world. Like the sound of a drum, the word echoes the mutuality of each person with all others, and of all with each. Hearing the name "God" means being on a *mārga*, on the way to moral mutuality.

> Then with his heart filled with compassion, ... with sympathetic joy, with equanimity, he dwells suffusing one quarter, the second, the third, the fourth. Thus he dwells suffusing the whole world, upwards, downwards, across everywhere, always with a heart filled with equanimity, abundant, unbounded, without hate or ill-will.[27]

There is no point in dreaming with eyes closed or open, or in gazing at a transcendent God in prayerful piety. The point is to turn the world into an ethical neighborhood, to love and be with others. That is the essence of redemption. That alone is the meaning of "union with God".[28]

IV

I am a creature of history and am in no position to divinize. Nevertheless I cannot resist the temptation of wondering a couple of what ifs. What if Rosenzweig met Śākyamuni face to face in Manasākaṭa? I tend to think that he would have loved Śākyamuni's deconstruction of "union with God", happy

to discern the echoes of his belief that the mystics claim of the non-othemess with God is actually a vault in which the privileged elite have sanctified their differences from the ordinary folks. And what if Śākyamuni had read *The Star*, especially the last chapter called "Gate"? I tend to think that Śākyamuni would have been shaken, not only by its moving prose, but even more so by its depth of faith and hope. "Gate" is a signpost differentiating the border of slavery and freedom. It also marks the difference between a God that is mummified in metaphysical silence and a God who cares. I tend to think that Śākyamuni would have walked out of the gate to a life on the road to freedom. He would have done so while recalling with relief his own exit through the gate of Kapilavastu, the city of his birth.

Once out of the gate, well on the way, Rosenzweig and Śākyamuni would have put two questions to each other. What unlocked the gates? And what lies ahead? Rosenzweig's answer is clear: God, in his love and mercy, unlocked the gate. What lies ahead is God himself who can be glimpsed, but whom no human being can see fully and live. Human beings cannot be God; they can only follow the signs of his presence. God leads the way to a life beyond in the middle of life, obligating human beings to live in pursuit of justice, mercy and love with prayer. What lies ahead is the way itself, which means walking humbly with God towards the endless perfectibility of human existence without ever reaching perfection. Perfection for man means death. Śākyamuni would have said that God indeed unlocked the gate, that God is the argument against lonliness of old age, death and social indignity. But "God" names moral humanity itself, the community in search of freedom from the slavery that possessive ego entails. Rosenzweig would have reiterated that moral humanity is an endowed entity, one that God uses as a medium to illustrate his liberative project. Śākyamuni would have said that liberation, be it social or existential, is not a gift but an achievement. Moral humility is indigenous to human existence, and it uses itself as the medium to materialise the liberative project. It is this collective will of moral humanity, embodied in Moses that unlocked the gate.

Śākyamuni would have concurred with Rosenzweig on the second question. What lies ahead is the *mārga*, the massive expanse of the way itself. The *mārga* obligates human beings never to return to slavery inside the gate, despite the temptations, and to keep walking on the way of compassion and friendliness with equanimity. What lies ahead is *saṁsāric* facticity, the commitment towards a better human order, to a life beyond in the middle of life. The facticity entails endless perfectibility that inevitably lands in imperfection. Being on the way means knowledge of where to be and the concomitant anguish of not being able to be there. It is not for nothing that Śākyamuni affirmed *mārga*, the way, as the last of the four noble truths. There is *mārga* and more *mārga*, and still more of the same. That alone is the destiny of the middle way, the predicament of having to keep walking towards a shifting

horizon. Conceived in the rejection of faith in the absolute beginning and end of the world, moral humanity can have no other destiny. *Nirvāṇa* does mean perfection, but *nirvāṇa* and *saṁsāra* are two different things. *Nirvāṇa* means whatever happens to a morally striving *arahant* after death. Such is the anguish of dying in pursuit of perfection in life. Rosenzweig would have nodded at Śākyamuni with sympathy and understanding. They would have smiled at each other in enlightened difference, happy to discover the way that leads towards life beyond in the middle of life as the theme of actual conversation. Addressing each other as a 'Thou', they both would have looked at the shifting horizons in awe and optimism, knowing that to keep walking together is the way of being in the middle of the world.

1 See William C. Allen's Ph.D. dissertation on Kumarila and Vasubandhu, Temple University, August 1996.
2 *The Star of Redemption*, trans. and ed. by William W. Hallo (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), N.N. Glatzer's Forward to *The Star*, pp. xvi-xvii.
3 *The Star*, pp. 35-36, parentheses added.
4 *The Star*, p. 58.
5 *The Star*, p. 36.
6 *The Star*, p. 40.
7 *The Star*, p. 35.
8 *The Star*, p. 37.
9 *The Star*, pp. 59-60.
10 *The Star*, p. 37.
11 *The Star*, pp. 37-38.
12 "What is absolutely effective is not enlightenment, but love. Love cannot be other than effective", *The Star*, pp. 368-269.
13 *The Star*, p. 39.
14 *The Star*, p. 60.
15 Bibhuti S. Yadav, "Vallabha's Positive Response to Buddhism", *Journal of Dharma*, April-June 1994, pp. 113-137; Vallabha, *Tattvarthadipa Nibandha,* Vol. I (Varanasi: Bhartiya Vidya Prakashana, 1971); Julius Lipner, *The Face of Truth*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1986).
16 *Dīgha Nikāya* (hence onward as DN) Eng. trans. by Maurice Walsh (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995).
17 DN, p. 188.
18 DN, p. 189.
19 Bibhuti S. Yadav, "Methodic Deconstruction", in S. Biderman and Ben-Ami Scharfstein (eds) *Interpretation in Religion*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992) pp. 129-166.
20 DN, p. 190.

[21] DN, p. 190.

[22] For technical discourse on God in Sanskrit thought, see works of Udāyana, Udyotkara, Jayanta, Gangesha (Hinduism); and Dharmakīrti, Śāntarakṣita, Ratnakīrti (Buddhism). Also John Vattanky, *Gangesa's Philosophy of God* (Madras: Adyar Library, 1984) pp. 3-150; George Chemparthy, An *Indian Rational Theology* (Vienna, 1972) pp. 77-157.

[23] DN, p. 190.

[24] DN, p. 190.

[25] DN, pp. 190-191.

[26] DN, p. 191.

[27] DN, p. 194.

[28] DN, p. 194.

ISSN 0970-5368

THE TIBET JOURNAL

(Established 1976)

A scholarly quarterly publication in English by the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (LTWA) at the headquarters of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, devoted to the presentation of scholarly and general-interest articles on Tibetan culture and civilization.

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HINDU NATIONALISM AND THE ISRAELI EXPERIENCE

Gary J. Jacobsohn

I. Introduction

India and Israel will soon be marking a half century of national independence. In the United States at least, both will undoubtedly be celebrated for their successful experiments in democratic politics, particularly since in each case the extraordinary obstacles in the way of their achievements have been so daunting. Of course it is precisely these obstacles that will still cause many to temper their enthusiasm for fear that, even after fifty years, the validation of democratic accomplishment may come to be seen as premature. While each obstacle alone — for example, living in a hostile neighborhood — threatens to disturb the equilibrium of democratic practice, it is the specter of religious and ethnic nationalism that casts the most ominous shadow over the future of democracy in these two countries.

In this article I want to consider the problem of ethno/religious nationalism in India and Israel by addressing the following question: to what extent is the Israeli model of a nation that serves as official homeland for a particular religious people a replicable example for India? The question, of course, is not one currently on anyone's specific agenda, but, with the resurgence of Hindu nationalism in India, the answer to it may satisfy more than just the idle concerns of an academic thought experiment. Thus it would be reasonable for someone to wonder whether the Israeli example could function as a source of insight into a possible future for India.

To put the matter another way, what would be entailed in the determination to act on the basis of the following proposition: "There is no Indian nation separate from the Hindu people"? The formulation is patterned after an observation made by Justice Shimon Agranat in an important Israeli Supreme Court case, in which it was pointed out that "There is no Israeli nation separate from the Jewish people"[1]. The author of this remark was no wild-eyed religious nationalist harboring dangerous extremist ambitions, but a secular Jew widely celebrated for his landmark libertarian judicial opinions. If not a universally shared sentiment among Israeli Jews, it is surely a belief well within the mainstream of Zionist thought, expressive of the broader commitments animating the founders of the State.

In India the establishment of the State of Israel was celebrated only among those outside of the mainstream of the Indian independence movement. In pointed disagreement with the official position of Nehru's Congress Party, Veer Savarkar, on behalf of the Hindu Sanghatanists, extended to the new state

in the Middle East "their moral support to the establishment of the independent Jewish State in Palestine on moral as well as political grounds..."[2] Without concealing his contempt for the very different arrangements adopted in his own country, Savarkar wrote:

> After centuries of sufferings, sacrifices and struggle the Jews will soon recover their national Home in Palestine which has undoubtedly been their Fatherland and Holyland. Well may they compare this event to that glorious day in their history when Moses led them out of the Egyptian bondage and wilderness and the promised land flowing with milk and honey came well within sight.[3]

For Savarkar the occasion of the establishment of the Jewish State was as much an opportunity to irritate Muslims as it was to identify with the plight of the Jews. As a key figure in the development of Hindu nationalist ideology, much of his work as a theoretician and political leader (he headed the Hindu Mahasabha from 1937-42) was formulated as a response to the purported vulnerability of the Hindu majority in India in the face of Muslim assertiveness. Moreover, as an admirer of Hitler's occupation of the Sudetenland because its inhabitants shared "common blood and common language with the Germans", Savarkar will never be mistaken as a friend of the Jews.[4] But this only underscores the obvious - that the attractiveness of the Israeli venture for Hindu nationalists lay in the example it set for the establishment of the Hindu Rashtra, rather than in any sentimental attachment to the Zionist cause. And no doubt the added attraction of tweaking the Muslim minority was surely not overlooked.

In what follows I do not pretend to offer a comprehensive analysis of ethno/religious nationalism in these two complex societies. Rather, what I want to do is argue that whatever success the Israelis may have had in creating a viable Jewish State is essentially irrelevant as far as the Indian case is concerned.[5] I reach this conclusion on the basis of a comparative assessment of the particular patterns of secular constitutionalism adopted in the respective polities. From this it becomes clear that the transition to a Hindu State would produce something quite different from what occurred in Israel, and in the process undermine the larger purposes of Indian constitutionalism.

II. A Comparative Perspective

Alexis de Tocqueville's famous insight that Americans possessed the distinct advantage of having "arrived at a state of democracy without having to endure a democratic revolution" is no longer as uncontroversial as it once was, but it still offers a useful clarifying lens through which to obtain

comparative perspective on many things, including secular constitutional development. If he and his latter-day intellectual disciples, most notably Louis Hartz, exaggerated the differences between the United States and Europe, their emphasis on the absence of a feudal tradition in the US (the South excepted) was not misplaced. The Americans' fortunate circumstance of having been "born equal, instead of becoming so" meant that their social and political development could proceed largely in the absence of the bitterly divisive ideological battles that prevailed in most other places. As for their secular constitutional development, what is interesting is not simply the founding commitment to a secular polity, but that in order to achieve that goal they did not have to break the chains (again with some local exceptions) of a dominant religion. By contrast, in having to overcome a feudal religious order, Indian constitutionalists understandably moved in the direction of a more transformative constitution, in which the commitment to secularism was directly related to the goal of social reconstruction. In this respect, the Israeli example is closer to the American case than to the Indian. As S.N. Eisenstadt has argued, "[I]n the United States and in Israel the ideological revolutionary visions [in contrast with the socio-economic agendas more prominent in other revolutionary contexts] constituted the most important component...in the formation and development of the basic institutional framework and in shaping the symbols of collective identity."[6] To be sure, in Israel, unlike the United States, the symbols of collective identity were primordial rather than idea-driven; yet this contrast, crucial as it is in other contexts, should not deflect attention from the more immediately relevant distinction between these two instances and that of India.

To develop this argument and its implications for the question at hand, I offer the following typology of the secular constitution. It requires, however, that we be careful not to identify the secular constitution with secularization, meaning, among other things, "the separation of the polity from religion"[7]. The concept denotes a process — usually associated with modernization — in which the various sectors of society are progressively liberated from their domination by religion; but the emphasis on separate spheres unnecessarily obscures the diversity among regimes that aspire to be constitutionally secular. More separation does not in itself mean greater constitutional legitimacy. Also, the secular constitution should be distinguished from secularism as an ideological commitment whose proponents are often hostile towards religion. To be sure, a secular constitution may rest upon an antipathy towards religion, just as it may be premised upon a radical separation of temporal and spiritual spheres. But in the analysis that follows, these assumptions are not intrinsic to the logic of secular constitutional development. When I refer to the secular constitution I mean simply this: a polity where there exists a genuine commitment to religious freedom that is manifest in the legal and political safeguards put in place to enforce that commitment.[8]

Two dimensions stand out in considering alternative approaches to the secular constitution. The first is "the consequential dimension of religiosity"[9]. which here connotes more than a subjective determination as to whether religion is deemed important by the people who practice it, but rather its explanatory power in apprehending the structural configuration of a given society. This dimension is also captured by the anthropological concept of a cultural "way of life," in which a (religious) system of beliefs, symbols, and values becomes engrained in the basic structure of society, and ultimately sets the parameters within which vital societal relations occur. Avishai Margalit and Joseph Raz have employed the term "encompassing group" to highlight a set of characteristics that should qualify a specific collection of people for national self-determination. Such a group will "possess cultural traditions that penetrate beyond a single or a few areas of human life, and display themselves in a whole range of areas, including many which are of great importance for the well-being of individuals."[10] They point out that some religious groups, by virtue of their rich and pervasive cultures, meet these conditions, although in the present analysis I offer no opinion on the desirability of national self-determination in such instances. It is sufficient to find in their construction an apt basis for distinguishing two senses of religion, thick and thin (or demanding and modest), the latter referring to a situation where religion bears only tangentially upon the life experiences of most people.

A second dimension refers to the official cognizance of religion, more specifically, the extent to which the State is decisively identified with any particular religious group. The relevant distinction here has less to do with concerns about the public square, that is, the question of governmental support, hostility, or indifference towards religion, than it does with the official favoring of one religion over others for special benefits. Thus in the United States, all separationists and most accommodationists are united (with only trivial exception) in their acceptance of the requirement of impartiality in the State's dealings with religious groups. Both sides are committed to neutrality among religions while they differ over whether there should be neutrality towards religion. While governmental neutrality is thus the key to this dimension, the formal identification of a state with a particular religion does not in itself remove that state from the category of secular regimes. Sweden (unlike Israel) has an established church, but that legal designation hardly disqualifies that country from asserting its secular credentials. Were it to become known as "the Lutheran State" and, consistent with that description, to distinguish in some of its policies and symbols between Lutherans and non-Lutherans, it would violate an essential requirement of liberal constitutionalism, but still admit of the possibility, as the Israeli example shows, of achieving a secular (albeit not unambiguously liberal) constitution.

These two dimensions create four quadrants that include three variations on the theme of the secular constitution.

		Socio-Cultural Consequence	
		Thick	Thin
Official Cognizance	Partial	(1) Non-secular[11] constitution	(2) Israel[12] (Visionary)
	Impartial	(3) India[13] (Ameliorative)	(4) United States[14] (Assimilative)

The lines that separate these four quadrants do not demarcate arenas whose confines are wholly dissimilar from one another. They are meant to be suggestive of orientations towards the secular constitution that are also expressive of salient aspects of national identity. They highlight contrasting emphases, rather than set forth mutually exclusive approaches. Thus in (2), Zionist aspirations for a homeland for the Jewish people frame the debate over Church/State relations, but the predominantly secular orientation of most Israeli Jews tends to dampen whatever theocratic impulse might reside in the founding commitment to ascriptively driven nationalism. A *visionary* model seeks to accommodate the particularistic aspirations of Jewish nationalism within a constitutional framework of liberal democracy. In (3), the constitutional promise of State neutrality toward religious groups is a corollary of the transformational agenda of Indian nationalism, a principal objective of which is the democratization of a social order inhabited by a thickly constituted religious presence. The *ameliorative* model embraces both the social reform impulse of Indian nationalism as well as its deeply rooted religious diversity. In (4), where the Constitution is the paradigmatic case of a governing charter that is central to its people's sense of nationhood, the relative thinness of religion in the United States, conjoined with a constitutional requirement of non-establishment, encourages the assimilation of a diverse population into a constitutive culture of ideas. An *assimilative* model manifests the ultimately decisive role of political principles in the development of the American nation.

III. India

The Indian Constitution explicitly permits the imposition of limits on freedom of religion in order to prevent religiously based conduct from undermining the constitutive principles of the polity. Article 25 provides that "Subject to public order, morality and health...all persons are equally entitled

to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion." The second section of the Article then goes on to say: "Nothing in this article shall affect the operation of any existing law or prevent the State from making any law — (a) regulating or restricting any economic, financial, political or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practice; (b) providing for social welfare and reform, or the throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all classes and sections of Hindus." Thus with admirable clarity the document guarantees all Indians a broad right to religious freedom, only to declare that this right is subject to substantial possible limitation.[15]

The debates surrounding the framing of India's Constitution support the most obvious interpretation of this language, which is that the constitutional undertaking of 1947 had as one of its principal goals the substantial reform of Indian society. Highlighting this constitutional language calls attention to the reformist dimension of Indian nationalism, with its distinctive commitment to Nehruvian scientific rationalism. Often drawing upon Western philosophical and jurisprudential sources, its vision of national unity relied primarily on social reconstruction to create one nation out of a multiplicity of peoples. For this experiment to succeed, popular religion had to be downplayed, constituting as it did the principal impediment in the path of integrating different classes and peoples into a modern nation-state.[16] The secular constitution represented in its essence a commitment to fundamental social change, with an important presumption of constitutional legitimacy attaching to State intervention directed towards that end.[17] "India," Subrata Mitra has pointed out, "is virtually alone among post-colonial states in Asia to have adopted secularism as a key feature of her constitution and the cornerstone of her strategy of nation-building."[18]

Typical of the statements made at the framing of the Constitution was delegate K.M. Panikar's comment that "If the State considers that certain religious practices require modification by the will of the people, then there must be power for the State to do it."[19] With this, scholarly opinion concurs. One commentator describes the Constitution as "first and foremost a social document",[20] another as "a charter for the reform of Hinduism".[21] Consistent with these views are statements from the Supreme Court; for example, the observation by a reform-minded jurist that it should "always be remembered that social justice is the main foundation of the democratic way of life enshrined in the provisions of the Indian Constitution".[22] The democratic way of life in effect takes precedence over religious practices that fail to connect with the legitimating principles of society.[23] However, it is one thing to *assert* the priority of the democratic way of life to religious practice, quite another to act accordingly. Consider, for example, that in the same case in which he wrote of the Constitution's enshrinement of the democratic way of life, Justice Gajendragadkar described Hinduism as constituting "a way of life and nothing more".[24] While surely there is some exaggeration in this claim ("nothing

more"?), to the extent that Hinduism does indeed constitute a "way of life", it renders largely fruitless the task of seeking a narrow definition of religion.[25]

It also points to one of the great challenges of Indian constitutionalism: how to reconcile two ways of life that are in fundamental tension with one another. For example, the late nineteenth century Indian social reformer, K.T. Telang, castigated Hinduism for "preach[ing] not the equality of men but their inequality", depicting it in a state of "war against the principles of democracy".[26] What made the war so difficult to pursue was that it was not simply a clash of ideas, but a contest fought, as it were, in the deep trenches of the social order.[27] Moreover, the fact that other wars — of independence, of culture — were and are being prosecuted concurrently, means that the battle lines have not always been sharply drawn. Thus for some, the secular state is "a vacuous word, a phantom concept",[28] but a dangerous construct nevertheless for the perverse consequences that its reckless pursuit entails. Others, who agree that traditional religion in India has for most people been manifest in the totality of their lives, welcome for that very reason a Western-oriented secular state that would bring with it a drastic reduction in the scope and sphere of religion.[29]

This debate need not be resolved here, it being necessary only to establish as a matter of broad general agreement a point whose constitutional significance increases when considered in a comparative context. Within a general framework of sensitivity to the imperatives of group and religious life,[30] the formal commitment of the fundamental law "to constitute India", in the words of the amended Preamble, "into a *sovereign socialist secular republic*", represented a substantial challenge to social, cultural, economic, and political practices deeply rooted in the soil of an all-encompassing religious tradition. Thus the observation by Tocqueville that "by the side of every religion is to be found a political opinion, which is connected with it by affinity",[31] requires little elaboration in the Indian context.[32]

IV. Israel

In Israel, unlike in India and the United States, religion has been more than an influence on national identity (present at the creation but in principle distinguishable from it); it is at the core of that identity. Yet very much like the United States, and in this regard quite different from India, religion does not for the most part function as a regulative culture, in which patterns of deeply engrained social relations are rooted in religious history and tradition.[33] To be sure, Judaism is a "total religion",[34] prescribing behavior and practice for all facets of human existence; but most Jews in Israel choose not to place their lives under the regulative jurisdiction of Jewish law. Socially, then, religion manifests a thin presence in Israeli life as a whole, even if politically it may be viewed as thick; for as Daniel Elazar and Janet Aviad have pointed out, "Judaism is constitutive of Jewish identity even for the unbeliever."[35] The

result is a regime in which public support for religion is definitional — an insistence that there be no "government entanglement" in religion has an air of unreality about it — but one in which religious liberty is relatively unconstrained by the burdens of social reconstruction.[36]

This dual commitment, to a public identification with religion and to an official policy of religious freedom for all, reflects the tension that lies at the center of the Israeli experiment in constitutionalism, a tension that is perhaps most tellingly revealed by the absence of a formal written constitution. While the failure to deliver on the promise of the Declaration of Independence to "a Constitution to be drawn up by the Constituent Assembly" is a complex multidimensional story, critical to its narration is the difficulty encountered in the effort to reconcile conflicting individualist and communal aspirations. A similar conflict was present at the Indian Constituent Assembly, but as Granville Austin points out, its "members disagreed hardly at all about the ends they sought and only slightly about the means for achieving them".[37] Thus communal aspirations were a reality that would require significant constitutional and judicial accommodation, but an operative consensus on the necessity of their subordination to liberal, universalist objectives, made it possible to achieve closure on a document.[38] In contrast, the Israeli failure in this regard is previewed in the opening lines of the Declaration of Independence, which in effect announces that the legitimacy of the State is ultimately rooted in the chronicle of a particular people. "The land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was formed. Here they achieved independence and created a culture of national and universal significance." Here also they committed themselves, as the next section of the document makes clear, to "precepts of liberty", including the guarantee of "full freedom of conscience, worship, education and culture". And here they quickly discovered that the translation of these sentiments into an enforceable comprehensive legal document was just too formidable a project to accomplish.[39]

The famous case of Brother Daniel, the heroic — indeed saintly — Polish Jew who had converted to Catholicism and then applied for citizenship under the terms of the Law of Return, poignantly illustrates what is distinctive about religion in the Israeli political culture. In denying that he was Jewish, the Supreme Court adopted secular reasoning to affirm the common understanding of "the ordinary simple Jew".[40] From this perspective, Brother Daniel, however noble in character, had severed his ties to the Jewish people. "Whether he is religious, non-religious or anti-religious, the Jew living in Israel is bound, willingly or unwillingly, by an umbilical cord to historical Judaism from which he draws its language and its idiom, whose festivals are his own to celebrate, and whose great thinkers and spiritual heroes...nourish his national pride."[41] Thus Brother Daniel's fate was sealed in the pages of Jewish history. As Charles Silberman has felicitously observed in another context, "Judaism

defines itself not as a voluntary community of faith but as an involuntary community of fate."[42]

For a nation that is associated with the fate of a particular people, and yet committed to freedom of worship and conscience, the non-religious (most of whom consider themselves traditional Jews) — who in Israel constitute a clear majority — are, paradoxically, dependent on religion for their political identity. Their stake in sustaining the Jewishness of the State should not be minimized by the absence of an abiding spiritual engagement in their faith. It is in this sense that Justice Agranat's assertion of the inseparability of the Israeli nation from the Jewish people rings true. The willingness of the non-Orthodox majority to incorporate parts of Jewish law into the broader legal framework of the polity may in this context be seen as a way of encouraging and reinforcing the unity of the Jewish people. To be sure, there is occasionally great resistance to some acts of incorporation when they are perceived as unreasonably burdensome, but most secular Jews in Israel understand the significance of observance to the historical continuity of the Jewish people. They "do not attack religion per se because they define Israel as a Jewish State and this necessarily requires their tacit acceptance of its religious symbols".[43] For the Jewish people "nationalism and religion are inseparably interwoven",[44] which means that for the non-Orthodox majority, the attraction of halakhic rules (in limited doses) is not theological but instrumental, residing in their capacity to serve the ends of the Jewish State by contributing to a concept of national identity that has at its core certain common strands uniting all members of a distinctive people.[45] The fact, however, that for most Israelis this religiously informed vision is only minimally imbued with constitutive social significance, means that a genuine secular commitment to protect religious liberty is compatible with the non-neutrality of the State in matters associated with religious affiliation. While this compatibility is not entirely unproblematic — there are occasions when policies stemming from the Zionist commitment of the State do impinge on the religious liberty of minorities — the predominant thinness of religiosity within the Israeli Jewish community prevents *visionary* secularism from becoming an oxymoron.[46]

Not only are direct infringements on free exercise relatively uncommon in Israel, they are at least as likely to be felt by people belonging to the majority community. Much like in India, allegations of legal bias against religion are heard with disproportionate frequency from within the dominant religious group. In India, however, the complainants tend to be identified with Hindu revivalism, whereas in Israel the people who see themselves as victims tend to be associated with more secular and less nationalistic Jewish loyalties. Apropos this difference, Hindu nationalists often insist upon Muslim assimilation into the predominant Hindu culture. Again in contrast, Jewish religious nationalists are the most adamant of Israelis in opposing any move that might lead to the slightest integration of the Jewish and Muslim communities.

Minority grievances in Israel over religious questions focus less on perceived violations of religious liberty than on inequities associated with the State's distribution of rewards and privileges. They speak most directly to the issue of standing in the political community, and their general target is preferential treatment. Implicated are both substantive policies — legal differentiations affecting immigration (the Law of Return), political representation (the Chief Rabbinate of Israel Law), administration of religious endowments, and provision for religious training seminaries — as well as largely symbolic ones: the design of the flag (inspired by items important to the Jewish tradition); and the national anthem (which is also the hymn of the Zionist movement). Scholarly accounts of Israeli political culture rightly emphasize Jewish privileges as an integral component of ethnic or national conflict. For example, Sammy Smooha uses the term "ethnic democracy" to characterize a system combining "the extension of political and civil rights to individuals and certain collective rights to minorities with institutionalized dominance over the state by one of the ethnic groups".[47] Similarly, for Yoav Pelev ,"[T]he dominant strain in Israel's political culture may be termed *ethnorepublicanism*. Jewish ethnicity is a necessary condition for membership in the political community, while the contribution to the process of Jewish national redemption is a measure of one's civic virtue."[48] Implicit in this conceptualization are contrasting notions of citizenship, republican for Jews and liberal for Arabs. "Thus, while Jews and Arabs formally enjoy equal citizenship rights, only Jews can exercise their citizenship as practice, by attending to the public good."[49] In essence, the fulfillment of Jewish national aspirations requires the denial of Arab national aspirations, which is another way of saying that non-Jews are effectively excluded from the civil religion of Israel.[50]

V. The Path Not (To Be) Taken

This exclusion might in itself constitute sufficient reason for rejection of the Israeli model for those contemplating new directions for Indian political development. Thus there is no gainsaying the fact that the Israeli solution, while perhaps justified by the unique historical circumstances surrounding the creation of the State, represents an incomplete realization of the liberal constitutionalist ideal. The argument here, however, is not predicated on constitutional idealism; rather it is grounded in the cold realities of the nationalist experiences of two countries. Such a grounding suggests first, that the creation of a Hindu State would undermine the ameliorative essence of Indian political identity; and second, that it would threaten a regime of religious liberty that has been one of the crown jewels of independent India. Using the conceptual apparatus set out in our earlier typology, any exercise in constitutional transplantation based on the Israeli experience in nation-building

runs the risk of moving India into category one, the one category distinguished by a non-secular orientation.

Recall that it was the challenge of a thickly constituted religious presence that more than anything else gave definition to Indian constitutional origins. The democratization of a rigidly hierarchical social order had always been an animating principle of the Indian independence movement, one that continued to give meaning to post-colonial constitutional politics. This is to be contrasted with the founding fathers of modern Israel, who, like their Indian counterparts, were also for the most part committed to broadly egalitarian socio-political objectives; but in the Israeli case these goals could be pursued in tandem with the construction of a Jewish State. More to the point, in Israel, unlike in India, the dominant strand in the nationalist movement that culminated in independence was not charged with the additional responsibility of undoing a social structure largely reflective of the newly emergent nation's dominant religion.[51]

Hence it must be observed with more than just passing interest that the spirit of Hindu nationalism has always been nurtured by high caste Hindus who have been notable in their lack of concern for India's downtrodden. As Christophe Jaffrelot has pointed out, "Hindu nationalism...largely reflects the Brahminical view of the high caste reformers who shaped its ideology."[52] Indeed it has been the pervasiveness of this ethic in both ideology and practice that explains why it has had only minimal success in attracting support from low caste Hindus.[53] Jaffrelot's overview of the social base of the Hindu nationalist movement in the nineties reveals that the principal motivation for many of its supporters were social factors, especially fear of the rise of the OBCs.[54] Even the efforts to reshape the movement's appeal to disadvantaged Hindus by capitalizing on resentments against Muslims (for example, following the Shah Bano controversy), have been notably unproductive as exercises in mass mobilization. In this respect Hindu nationalism, if not unique, is distinguishable from most contemporary religious nationalist movements in not being a populist based movement directed against the entrenched economic power of established interests. The threat to the ameliorative constitution, which is to say secular constitutionalism in India, is clear. As Sumit Sarkar points out, "A construction of Hindu unity that evaded rather than sought to reform or even significantly ameliorate hierarchy needs for its sustenance the notion of the Muslim as an ever-present, existential threat, actualized and renewed, furthermore, in recurrent communal riots."[55]

Thus if the "thickness" dimension of religion in India argues against the broader ambitions of the political project of Hindu nationalism, it also threatens the core of secular constitutionalism, religious liberty. That is not because a secular constitution is possible only in the presence of a liberal constitutionalism predicated on an exclusive commitment to universalist principles of justice. Were that the case, Israel would not qualify for membership in the fraternity of secular constitutional regimes. But in Israel, the religious nationalism that

has dominated the politics of the State since its inception has been relatively benign as far as religious freedom is concerned, largely because it views the social demands of religion as peripheral to its political objectives. To be sure, Orthodox Judaism is unambiguously thick in the sense that it effectively governs all aspects of its adherents' lives. But because the number of its adherents in Israel is relatively small, with many of these having dissociated themselves from the business of the State, the prevailing pattern of religiosity is one in which a theocratic threat to personal liberties is quite remote. Indeed there is a strong argument that precisely because the core of Talmudic Judaism is not theology but halakhic practice, the embrace of secular principles by the non-practicing majority is likely to be smoother than if a set of spiritual beliefs constituted the essence of the religion.[56] Of course, the secular majority in Israel is not unencumbered by halakhic regulation, but ultimately it retains control over the reach and extent of religious imposition. Moreover, the extent of secular complicity in the intrusion of religion into public and private domains renders the issue of coercion a very complicated one, certainly defying any casual attribution of theocratic motivation.

What, then, might it mean to say, "There is no Indian nation separate from the Hindu people"? In a recent judgment of the Indian Supreme Court, the majority opinion averred that "[W]e would express our disdain at the entertaining of such a thought [establishing the first Hindu State] or such a stance in a political leader of any shade in the country."[57] The concern expressed here relates to the Constitution's guarantee of a "secular republic," which would be threatened, I would suggest, not so much because a Hindu State is by definition counter-secular (it may not be, to wit Israel), but because a Hindu State might by its constitutive nature be counter-secular. Thus the threat posed by religious nationalism to principles of secular constitutionalism may take several forms, varying in their magnitude according to the theological precepts of particular religions. If all that is available are general assumptions about the convergence of spiritual and temporal power, the identification of the state with a specific religious group tells us — and more importantly, other religious groups — very little about the impact of that identification upon the future of religious liberty. The answer to the question of whether a Hindu State would bear a close resemblance to a Jewish State rests in large part upon an appreciation of the similarities and differences of the two religions (at least with respect to how they would be interpreted by those wielding political power) in matters having very little directly to do with affairs of state. For example: Are they proselytizing religions? Are their inclinations absorptive or repellant with regard to non-members?

Because of the radically heterodox character of Hinduism, answers to such questions defy singular responses. Gandhi, for example, was murdered for his policies of tolerance and peaceful co-existence toward fellow Indians of Muslim descent. But to the non-Gandhian Hindu nationalists who are so

prominent and vocal in contemporary discourse in Indian politics, that is to say, descendants of Savarkar who would see in the Jewish State a model for guidance, the re-constituting of India into a Hindu State would entail a commitment to assimilation quite different from the political assimilation that distinguishes, say, American secular constitutionalism. Thus, as Ashutosh Varshney points out, the generic Hindu nationalist argument is that to become a part of the Indian nation Muslims would have to agree to a number of things, including an acceptance of the centrality of Hinduism to Indian civilization and a relinquishment of all claims to the maintenance of religious personal laws. "They must assimilate, not maintain their distinctiveness."[58]

In contrast, the non-assimilative character of Judaism in Israel arguably enhances the prospects for religious freedom among non-Jews, introducing a political climate in which benign neglect sets the terms for religious minority relations with the state. In this regard, Gershon Weiler is correct to see the very idea of personal status in conflict with the idea of equal citizenship.[59] But opposition to personal status need not connote a principled commitment to equal citizenship; indeed it may be part of an agenda of religious subordination. Thus the insistence by the BJP and other Hindu nationalists in India on a uniform civil code is more a reflection of their determination to require Muslim acceptance of Hindu tradition than it is an affirmation of the principles of liberal constitutionalism. In this respect we might want to consider another country from the region — Thailand — in which national conflict (between Thais and Malays) is expressed in a religious idiom, a factor that seriously undercuts any pretensions the majority might assert regarding its secular intentions. In a comparative analysis of Israel and Thailand, Eric Cohen explains the Thai polity's failure, in contrast to the mixed success in Israel, in achieving a harmonious solution to its Muslim minority problem. He finds that Judaism, as a political force in Israel, is mediated through the secular ideology of Zionism, leading to an attenuation in the conflict between the state and its Arab minority.[60] "[E]ven when symbols originating in Jewish religion were incorporated into the body of the central political symbols of the state, they were not perceived as religious, but as historical national symbols; their religious salience was low not only in the perception of the Jewish but also of the non-Jewish citizens."[61] There are several reasons for the more violent history of the Thai government's relations with its Malay Muslim minority, but the one that is most relevant in this context is that Buddhism as a political presence has retained its religious significance, so that Muslims tend to perceive demands upon them as infringements upon their religion. "The Thai-Malay conflict, like that between Israel and the Arabs, is essentially a national and political one; but in Thailand it is expressed in a religious idiom, which in Israel, at least for the time being, it is not. It is this religious dimension of the conflict that endows it with its violent character."[62] While the parallel to the Indian case is far from exact, in at least one salient respect it offers this to worry

about: a Hindu State, unlike the current Jewish State in Israel, would not be able to achieve a sufficient degree of separation between religion and the "way of life" of most of its citizens, such that adherents of the principal religious minority could safely distinguish between their sense of political exclusion and their ability to engage freely their spiritual commitments.

My argument, then, comes to this. Much as constitutionalism is a designation broad enough to include nonliberal variants, ethnorepublicanism may incorporate under its rubric both secular and nonsecular possibilities. While there are powerful normative arguments why we should not lightly countenance any constitutional experiment that embraces ethno/religious distinctions in its national self-understanding, a proper regard for the conditions that nurture and sustain a commitment to secularism will reveal the limits beyond which our tolerance for experimentation should not extend. Furthermore, whatever may be our capacity for tolerating deeply engrained religiously-based patterns of social injustice, to abandon a project in secular constitutionalism that is animated by the spirit of amelioration for a visionary project in religious nationalism, would constitute an act of surpassing insensitivity and wrongheadedness. A Hindu State would not not be like a Jewish State for the simple reason that India is not like Israel.

1 *Tamarin v. State of Israel*, 26 (1) P.D. 197. at 201 (1972).

2 V.D. Savarkar, *Historic Statements* (Bombay: G.P. Parchure, 1967), p. 221.

3 Savarkar, *Historic Statements*, p. 219.

4 Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996) p. 53. As Jaffrelot makes very clear in his discussion of the RSS, a good bit of the ideological inspiration behind Hindu nationalism in the thirties and forties had its origins in Nazi Germany. Jaffrelot, pp. 50-58.

5 There are those of course would argue that the same holds true as far as the Israeli case is concerned. That is to say, even if the Zionist experiment is judged a success, its continuation may no longer be justified. So say some of the "post-Zionists" in Israel. Amos Elon, for example, has recently written: "Zionism was useful during the formative years. Today, it has become redundant. There is need to move ahead to a more Western, more pluralistic, less 'ideological' form of patriotism and of citizenship. One looks with envy at the United States, where...identity is defined politically and is based on law, not on history, culture, race, religion, nationality, or language." Amos Elon, "Israel and the End of Zionism," *The New York Review of Books*, Vol. 43, n. 20, December 19, 1996. My account does not require taking a position on such sentiments, inasmuch as they do not

directly challenge the legitimacy of the original Zionist undertaking of establishing a Jewish State.

6 S.N. Eisenstadt, *Jewish Civilization: The Jewish Historical Experience in a Comparative Experience* (Albany: The State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 229.

7 Donald Eugene Smith, *Religion and Political Development* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1970), p. 11.

8 As Charles Taylor points out, the term *secular* was originally part of the Christian vocabulary , which serves as a useful reminder that liberalism fits most comfortably with certain kinds of religious experience. Charles Taylor, et al., *Multiculturalism and 'The Politics of Recognition'* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 62. In this regard, Marc Galanter, the leading American student of Indian law, writes of the First Amendment that it is a charter for religion as well as for government. "It is the basis of a regime which is congenial to those religions which favor private and voluntary observance rather than to those which favor official support of observance." Marc Galanter, *Law and Society in Modern India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 249. There is also another kind of separation that should be minimized for our purposes. Harvey Cox's definition of secularization involves, in addition to liberation from "religious and metaphysical tutelage, the turning of [man's] attention away from other worlds and toward this one." Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* (New York: MacMillan, 1990), p. 15. But as Tocqueville suggests, a democratically constituted regime can be undermined by an exclusive focus on this-worldly concerns.

9 Frank Way and Barbara J. Burt, "Religious Marginality and the Free Exercise Clause," *The American Political Science Review* 77: 652-665 (1983), p. 654.

10 Avishai Margalit and Joseph Raz, "National Self-Determination," in Will Kymlicka, ed., *The Rights of Minority Cultures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 82.

11 As broad as my working definition of the secular constitution is, it cannot accommodate a regime — I have in mind a country such as Iran — where the State identifies strongly with a religion that is constitutive of society.

12 There is a great temptation to deny Israel the status of a secular regime. See, for example, Mark Tessler, "The Middle East: The Jews in Tunisia and Morocco and the Arabs in Israel," in Robert G. Wirsing, ed., *Protection of Ethnic Minorities* (New York: Pergemon Press, 1981), p. 247. I believe one should resist this temptation, even while conceding that Israeli policies discriminate against non-Jews.

13 One way to depict the thickness of Hinduism in India in contrast with Christianity in the United States and Judaism in Israel is to observe the influence of the majority religions in these three places on the social

practices of adherents of minority religions. Thus, for example, it has often been observed that although the caste system in India is uniquely associated with Hinduism, over a long period of time manifestations of its distinctive hierarchical social ordering have become entrenched in other communal settings, most notably the Muslim (most of whom, to be sure, are descendants of converts). See Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: An Essay on the Caste System* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 210; J. Duncan M. Derrett, *Religion, Law and the State in India* (New York: The Free Press, 1968), p. 558; Marc Galanter, *Competing Inequalities: Law and the Backward Classes in India*, 1984), p. 17; and Krishna Prasad De, *Religious Freedom Under the Indian Constitution* (Columbia, Maryland: South Asia Books, 1976), p. 105. There is nothing comparable to this in either of the two other countries. In the United States, Christian influence may be discernible in the participation by members of other religions in the traditions of Christmas, but this sort of trivial cultural impact only underscores the relative thinness of American religious practice. In Israel, too, the religion to which most people belong does not constitute a significant presence in the behavior of non-adherents, although this is at least partly attributable to the non-assimilationist character of Judaism.

14 The thinness of American religiosity is partially explained in theological terms. As Warren A. Nord has observed, "Many Americans believe that believing is enough." Warren A. Nord, *Religion & American Education* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), p. 41. Thus Nord notes that Protestantism made doctrine and belief, rather than good works and religious practices, critical to religion. The contrast with Catholicism, Islam, Judaism, and Hinduism is not without political significance.

15 Indeed, the leading authority on law and religion in India, J. Duncan M. Derrett, notes that the Article is "subject to so many qualifications and restrictions that the reader wonders whether the so-called 'fundamental right' was worth asserting in the first place." Derrett, *Religion, Law and the State in India*, p. 451. The reference to "fundamental right" refers to the fact that Article 25 appears in Part III of the Constitution, labelled "Fundamental Rights." There are additional rights present in this section that relate to religion, such as the freedom of religious institutions to manage their own affairs, and the freedom to avoid being taxed for the promotion or maintenance of any particular religion or religious denomination. Part IV of the Constitution — the "Directive Principles of State Policy" — also contains passages implicating religious freedoms, but the articles in this section of the document are essentially hortatory in nature, meaning that they are not justiciable in Court.

16 On this point see Ravinder Kumar, "The Ideological and Structural Unity of Indian Civilization," in R.C. Dutt, ed., *Nation Building in India: Socio-*

Economic Factors (New Delhi: Lancer International, 1987), p. 34.

17 The significance of this presumption becomes clearer if considered in the light of this observation by Harvey Mansfield, Jr. about modern constitutionalism. "The subordination of state to society...is the main truth of constitutional government, which is shared by liberals, conservatives, and even radicals, despite the various pet projects of intervention in others' liberties cherished by all three parties. That these projects are known as 'intervention' indicates the general expectation that government be limited...." Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr., "The Religious Issue and the Origin of Modern Constitutionalism," in Robert A. Goldwin and Art Kaufman, eds., *How Does the Constitution Protect Religious Freedom?* (Washington, D.C.: The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Reearch, 1987), p. 3. Mansfield's point is that there is a general presumption in constitutional polities *against* the legitimacy of state intervention. A criticism that could be made of the prominent restrictive clauses in the Indian Constitution is that they reverse this presumption and thus threaten the viability of constitutional government. For some, no doubt, the plausibility of the criticism is rendered more obvious if Indian national identity is too closely associated with an ambiguous agenda of social reconstruction.

18 Subrata Mitra, "The Limits of Accommodation: Nehru, Religion, and the State in India," *South Asia Research* 9 (1989), p. 107.

19 Government of India Press, *The Framing of India's Constitution: Select Documents* (New Delhi: Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1967), Vol. II, p. 265.

20 Granville Austin, *The Indian Constitution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 50.

21 Galanter, *Law and Society in Modern India*, p. 247.

22 Justice Gajendragadkar in *Yagnapurushdasji* v. *Muldas*, S. Ct. J. 502, at 522, 1966.

23 Note, for example, the concern for the thickness of religion in this debator's comments on Article 44, the section in the Constitution concerning a uniform civil code. "We are at a stage where we must unify and consolidate the nation by every means without interfering with religious practices. If, however, the religious practices in the past have been so construed as to cover *the whole field of life*, we have reached a point where we must...say that the matters are not religious, they are purely matters for secular legislation." Quoted in Robert D. Baird, *Religion in Modern India* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1981), p. 423, emphasis added.

24 *Yagnapurushdasji* v. *Muldas*, at 513.

25 This needs to be qualified in a way that incorporates an important insight appearing in Marc Galanter's discussion of caste in India. He maintains that it may make a great difference whether the characterization "religious" is attached to caste groups within a legal context, arguing that actual behavior,

and thus real reform, could hinge upon such a determination. Galanter, *Law and Society in Modern India*, p. 141. The Constitution itself provides a negative judgment about caste, but since compliance with constitutional injunctions are rarely automatic, decisions about whether the origins of caste are rooted in religious or racial considerations become relevant to the work of the courts. For an intriguing view of why Hindus often assert to Westerners that caste is a social rather than a religious matter, see Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus*, p. 25. As a rank amateur in this area, I express no opinion on the question of origins, but feel safe in simply acknowledging the deeply interwoven nature of caste and religion as they have evolved over the centuries. I would note, too, in this regard, Donald Smith's observation that it is a relatively recent phenomenon for caste to be repudiated as a Hindu religious value, and that this repudiation has had little effect upon the ordinary Hindu's acceptance of the divinely ordained character of the institution. Donald Eugene Smith, *Religion and Political Development* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1970), p. 35. Robert D. Baird is similarly of the view that caste, for all of the sociological interest it has engendered, is ultimately a phenomenon sanctioned by religion." Robert D. Baird, "Human Rights Priorities and Indian Religious Thought," *Journal of Church and State* 11 (1969), p. 225.

[26] Charles H. Heimsath, *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 326.

[27] The entrenched character of Hinduism in the social fabric of Indian society is a description widely accepted in a variety of literatures. Social theorists: Charles Y. Glock and Rodney Stark, *Religion and Society in Tension* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1965) p. 34; S.N. Eisenstadt, ed., *The Protestant Ethic and Modernization: A Comparative View* (New York: Basic Books, 1968), p. 34; Charles P. Loomis and Zona K. Loomis, eds., *Socio-Economic Change and the Religious Factor in India: An Indian Symposium on Max Weber* (New Delhi: Affiliated East-West Press, 1969), p. 79. India specialists: Myron Weiner, "The Politics of South Asia," in Gabriel A. Almond and James S. Coleman, eds., *The Politics of the Developing Areas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), p. 178; Robert Stern, *Changing India: Bourgeois Revolution on the Subcontinent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 24. And legal scholars: Derrett, *Religion, Law and the State in India*, p. 57; Dhirendva K. Srivastava, *Religious Freedom in India: A Historical and Constitutional Study* (New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications, 1992), p. 103; C. H. Alexandrowicz, "The Secular State in India and the U.S., "*Journal of the Indian Law Institute* 2 (1960): 273-296, p. 283. All of these perspectives generally share a consensus in highlighting the profound extent to which the religions of India — in particular, Hinduism — are solidly embedded in the existent social structure.

[28] T. N. Madan, "Secularism In Its Place," *Journal of Asia Studies* 46: 747-759 (1987), p. 749.

[29] P.C. Chatterji, *Secular Values for Secular India* (New Delhi: Pauls Press, 1984), p. 23.

[30] Rajeev Dhavan, "Religious Freedom in India," *American Journal of Comparative Law* 35: 209-254 (1987), p. 250.

[31] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Vintage, 1945), Vol. I, p. 310.

[32] For a very good elaboration of Tocqueville's point as applied to India, the work of another French sociologist, Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus*, is an excellent place to go. His principal focus on the tension between the principle of equality and the principle of hierarchy is one that has a distinctly Tocquevillian ring to it. The decisive role of religion in this tension was affirmed in the very important official government report of the Mandal Commission, which was established in 1979 to investigate the conditions of the socially and educationally backward classes in India. That report indicates clearly that social inequality is deeply rooted in religious practices, and that the structural reality created by this history cannot be changed through the routine progress of modernization. See the discussion of the Mandal Commission Report in Sawhney v. Union of India (1992).

[33] By this I am referring only to the socio-economic configuration of the majority Jewish population. Obviously, Jewish - Arab relations are associated with religious differences, and in this sense there surely is a regulative culture decisively at work.

[34] Lilly Weissbrod, "Religion As National Identity In a Secular Society," *Review of Religious Research* 24 (1983), p. 190.

[35] Daniel J. Elazar and Janet Aviad, "Religion and Politics in Israel," in Michael Curtis, ed., *Religion and Politics in the Middle East* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1981), p. 195.

[36] There are of course strong, articulate, and passionate voices on behalf of a strict separation of state and religion, but they possess quite limited appeal. Perhaps the most controversial is the late Yeshayahu Leibowitz, whose argument for separation was grounded in an understanding of the thickness of the Jewish religion, the fact that "the regime of the Torah...constituted a way of life." Yeshayahu Leibowitz, *Judaism, Human Values, and the Jewish State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992) p. 162. For Gershon Weiler, on the other hand, it is to "escape the yoke of the Torah" that requires Israelis to accept "the principle that the religion of a person must be of no interest to the State." Gershon Weiler, *Jewish Theocracy* (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1988), pp. 224, 234. For Leibowitz, separation preserves the integrity of Judaism; for Weiler, the integrity of the State.

[37] Austin, *The Indian Constitution*, p. xiii.

[38] I emphasize closure in order to highlight the contrast with the Israeli experience. The Knesset's deliberations over the constitutional question concluded with the passage of a compromise proposal, known as the "Harari Resolution," that prescribed a process of incremental accumulation of individual chapters — or basic laws — that when terminated will together form the state constitution. This vaguely worded and much criticized legislation left unclear the status of the basic laws (of which there are presently eleven), just as it was silent as to a timetable for completion of the constitution. It provided formal commitment (sincere or otherwise) to the principle of a written constitution, while maintaining maximum flexibility in the Knesset's capacity to determine its realization. It was essentially a formula to proceed "with all deliberate speed," although it lacked any method to enforce compliance. It left the state with an evolving constitution that conceivably possesses superior status to ordinary law, but which, predictably, coexists uneasily with the tradition of parliamentary supremacy.

[39] It is worth noting that opposition to the adoption of a formal written constitution represented an interesting alliance, consisting on the one hand of extreme secularists such as David Ben-Gurion, and on the other of ultra-Orthodox Jews, who maintained that Israel had no need of *another* constitution, the Torah being a more than adequate fundamental law. Indeed, it was the radically different understandings of the essence of the regime held by these alliance partners that suggests the great dilemma inherent in one of the principal arguments of the document's proponents — that it should serve as a pedagogical device for educating a diverse population in the political principles of the regime. Nevertheless, it is incorrect to suggest that Israel functions without a constitution. With the Declaration of Independence (often appealed to by the Supreme Court), sacrosanct legislation such as the Law of Return (entitling Jews emigrating to Israel automatic citizenship), and the Basic Laws (some of which have been interpreted as entrenched), there is in place the functional equivalent of a formal constitutional document. Much debate, of course, occurs over the question of how well this arrangement actually performs its functions.

[40] *Rufeisen v. Minister of Interior*, 16 P.D. 2428, at 2437, 1962. This phrase is reminiscent of language used by the U.S. Supreme Court in a case that recalls a period in American history when racial qualifications were very much a part of the naturalization process. (Such qualifications were eliminated by the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952.) The matter at issue concerned the qualifications of a Hindu, who, while technically a Caucasian, was not, according to Justice Sutherland, white in the "understanding of the common man." *United States* v. *Thind*, 261 U.S. 204, at 209, 1923. I have discussed the Brother Daniel case at length in

another place. Gary Jeffrey Jacobsohn, *Apple of Gold* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 63-69. A recent episode in Israel is a vivid reminder of the continuing salience of the issues in that case. It involved the visit to Jerusalem of the Archbishop of Paris, Jean-Marie Cardinal Lustiger, who claimed in his various appearances in Israel to be a Jew. The Cardinal had converted to Christianity as a boy in Europe, a fact that did not in his estimation invalidate his self-identification with the Jewish people. His claim was widely denounced by both orthodox and secular Jews in Israel, to which he responded: "I am as Jewish as all the other members of my family who were butchered in Auschwitz or in the other camps." N.Y. Times, April 4, 1995.

41 *Rufeisen v. Minister of Interior*, at 2438.

42 Charles Silberman, *A Certain People: American Jews and Their Lives Today* (New York: Summit Books, 1985), p. 70. Silberman's elaboration is not fully consistent with the *Rufeisen* decision, but it speaks to a distinction directly relevant to the distinctions made in this essay. "[O]ne is a Jew by virtue of one's birth, not one's beliefs or practices. Thus it is that Protestants speak of *joining* a particular church and Catholics of *becoming* a Catholic, whereas Jews speak of *being* Jewish; for Jewishness is an existential fact." Silberman, *A Certain People*, pp. 72-3. In this regard, it is worth noting the similarities to Hinduism, which like Judaism, is often identified (for all sorts of purposes, good and bad) with the story of a particular nation. More important, Hinduism is also not defined by particular beliefs and practices, a reality even more pronounced in India, where the absence of an official, institutionalized religious hierarchy accentuates the heterogeneity of Hindu doctrine and behavior.

43 Stephen Sharot, "Judaism and the Secularization Debate," *Sociological Analysis* 52 (1991), p. 271.

44 *Rufeisen v. Minister of Interior*, at 2447.

45 Church/State relations in Israel are often characterized with reference to the "status quo," a term referring to a compromise agreement between secular and religious forces that goes back to the inception of the State. As a result of the agreement, religious law has been accorded a limited presence in the life of the State. It is easiest to view the arrangement as a standard splitting of the difference, in which both sides settle for as little or as much as they can get away with. This is misleading, however, as it fails to convey a more principled side of the status quo as "one of the unique and prime factors ensuring the Jewish character of the State of Israel." Ben-Zion Eliash, "Ethnic Pluralism or Melting Pot: The Dilemma of Rabbinical Adjudication in Israeli Family Law," Israel Law Review 18 : 348-380 (1983), p. 349. The debate over how to characterize this agreement, implicating as it does theological and nationalist dimensions of Judaism, is emblematic of "the crisis of Jewish identity." As Peter

Berger aptly puts it: "The Zionist attempt to redefine Jewishness in terms of a *national identity*...has the ambivalent character of, on the one hand, reestablishing an objective plausibility structure for Jewish existence while, on the other hand, putting in question the claim of religious Judaism to being the *raison d' etre* of Jewish existence — an ambivalence manifested in the ongoing difficulties between 'church' and state in Israel." Peter L. Berger, *The Social Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967), pp. 69-70. For further insight into the intertwining of nationalistic elements and religious practices in Israeli Jewish and political cultures see Ephraim Tabory, "Hate and Religion : Religious Conflict Among Jews in Israel," *Journal of Church and State* 11: 275-283 (1981), p. 280. In general see Charles S. Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, *Religion and Politics in Israel.* And for additional insight into the complexity of the relationship between nationalism and religion in Israeli political culture, consider the reaction in Israel to the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Secular Jews were especially outraged that Rabin's killer was an orthodox Jew. For many the slain leader had become "an icon in a new kind of national religion." (*New York Times*, November 19, 1995, "Secular Israelis, Too, Have a Faith," sec. 4, p. 4). Yet despite the backlash against the orthodox, particularly among young Israelis, a mass movement to get alternative branches of Judaism recognized is unlikely to occur. As the New York Times pointed out, "the State itself seems to be enough of an organization to let these young identify themselves as Jews."

46 There have been many empirical studies of Jewish religious commitment in Israel, all of which suggest that for the great majority of Israelis being Jewish plays an important role in their lives (in different ways) but is not a way of life. Many of these findings are included in Zvi Sobel and Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, eds., *Tradition, Innovation, Conflict: Jewishness and Judaism in Contemporary Israel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991).

47 Smooha, *Israel: Pluralism and Conflict*, p.

48 Yoav Peled, "Ethnic Democracy and the Legal Constitution of Citizenship: Arabs Citizens of the Jewish State," *American Political Science Review* 86: 432-443 (1992), p. 435.

49 Peled, "Ethnic Democracy," p. 432.

50 Liebman and Don-Yehiya, *Religion and Politics in Israel*, p. 48. David Kretzmer suggests that the maintenance of the distinction between rights and privileges is at the root of the otherwise inexplicable Population Registry Law, which requires that all citizens of Israel be registered by "nation." "Registration of 'nation' is irrelevant in determining the rights and obligations of citizens, but it strengthens the dichotomy between the state as the political framework of all its citizens, and the state as the

particularistic nation-state of the Jewish people." David Kretzmer, *The Legal Status of the Arabs in Israel*, p. 44.

51 By this I do not mean to suggest that there was *no* ameliorative dimension involved in the realization of Zionist aspirations. Indeed, to the extent that the Jewish national movement's historic roots can be traced to rebellion against traditional Judaism, its hopes for a Jewish State in Israel were implicated in a project in social reconstruction. See in this regard Raphael Cohen-Almagor, "Cultural Pluralism and the Israeli Nation-Building Ideology." *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 27 (1995), p. 465. But the contrast with India in this regard represents a difference in kind and not merely magnitude.

52 Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*, p. 13. See also Sumit Sarkar, "Indian Nationalism and the Politics of Hindutva," in David Ludden, ed., *Contesting the Nation:Religion, Community, and the Politics of Democracy in India* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), p. 277. "The votaries of Hindutva have tended to come in the main from high castes quite self-conscious about their status privileges...."

53 Jaffrelot, p. 47.

54 Jaffrelot, p. 435.

55 Sumit Sarkar, "Indian Nationalism and the Politics of Hindutva," p. 289.

56 Stephen Sharot, "Judaism and the Secularization Debate," p. 257.

57 *Manohar v. Nitin Bhaurao Patil & Anr.*, JT 1995 (8) S.C. 646, at 684.

58 Asutosh Varshney, "Contested Meanings," p. 231. This is also clear from the writings of the important Hindualist theorist, Madhav Sadshiv Golwakar. "Non-Hindus must be assimilated to the Hindu way of Life." Quoated in Sumit Sarkar, "Indian Nationalism and the Politics of Hindutv." p. 289.

59 Gershon Weiler, *Jewish Theocracy*, p. 235.

60 Eric Cohen, " Citizenship, Nationality and Religion in Israel and Thailand," Baruch Kimmerling, ed., *The Israeli State and Society: Boundaries and Frontiers* (Albany: State University of New York, 1989), p. 68.

61 Eric Cohen, " Citizenship, Nationality and Religion in Israel and Thailand," Baruch Kimmerling, ed., *The Israeli State and Society: Boundaries and Frontiers* (Albany: State University of New York, 1989), p. 87.

62 Eric Cohen, " Citizenship, Nationality and Religion in Israel and Thailand," Baruch Kimmerling, ed., *The Israeli State and Society: Boundaries and Frontiers* (Albany: State University of New York, 1989), p. 70.

CROSSING BORDERS, MAINTAINING BOUNDARIES: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF FARHA, A WOMAN OF THE BAGHDADI JEWISH DIASPORA (1870 - 1958)

Jael Silliman

"Christians, Portuguese and Jews; Chinese tiles promoting godless views; pushy ladies, skirts not saris, Spanish shenanigans, Moorish crowns..... can this really be India?"
Salman Rushdie, *The Moor's Last Sigh.*

INTRODUCTION

This life-history of Farha Baqaal Abraham opens a window into the worlds and world-views of women in the middle-class strata of the Baghdadi Jewish diaspora of Calcutta, India. Farha's narrative also lends itself to raising several questions relevant to contemporary scholarship relating to issues of identity, diaspora and travel. It suggests new ways to think about "travel" and "displacement" and broadens notions of who was traveling, with whom, how and for what purposes people traveled in the 19th century in the East and Far East. To date, both research and popular writings have focused on the elite of this diaspora community. This paper examines the conceptual, material and spatial worlds of middle to lower middle-class women from multiple locations.

As there are few primary or secondary documents that yield information on the lives of women of this diaspora[1], the everyday lives of middle-class women are recreated through the narrative of one particular woman[2]. Just as there is dearth of information on women in the documents and the writings on the Baghdadi Jewish diaspora, so there is relatively little writing about the women of the numerous smaller minority communities that thrived in Colonial India.[3] Working against the tide, this paper illuminates the experiences of women who were not part of the European or Indian mainstream. While for the most part invisible in historical records, women from these minority communities were active in the public and private domains as householders, travelers, traders and businesswomen.

Employing Farha's narrative as the anchor, the process by which the proceeding generation of middle-class Jews adapted a different dual/hyphenated identity — from Judeo-Arabic to Judeo-British — is outlined. In the process of "transculturation",[4] their Jewishness remained the constant and primary identity — the first part of their hyphenated selves. The paper highlights the "deterritorialized" nature of the community. Identity and territory were not

connected for this diaspora. Its members moved fluidly across borders and large geographic spaces, but were able to maintain strong boundaries and real communities even as they moved. The move from Baghdad to the other locations in the diaspora and subsequent shifts to yet other destinations have not been traumatic. Rather, I suggest that these diasporic movements are better understood as a historic process through which community members have flourished. This diaspora was quintessentially a "diaspora of hope."[5]

Farha's story defies conventional travel categories. She was not an exile, a tourist, an adventurer, an immigrant, a refugee, or a nomad.[6] "Displacement" does not capture her experience. None of these categories express the fullness and at the same time the narrowness of her life. The travel narratives of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are predominantly the accounts of imperial travelers. Farha's purposes and experiences of travel was fundamentally different. She represents yet another layer of travelers for whom "Travel was unavoidable, indisputable, and always necessary for family, love, and friendship as well as work" which is considered a "post-modern phenomenon."[7] I argue that though Farha's life encompasses a great deal of spatial and geographical movement she always stayed in one place or location —the Baghdadi Jewish community. Its physical location was almost incidental.

THE BAGHDADI DIASPORA IN THE COLONIAL ERA

The Economic Environment

Farha belonged to the Baghdadi Jewish trading network which stretched eastward from Baghdad to China and westward to Britain and France. While the first members of the Calcutta Jewish community came from Aleppo, Syria,[8] the largest number of Jews came from Baghdad in present-day Iraq.[9] Among them were a few Jews from Yemen, Persia and Egypt. This string of Baghdadi Jewish communities thrived on the underside of the colonial enterprise. The British favored the Jews, as they did other minorities, who were too small in numbers to pose a threat to British supremacy. Economic opportunities provided by the British advantaged the Baghdadi Jews as they did other Indian Jews. Elite members of the Baghdadi Jewish community especially benefited from colonial rule which opened up great commercial futures for them. They "operated to a considerable extent as ancillary to the British trading networks at least from the mid-nineteenth century onward, as well as playing an important part in India's economy."[10] Influential families like the Sassoons, Gubbays, Ezras and Eliases traded across the Middle East and Asia on a large scale, and sought to identify with their British overlords.

Thus a few elite Baghdadi families moved rather quickly from their status as "alien pioneers" to become key commercial interlocutors for the British.[11] Legislative appointments were bestowed on a few of them. The Baqaals did not belong in this category. Farha came to Calcutta as the wife of a small trader

—Saleh Baqaal Abraham—who had come to India to seek his fortune and continued to conduct small trading enterprises. I would argue that the colonial authorities regarded these petty traders and business people as utilitarian instruments of the economy.[12] Petty traders had minimal interactions with colonial authorities and institutions, and no social interactions with the British. Thus, they seemed to have worked and lived free from the weight of colonial rule. "Free," at least, when compared to the Jewish trading elites who were more closely aligned to British political and commercial interests, and interacted with the British in social and business spheres in India, England and in the various Eastern trading ports of the Empire.[13]

The Baghdadi Jews are often categorized as being "prosperous." Yet, perhaps as much as one half of the Baghdadi community was poor and depended on Jewish charities. The remainder were divided among the middle-class (about 35%), tending towards economic well-being, and the wealthy, the affluent and the opulent.[14] The middle-class and poorer families of the Baghdadi community were observant which made it difficult for them to find work in British enterprises where Saturdays were working days. In the first quarter of the twentieth century, to overcome this problem of finding employment and maintaining Jewish law, the firm of E.D. Sassoon and Co. employed many impecunious Jews who wished to observe the Sabbath.[15] Several in the community worked for Jewish firms or depended on Jewish charities. The Baqaals ran their own businesses and were not dependent on the commercial enterprises of the British or elite Jews.

Social Environment

The elite mercantile families identified with the British while maintaining good relations with their Indian counterparts. "(they) carried British passports and therefore lived as though their futures belonged in Europe even though their past was Middle Eastern and their present Asian."[16]

> Socially, the better off Jews who led the community were rapidly integrated with British society..... Those members of the elite who remained in India took long vacations in England, adopted the English dress, language and manners and were progressively accepted as marginal members of the European community for many purposes-though in the caste-ridden society of Anglo India it was always clear that they did not quite belong. [17]

Anglicization was less complete further down the social structure but the community was led and dominated by its elite, mercantile elements.[18] The Baqaals had a strong Judaeo-Arabic cultural identity rather than a British one. Like other middle-class Jews in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century,

Saleh and his family dressed in Arabic style clothing[19] and spoke Arabic and Hindustani at home and on the street.[20] They understood and spoke a little English, the men knowing more than the women. Farha understood but did not speak English. Their knowledge of Arabic, with limited understanding of Hebrew as the language of synagogue and ritual practice in the home, enabled most men to peruse the Hebrew-Arabic newspapers, perhaps the main source of local and overseas news.[21] Farha's children and grandchildren, however, moved away from this identity to adopt an Indo-Anglian identity.[22]

FARHA'S WORLD

Baghdad and early married life

Farha was born into the well-established, landed Musree and Nasrullah families of Baghdad. She was the only daughter of Yusef Musree, the business partner of Saleh Baqaal Abraham, who would become her husband. Saleh left Baghdad in his early twenties and arrived in Calcutta in 1865 during the high tide of British imperialism. He followed a wave of Jews who had originally fled from persecutions such as those of Daud Pasha in Baghdad (1817 - 1831), and the forcible conversion of Meshed Jews in Persia in 1839. Stories of opportunity and commercial possibilities reached Baghdad from those who sought refuge in India. This led many young men to seek a fortune in the East and Far East, and many Jewish women left Baghdad to marry prosperous Baghdadi Jews living in these various commercial centers. A few women were sent out to work in wealthy Baghdadi homes to maintain Jewish ritual practices.[23]

Saleh settled down in the port city of Calcutta but traveled extensively for his business between Basra and Shanghai. He brought fez caps to India and the Far East, and returned to Baghdad with silk, spices and teas. His partner Musree managed the Baghdad end of the business. Soon the partners set up a small import-export trade which extended to Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, Rangoon, Singapore, Penang and Djakarta. Having somewhat established himself by his late forties, Saleh sought to settle down to a married life. He turned to Musree to find him a suitable match, a customary practice in those days.

Yusef sent his only daughter, Farha, then 15 years old, to be Saleh's bride.[24]

> Farha was sent by ship on her own volition to marry a man thirty-five years older, who could have been her father. She never regretted this decision! Her husband-to-be Saleh dutifully met her at the dockside in Kidderpore in Calcutta where a formal "kiddushim" was performed. On this occasion he brought her a full set of clothing. In her new finery she was escorted, well-chaperoned, to be married a week later to this tall, handsome man![25]

By all accounts, including her own statements, Farha was adored by her husband and never regretted her marriage to a man so much her senior. She settled into her new life in Calcutta, which at that time had a Jewish community of about 1200 people, [26] including a few of her relatives. She traveled to Baghdad to bear her first child, as it was customary to bear the first child in one's mother's home. She returned once again to Baghdad a few years later for an extended visit. Thereafter she maintained connections with her family through relatives and friends coming and going between Baghdad and the other Diaspora communities. Many decades later, her son Jo Abraham, an officer in the British army, visited her family in Baghdad in 1944 where he was warmly received.

During Farha's early married years her husband continued to travel. Unlike other traders, Saleh's young wife accompanied him on his business ventures. Travel was very slow: a business trip to the Far East took between six and eight months.[27] Farha gave birth to two of her children, Elias and Mozelle, in Singapore and Penang respectively.[28] The children were born in the homes she stayed in en route. It was considered a "mitzvah"(good deed) to provide home and shelter for months at a time to fellow Baghdadi Jewish visitors. These diasporic Jewish communities were a refuge, a home, a place of security in an alien world. [29] While Saleh must have ventured into the market-places and docks of Penang, Rangoon and Singapore, Farha most likely stayed within the narrow confines of the Baghdadi Jewish communities. She would have helped her hosts with the cooking and other household chores, and in the process forged strong bonds and social networks with the women of the households.

Travel back and forth and extended visits were critical in forging a sense of community. It consolidated kinship and patronage networks, enabled news to be transmitted and exchanged, and renewed, recreated and sealed family bonds. Since the communities were so small, marriage outside the immediate community was often essential to avoid too much inbreeding. Farha had two of her nieces, Mazal Tov and Tufahah Khatoon, sent out from Baghdad to stay with her in Calcutta for several months. As Baghdadi brides were in great demand, Farha arranged suitable matches for them. Mazal married Elias Nahoum of the well-established Nahoum family of Calcutta in 1914. Tufahah became the bride of Saul Isaac and went to Djakarta in 1915.[30]

Although ocean travel in the late nineteenth century was arduous, such voyages were routine among the Jews of this diaspora. By the end of the nineteenth century they traveled on small British steamships. The Hebrew-Arabic papers feature numerous accounts of community members traveling for business, vacations, marriages and religious functions. The crossing from Calcutta to Rangoon was done fairly frequently. Entire Jewish families, replete with servants to help with the cooking on deck, would travel as deck passengers (because of dietary restrictions) to attend a wedding or a bar-

mitzvah of relatives in Rangoon. Sons would be sent to settle in the various port cities and trading centers to extend a family's commercial reach. Voyages were undertaken with prayers and rituals to ensure safe passage.[31]

Though Farha traveled many miles and over many seas, the worlds in which she moved were Baghdadi Jewish worlds, so much so that her children hardly recall the fact that she traveled extensively! Saleh's deft notes at the back of his prayer book record the dates and places of his children's births. [32] Farha's children do not recall any stories of her travels, and remember no particular objects in their home, or special foods that Farha prepared that spoke of the many places she had visited. Her only narrative was that of the Middle Eastern Jewish Diaspora. Whether in Calcutta, Rangoon or Penang, she would be part of the Baghdadi Jewish community to which she was connected through kinship or other ties. All the women Farha knew intimately or met socially spoke Arabic and knew some Hebrew, as well as had a working knowledge of the local language of the area where they lived. They wore wrappers, cooked Iraqi preparations, followed the same rituals in their homes, and prayed in synagogues that followed Iraqi Jewish traditions. A few could read *Tehilim* (psalms), most cooked, sewed, and were very active in community functions and ritual practices.

While comfortable in their local settings, the Baghdadi Jews never identified with, or saw themselves as part of, the lands in which they lived,. "... Arabic-speaking immigrants to British India who lived in India but were never of India, unlike the Cochin Jews who were well acculturated and the Bene Israel who had become assimilated."[33]

While the Baghdadi Jews were loyal to their British overlords, they did not identify with them. Socially, they isolated themselves from British and Indian society because of religious taboos and a deep fear of assimilation. This "boundary maintenance" between the Jews and other communities was not unusual in the Indian context, where the dominant tradition still is for various religions and castes to live in separate social spheres. Despite this "boundary maintenance," theirs was a "harmonic co-existence".[34] "...'Foreignness' of the Baghdadi's was not a disturbing element in traditional Indian society, with its easy tolerance of, but compartmentalization of differences, just as it was not a disturbing element in the millet society of the pre-modern Middle East."[35]

This "harmonic co-existence" was maintained despite the British obsession with classifying its Indian population, and its "divide and rule" policy. Colonial practices encouraged Jews to develop a sense of distinctiveness vis-a-vis the Hindu and Muslim population.

> Under the British, the Indian Jews were encouraged to manifest and articulate an ethnic identity which could not be defined within the caste framework. Religious differences became the focal point in defining ethnic identity and the marker and cognition for social interaction.[36]

Farha had both Hindu and Muslim day servants working in her household, but rarely met socially with non-Jews and knew little about their lives. She had many Jewish neighbors, but she also had Chinese, Armenian, Anglo-Indian and Parsees families living in close proximity, as the Jewish community was not geographically segregated.

All the social events she attended were in other Jewish homes and with Jewish families, or in the synagogues or Jewish schools. The more elite Jews moved beyond the narrow confines of the Jewish community and entertained other elites in their homes with whom they were associated through business and politics. Wealthier Baghdadi Jews who were more Anglicized looked down on the many members of the community who did not speak English or dress in English style.[37] The elite Jewish families did not socially mix with the poorer Jews. They sent their children to England or to missionary schools in Calcutta while the rank and file of the community attended the Jewish schools.

FARHA'S MIDDLE AND LATER YEARS IN CALCUTTA

Residence

Later in Saleh's life the Baqaals settled more permanently in Calcutta, when he must have found traveling more difficult. Calcutta provided many opportunities for business and had religious facilities that other Jewish communities in the East did not.[38] He sired five more children; the last son, Isaac, was born when Saleh was 79! Farha's sister-in-law and her husband lived for several years in Farha's home.[39] Eventually this childless couple emigrated to Palestine where they endowed a synagogue called the "Aharon Baqaal Synagogue," which now serves as an Ashkenazi shul in Mea Shearim.

The Baqaals maintained a very religious home, for the overriding consideration among the community was religious observance and its perpetuation.[40] Like other Jews, the Baqaals first lived in the old Jewish quarter in the western part of the city which was bounded by Old China Bazaar Street, Sukeas Lane, Lower Chitpore Road and Canning Street, where three synagogues were located.[41] The synagogue was a dominant force in the 19th century so the community gravitated to the synagogue and its religious ceremonies.[42] "In the absence of a center for meeting, the house of worship served as the locale for social exchange; public meetings took place there and domestic occurrences were announced there; even personal animosities were exhibited there." [43] After World War I, Jews started moving towards the center of the city and further to the south, a marker of their Anglicization. The Baqaals, too, moved from the Canning Street area to the area between Bentinck Street and Central Avenue (today known as Chittaranjan Avenue). In the thirties and forties they moved further south towards the New Market area around Sudder Street and Totties Lane, which had become a predominantly Jewish area by that time, reflecting still greater Anglicization among the middle-class and lower middle-class Jews.

Throughout her life Farha lived in modest rented apartments. Typically they consisted of two to three modest sized rooms—a bedroom, an all-purpose but primarily eating room, a kitchen and a bathroom. She usually had an attached verandah or a courtyard which she used for drying clothes and food products, for potted plants and for sitting out in the sun. Her rooms were sparsely furnished with the minimum of furniture and decoration. [44] The kitchen had a "chulha" (a coal stove made of clay), a table for food preparation and a low tap at ground level for washing utensils.[45]

Business Ventures

During his later years Saleh's business ventures continued to prosper. Saleh was the first man to import rickshaws to Calcutta from China, and ran this business for several years. Eventually he sold this business as the day-to-day management became increasingly onerous. Farha helped her husband carry out his other business activities as he grew older, and gradually started her own businesses to support her family. This was not unusual among Baghdadi Jewish women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.[46] Farha would set out for "Burra Bazaar", the large wholesale market of Calcutta, where she would search the market for beautiful fabrics. She would be accompanied by a coolie (porter) or two who would carry her purchases on their heads in large cane baskets as they followed her through the markets. She wore a long tussah silk coat over her wrapper and drew her hair in a scarf. She went about on foot or in a hired phaeton, a four-wheeled horse drawn carriage. It was not customary then for women to go out to the bazaars, though her going was not frowned upon when circumstances demanded it.

Followed by her two coolies, Farha called on wealthier Jewish homes to offer her silks, lace, voiles, linen and velvets. They would be bought and given to Jewish seamstresses to sew into garments for bridal trousseaux. It was not appropriate for Indian male tailors to sew their clothes. It was the custom for the girls' family to provide their daughters with bed linen, and many sets of outfits from underwear to outer garments. Even the underwear of Jewish women in that period was elaborate. It was made with cotton and lace, picot edged and pin-tucked. Eighteen outfits was the favored number to be gifted by those who could afford it. The number eighteen, according to "Gematriya," a mystical method of assigning numbers to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, translated into the word "*Hai*," meaning "life," in Hebrew. Multiples of eighteen were used for charity, for wedding gifts and for *brachot* (blessings). In addition to the clothing and bed linens, the girl's family provided the bride with gold jewelry and the new couple with a bed-room suite. Farha's finer linens and *mull-mulls* (soft cottons) would be bought for baby-clothes, underwear and household linen. Preparing the first few items of clothing for the expected baby was an occasion for women to get together to prepare the trousseau of the first born - a gift from the grandparents.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, many middle-class and poor Jewish women worked as seamstresses, and in other small businesses that catered to the needs of the wealthier in the community. Farha was a good business-woman, but her inability to read and write made her depend on Saleh to do her accounts. Saleh, then in his eighties, trained Ruby, his youngest and still unmarried daughter to manage Farha's accounts. As times changed, Farha branched out into other businesses. When the Stewart Hogg Market opened (commonly known as the New Market), more Jewish women started to shop there. It was a European-style covered market that brought several dozen shops under one roof. It was conveniently situated close to where the Jewish community resided. As Jewish women began to adopt European-style clothing, they switched to employing European dressmakers. These changes made the services of Jewish seamstresses and saleswomen redundant.

Adapting to the times, Farha gave up the cloth business and marketed her culinary skills. She made special kosher jams, jellies, preserves and pickles for sale. She supervised this work in her home, and had the help of domestic workers who did the chopping, stirring and other preparatory work. Having been born in Baghdad and traveled extensively, she was famed for specialty dishes like *pacha* (a delicacy made from beef intestines) that only a few women knew to prepare. For synagogue ritual she made rose and kewra water which were used to offer blessings in the synagogue in memory of the deceased. Mourners would take containers called *Koom Koom* from person to person to recite the appropriate blessing over spices. It was believed that the sweet scent would elevate the soul closer to God after death.[47] The shroud which enveloped the dead were well doused with rose and kerwa water as well.

For Passover she prepared kosher salt, pepper, spices, and *halek* (Baghdadi haroset made with date juice and walnuts), which she sold to a Mr. Gubbay, a Jewish trader in Calcutta. He in turn exported these items across the Far East to the smaller Jewish communities. This export and import of foods was common in the period. For example, right up till the Second World War, Calcutta Jews primarily cooked with olive oil from Palestine. Dates and many sweetmeats such as *halkoon* (Turkish delight), *baba-khadrasi* (nougat), *halva-rashi* (halva) and *kamrudin* (apricot leather) were imported from Baghdad. Farha kept large glass jars of these delights in her *almirah* which she doled out to her grandchildren when they visited her. These foods eaten regularly and on ceremonial occasions were common throughout the Baghdadi diaspora.

Aside from her business ventures, she was well-known for the medicinal herbs which she grew in earthen pots in her small compound. She grew *yas* (myrtle, which she used for the Sabbath benediction), *rehan* (basil, for flavoring) and several medicinal plants including aloe vera. Members of the community sought her advice about natural remedies. She kept goats and mostly drank goat's milk, and she made special goat cheese. She was an excellent baker and knew how to prepare all the special sweet-meats which she

supplied to her children and grand-children for ceremonial occasions. She informally counseled women, helped arrange marriages and gave marriage counseling to community members. She was considered very wise in these matters. [48] She was extremely superstitious, as were most Baghdadis, and was apparently able to help community members detect the cause of a sickness and could tell who was lying and cheating by reading signs and dreams.

Family Matters

Farha's children and grandchildren remember her industriousness and good humor. She provided for all her children, and took a keen interest in their education. The boys went to Talmud Torah (the Jewish Boys School) and the girls went to the Jewish Girls School. She arranged marriages for her three daughters and provided their trousseaux. Ruby was married to a well-educated Jew from Cochin who resided in Calcutta. He came from a religious family that followed Baghdadi customs. Though he was not of Baghdadi origin and was dark complexioned, this was not cause for distinction or discrimination.

All Farha's children married within the Jewish community and lived most of their lives in India. Her daughters did not have to work for their livelihoods. Her children, who studied in English medium schools, were far more Anglicized than she. They spoke English, wore European clothes, and listened to Western music. Her younger sons selected their own brides. However, they continued to eat middle-eastern food, which over the years became more spicy and Indian in its flavors. As adults they found jobs and helped support Farha and the younger children, enabling her to stop some of her more strenuous work.

Social Life

Jewish ritual events and the festivals were great social and ceremonial occasions. These events marked Jewish community identity and differentiated the Jewish community from all others.[49] The observance of festivals, rites, laws and rituals, express and maintain community identity and solidarity and enable its members to become "conscious of the social and moral force of the collectivity.[50] Some of the most elaborate ritual events were connected with marriages and births. There was the engagement ceremony or *bath pakka* (meaning "sealing of the matter" in Hindustani), the *mileek* or engagement celebration,[51] the *khadba* (pre-wedding ceremony)[52] which was followed by the *Toowafah*,[53] then the wedding itself and *sheva brachot* (seven blessings).[54] *Brits*, (circumcisions) *bar-mitzvahs and maftirs* (the boy's first Torah reading) were also grand social events.[55] At these occasions men grouped together, as did the women, to conduct the rituals and to enjoy themselves, but there were no formal partitions between their spaces. They took pleasure in singing, dancing and listening to Arabic and Hindustani music. At such times Farha donned a *gowan* - an elaborate gown that flowed down from a more fitted waist than did a wrapper.[56]

On Shabbat women visited each other in the late afternoons. They chatted while they drank tea and snacked on sunflower or dried watermelon seeds. Jewish families often went on family picnics and outings to favorite spots such as the Alipur zoo, the Sibpur botanical gardens and the Eden gardens. Many winters would be spent in Madhapur (Bihar), a favorite vacation spot for the Baghdadi Jewish community. [57] The wealthier Jewish families often owned winter homes there. Like many women of her day, Farha smoked a double hookah with her husband. When he passed away she continued to smoke a single hookah and later smoked cigarettes.

Political and Economic Change sets in

In 1942, during World War II when the Japanese invaded Burma and were at the Indian border, Jews from Singapore, Penang, Kuala Lumpur and Rangoon escaped the invasion and poured into Calcutta by ship and by land. Most Calcutta Jewish homes had room in their homes and hearts for these refugees. Farha welcomed family members from Rangoon whom my mother remembers as "Rangoon cousins". Farha helped the "Rangoon cousins" settle and find jobs in Calcutta, where they lived until they emigrated after the War to California. Many of these refugees married Calcutta Jews, swelling the ranks of the community.

At the same time, British and American Jewish soldiers were stationed in Calcutta. This was the first time that Baghdadi Jews had their Jewish horizons widened.[58] Jewish soldiers came to Calcutta Baghdadi homes for Sabbath and for the festivals and attended shul, and many dated Calcutta Jewish girls. In fact, among the first to leave the Calcutta Jewish community for London and America after the War were girls who married soldiers. Though they were few in number, their families subsequently joined them overseas. Emigration reached exodus proportions when India achieved independence in 1947, when the state of Israel was formed in 1948 and when the economic forecast for Jews in India seemed unpredictable.

The British departure signaled an end of a golden era for Baghdadi Jews who had improved their socio-economic position under British patronage. [59] While many in the Jewish community accepted Indian citizenship, there was concern about the foreign currency restrictions imposed by the newly formed Government of India. In order to preserve foreign currency the Government tightened funds that could be removed from India.[60] These economic uncertainties were heightened by political uncertainties. The violence of Partition and the bloodshed that ensued between Hindus and Muslims made some Jews fearful of a rise of sectarianism. These factors, in conjunction with Israel's active policy to recruit Indian Jews, led a steady stream of Baghdadi Jews to emigrate to Israel between 1948 and 1952.

The fifties witnessed other Baghdadi Jews emigrating to England, Australia, the U.S.A. and Canada. By the end of that decade three of Farha's sons and

three of her daughters had moved with their children to Australia and London. By 1962 the Jewish population of Calcutta had dwindled to less than a thousand Jews and was decreasing at the rate of 100 persons a year. Farha, like many of the elder members of the community, continued to live in her home in Calcutta, with the support of her children and grandchildren. She died at the age of 86. At that time she had about 250 direct descendants living in many parts of the world.

QUESTIONS OF IDENTITY AND TRAVEL

Nationality, Diaspora and Identity

Farha was born in a period characterized by powerful empires riven by insistent nationalist pressure from below. The nationalist discourses, first heard in the nineteenth century in Asia, bore fruit in the twentieth century with the emergence of India, Pakistan, Burma, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and China - occupying many of the regions where Farha had traveled/visited. The Baghdadi Jews who came to India during the British Raj, and benefited greatly under colonial rule, were politically unwilling to participate in the national struggles that engulfed them.[61] They stood by and watched the battle for Indian independence unfold. While most Baghdadi Jews did not identify with the Indian national struggle, many did feel a strong identification with "Zionism." I would argue that this diaspora was rooted in the earlier kind of collective logic wherein religious communities were the dominant cultural system in much of Europe and Asia. Benedict Anderson's notion of an "imagined" community, that is not necessarily bound to a territory but rather to an ideal, captures the very essence of the Baghdadi Jewish experience in Asia: "(unity) is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." [62]

The Baghdadi Jews were very much an "imagined community," a "community of sentiment." As this account underscores, the Baghdadi Jews identified strongly with each other whether they lived in Calcutta or Shanghai, and they believed in and acted on their common identity. They saw themselves as a "community" in the sense of a deep, horizontal comradeship, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that prevailed among them.[63] In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the three Calcutta Hebrew-Arabic gazettes printed the comings and goings of local and overseas visitors and guests from other Baghdadi Jewish communities. This feeling of being part of a community despite the spatial distances that separated them is revealed in the quotation below :

> Distanced spatially from relatives abroad, the Jews in Burma were nevertheless close to them through the orthodoxy of home and synagogue ritual. The rules of Jewish law formed

> an apparently eternal framework for the society. They kept them true to their past, conforming with Jewish communities elsewhere. The continuity of tradition was ensured by a ritual director from Iraq, who served as rabbi, cantor, ritual circumciser, overseer of ritual slaughter and arbitrator of questions about Jewish law. That the authoritative voice about Jewish law and practice was invested in a representative of Iraqi Jewish tradition was significant for the community.....Each Sabbath, each Passover, each Yom Kippur the Baghdadi in Rangoon knew that his cousins in Iraq and elsewhere were lighting candles the same evening, eating *matzah* when he did, and experiencing with him the fast on Yom Kippur.[64]

And when religious questions too difficult for the local master arose, the mother city, Baghdad and often Jerusalem were invoked for authoritative guidance. Moreover, while great class differences existed among Baghdadi Jews, there was an underlying acceptance of each other as Jews and a commitment to help each other in times of need. This was manifested through the establishment of several charitable trusts. These trusts were funded by the Sassoons and Ezras, Gubbays and Meyers. That they were established to take care of the needy reveals that there were impoverished Jews, from birth to burial. The Jeshuruan Free School and the Elias Meyer Free School Talmud Torah exemplified how poorer students were supported by community money and received good high school secular and Jewish education.[65]

All communities larger than primordial villages are imagined, but what differs is the style in which they are imagined.[66] Farha's life underlines the distinctive style in which the Baghdadi Jewish community was imagined by its members. While possessing a strong sense of community identity, notions of nationality were peripheral to them: Jewishness was their core identity. I vividly recall a discussion in 1971 that took place with my grandmother, Miriam Abraham (Farha's daughter-in-law). On declaring myself *Indian* , I asked my grandmother *her* nationality. She instantly responded that she was Jewish—note: not Zionist or Israeli. I pressed her for another identity, but she insisted she was Jewish and that was all. Despite living all her adult life in India (she later emigrated to Australia and then England and over this time held several different passports), Farha's daughter-in-law did not feel loyalty to any nation.

Her *Jewishness* was so deeply ingrained that she saved her meager resources to die and be buried on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. The classical religious communities of the past —the great sacral cultures —that preceded the nation—were the relevant cultural systems to her and Farha's generation. These communities, linked by sacred languages and religious

beliefs and rituals, were very distinct from the imagined communities of modern states. Their crucial difference was "the older communities' confidence in the unique sacredness of their languages, and thus their ideas about admission to membership." [67] In striking contrast to the later European imperialist's preference for "pure-breeds" over "half breeds, semi-educated natives, wogs, and the like,"[68] converts were easily absorbed in the classical communities of the three Semitic religions. This openness to new members who shared religious beliefs, rituals and a common language marks the Baghdadi Jews' cultural identification with the Semitic religious communities of the past. The Baghdadi community had among them several converts to Judaism who were respected as full-fledged community members. For example, Miss Regina Guha, the daughter of Abhijit Guha who converted to Judaism, became the Principal of the Jewish Girls School. In this role she set the tone for the education of Jewish girls and served as a moral example within the community. As long as converts adhered to religious traditions, no distinction was made between them and born Jews.

Thus, I would conclude that Baghdadi Jews were an "archetypal diaspora," sharing a "sacral myth that sustains their collectivity"[69]. This sacral myth and more "informal constructions" of connectedness that women played a key role in nurturing, maintaining and extending, linked the Baghdadi Jews who thrived through many centuries of dispersion and living among other peoples. Living in Asia in multicultural and multiethnic societies, the Baghdadi Jews crossed borders within and between countries but did not feel displaced. I would suggest that for them "home" was mobile:

> ....the concept of "home" (for many) is both mobile and nomadic, more synonymous with family than a particular place. Edward Relph has noted that "places are defined less by unique locations, landscapes and communities than by the focusing of experiences and intentions onto a particular setting.[70]

Being a "deterritorialized community" their loyalties were mobile and transferable too. Arjun Appadurai, in his global discussion of the cultural dynamics of deterritorialization, suggests that deterritorialization affects the loyalties of groups, and their manipulation of currencies and other forms of wealth, especially in the context of complex diasporas.[71] These constructs of home, their mobility and their history of deterritorialization provide some understanding of why after World War II, when the world was reconfigured by imperial collapse and decolonization, many Baghdadis left their Asian homelands in search of other opportunities. Today there are "reconstituted Baghdadi communities" in places like London and Australia with strong Indian constituents.[72]

Travel and Displacement

Farha's story raises several contemporary "questions of travel." She was not an exile, a tourist, an adventurer, an immigrant, a refugee, or a nomad.[73] Farha was not cosmopolitan and she was not displaced.[74] Expatriation— "voluntary displacement undertaken for any number of reasons without entailing state-sponsored or legal banishment" — comes closest to describing her circumstances. Yet, displacement is associated with exile, solitude, distance, emptiness, nostalgia and loss. None of these sentiments or emotions signifies Farha's experience — the fullness and at the same time the narrowness of her life. While the institutional practices of high colonialism "... sent Africans to Europe to further their education, for instance, created a culture of alienation that privileged travel and displacement" [75], "travel and displacement" was not privileged among many of the minority trading communities in the heyday of Empire.

As this narrative illustrates, though Farha's life encompassed a great deal of spatial and geographical movement she always stayed in one place or location:"the Baghdadi Jewish community". This raises the question of whether she, and other women like her, "traveled" in the sense we know and understand today. Today it is assumed by most in the West that travel is "broadening," opening up people to new ideas and new ways of doing things, putting one in touch with "the other". Farha, while "well-traveled" in the literal sense of the word, rarely came into contact with "the other." More study of the "travel" undertaken by women like Farha, who were part of widely dispersed trading networks, would offer new theoretical constructs and enrich our understanding of who was "traveling" and the outcomes and functions of travel in the eighteenth and nineteenth century in the East.

This paper suggests that Farha's "travels" seemed to have been unselfconsciously more about recreating and sustaining the Baghdadi diaspora community than an individual's encounter with "otherness". Her "travel" was utilitarian, and her "displacement" did not produce the sensations of loss typically associated with this phenomenon. Gender plays a critical role in determining the "travel" and "displacement" experiences of women. For example, gender constructs both cushioned and further exacerbated Farha's experiences of "travel" and "displacement." As a young woman in the latter half of the nineteenth century she was not expected to go out in the world and support herself and her family. She traveled at first for the purpose of marriage, and accompanied her husband on his travels. She was expected to negotiate her way within familiar Baghdadi worlds, not in alien countries and environments. Her husband, on the other hand, was expected to make his future outside of the familiar Baghdadi world, and thus had to venture beyond that narrowly defined terrain at least for commercial purposes.

Saleh found himself thrust in "contact zones", those spaces which Pratt has defined as "the space of colonial encounters, the spaces in which people

geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish on-going relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality and intractable conflict"[76]. However, Saleh, being from a minority trading community and not from the dominant society of the colonizer or the colonized, probably did not experience the inequalities embedded in the notion of the contact zone as starkly as Pratt has presumed. This suggests that the contact zone itself, and the tensions it produced, were experienced differently by the range of actors implicated in the colonial project. As ethnicity shaped a complex range of encounters with the contact zones, so gender mediated and shaped the nature of those encounters. This paper has argued that though Farha lived almost all her life in the contact zone, she rarely came into contact with the other in a sustained way. Her circumscribed life meant that she had few possibilities to "meet, clash and grapple" with the other.

Thus, in many ways, gender "cushioned" Farha, who could depend on her husband to provide her with support and guidance when she moved from Baghdad to India. It was he who negotiated a place in those complex contact zones in India and the trading centers of the East. On the other hand, the early loss of her husband, while she still had dependent children to support, meant that in her time of need she was far from the support networks of her parents and extended family. Though she belonged to an established family in Basra, she could not return home or depend on those support networks. Rather, she had to work to support herself and her children till they came of age. These issues warrant further theorizing and call for a reconfiguration of questions of travel and displacement to include the non-western, pre-modern, gendered and minority narratives. Through this inquiry other tropes of displacement and travel are introduced which, as this study shows, provide alternative and rich sites for further exploration of the intricacies of cultural production and reproduction.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my mother, Flower Silliman, who in hours of discussion and story-telling talked of her grand-mother Farha, and filled me in on the details of Farha's life as she remembered it. She was also a rich resource for other information on the community and our customs. I would also like to thank Ezekiel Musleah, a family friend and authority on Calcutta Jews, for his encouragement and for assistance in providing me detailed information from his historical records. I am grateful to my colleagues Anne Donadey, Laura Donaldson, Natasa Durovicova, Paul Greenough, Philip Lutgendorf and Margery Wolf at the University of Iowa for several points of constructive criticism, and invaluable advice on the presentation of this material. I would also like to thank S. Shankar of Rutgers University.

1 Two memoirs and a best selling novel have some accounts of the ways in which the upper middle and upper class Baghdadi Jews lived. See Flower Elias *The Jews of Calcutta: The Autobiography of a Community: 1798-1972*, (Calcutta: The Jewish Association of Calcutta, 1974), Esmond Ezra, *Turning Back the Pages: A Chronicle of Calcutta Jewry*, (3 vols.) (London: Brookside Press, 1986), and Virginia Courter, *Flowers in the Blood*, (New York: Dutton, 1990).

2 Farha's life is not intended to be read as a story of one woman alone, but also as a site for the examination of the material and conceptual worlds in which middle-class women of this diaspora lived. As there are few primary or secondary sources for such information, I relied on talking with several members of Farha's family which is also my family. The members were her son Isaac Abraham, her daughter Ruby Benaiah, and her grand-daughter Flower Silliman. I am Farha's great grand-daughter.

3 Calcutta of the nineteenth and twentieth century was home to several small minority communities including the Baghdadi Jews, the Armenians, the Parsees and a Chinese community.

4 Mary Louise Pratt defines how ethnographers use the term transculturation to describe how subordinated or marginal groups "select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture." While they cannot control what is transmitted to them they are more able to determine which aspects of the culture they will absorb into their own and how to employ what they have transferred. See *Imperial Eyes : Travel Writing and Transculturation,* (London: Routledge, 1992) p. 6.

5 This term has been coined by Arjun Appadurai in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization,* p. 6. Appadurai also talks of "diasporas of terror" and "diasporas of despair" that exist in the contemporary world.

6 See Caren Kaplan, *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement*, (Raleigh Durham: Duke University Press, 1996) for a very rich discussion of the meanings attached to "exile" "tourism" and "nomad". Kaplan suggests that exile connotes the estrangement of the individual from an original community; tourism claims community on a global scale. She discusses how "tourism" heralds post-modernism and is understood as a product of the rise of consumer culture, leisure and technological innovation. Nomads have absolute movement, as distinct from migrants, who move in more determined and located ways.

7 See Kaplan from the preface.

8 The earliest Jewish settlement in Calcutta in the first two decades of the nineteenth century was comprised mostly of Syrian Jews in search of greater trading opportunities and greater religious tolerance that the British rulers provided.

[9] Both present-day Syria and Iraq were controlled before World War I by the Ottoman Turks. The entire region was called "Syria." In the second quarter of the nineteenth century there was a sizable emigration from Iraq primarily in response to persecution by Daud Pasha, Wali or Overseer of Baghdad.

[10] Thomas A. Timberg, "Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Jews" in Nathan Katz (ed), *Studies in Indian Jewish Identity,* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1995) pp. 136.

[11] Timberg, p. 137.

[12] In his chapter on the Chinese in India, Schermerhorn notes that the bulk of Chinese came to India in the heyday of the colonial era, which was the same as for several Iraqi Jews, including the Baqaals. The Chinese, like the Baghdadi Jews settled in areas where there were alien government structures superimposed on local institutions. The colonial authorities regarded the Chinese as utilitarian instruments of the economy. The Chinese in Calcutta were traders, agents or manual workers. The British had no interest in them as a people or in their cultural habits. The Chinese developed a working knowledge of local customs and European ways to be effective in their new environment. I believe that the colonial authorities had the same attitude/relationship to middle-class and working Baghdadi Jews. Like the Chinese, the Baghdadi middle-class Jews were very law-abiding and gave the ruling powers little trouble. Elite Jews developed more strong ties to the Colonial authorities and were more Anglicized in their ways. For more information see R.A. Schermerhorn, "Unique Position of the Chinese" in *Ethnic Plurality in India*, (Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 1978) pp. 290 - 312.

[13] Jackson, in *The Sassoons* discusses in much detail the way in which the Sassons entertained the British in England, India and the Far East. He notes that in the last two decades of the century the Court Circular was rarely without some daily reference to the Sassoons. While the prestigious Baghdadi families from Calcutta may not have entertained as lavishly and were not as notable, they too interacted with the British in Calcutta and abroad on on-going basis and adapted British ways. Leading members of the Calcutta Jewish community were invited to the Viceroy's levees and celebrations, and helped to organize some of the latter. For more information see Stanley Jackson, *The Sassoons*, (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1968) and Joan G. Roland, *The Jews in British India*, (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1989) pp. 56 - 64.

[14] This information on community economic structure was obtained from Ezekiel Musleah. Rabbi Musleah has written one of the key texts on the Calcutta Jewish community, is a member of the community and served as a rabbi in Calcutta in the mid twentieth century. Today he lives in Philadelphia. In personal discussion with me he contradicted the break-

down of the community by Timberg, p. 141 where it is stated that the "Baghdadi community was middle-class tending towards the prosperous in composition, with a considerable number of very wealthy and few poor members." Musleah argues that Timberg was not witness to the miserable conditions, destitution and penury in the heart of the Jewish community.

15 Personal communication from Eziekel Musleah.

16 See Ruth Freedman Cernea, "Promised Lands and Domestic Arguments : The Conditions of Jewish Identity in Burma", in *Studies in Indian Jewish Identity*, (New Delhi: Manohar, 1995) p. 163.

17 See Timberg, p. 140 - 141.

18 Timberg, p. 141.

19 Arabic clothing for a man consisted of a *Dagla* (a long coat), *Kamsan* (long shirt), *Labsan* (undershirt) and *Sadaria* (outer vest). The women wore "wrappers", loose cotton gowns flowing from the shoulders to the ankles, with wide gathered collars and elbow length sleeves, often trimmed with lace. Married women covered their heads with *yasmas* (scarves) which were fastened around their buns or knotted at the forehead. When they went outdoors, the wrapper was covered with a shawl. Women wore a petticoat and drawers under the wrapper. Hindustani, the language they spoke is a mixture of Hindi and Urdu that was commonly used as the lingua franca of the Indian port cities.

20 Nathan Katz in *Studies in Indian Jewish Identity* states that the "Baghdadis remained aloof from Indianness and that English replaced Arabic as their mother-tongue with no intermediary of Hindustani which they used only for trade and to speak with their servants" (p. 4). Ezekiel Musleah in *On the Banks of the Ganga: The Sojourn of the Jews in Calcutta*, North Quincy, MA: Christpoher Publishing House, 1975) argues to the contrary. He states that there was a time in 1883 when the Inspectorate of European Schools wrote a scathing report decrying the fact that in the newly formed Jewish Girls and Boys School students were speaking Hindustani among themselves. He states that Hindustani was spoken in most homes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. This practice continued right into the first two decades of the twentieth century when English became the mother-tongue for Iraqi Jews in Calcutta. See p. 281.

21 The three leading Judeo-Arabic newspapers were the *Paerah, Mebasser* and *Maggid Mesharim.*

22 I prefer to use the term "Indo-Anglian" identity to distinguish the different ways in which the Baghdadi Jews fused "Englishness" and "Indianess" and to distinguish this fusion from the fusion of cultures, and indeed the fusion of two different ethnic groups created by "Anglo-Indians."

23 Another great-grandmother of mine was sent out from Baghdad to work in the Sassoon family home in Bombay where she was to see that Kashrut was maintained.

[24] Jacob Sapir, the envoy from Jerusalem in 1860 noted that ".....The Baghdadians marry only virgin girls below the age of seventeen years. Beauty and talent are sought after. So the more particular bring out their wives from Baghdad, Syria and the Holy Land. They do not marry for money " see *Musleah,* p. 201. Arranged marriages were the order of the day till well into the twentieth century.

[25] From the unpublished manuscript of Flower Silliman.

[26] Timberg, p. 137 presents some figures for the number of Jews in Calcutta from 1816 - 1961. He notes that between 1881 and 1891 there were between 982 - 1387 Jews in Calcutta. .

[27] Musleah, p. 49.

[28] From the notes of Saleh Baqaal at the back of his prayer book. The prayer book is in the possession of his grandson in Australia.

[29] Cernea, p. 164 comments that "Jewish identity can be conceived of as a refuge, a home, a place of security in an alien world."

[30] This information was provided by Rabbi Ezekiel Musleah who has much of the Jewish birth and marriage records of the Calcutta Jews in his keeping.

[31] My mother recalls people saving a piece of the *afikomen* (the bottom of three matzahs eaten at the Passover seder) till it dried to a hard flat stone; this would then be thrown into the ocean to calm the stormy water.

[32] These notes are in Arabic but written in the Hebrew script.

[33] Katz, from the Introduction of *Studies in Indian Jewish Identity*, p. 4

[34] Margaret Abraham, "Marginality and Community Identity" in, *Studies in Indian Jewish Identity*, (Ed) Nathan Katz, (New Delhi: Manohar, 1995) pp. 177 and 178.

[35] Timberg, p. 150

[36] Timberg, p. 178.

[37] Roland, p.120

[38] For example, Musleah in *On the Banks of the Ganga*, states that Jewish communities in the Far East like Singapore in the mid-nineteenth century did not have Sofers (scribes) to draw up Ketubas. They looked for these services in Calcutta and often sought guidance from the community in Calcutta which was better organized. p. 67

[39] Her sister-in-law was unable to bear children which was a source of great grief to her and a source of tension between her and Farha, the mother of many children.

[40] Musleah, p. 68

[41] Musleah, p. 184.

[42] Until 1884, the Jewish community of Calcutta worshipped in two synagogues - the older Neveh Shalome bought in 1825 and the newer Bethel built in 1856. As the last quarter of the nineteenth century approached they served a rapidly expanding Jewish community of about

a thousand people, most of whom were of Baghdadi extraction. A third synagogue, the Maghen David, the largest and most ornate synagogue in South and South East Asia was dedicated in 1884. It was modeled after the Old Telegraph Office and other official structures of the day. The Maghen David could accommodate about 300 women and 400 men. The old Neveh Shalome which was in a state of disrepair was closed and ceased to be used as a synagogue. The congregation of Neveh Shalome became the congregation of the Maghen David. The old Neveh Shalome synagogue was rebuilt and reopened in the early twentieth century. See Musleah, pp. 100, and 159.

43 Musleah, p. 68.

44 The bedroom had a large bed made of wood with a cotton mattress and a mosquito net. A large wooden almirah or two was used to store clothes and personal possessions. The family room would have an easy chair, a few simple wood chairs with cane seating, a couple of morahs (stools) and a wooden table. The kitchen had a "kapera" - a wooden cupboard with wire mesh doors to keep out the insects. The kapera was mounted on metal trivets containing water to prevent ants from getting into the food stuff stored within it.

45 The water in the kitchen and bathroom was filled in big vats by a "bisti-wallah" - a water carrier who carries water in a large leather bag on his back from home to home. By the thirties and forties Farha had access to running water Timberg, notes that the 1901 Census of Calcutta records that several Jewish women were piece good dealers, five women were tailors, three women were general merchants, two women were shop keepers with a total of 69 females carrying out several different profession. This information was recorded by Esmond Ezra, *Turning Back the Pages - A Chronicle of Calcutta Jewry,* (London: Brookside Press, 1986) vols. I and II.

46 A personal communiqué with Rabbi Ezekiel Musleah.

47 Farha was not a professional marriage broker. Marriage brokers were mostly women and their help was sought in "disposing" of girls who were older or less attractive. This was quite a competitive business. Their fees were standard - a complete set of clothes from head to foot. When families unfamiliar with each other were introduced, a searching inquiry was taken to the third and fourth generations. If the labors of the broker were satisfactory a tray of candy, flowers and a piece of jewelry were sent to the girl from the boy's parents. See Musleah, p. 202.

48 Abraham, p. 190.

49 Abraham, p. 191.

50 This celebration is held at the home of the girl's parents where the groom's family arrives with an array of trays containing flowers and candy. A woman - the dhakaka is the master of ceremonies. She is adept in

drumming and plays the tambourine and balances a glass full of liquid or the candy tray on her hand as she dances to her music. The ring is placed on the brides' finger on this joyous occasion by her future mother or father-in-law.

51 This function takes place a week to three days before the wedding. The important moment on this occasion is when henna is applied to the couple's outstretched fingers.

52 On the Saturday night before the wedding the groom once again sends trays of candy, flowers and molasses to the bride followed by a get-together of both families. The couple step over a goat or sheep as atonement.

53 These are the dinners served in the post-nuptial week when the wedding ceremony's seven benedictions and sacred songs are chanted. The occasion often lasts well into the morning.

54 Farha, a good baker and sweet-maker prepared the sweets such as baklava and delicacies required on many of these occasions for her extended family.

55 This was called a *qussah* in Arabic. It was usually made of a rich fabric. It had a low cut neckline and long sleeves widening to the cuff where there was a slit. A front panel covered by a bodice was made of fine cloth and was usually elaborately embroidered and fastened with straps.

56 Madhapur is one hundred and eighty-two miles from Calcutta and is about 8oo feet above sea level. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, Calcutta Jews, rich and poor, enjoyed its salubrious climate every winter. For a month or two it was filled with festivities and was a lively place. At one time, daily and Sabbath services would be held there and a Sefer Torah was transported there. See E. Musleah, p.56.

57 rom the late nineteenth century there was a steady trickle of Ashkenazi Jews coming to Calcutta to seek better economic opportunities. At the turn of the century Musleah estimates that there were about 150 of them in Calcutta. In fact the community apportioned a part of the cemetery for their exclusive use, p. 393. In the mid- nineteenth century many Ashkenazis served as medical doctors and businessmen and occasionally local Jews married Ashkenazi women, p. 395.

58 Abraham, pp. 177 - 178.

59 See E. Musleah, pp. 449 - 450

60 Yet, this is exactly the period which witnesses the rise of Zionism in Europe, and some Jews did identify with Zionism. The early part of the twentieth century witnessed the establishment of a Zionist movement in India. It heightened the awareness of a Jewish identity.

61 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (London: Verso, 1991) p. 6.

62 Anderson, p. 7.

63 Cernea, pp. 164 and 165, describes the Iraqi Jewish community in Burma.

64 Graduates of these schools, the community was proud to note, were academically on a level with those of other city-wide educational institutions.

65 Anderson.

66 Anderson, p. 13

67 Anderson, p. 14

68 Susan Pattie, "At Home in Diaspora : Armenians in America" in Diaspora 3:2, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

69 Pattie, p 186.

70 See Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization,* Public Worlds, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) vol. 1., p 49 for further discussion of the cultural dynamics of deterritorialization.

71 Timberg, p. 150.

72 See Kaplan for a very rich discussion of the meanings attached to "exile" "tourism" and "nomad". Kaplan suggests that exile connotes the estrangement of the individual from an original community; tourism claims community on a global scale. She discusses how "tourism" heralds post-modernism and is understood as a product of the rise of consumer culture, leisure and technological innovation. Nomads have absolute movement, as distinct from migrants, who move in more determined and located ways.

73 Displacement is associated with exile, solitude, distance, emptiness, nostalgia and loss. None of these sentiments capture Farha's experience. The closest describer of Farha's experience is that of expatriation - "voluntary displacement undertaken for any number of reasons without entailing state-sponsored or legal banishment".

74 For further discussion see Kaplan in her discussion of Ngugi's distaste of the identity of "exile writer" in reference to himself, p. 111.

75 Mary Lousie Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation,* (London: Routledge, 1992) p. 7.

International Journal of HINDU STUDIES

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The aim of the *International Journal of Hindu Studies* is to examine Hinduism centrally and in a special way. It wishes to consider Hinduism analytically and comparatively as a "form of life" as clarified by its contrasts and similarities to other historical and present day forms. This is to say that we will be less concerned with the intrinsic forms of Hinduism and its history, as illuminated by philological and descriptive studies. Rather, our focus will be, on the one hand, on Hinduism's adaptations to a wide range of historical circumstances and ecological, economic, and political possibilities and, on the other, on the Hindu forms that work "on the ground" in particular places and times to generate special kinds of social, cultural, and psychological order and problems. We consider this to be necessarily a comparative exploration and welcome (and need) contributions from scholars in other fields who wish to bring their own studies of religion, world views, theories of modernity and pre-modernity, social organization and social control, and so on, into dialogue with Hindu studies. We equally encourage South Asia scholars to explore such perspectives in their own work. We wish to explore whether it may be productive to ask—in addition to the descriptive "*What* is Hinduism?"—the theoretical question (or questions, for we expect there is a large and productive set of answers) "*Why* is Hinduism the way it is?" The Journal, therefore, invites submissions of a comparative or theoretical nature in all fields of the social sciences and humanities in the hope of furthering a dialogue that centers on one of the great human creations, Hinduism, which differs in so many respects from the religions and societies that have informed much of classical Western thought. Three copies of the paper should be submitted. All submissions will be peer reviewed.

Publication details: Volume 1 (1997; 640 pages), ISSN: 1022-4556, three issues per volume
Subscription rates: North America: Institutions $150, Individuals, $60, Students, $30
Rest of World: Institutions $156, Individuals, $66, Students, $36
Canadian orders must add 7% GST (#138810882). Orders from outside Canada must be paid in U.S. dollars.

World Heritage Press, Journals Division, 1270 St-Jean, St-Hyacinthe, Quebec, Canada J2S 8M2
Tel: 514 771 0213 Fax: 514 771 2776 Journal Homepage: http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/gthursby/ijhs/

A Tibetan-language History of Israel by Jamyang Norbu

Nathan Katz

In 1990 I was privileged to be part of a delegation of eight rabbis and scholars who traveled to Dharamsala, seat of the Tibetan government-in-exile, to meet with the Dalai Lama. His Holiness wanted to learn the "Jewish secret" for preserving a religion and a culture in exile.[1]

We met not only with the Dalai Lama, but with all strata of Tibetan leadership as well. During a dialogue with "young, educated Tibetans" (as the official itinerary put it), Lhasang Tsering, President of the Tibetan Youth Congress, one of the leading political organizations in the exiled community, handed me a small Tibetan pamphlet.[2] It took me a few moments to decipher the Tibetan for "Israel," and once I did I was surprised to learn that I had been given "An Outline of the History of Israel," written by a fiery Tibetan patriot, Jamyang Norbu.

Norbu is well known in the refugee community as one of its leading militants. A graduate of St. Joseph's College in Darjeeling, he was a guerrilla fighter with the Tibetan Resistance Force in Mustang, a remote section of Nepal. After the Force was dismantled by the Nepali government, Norbu studied Sinology in France and joined the China desk of the Tibetan Office of Research and Analysis.

In 1970 Norbu became one of the founders of the Tibetan Youth Congress and, later, editor of its magazine, *Rangzen* (*rang-btsan*, "Independence"). Analogies between the Tibetan and Jewish experience appeared in its pages, such as referring to the *kohen gadol* (the high priest of the Temple of Jerusalem) as "the Dalai Lama of Israel" and likening the Roman conquest of Israel to the Chinese occupation of Tibet.[3] More recently, Norbu warned against Tibetans who became too close to Deng Xiaopeng as akin to Chamberlain's appeasement of Hitler, and cautioned his countrymen against the "banality of evil", by which he meant that while those in power may appear cordial and humane, they had to be judged by their deeds rather than by affect.[4]

Norbu has been very active in Tibetan cultural as well as political life. He edited *dZlos-gar*, a work on Tibetan music and the performing arts,[5] and from 1979 to 1984 was director of the Tibetan Institute of the Performing Arts in Dharamsala. He is an accomplished poet in both Tibetan and English, and is the translator of *Horseman in the Snow*[6] and the author of *Illusion and Reality*,[7] a collection of essays which originally appeared in *Tibetan Review*.

A translation of Norbu's text follows.[8]

An Outline of the History of Israel, by Jamyang Norbu

Introduction

As a result of the Communist Chinese invasion of the rich land of Tibet, today we have been deprived of our own history, our constitution, and the free preservation of our unique culture and customs. The greedy, selfish motivation of the atheist Communist Chinese was their madness to gain more and more material wealth. Not only did they forcefully occupy Tibet, but the are actively engaged in the systematic destruction and pollution of the once virgin and pollution-free region. Today, we have a tremendous responsibility on our shoulders. It is now time for us to rise and work hard to achieve the aspirations of the millions of our brothers and sisters left behind in Tibet.

To achieve such a noble cause, we must take a lesson from someone who had experienced the same tragic fate. We need to derive inspiration from a people whose determination and hard work achieved their long-awaited goal.

The credit for writing this work goes to Mr. Jamyang Norbu who compiled this brief history of Israel, whose people had struggled for 2,000 years under many difficulties and hardships to get their land and freedom back.

This brief history of Israel is published by the Tibetan Information and International Relations Office on the second day of the first month of the Tibetan water-bull year (March 6, 1973) to mark the 2100th anniversary of the political independence of Tibet.

Chapter 1

A small, independent nation has reappeared on this planet after a gap of 2,000 years. This nation is not only very new, but she is very small, too. However, her military might is the equal of any super-power in the world. This is evident from the constant fear and anxiety being shown by its neighboring countries. Although she is surrounded by hostile nations on all sides, her military power has no match among these neighboring countries. For instance, in 1967 all the Muslim nations grouped together and attacked Israel, using aircraft, missiles and tanks given by the Soviet Union. They were united in their attempt to destroy this comparatively small nation completely, but to their great dismay, when the real battle came this small nation defeated her enemies, even though they were greater in number of soldiers and possessed more sophisticated weapons. She also captured significant enemy territory.

The history of Israel can be traced back 3,400 years. They enjoyed their independence for about 1,400 years before the Roman invasion. The early people of Israel were nomadic and were very religiously minded. After 1,400 years of their total freedom, the Romans, who were the most powerful nation of their day, invaded Israel and many other nations. Many nations did not dare to fight against such a powerful nation, and so they submitted themselves

without resistance. However, the Israelis[9] were not easy men. They did not submit before their powerful enemies, but kept on fighting for their freedom and rights. However, despite all their determination and courage, they were defeated by their powerful enemy. The Romans completely destroyed their country and did not leave even a single stone from the buildings of Jerusalem. Those who survived the fight could not remain in their own country. They went to all the different countries of the world and took asylum. These displaced people, no matter where they went and settled, continued to cherish and preserve their religion and culture, and were thus able to maintain their distinct identity during their long exile.

Although they had lost their country and became displaced people in many different countries, they never allowed their distinct culture and religion to degenerate. They cherished and preserved their culture quite intact throughout their long exile. In addition to this, they worked hard to gain all sorts of knowledge from outside during their long period of exile. As a result, the people of Israel were considered as most intelligent and courageous, and were known all over the world.

For example, the Israelis were the first people who thought of and created the atom bomb. One of the Israeli refugees had even become Prime Minister of England. His name was Benjamin Disraeli and he made many contributions to that country. The Israelis were also well versed in poetry, medicine and music. In fact, the richest and biggest businessmen in France today are Israelis.

The Israeli refugees suffered tremendous difficulties and hardships because of the jealousy and hatred of the people of those countries where they lived, as the Israelis always turned out to be the most intelligent and successful in every field. Israelis were especially hated in England, France, Poland and Russia. Hundreds and thousands of Israelis were killed in those countries out of hatred. Although Israelis who lived in England and France made many valuable contributions to those countries, the people and the government of these countries always discriminated against them on the basis of religion and never treated them well.

The Israelis were highly educated, courageous and possessed all the qualities to challenge and face up to any circumstances. Nevertheless, they silently tolerated all the mistreatment they received from their host nations, as they knew that they lost their own country and were living temporarily in those countries. In the countries mentioned above, special laws were imposed upon the Israelis which restricted them from carrying out business ventures, and extra taxes were imposed upon them. In some of the countries, the children of the Israelis were denied admission to schools. Thus they experienced indescribable difficulties and tremendous hardship.

Despite these tragic circumstances, they cherished their race and made tremendous efforts to educate their children. New schools were opened at their own expense. Rich people helped the poor ones, and these poor people helped

those who were poorer than themselves. Each family member tried to contribute even their last dollar to the community. The community, in turn, helped to educate those children who families could not meet their educational expenses. Religious people [rabbis], elderly men and women, and unemployed people were supported from community funds. They had not only physical unity, but also unity of souls. Their love for each other and their mutual bonds were so strong that no matter how hard those hostile governments and people tried to mistreat and abuse them, they could not harm them. Rather, these hostile conditions became a blessing in disguise for them, and their dedication and solidarity became tighter and stronger forever. Although no outside nation came forward to their support, they boldly stood on their own legs and faced all odd circumstances.

Chapter 2

In 1939 World War II started, a war in which millions lost their lives. This large scale, destructive war was started by Hitler of Nazi Germany. He was one of the most cruel and merciless dictators the world has ever produced. During those times, the Israelis living in Germany were economically very rich, intellectually at a very high level, and enjoyed a very high standard of living The native Germans were jealous of their industriousness, economic conditions and intellectual qualities.

On top of this, Hitler fueled the fire by making inhuman propaganda statements, saying that the Jews[10] had a very bad character and belonged to a low caste. Besides, he blamed the Jews for the German defeat in World War I. He said that the Jews had polluted their pure, white, superior race. So he advocated that the race of Jews should be totally eliminated in order to maintain the purity of the white race. Soon after he made this announcement, the secret police [SS] raided the Jews' residences, arrested hundreds of thousands of Jews, and tortured and killed them indiscriminately. Since at that time most of the European nations were under Hitler's rule, they followed suit and rounded up all the Jews and imprisoned them.

Jewish people living in Poland were looked down upon by the Polish, and to prevent their own people from becoming mixed up with the Israelis, separate residential areas were made for the Jews. When Poland surrendered to the Germans, the Jews living in Poland refused to surrender and so Hitler sent a huge army to destroy and suppress them. Although the Israelis did not have any weapons, they boldly grabbed the enemy's weapons and fought back. They opened factories where arms and ammunition were manufactured, and tin bombs and sten guns were made. When the German tanks came, even Israeli women and children ran with their weapons and destroyed both themselves and the tanks. The reason they sent women and children against the tanks was to keep their male fighting force in reserve to fight the main battle.

However, they suffered defeat because of the intense attack by Hitler's armed forces, both air and ground. Millions of Jewish people were arrested and put into prisons. Soon after, Hitler decided to kill all the Jews. But he did not want to shoot them one by one and thus waste both his time and ammunition. He had another plan to massacre the Jews. He built many cement chambers that could accommodate a thousand prisoners each, with a small window in each chamber. He then released poisonous gas into the chambers and destroyed as many as six million Jewish prisoners.

After World War II ended in 1945, hundreds of thousands of Jews became displaced. They had no place to go, no home. Besides, they were in a state of shock. They could not imagine the killing of six million Jews like insects, without the slightest regard for human dignity. Then a new idea dawned upon them. They realized that if they were to remain stateless, then they would experience more suffering and the same tragic fate again. Those who survived the brutalities remembered how they suffered humiliation and hardship for 2,000 years, only to die like insects ultimately. So they decided to go back to their own country and struggle to regain their ancient land.

Prior to the nineteenth century and long before World War I, Jews from all over the world began to return to their land. However, those going back to their country were still very few. Only those who loved their country and their people [i.e., the Zionists] went back, and they were in the minority. At that time, Israel was under the rule of Turkey and was called the Land of Palestine.

During World War I, when England and France were engaged in a war against Germany, England was in dire need of an element to be used for their mortar fire, which was discovered by Dr. Chaim Weitzman, an Israeli scientist living in England. As a result of his discovery, the firepower of England's arsenal was greatly enhanced, and the English were able to administer a severe defeat to Germany. The British Government was very pleased and decided to reward Dr. Weitzman. But Dr. Weitzman did not accept any award,. Instead he said, "I do not need any reward, but I request you to help my people restore our country." The British Government agreed.

Both Germany and Turkey suffered a great loss in World War I, and they lost some of their land to England. At that time a number of Arabs were living in Palestine, and they were unhappy when many Jews began to return home. In spite of the hostile attitude of the Arab people, the Jewish people continued to return to their homeland. They started resettlement programs and engaged in an active cultivation program. As a result, great prosperity ensued. Jews tried to be cooperative and gave all kinds of help to the Palestinian people, but the Palestinians always showed their hostile attitude to the Jews. They never cooperated with them, claiming that the land belonged to them. The Jews also claimed the land as their own. In fact, the land rightfully belonged to the Jews. They lost it as a result of an invasion by outside forces. When the Jews claimed their rightful land, the Arabs were greatly enraged and razed the Jewish

settlements, burned the crops and killed Jewish women and children, thus causing a big problem.

In spite of Muslim atrocities against the Jews, the British Government did not help the Jewish people and ignored the matter completely. Law and order suffered, and the Arabs were allowed to act according to their own free will. The reason why the British government was so cautious was mainly because of their fear that their relationship with Arab nations might become strained, for those Arab nations possessed large quantities of oil, and twentieth century people are greatly dependent upon oil because of its use in modern technology. For that reason, the British government broke the promise they had made earlier, and instead of helping the Jewish people regain their independence, they rather strengthened their friendship with the Muslim nations.

The Jewish people had to suffer the atrocities committed by the Arabs for a long time. On top of this, the British government confiscated all the weapons of the Jewish people on the excuse that they were the guardians of the security in the land. But they never confiscated the weapons of the Arabs. The Arabs robbed Jewish villagers, killed others who tried to resist, and committed all kinds of atrocities. As a result, the Jews at last ran out of patience and decided to take revenge, blood for blood and brutality for brutality. Secretly, they purchased weapons abroad and began to manufacture their own weapons. They formed among themselves new organizations, namely Haganah, in order to prevent Arab brutalities. Later, when the Arabs came to attack them, they boldly fought and beat them back, successfully stopping Arab attacks against them.

After World War II, hundreds of thousands of Jewish people tried to emigrate to Palestine. Many of them were those who survived the release of poison gas by Hitler. Their condition was very miserable. The migration of many Jews into Palestine alarmed the Arabs, who thought that if such a great number of Jews came to Palestine, then they would take away all the Arab lands. So they appealed to Great Britain to make them stop their migration to Palestine.

Since the British had their own interest in the Arab nations, they sent ships to stop the Jews from immigrating into Palestine. However, those Jewish people who had already entered the land had given all necessary aid and support to help the new immigrants enter the country. Those Jews who were in the United States and other countries, and whose economic conditions were better, gave financial support, purchased weapons and smuggled them to Palestine. Clandestinely, the Jews purchased old ships from many countries, and tried to smuggle their coreligionists into Palestine without the knowledge of the British guards. However, since the British guards were very clever, they were able to capture many Jewish ships that were sent to Palestine during the night. However, many Jewish people were able to get into Palestine. Those who were captured by the British guards were sent to Cyprus, in the name of resettlement. In reality their conditions were no better than they had been in

German prisons. As a result of this slow and silent torture meted out by the British Government, the Jewish people completely hated the British Government.

In the course of time, there arose many military organizations in Palestine, and these organizations demanded that the British government withdraw all British influence and power from Palestine. The strongest of these organizations was the Stern Gang.[11] Although this organization had very few members and possessed very limited weapons, yet it was extraordinarily strong, well disciplined and maintained such tight security that it was successful in many ways. They bombed British factories, theater halls and army regiments. They killed British soldiers and police secretly, and thus they were able to wreak havoc for the British government. The British government made an all-out effort to destroy the Stern Gang. They were able to arrest some of the party members and engaged in torturous interrogations to get information about the Stern Gang. However, the arrested members never disclosed anything about their organization.

The Stern Gang assassinated two top British military generals in Palestine, and this caused the British government many problems. In fact, many nations at the time protested the British brutality against the Jews in Palestine. But this time the British Government had good reason to bring the assassinations before the United Nations, in order to justify their repressive measures against the Israelis.

Chapter 3

In November 1947, the United Nations decided to grant independence to Israel. But the United Nations was not going to return all of the land to Israel. They decided to give only a small, narrow portion of the land to the Jewish people. Besides that, Jerusalem, Israel's former capital, was to be given to an Arab country called Jordan. Despite such decisions, the Arab nations were still not satisfied. They protested that no portion of the land should be given to the Jews. The Arabs threatened the Israelis, saying that if they tried to declare their independence and hoist the independent flag, then they would destroy all the Jewish people. This threat made the Israelis so upset that the Israeli Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, instead of listening to what they said, reinforced their army and arranged to obtain more weapons. In May 1948, they hoisted the Israeli flag. This enraged the Arab countries so much that countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Syria and Saudi Arabia gathered a huge army and tried to destroy the Israelis. At that time, the ratio of Israeli soldiers to Arab soldiers was 1:20. Yet the Israelis were united, motivated by their firm belief in the truth of their rights. The Israelis fought so bravely that within eight months, the Arabs were defeated and had to approach the United Nations.

Although the Arab nations appealed to the United Nations to stop the war and maintain peace, in reality they conspired among themselves. They decided

to remain silent until they were able to eliminate the whole Israeli race, one by one. The United Nations believed in the Arab peace proposal, and decided to give all the best land and militarily strategic seaports to the Arabs. This decision was greatly resented by the Israelis, who had sacrificed so much and had undergone so many hardships for the cause of their independence. So these patriotic Jews instigated among their own people, and tried repeatedly to start another war against the Arabs. As a result, the Arabs were greatly alarmed, and they approached the Soviet Union for military aid. They gave many tanks and other sophisticated weapons to Syria and Egypt.

Gradually, the military capability of the Arab countries greatly increased, and they increased their show of military strength. Eventually in 1967, Syria sent many soldiers secretly to infiltrate Israeli territory to ambush and kill many Israeli people. Egypt, on the other hand, tried to blockade all Israeli shipping moving in and out of the Suez Canal. Consequently, on June 5 war broke out between the Arabs and the Israelis. However, the Israelis were well prepared . They defeated and inflicted heavy losses upon the Arab armies within six days. This decisive battle earned a great reputation around the world for Israel's soldiers. Israeli soldiers captured many Arab soldiers and killed a great number of them. Since then, the Arabs have not been able to wage any fierce battle against Israel.

However, the Arab nations organized many terrorist forces who attacked Israeli civilian hospitals and schools, destroying them with bombs. However, Israel's military forces did not receive significant harm from these terrorist activities. These Arab terrorist organizations had a reputation for being well disciplined, like a thunderbolt. They were called "national liberation movements". Despite the Arab states having so many such organizations and possessing so many modern weapons, they could not win any of the wars. The reason was that, internally, these Arab nations were not friendly with each other, and were not well coordinated. For instance, the number of Israeli people they killed, directly or indirectly, in the wars was less than the number of people who were killed among themselves.

The terrorist acts of the Arabs were partly justifiable, but these terrorists exceeded all limits and hijacked international air planes, which discredited the name of these terrorist gangs.

The reason why Israelis prospered so rapidly is that they were highly motivated, and there was great unity among themselves. The people are highly educated, and they love their people very much. Israeli people are free from delusions and anger against one another, and they are always ready to sacrifice the self for the common cause.

1 My reflections on the historic dialogue were published as "The 'Jewish Secret' and the Dalai Lama," *Conservative Judaism* 43, 4 (1991):33-46. The trip drew considerable media attention, including Rodger Kamenetz's best-seller, *The Jew in the Lotus: A Poet's Rediscovery of Jewish Identity in Buddhist India* (San Francisco, Harper, 1994).

2 Jamyang Norbu ('Jam-dbyangs Nor-bu), *I-si-ral gyi rgyal-rabs snying-bsdus bsgrig-pa* (Dharamsala, Tibetan Information and International Relations Office, 1973.

3 Zev Milstein, "A Letter from Jerusalem," *Rangzen* 2, 4 (19767):14, 16.

4 Jamyang Norbu, "The Heart of the Matter," in Edward Lazar, ed., *Tibet: The Issue is Independence* (Berkeley, Parallax Press, 1994), p. 25.

5 Jamyang Norbu, ed., *Zlos-gar: Performing Traditions of Tibet* (Dharamsala, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1986).

6 Rab-brtan rDo-rje, *Mi tshai bya bzags dnos myon ma ons dran bskul*, translated by Jamyang Norbu as *Horseman in the Snow: The Story of Aten, and the Khampas' Fight for the Freedom of their Country* (Dharamsala, Central Tibetan Secretariat, 1979), republished as *Warriors of Tibet: The Story of Aten, and the Khampas' Fight for the Freedom of their Country* (London, Wisdom Publications, 1986).

7 Jamyang Norbu, *Illusion and Reality* (Dharamsala, Tibetan Youth Congress, 1989).

8 My former student at the University of South Florida, Mr. Damcho, was of considerable help to me in reading the text.

9 Generally in his text, Norbu uses I-si-ral-gyi-mi ("people of Israel") to mean Israelite, Jew, Israeli, etc.

10 Here Norbu uses the Tibetan neologism Dzi'u, roughly pronounced "Jew."

11 Si-kron in Tibetan. It is instructive that it was the most militant faction of armed Jewish opposition to the British which Norbu highlights, ignoring the more moderate Haganah.

REVIEW ESSAY

LIVING ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN JUDAISM AND HINDUISM/BUDDHISM

Maurice Friedman

Judith Linzer, *Torah and Dharma: Jewish Seekers in Eastern Religions* (New York, London, Jerusalem: Jason Aronson, 1996), xxv+367 pages.

Judith Linzer's *Torah and Dharma* gives us an in-depth understanding of a significant contemporary phenomenon which will speak to a wide spectrum of Jews and to many non-Jewish seekers and scholars. It is a unique combination of a phenomenological study of many different types of religiously East-West Jews with a broad personal preface, and a 100-page section on"Jewish-Buddhist Encounter"—a jewel in its own right which continues the personal-dialogical form of the rest of the book.

A meaningful thread through the whole book is the growth and development of Judith Linzer herself—from an ethnic, non-religious Jewish childhood to years of work with Zen and yoga, followed by her emergence as a spokesperson and witness for Jewish renewal, Jewish feminism, and the finest kind of openness to the dialogue of "touchstones of reality" that is the real heart of her book. (See Linzer, p. 233)

Jews who go East find other Jews too. They also may find, as I did when Swami Yatiswarananda gave me a copy of Gershom Scholem's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, Eastern teachers who tell them to explore their own roots. Many Jewish seekers have found Judaism illuminated when they were practicing one Eastern religion or another. In particular they come to look at Judaism with a spiritual and mystical orientation for which nothing in their Jewish upbringing may have prepared them. Some have remained Buddhist while trying to understand Judaism better. Others have returned to a new, more mystical Judaism, whether Hasidic and Orthodox or Neo-Hasidic and "Jewish Renewal."

One seeker discovered the "Divine Mother" at Sri Aurobindo's ashram to be originally an Egyptian Jewess from France, who had studied with a kabbalist who created the symbol of the Star of David with a lotus in it that has become the logo for the ashram! All this, of course, inevitably entails some syncretism.

Torah and Dharma may be characterized as a practical workshop in Indo-Judaic studies as opposed to the theoretical and academic comparisons and contrasts which one usually finds. Some seekers found that their *zazen* brought up deep Jewish feelings and concluded that their "Zen practice" was Orthodox Judaism. One seeker went from Orthodox Judaism to Hinduism to a Sufi

teacher who helped him develop an intuitive understanding of Torah, hence again a combination of Judaism and an Eastern religion.

Two Jewish seekers, who were married to each other and who had become Zen Buddhist priests, later incorporated the observance of Jewish holidays and the Sabbath into the "practice" at the Zen center. They had to "leave" Judaism to "become sufficiently developed" so that they would be able to find that thread or missing link where the real, live tradition of Judaism had been broken. Only then did they intuitively understand Torah and *mitzvot*. Others similarly had to practice one or another form of Yoga to discover that Judaism is a valid spiritual path, the depth, power, and profundity of which Jews today have difficulty tapping into.

Many of these seekers felt they had to return to Orthodoxy after their Eastern religion because it seemed to them to be a real religious practice that makes for spirituality and God-consciousness. On the other hand, some contrasted the physical and aesthetic environment of the *shul* unfavorably with the ashram. One seeker complained that Judaism told her what kind of person to be but did not give her the tools to actualize it as did Zen.

Judith Linzer quotes me as valuing in Hasidism precisely what is *not* merely spiritual. "Hasidism . . . was concerned about hallowing the everyday, sanctifying the profane, and about real community life, and not just individual spirituality" (p. 188). A moving witness that may be placed in opposition to my own is that of a woman who asserts that as a result of her years of Zen practice her Judaism and her entire life "have become more vivid, meaningful, rich, and alive":

> Without my Zen practice, I would never have had the strength to endure the incredible loneliness I've experienced doing Jewish practice all these years. Needless to say, as a single mother, or single woman in the traditional Jewish community, there is little understanding or true kindness or acceptance available. This is the opposite of the zendo, and this is where the great need of Zen mindfulness towards others, and sensitivity, comes in. . . . 'My years of Zen practice have helped me live with myself, live with the world, be kinder, more caring, compassionate, fun-loving. It helps me forgive over and over. So, in that sense, Zen practice has helped me 'do Torah'.

The rest of her witness, however, is closer to my own:

> In Judaism, I appreciate the incredible beauty of *davening*, *Shabbos* and the emphasis upon family, children, love, life itself. Judaism is a pathway which encompasses everything.

> It includes one's whole life, season by season, and does not deny the joys of personal expression and achievement in the world. . . . When practiced mistakenly, the Eastern pathway can give rise to a withdrawal from life and separate a person from the society in which they presently live. . . . Zen practice fosters a fierce independence, strength, and ability to stand alone, and I love that. Judaism fosters a great deal of dependence upon community, relationships, and others.(p. 194 f.)

While this seeker says that in Zen one goes to the God within and in Judaism to a God outside one, another says that Zen practice isn't about inner life versus outer life. Judith Linzer comments that many Jewish seekers who have turned to Buddhism also emphasize that this inner-outer dichotomy does not exist in Buddhist thinking. I was struck by this statement since it is something that I have often emphasized in my own books, such as this formulation from my forthcoming work *The Road to Genuine Community*:

> Inner and outer are *not* primordial human reality but secondary elaborations and constructions arising from a human wholeness that precedes them both. Unless we understand this and understand the possibility of direct contact between whole human beings, we cannot understand the sphere of the between. The inner is psychic in the sense that we do not perceive anything with our senses, the outer physical in the sense that we do. And these divisions are useful for a certain ordering of our lives, such as the distinction between what we see, what we dream, what we envision, and what we hallucinate! Yet if we think about human existence in its wholeness, we realize that a true event in our lives is neither inner nor outer but takes up and claims the whole of us.

In the update of her earlier interview of me that Judith Linzer quotes are some statements particularly relevant to our theme of Indo-Judaic encounter and study:

> Once, after a lecture of mine on Hinduism, my wife asked me, "What touchstone of reality do you still retain from Hinduism?" My answer was that it gives a depth-dimension, which is always there for me even when I do not spell it out—a transpersonal consciousness, the reality of which I recognize, though not as the only reality. . . . I believe that the options which we choose and later reject are almost as important as

> the options we ultimately choose and make our own. They remain with us, like an obligato to the melody of our lives. (p. 204)

This does not mean, however, that that melody has not changed in essential ways since I was immersed in Hinduism:

> In contrast to what I held when I affirmed with the nondualist Hindu Vedantist that Brahman is Atman, I believe that human existence as we know it is not *maya*, or illusion, but genuine historical destiny. This destiny is not a divine plan or blueprint that we merely act out. On the contrary, we are given a real ground on which to stand, real freedom with which to act, real resources to praise, bless, thank, but also to contend with God. . . . (p. 204)

> There is no rung of human life that cannot be the ground of hallowing, no rung where we cannot put off the habitual and discover the wonder of the unique and the claim of the hour! We are constantly creating new religious forms as we respond to the spirit and are permeated by it, and we do so in faithful dialogue and tension with the spirit and form of tradition. "To be a spiritual heir, one must be a pioneer," writes Heschel, but he also says elsewhere, "To be worthy of being a pioneer, one must be a spiritual heir!" (p. 206)

Speaking of what Max Kadushin called "normal mysticism", and what I call "mysticism of the particular", the Buddhist Rev. Heng Sure picks up on the fact that "the Baal Shem is always talking about meeting God now and how the holy is not separate from this moment". He compares the joy of the observant Jew in doing the *mitzvot* with the Buddhist idea that your own mind is accessible to you if you cultivate it and practice. "You walk the path and, as you go, your mind gets purer and purer and the holy emerges, not from the outside, but because you are tuning in more and more. This spirituality becomes daily mysticism" (p. 255). Daniel Matt explains it as "the Rabbis' attempt to fashion a person's daily life in such a way that someone could continually become aware of God's presence". Normative within rabbinic Judaism, this notion got lost but was brought back by Hasidism, and it is also what people find in Eastern religions. Matt also makes a contrast between *devekut*—Jewish mystical union with God through attachment or cleaving—and Buddhist detachment.

Ram Dass similarly describes Judaism as being like karma yoga in which your life is your path and your job is to hallow that life through living fully.

Avram Davis sees the Jewish path as not only redeeming ourselves but also transforming the world: "The heart of what blessing is, is connection. That's very different from Buddhism, which is to disconnect. The heart of Judaism is attachment." (p. 266).

Judith Linzer herself takes this contrast further by stresssing the emphasis within contemporary Judaism on remembering the *Shoah*, the Holocaust. Avram Davis adds, "The Jewish people and the Jewish path are the oldest self-reflective continual tribe and path on earth" (p. 267). Judith Linzer sums this up:

> If one practices Buddhist meditation, one is encouraged to let go of the idea of personal history and people history and to be in the moment. If one views existence through Jewish eyes, one is encouraged to think of oneself, not just as an individual person, but as an entire four-thousand-year historical process and people. (p. 268)

Linzer agrees with Daniel Matt's statement that a "healthy spirituality might be to learn from both of these extreme poles". On the other hand, as a result of her years of Vipassana meditation, the psychologist Ronna Kabatznick wishes to see no distinction here:

> When you are a meditator, you see the Nazi within yourself. It's not that the Jews are one way and the Nazis are another way. We are all in the same pie. The human mind is filled with anger, greed, and delusion [the Buddhist three poisons]. The first of the four Noble Truths is that suffering exists for everyone. *It is a mistake to base our Jewish identity on suffering because it creates a sense of separation. Everyone suffers.* (p. 285)

Another balance that Judith Linzer puts before us is being committed to both the universal and the particular.

> One can be part of the Sangha and be a "good" Jew.... Sensei Helen Harkaslpi answered the question, "How can you be an observant Jew and a Zen priest?" [with] "Watch me and see." That's a good Zen, as well as Hasidic, answer. Watch how the rebbe ties his shoelaces and watch the Zen master make tea. (p. 273)

For a great many years I have stressed the crucial difference between that which is merely "different" and that which is "unique". I am delighted to find Marc Lieberman making the identical distinction in this book, and with it

recognizing the true meaning of the "chosenness" of the Jewish people: "If one recognizes our uniqueness, that allows us to look around and see the uniqueness of our fellow human beings and our fellow human groupings" (p. 274). In the same vein, Moshe Walkos suggests that "the Jewish renewal movement is beginning to sing the *Kiddush* this way: 'You have chosen us with [instead of *from*] all of the nations of the world.' (p. 274) Moshe Waldoks also recognizes that the Buddhist major teaching of living in the moment is a Jewish teaching too, and cites Ram Dass' famous book *Be Here Now* as the truly vital approach to Jewish observance without which organized Jewish religion lacks immediacy.

In one update, an interviewee witnesses that his touchstones of reality are his earlier mystical experiences, and that in looking at the Torah, Talmud, Zohar, or *halakhic* codes, he seeks to bring the mystical elements to the foreground. Believing that we can learn more about Judaism from conscious and comparative relationship with other religions, he edited a scholarly collection of essays comparing Judaism and Hinduism. "I believe it is legitimate, valuable, and relevant for a Jew to take an interest in Hinduism and Asia" (p. 209).

In chapter 8—the hundred page section on "Jewish-Buddhist Encounter"—Judith Linzer attempts to integrate the intellectual with the experiential, the historical with the personal, weaving together the statements from interviewees and other sources to simulate a round-table discussion.

In this "round-table" a Christian from Sri Lanka asserts that in the way that the Bible was *originally intended*, "a life of God-centeredness was primarily meant to bring about a life of right-centeredness" (p. 230). Daniel Matt, a professor of Kabbala at Graduate Theological Union, claims that the Buddhist *sunyata* [emptiness] and the Hebrew word *ayin* [nothing] are almost indistinguishable, since both mean that nothing exists of itself (see p. 242 f.). The Jewish psychologist Ronna Kabatznick denies that Buddhist meditation is passive and socially uninvolved, for "it results in creating compassion, rather than a sense of separation. . . . . The distinction between spirituality and social action makes no sense from a Buddhist point of view" (p. 248). Judith Linzer offers a more balanced statement:

> Just as we Jews are becoming aware of needing to balance ourselves by focusing inward on personal spiritual experience . . ., the Buddhists are becoming aware of needing to learn about how to become more focussed on collective transformation and personal assertiveness in the face of external political authority, economic injustice, and physical human suffering. (p. 250)

Rev. Tanaka goes even further by explaining that "many Jews with a heritage of social activism and leftist politics, who had become Buddhists by

religion, were infusing Buddhism with a spirit of social activism that was sorely needed and very much appreciated by the progressive elements with the Asian Buddhist community" (p. 252). Rabbi Jonathan Omer-Man points out that one of the main challenges to Judaism which make it difficult for the contemporary is that, in contrast to Buddhism, it is a text religion.

I want to conclude this essay with a wonderful quotation from Zen Abbott Norman Fischer, because it contains a double comparison and contrast going in two different directions:

> I think of Judaism as a religion of life. In Judaism, the dead are considered unclean and must be buried immediately. Children are named for them to get back into life as quickly as possible. There is not much sense of afterlife, rather the ongoing life of the community....I think of Buddhism as a religion for death, with its meditations on death; especially the famous cemetery contemplations of the old tradition, the central importance of impermanence, emphasis on monkhood, doctrine of emptiness and renunciation....But then again, Judaism, this great religion for life, has left a lot of people frozen, guilty, and afraid, unable to jump into life for fear of breaking God's rules; and Buddhism, this great religion for death, has become famous for fostering a broad, free, quirky, enjoyable approach to life.(p. 286)

BOOK REVIEWS

Slapak, Orpa (ed.), *The Jews of India: A Story of Three Communities*, (Jerusalem: Israel Museum, 1995), pp. 215, $33.20 + postage, ISBN 925 278 179 7. (English Version; Hebrew Version exists)

In June 1995 the Israel Museum opened its exhibit on the Jews of India, which curator Orpa Slapak had been preparing since 1982. The exhibit coincided with the unveiling of the restored sanctuary of the Kadavumbagam Synagogue, built in Cochin in 1544, transferred to the Israel Museum in 1991, and now part of the permanent collection. Slapak's thirteen years of research, travel, and collection bore a rich harvest, of which the catalogue is visual and intellectual proof. In the course of her travels to India and around Israel, making contact with the three Jewish communities, she recruited scholars Shirley Berry Isenberg, Barbara C. Johnson and Joan G. Roland to prepare chapters on the history of the Bene Israel, Cochinis and Baghdadis respectively, as well as Shalom Sabar for a chapter on illuminated *ketubbot* (marriage contracts) and No'am Ben-Yossef for a glossary. A bibliography completes this book, which is as much a scholarly work as it is an exhibition catalogue.

The volume opens, however, on two sour notes reflecting the stereotypical Ashkenazic views of eastern Jews. Museum Director Martin Weyl writes that the Jews of India came from a "distant, colorful, and exotic land" (p.8); in her Foreword Rivka Gonen, senior curator, Department of Jewish Ethnography, repeats that the exhibit "will give the public a taste of the exotic flavor of distant communities" (p.9). She further flaunts her ignorance by adding that the three communities had little contact among themselves or with Jews outside India. The informed reader blushes at these statements from highly placed museum personnel, for India was at the center of world trade. Jews were actively involved in it from at least the 11th century C.E., as Cairo Geniza documents show, if not a thousand years previously, by providing links between the sub-continent and the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, the Mediterranean and China, long before Ashkenazic Jews from Poland came out of their "exotic" [sic] shtetls. One hopes that Forewords are to be seen and not read.

The contacts were so significant that if the book had a subtitle, it could have been "Between Jerusalem and Varanasi." This theme of connection and link reappears through-out the catalogue, for while the Jews of India maintained their Judaism and even moved closer to mainstream or normative Judaism (e.g. the Bene Israel), they absorbed practices and material culture from the rich civilization around them. Like 20th century America, India accepted and appreciated Jews, but unlike American liberalism and individualism, India encouraged Jewish group identity by integrating Jews into the caste system.

To understand the differences among these Jews, the links connecting them, how they practiced their Judaism and how they adapted to Indian civilization, the editor very sensibly presented the three historical chapters by Isenberg (Bene Israel), Johnson (Cochinis), and Roland (Baghdadis) at the beginning. Then Slapak refocuses on themes such as the synagogue, ritual objects in the home, scenes from daily life, dress, customs and ceremonies, and the illuminated *ketubbot*, explaining with text and over 100 high quality color and black-and-white photos how each community expressed itself.

Isenberg's discussion of the Bene Israel succinctly covers territory examined in her previous publications. Firmly rooted in India, the Bene Israel sharpened their Jewish identities in the 18th and 19th centuries due to their migration to Bombay, contacts with the sympathetic Christian missionary John Wilson, Cochini Jewish teachers, their own newly conscious leaders, and some Baghdadi or Yemeni cantors. Johnson's good history of the Cochinis presents much of the evidence of their long presence such as the circa 1000 C.E. copper plate given to Joseph Rabban (pictures p. 35), a tombstone dated 1269, and the Parur Torah ark dated 1164. She could have mentioned some of the letters from the Cairo Geniza which show a Jewish trading presence on the Malabar Coast from the 11th century, and that Portuguese travelers met Jews around 1500 in Cranganore.

She explains that each of the eight synagogues was led by very learned persons who were in continual contact with Jews elsewhere in India, Yemen and Amsterdam. This minuscule community composed its own songs and prayers. Roland, author of a book about Jews during British rule, summarizes here the Baghdadi Jewish experience, emphasizing their 18th century arrival at Surat, then Bombay and Calcutta, from Baghdad, Basra, Aleppo and Persia. The Baghdadi Jews assimilated least into the Indian environment, preferring to learn English and some spoken Hindi rather than Marathi and Bengali of their neighbors. Not unexpectedly, they departed from India sooner than the others, although they left important Jewish and secular landmarks thanks to their wealth and generosity: the David Sassoon library in Bombay (pictured p. 38); Magen David Synagogue in Calcutta; Eliahu Synagogue in Bombay; and the Sassoon Hospital in Pune, plus trust funds for the poor. A wonderful photograph of the interior of the grand Calcutta home of Moses Elias in Calcutta in 1986 (p. 39) shows the casual luxury in which some Baghdadis lived.

Slapak shifts the focus to themes in the next chapters. First she discusses synagogues and ceremonial objects, explaining that there was a unified Malabar synagogue architecture which the photos prove, while the Bene Israel houses of worship were all different from each other, and the Baghdadis' tended to be more like western synagogues or, in a couple of examples, like British churches. There are 20 Bene Israel synagogues or prayer halls, seven standing Cochin synagogues of which only one is used, and there are six Baghdadi synagogues today. Clear photographs and text explain the organization

of the sanctuary, the ark curtains, handmade furniture, and the Torah scroll cases showing the influence of other communities, particularly those of the Baghdadis. The spectacular carved Torah ark of the Kadavumbagam synagogue, which is now in Moshav Nehalim, is pictured (p. 56) alongwith the handmade ark curtains. Cochin interior design is similar to that used in local mosques; the Hindu lotus is also a frequent motif. Oil lamps suspended from the ceiling grace all types of synagogues as they do Hindu temples. Many scrolls came from Iraq, but the local artisans who made the cases took inspiration from local aesthetics (pp. 61, 69, 71, 75). Cochinis had special customs on Hanukah such as reading a scroll unique to them, the "Scroll of Antiochus." During that holiday they also visited the tomb of Nehemiah Mota, a Jew venerated as a saint by Muslims, Hindus and Jews.

Scenes from the daily secular life of these communities show their own traditions, Jewish custom and adaptations to the surrounding cultures. Only the Baghdadis, however, show the strong influence of the British. Among the Bene Israel stalks of rice are "hung on the doorpost to ensure blessing and prosperity" on Shavuot, a custom shared by non-Jewish neighbors (p.99). Like other rural Indians their houses were made of mud with a layer of cow dung. Styles of water containers, methods of food preparation, cooking and serving, and clothing were close to those of non-Jews. Bene Israel in rural areas extracted oil from peanuts, "ramtil" and coconut just like their neighbors, except they did no work on Saturdays, a commandment they kept over the centuries of separation from other Jews (for picture, p. 109).

One of the most interesting chapters follows: "Dress: Tradition and Innovation." Bene Israel women wore saris just like their Hindu neighbors, and the many old photos printed here show the fabrics, as well as how to tie a lugra, which is similar to a sari. Bene Israel brides wore white, not the red of the Hindu neighbors. Men's apparel was eclectic. Cochinis wore simple but distinctive Jewish clothing. The color picture of a bride and groom in wedding apparel (p. 152) is simply gorgeous, and the author explains that in Cochin Muslim, Hindu and Jewish brides wore the same outfit. Baghdadis, as the photos of the distinguished Sassoons show (p. 141), at first kept their Ottoman styles, but later they shifted to British clothing.

Slapak then expands her previous remarks about marriage with the help of photos of the henna ceremonies (pp. 142, 148, 150). Some of the photos were taken in Israel where Indian Jews, particularly the Bene Israel and Cochinis, perpetuate many Indian Jewish customs. In Cochin the bride went to the synagogue on a road covered with coconut branches, not possible in Israel. Singers accompanied her. In the synagogue there was no *huppah (*marriage canopy*)*, nor was there a rabbi. The groom and the congregation recited the blessings. Names for their future babies were chosen from astrologers' suggestions, following the example of the Hindu majority. Baghdadis decorated babies' cradles with amulets to keep away the evil eye, similar to Muslims (pp.

160-161). The very short section on leisure and entertainment provides other examples of the closeness of the Bene Israel and the Cochinis to their non-Jewish neighbors: board games called *gaychula* (p. 163), the eating of *paan* after some ceremonies or events and types of female singing and storytelling.

Shalom Sabar's concluding chapter on *ketubbot* could stand by itself as scholarship and discovery. He finds striking similarity among these marriage contracts from the three communities which "drew on an older tradition so strong and well established that it was perpetuated by all three communities, however different they were in other respects" (p. 168) The dozen very beautiful color plates support his analysis and descriptions: these documents, which the Cochinis may have influenced the most, show flowers and animals of India; they are preserved in cases of silver or bamboo; the formulas are the same, even for the Baghdadis, with certain phrases occurring in all and indicating influences from the Mediterranean (as proven by Cairo Geniza materials) and Yemen. Documents from Yemen specify that during the 18th century Yemenite women were sent to Cochin to marry the Yemenite merchants already resident there (p. 172, footnote 14). The Baghdadis of India influenced *ketubbot* design more than their relatives in Baghdad, and their ideas were exported east to their communities in China (p. 194). This chapter closes with a poignant portrait of the wedding party of Seemah and Saul Ezra in Calcutta in 1951, all of whom are doubtless living elsewhere today.

Seeing this happy group of family and friends portrayed 46 years ago, just before the beginning of the end of the community, and then turning the last page of this catalogue-book, I felt both sad and content. Sad because we all know that the communities in India are no more, except for 5,000 Jews in Mumbai and a handful of stalwarts in Cochin, but content realizing that they thrived in India, making their own contribution to India, while maintaining their Judaism in peace. Orpa Slapak's *The Jews of India* is a beautiful tribute to those Jews and the land that welcomed and sheltered them.

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Maurice Friedman, *Intercultural Dialogue and the Human Image*, Ed. By S.C. Malik and Pat Boni (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi Center for the Arts, 1995), 299 pages, ISBN 81-246-0044-9. Rs. 600.

Invited by the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) to initiate and facilitate a series of deeper-dialogues, this volume includes four public lectures plus a discussion paper prepared by Professor Friedman, and

a lecture by his wife, Aleene, each followed by a discussion. True to its title, *Intercultural Dialogue and the Human Image* is charged with a freshness of the spoken word, and by recurring occasions of speech-with-meaning. Along with the oral genesis of the book ("I did not use a text or even notes in giving any of my lectures," Friedman states), equally important is the fact that these lectures were a conscious attempt to give shape to his "mature thought at seventy" by bringing it into dialogue with professors from many fields and many parts of India.

The work takes the shape of a five-part, musical quartet with motifs from each section echoing through the other movements: Analogous to reviewing a musical composition by listening carefully to selected sections, here I will quote one central passage from each movement. Together, they point to Friedman's 40-year concern with the life of dialogue and with becoming uniquely human.

The first movement is comprised of Friedman's reflection on the philosophical anthropology of Martin Buber. As he grows older, Friedman writes, more than Buber's impact on religious traditions, "the aspect that speaks more and more to me is Buber's philosophical anthropology." To address the motifs of human wholeness and uniqueness, Friedman rehearses familiar themes in a concise way: Buber's "two-fold world" of *I and Thou;* the ontology of the between; the narrow bridge; inclusion, mutuality, and making present. For Buber, he writes, dialogue really means a fully responsible response to the unique address of a lived word.

The second movement, "Dialogical Psychotherapy," accumulates many formative voices—from Hans Trub to Carl Jung, from Carl Rogers to R.D. Laing—each of whom are taken up into dialogue with Buber. Stressing the importance of healing through meeting, of existential guilt, and of inclusion, Friedman highlights one of Buber's most provocative insights concerning the therapist's struggle to confirm a patient.

The third movement, "The Dialogue of Touchstones," springs from Friedman's earlier book, *Touchstones of Reality*, in which he spoke of "touchstones" as insight-producing events whose lasting residue grows milestones along the way which affect the attitudes one brings to each new situation. In and of themselves, they tell us nothing about what "reality" is apart from the "relation" out of which it emerges.

In the fourth movement, "Restoring Relational Trust: The Confirmation of Otherness in Family, Community, and Society," he speaks about "existential trust" as the heart of the confirmation of otherness. In a moving passage, one most pertinent to our time, Friedman speaks of how important the confirming presence of Buber's wife, Paula, was for his work.

This section is followed Aleene Friedman's lecture, "The Healing Partnership: Biofeedback Pain Therapy," in which she illustrates the concepts basic to biofeedback pain therapy with two case studies. Referring to a

different type of dialogue, one between body and mind, she remarks that the "communication process is non-verbal, and is expressed through the rhythm that pulsates through every cell, organ, and body system" (132).

The last movement, "Dialogue and the Human Image," is a short position paper used to lead a two-day seminar. It encompasses both the method and the goal of the book — namely, a dialogical approach to the meaning of human existence grounded in the ontology of the between. Because we live in relation to other selves, finding a meaningful existence involves responding to images of the human that point toward our unique potential.

One of Friedman's pivotal contributions to philosophical anthropology is that the image of the human is not a fully formed concept, but constantly changes and evolves. Embodying potentiality and the direction we give it, Friedman then suggests a fruitful outline for discussion.

One of the most intriguing chapters of the book is simply called "Dialogue," which should be read in connection with the conclusion, "Intercultural Dialogue: Meeting or Mismeeting?" In the dialogue between Friedman and the professional participants, fruitful exchanges took place about problems involving multilogue, monologue, and dialogue itself. Two senses of "relationship" were discussed—identification with the whole world experientially, and a relational dialogue that retains the otherness of the other—in the context of different cultures and among different traditions. The exchange contains valuable, spontaneous insights, and openings into many of Friedman's other works. Readers of Friedman (and Buber) will relish the opportunity to mine these fields which elicit theoretical, methodological, and applied interrelations between a variety of thinkers.

My one criticism is that the book ends too quickly. Not wanting to be restricted by misunderstandings, Friedman distinguishes "cognitive dialogue" and "technical dialogue" from "genuine dialogue." He writes, "As the reader will have noted, there was often mismeeting and meeting — enough so that halfway through I declared that the seminar was not what I would call genuine dialogue" (283). Given that the dialogues were as much mismeeting as meeting, Friedman writes, "Even our disagreement about what we meant by dialogue was itself a meaningful part of our dialogue, coming as we did from many intellectual fields and geographical and cultural backgrounds" (284). Genuine dialogue, Friedman concludes, is integral to the tension between understanding and misunderstanding.

But in what way? This is a very provocative statement. I am left wanting to hear more. More details. More reactions. More responses. How much, one wonders, did cultural differences stand in the way of genuine dialogue? Can one say that genuine dialogue is transcultural? And how is dialogue integral to (might we say, generated by?) the tension between understanding and misunderstanding? We can only hope for an expanded edition of this book in which Professor Friedman will be able to address these issues, and

to speak further of the relationship between the human image and touchstones of reality as mutually constitutive components of becoming uniquely human in a multi-cultural context.

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Mavis Hyman, *Jews of the Raj*, Hyman Publishers, 10 Holyoake Walk, London N2 OJX, pp. 258 (15 pounds sterling + 2 pounds sterling p.&p., or $20US).

They had a glorious life, complete with servants, summer houses, clubs and race horses, the historical illusion only to be shattered by Indian independence in 1947. For the Jews of Calcutta, now resident in England, Australia, North America and Israel, the sweet memories remain of an unreal, too-good-to-be-true world, which their children and grandchildren in the West find difficult to fathom.

Jews of the Raj is written by Mavis Hyman, an Iraqi Jewess resident in London since 1957, and author of a previous book entitled *Indian-Jewish Cooking* (Hyman, 1993). According to most accounts, the first Jewish settler in Calcutta was Shalom Cohen (1762-1836) (Ezra, 1986), but Hyman's maternal ancestor was one of the first Jewish merchants to escape deteriorating conditions in Iraq and settle in Calcutta about 200 years ago. He was followed by many of his countrymen who escaped the persecutions of Daud Pasha (1871-1831) in Baghdad. They established thriving businesses in the East and magnificent Jewish community structures.

The Jews of the Raj belongs to a genre of books, notable among which can be mentioned Elias and Cooper (1974), Ezra (1986), and Musleah (1975), which attempt, in their own individual manner, to record the heritage and flavour of the fading Jewish life in Calcutta. Forerunners provide sketches of the community in its heydey in a more historical perspective (Isaac, 1917; Abraham, n.d.). All the books are written by educated ex-members of the Calcutta community, who see it as their duty to record whilst still possible the history and day-to-day life of this remarkable community. Hyman's book actually represents a group endeavour with 80 informants who provided intimate details of their families' lives in Calcutta. Hyman admits that she played a dual role: on the one hand, she acted as coordinator and commentator, and as such stood outside the community; on the other hand, sections of the book are autobiographical. The book does not purport to rely on a research sample and therefore does not portray the lives of the poor, of whom there

were many. As Timberg points out, "The Jewish poor remained outside the circle of Anglicization and confined to its traditional area" (Timberg, 1986: 34).

Although the book has academic pretensions, it does not really provide an analytical account of the Jews of Calcutta. There is neither an attempt to analyse the remarkable adaptive powers of this minority group, nor an attempt to understand how the unique features of Indian society with its hierarchical structure incorporated the Iraqi Jews. Nor is there a comparison with other ethnic groups such as the Armenian or Greek communities in Calcutta (cf. Timberg, 1986). The book raises more academic questions than it answers and it does not provide an analytic conclusion of any sort. Nevertheless, it is an important document which preserves historical memory.

The chapter titles of the book provide a quick indication of the content of the book and an easy entree into the almost make-believe world of the Jews of Calcutta: "The Servants" is the title of one such chapter; "Food" is another; "An Afternoon at the Races" is the title of a third. For the Jews of the Raj, life was a decadent affair, revolving around the festivals, badminton or the preparation of *humeen* (the staple Sabbath dish). There appeared to be no worries: they set up home-away-from-home in the summer in Darjeeling, the mountain resort famous for its aromatic tea, and in the winter in Madhapur, a railway junction town frequented by Anglo-Indians. Synagogue services complete with a *Sefer Torah* (Torah Scroll) from Calcutta continued at the holiday resorts, scout camps for Jewish youth worked liked clockwork, and Jewish young men mingled but never matched with local Anglo-Indian girls at the club house in the *dak* (Post House) bungalow. Back in Calcutta, the servants washed, cleaned and laboured and became part and parcel of Jewish households. The cooks prepared lunch, or *tiffin*, and brought kosher meals to school for the children of their households to eat. The 'boy,' as he was called (he may have been quite grown up), who served family members at table, would take the food to school with a *tiffin*-carrier in one hand, and the crockery and cutlery wrapped in a dishcloth in the other. Hyman recalls, "We were usually allocated our own seats at long dining tables in school, and by the time we took our places, the servants would have laid the table, fetched water, unstacked the *tiffin*-carriers. ...When we finished eating we went off to play , leaving it entirely to the servants to rinse our dishes, restack the *tiffin*-carriers and make their way home on foot, by bus or by bicycle. I can't remember that anyone of us ever felt a sense of gratitude for this service. We simply took it for granted as part and parcel of our everyday life."

The demise of Calcutta Jewry began in the 1940's. The Second World War left its mark on Jewish community life. Hindus and Muslims began rioting and Zionism took root in India. Hebrew teachers were followed by emissaries from Palestine, who established Zionist movements in Calcutta and encouraged the youth to emigrate. Some pioneers did leave Calcutta and went to Israel,

particularly in the early years of the State; most preferred to emigrate to other countries, such as England, where they felt more comfortable and closer to British culture. The establishment of the State of Israel (1948) almost coincided with the attainment of Indian independence (1947). The "Baghdadis," as they were colloquially known (Hyman never mentions this term!), who had identified with the British Raj, were doubtful as to their future in an independent India. In a final chapter, poignantly entitled "Exodus", Hyman's groups describe their oft-painful decisions to emigrate.

In 1995, Hyman returned to Calcutta from London on a kind of 'roots' trip. She visited the *Magen David* synagogue, and re-traced former steps. "Tears welled up for a past which so many of us were privileged to experience, and for days which would not be renewed in this place. Then I thought about the present. The present that people from this place were enjoying in other parts of the world, reaping different rewards in other places." According to Hyman, in 1995 about 75 people remained in the Calcutta Jewish community (although when I visited the same year, I was quoted the number of 250, but then all depends on the definition of a "Jew" in these dwindling Jewish communities). Nevertheless, strange things are occurring there. A new sociological phenomenon, which requires serious scientific enquiry, is taking place, as young Israeli backpackers, often straight out of the Israeli army, visit India in quasi-ritual fashion. A mandatory stop is Nahoum's the famous Jewish confectioner's and baker's shop in New Market, Calcutta, which still operates under the original family management, where they taste the *makhbuz* and *halwie*, delicious reminders of a once flourishing Jewish community which did not stand the test of time.

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J.B. Segal, *A History of the Jews of Cochin* (Vallentine Mitchell, 1993), 134 pp., 15.00 pounds sterling.

In the preface to his thin volume, J.B. Segal, an emeritus professor of Semitic languages at the University of London, writes, "This is the story— told as far as possible in the words of contemporary observers— of a miniscule community on the Spice Coast of south-west India that maintained a vigourous Jewish existence thoughout the vicissitudes of at least two millenia." Indeed the lengthy quotations and translations from Hebrew, Portuguese, Dutch, and Indian sources make this a valuable and interesting book.

In Chapter One, "The Early Centuries", Segal nicely summarizes the theories and philological and other evidence concerning the arrival of the

Jewish merchants from Palestine and other regions of Western Asia and the Mediterranean who settled in Kerala. He discusses their early relationships with local princes who encouraged them and with other inhabitants there, including Syrian Christians and the Cnanaya, the so-called Jewish Christians of Kerala, of whom there are currently about 70,000. Segal agrees with other scholars that members of the indigenous population whom these Jewish merchants converted to Judaism became the ancestors of the Malabari, or so-called Black Jews. The most important center of Jewish settlement in these early years was an autonomous Jewish principality at Shingli, or Cranganur. In 1341, a major flood silted up the harbor of Cranganur and created the port of Cochin, to which a great number of the Jews now moved.

In Chapter Two, "The Portuguese Period", Segal points out that the arrival of the Portuguese at the close of the fifteenth century marks the beginning of the scientific documentation of the region. He shows how the Portuguese introduced a new and troublesome factor into the politics of Cranganur. The final exodus from that site in the mid-16th century is still remembered in legends and song; Shingli melodies and pronunciation are still used in Cochin synagogues. The Jewish refugees from Shingli were received with great hospitality by the Rajah of Cochin. The White Jewish community was enlarged through the arrival of other refugees— those fleeing religious persecution in Spain and Portugal. Segal focuses on the origins of the antagonism between the so-called White Jews and the Black Jews that was to plague Cochin Jewry throughout its history. Explaining that the Whites believed the Blacks were originally slaves, he argues that the conflict, deeply rooted in Indian tradition and the caste system, was exacerbated by the presence of the Portuguese in South India, among whom distinctions of color were very important. This encouraged the attitude of superiority that White Jews felt toward darker Jews (similar to what occurred later in Bombay when Baghdadi Jewish attitudes toward Bene-Israel reflected British racism). This chapter is particularly useful for its discussion of Portuguese attitudes towards the Jews and the introduction of the Inquisition to South India in 1560, for the "sake" of New Christians who were returning to Judaism. But the Inquisition did not extend to the Old Town of Cochin where the Portuguese had no jurisdiction. There, their Indian hosts protected the Jews.

The Dutch period, beginning in 1662-63, often referred to as the "Golden Age of Cochin Jewry", is described in Chapter Three. Here Segal has used the reports of Dutch Commandeurs and also draws heavily on those of Pereya de Paiva, a Dutch Jew who visited Cochin in 1686. The White Jews were now in contact with the Jewish community of Amsterdam, who visited them and sent copies of the Hebrew Bible, the Babylonian Talmud and other ritual books and objects to the White Jews' Paradesi (Foreigners) Synagogue — a full description of which is given. The Malabari, or Black Jews, received their ritual and synagogue objects from Yemen. According to Segal, the friendly Dutch

attitude precipitated a conflict of loyalties for the Jews for the next three centuries, between the Dutch or the British on one hand and the Indian rajas on the other. The White Jews tried to walk the tightrope, submitting to the jurisdiction of the Dutch East India Company; the rajahs, under whose control they also were, did not seem to protest. The author points out that the favor shown by the Dutch to the Jewish merchants, who were mainly White, increased the tension between the latter and the Black Jews. The lack of intermarriage and interdining between the two communities and the separation of their synagogues was noted by the Dutch governor. The story of the Rahabi (Raby) family, including that of David, the father of the well known Ezekiel, the Principal Merchant for the Company, is discussed in some detail. There is also a brief mention of how the Cochini Jews helped the Bene-Israel in their revival of Judaism, (a story which is continued in the next chapter) but Segal does not think that David Rahabi, Ezekiel's son, ever visited them, as some scholars have suggested.

The last chapter, "British Rule to Independence," is by far the longest. The British conquest of the Dutch fort in 1795 ended Dutch rule in Cochin. Now that the British controlled the economy and opened the area to outside interests, the Jews no longer had a near monopoly on local commerce. The economic and social postion of the Jewish community of Cochin slowly declined. Segal gives a good account of the battle over the jurisdiction of the White Jews between the British (who wanted Jews as well as Christians to be subject to British courts) and the Rajah of Cochin. This time the Rajah protested, claiming he had certain prerogatives over all his subjects, and that the British were going beyond Dutch precedents. The Indians claimed that the Jews preferred the Rajah's jurisdiction because they had been treated well; in fact, the Jews once again were caught in the middle. The British extended their protection to the whole Jewish community, including the Black Jews, just as all Christians in South India, regardless of color, had been treated the same by both Dutch and British. Official documents now spoke of "Jews," not "White Jews" (perhaps forseeing the refusal of the British to make similar distinctions concerning Bene Israel and Baghdadis in the 1930's in cases concerning synagogue access, hospital beds and electoral classification). Segal cites the descriptions of Rabbi David d'Beth Hillel who, having visited in the 1820's, talked about both White and Black communities and the attitudes of the former toward the *meshuhrarim* (manumitted persons) and *avadim* (slaves).

Indeed, much of this final chapter is concerned with the disabilities faced by the Black Jews, the *meshuhrarim* of both communities, and the *avadim*, who had no rights or organized life, but who could be manumitted, and then become *meshuhrarim*. Citing several mid-nineteenth century travelers' accounts, Segal shows himself sympathetic to the claims and problems of the *meshuhrarim*; his treatment of the social and religious discrimination they experienced is excellent. Correspondence between the White Jews of Cochin and Jews in

Bombay and Calcutta, as well as pronouncements of the Chief Rabbi at Jerusalem on the issues, are analyzed. There is a particularly good discussion of one of the 20th century leaders of the *meshuhrarim*, A.B. Salem, who used Gandhian tactics in his campaign for equal rights for his community.

Other areas covered , if a bit choppily at times, include dress of both White and Black Jews, illnesses, education, literary activity, and the role of the synagogue as the center of religious and social life. A table of statistics, taken from various sources in different periods including the British censuses, shows that the number of Jews in Cochin remained more or less about 2000, with Whites rarely constituting more than 15% of the community.

By the second half of the 20th century, with the emigration of many Black (and later White) Jews to Israel, the situation had changed. Relationships among all segments of the now shrunken community were much friendlier. Segal essentially ends his story with the 400th anniversary of the Paradesi Synagogue in 1968, and does not consider the period of 25 years which elapsed between that event and the publication of his book. The community is now practically non-existent: barely 20 Jews remain in Cochin.

This study serves as an accessible introduction to the history of the Jews of Cochin. At the same time, its insights will interest the specialist. The seventeen pages of pictures and maps (some of which could be clearer) and thirty-two pages of notes, index and bibliography make up over onethird of the book. The critical engagement of a wealth of published and unpublished Hebrew sources, as well as of British public records, Indian scholarship, and Dutch, Portuguese and other European materials make this work particularly worthwhile. The relationships between different communities of Indian Jews, whether those between the Bene-Israel and Baghdadis or between the sub-groups in Cochin, have drawn a good deal of popular and scholarly notice. Segal's historical analysis of the Cochin situation is a useful contribution here. Those interested in the interaction between the Cochin Jews and their non-Jewish neighbors will want to supplement Segal's outline with Nathan Katz and Ellen S. Goldberg, *The Last Jews of Cochin* (University of South Carolina Press, 1993), which analyzes the Jewish legends and the religious observances in their Indian context. A woman's personal account of growing up Jewish in Cochin and of the struggles of the *meshuhrarim* community discussed by Segal can be found in Ruby Daniel and Barbara Johnson, *Ruby of Cochin* (Jewish Publication Society, 1995), which is the autobiography of a member of that community. Segal's concise, thoughtful book is a valuable addition to the growing literature on the Jews of India.

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