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From the Editors

The *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies*, volume 14, brings several new scholars, most from Israel or India, to our readers. It is always encouraging to witness scholars entering into Indo-Judaic conversations.

Our first article by Michael Bender of Florida International University discusses participants' reflections about the historic 2007 and 2008 Hindu-Jewish "summits" in New Delhi and Jerusalem.

Kaustav Chakrabarti of Fakir Chand College in Kolkata, presents a history of women in the Jewish community of that city.

The next two articles analyze literary documents. Amos Nevo, recently retired from years of service with the Israeli Ministry of Education, discusses the complex father-daughter relationships in Hindu and comparative literature.

Shalom Saloman Wald has been working on relationships between Jews and Asian elites via literature. He is a Senior Fellow at the Jewish People Policy Institute in Jerusalem.

Navras Jaat Aafreedi of Gautam Buddha University, Noida (near New Delhi) and a member of the JIJS editorial board, writes on claims to Israelite identity among Judaizing movements in South Asia.

The Holocaust as understood and commemorated by Indian Jews is the topic for a provocative essay by Anuradha Bhattacharjee, a Fellow in the Charles Wallace India Trust. The tepid response to Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) by the Jews of Mumbai leads her to consider the meaning of the Holocaust for Indian Jews in general.

Israeli Prize winner Rabbi Daniel Sperber of Bar-Ilan University served as rabbi for Kolkata's Jews during the mid-1960s, and he kindly sent us a report about the community that he filed with the London Beit Din in 1965. His report is an important primary source of information.

Five books are reviewed in this issue. Priya Singh of the Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, Kolkata, discusses a new book on the emerging Jewish community in Andhra Pradesh by Yulia Egorova and Shahid Perwez. Jael Silliman, who published a pioneering essay in *JIJS* 1, reviews a lavish new book on Western Jews in India edited by Kenneth Robbins and Marvin Tokayer. Nathan Katz, of Florida International University, reviews two recent books by and about Mumbai's Baghdadi Jewish community: a family history by Rachel Manasseh and an urban history by Shaul Sapir. Shalva Weil, of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, prolific author, and JIJS editorial board member, reviews a new personal novel by Jael Silliman, *The Man with Many Hats*.

Finally, Navras Jaat Aafreedi concludes with a first-hand report on the European Association for South Asian Studies (EASAS) panel discussion on Jews and Judaism in South Asia at its 23rd conference held at the University of Zurich from July 22-26, 2014.

We anticipate a thematic issue next, one on food in Hinduism and Judaism, and as always we welcome contributions, especially by scholars new to us.

The Hindu-Jewish Relationship and the Significance of Dialogue: Participant's Reflections on the 2007 and 2008 Hindu-Jewish Summits in New Delhi and Jerusalem

By Michael Bender

In the last six years, a relationship has been budding between Hindu and Jewish leaders as a result of dialogue. This relationship stems from the 2007 and 2008 Hindu-Jewish summits, which took place in New Delhi and in Jerusalem. This dialogue was clearly something new for each tradition in the sense that it was the first time that such prominent leaders from these two traditions met, but what is its significance to the Hindu and Jewish worlds? There is something novel and significantly important to be found here in the Hindu-Jewish encounter with regards Hindu-Jewish relations and their interreligious dialogue. In particular it is the words of Hindu and Jewish leaders, found in the summit reports and in personal interviews, which demonstrates the great significance this dialogue contains.

The summits were an initiative of Mr. Bawa Jain, Secretary General of the World Council of Religious Leaders, a New York-based NGO. The idea to put together such a meeting between Hindu and Jewish groups was conceived by Mr. Jain in 2003 following the 3L (Look, Listen, and Learn) initiative of the World Council of Religious Leaders (Jain, 2007). It was here that he spoke with Mr. Oded Wiener, Director General of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, about the rabbinate's engagement in various dialogues and learned of the rapid progress they had made with the Abrahamic religions through the process of dialogue (Jain, 2007). Following this meeting, Mr. Jain met with Swami Dayananda Saraswati, founder and convener of the Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha (HDAS), to propose a meeting between the HDAS and the Chief Rabbinate of Israel. Swami Dayanada promptly embraced the idea and, in four years time, the first summit was launched in New Delhi, India (Jain, 2007).

These summits would bring together two delegations of some of the most influential and important religious leaders of the modern day. The Jewish delegation was led by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel who represents the interests of Orthodox Jewry in the sacred land of Israel and, to a certain extent, around the world. The other delegation was led by the HDAS, a Hindu umbrella group consisting of swamis from several different traditions that represents one of the first attempts at providing a representative body for Hindu religious interests. The summits had several main areas of interest from which their significance derives. By reading through discussion topics and taking note of what my personal interviewees focused their reflections on, four pertinent themes are identified that serve to demonstrate the novel and significant developments for both traditions that emerged from this dialogue:

1. The first is the newness of the dialogue itself. This is the first time in recorded history that two "non-universal" religions have come together for a dialogue such as this without the mediation of one or more traditions that are not "non-universal."
2. The second deals with shared threats that both respective traditions and cultures are dealing with in the modern age. The focus here is on the challenges of "secularization" as well as "terrorism"—forces that continue to endanger both traditions. A unique feature that both these traditions share is that they are integrated into entire ways of life that can not be easily compartmentalized; these religions become indistinguishable from other parts of the culture. They both developed as "lived" traditions where religion is not compartmentalized as it is in many secular and Western cultures. Both traditions' histories over the last two centuries have been heavily targeted by terrorist activity. Secularization, as well as terrorism, therefore, poses very real threats to each of these respective cultures.

3. The third important theme also relates to the threatening of tradition, but in the form of proselytization by Christians and Muslims. This is a threat that had plagued Jewish communities for centuries up until the last few decades, and is currently considered to still be a serious concern of the HDAS, for Hindus in India are described as being unknowingly attacked and converted.
4. The fourth and final theme focused on here deals with understanding and supporting one another's views of self-defined history and self-understanding. Foreigners and outsiders have at times misrepresented Hindu and Jewish practice, history, and symbolism for centuries. Because of this, inaccurate information is passed down through the generations resulting in misunderstandings and misconceptions about one another. A major area that falls under self-understanding that I will discuss here is the issue of Hinduism as a monotheistic tradition.

It has been the age-old perception among many Orthodox Jews, including the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, that Hindus are definitively idolaters or polytheists. Had this been fact, it would have restricted Jews from having any kind of extensive or meaningful relationship with Hindus, if at all, due to precepts of *halacha* or Jewish law. The incentive of proper understanding of this premise on both sides, therefore, becomes of the utmost importance and a major theme in these dialogues.

A New Type of Dialogue: A "Non-Universal" Meeting with Universal Implications

From the very onset, the proposed meetings between the Jewish and Hindu delegations were seen by participants as a landmark event. For the first time in recorded history, two "non-universal" religious traditions were meeting formally. Therefore, the occurrence of this meeting is a demonstration of a new development in itself. The characterization of Judaism and Hinduism as "non-universal" religions had a significant effect on the structure of the dialogue. One aspect of the two faiths that defines them as "non-universal" religions is that Judaism and Hinduism are traditions that are deeply linked, historically and culturally, to a piece of geography and an ethnic people. For the Jewish people this land is Israel and for the Hindus, India. The connection each religion has to these two factors of land and people is of the utmost importance in matters of how they define themselves. This goes contrast to a "universal" tradition, such as Christianity, which has no deep-rooted connection to a specific ethnic group or piece of land the way that Jewish and Hindu traditions do.

The absence of an initiative to proselytize is also a major point of connection between these two faiths, which reinforces their non-universal character. There is no standard conversion process for an individual who wants to be a member of the Hindu community and an individual's recognition within any given community could vary. In most Hindu traditions, however, they would not be recognized as a Hindu because of the tradition's strong tie with ethnicity. Ethnicity does not present as much of an issue in Judaism, as there does exist a conversion process. However, for an outsider who wants to become a member of the Jewish religion it is typically not an easy process, especially within Orthodox circles. It is not uncommon for a rabbi to deny an individual's conversion request several times before conceding to convert an individual. Rabbis typically first try to convince a potential convert that conversion is not necessary and that the Noahide laws are all that need be followed for a non-Jew. Rabbi David Rosen, the Director of the American Jewish Committee's Department for Interreligious Affairs and the special advisor to the Chief Rabbinate of Israel on interreligious affairs, definitively states the Jewish position on the issue of conversion noting that:

> When someone comes to the Rabbinic Court and says "I want to be with you," we are obliged to say that they are not required to convert to find the fullness of their soul. The person is already acceptable in the eyes of the Almighty. We are obliged

> to tell the person that they are loved and acceptable as they are so long as they follow the basic moral codes. (2007c, p. 41)

For Jews, the absence of an imperative to convert comes out of reasons rooted deep in their history. This understanding of a non-conversion effort emerges out of a tradition that is culturally particular, historically specific, and based on particular experiences, therefore making it senseless to expect or require outsiders to covert to or follow it (Rosen, personal communication, 6/24/2010). The same understanding would follow for the Hindu tradition as well, which is also culturally particular, historically specific, and based on particular experiences

Another unique link in the dialogue between the two delegations comes with reference to the popular religious distinction between "orthodoxy" and "orthopraxy" or "right teaching vs. right practice" (Hopkins, 1971, p. 73). Orthodox Judaism and neo-Vedantic Hinduism are most commonly referred to as "lived" religions because of the traditional emphasis on particular ritual action as the central element of the religions. It is very important to note, however, that these traditions cannot be defined totally within the borders of either orthodoxy or orthopraxy. Both the Hindu and Judaic traditions inherently exhibit characteristics of both these categories through a variety of aspects found in their theologies. As Gutiérrez notes, "Orthodoxy and orthopraxis are related each to the other; each feeds the other. If we limit ourselves to one, we reject both" (1988, p. 180). This premise of "orthodoxy vs. orthopraxy" is likewise highlighted by Katz when he stated, "The Hindu-Jewish dialogue is about the absolute and practices which lead to the absolute. Even as I maintain that it is a mistake to focus upon orthodoxy to the neglect of orthopraxy, so too is it a mistake to neglect doctrines and mysticism entirely" (1997, p. 37).

The notions of "right belief vs. right practice" become a relevant point in our discussion regarding the newness of the Hindu-Jewish dialogue, insofar as there is a "natural alliance" that is formed as a result of the orthopraxic nature found in both religions. Several patterns can be recognized that demonstrate why this orthodoxy-orthopraxis distinction has a relevant part to play in the Hindu-Jewish dialogue process. In describing characteristics of Hindu-Jewish dialogue, Nathan Katz notes that:

> An overemphasis on the "absolute" (as a metaphysic or as an experience) tends to predetermine the outcome of interreligious dialogues, often distorting the religious traditions represented. Underlying this search for the absolute is the tacitly Christian assumption which values orthodoxy over orthopraxy. Most Hinduisms and most Judaisms, on the contrary, value practice over doctrine, and the primacy of orthopraxy over orthodoxy. (Katz, 1997, p. 33)

The labeling of Judaism as an "orthopraxis" religious tradition as opposed to "orthodoxy" relies heavily on the dominance of *halacha* or the Jewish legal system in Judaic religious life. There are 613 commandments derived from the Torah that bring a central focus on the way the individual lives his or her life with no reference to salvation. As Rabbi Alfred Cohen states, "For the 613 commandments in the Torah, there is no mention of any reward" (1984, p. 308). Rabbi Daniel Sperber, a professor at Bar Ilan University, Chairman of the Israeli Chief Rabbinate's Commission for Inter-religious dialogue and former Chief Rabbi of Calcutta, expands on the notion of *halacha* by stating:

> In our tradition, "*Halacha*", the Jewish Religious Law, which comes from the word go, means it does not stay in one place and continue to develop, and you go with it from generation to generation. Our *Halacha* deems the rest of the Sabbath as a major component in our religion that according to the rabbinic traditions is the basis of all the other Commandments of God. You may know that we have 613

> commandments, do and do not do, in the Bible, in the five books of Moses. Every observant Jew is supposed to abide by them (2008a, p. 23).

One can see the importance here that Sperber ascribes to the commandments, to do or to not do, to act or to not act. The focus on action is further divulged when he said:

> We [Judaism] have very little in the area of dogma. There are two basic concepts, the concept of intention, thought intention and the concept of deed action. In Hebrew we say "*Kavana ne maase*". In Judaism there is no doubt that action plays a greater role, more dominant role than that of intention. (2008c, p. 40)

The orthopraxis nature of Judaism is therefore demonstrated in its downplay of dogma in favor of a focus on action.

Orthopraxy in Hinduism is highlighted by the concept of *dharma*. This *dharma* allows men to live in society and work toward the distant, but desirable, goal of *mokśa.* It dictates how humanity should act and it includes all actions by which men define and express their place in the cosmos (Hopkins, 1971, p. 73). Referring to priestly social and ritual standards, Thomas Hopkins notes that:

> The details of these standards had been worked out from the time of the Brāmhanas onward, but in the period after 500 BCE there was a great increase in the number of texts dealing with duties of men in everyday life. The result was a large body of Brahmanical teachings on social as well as ritual responsibilities. These responsibilities were collectively called *dharma*, "that which is established", or in more specific terms, "what men ought to do". (Hopkins, 1971, p. 73)

Dharma was one of the most fundamental topics of discussion coming from the Hindu delegation at the summits. The relation *dharma* shares with *halacha* in the orthopraxic realm was voiced at the second summit when Swami Parmatmananda, secretary of the HDAS, explained, "Though today it [dharma] has been limited to religion or a belief system, but primarily Dharma means a duty based life. Indian culture, Indian upbringing always emphasized on duties rather than the rights" (2008c, p. 45). The concept of *dharma* is so important in the Hindu religious tradition that in some cases the Hindu delegation used the term interchangeably with the name of their religion. This fact was exemplified by Swami Vishveshvarananda: "Another name for this old religion [Hinduism] is 'Santana Dharma'" (2007, p. 27).

Dietary laws are a relevant aspect of both Jewish and Hindu practice. The dietary laws that both traditions impose on their practitioners are a prime example of their nature as orthopraxis-centered religions. This is orthopraxic because, in the eyes of many outsiders, everyday diet expands well beyond the realm of what would commonly be considered a "religious" concept. The existence of dietary laws in both religions opens another lane of dialogue by which each tradition could potentially connect with the other. As Katz notes, "While Hindu and Jewish dietary codes do not coincide, they do overlap, and these are areas in which communication and cooperation can be developed" (1997, p. 38).

The concepts of *dharma* and *halacha* and the existence of strict dietary laws all play into the notion of a "lived" religion, which is commonly associated with orthopraxis religions. As non-compartmentalized traditions that are entire ways of life, everyday activities from eating to bathing to simply waking up in the morning all take place within what can be defined as a religious framework. For individuals of these traditions the boundary between "religious" and "non-religiously" related activities is extremely blurred if not completely non-existent in many cases. Dr. L.M. Singhvi, a constitutional expert and former member of the Indian parliament, stated that "Dharma is that which sustains and keeps us together. Like

us Hindus, the Jews unite with us in their adherence to righteous living" (2007, p. 23). He depicts the vital importance of *dharma* to the Hindu religion while affirming how this concept ties Hindu practice with that of the Jews. Rabbi David Rosen verified this one of a kind bond:

> There are many commandments, which tell us that to live a Jewish life is to be alive to the consciousness. It is a way in which the language, culture, and religion are intertwined. This is not found anywhere, except in Hindu culture, where the religious culture and society are similarly connected. (2007a, p. 25)

The shared orthopraxic natures exhibited by these two traditions, in conjunction with the notions of a sacred land, an ethnic people, and an absence of conversion efforts, creates a non-universal character for both traditions. A new and significant development is therefore demonstrated when placed in the context of an interfaith dialogue.

Cultural Threats: The Challenge of Secularization and Terrorism

Journeying through Jerusalem's Old City, one would notice crowded, narrow corridors, Roman-era cobble stone paths, smells of frankincense and falafel, while hearing the accents of no less than a half dozen different languages at any given time. Despite its richly deep history that dates back thousands of years and the sheer beauty of the city itself, Jerusalem is a highly modern city, quite reminiscent of a typical city in a Western society. It is with this that one realizes that even here, in one of the most ancient and sacred city's on the planet, where some of the most solemn chapters of religious history ever have taken place, there was no immunity from modernity and globalization. The threat of secularization was a common theme found in both the published summit reports as well as my individual interviews. It is a problem that, due to globalization and the rise of modernity, is nearly impossible to escape the effects of. As Rabbi Rosen remarked, "There is a threat from secular worlds. To commit to tradition in a secular world is extremely difficult" (personal communication, 6/24/2010). For Orthodox Judaism and neo-Vedantic Hinduism secularism creates an especially viable threat considering their nature as not just being "religions," but entire cultures, identities, and ways of life. These truly ancient religions carry with them political theories, medical practices, astrology, aesthetics, philosophy, dietary laws, science—virtually everything. Secularism is in itself a competing culture complete in some senses, with its own political systems, institutions of higher learning, values and, maybe most notably, a diminution of the domains of religious traditions. Many of the world's other religious traditions, although by no means free from the threat of secularism, can nonetheless be compartmentalized and practiced in conjunction with a secular culture more readily. The leaders I interviewed emphasized that the secular threat is one that cannot and must not be overlooked as a challenge facing both of these religious groups. The relevance of this threat was underscored by Rabbi Rosen when he stated:

> Now we get into challenges that are probably the biggest challenge of all time, the modern age in which we live. Because the pressures that we have faced historically have paradoxically, even in our [the Jews] suffering and difficulties in a way served to protect us against precisely the world that was antagonistic towards us. Today, if you like, the challenges, if I may use the metaphor, my colleagues will understand from our biblical tradition, it is the "kiss of Evil", it is opportunity that we have and the openness that threatens our ability to be able not only to survive but to be creative. This is the real challenge before us in our time. (2008, p. 39)

Similarly, Rabbi Daniel Sperber also notes that, "There is a challenge that is facing us from the newly emergent way of thought that developed in these modern times. These are

complex challenges" (2008c, p. 41). The threat comes from a variety of different sources including the media, the Internet, television, and personal travel just to name a few. The contrast between traditional and secular worlds is embodied in the description of Old City Jerusalem versus that of the New City Jerusalem with its visible lack of modesty in the way people dressed, in the design of the street buildings, and in the advertisements for European and American brand names found on nearly every street.

India has also by no means been immune to the effects of modernization and secularization, despite the fact that India is still considered by many to be a developing country. Western style coffee shops, restaurants, and grocery stores could be found in several of the country's many urban areas. The skyscrapers of Mumbai were among some of the most impressive in existence and the efficiency of the city's train system is comparable to metro systems that are found through the Western world. Modern ideas and secular ways of thought infiltrate and spread through the Hindu tradition in much the same way they do the Jewish tradition. As Rabbi Rosen noted, "The big challenge in India today is the loss of identity" (personal communication, 6/22/2010). The level of penetration of these ideas is evident throughout India, especially in cities like Calcutta, Mumbai, and in Bangalore, India's IT capital. The booming technology phenomenon has been the scourge on Hindu tradition as far as the spread of secularism goes. As Rabbi Sperber notes:

> When you have a city like Bangalore, which is a high-tech city, which is sort of "Silicon Valley" of India, has an enormous concentration of highly intellectual people. Many or most have been trained probably in Europe or the United States, come back with Western ideas. It's probably quite difficult to sort of get back in the tradition of Hinduism. So this they [the Hindu delegation] see as a challenge. (Personal communication, 7/11/2010)

Sperber indicates here that people like this—those that go away and experience the modern culture of the West first hand—come back to India and further progress the process of secularization there. Swami Adveshvaranand Giri, a major leader of the Hindu delegation at the second summit in Jerusalem, was sure to mention the destruction secularism causes when I spoke with him. He referred to our current time being the "age of consumerism" and that the materialistic mindset aids in driving adoption of a secular culture (personal communication, 5/14/2010).

We can plainly see the ways in which secularization affects a culture, and all that is a part of that culture through the modernization of cities, transportation, and, one of the most noticeable, the lack of modesty in the style of dress. There are even greater concerns with relation to secularization, however. These are concerns that tend not to be material in nature and may not be so obvious to an individual from outside the affected culture. One of the most pressing areas of concern here lies in the realm of ethics: "There is a need on the part of our youth to fill the void which has been created in their heart due to an education which is ultra-rationalistic, de-ethicized and without serious, clear priorities in life" (2008c, p. 43) Sperber notes. Swami Parmatmananda spoke in very similar words when he said, "In a real sense, our country [India] is secular, so our education system does not have any inbuilt mechanism to educate our children about our culture, tradition and religion" (Parmatmananda, 2008c, p. 43).

Secular culture's destructive effect on the ethical systems traditionally found in both Judaism and Hinduism can be seen in the compromise of the most sacred values of these two traditions. One instance can be seen in the breakdown of the family unit and the bond between man and woman, created through the sacred act of a religious marriage, of which the source of the family unit rests (Sperber, 2008c, p. 41). Moral and ethical behavior in sexual relationships is a value to be viewed with the utmost respect, notes Sperber. He goes on to describe the nature of this type of relationship: "Sexual relationships, one man and one woman loyal to each other, married in a covenant blessed by God" (2008a, p. 24).

Immodest dress, casual sex with multiple partners, sex before marriage, and civil marriage—which are seemingly acceptable practices in secular society—all work to contribute to this breakdown of traditional Hindu and Jewish values. Another instance can be found in the practice of legalized abortion and in it, the desecration of each tradition's most sacred value of preserving the sanctity of life. These are serious issues that attack the very core of everything these two traditions stand for.

The manner in which secularism affects traditional Hindu and Jewish religious practices is different from the way it affects most other religions where secularism is more compatible with their practice and the threat not as pressing. Being that both traditions are burdened with the same impending threat, an avenue of connection, discussion, and mutual concern for one another has developed as a result. Referring back to my meeting with Rosen, he voiced the need for both groups to reflect much more on the secular threat, noting that historically, the Jewish community has more experience to reflect on regarding the secular threat (personal communication, 6/ 22/2010). Furthermore, in referring to a strategy to combat the affect secularism is having on the education of the youth of this generation, Sperber notes:

> I know it is a tremendous challenge, and it is a challenge every educator faces. We have to go about it by relearning the original texts, by learning them in the language in which they were written, by sharing the depth and the richness of the heritage of each of our traditions, whether it is Sanskrit, or Hebrew or Hebraic tradition (Sperber, 2008c, p. 44).

Sperber suggests here that a potential answer for this problem lies in educating the youth in each respective culture's traditional language. This would allow one the means to reconnect with their tradition and ethical system, the bases of which originate in ancient texts such as the Torah for Jews and the Vedas for Hindus.

The Hindus hope to learn from the Jews reflected experiences. Efforts to solve this rapidly encroaching problem are a part of a bridge that has been built between these two delegations that hope to mutually benefit one another in their respective fights against the imposing threat of secularization. The attention and sincerity with which this subject has been, and is, dealt with by both religious factions, demonstrates its importance within the framework of the Hindu-Jewish dialogue. The threat of secularism, therefore, will not play the same role in dialogue involving one or more traditions that can be compartmentalized in the face of secularism and where culture and religion are separate, distinguishable phenomenon from one another.

Dialogue participants felt that while secularism gradually, and seemingly silently, continues to progress as a major threat to both traditions, it is the threat of terrorism that grabs headlines and is most realizable to the general populace. Like the secularist threat, terrorism affects many others around the globe in addition to the Jews of Israel and the Hindus of India, but in a different manner. The majority of terrorism against the two traditions has been associated with the actions of Islamic jihadist organizations that, over the last several decades, have had a history of violent conflict with the two cultures. The frequency with which terrorist acts have been, and are, present against Jews in Israel and Hindus in India are therefore quite high, creating a serious cultural threat. The tumultuous and violent feelings brought about by the Israeli-Palestinian morass for the Jews, and by the Indian-Pakistani conflict for the Hindus, no doubt plays a central role in each tradition's struggle against terrorism. Unfortunately, it is this shared historical experience over the last several decades that creates an unwanted area of relationship that has become a major issue for both religions.

In December 2010, a terrorist strike took place in Hinduism's holiest city of Varanasi, where an explosive device killed a two-year-old child, while injuring about twenty-five others (Singh, 2010). Responsibility for this attack was claimed by the radical Islamic group

known as Indian Mujahideen, which promised more attacks and made an announcement via e-mail saying, "Indian Mujahideen attribute (*sic*) this attack to the 6th of December [anniversary Babri Masjid demolition] that will haunt your nation of world's 'Greatest DemoNcracy (*sic*)' " (HT Correspondent, 2010).

In September 2004, the southern Israeli city of Beersheba unfortunately suffered a similar attack by the Islamic terrorist organization known as Hamas, when two suicide bombers detonated themselves on crowded buses (King and Zer, 2004). The graphic and violent nature of these attacks are noted by the authors who mention that, "At least 16 passengers were killed and nearly 100 were injured by the blasts, which scattered charred metal, glass shards and body parts across a palm-lined boulevard" (King and Zer, 2004).

These are just two of the innumerable instances of terroristic violence that continues to plague the people and homelands of Jewish and Hindu traditions. In addition to these examples, evidence that the two groups are being specifically targeted from the same threat came on November 26, 2008. It was on this date, in the Indian city of Mumbai, where 10 Islamic extremists shot and killed over 160 persons in the city's financial district, most notably at the Taj Mahal Palace and Tower (Bajaj, 2010). Among the victims targeted were some that came from a nearby Jewish center known as the Chabad-Lubavitch Nariman House where it was reported that, "Israeli hostages killed by Islamic terrorists during the attacks on Mumbai (formerly Bombay) were tortured by their captors before they were bound together and killed, according to officials in both countries" (McElroy, 2008). As my interviewees iterated, and as can clearly be gathered from nature of the incident, Jews and Hindus were jointly targeted and affected not just by terrorism in general, but by the exact same act of terrorism!

The examples above clearly demonstrate why terrorism is perceived to be such a pressing threat for both factions. One reason for the existence of terrorism, and those who buy into it, deals with a lack of proper education and guidance that is covered in a veil of fundamentalist and extremist lies, according to Sri Swami Dayananda Saraswati, founder and convener of the Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha. He made it clear that, "Terrorists don't know who the enemy is and they fear that they are in danger of losing their culture to modern society. The leaders are confused and use religion as a weapon. They believe this a direct ticket to paradise" (personal communication, 5/30/2010). These terrorists fear secularism as well, but believe the only way to combat it is through senseless violence and killing of the innocent.

Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Israel Yona Metzger made a similar remark at the first summit with reference to the creation of the State of Israel when he said:

> Our neighbors did not agree, and during all the 60 years we suffered, as their religious leaders commanded them to kill themselves and to kill others, all for promises of pleasures in heaven. The poor families get money for every suicide bomber that they can sacrifice. (Metzger, 2007, p. 21)

The swamis believe that Muslim leaders misrepresent Islam when they teach their followers that their culture is in a state of peril. "Nobody is a terrorist by birth. They are created." Swami Parmatmanada informs me, "Religious leadership needs to take action" (personal communication, 5/18/2010). Again, it is with the religious leadership that responsibility for the propagation of terrorism is placed, and that makes dialogue with these leaders imperative if the current trend of terroristic violence is to be effectively stopped.

The notion of terrorism also poses a threat to Jewish and Hindu cultures through its obvious disregard of each group's most important ethical value: the upholding of the sanctity of life. This disregard can also be credited to a lack of knowledge or education, according to Swami Vishveshvarananda, who noted that, "Terrorism is a very big problem that comes from lack of knowledge of the value of human life on the Muslim extremist's part" (personal communication, 6/18/2010). As Rabbi Metzger said, "We value the sanctity

of life. Even if someone put up his hand to hit his friend in anger, but does not hit his friend, he is considered wicked. For us, violence is one of the biggest sins in the tradition" (Metzger, 2007, p. 20). The parallel to this concept in the Hindu faith is the premise of ahimsa or non-violence. Swami Parmatmananda highlighted the concept of ahimsa and where its source originates when he exclaimed, "According to Hindus, because all is God, all life must be respected and nobody, therefore, should be killed in the name of religion" (personal communication, 5/18/2010).

There is, however, an extremely important aspect that must be kept in mind with regards to the approach of both delegations toward the terroristic threat. This is not a rally against the Islamic faith. During my interview with Rabbi Rosen, he explicitly noted that, "This [dialogue] must not be seen as anti-Muslim" (personal communication, 6/24/2010). The fear of radical Islam is a consistent, ever-present danger affecting the Hindu and Jewish traditions, which therefore requires the leaders of these two faiths to take a very proactive stance toward the issue. Some Islamic leaders in India took it upon themselves to approach Swami Dayananda about accepting all religions, in particular the Israelis (i.e., Israeli Jews) (Dayananda Saraswati, personal communication, 5/31/2010). In historic fashion, during a previously unscheduled third day at the New Delhi summit, Moulana Jameel Ahmed Ilaysi, president of the All India Organisation of Imams of Mosques, signed a letter of peace and cooperation with Swami Dayananda Saraswati and Chief Rabbi Yona Metzger. The declaration which, among other precepts, condemned killing, rejected extremism, and forbade suicide, was an unexpected event described as being "loved" by the Jewish delegation while being seen as a bridge to the rest of the Muslim world (Rosen, personal communication, 5/31/2010).

This also led to the unprecedented visitation of several of these Muslim leaders to Israel for a first-hand look at Israeli society and the effects of Palestinian rocket attacks and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on Israeli society. The event was the first of its kind and will hopefully not be the last. The great success of this visit to Israel can be understood from the words of Moulana Jameel Ahmed Ilaysi:

> The Jews I have met here say that we are all children of Abraham, part of the same family. This is something I didn't hear in India. The Muslims in India should come and see things for themselves. My initial impression was that the Israelis are certainly dominating Muslims out here. Once I came here, that impression completely changed. I saw the reality on the ground, the mutual respect Israeli Arabs and Israeli Jews have for each other. Constant conflict is not the reality here. I saw that Muslims, Christians and Jews lived side by side happily, not at each other's throats. (Ratzlav-Katz, 2007)

It can be seen then what role the terroristic threat plays in a dialogue between the Jewish and Hindu delegations and the great attention that must be present in dealing with this threat. Although terrorism is not unique to these two cultures alone, the nature of their specific problem with the terroristic threat certainly is. This nature is fostered in great part by the histories the two traditions have with the terrorist groups who commonly carry out attacks on them and the great strife that riddles the history that Judaism and Hinduism have with Islam in general. Additionally, modern-day conflicts that both Israel and India have with neighboring Islamic countries also work to enhance the severity of this nature. It is by taking this very nature into account that we find an aspect of life shared by the Hindu and Jewish traditions that is different when compared to other traditions. The fact that both traditions share his unfortunate link led them to place an important emphasis on it at the summit meetings. One significant result of this emphasized link can be seen in the treaty that was signed with the Muslim delegation. Another significant development for the Jewish faith came with the subsequent visit of this Muslim delegation to Israel, which is a new

stepping stone that could take the Jewish people of Israel one step closer to peace with their Islamic neighbors.

Proselytization: The Destructive Nature of Conversion

The absence of a proselytizing nature in the Hindu and Jewish traditions creates a significant point of connection not found in most other major interreligious dialogues. In an interview with Swami Dayananda Saraswati he explained the Hindu-Jewish encounter and went on to describe the nature of religious tolerance in India and how Christians and Muslims proselytize by saying, "In India, every religion is allowed to practice religion. We don't have an issue" (personal communication, 5/31/2010). He continued:

> It's very difficult to make the other people also live like that [without an issue]; it's very difficult because they can't live quietly. They have to convert. They rub all the time, that's how they survive. They have to rub. That is their commitment. So to change them is so difficult, so we try, we keep the dialogue going. (Personal communication, 5/31/2010)

About halfway through the interview, he asserted that, "If they [the proselytizers] believe that other religions should be destroyed, that belief is not acceptable. It's not human. Conversion is violence" (personal communication, 5/31/2010).

Proselytization, or forced conversion, is by definition an expression of disrespect according to Rabbi Rosen (2007c, p. 41). The sentiment about proselytization among the whole of both delegations is that of a formidable foe that has wreaked havoc on the Jewish way of life for centuries and may pose the single greatest threat to the Hindu culture during this modern day and age. As Rabbi Rosen pointed out, "Many Muslims and Christians in India see attempts at conversion simply as an 'exchange of ideas' in a democratic society" (personal communication, 6/24/2010). From this perspective, the whole proselytization issue becomes even more dangerous in that the proselytizers truly have no realization that what they are doing is violent in nature. Acknowledging this circumstance, a considerable amount of time and energy was placed on discussing this topic at the summits, which is why I treated this as a separate theme from the previous two despite the fact that this is also a perceived cultural threat.

As I had briefly mentioned earlier, a view of non-proselytization is strictly adhered to by the two delegations involved in this dialogue. The tolerance for other religions exhibited by the two traditions involved in this dialogue is a key factor in their stance on non-proselytization.

A prime example of an inclination to proselytize in India can be seen during Pope John Paul II's visit there in 2000. Swami Dayananda described this visit to me when he quoted the Pope in saying, "The cross was planted in the first millennium in Europe, it was planted in the 2nd millennium in North America, South America, and Africa and will be planted in Asia in the 3rd millennium" (personal communication, 5/31/2010). Rabbi Rosen added to this point when he noted that without John Paul's visit to India in 2000, interfaith dialogue between the Jews and Hindu's never would have taken place (personal communication, 6/24/2010). As Rabbi Rosen's words insinuate, this declaration by the Pope caused a great feeling of concern among these leaders of the Hindu tradition. The need to dialogue about proselytization became a top priority as the perceived reality of this cultural threat continued to grow.

On the basis of the positions they take toward other religious traditions, the use of a dialogue as an arena to gain potential converts has no place in this encounter between these Hindu and Jewish delegations. Professor Leonard Swidler, Christian dialogian at Temple University, notes the importance of this observed fact found in the Hindu-Jewish summits in his "Decalogue of Dialogue" where his first commandment reads:

> *The primary purpose of dialogue is to learn, that is, to change and grow in the perception and understanding of reality and then to act accordingly.* We come to dialogue so that we ourselves may learn, change, and grow, not so that we may force change on the *other,* our partner, as the old polemic debate hoped to do. (Swidler, 1990, p. 43)

Feelings against proselytization were voiced by all interviewees that I spoke to, as well as all who spoke at the summits. Not only do these particular Jewish and Hindu groups promote tolerance and respect for all world religions, but also many of the leaders spoke of the necessity of the existence of these traditions. During the interview process, I had the honor of spending nearly an entire week with Swami Parmatmananda at his ashram on the outskirts of Rajkot, Gujarat. It was here, during one of our discussions, that he presented me with an analogy regarding other faith traditions and the necessity of having them in the world. He said, "Exclusivity is the problem. Let the world have variety. Religion on this planet is like an orchestra and the multitude of instruments that must be a part of it. Some religions are less, some more, but all are equally important" (personal communication, 5/18/2010). Similarly, when I approached Swami Vishveshvarananda about his own thoughts on this issue, he stated that, "Every religion's followers should study their own religion and find out the truths" (personal communication, 6/18/2010). This point is further amplified by a quote of Rabbi Sperber:

> The same sunset can be seen by two people and each will give an accurate impression, which although different, will be truthful. Similarly, there are multiple truths of that which is outside of us. God creates everything that is not identical. We see truths in our own subjective fashion. There is no single, holistic truth; each person has his own truth (Sperber, 2007b, p. 35).

These comments go beyond the fairly simple concept of respect and tolerance for other religions. They demonstrate the unquestionably legitimate value with which the leaders involved in this dialogue view other faith traditions. These other faith traditions are seen as entities that have something positive to share with and spread to others in the world. This type of sincerity toward the value of other faith traditions is not common place. The sincerity of value placed on the other's tradition depicts another aspect of dialogue that has been, up until this point in history, quite rare and seldom verifiable in other interreligious encounters.

Proselytization has affected the Hindu and Jewish traditions throughout their histories up until the present day. The contemporary threat of forced conversion is more crucial for Hindus in India than for Jews in Israel or elsewhere. Due to centuries of fighting this threat, Jews have developed viable strategies and made significant progress in combating proselytization. It is these strategies that the Hindu delegation desired to develop in order to better deal with their own struggles against forces of exploitive conversion attempts. As Sri Venkatanarayanan, General Secretary of the HDAS pointed out to me, "Hindus only recently, in the last 150 years, began to approach, recognize, and combat conversion attempts from 'outsiders' " (personal communication, 5/27/2010).

In addition to Jews sheer will to survive, their cultural survival throughout their history can be attributed partially to their ghettoization by Gentile rulers that isolated Jews from the rest of society. Fortunately, contemporary circumstances have improved dramatically for Jews in many places around the globe, and another giant step toward this improvement came over the last decade as Sperber notes, "We [the Jews] have never been a proselytizing nation and we have always been against being proselytized. We came to an agreement with the Vatican with the last Pope [John Paul II] that he would forbid any kind of proselytization in Israel" (personal communication, 7/11/2010). This was a key victory

for the Jews in Israel in their centuries-old fight against conversion attempts, and the agreement between the Vatican and the Chief Rabbinate is a model the HDAS hopes to replicate, according to Swami Dayananda. The swami hopes to engage in a similar discussion with the Vatican, with the goal of ending Catholic proselytization of Hindus (personal communication, 5/31/2010). Swami Dayananda went on to explain that, according to the views of many other religious traditions, Hindus do not pose the threat of religious dominance and are looked down upon as possible victims, as ones to be helped in terms of having a backward religious tradition (personal communication, 5/31/2010). "They think they have to help the Hindus," says Swami Dayananda, "that they [Hindus] are outside the flock. They need to be brought back inside the flock" (personal communication, 5/31/2010). This perceived negative view of Hinduism by many of the world's major faith traditions is also recognized by Jewish leaders as well. Professor Dov Maimon, senior fellow at Hebrew University's Jewish People Policy Institute, described the problem Hindus face in this respect by noting that, "The threat is missionary Christians. Also, maybe Islam. These two groups of people come to them and tell that you are a primitive religion, you are a popular religion, you have no base and so on *(sic)*" (personal communication, 7/11/2010). This described negative view toward Hinduism deters leaders of other religious groups from dialoguing with them, it is believed. Swami Parmatmananda put it best when he described this dilemma in saying, "Those who are strong do not feel the need to sit with the weak" (personal communication, 5/18/2010).

As has been the case with many of the issues facing both delegations, education is again a key factor in neutralizing what they see as the conversion threat. According to members of the Hindu delegation, the problem in India is a lack of an adequate educational system that teaches about Hindu tradition and represents it in a positive fashion. A solid education, which positively promotes the true nature of the Hindu culture, is a means to strengthening their group identity, according to Rabbi Rosen (personal communication, 6/24/2010). Elite education in India is often found in the private sector that, unfortunately for Hindus, is dominated by Christian-based schools (Rosen, personal communication, 6/24/2010). As a result of their inherent lack of education that serves to preserve tradition, Swami Dayanada asserts that Hindus in India do not even realize they are under attack and are frequently tricked into conversion by missionaries (personal communication, 5/31/2010). The Jewish role in aiding Hindus comes with their strength in education. The highly educated nature of the Jewish people is demonstrated on an international scale with Jewish overrepresentation in fields such as politics, business, and science to name a few areas. In this fashion, the Hindus said they would like to learn from the Jews about how to preserve their tradition to combat threats and to educate their people about converts (Dayananda Saraswati, personal communication, 5/31/2010).

This is a significant development for the Hindu delegation as far as what they have gained in their struggle against the perceived threat of conversion. The progression of this dialogue gives them new allied support in their fight against proselytization and a framework from which they can learn to combat this threat.

Self-Defining Identity: History, Symbols, and Monotheism

The unfortunate outcome of centuries of demeaning misrepresentations of the Hindu religion has now become a reality for the devout Hindu. As Leonard Swidler's fifth rule of dialogue explains, "Each participant must define her- or himself" (1990, p. 44). The concept of self-definition is absolutely essential with regards to the manner in which the histories, sacred symbols, and beliefs of Hindus, as well as Jews, have been perceived by outsiders. The lack of acceptance of the self-definition of these groups has had, and continues to have, ill effects upon the followers of these timeless traditions.

The tumultuous history of the Jewish people has been well attested to throughout the pages of history with examples of physical violence directed toward them. The violence

and influence of Hellenistic culture threatened to erase the identity and even the existence of the Jewish people at various times. The threat of violence continued to be ever present into the first millennium of the Common Era and into the second, especially with regards to the relentless persecution that took place in medieval Christian Europe. This violent and hateful treatment of the Jewish people all culminated in what is considered to be the most atrocious and diabolical undertaking in human history, the Holocaust. Much of the suffering that Jews have endured in the last two thousand years stems from the misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the Jewish religion by outsiders.

Although not as widely realized as that of the Jews, the history of the Hindus shows that they have suffered through their fair share of violence and oppression, especially under particular periods of Mughal and British rule. Harsh treatment for Hindus persisted under the Mughal ruler Aurangzeb. As a result of a series of edicts he made throughout the 1660s, Hindu shrines were destroyed, the building of temples was restricted, and new taxes were imposed on Hindu merchants and pilgrims, who were then forced to pay twice the rate of Muslims (Stein, 1998, p. 179). Conditions under British control were just as appalling and, at times, seemingly worse. Slavery, said to have affected over eight million Indians, continued to be widespread even after its abolishment in 1843 (Stein, 1998, pp. 217-19). Just as in North America, during British control: "As colonial subject[s], Indians were neither invited nor permitted to enjoy the right of 'freeborn Englishmen'" (Stein, 1998, p. 227). Much of the violence toward the Hindu tradition during the modern time period, however, comes in the form of a misrepresentation of their beliefs and sacred symbols and a denial of their dignity and cultural accomplishments.

The defining of history by outsiders is an issue that has much relevance for Hindu and Jewish participants. At the first summit meeting between the two delegations, discussions about the self-definition of Hindu history centered on the story of the Aryan invasion of India. Professor Rajiv Malhotra of the Infinity Foundation noted that it is an issue that is very much alive today and is seen as having caused great harm to both Jews and Hindus (Malhotra, 2007, p. 40). It was crucial in the summit dialogues for Jews to understand the truth of the origins of Hindu culture. The motivation for understanding was because of the consequences of the traditional false representation of Hindu history and its symbols among the Jewish people, most notably the swastika:

> In the 19th century, the Aryan theory was formulated by scholars, which said that Sanskrit and Vedas came to India from the West, where it got diluted to become Hinduism, and to take credit for the wonder of the Sanskrit language. The theory that posited Nazi superiority was based on the same fabricated Aryan identity, and led to the Holocaust. This theory has been creating havoc in India. It says that what we practice in not Hinduism, but an upper caste fabrication. (Malhotra, 2007, p. 40)

The 19th-century Aryan theory has raised feelings of concern among both traditions. According to Malhotra, the "Aryan Invasion Theory" strips the Hindu people of the credit they deserve as being the source and engineers of all the wonders that comprise the ancient Hindu tradition. At the same time, the Aryan theory also charges Hindus with negatively altering a great tradition into a corrupt version of what it formerly was. This is an ignorant and harmful gesture toward the Hindu tradition, which brings into question their achievements, values, and, essentially, their entire identity. The result of an acceptance of this theory is a lack of respect for Hindu people and tradition. This negative perception of Hinduism has devastating effects within the culture as well, causing Hindus to be ashamed of their heritage and turn away from their roots in favor of what are perceived to be "more respectable" ways of life.

The effect this theory has had on the Jewish people creates a deep, dark legacy that caused them to suffer at a level never before seen. The purported supremacy of the Aryan

race was a foundation for Nazi ideology in their attempt to exterminate European Jewry during the Holocaust. The adaptation of this theory by Nazis, led them to use one of Hinduism's most revered and auspicious symbols as the ultimate representation of all they believed, propagated, and fought for: the swastika.

The swastika symbol and its meaning was distorted and misused by the Nazis during the Holocaust and, in part, as a representation of their belief and commitment to Aryan supremacy resulting from the existence of the "Aryan Invasion Theory." With regards to the swastika, Malhotra mentions that:

> The Nazis used the swastika as a symbol. Not only Hindus, but Buddhists and Jains also used the swastika. The appropriation of the swastika went hand in hand with the theory. It became a symbol of Aryan superiority. This is one of the challenges that both our communities should have to overcome. (2007, p. 40)

Additionally, during the contemporary time period, the swastika has become the international symbol for neo-Nazi and white supremacy groups the world over. It not only continues to be perceived in this fashion by many outside of India, but also it is still being used by groups as an active symbol of hatred and bigotry—everything the Hindu tradition stands against. In this manner, the swastika continues to have a negative effect on Hindu and Jewish traditions that each desires to shed and transform.

The process of understanding the true nature of this symbol was begun at these meetings when several pleas were made by the Hindu delegation for the Jews to accept the nature and the use of the symbol. "While I totally condemn the use of the Swastika in any other context, I appeal to the Jewish leadership to appreciate our Hindu sentiment and totally accept this symbol for use as an auspicious symbol" (Saraswati, 2007b, p. 39). In a similar appeal Swami Parmatmananda stated:

> I request our Jewish friends to appreciate this fact that the swastika also has been, for generations, a symbol of the Lord. For not only centuries, but for thousands and thousands of years swastika is a sacred symbol for us and in every house and every village if you go, you will find this. Even on marriage invitations it will be printed. I request our Jewish friends to appreciate our position. (2008b, p. 38)

Considering all that this symbol represents to the Jewish people over the last seventy years, it takes a serious commitment to understanding to meet a request such as this, which the Jewish delegation conceded to do:

> The way to address this technically at least, is through the area of Holocaust education so that people have a better understanding of how Hindu culture was distorted, abused, and continues to be denigrated by a group of vested interests. (Rosen, 2007c, p. 41)

Rosen suggests that the key here is, again, education. The original meaning of this symbol needs to be taught in conjunction with the horrific meaning it has come to be associated with by most.

The existence of, and consequences from, the "Aryan Invasion Theory" creates another unique point of connection and dialogue between the two particular traditions. The reinterpretation and understanding of the swastika symbol is an exceptional breakthrough that aids in restoring truth and dignity to the Hindu tradition, while highlighting the deep level of sincerity at which these meetings were held. It is a level of sincerity and area of very sensitive understanding that must not be over looked when considering the ways in which these meetings demonstrated new and significant developments for both traditions and for the entire process of interreligious dialogue.

Nowhere, perhaps, was the notion of self-definition of tradition more important or the understanding more impressive in this encounter than it was with regards to the intellection of Hindu monotheism. From the viewpoint of both delegations, the acknowledgment of Hinduism as a monotheistic tradition by the Jews was an absolute must, but for differing reasons. For the Hindus, the recognition by the Jews of them as believing in only one God is the key to gaining the respect of other religious communities around the globe, particularly within Christian and Islamic factions. These two factions have their roots in the Jewish religion, and it is widely recognized that the Jews were among the first to embrace the concept of monotheistic worship. In this fashion, their Jewish rulings and opinions on the singular nature of the divine are therefore highly regarded. With reference to this fact, Dr. Maimon quoted Hindu leaders in saying, "We want you to give us legitimation that we are monotheists" (personal communication, 7/11/2010). This recognition will, in turn, open doors of dialogue with leaders of other religious communities in the hopes of breaking the barriers of misunderstanding that most have about the Hindu tradition.

The Jewish reason for verification and acceptance of Hindus as monotheists relates to precepts of *halacha*. As Rabbi Sperber explained, "From our point of view the issue [monotheism vs. polytheism] is important because according to Jewish law, we are not really meant to have any kind of a close relationship with idolaters" (personal communication, 7/11/2010). From the *halachic* perspective, the mere meeting with the Hindu delegation was highly contingent upon the sincere acceptance of Hinduism as a monotheistic religion. This makes the affirmation of the Hindu religion as a monotheistic tradition absolutely basic in order for the Orthodox Jew to have any kind of relationship with them in many cases.

The Jewish delegation's reasons for recognizing this ruling on the monotheistic nature of Hinduism of this particular group of Hindus is again tied to *halacha*. Rabbi Sperber's words reflect the sentiment of the entire Jewish delegation. "And I've seen halachic discussions where in it is clearly stated the rabbinic position on Hinduism should be determined in accordance with the authoritative understanding of the religion as opposed to the popular understand of the religion" (personal communication, 7/11/2010). He continued with reference to the Hindu authorities, "We had a fairly representative body of people coming from many different parts of India. That's what was important and they all came to much the same conclusion which was important to understand" (personal communication, 7/11/2010). This representative body of Hindu leaders was the key to the Jewish delegation making a complete reversal of their previous belief that Hinduism was a polytheistic religion, and it created a circumstance that allowed the dialogue to proceed in such a productive manner (Sperber, personal communication, 7/11/2010).

Hindu leaders were very assertive in speaking about monotheism. Monotheism is the only topic that nearly every individual I spoke with, or who spoke in the summit reports, was sure to comment on and verify at some point during the discussion. During Swami Dayananda's opening remarks at the initial summit meeting, he stated that the very first precept of the Hindu religion is: "There are not many Gods. There is only one God" (Saraswati, 2007a, p. 14). Sri Swami Viditatmananda expands on the concept on monotheistic belief in Hinduism by saying:

> All that there is, is God. Whatever has form also has manifestation of God. God can be worshipped as something beyond forms, but at the same time, whatever has form, also has the presence of God. We find Hindus worshiping God in forms. It is not that the person worships the idol, metal or stone, that is in front of him, but it becomes a stepping stone for worshiping God. (2007, p. 36)

One reason for the existence of this method of worship deals with devotees' varying levels of understanding of the divine. Some need props, names, and forms to get in touch with

the divine where as the more sophisticated may not require these aids in worship (Viditatmananda, 2007, p. 36). As Swami Parmatmananda said to me, "Every emotion requires a form to express it" (personal communication, 5/31/2010). This necessity for a "vehicle" of worship for some practitioners has consensus among the Hindu leaders who all affirmed their adherence to a monotheistic belief in the divine. This practice of using forms in worship is justified in their understanding that all is God. Swami Parmatmananda reinforces this belief in saying, "We do not say that there is one God, please understand, we go one step further, Hindu tradition says that there is only God" (2008a, p. 29).

The Hindus' understanding of themselves as a monotheistic faith was a carefully formulated premise that came as "great surprise" to the Jewish delegation, as Rabbi Sperber described (personal communication, 7/11/2010). Similarly, Chief Rabbi of Haifa Shear Yashuv Cohen notes, "I must say that I was surprised to learn that behind the many names of Gods that you find in India, there was one supreme God" (Cohen, 2008, p. 33). Rabbi Rosen further described the newly refined Jewish delegation's understanding of the Hindu concept of the divine denoting that it shared the essence of monotheism and by using the Hebrew word *shituf,* which refers to the association of different dimensions with deity (personal communication, 7/11/2010). From Rosen's insight, one can see how the Hindu view of God can be conceptualized and made permissible within a *halachic* framework. By equating the various Hindu incarnations of God (i.e., Vishnu, Shiva, etc.) with differing dimensions of a single God rather than equating them with individual and separate gods, the Hindu religion can now be realized as a monotheistic tradition in terms of Jewish law.

By looking at the aspect of this dialogue dealing with self-identity, we find a number of developments that are both rare and remarkable. The first important development was the Jewish recognition of the original meaning of the swastika symbol, which took a deep level of understanding and sincerity. This level of understanding is not only observed in the printed report of each meeting, but also is something that was verified by every Hindu and Jewish leader that I interviewed. The leaders of both delegations were seemingly absent of any type of superficial understanding of the other's tradition, which was also quite relevant in the discussion on monotheism; a claim verified by Swami Parmatmananda and Rabbi David Rosen during the interview process (personal communications, 5/31/2010 and 7/11/2010).

The second development deals with the remarkable reversal of a deeply ingrained, two thousand-year-old belief on the part of the Jews, of Hindus being polytheistic idol worshipers. This instance of belief on the part of the Jews goes contrary to Swidler's sixth commandment of dialogue that states that, "Each participant must come to the dialogue with no hard-and-fast assumptions as to where the points of disagreement lie" (1990, p. 44). After the meeting, both delegations sincerely understood the revised Jewish position on the Hindu concept of the divine. Swami Parmatmananda confirmed the Hindu belief in the Jewish reversal of thought by saying, "Rabbi Sperber said that a 2,000 year old confusion had been reconciled" (personal communication, 5/31/2010). The retraction of a two thousand-year-old belief during the first ever dialogue between these two groups is a seemingly unparalleled fact that further illustrates the significance this dialogue has for both traditions. As Rabbi Sperber said, "One of the great achievements of our first meeting in New Delhi was when we signed together a declaration clarifying what is not understood by most people, that Hindus basically are a Monotheistic religion as is Judaism, Christianity, and Islam" (2008b, p. 32). This acceptance by the Jewish delegation of the Hindu delegation as being monotheistic is a perfect demonstration of Swidler's first commandment and how one must be open to the possibility of changing oneself as a result of dialogue.

Conclusion

It is in considering these four major themes that one can see evidence for new and significant developments for Hinduism, Judaism, and interreligious dialogue as a whole.

During the interview process, however, two themes stood out as receiving more attention than the others: the notion of Hinduism as a monotheistic faith and the effort to combat proselytization. The focus on these themes came as no surprise for two reasons. The first is that the recognition of Hinduism as a monotheistic faith by the Jewish delegation was the most notable breakthrough of this dialogue. That can be gathered from the explicit acknowledgment of this fact by Jewish leaders in the summit reports and by looking at what the Jewish perception of Hinduism had been up until the occurrence of these meetings. The second deals with the fact that proselytization of Hindus in India is currently the most pressing concern for the Hindu delegation, and therefore, requires a great deal of attention if they hope to resolve this perceived issue.

It is the progress, the sincerity, and the high level of understanding observed in these two meetings dealing with such sensitive issues issue as those listed above, which confirms the existence of new and significant developments for Hinduism, Judaism, and the dialogue that continues on between them.

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Voices from Antiquity: Glimpses into the Lives of the Jewish Women of Calcutta

By Kaustav Chakrabarti

The cultural heritage of Calcutta is one of the most colorful in the world. Numerous races from diverse backgrounds have contributed to the multiethnic character of the city. Among them we find the presence of a microscopic community. They are the Jews of Calcutta.

Transition

When the Baghdadi Jews first arrived in the port cities of Bombay and Calcutta, they were quick to realize the advantages of the metropolitan centers ruled by the British. Under the protective umbrella of the British Raj, these Jewish immigrants to India not only created major financial institutions, such as the Bank of India, which was established by the Sassoons, and the Calcutta Stock Exchange, which was set up under the patronage of Ezekiel Judah and the Gubbay family of Calcutta to cater to their mercantile needs, but also they set up social and institutional spaces like schools and synagogues to cater to their emotional and spiritual needs. These sociocultural elements served to cater to the requirements of an ever-expanding community, a majority of whom came over to India through the system of chain migration. Initially, following the tenets of the rabbinate of Baghdad and Jerusalem, the Jews of Calcutta looked to their ancestral lands for guidance in commercial and spiritual matters, but gradually with the passage of time they struck firm roots in the city and looked upon the British to fulfill their civic and social needs. Moreover, the arrival of the Baghdadis in India after the British had firmly established themselves as rulers had consequences that affected relations between them and the rest of the population. On their arrival in India—as newcomer—the Baghdadis saw who were unfamiliar with the Indian way of life, the racial divide mainly marked by the difference in skin color keeping ruler and ruled apart; they also saw the stamp of inferiority that was put on the ruled and felt the contempt in which they were held. Under the circumstances, it was highly disadvantageous for the Baghdadis to identify themselves as Indians, when as Jews from another country, with their relatively light skin in tropical conditions, they could remain distinct and separate.

After the Mutiny (Revolt of 1857), the lines between the British and the Indian were drawn more starkly than ever.[1] Whatever had been liberal about the British Raj was submerged, as the racist underbelly of imperialism emerged.[2] Such antipathy between the larger players profoundly disrupted the position of the middleman groups such as the Baghdadis.[3] As a result, Jews in Calcutta came to be increasingly identified with the British.[4] This transition entailed the gradual and uneven rejection of their "Arabian Jew of the British Raj" persona in favor of a new, British persona that merged in patterns of residence, language usage, clothes, choice of schools, and so on.[5] It was then that most of the Baghdadis, with a few notable exceptions, aligned themselves with the British rulers of India. They joined clubs from which Indians were rigidly excluded and affiliated their commercial and industrial establishments with the British Chambers of Commerce. Most of them assumed a "European" lifestyle in terms of dress, manners, and habits. There were after all certain tangible benefits in being classified as "European."[6] Salary scales were different for "Europeans" and "Natives."[7] Europeans had more business opportunities, bank credits and so on. Jews with close ties with the British rulers (Eliases, Ezras, and Sassoons) found their business operations expanding. The European Defence Association was open only to Europeans including Jews. During the Ilbert Bill Agitation in India in 1883, Jews and Armenians joined the chorus with other Europeans in protest against the bill's provision for trial by Indian judges.

This Europeanization or Anglicization of lifestyle, pragmatically speaking, served the community extremely well. The "European classification"[8] became the passport to a better life. At the same time, this process of Anglicization created dents in the prevalent patriarchal structure, and it raised the hitherto uncomfortable question of the seclusion of women.

With encouragement being provided for female education and the establishment of schools for women in Bengal in the second half of the nineteenth century at official and private initiative, the Jewish women of Calcutta also took to Western education as the avenue of progress and prosperity, and with it came a veritable change in the social outlook regarding the emancipation of the womenfolk from the drudgery of home and their forays into the world of men

The Sociocultural World of the Jews of Calcutta

Commercial success apart, it is the sociocultural world of the Calcutta Jews that is the most fascinating. The Jewish community of Calcutta was tightly organized. The community provided every member sacramental wine from its winepress, bread from its bakery, chicken from its slaughterhouse, education from its schools and even paid employment in its services.

The Family

In attempting to capture the identity of a people, we first look into its heart—the family. The joint family system was a common feature of life in the Middle East, and among the Oriental people, the Jews were no exception. The traditional Middle Eastern Jewish family, like its Muslim counterpart, was extended, endogamous, patriarchal, patrilineal, and occasionally polygynous.

Oriented toward the past, these families were organized into large households. These large households consisted of the principal couple, their children, some married with children of their own, unmarried sisters or bothers of the couple, and any aged parent who might still be living. By "family," the married ones automatically included their parental family and those grandparents who lived with them. In general, the whole family sat at one table, although as the twentieth century progressed, they might have ordered individual meals from the same cook or in some cases have had completely separate establishments including their own kitchen while living in the same house.

The extended family was a central part of each person's daily experience.[9] Cousins did not just visit on a holiday or special occasion, but they saw each other everyday.[10] They played, fought, and argued together like siblings.[11] And, when a Jewish holiday was around the corner, every member of the family eagerly participated in the preparations.[12]

The extended family gave community members a sense of security. Even the adolescents might have benefited from it. It is only the young married couple wanting to spread their wings and start a family who would have found the joint family system irksome. If the pressures became unbearable, a couple could solve the problem by moving into a household of their own while maintaining ties with the parental family.

A child's welfare was the concern of the whole family. A verbal reprimand or even physical punishment was not uncommon from grandparents or aunts of the older members of the community. In a community as rigidly patriarchal as the Jewish community, there was no distinct dichotomy between male and female roles. The role and status of each member was defined in strict details. Higher status and authority went to the males, particularly the head of the household and the eldest son. Females had a lower status, but gained a measure of indirect power through motherhood.

The Status of Women

A noticeable and recurrent feature of Calcutta Jewry even in the days of 100 percent male dominance was the strength of many of the women it produced. Bound as she was by convention, nevertheless her character developed along permitted lines, and in her own sphere she commanded the respect of her husband, children, and the community. She might study Hebrew or the mysteries of the *Kabbala* (Jewish mysticism) at an advanced stage outstripping her brothers or else helped her father and husband with their work. In the confines of her home, her intelligence was appreciated and was even used by the men folk to make business decisions. Some women acquired entrepreneurial skills and managed their husbands' estates or businesses in the event of the latter becoming incapacitated.[13] They did so admirably.

It might be thought that in a society as rigidly Orthodox and patriarchal as the Baghdadi Jews of Calcutta, women would for the most part remain suppressed, and sometimes this did happen, this was not always the case. The community held many women in great esteem whether they were married or unmarried. The cases of women going out on their own were not unheard of. Women worked as piece-good dealers, tailors, general merchants, shopkeepers, and domestic help. Four women were teachers. There were seven prostitutes and five women who were singers and actors.[14]

Western Education and Changing Perspectives: The Jewish Girls and its Pioneering Role

By the middle of the nineteenth century many members of the community had been born in India. Though they would continue to recognize the authority of Baghdad and Jerusalem in religious matters, the ties with the homelands of their fathers had begun to weaken. The community had already become more Westernized in their outlook and sought a closer relationship with the British rulers of the country. Though Arabic would continue to be still spoken and Hindustani for even longer, English education and the Western mode of dress was beginning to be regarded as increasingly important for the generation being born about that time.

The Jewish Girls' School was opened in 1881 by members of the Jewish community.[15] It was founded to counter missionary efforts when it was discovered almost by accident that a Jewish girl was about to be converted to Christianity.[16] Education for Jewish girls paralleled the development of girls' education in Calcutta.[17] At that time numerous schools catering to the educational needs for girls were established, such as the Juvenile School (1820), Bethune School (1849), Victoria College (1882), and Brahmo BalikaVidyalaya (1890). The poorest in the Jewish community attended the Old Mission School.[18] In part, the Jewish Girls' School was opened so that Jewish girls would not fall prey to Christian/proselytizing influences. The school had a kindergarten (for three-year olds) plus an additional nine grades.[19] In the seventh grade, the girls had to pass a Junior Cambridge Examination, which was administered from and corrected in Cambridge, England.[20] Similarly, in the ninth standard, and to finish high school, they had to pass the Senior Cambridge.[21] The school was run by the reverend E.M.D. Cohen, the rabbi of the Maghen David Synagogue and editor of the journal *Paerah*. The Jewish Girls' School was set up chiefly at his initiative.[22] Among other benefactors of this noble institution were Moses Jacob Abeasis, Moshe Mayohas, and Rahamim Moosa Cohen.[23] The Jewish Girls' School was noted for the excellent performance of its candidates and several came out with flying colors in the examination. In 1936, the best results in Bengal for the Cambridge Examination went to the Jewish Girls' School, which sent seven girls for the Senior Cambridge, all of whom passed, and, three out of four for the Junior Cambridge. The successful candidates were: Senior Cambridge: Ruby Gubbay, Mercia Rassaby, Sally Twena, Hannah Moses, Sarah

Meyer, Mercia Abraham, and Helen Rassaby; Junior Cambridge: Myrtle Abraham, Ramah Elias, and Ethel Isaac.[24]

Among the distinguished alumni of the school was Matilda Cohen, the first Jewish girl to receive the Master's Degree from the University of Calcutta. Though the Jewish Girls' School prepared the students for college, most of the girls did not pursue a higher education.[25] They opted for vocational training classes to become teachers, secretaries, nurses, hair dressers, and join other professions that were considered suitable for women in those days.[26] One respondent, formerly a teacher of the Jewish Girls', replied, "I finished my education at the age of fourteen."[27] The students at the Jewish Girls' School were all Jewish, as most of the staff, except a few Anglo-Indian teachers. Regina Guha, the sister of Hannah Sen (nee Guha), was the first Jewish principal of the School.[28] It attained the highest intake of Jewish pupils during the time of Miss Ramah ("Ramoo") Luddy who served as the principal of the school for thirty-five years from 1928 to 1963. Aside from English serving as the first language, the second language was French, and the students learned to read and write enough Hebrew to be proficient at their prayers.[29] School hours at the Jewish Girls' School were from nine in the morning to three in the afternoon, but school work did not end there.[30] Home work was a regular and daily feature of life, taking at least two hours a day from the first standard.[31] "Not Failure But Low Aim is Crime" ran the motto of the school. Miss Ramah Luddy, the principal, always set and maintained the very high standard for which the school was justly renowned. This is what a community member had to say about the standard of its teachers:

> "When I took the tram from office on my way home, I used to sort of eavesdrop on the conversation of the teachers of the Jewish Girls' School. They were very informative and covered every aspect of knowledge. It was as if these teachers had dedicated themselves to the well being of the students and that of the community at large. It was a treat to hear them out."[32]

The school, which was initially set up at Ezra Street, moved to a rented accommodation on Pollock Street.[33] As the need and demand for a new building of their own grew, contributions were raised largely through the efforts of the Reverend E.M.D. Cohen, and the foundation of a new building was laid on the same premises in 1926 by Sir David Ezra.[34] His wife, Lady Rachel placed with it, in a vacuum jar, two gold, four silver, four nickel and four copper coins recording the proceedings on a specially prepared parchment, an engraving of Jerusalem, copies of the speeches, and issues of the day's English-language newspapers.[35] The building was opened three years later by Lady Jackson, wife of the governor of Bengal, Sir Stanley Jackson.[36] With Pollock Street having become an impossible snarl of congestion and the Jews having long moved out of the area, in 1955, the school shifted again to its present premises on Park Street.[37] In 1962, they got a new building there.[38] While the poor and the middle-class girls attended the Jewish Girls' School, the daughters of the wealthy attended schools such as Calcutta Girls' School, Welland Goldsmith, and later, Loreto House.

The early settlers of the community were not well educated. They knew just enough to carry on their day-to-day business. Formal education among the older members of the community usually stopped at ages fifteen or sixteen. Academic qualifications were not considered necessary to the main business of life. In fact, instances of dropouts were not rare. In contrast to the old timers, many members of the younger generation went out into the world to make their own fortunes on completion of their college education. By that time onward, higher education began to be seen as a passport for a better life and overall progress of the self and community. The majority of graduates worked in the concerns of the Jewish firms such as David Sasson, E.D. Sassoon, Curlender's, and B.N. Elias. The B.N. Elias and Co. was by far the largest employer of Jewish professionals in Calcutta and the neighborhood. Jewish men worked as clerks, assistants, managers, and even directors in

these organizations. There were very few Jewish professional men. This was in sharp contrast with the Armenians of Calcutta. For instance, we have a list of 25 Armenian High Court Advocates between 1855 and 1891, 8 solicitors (1856-91) and six doctors in the Indian Medical Service.[39] The 1915 Thacker's *Directory* lists four Jewish barristers and one solicitor.[40] Some of the prominent Armenian doctors and medical professionals include Dr. Joseph Marcus Joseph, MD, who joined the Indian Medical Service in 1852 and rose to the level of deputy surgeon-general in 1880. The British Indian Army had several Armenian lt. colonels, surgeon captains, and surgeon-majors. Dr. Sargis Avetoom of the Indian Army, participated in the British Army's action in Afghanistan, Egypt, and Burma, and was honored by the British government: Medal and Clasp and the Khedive's star with Clasp from Egypt, and Medal and Clasp from Burma.[41] He discovered a medicine for dysentery.[42] Dr. Arthur Zorab, an ophthalmologist, perfected an eye-operating style for Glaucoma, which was named after him as the "Zorab operation."[43] There were also a number of leading barristers, solicitors, and advocates in the Armenian community who played a crucial role in the civic life of Calcutta. They include M.P. Gasper, a leading barrister of the Calcutta High Court, and the first Armenian to have passed the Indian Civil Service Examination in 1869.[44] Sir Gregory Charles Paul, KCSI, was the advocate-general of Bengal during British rule for more than thirty years and was subsequently knighted in recognition of his services to the Crown. He lies buried at the Greek Cemetery at Narkeldanga Road.[45] Interestingly, Narkeldanga also happens to be the venue of the Jewish Cemetery of Calcutta.

Notwithstanding the palpable presence of the Armenians in different spheres of administration, commerce, and professional fields at times outshining and far outnumbering their Jewish counterparts, it is indeed surprising to note that the community boasted of very few women professionals and educators in an era (as the Thacker's Directory shows) when the emancipation of women in the Anglicized and Europeanized communities such as the Armenians, Parsis, and Jews, were much talked about and community leaders did their best to bring their women at par with the men folk in different areas of life. The Thacker's *Directory* for instance, speaks only of Dr. Marie Catchatoor, an Armenian lady and the first woman of India to be appointed as the presidency surgeon of West Bengal. She retired in the early 1980s as the superintendent of Lady Dufferein Hospital, Calcutta. Further investigation in this field on the part of the researcher was of no avail as the present community in Calcutta is highly secretive and does not want to disclose details of its life and activities whether in the colonial or the postcolonial period. The existing Armenian School does not have documentary evidence, and whatever little is available is kept off limits to outsiders. This is indeed a tragedy for a community as vibrant as the Armenians who sought to make Calcutta their home, prospered using the city's infrastructure and resources, and yet refuses to disclose its historical records to be preserved for posterity. So given the paucity of evidence, documentary or otherwise, it's extremely difficult to arrive at definite conclusions regarding the educational and professional achievements of the Armenians vis-à-vis other communities such as the Jews and Parsis, and the Chinese to some extent.

What however follows from the Thacker's *Directory* is the fact that the male presence in the professional and social world of the Armenians was intriguing despite the community's quest for modernity in a colonial ambience. This stands in sharp contrast when we compare the Jews with the Armenians whose emphasis on education was derived from the Babylonian Talmud, and the woman being given a central place in child education at least in the formative years of the child. With religious sanction on acquisition of knowledge and a highly adaptive lifestyle in contrast to the Armenians, the Baghdadi Jews of Calcutta, though late-comers in the scene, soon made their presence felt in building viable community infrastructure to sustain themselves in an alien but hospitable surrounding. Patriarchy did not stand in the way of Jewish women gaining an education, and as the world moved on, the Jewish women of Calcutta too moved with the times in keeping with their needs and aspirations.

The rate of literacy was also much higher among Armenians than Jews: 86% in 1911 compared to 60% among Jews.[46] Since 1891, female education made satisfactory progress among the Jews.[47] The distribution of literate male and female population among the adherents of Jewish faith in 1901 as compared with 1881 and 1891 is as follows:

PERCENTAGE OF LITERATES

JEW	1881	1891	1901
MALE	63.5	62.9	65.9
FEMALE	29.3	36.2	44.8

Source: J.R. Blackwood, "Calcutta Town and Suburbs," *Census of India 1901*, Vol. 8, p. 57.[48]

Taking both the sexes together, about 69.3% of the Jews were literate in Calcutta and the suburbs. By 1921, a majority of the Jews could read and write English.

Poverty among the Calcutta Jewry in a Nutshell

The turn of the century saw the Jewish community in Calcutta firmly established. Many of its members had become prominent and wealthy citizens. Despite signs of prosperity, the community (as all communities are) was plagued with the chronic problem of poverty. To quote Ezekiel Musleah, "The Jewish community of Calcutta, since its inception at the turn of the nineteenth century, had more than its fair share of poverty. About a quarter required the helpful hand of their co-religionists."[49] The Baghdadi Jewish community has been categorized as "prosperous"; however, ironically, perhaps half of the community was poor and dependent on Jewish charities.[50] The other half was divided between the middle class (about 35%) and the wealthy, the affluent, and the opulent.[51]

The Poverty Commission set up by the British government also included in their program the investigation of poverty among the Jews of Calcutta.[52] The commission noted in its observation that,

> there can be no doubt that great destitution prevails among the Jewish poor in Calcutta. They are scattered in and about the neighborhood of Canning Street and Ezra Street, but their headquarters (*sic*) are in Hurrinbari Lane and Chinapara, where they live in a state of utmost filth, and do not live morally. We fear altogether clean lives. These Jewish poor have come mostly from Baghdad, a city notable for a floating population of the *budmash* (rogue) type, and some such budmashes one may encounter in the environs of Coloohtolah.[53]

The commission obviously did not take a charitable view of the extent of destitution faced by the community, despite its apparently "sympathetic" stand, and some of its observations could not veil the patronizing attitude prevalent in British official circles. For instance, beggary was rife in the community among the early immigrants from Baghdad and Basra. The commission did not fail to take notice of this social problem, but its attitude with regard to this demonstrated nothing but contempt. In its observations on the state of misery being faced by the Jewish poor of Calcutta, the commission further goes on to add:

> It must not be supposed that the wealthy Jews of Calcutta have done nothing for their brethren in misery. On the contrary, they have cheerfully consented to give from their purse, and even to be blackmailed till now. But, no one likes to part with his money under threats, and with abuse and contumely for reward, and this is just

> the attitude which the Jewish poor have taken up recently....The wealthy Jews have been regularly taxed by their poor brethren. Professional beggars from Jerusalem known as *Hakhams*, men learned in the Hebrew religious lore, but generally devoid of anything else, even of outward cleanliness, visit Calcutta every year. They have been to Bombay previously, and made there what they have to call a good "list" or collection. In Calcutta, they collected their hundreds as well, and next year they send other *hakhams* from Jerusalem on the annual round of religious blackmailing....[54]

The women in the community shouldered the responsibility of trying to uplift their less fortunate brothers and sisters from the stigma of poverty and destitution that was being bandied about in British official papers. And as they set about the task with great vigor, a number of institutions came up on different occasions to better the living standards of their co-religionists.

Welfare and Philanthropic Work at Women's Initiative

In 1911, the affluent members of the community established the Central Jewish Fund in order to assist the poor. With a view toward eradicating the evil of poverty and in order to infuse into the destitute a sense of purpose in their life, a group of ladies led by Miss Kate Judah decided to form a league. Thus in 1913, was born the Jewish Women's League to promote the social, civil, moral, intellectual, and spiritual welfare of the poor.[55] A committee was set up consisting of fifteen members, five of whom were elected as office bearers.[56]

Education for the poor children was a crying need. The league closely associated itself with the "Jewish Girls' and the Jeshurun Free School" where they obtained every cooperation from the Reverend E.M.D. Cohen.[57] Thanks to the league, the Jewish Girls' Hostel was established in 1937.[58] In order to protect Jewish students from Christianizing influences, the league withdrew fifteen girls from the Hebrew Mission School and had them admitted into the Jewish Girls' School.[59] By 1952, the league was paying of the education of twenty-two girls.[60] Scholarships were also offered to poor girls for training in medicine and the arts. Since there were no applicants for the proposed scholarship, the funds were eventually utilized for teaching needlework and dress making to the children at the Talmud Torah.[61]

Many other plans were formulated with varying degrees of success. A medical panel comprising Dr. Hannah David Duke Sassoon and Dr. Rachel Cohen and assisted by two Indian doctors attended to the girls at the Jewish Girls' School. A bureau was also set up to streamline the collection of gifts and donations, the task previously carried out through individual efforts. Due to various fund-raising activities and generous donations from wealthy philanthropists (e.g., Sir Victor Sassoon, Ronald Sassoon, and the Countess of Reading) the financial stability of the league was established. In 1922, its capital was Rs. 34,000 and by 1925 it had risen to about Rs. 50,000.[62] In 1929, the league was registered as a society. Some of the aims of the league were as follows:

1. To take all measures expedient or necessary to help the Jewish poor and depressed classes
2. To act as guardian of unprotected Jewish children
3. To promote the social, civil, moral, intellectual, and spiritual welfare of the Jewish poor
4. To establish, conduct, and carry on houses, clubs, and hotels for the Jewish poor and generally to relieve their distress
5. To place poor Jewish children in schools and to pay school fees and other charges on their behalf
6. To take all steps to rescue Jewish children from surroundings which may be considered dangerous or undesirable to tem physically or morally

7. To take such steps by oral or written appeals, both private and public as may from time to time be expedient or necessary for the purpose of procuring contributions to the funds of the league in the shape of donations, subscriptions, or otherwise
8. To acquire by purchase, lease, gift, or otherwise, property moveable or immoveable and whether subject to any special trust or not for any one or more of the objects of the league.

The league actively cooperated with the great industrialist, B.N. Elias in getting employment for many of the Jewish unemployed, thereby inculcating in them a sense of self-respect.[63] Also, in 1940, a scheme was set up with the cooperation of the Director of Industries, Bengal, to impart technological training in such small scale industries as bee keeping, pottery making, and weaving. This scheme, however, was not very successful and was later abandoned.[64]

Appalled by the conditions under which infants and nursing mothers were compelled to live with no external aid except what could be procured from the St. John's Ambulance Clinic, the league headed by Lady Rachel Ezra, set up in 1928 the "Jewish Women's League Baby Clinic."[65] It later came to be known as the Jewish Baby Welfare.[66] It started with a budget of Rs. 3,000.[67] At the initial stage of its operation, ten babies were selected for special medical care and nourishment.[68] Dr. Rachel Cohen was the first medical practitioner in charge of the clinic and Miss Hannah Ephraim, was the matron.[69] The baby clinic functioned within the premises of the Jewish Girls' School.[70] Dr. Ena Mitra made valuable professional contributions as well as occasional gifts of medicines.[71] The Calcutta Corporation made a grant of Rs. 100 per month to the Jewish Baby Clinic.[72]

Reaching maturity in 1936, the Baby Welcome became a registered body.[73] It had the following aims and objects:

1. To provide for the babies free milk and fruit juices daily, and tonics whenever necessary.
2. To provide free medical advice to mothers and babies once a week; also all kinds of medicines including tonics and other body building tonics.
3. To impart free instruction about the best modern methods of bringing up babies.
4. To impart free hygienic instruction with particular reference to proper ventilation, sanitation, consistent cleanliness in body and clothes, scrupulous avoidance of dust, regular baths, plenty of fresh air and the value of vitamins in food.
5. To take such steps by oral or written appeals both private and public as may from time to time be deemed expedient or necessary for the purpose of procuring contributions to the funds of the Clinic in the shaped of donations or subscriptions or otherwise.
6. To erect or purchase a small building, funds allowing, for the use of the Clinic.[74]

The ladies of the Jewish Women's League also took initiative in the establishment of the Jewish Girls' Hostel, which was opened officially on December 26, 1937.[75] The hostel became a home providing a condusive atmosphere for girls studying at the Jewish Girls' School and requiring a shelter other than what their parents or guardians could afford.[76]

The league provided exemplary services in feeding the hungry during the Bengal Famine of 1943.[77]

Among the new commitments brought about by the Second World War, was the relief extended to the distressed Jewish evacuees from Burma, many of whom became permanent recipients of the league's assistance.[78] In this regard, the league cooperated with the Rangoon Evacuees Relief Association Fund.[79]

The league also catered to the needs of destitute refugees from Europe, many of whom sought shelter in Calcutta.[80] Despite the crunch in resources, the league tried its best to rehabilitate as many people as possible. As the financial assets of the league were

stretched to the limit owing to various commitments, there was a budget deficit. Two windfalls provided a badly needed respite. This came in the form of contributions of Rs. 134,000 and Rs. 84,000 from Aaron Raphael Gubbay and Raphael Aaron Gubbay respectively.[81]

Women's Emancipation and Social Activism

The growing emancipation of women in the Calcutta Jewish community was an indicator of social activism and rising social consciousness among the youth. The first stirrings of female emancipation from the straitjacket of home and family were felt in the community, and Jewish women—following the lead given by their unshackled sisters in Europe and America—started to take up jobs and think of self-reliance. It was then that the majority of Jewish girls who wished to take up secretarial work after leaving school met with parental opposition. But the battle was soon lost to the youngsters and by the 1930s, Jewish girls were much in demand in the business world of Calcutta. Stella Benjamin was an MA of from Calcutta University, and for several years taught at the Jewish Girls' School, then joined the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, the first woman to hold an executive position there. She immigrated to England in the 1950s. Rachel Duek Cohen was the first lady doctor in the Jewish community of Calcutta. She enrolled in the Calcutta Medical College in June 1892 for LMS and MB courses at[82] Government Scholarship of Rs. 20/-.[83] Rachel Duek Cohen was connected to the Jewish Baby Welcome Clinic started by the Jewish Women's League in Calcutta and together with Miss Hannah Ephraim and Dr. Ena Mitra, rendered valuable service to poor and destitute children and their parents. She immigrated to England in the 1930s. Niuta Ghosh was born in Bialystock, Poland, and got her education in Germany and France, where she studied at the Pasteur Institute.[84] Her father, a well-known chemist, was the first cousin of Dr. Zamenhof (inventor of Esperanto) and of Manya Wilbushewitch-Shochat, one of the first and most prominent women pioneers of Israel.[85] Mrs. Ghosh was on the Calcutta ORT Committee and was connected with charity work. She took over the OSE (Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants [Institution for Childhood Assistance]) work in 1948 from Mrs. Jo Farbstein who started the work in Calcutta.[86] The OSE was set up to provide assistance to children who survived the Holocaust by establishing and organizing children's homes, kindergartens, orphanages, sanatoria, and other institutions. With the generous support of the American Jewish Committee through the American Jewish Joint Distribution System and other Jewish organizations throughout the world, it was possible to undertake such a gigantic task. The Calcutta chapter of the OSE, through the energetic efforts of Mrs. Ghosh, tried to enlarge the number of sponsors and donors. By the early 1950s, forty-one children found sponsors in Calcutta alone.[87] Rachel Ashkenazi was the first female lawyer in the community to practice at the Calcutta High Court. She pleaded for Muslim women who had to go about in *Purdah* (veil). Miss Queenie Cohen of Calcutta was the first Jewess from India to be a barrister.[88] She passed the final examination from Lincoln's Inn and was called to the Bar.[89] She was the sister of Miss Seemah Cohen who passed the ISC Examination of Calcutta University in one year and won a scholarship.[90]

The Jewish women of Calcutta excelled in studies and many made a mark for themselves in academia. Miss Hannah Cohen, Miss Seemah Duke, and Mr. Ezra Gubbay all passed their pre-Sci MBB examinations.[91] Miss Hannah Moses and Miss Seemah Cohen passed the ISC.[92] Miss Seemah Cohen, a former pupil of the Jewish Girls' School, completed her course in one year gaining a scholarship of Rs. 50/-.[93] Among those who passed the BA examination, University of Calcutta, Mrs. S. Isaacs got the Second Division.[94] She pursued her studies while continuing her work as a teacher in the Jewish Girls' School.[95] She won the gold medal for English composition.[96] Miss Daisy Jacob passed the BA examination, standing first among the girls of her college, while Moses Levi, a student of St. Xavier's' came first in the Second Division.[97] Miss Iris Moses, BA, BT (Calcutta University) was the Principal of Sir Romesh Mitter School Bhowanipur.[98] She was also Girl Guide Captain Calcutta, 8th

Company.[99] In 1953, she and her husband Eddie Ferris, a locomotive driver immigrated to England with their son Dan. Iris became immersed the Girl Guides Movement of England and rose to a high position in its London headquarters. Ramah Khatoon did not marry and became one of the outstanding social workers of the community. For many years she taught at the Jewish Girls' School, her principal subject being French. She was instrumental in setting up the Jewish Girls' Hostel. The hostel was opened officially on December 26, 1937.[100] For several years, the services of Anne Othoneos as superintendent were invaluable.[101] The Girls' Hostel was to ultimately become the foster child of the Jeshurun Free School, developing into its boarding department and fed by generous endowments.[102] Ramah Musleah decided not to marry and dedicated her life to teaching, a profession she cherished all her life.[103] Tabby Solomon became a dentist, and Sarah Abraham became a math teacher at the Jewish Girls' School after training at a teachers' seminary in Dow Hill Kurseong, West Bengal, and subsequently continued teaching when she immigrated to London.[104] Miss Kathleen Joyce Ezekiel of Calcutta thrilled the audience with her exquisite and masterly rendering of Rhapsody No. 6 of Lizst at the annual concert and prize distribution ceremony of the Calcutta Centre of the Trinity College of Music, London, held in the hall of Loreto House, Middleton Row, on January 31, 1952.[105] She was conferred the highest award of the day, the Stenton Dozey Gold Medal, and was awarded the FTCL (Fellow of the Trinity College of London Diploma).[106] Miss Joyce Lanyado, a nine-year-old contestant was awarded the Gomes Medal.[107] Her sister, Miss Hazel Lanyado, was awarded the Augier Medal.[108]

Ramah Luddy had been the principal of the Jewish Girls' School for twenty-eight years (1935-63). Apart from her role as a teacher, she served the community in other respects as well. Under the guidance of St. John's Ambulance, she did voluntary work in the outpatient department of a hospital and also at the first baby clinic started by the Red Cross in Calcutta. After completing her training as a teacher in England, she started a Jewish Company of Girl Guides in the East End of London. She joined the University of London's Jewish Students' Union. From then on she became an active Zionist. Soon after her return to Calcutta, she was appointed Honorary Treasurer of the Jewish Women's League. She organized the Jewish Baby Welcome and she and Miss Marie Mordecai were its first honorary secretaries.

In 1929, Miss Ramah Luddy started two study circle groups with a view toward conducting research into postbiblical history and Jewish literature. In May of the same year, these groups were amalgamated and the Judean Club was born.[109] The Judean Club was inaugurated in Calcutta on July 12, 1929 at a meeting held that day at the residence of Sir David and Lady Ezra, 3 Kyd Street, Calcutta under the chairmanship of S.R. Jacob.[110] The chairman for the year (1930-31) was Miss Ramah Luddy.[111] The year 1929-30 was marked with great success considering the infancy of the club.[112] The first Hanukkah party for underprivileged Jewish children was organized by the club on December 21, 1930.[113] The children were catered to and were served tea, cakes, fruity, Indian sweets, and light refreshments besides receiving a bag of sweets and a toy each.[114] During the Second World War, the club became a meeting place for Jewish (British and American) servicemen in and around Calcutta. A canteen sponsored by B.N. Elias and Co. was opened during the war, and it was Ramah Luddy who made all the necessary arrangements. In 1945, she organized the Young Peoples' Congregation with the help of Rabbi David J. Seligson, a Jewish chaplain with the American forces in Calcutta. As principal of the Jewish Girls' School, Ramah Luddy enforced greater discipline.[115] Uniforms were introduced and formal physical education and gym requirements were made mandatory.[116] Miss Luddy was admired for her great ability to run the school on more professional lines, and she remains a legend in the community.[117] A few years after her retirement as headmistress, she embarked upon a new vocation: She started a Hebrew class for young Jewish children. The classes came to an end when there were no Jewish children in Calcutta to teach.

Hannah Sen, the daughter of P.M. Guha, an eminent Bengali lawyer, and married to Seemah Gubbay of the Gubbay family of Calcutta, was a brilliant and talented woman. She was educated at the Pratt Memorial School and later at the Diocesan College where she took the degrees of BA (Hons) and BL (First Class) of Calcutta University.[118] After graduation in law, Hannah Sen took up the profession as to be an educator. She was permitted to sit for the BA examination after qualifying Senior Cambridge without having to go through the FA examination.[119] After a stint at the Jewish Girls' School in Calcutta, she went to Bombay and took up the post of principal (the first Indian principal) of the New High School for girls. She worked there until 1925. Later in 1925, she married Dr. Sen, an eminent radiologist. It was in Bombay that Mrs. Sen met many of the leading personalities of the time. Among the most notable of these was India's greatest woman poet, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu with whom she became a close friend.[120] Soon after their marriage, Dr. and Mrs. Sen went abroad for further studies. Hannah took her Teacher's Diploma at the University of London where she later became a Research Scholar in Psychology under Professor Spearman.[121] Persuaded by Sarojini Naidu, on the plea that she should further the development of Indian women, Mrs. Sen returned to India and assumed the post of directress of Lady Irwin College, New Delhi, whiles Dr. Sen gave up his successful career in London and set up practice in New Delhi.[122] Thanks to her tremendous zeal for work, the tiny college of 1932 that started only with eleven students soon blossomed into a major institution of great standing imparting training to hundreds of women every year.[123]

It was during these fruitful years that Mrs. Sen came into contact with the leading lights of Indian nationalism such as Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Vijaylaxmi Pandit, we well as Lord and Lady Mountbatten, Madame Chiang Kai-Shek, and many more luminaries. When she resigned from Lady Irwin, she served in the honorary capacity to the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation of the Government of India, and she shared with Mrs. Rameshwari Nehru, the task of advising the ministry in all matters pertaining to the relief and rehabilitation of displaced women and children.[124]

Closely associated with her domestic activities were her wider interests in activities abroad. She was one of the Observers of the All India Conference of Social Work held in New York in 1948.[125] She also represented the All India Women's Conference (AIWC) at the International conference of NGOs held in Geneva in May the same year.[126] She was a member of the Executive Board of the Indian National Commission of UNESCO and Honorary Secretary of the Indian National Committee of the United Nations' Appeal For Children.[127]

As an activist on women's issues, she represented India on the UN Commission on the Status of Women in 1950 and 1951.[128] Mrs. Sen was also present as the leader of the Indian delegation at a meeting of the International Union for Child Welfare held in London in July 1950.[129] She was member of the Indian Delegation to UNESCO held in Paris in 1951 and a member of the Indian Goodwill Mission to China the same year.[130]

It was women such as Mrs. Hannah Sen who cemented the friendship between India and the rest of the world. A sense of world citizenship, a deep intuitive understanding, a charming personality, a keen intellect, and a crystal-clear mind were but a few of the invaluable qualities associated with Hannah Sen.

Her elder sister Regina Guha (better known to Calcutta Jewry as one of the earliest principals of the Jewish Girls' School) had the distinction of being the first woman to take up law in Bengal after obtaining the first place in the first class of her MA degree in English at Calcutta University. For a long time, there was a medal bearing the name of Regina Guha awarded each year to the candidate securing first place in English in the MA examination.[131] After successfully completing her legal studies, Regina sought to follow her father's footsteps and practice criminal law. India, at that time was not prepared to admit practicing women lawyers to the Bar. Regina was however determined to fight against this conservative attitude and instituted a case against the Calcutta High Court thus writing a new chapter in legal history.[132] The chief justice at that time was Sir Asutosh Mukherjee,

while Lord Sinha as advocate general defended the action of the High Court.[133] Regina's case was presented by Erdley Norton, the intellectual genius of the legal world.[134] In the face of the law as it stood it was a foregone conclusion that she would lose the case. However, she succeeded in focusing the attention of the public both in India and abroad on the disability Indian women underwent because of the narrow-minded conservativeness of the time. It was not very much later that the law was revised and women were accorded the right to practice in the law courts of India. Unfortunately, Regina died too soon to avail herself of the privilege.

Flower Abraham was another noble Jewish woman who dedicated herself to the cause of India and the well-being of her people. She was an associate of Hannah Sen. She was also president of the Lady Irwin College Students' Union. At Lady Irwin, Flower had direct contact with nationalist politics.

During her first few weeks at the college, she saw Nehru, Gandhi, Patel, and other leading Congress personalities. They were inspirational, and she became committed to the nationalist struggle. In addition to coming into direct contact with nationalist politics at Lady Irwin, Flower had her first contact with Indians as close friends. To fit in other students at college, "Flower often wore *salwarkameez* (a north Indian outfit)...she learned a more formal Hindi, learned to sing Hindi national songs, ate Indian food with her fingers, listened to popular Hindi music, and tried to familiarize herself with Indian culture."[135] In the last year at college, India became a Republic. Flower received her graduating diploma from her hero, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the then-prime minister of India. The few years after independence were times of heady nationalism and great idealism for many in India who saw the future filled with promise. Flower was amongst those caught up in the euphoria of independence.

She and other students would walk past Nehru's home in Teen Murti Lane late at night to catch a glimpse of him sitting at his desk near the window, doing the work of the nation: "From the street we would see only a silhouette of him bent over his desk, but it gave us a great uplifting feeling—we felt our country was safe in his hands."[136]

Flower was deeply shaken by the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, as was the rest of the nation and the world. Bhajans (devotional songs) were sung round the clock. Flower sang with the college choir and mourned him through the mourning period.[137]

During the days of the partition and the postpartition riots that followed in Delhi, Flower played a heroic role with her friends in giving shelter to and providing the refugees with food. Flower herself did the cooking. Lady Irwin College served as the focal point for "Operation Chapatti."[138] For one long night the college became a base for making chapattis by the thousands.[139] Indian air force planes picked up the chapattis from the college and flew between the India-Pakistan border and Delhi.[140] The airlifted bundles were dropped to the refugees to stem starvation and fatigue.[141] The plight of the refugees came home to Flower when many of the students at Lady Irwin from the Punjab returned to college as refugees. Flower had visited some of their homes in the Punjab (now part of West Pakistan) a year earlier.[142] Partition and its horrors left a lasting scar in the mind of Flower and many of her generation. Flower's brief but formative contact with Indian nationalism made her feel, for the first time, that she was both an Indian and a Jew.[143] She felt that when she identified with India, she was accepted and not treated as an outsider.[144] Her experience suggests that when Jews wanted to identify themselves as Indians, there was no resistance to their doing so, and their participation was welcomed.[145]

On the whole, whatever may have been the socioeconomic differences in the community, the sense of comradeship feeling outweighed all petty considerations as each and every member strove toward its betterment, albeit, within his or her means. The sense of being Jewish dissolved all artificial barriers, because to every member, the community was "home." In this respect, welfare and philanthropy took the center stage, in which women played a seminal role.

To sum up: the Jewish women of Calcutta had made notable contributions in their distinctive fields, contributing not only to the enhancement of their personal freedom by making the best of the opportunities of a "brave new world," but also contributing significantly toward the uplifting of their less privileged sisters and that of humanity in general. The thrust area of this article has been the role of the women in the community's day-to-day affairs. Apart from their Jewish identity, which marked them from the non-Jewish majority, they were also an identity unto themselves, which was being built in a society as conservative as the Jewish community though the creation of social spaces in the form of schools, hospitals, clinics, clubs, in addition to philanthropic and welfare institutions. The woman's voice (*Kol Isha*) in her contribution toward establishing these social and civic infrastructures of community existence were slowly being heard and gradually being recognized. This is one of the primary reasons for the popularity of the Jewish Girls' School, which produced leaders and stalwarts like Regina Guha and Sally Lewis Meyer, the former being a renowned lawyer who had sued the Calcutta High Court, and, the latter being the founder member of the youth wing of the Calcutta chapter of the Zionist movement, namely, Habonim. These women broke new grounds by not only challenging convention, but also by showing their more conservative sisters that traditional institutions could be shaken and norms questioned as and when they stood in the path of human dignity and freedom. This is indeed a path-breaking achievement for such a tiny minority such as the Baghdadi Jews of Calcutta, and from a gender-history perspective, provides a source of knowledge of what the "other" in the dominant (predominantly Hindu and Muslim) historical narrative was trying to achieve without being subsumed by the latter. This autonomy of existence and the freedom to scale (academic and professional) heights provides an insight into the small but significant achievements of the women folk of the Calcutta Jewish community cutting across generational barriers.

Appendix: Farha Abraham

She was the daughter of Yusef Musree of Baghdad and the wife of Saleh Baqaal Abraham. She was married to Saleh at the age of fifteen. Farha's case was the classic instance of breaking the old stereotype of the domesticated Jewish woman. As her husband grew older, it was Farha who took upon herself the crucial responsibility of running the family business. Farha gradually started her own business to supplement the family income. Some Baghdadi women worked outside their homes in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. On several mornings, Farha set out for *Burrazbazar*, the large central wholesale market of Calcutta. She searched the busy bazaar for beautiful fabrics. It was not customary for middle- and upper-class Baghdadi women to go to the bazaars, though her going was not frowned upon by the community. This was because circumstances demanded it. Followed by two porters, Farha called on wealthier Jewish homes to offer silk, lace, voiles, linen, and velvets. They bought the fabrics and gave then to Jewish seamstresses to sew garments for bridal trousseaus. Farha thus proved herself to be a talented businesswoman. With her rudimentary reading and writing skills, she had to depend upon her youngest daughter, Ruby, trained by her father, in managing the accounts. Farha, a good cook, marketed her culinary skills. She made special kosher jams, jellies and preserves to sell from her home and supply a dealer for exports. She made cheese *samboosas*, almond rings, *baklavas,* and other delicacies. Farha was famous for her specialty dishes such as *pacha* (pronounced "pakha"), a delicacy made from beef intestines that only a few women knew how to prepare. Her apple *murubba*was were greatly prized. For Passover, Farha prepared kosher salt, pepper, spices, and *halek* (juice made with dates and crushed almonds to be eaten with matza or unleavened bread), which were sold to a Jewish trader in Calcutta. He in turn resold her products to communities in the Far East. She died in Calcutta in her mideighties in 1958 and was buried at the Narkeldanga cemetery. At that time she had about 250 direct

descendants, some of whom had left Calcutta to pursue their futures in many corners of the world.

Source: Jael Silliman, *Jewish Portraits, Indian Frames: Women's Narratives from a Diaspora of Hope* (Calcutta: Seagull), 2001.

Notes

[1] Nathan Katz, *Who are the Jews of India?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 142.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid., 143.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] T.V. Parasuram, *India's Jewish Heritage* (New Delhi: Sagar Publications, 1982), 116-17.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Paraphrased from Katz, *Who are the Jews of India?*, 147
[9] David Kazzaz, *Mother of the Pound Memoirs on the Life and History of the Iraqi Jews* (New York: Sepher Hermon Press Inc., 2001), 32.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Jael Silliman, *Jewish Portraits, Indian Frames: Women's Narrative from a Diaspora of Hope* (Calcutta: Seagull, 2001), 44; See Appendix for a short biography of Farha Abraham, a Baghdadi Jewish woman entrepreneur.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Benjamin Israel, *The Bene Israel of India* (Bombay: N.p., 1984), 43.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Silliman, *Jewish Portraits, Indian Frames*, 62.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid., 108.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Speech by Miss Marie Mordecai on the 75th Anniversary of the Foundation of the Jewish Girls' School, *Shema*, Calcutta, Vol. 10, No. 11 (1956): 5.
[23] Ibid.
[24] On "The Jewish Girls' School Examination Success," *Calcutta News, The Jewish Tribune* (Bombay), June 1936, 15 (available at the Ben Zvi Institute, Jerusalem, Israel).
[25] Silliman, *Jewish Portraits, Indian Frames*, 108.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Interview with the late Ms. Ramah Musleah, Calcutta, dated 15.2.2002.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Silliman, *Jewish Portraits, Indian Frames*, 108.
[30] Ibid., 109.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Interview with Mr. Solomon Twena, Benei Barak (Israel), dated 15.4.2006.
[33] Bachi J. Karkaria, "Hundred Years of the Jewish Girls," *The Statesman* (Kolkata), 20.1.1981.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.
[39]Thomas Timberg, *Jews in India* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1986), 34.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Quoted from Thacker's *Directory* (1864-1900).
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Available at the National Library, Kolkata.
[49] Ezekiel Musleah, *On the Banks of the Ganga: The Sojourn of the Jews in Calcutta* (North Quincy, MA: Christopher Publishing House, 1975), 311.
[50] Silliman, *Jewish Portraits, Indian Frames,* 28.
[51] Ibid.
[52] "The Jewish Question in Calcutta," *The Statesman* (Calcutta), July 15, 1891, in The Statesman 100 Years Ago, July 15, 1991.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Isaac S. Abraham, *A Short Account of the Jews of Calcutta* (Calcutta: SenDaw & Co., 1969), 41.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid., 42.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid., 43.
[62] Ibid., 43.
[63] Ibid., 45.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid., 45-46.
[70] Musleah, *On the Banks of the Ganga*, 321.
[71] Ibid.
[72] *The Jewish Advocate* (Bombay), Vol. 1, No. 10 (July 7, 1933): 10; available in microfilm at the Jewish National and University Library, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
[73] Musleah, *On the Banks of the Ganga*, 321.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid., 322-23.
[76] Ibid., 323.
[77] Ibid., 324.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid., 325.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.
[83] *The Jewish Advocate* (Bombay), Vol. 1, No. 10 (July 7, 1933): 10.
[84] *Shema*, Vol. 5, No. 11 (April 1951): 3.

[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.
[88] *The Jewish Advocate* (Bombay), Vol. 1, No. 10 (July 7, 1922): 10.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid., 12.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid.
[98] *The Jewish Tribune* (Bombay), January 1939, 18.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Musleah, *On the Banks of the Ganga*, 323.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid.
[104] *Shema*, Vol. 6, No. 9 (February 1952): 15.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Abraham, *A Short Account of the Jews of Calcutta*, 73.
[110] *The Jewish Advocate*, Vol. 1, No. 7 (September 1930): 34.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid.
[113] *The Jewish Advocate*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (January 1931): 91.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Silliman, *Jewish Portraits, Indian Frames*, 63.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid.
[118] "Mrs. Hannah Sen," *Shema*, Vol. 10, No. 6 (February 1956): 9.
[119] Ibid., 10.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid., 11.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid., 9.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Silliman, *Jewish Portraits, Indian Frames*, 120, 123.

[136] Ibid., 127.
[137] Ibid., 128.
[138] Ibid., 126.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid.,128.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid.

We shall examine this little-known episode of King Raghu and Candravatī, analyzing King Raghu's relations with his daughter as a case of the "Love" versus "Duty" dilemma in parent-child relations.

A. King Raghu and Candravatī

The Raghu-Candravatī episode appears only in Nāsiketopākhyāna,[6] a late development of the Vedic story of Naciketas, which is partly based on its preceding version in Varāha Purāṇa. The Nāsiketa story is more elaborated than the Purāṇic version, with richer fantastic and dramatic elements. All previous versions of the Naciketa story start with the scene of the father cursing his son to death, whereas the Nāsiketa story tells Nāsiketa's history prior to that scene. Nāsiketa's father is more elaborately portrayed as a sage, and Candravatī--the added mother figure—renders the ancient Vedic dyadic myth into triadic, more compatible with traditional myths.[7] King Raghu's relations with his daughter Candravatī are the prelude for the following complex father-son relations.[8]

The story begins with a meeting between the sage Uddālaka and his father God Brahma (Prajāpati). Brahma agitates the imagination of his ascetic son saying:[9]

> You will have a son, who will increase your lineage.
> First will a son arrive, and then there will be a wife...

Excited by these enigmatic words, Uddālaka performs penance. Desiring a wife, he looses control and his semen bursts out. He carefully puts the semen in the midst of a lotus flower, wraps the flower with Kuśa grass, and sends it in the river floating downstream.

By smelling that same flower, Uddālaka's semen entered Candravatī's body through the nose, and she became pregnant, while still a virgin.[10] When informed about his unmarried daughter's pregnancy, King Raghu became very angry,[11] and he spontaneously expelled her from the palace, to die in the forest. She was rescued, though, by the wandering sage[12] Yājñavalkya, and at his hermitage she gave birth to a male child, who, since born through his mother's nose, was called Nāsiketa.

As far as we know, the Raghu-Candravatī episode is unique in Sanskrit literature—there is no other tale of a daughter killing or of an expulsion of a daughter to die in the wilderness. The story of Kuntī, the young unmarried princess, who secretly gave birth to Karṇa and then sent him drifting away, has a certain similarity, but Kuntī is not punished by her father.

1. King Raghu

Who is King Raghu, Candravatī's father? Is he the well-known Raghu, king of Magadha, the great grandfather of Rāma?[13]

According to Prajapati's promise, Candravatī's father belongs to the Ikṣvāku dynasty,[14] but his identification as the famous King Raghu is doubtful. Rāma's ancestor had at least one son, Aja, who inherited him and the kingdom, while Candravatī's father, as implied from various hints in the text, seems to have no sons, only a single daughter:

- Candravatī describes her status at the palace saying: "In his [Raghu's] family I was born and was like a son to him."[15] Since he treats her "like a son," we may conjecture (among other options) that he had no son.
- King Raghu offers Uddālaka a very big part of his wealth:[16]
  A hundred thousands cows and hundreds of millions of gold (coins),
  horses etc., as many as you wish, just say and I shall give (all to) you.

King Raghu's Dilemma: A Unique Case of Father-Daughter Relations

By Amos Nevo

Princess Candravati used to go everyday bathing in the river, accompanied by her girl-attendants. One day she saw a wonderful fragrant lotus flower drifting in the stream and ordered her attendants to bring it to her. Ignoring its contents and its magic and mystic story, she smelled it, and got pregnant. Her loving father, King Raghu, punished her for her "sin," and sent her away from the palace to be left alone and die in an unpopulated forest.

How could a father send his beloved daughter to her almost certain death?

The case of a father sending his own daughter to die, though quite rare in Hindu literature, is well known in universal lore. Among the best known are the stories of Agamemnon, the Greek king, and biblical Jeptah.

Agamemnon, king of Argos and leader of the Achaean troops in the war against Troy, obeys the oracle and sacrifices his daughter Iphigenia to Artemis, in order to get the stuck Greek fleet moving. Euripides, in his famous play *Iphigenia at Aulis,* describes in detail Agamemnon's changing states of mind before making his last decision. Agamemnon says to his brother Menelaus: "...I pass nights and days in anguished tears, guilty of unnamed wickedness towards the child of my own blood."[1] Eventually, after making up his mind he explains to his wife and daughter his reasons for sacrificing Iphigenia:[2]

> I love my children and I am not a brute. I shrink in dread from carrying out this act, my wife. Yet, if I do not, dread remains. I must do this.... If I refuse, to obey the oracle, they'll come to Argos and kill me, you, the whole family. I am a slave to Hellas; for her, whether I will or not, I am bound to kill you. Against this I have no power.

Agamemnon acts as if he has no choice—"I must do this...," "Against this I have no power." He obeys the oracle according to religious law and acts out of fear for his family and out of a feeling of duty toward his country, Hellas. Iphigenia, his victim, accepts his reasons, especially the national motive: sacrifice for Greece.

After many hesitations and regrets, Agamemnon's fear and sense of duty overcome his scruples and love for his daughter, and grieving, he makes the sacrifice. While performing the sacrificial rites, Agamemnon is described as stricken with grief: "... he sobbed aloud; the tears streamed down his face; he turned his head away and held his robe before his eyes."[3]

In some details Jeptah's case resembles Agamemnon's. Jeptah vows to sacrifice the first living creature coming out from his house to greet him after his victory over the Ammonites, figuring it would be his loyal dog. But, in fact, his loving daughter, his only child, is the first to come to him, and he has to sacrifice her. The Bible is much more minimal than Euripides in describing the father's feelings—one verse instead of a whole play. When Jeptah realizes that his daughter is the first to greet him "...he rent his clothes and said 'Alas my daughter, you have broken my heart, such trouble you have brought upon me. I have made a vow to the Lord and I cannot go back.'"[4] Jeptah, like Agamemnon, feels that he has no choice—"... I cannot go back.'" Like Iphigenia, Jeptah's daughter accepts her fate, and thus makes the ordeal a little easier for her father.

In both case, religious reasons are involved, and we may conclude that "the killing serves a readily intelligible purpose."[5] Whereas in Raghu's case the gods are excluded, the scene concerns human feelings only, and the intelligibility of the daughter's intended killing is still to be decided.

He also offers him his kingdom:[17] "O sage, I (would) give you (my) kingdom, but there is no daughter in my palace."

After the marriage of Candravatī and Uddālaka, King Raghu bestows royal presents to the new couple,[18] which Uddālaka refuses once again. Had the king a son, he could not have offered his kingdom, depriving his son of his birthright.

- Nowhere in the Nāsiketa story versions, is Prince Aja, King Raghu's heir, mentioned. In the Rājasthāni version, the king—Rumgha—sends the "princes" to fetch Candravatī and bring her home,[19] but it is not explicitly mentioned that they are his own sons.

Since it is not clear whether Candravatī's father is the famous King Raghu, or not, he is examined here solely by his merits as portrayed in this specific episode. King Raghu is described in all the Nāsiketa story versions as a righteous,[20] devout,[21] and pious king.[22] A most elaborated description of King Raghu appears in the Hindi version:[23]

> ...Raghu of the Suryavansa, who was the protector of cows and the Brahmans. He was of a mild disposition, and never in life looked at another person's wife with bad eye. He was ever ready to help the cause of religion, and was charitable and prosperous.
> ... a worshipper of Brahmans, ... generous, pious and charitable. His rule was just, and never even in a dream, did he commit the slightest sin. He was a kind protector of his subjects, and he never gave them the slightest pain.

King Raghu is a sample of righteousness and adherence to Dharma. Nowhere is he referred to as susceptible to anger, which might have explained his behavior toward Candravatī, when thinking that she had disgraced his family.

2. Candravatī

There are not many literary female figures called Candravatī in the Hindu scriptures. One well-known figure is the daughter of the Brahman Candrasvāmin, from Somadeva's Katha Sarit Sāgara. Another quite known story is about Princess Candravatī who discovered the Śivaliṅgam, around which the Śrīsailam Temple has been built. There are other more modern literary princesses called Candravatī, but Candravatī, as King Raghu's daughter, appears only in the Nāsiketa story.

> Candravatī's first and obvious virtue is beauty:[24]
> There, in the beautiful spacious king's palace (lived) the king's daughter,
> a young sprout, the image of beauty. Her name was the beautiful Candravatī -
> such a beautiful princess, red as polished gold.
> No goddess, no Gandharvī, no Asurī, not any Apsarā,
> indeed no any other beautiful girl in the three worlds could be compared to her.

She has elongated eyes (N/2.13b) and beautiful limbs (N/2.15c), and when the sage finds her in the forest, he is so amazed by her beauty that he considers her one of the goddesses (N/3.3b-4).

She is also described as "truthful," "restrained" (N/2.7a), keeping her vows (N/2.17b), and "pious" (N/4.68a), "...of good conduct, very truthful, adhering to Truth and moral law."[25]

Apart from her descriptions, Candravatī is examined/analyzed by her conduct in several situations:

a. As a happy girl at the palace

b. When realizing her pregnancy
c. As a young distressed mother
d. As Nāsiketa's mother after their reunion

The text is quite minimal about her while in the palace, prior to smelling the lotus flower. She is described as always playing with her girl-attendants in the palace (N/2.10a), and as always going to bathe in the river. She is very happy when going to the river,[26] which is in sharp contrast to her mood after discovering her pregnancy.
Recognizing the signs of pregnancy she is frightened and grief-stricken:[27]

> Seeing the signs [of pregnancy], that very girl of noble family was alarmed.
> She lost her vivaciousness, falling into the ocean of sorrow.
> Crying incessantly, she blames herself for disgracing her family and keeps wondering how it has happened to her. She says to her girlfriends:[28]
>
> How shall I tell my so extraordinary sorrow, O friend(s).
> The cessation of my monthly period brings shame upon my family.
> My deed, O dear, has defiled the Raghu family.

She is fully aware of the disgrace and repeats saying it: "I am full of grief because of the defilement I have brought upon the Raghu family."[29] In taking the blame for "defiling" the family, she justifies, in a way, her father's following reaction. Candravatī knows that she is innocent, so there should be some other explanation for her situation, and she finds it in the Karma doctrine. In her dialogue with her mother, she insists that she is innocent of sin, and that her suffering is the result of the fruits of actions done in a former birth.[30] The queen, her mother, on the other hand, is convinced of Candravatī's sin in present life, and asks her to think well and examine her actions, trying to reveal why she is so punished by God.[31]

Candravatī's response to her pregnancy is most elaborate in the Hindi version of the story. Talking to her fainted mother, she actually utters aloud her contemplations about her situation:[32]

> Mother do you come to your senses and hear what I have to say! That which is ordained must come to pass, and that which has been written on my forehead has happened...You will thus observe mother, I have not sinned. To avoid shame I shall give up my life...My father's and mother's lineage is disgraced and my disgrace will spread far and wide in the three "loks...What sin had I committed last birth that I should reap its fruit this birth?...I am at a loss to know whether I have committed such a heinous sin as the murder of a cow or a Brahman...If I commit suicide and murder that which is in my womb, that is a horrible sin and I shall have to suffer extremely for that.

In the palace, Candravatī is pure and flawless, aware of sin and avoiding it. Later on, one may find flaws in her conduct as a young mother, but these matters are excluded from the present analysis.

3. Father-Daughter Relations

Candravatī is King Raghu's only daughter, but we can't be certain that she is his only child. All we know is that he loves her "as a son." He gives her a very large and unusual retinue—ten thousand girl-attendants[33]--which may indicate his love for her. The presents that he bestows on her after her marriage also show how much he loves her. Candravatī also loves her parents and is an obedient daughter, very anxious about her family reputation.

Considering these facts, it is harder to understand her parents' reaction to her pregnancy—both parents tend to blame their innocent beloved daughter, rather than listen to her. Without allowing his daughter any explanations, King Raghu presumes her guilt and gets very angry.[34] His words reveal his lack of trust in her and his presumption of her guilt:[35]

> O most wicked; you have committed a great immoral [sin]!
> Or:[36]
> O, you vilest of the vile, what have you done? How came you to be with a child? You have heaped disgrace upon my head.

It seems that both parents are more concerned about the reputation and good name of their family and lineage than in the distress of their own daughter. The same impression is expressed in King Raghu's final verdict—even if he does have scruples first.

B. King Raghu's Dilemma

In most versions King Raghu reacts spontaneously to his daughter's pregnancy. Even in cases when a consideration is mentioned, there is no elaboration.[37] When he does think about the case, he usually does not have any hesitations about what should be his daughter's punishment for her alleged sin. He considers death as the most appropriate verdict, but, hoping to avoid filicide,[38] he does not order her execution, but rather expels her to die in a desolate forest, instead.

Despite the scarcity of evidence in the texts about King Raghu's dilemma, it is reasonable to assume that a loving father should have scruples before sending his beloved daughter to her certain death. The most explicit dilemma is expressed in one developmental branch of the story:[39]

> Hearing it, the king was seized with rage.
> With heart full of misery he thought: "What do I do (now)?
> Grief-stricken, his eyes red (he kept thinking): "My own daughter's misery,
> or the family's good name—what is greater to be afraid of?"

While angry, with no further considerations, he commands his servants to leave Candravatī in the forest:[40] "Take her quickly to that unpopulated big forest."

There is not much chance for a delicate young princess to survive in the jungle inhabited by lions and tigers,[41] so the king actually condemns her to death without having blood on his hands.[42] Thus, when Uddālaka comes to ask for her in marriage, King Raghu naturally tells him that his only daughter is dead:[43] "I once had just one daughter and she is dead, O excellent Brahmin."

Candravatī's expulsion and her intended death verdict bring to mind the story of King Acrisius and his daughter Danaë. Acrisius sends away his only daughter and her immaculately born son Perseus,[44] to die at sea. He, like King Raghu and King Laius—who sent his baby son Oedipus to his death in order to avoid his prophesized killing by his son—also resorts to expulsion, trying to avoid being blamed for murdering his daughter and her baby. The Greek story lacks all signs of doubts or remorse. King Acrisius, like King Laius, is defending his own life, trying to avoid his inevitable prophesized death by his offspring.

In King Raghu's case there is no prophecy of imminent danger. He expels his daughter unaware of the unique circumstances of her immaculate conception and acts upon strict Dharma norms, trying to save the dignity of his family and lineage. As a loving father he could have listened more carefully to his daughter and could believe her words conveyed to him by her mother:[45]

No god, no demon, nor a male celestial being, and no man,
not a Kinnara—no male has entered the harem.
Staying there, by fate, your daughter became pregnant.

As king and father he could have investigated the girl-attendants and could have believed them when telling the same story.[46] But in the majority of the texts he acts differently. Adhering to the social norms, he disregards his love for his daughter. It seems that anger and the sense of "Duty" have the upper hand on "Love."

Examining the text carefully, it seems that King Raghu actually has no option to treat Candravatī according to his heart's feelings. Not only is he a king that must set an example of adhering to Dharma for his citizens, his behavior also complies with the narrative and the general literary goals of the Nāsiketopākhyāna text, namely, adherence to Dharma.

King Raghu's relations with Candravatī form a link in a chain of parent-child relations in the text, all characterized by tension and bad feelings, culminating in expulsion or a death punishment:

- In all the Naciketa story patterns and versions there is an implicit tension between father and son, that turns into an explicit confrontation in the Nāsiketopākhyāna. Uddālaka becomes enraged with his son's arguments and, unable to defeat him in the debate, drastically resorts to the death curse and sends Nāsiketa to the realm of the dead.[47] Uddālaka acting out of anger is subject to ridicule, when the author describes him as "the master of anger, subjugator of the senses."[48]
- Candravatī, after taking care of Nāsiketa as a young mother in the hermitage of Yājñavalkya for about a year, becomes enraged by the baby's cries. She expresses her anger toward the unwanted child:[49]

O son, why are you crying, you sin-child of bad character?
You, son, are the cause of my present situation, as it is.

She puts him in a grass box and sends him away in the river, ordering him to go to his father. What chance does a helpless one-year-old baby to survive drifting in the river? Candravatī actually condemns him to death. But miraculously, the box turns upstream and does go to Uddālaka's hermitage.

King Raghu's anger dictates his behavior, just as it does in the other two parent-child relations cases. The final intended result of all three cases is a death verdict, but all these cases eventually end up in total contrast to the initial intention. The parents and children reconcile and live happily ever after.

C. Summary

All three cases of parent-child relations of the Nāsiketopākhyāna seem to fall into the *aqeda* model, suggested by Shulman.[50] Like the heroes of the *aqeda* model, both Candravatī and Nāsiketa, though sentenced to die, keep on living—Candravatī is saved, just as the baby Nāsiketa is, and Nāsiketa as a boy, returns alive to Earth after the death curse and his ordeal in Yama's realm.

The case of King Raghu and Candravatī, though in a way a case of filicide, does not fully fit into the "*aqeda* model," but is rather a case of a category that may be called "The Angry Father."[51] The angry father is quite a common phenomenon in folk tales in Hinduism as in other cultures. King Raghu acts out of anger, intending his daughter's death, but differs from the "*aqeda* model" in several points:

- King Raghu does not personally kill his daughter, but sends her with his servants to her almost certain death.

- Her intended killing does not serve a definite purpose—the king's motives are similar to the Cola king Manu, as summarized by Shulman.[52]
- There is no element of divine trial, and Candravatī is not sacrificed in an act of devotion, or for the purpose of acquiring transcendental knowledge. She is sent to die by her enraged father out of his need to preserve the family dignity, and for what seems the breaching of Dharma and the conventions of royal behavior.

Both King Raghu and Uddālaka, the angry fathers of the Nāsiketopākhyāna, are characterized by being the protagonists of Dharma. Dharma is the main goal of the Nāsiketopākhyāna narrative. King Raghu, when having scruples, solves his dilemma preferring Dharma to the welfare of his beloved daughter. The majority of the text is dedicated to descriptions of man's fate after death, according to Dharma norms—thirteen chapters out of a total of eighteen. Five chapters are dedicated to Nāsiketa's history prior to the death curse, and even in these chapters, the relations between Nāsiketa and his father, symbolize the tension between Dharma and Mokṣa.[53]

No wonder that King Raghu's decision complies with Dharma and that the paragraph dedicated to his scruples and doubts is so short and so rare in the Nāsiketa story corpus. The Nāsiketa narrative dictates quite clearly that Dharma should prevail over all other considerations.

Notes

[1] Euripides, p. 381.
[2] Ibid., p. 412.
[3] Ibid., p. 424.
[4] Judges 11, 35.
[5] Shulman, p. 6.
[6] Nevo (2009).
[7] Lévi-Strauss (Chicago, 1983), Vol. II, p. 72.
[8] Nevo (2005).
[9] *bhaviśyati ca putras te yo 'sau vaṁśavivardhanaḥ*
prathamaṁ putrasaṁprāptiḥ paścād bhāryā bhaviṣyati - Nāsiketopākhyāna, 1.46. Nevo (Xlibris, in print; hereafter cited as – N/...).
[10] An immaculate conception in the Middle East ended up in a new religion!
[11] *krodhasamanvitaḥ* - N/2.42a, *kopakulitamānasaḥ* - BF/2.51a.
[12] Compare to the rescue of baby Oedipus by a passing shepherd (Graves 1960, Vol. II, p. 9).
[13]After whom Rāma is sometimes called "Rāghava." Pargiter (1979), p. 127. See also Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṁśa*, as well as the discussion about Raghu's identity in Pargiter (1979), pp. 92, 126ff., and Smith (1973), p. 81.
[14] "... she will be endowed with all the auspicious marks, daughter of (a king) born in the Īkṣvāku lineage."
sarvalakṣaṇasaṁpūrṇā ikṣvākukulajāṁ satīṁ - BF/1.37a.
[15] *tasya vaṁśe samutpannā yathā putras tathā hy ahaṁ* - N/4.24b.
[16] *gavāṁ śatasahasrāṇi svarṇakoṭiśatāni ca*
turaṅgādir yad iṣṭaṁ te tad vadasva dadāmy ahaṁ. Ibid., 4.46c-d.
[17] *rājyaṁ dadāmi te vipra na kanyā mama sadmani* .Ibid., 4.48b.
[18] "The king (gave) many elephants, horses, chariots, cows and clothes." Ibid., 4.69b.
[19] Krause (1924), p. 416.
[20] *dharmaparāyaṇaḥ* - N/424a, *atyantadhārmikaḥ* - N/211a.
[21] N/4.24.

[22] For example, the way he receives his guest, Sage Uddālaka - N/4.43-6a.
[23] Nasiket Ākhyan, p.10ff.
[24] *tatra rājagṛhe ramye viśāle rājakanyakā*
pravālādhararamyā sā nāmnā candravatī śubhā
taptakāñcānaraktābhā surūpātimanoharā
na devī na ca gandharvī nāsurī nāpsarā kvacit - N/2.6.
[25] *suśīlā paramā satyā satyadharmaparāyaṇā* - N/4.49a.
[26] *gaṅgātīraṁ samāsadya krīḍayantyāḥ parasparaṁ* - BF/2.23a.
[27] *dṛṣṭvā cihnāni sā kanyā bhraṣṭatejā kulekṣanā*
udvignamanasātīva patitā śokasāgare - N/2.24.
[28] *idam atyadbhutaṁ duḥkhaṁ pravakṣyāmi kathaṁ sakhi*
vinā rajas samudbhūtaṁ kulākīrtiṣu dāyakaṁ
māmākīrtikaraṁ bhadre raghuvaṁśasya dūṣaṇaṁ - N/2.26b-27.
[29] *tenāhaṁ duḥkhasantaptā raghuvaṁśasya dūṣaṇāt* - N/2.28b.
[30] *matar na jāne kasyedaṁ karmaṇaḥ samupasthitaṁ*
phalaṁ me pāpahīnāyāḥ praṇatyāgena śāmyate - BF/2.35.
[31] *putri kiṁ kriyate devadoṣo yaṁ samupasthitaḥ*
matvā taṁ ko vipāko yaṁ devena prakaṭikṛtaḥ - BF/2.42.
[32] Nāsiket Ākhyan (1892), p. 13ff.
[33] In one source - 100000 (!) - 2.50b in MS No. 11639 in the Rājasthān MSS collection of the Oriental Research Institute at Jodhpur, and Ra/2.10b.
[34] See note 10.
[35] *kurvan he heti pāpiṣṭhe mahānarthaḥ kṛtaḥ tvayā* - N/2.42b.
[36] Nāsiket Ākhyan (1892), p. 14
[37] "Thus consulting his heart, the king ordered his servants" -
evaṁ hṛdi samālocya bhṛtyān ājñāpayan nṛpaḥ - Ra/2.55b.
[38] "By killing her, evil would arise!" - Krause (1924), p. 413.
[39] *iti śrutva sa bupalaḥ kopākulitamānasaḥ*
duḥkhena dīnahṛdayaḥ kiṁ karomīty acintayat.
raktanetro 'tiśokāntaḥ kiṁ kanyā duḥkhitā nijā
kiṁ vā kulaṁ suvimalaṁ kva śaṅkitam idaṁ mahat - BF/2.51-2.
A similar text is found in MS No. 377, in the Bhandarkar Institute collection.
[40] *ajane tūrṇam ādāya yāta enāṁ mahāvane* - N/2.43b.
Similarly in most other texts, including Belloni-Filippi:
āhūya kanyakātyāgam ādideśājane vane - BF/2.53b.
[41] "leaving her there in the big forest, full of tigers and lions " -
tyaktvā tatra mahāraṇye siṁhavyāghraniṣevite - N/2.45.b
[42] Compare, for example, the decision of King Laius to get cleanly get rid of his baby son Oedipus, his future murderer, by exposing him on mount Cithaeron (Graves, Vol. II, p. 9).
[43] *ekāsīc ca purā kanyā sā mṛtā dvijasattama* - N/4.48c.
[44] The son of Zeus, who came to the well guarded tower where Danaë was held, in the form of "a shower of gold" (Graves, Vol. I, p. 238).
[45] *na devā na ca gandharvā nāsurā na ca mānavāḥ*
na kinnareṣu lokeṣu vrajanty antaḥpuraṁ janāḥ
tatra sthitāyā daivena duhitur garbhasaṁbhramaḥ - N2/34b-35.
[46] See for example the investigation of Urvamsi in Krause (1924), p. 413.
[47] See an elaborate discussion in Nevo (2005).
[48] *vimuktaḥ sarvapāpebhyo jitakrodho jitendriyaḥ* - N/1.43b.
[49] *vatsa rodiṣi kasmāt tvaṁ pāpakarma durākṛte*
tvadīyakāraṇāt putra avasthā mama cedṛśī - N/3.30.

[50] Shulman (1993).
[51] See for example '...The Case of the Good Boy and the Angry Father' in Grinshpon (2003), p. 80.
[52]Shulman (1993), pp. 6-10.
[53] Nevo (2005).

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Jews, Judaism and Israel in India's English-Language Fiction: A Glimpse at What India's Elites Read or Believe

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The sheer size and diversity of India makes it difficult to accurately gauge Indian perceptions of Judaism and Israel, perhaps more so than for any other single country. Even Chinese perceptions are perhaps easier to assess. In China the daily news and publications that influence public perceptions on foreign issues are controlled and not too difficult to follow, and the country has more academic centers studying Judaism and Israel than India. Some of these academic centers are conducting occasional, rudimentary opinion assessments to review Chinese public opinion about Jews or Israel.[2] The Indian people speak not one, but dozens of languages and a lot of Indians are still illiterate. Thus, nationwide opinion polls are likely to encounter enormous problems. However, the Jewish people and Israel need to understand the image they currently have in India's collective conscience if they want to strengthen their long-term bonds with this emerging power. The chances are good, amongst others because India like China carries less negative theological and historic baggage in relation to Jews than Europe and the Muslim world.

The few available statistical data on Indian attitudes are difficult to compare because they measure different issues. Some of them indicate higher support and sympathy for Israel in India's urban middle classes than could be found today (e.g., in Europe). There is also much anecdotal evidence by Indian Jews as well as Jewish and Israeli visitors who often report friendly comments by Indians, but such chance encounters are no proof either. Can 1,200 million Indians really express an opinion on such a complex foreign policy issue and can they be polled like an American or European public? Different ways must be explored to find answers to this question.

Two scholars have shown such ways. Popular opinions do not form overnight. They are often the result of past history, of older patterns of thought, belief and prejudice. This is why the Anglo-Russian historian Yulia Egorova has chosen to track past and recent Indian perceptions of Jews and Judaism. Her *Jews and India: Perceptions and image* is a systematic analysis of what India's political, religious and intellectual leaders of the last 150 years had to say about Jews, Judaism, Zionism and anti-Semitism.[3] The other author is P.R. Kumaraswamy, India's leading Israel scholar. His indispensable book *India's Israel Policy* describes the history of India's policies toward Jews, Zionism and Israel from 1920 to 2010, against the background of the dominant attitudes and ideologies of the Indian elites during this period.[4] Both books show the evolution of Indian public attitudes toward Jews and Israel.

Our approach focuses on India's contemporary English-language literature and what can be found there on Jews, Judaism and Israel. Great fiction can be a better introduction into the mood of a time and the thought of a social class than an opinion poll or a sociological doctor thesis. No opinion poll could have told us what we can learn from Balzac's work about French society in the early 19th century. Thus, a country's literary elites often reflect widely shared public perceptions and the conflicting political trends of their society. This was certainly true for French literature of the 19th and 20th centuries. In India too, major opinion trends in regard to Jews and Israel, which Egorova and Kumaraswamy have identified in their books, can also be found in the country's literature. Both authors lend credence to our assumption that the books of India's most popular and widely read English-language novelists published between 1980 and 2010, if and when they speak about Jews or Israel, reflect relevant Indian views of their time. The latter limitation must be emphasized. India is changing fast, not only economically and socially, but also culturally and intellectually. The opinions of 1980 were no longer dominant in 2000, and those of

2000 are changing by the day. Daily events and political changes in and outside India will shape new opinions that are likely to find their way into the literature of the future.

This article speaks of the large number of English-language novels and other books written by Indians, many of which were also translated into Indian languages. But the limitation to India's English-language fiction can be seen as problematic. Tarun Tejpal, an influential Indian novelist, editor and journalist, and also an iconoclast, told an Israeli audience in 2011 that he despised India's English writers. He argued that they were commercial, had nothing to say and did not affect a single Indian—notwithstanding the fact that he is himself one of India's respected and successful English-language novelists.[5] It is true that only a minority of Indians are sufficiently fluent in English to read fiction books in that language. They are said to number 6-7 percent of the total population, or approximately 100 million people, but this figure is likely to include many if not most Indian intellectuals, policymakers and opinion makers, and it has been said that Indians, particularly the young, are avid book readers.

Indian literary works have existed for three thousand years, but Indian fiction writing about social and political issues came only with the British in the 19th century. "The novel is of the West," said V.S. Naipaul, a great Indian novelist himself; "it is part of that Western concern with the condition of men, a response to the here and now"—in other words, it is the opposite of age-old Indian thought that is concerned with the eternal questions, not with the "here and now."[6] Hence, India's modern literature has a foot in two worlds: the West and traditional India. A number of themes and perceptions in Indian literature are grafts from the West, particularly from English-language literature. It was British rule, and the foreign Protestant missions that came with the British, which spread ideas about Jews and stimulated the first known Indian discussions about them.[7] The indigenous Jews who lived for two thousand years in complete peace in India had little or no effect on these discussions. Hence, the literary image of the Jew is partly also an import from the West. Moreover, for some Indian authors, the Jew who is at the same time at home and a stranger in a particular culture or language could be a metaphor of their own cosmopolitan life and wanderings.

Today, India is blessed with many outstanding and internationally respected English fiction writers. We have chosen twenty-five books by Aravind Adiga, Chetan Bhagat, Anita Desai, Amitav Gosh, V.S. Naipaul, Arundhati Roy, Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth and Vikas Swarup. Moreover we added two books by India's internationally best-known economist and political philosopher Amartya Sen. His work will help us to corroborate some of the conclusions that can be drawn from the lecture of the fiction writers. All these names are famous in and outside India. Most appear on lists of the "Ten Most Important Indian Writers" that can be found on the Internet.[8] Two, Naipaul and Sen, are Nobel laureates. Many of these authors have spent a considerable part of their lives outside India, mainly in America or Britain, some live permanently there, and one, Naipaul, has never lived in India. Yet they are quintessentially Indian, focused on Indian problems and want to speak to the Indian public. Four of these authors, Anita Desai, Amitav Gosh, Salman Rushdie and Vikram Seth have published five books (two by Rushdie) with major Jewish characters and themes. In addition, there are at least five more books by these and other authors containing important references to Jews or Judaism.

It is unlikely that we missed other well-known English books on Jewish themes by these or other prominent Indian novelists. General and Jewish book critics and literature chroniclers have reviewed all five books just mentioned. So far we have not been able to find any additional books with major Jewish themes. Have we missed English books written by leading Indian novelists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries? This is most unlikely as Jewish and other literary critics would have made such books known.

We have to mention in this context the Indian Jewish fiction writer Esther David born in Gujarat, who has published several, partly autobiographic English novels that describe the life of India's Jews at the time of independence and later. Her work will be briefly

reviewed below in the subsection *India in Contemporary Jewish Fiction.* It is about the thoughts and perceptions of Indian Jews, not of India. Her books are little known in India although one has been translated into Gujarati. Much better known in his homeland is the Indian Jewish poet Nissim Ezekiel (1924-2004). Some of his English poems have over the years become compulsory reading in Indian schools. Ezekiel did not follow most other Bene Israel Jews to Israel. He tied his fate to India, becoming the "Father of Modernity in Indian-English Poetry," as some Indian critics have called him. Yet his Jewish roots are never in doubt, and his perpetual quest for identity is quintessentially and universally Jewish. One of his two autobiographic "Jewish" poems, *Background, Casually*, speaks of his Jewish people's marginality in India and its modest origin:[9] *"My ancestors, among the castes, were aliens, crushing seeds for bread,"* and then the poem discloses his unhappy school days in his most often quoted "Jewish" stanzas:

I went to Roman Catholic school
A mugging Jew among the wolves
They told me I had killed the Christ
That year I won the scripture prize
A Muslim sportsman boxed my ears
I grew in terror of the strong
But undernourished Hindu lads
Their prepositions always wrong
Repelled me by passivity
One noisy day I used a knife.

The poem could have been written almost anywhere in the Diaspora and seems to modify the often presented image of an India where Jews were allegedly never abused or marginalized. Ezekiel's second "Jewish" poem, *Jewish Wedding in Bombay,* is a masterpiece of biting irony. *"Her mother shed a tear or two but wasn't really crying. It was the thing to do."*[10] Ezekiel mocks the increasingly empty religious traditions he grew up with and sets them in parallel with the growing emptiness of his own marriage. Ezekiel's few verses could have told Indians and Indian novelists something new about Jews, but curiously and despite his nationwide fame, he does not seem to have influenced the Indian literary or more general views of Jews that the following pages will examine.

Returning now to Indian fiction writing, there are three novels written not in English, but in Indian languages that include Jewish themes or characters. Apparently only one has been translated into English. The first of these novels appeared in 1939. The well-known Marathi writer Vishram Bedekar (Marathi is the language of the State of Maharashtra and its capital is Mumbai/Bombay) published a novel on the problem of Jewish immigration.[11] It is the author's only prose writing. For reasons that have as much to do with the novelty of his Marathi style as with the predicament of the Jews, his book took the Marathi literary scene by storm. Bedekar illustrates a particular issue of that time. Before World War II, Gandhi, Nehru and Indian intellectuals discussed the plight of Europe's persecuted Jews and the possibility of their immigration to India, but the British colonial authorities closed India's doors to fleeing Jews. Years later, after partition, the widely read, sometimes controversial Urdu writer Saadat Hassan Manto (1912-1955) published the short story *Mozelle*. Manto moved in 1948 from India to Pakistan. His novel captures the violence of partition through the story of a Jewish woman in Bombay who saved the life of her former Sikh lover and his fiancée. *Mozelle* exists also in English and French, and the English version was republished in Pakistan in 2010. Finally, in spring 2013, Sheela Rohekar, currently the only Indian Jewish writer of the Hindi language, published her long-awaited Hindi novel *Miss Samuel: Ek Yahudi Gatha.* Rohekar speaks of the life of India's Bene Israel community sixty years after most of them had left for Israel. Her novel is the first to do this in the most widely used native Indian language. This could turn out to be an important event in Indian and Jewish

literature, but only the future will tell whether the book will have some influence on Indian thought or whether it will remain an isolated, little noticed event.

We have not been able to identify other Indian-language novels about Jews written between 1939 and 2013. Thus, it would seem that Jewish themes in Indian books are very recent; they appeared, with few exceptions, since the late 1980s, which is long after Jews began appear in Russian and Western literature.

Finally, in order to contrast Indian literary views of Jews with Jewish literary views of India, we have examined three novels with Indian settings, written by two Jewish novelists, Esther David mentioned above, and the famous Israeli author A.B. Yehoshua.

Nine Indian Fiction Writers and One Philosopher

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India in Contemporary Jewish Fiction

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A Summary

I. Four 20th-Century Classics

The five books with important Jewish characters and themes are Anita Desai's *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988), Amitav Gosh's *In an Antique Land* (1992), Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995) and *Shalimar the Clown* (2005), and Vikram Seth's *Two Lives* (2005).[12] Several other books of Salman Rushdie, particularly *The Satanic Verses* (1988) contain important references to Jews that must be considered. These four authors have so far published more than fifty novels. Five books about Jews can be regarded as a relatively substantial proportion of the total, considering that Jews were few in India and that no Indian or foreign Jew ever played a critical or lasting role in India's long history. Two books are about the Holocaust, one real (Seth) and one fictional (Desai), both written with obvious sympathy for the victims. One (Gosh) is about a real Jewish Egyptian long-distance trader of the 12th century and is equally sympathetic. The two books by Salman Rushdie, both completely fictional, speak about two powerful Jewish leadership figures, one Indian from Cochin and one American. Both are dubious, immoral characters. Here Rushdie introduces a few Western anti-Semitic motives into his narratives. In contrast, most Jewish references in *The Satanic Verses* are well-informed and positive. Desai, Gosh and Rushdie barely mention Israel, in contrast to Seth who offers extensive and very hostile comments

about the Jewish state. All four authors, in all their books, also show great concern about Islam, India's religious tensions and communal violence.

These five books with major Jewish themes are not isolated from the other writings of their authors. They are connected to and influenced by these writings. Thus, the following review includes also other, often more important and better known books of these authors. This will help the reader to better understand the authors' worldviews and motivations, which have helped to trigger their interest in Jews.

1. Anita Desai

Anita Desai was born in 1937 to a Bengali father and a mother of German origin and grew up in India. Today she divides her time between India, the United States and England. The *Independent* of London calls her "India's finest writer in English." She is certainly India's best-known women writer. In contrast to other writers, the background of her stories is generally not the headline-making events of 20th-century India. She writes about small people who straddle different cultures and social classes, try to confront, appease or simply survive the ensuing tensions and in the end are all doomed to fail. Born to a "mixed" couple, Desai is since her birth at home in different cultures. She is the first famous Indian fiction writer who wrote a novel about a Jew and the fate of his people, *Baumgartner's Bombay.* Her Baumgartner is a failure. Saul Bellow, Phillip Roth and other American authors have invented plenty of Jewish characters who are failures and so has the movie star and filmmaker Woody Allen. Their background is American Jewish culture and their failure is part of a well-known American scene. Desai's "heroes" are failures too, and so is her only Jewish character, Hugo Baumgartner.

—Baumgartner's Bombay appeared in 1988.[13] Maybe Desai's invention of this fictional Jew was rooted in her mother's German origin (rumors have it that she was Jewish but we have found no proof of this). In any event, the theme of Jewish exile and emigration raised in *Baumgartner's Bombay* was already known to some Indian readers, because Gandhi and Nehru had repeatedly mentioned the tragedy of European Judaism and also because the Marathi writer Vishram Bedekar had published in 1939 a narrative about this theme, as mentioned above.

Anita Desai was motivated by the death of an Austrian Jew who had left a trove of letters related to the Holocaust. This happened in postwar Bombay.[14] In the West, the eternally "wandering Jew" is an old Christian stereotype. Desai's Hugo Baumgartner, a wandering Jew, is a small man crushed by history and the clashes of cultures: "In Germany he has been dark—his darkness had marked him the Jew, *der Jude*. In India he was fair—and that marked him as *firanghi* ["Frank," meaning a European]. In both lands, the unacceptable."[15] Baumgartner is the son of an educated, well-to-do Jewish middle-class family in Berlin. When the Nazis take power, Hugo flees to India, leaving behind his old parents who refuse to immigrate like so many other Jews and will later be killed. He tries to find his way in an unfamiliar Bombay, but is soon picked up by the British who send him to an internment camp with other Jews but also many German Nazis—a true occurrence in 1939 and later. The British saw no difference between German Jews and Nazis. When a desperate Baumgartner tries to explain the difference, a British official barks at him: "Stop that whining and show me your passport, will you?" "German, born in Germany"[16] he snaps—that is all he needed to know. In fact, approximately two thousand persecuted European Jews survived the war in India. Many others who had nowhere to go were eager to flee to India, but in 1939 the British closed the doors to Jews. They worried that their arrival would antagonize India's Muslims and claimed that thousands of additional Jews might cause social and economic hardship to India's native population, which numbered according to census figures 378 million people. Both Gandhi and Nehru were more generous and ready to save some more, but they too were afraid of a massive influx of Jews.

Baumgartner is released when the war is over. He tries to eke out a living in Calcutta where he witnesses the massacres that follow partition. He sees many Muslims running for their lives. Millions share now the tragic fate of the Jews. He moves finally back to Bombay where his life degenerates. He becomes a derelict beggar in a slum area, surrounded by a large number of stray cats. He is finally murdered by a young German drunk and drug addict to whom he had given shelter and who wanted to rob him of his few belongings. Baumgartner survived the Nazi monsters who wanted to kill him because he was a Jew, only to be killed later by a young German who had no idea that he was a Jew. Is there any sense to his death? Blind fate first saved him from the Nazi Germans and then destroyed him through the hand of another German, like in a Greek tragedy. There is ambivalence and an unsolved mystery in this narrative. Desai dwells on Baumgartner's identity problem. Is he a Jew, a German or simply an unwanted foreigner? Or is he a metaphor for Desai herself, the peregrinating daughter of an Indian father and German mother who lives in different countries?

Baumgartner's Bombay was apparently not a great success with the Indian public—some of Desai's biographies and book lists do not even mention the book— and the Jewish public did not pay great attention either. Anita Desai is intimately familiar with India but not with Judaism and German Jewish middle-class homes. Her Hugo Baumgartner is incongruous and does not come to life. The Baumgartner parents could in fact have been the typical, completely assimilated German Jews who wanted to be nothing but good German patriots. But this is not how they are presented. The grandparents are "strictly orthodox" and the Baumgartner parents are still moderately observant. On a Friday evening they light the Sabbath candles and have the traditional Sabbath meal. But this is the only reference to a Jewish tradition in the book and therefore looks somewhat out of place. There is not a word about British Palestine or America where tens of thousands of German Jews fled to escape persecution and death—certainly a key issue in the anxious debates among the Jews of the time. We read that the ashtray in the house is "in the form of a Prussian helmet" and "the barometer shaped like a pistol,"[17] not the most typical accessories even in an assimilated Jewish middle-class home after World War I. Few if any Jews remained Prussian militarists after the defeat of 1918. To give her story a touch of authenticity, Desai inserts a large number of German words, phrases and poems into the text. However these contain so many German-language mistakes that the effect on a German speaker is the opposite of what the author intended.

Baumgartner's end is unlikely and strange. When the war was over most Jewish survivors could not return to the lands of persecution. Emigration became again the main topic of conversation. But our hero, an educated and healthy Jewish survivor who is still in his best years does not plan a new life elsewhere. He becomes a pauper who is aimlessly hanging on in war-torn India. As a real-life Jewish figure Baumgartner is implausible, but then a fiction writer is not a historian. Desai's novel tells of a timeless human tragedy. Things happen to Baumgartner; he does not choose them nor can he change them. Because he falls between cultures, he becomes a symbol of victimization and failure; his is not a so much a typically Jewish than a universal human fate.

Anita Desai's intention is laudable. When she wrote her book, Holocaust denial was already spreading across the Muslim world and had begun to infect fringe elements in the West. She helped to make the tragedy of the Jewish people and the ripple effects it has had even in remote India known at least to some Indians who were not yet aware of it, or who were not interested, because India itself had lost many millions of human lives to famine and civil war between 1943 and 1948. Today, no respectable Indian writer would deny or belittle the Holocaust. Desai's book is a small mark stone in the history of world literature, the first important Indian fiction about a Jew.

Desai wrote many other, more successful books, which also describe human tragedies. Small people struggle and fail because they cannot cope with the stronger forces of history and society. Two novels will be mentioned:

—*In Custody,* published in 1984, narrates the calamities of a small-town, impoverished university scholar.[18] He hopes to escape the drabness of his life by interviewing India's "greatest living Urdu poet," the—fictional—Muslim sage Nur Sahib. But the project collapses because the psychological, financial and technical problems are insurmountable. Behind the scholar's failure lies centuries of struggles between Hinduism and Islam. Already at the beginning Nur complains bitterly that Hindu civilization has destroyed the beauty of Urdu poetry. His allegation seems to anticipate the ultimate failure of the endeavor. Desai's work, like that of many others, shows that Indian writers cannot ignore the significance and problem of Islam in India's past and present.

—*Fasting, Feasting* (1999) is another successful book and illustrates other fault lines of India's old civilization that is buffeted by the winds of change.[19] A minor, small-town official—again a small man—wants to better if not his own life, than at least that of his three children. But no happiness will come to this family. The first daughter fails in school and life. Her father scolds and humiliates her because he is unable to grasp that the poor child is retarded. The second daughter, smart and dynamic, marries a rich man in Bombay, takes to fashion and the good life and breaks with her family. In a rare visit back home she copiously insults her mother and sister: the women in Bombay "don't walk around like washerwomen unless they *are* washerwomen."[20] The son Arun is brilliant and like all brilliant young Indians must absolutely study in America. But the culture shock shatters him. He lodges, lonely and sad, with a family that cannot understand why he does not eat meat. Interwoven with these tales is the story of the most beautiful girl of the family, a cousin who marries another rich man but is ill-treated by her sadistic mother-in-law. She dies young, burnt alive, by suicide as the family claims or more likely murdered by her mother-in-law—one of India's most horrific cultural fault lines. Again, the failures of small people symbolize larger failures of their culture and society.

2. Amitav Gosh

Amitav Gosh, born in 1956 in Calcutta (Kolkata), Bengal is one of India's best-known writers. Most of the few books he has published so far have won international prizes. His *In an Antique Land* of 1992[21] is the second Indian book after Desai's that puts Jews and their history in the center of the narrative. The book shows impressive scholarship and a deep interest in the meaning of past and present history. The publishers called *In an Antique Land* "non-fiction," though it reads like a fiction. It weaves together two tales that seem at first sight to be completely different because they are separated by eight hundred years. One is the author's personal tale. During the 1980s he lived in an Egyptian village to write a doctoral thesis on social anthropology. The second is the tale of Abraham Ben Yiju, a powerful Jewish long-distance trader and scholar who lived in 12th-century Egypt, Aden and India. It is this Jewish link to India, the meeting of two old civilizations, which fascinated Amitav Gosh.

Gosh likes Egypt which is "far gentler, far less violent, very much more humane"[22] than his native India. But his book does not begin, as one would expect, with his move to Egypt. It begins with an enigmatic phrase: "The slave of MS H.6 first stepped unto the stage of modern history in 1942."[23] The "slave"—probably a misleading translation of the broader, ancient Hebrew term *eved*—is Bomma, a well-known name in certain parts of southern India. Bomma is Abraham Ben Yiju's Indian business agent, his helper and a greatly respected member of his household. He traveled long distances for his patron and controlled large sums of money. He may have converted to Judaism but this is not clear. He appeared in a medieval letter first reported in 1942 in a Hebrew academic journal. MS H.6 is the letter's catalogue number in the Hebrew University National Library of Jerusalem. The letter is one of many thousands found in the late 19th century in the *Geniza* of the Ben Ezra

synagogue in Cairo where large numbers of Jewish manuscripts of centuries past had been preserved. The historian Shlomo Goitein based his monumental work on the Mediterranean Jewish society of the Middle Ages on these letters[24] and prepared a book particularly on the Jewish India traders. This book was unfinished when he died in 1985.[25] Amitav Gosh discovered Goitein's work already in 1978 and became completely absorbed by the stories and travels of Abraham Ben Yiju, Bomma and other Jewish traders. He began to identify with Bomma, his long-vanished Indian compatriot. Bomma gave him a feeling of familiarity and belonging; it is as if he too belonged now to this thriving and open multicultural world of the past. He decided to follow the trails of Bomma and Ben Yiju wherever they would lead, to India, Egypt or Western university libraries. He was already fluent in modern Arabic and learned to master medieval Judeo-Arabic, which is written in Hebrew letters, so that he was able to read these letters in the original. This was an extraordinary achievement. Few modern fiction writers, if any, can claim similar scholarship in a difficult ancient language, acquired for the purpose of writing a novel. Gosh knows that studying the life of Ben Yiju and others has historic importance beyond their personal adventures. Fustat in Egypt and Aden began to play a pivotal role in the global economy of the time because they linked the Mediterranean with the Indian Ocean, and Jews played a role in this economy. Ben Yiju was Tunisian, son of a rabbi and a scholar and calligrapher, like many other Jewish traders. He moved to Mangalore on the Indian Malabar coast where he stayed for seventeen years, set up factories and became very rich. He married an Indian girl, Ashu, certainly after having converted her to Judaism, and she bore him children. His main business contacts who are known from their letters were all observant Jews. They were also part of the dominant Arab civilization.

Thus, Amitav Gosh lived in his mind for years in two worlds that both connected Egypt and India, worlds that were distant in time yet in his imagination linked in many ways. His book *In an Antique Land* is a testimony of this link. His narrative ends with an unpleasant personal experience that he invests with symbolic meaning. Egyptian friends had told him of an annual pilgrimage to the nearby tomb of a "Sidi Abu-Hasira" in Damanhour, according to them a saintly Muslim man of Jewish origin. When Amitav Gosh went to visit the tomb, he was stopped by armed Egyptian police. He did not know that the tomb was that of Rabbi Yacov Abu-Hadzera and that it attracted many Jewish and Israeli pilgrims. "But you are not Jewish or Israeli," scolds the officer, "you're Indian—what connection could you have with the tomb of a Jewish holy man, here in Egypt?"[26] He asks his men to drive Amitav Gosh to the railway station and orders him to take without delay the next train to Cairo. Gosh's two worlds, the ancient and his own were just about to touch when the link between them broke. He now understands that "the remains of those small, indistinguishable, intertwined histories, Indian and Egyptian, Muslim and Jewish, Hindu and Muslim, had been partitioned long ago." Earlier, he had expressed the inkling that something may have been amiss in the often celebrated "golden ages" between Muslims and Jews. He wondered why Egypt was so indifferent to the removal of all *Geniza* manuscripts to other countries: "In some profound sense, the Islamic high culture of Masr (Egypt) had never really noticed, never found a place for the parallel history the Geniza represented (read: the history of the Jews), and the removal only confirmed a particular vision of the past."[27]

Here Amitav Gosh enters a territory on which Indian writers do not like to tread, namely the issue of Muslim and Arab attitude to Jews and Jewish history. P.R. Kumaraswamy emphasized more than once that Indian intellectuals often refused to admit that concern about India's Muslims affected and biased Indian policies and attitudes toward Israel.[28] India claims to be a secular state where no religion can determine or even influence policy. Admitting that Islam and apprehension about India's Muslims have indeed massively influenced Indian policy would dent this claim. The issue of Muslim attitudes toward Jews and Judaism has become a "taboo" subject because it touches on too many Muslim idiosyncrasies and sensitivities. The works of Gosh, Rushdie and Seth leave no doubt that

this "taboo" has infiltrated even Indian literature—with the main exception of being the diaspora Indian Naipaul who is very attentive to Muslim anti-Semitism. More often Indians want to believe that Jews have suffered only in Europe and Arabs under European colonial rule, including (according to some), under Israeli rule, whereas Jews allegedly lived comfortably under Islam. But in old and recent times Jews have also suffered at Arab and Muslim hands; their life under Islam was not uniform; it could be good or tolerable but often enough it was bad. Some of the facts were, or should have been known to Indians because the Indian press did report on anti-Jewish discrimination and persecution in Arab lands.[29] But the Indian elites mostly did not see it because Muslim anti-Semitism is counter-intuitive and not part of India's intellectual baggage. What India wishes to remember is a long history of friendship between Indians and Arabs, and particularly Egyptians. Amitav Gosh's perceptive comment that Islamic high culture had no consideration for Jews and their history is an exception. Gosh does know that Jews have occasionally been massacred by Arabs. He mentions such massacres in 12th-century Morocco, but only because Abraham Ben Yiju's letters had asked anxious questions about these tragic events. However, this was long ago. Amitav Gosh does not say a word about other tragic events that occurred only three decades before he came to Egypt: the expulsion of Egypt's entire Jewish community of nearly 100,000 souls, a first group after Israel's War of Independence in 1948 and the largest group following the Suez war of 1956. Abraham Ben Yiju, Gosh's hero, was once a distinguished member of this proud community and particularly of the Ben Ezra synagogue in Cairo. It is these expulsions and similar ones from other Arab countries that sealed the fate of Amitav Gosh's Judeo-Arab world, and the incident in Damanhour, which had opened his eyes, was only a minor after-shock.

Amitav Gosh opened for an Indian and wider audience a window to a colorful world that had vanished long ago. Otherwise this world was known only to a experts. The erudite, letter-writing Jewish traders who linked the Mediterranean to India were proud and respected members both of their religious communities where they played major roles, and of the wider multicultural civilizations of Islam and India. Amitav Gosh loved this medieval world where a Jewish trader and scholar made India his home and linked it to other continents and where Hindus, Muslims and Jews were living, trading and florishing together.

—*Sea of Poppies* (2008)[30] is Gosh's later book that many regard as his first great novel. Much of this story takes place on a ship that crosses the Indian Ocean in a tumultuous voyage. The Jewish hero of *In an Antique Land* kept crossing the same ocean, connecting different countries and cultures. Gosh's fascination with sea travel, old history, exotic adventure and encounters between civilizations connects the *Sea of Poppies* with the earlier book *In an Antique Land.*

Sea of Poppies is the enthralling saga of the Baltimore schooner *Ibis*. We are in the late 1830s, shortly before the Opium Wars between the British Empire and China. The *Ibis* began as a slave ship that its British owner converted into an opium carrier after Britain abolished the slave trade (1807 and 1833). The ship's history thus embodies two of the vilest offenses that Western colonialism has committed in the 19th century. Fate has thrown together on the *Ibis* a cast of Indians and Westerners so diverse that they could never have met on land in 19th-century India. Though they are still "ensnared by the illusionary differences of this world"[31] could it not be said "that they were all kin now; that their rebirth in the ship's womb had made them into a single family?"[32] This is Gosh's preemptive utopia of a fraternal, caste-free India. The book narrates the lives of all of these travelers before they choose, or were forced to board the *Ibis.* Except for a few rich and privileged ones among them, most of their lives were hard, short and cruel. Amitav's political and moral credo appears indirectly in a cynical speech that he puts into the mouth of an Englishman who defends the impending war against China. "The war, when it comes, will not be for opium. It will be for a principle: for freedom—for the freedom of trade and for the freedom of the Chinese people....If it is God's will that opium be used as an instrument to open China

to his teachings, then so be it."[33] Again, Amitav Gosh's gripping narrative is supported by impressive scholarship.[34]

3. Salman Rushdie

All Indian writers included in this review are humanists. All are deeply affected by the wars, cruelties and intercommunal bloodshed, which have accompanied the rise of this great nation. None seeks to justify what Indians—defined in the broadest sense as citizens of former British India—have done to other Indians since 1947. Salman Rushdie is perhaps the most deeply wounded of all of them and also the most famous, albeit for the wrong reason. In 1989 Iran's religious ruler issued an edict ordering Rushdie's assassination for allegedly insulting Islam's prophet. Rushdie is the only Muslim in our selection; he was born in 1947 in Bombay. When one of his characters says that "despite my Muslim background I am enough of a Bombayite to be well up in Hindu stories"[35] the author obviously speaks of himself. Fate has torn the old India into two parts, and the wound of partition goes through Rushdie's heart, the more so as his family is from the disputed land of Kashmir. His books are full of betrayal, murder and massacres. He narrates these events in a jocular, ironic, sarcastic or cynical language, but his language is a veneer. Underneath this veneer horror is manifest. No single, straightforward interpretation fits any of his books. The following interpretations focus on Jewish themes because Rushdie shows more interest in Jews as well as greater knowledge of their history than other Indian writers. We have analyzed five of his books, which is half of the fictions he had published by 2009. Interesting Jewish characters appear in three of them.

—*The Satanic Verses.*[36] This is Rushdie's first book with a fair number of open and hidden references to Jews and Judaism. There is a Jewish subtext to this book, but only to the parts that narrate events in London. Published in 1988, this fiction is inspired partly by current events and partly by the—real or invented—life of Mohammed. No fiction written in the 19th and 20th centuries could match the world-wide uproar caused by this book and the international political crisis that followed the author's condemnation to death by Iran. *The Satanic Verses* consists of stories alternating between reality and dream sequences and between widely different centuries. A large literature has grown that tries to interpret the book's riddles and identify its literary sources. A convincing interpretation, put forward by several reviewers, sees *The Satanic Verses* mainly as a metaphor of the eternal wrestling match between Good and Evil, between God and the devil. The frame narrative that holds the stories together is the adventures of two friends who are protagonists of this cosmic wrestling match. Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha are Muslim actors from India. They are the only survivors from a hijacked plane that explodes over the English Channel. In a miraculous transformation Gibreel takes on the personality of the archangel Gabriel who according to tradition has transmitted Islam's holy book to the Prophet. Saladin takes on the personality of the devil.

Jews appear early enough. When Gibreel and Saladin touch down on an English beach, miraculously unharmed, they are given shelter by a kind old English lady, Rosa Diamond. But soon Saladin is arrested by a nasty English immigration official, Officer Stein. Both are typically Jewish names; the message seems to be that some Jews are nice but others are not. Later on, an English football fan insults Saladin because of his apparently Jewish-sounding name: "Sally-who? What kind of name is that for an Englishman?"[37] More tragic is the story of Otto Cone, a Polish survivor from a camp "whose name was never mentioned." Cone's real name was Cohen, from Warsaw. "He wanted to make it as if it had not been" and insisted to celebrate Christmas because it was "an English rite."[38] But his family loves East-European Jewish food, "soup and kreplach," "gefilte fish," "tsimmis"—one wonders how many of Rushdie's Indian readers have ever heard of these foods. Finally, Cone-Cohen's struggle to "wipe the slate clean" of his Jewishness fails, and he kills himself,

jumping into an empty lift shaft. Rushdie knows a lot about Jews. His Cone-Cohen is not a product of his fantasy. Quite a number of Holocaust survivors committed suicide decades after their liberation. The most famous case was the Italian writer Primo Levi who in 1987, one year before the publication of *The Satanic Verses*, jumped to his death from the third floor of his house. He was probably the model for Cone-Cohen's suicide. The tragic end of these Jews leads Rushdie to a philosophical reflection about his main theme, the struggle between Good and Evil: "Why does a survivor of the camps live forty years and then completes the job the monsters didn't get done? Does great evil eventually triumph, no matter how strenuously it is resisted?"[39] But is the division between Good and Evil always clear? Surely it is not between Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha. The first is not entirely good and the second not entirely bad. Each has something of the other in himself. Rushdie does not get the answers he is looking for from Islam, because "the name of the new religion is submission."[40] He looks to Judaism's eternal questioning for answers. He gives a number of quotes from the Jewish Bible, a book which was absent in his earlier novels. He recites from the Psalms, "King David calling out through the centuries."[41] His most important references relate to the question of Good and Evil. It is the great Jewish prophets who addressed this question, such as the Prophet Amos of the 8th century BCE: "Shall there be evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it?" or Deutero-Isaiah: "I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I the Lord do all these things."[42] Is then God the source of Evil too? We are left with no answer, only with another question, which is appropriate for a Jewish-inspired text, but this new question opens a window of hope: "Is it possible that evil is never total, that its victory, no matter how overwhelming, is never absolute?"[43] There is a deep philosophical quality to Rushdie's reflections.

The same cannot be said about the—often fantasy-based—chapters that describe how Mohammed founded Islam, the chapters that triggered the ire of Muslims. As said above, there is no Jewish subtext to these chapters. The Jewish-Islamic link is ignored. There is no mention of the Jews whom Mohammed met and tried to convert, no mention of the Jewish tribes who sparked his anger when they refused to accept him as their prophet, no reference to the biblical and other Jewish sources of the Koran. There is only one Jew—"Rehana the Jew," one of twelve whores who work in a secret—and imaginary—brothel in Mecca in the time of Mohammed. There is a striking contrast between Rushdie's vast and often detailed knowledge of Western and Indian Jews (about the latter see *The Moor's Last Sigh below*) and his silence about the Jews of Islam. This silence indicates a "taboo." We have already mentioned the problem in the section about Amitav Gosh. It is as if Rushdie was afraid to contradict current Muslim claims according to which Islam was a new, independent revelation that owed nothing to Judaism. He must have known better.

—*The Moor's Last Sigh.*[44] The *Moor*, part history and part fantasy, appeared in 1995. All the action takes place in mid- and late 20th-century India, with fewer miracles and human transformations than in earlier books. It is Rushdie's first book with a Jew, his Christian wife and their half-Jewish son as main characters.[45]

The historic frame of the book is the fall of Muslim Granada to Christian conquest and the expulsion of Spain's Jews in 1492 and five hundred years later in 1992, the travel back to Spain of the half-Jewish son of the main character who is a late descendant of these Spanish Jews. He is the "Moor," a nick-name for Moraes Zogoiby, son of Abraham Zogoiby from the old Jewish community of Cochin in Kerala State, southern India. His mother is Aurora da Gama of Cochin, who claims to descend from the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama. Abraham and Aurora met by coincidence in 1939. Aurora is the young, tempestuous heiress of a wealthy Christian family of spice traders. Native Christians form the main part of the economic upper class. Aurora falls in love with this dangerously handsome employee of her family's business enterprise, but is aware that her inappropriate passion will defy class and convention. The Da Gamas react with the same consternation to Aurora's bad news— her falling in love with a poor Jewish boy—that a wealthy Christian family in Europe

would have shown in the same situation. India is surely not anti-Semitic—as long as a girl from a good Christian family does not fall for a poor Jew. The Jewish reaction is predictably just as hostile. Abraham's mother Flory, who is the caretaker of Cochin's famous synagogue decorated with blue Chinese tiles, disowns her child "because it was unheard of for a Cochin Jew to marry outside the community"..."A Christy was not bad enough, you had to pick the very worst of the bunch!"[46] Probably Rushdie was aware that Cochini Jews feared intermarriage, and parents encouraged their children to immigrate to Israel for this reason.[47] One of the leading Hindus said: "Aurora da Gama and her Jew were no more than flies on the great diamond of India."[48] Rushdie revolts against such attitudes: "Christians, Portuguese and Jews; Chinese tiles promoting godless views...can this really be India? ...Majority, this mighty elephant, will not crush my tale beneath her feet. Are not my personages Indian, every one? Well then: this too is an Indian yarn!"[49]

This book of 1995 is the first by an Indian mainstream novelist to speak of India's own Jews and their old history at some length, with sympathy and even nostalgia. He knows details of their history with which generally only a few experts are familiar, for example that the Jews of Cochin had a proud martial tradition and that once a battle between Cochin's Hindu ruler and an enemy army had to be postponed because his Jewish soldiers refused to fight on the Sabbath![50] Rushdie reminds Indians that their Jews are an integral part of India's history and deserve their attention and respect: "They have almost gone now, the Jews of Cochin. Less than fifty of them remaining, and the young departed to Israel. It is the last generation...This too is an extinction to be mourned; not an extermination, such as occurred elsewhere, but the end, nevertheless, of a story that took two thousand years to tell."[51] People who know the city today report that some Cochinis share Rushdie's feelings and others are resentful that the Jews left although they were never persecuted.[52]

In Rushdie's story, the Zogoiby family traces their name back to Mohammed XI, the last Sultan of Andalusia who surrendered to the Christians and was called "El-Zogoiby," the "Unfortunate." It is an Arab name; in real life no Cochini Jew ever had such a name. In Rushdie's fiction the sultan had a Jewish mistress who sailed in 1492 to India when the Jews were expelled from Spain, pregnant with his child. Thus started the lineage of Flory and Abraham Zogoiby. Abraham did not forget his lineage. When he was banished from the fellowship of his own people for marrying a Christian, an inner voice told him "that he must guard his Jewishness in the innermost chamber of his soul...and keep his truth there."[53]

But soon his life takes a radical turn. He transfers the family business to Bombay and makes a pilgrimage of respect to the old man Sassoon, head of the great Bagdhadi-Jewish family "which dominated the city for hundred years."[54] But the old man leaves him in no doubt that the city is closed to him. Disowned by his mother, rejected by his community, excluded by India's most influential Jew, humiliated by his increasingly overbearing wife Aurora, he begins to supply girls to the city's brothels. He smuggles heroin, speculates in property and traffics in arms. Finally he gets involved in a secret scheme to finance and develop nuclear weapons "for certain oil-rich countries." His son Moraes discovers the project and suddenly understands that his father has become a monstrous criminal. Now that Abraham has betrayed his own Jewish people by his support for the nuclear scheme of Israel's deadly enemies, it is Moraes who rises to the defense of his people and confronts his father violently: "Excuse me, but I find that I am a Jew."[55] Abraham sneers at him, asks him whether he wants a "yarmulke," a Yiddish term for a scull cap, phylacteries, or a one-way ticket to Jerusalem, but he also warns him: "Many of our Cochin Jews...complain of the racism with which they are treated in your precious homeland across the sea."[56] In fact, complaints about color discrimination of Indian Jews in Israel have often been heard in the past and can still be heard, from Indians as well as Indian Jews themselves.[57]

Abraham has become a "race traitor who was repeating on an appalling, gigantic scale the crime of turning his back on mother and tribe." Rushdie will return again to the image of this self-hating Jew who was once spurned by his people for marrying out and finally gained the power to destroy the Jewish state by arming its enemies. Abraham was

like a deity who "wrought havoc upon the mere mortals below; but also, and in this he differed from most deities, among his own kith and kin."[58] Rushdie knows enough of Jewish history and psychology to understand the genesis of Jewish self-hate in his Abraham. Fortunately it will not come to the worst. Abraham gets entangled in a fight with the largest and most dangerous Hindu crime syndicate of Bombay. The result is that half of Bombay is blown up in a large series of gigantic explosions. Abraham perishes in one of his own skyscrapers. His son Moraes flies over the burning city on his way to Spain, the origin of the Zogoibys, where he plans to look for his Jewish roots. He says to himself: "I am a Jew from Spain, like Maimonides," but senses that "Maimonides' ghost laughed at me."[59] He already anticipates that his quest will fail.

Salman Rushdie's Abraham Zogoiby is the first Indian Jew to enter world literature through a major Indian fiction writer. Abraham has many traits that have variously been described as Jewish although only few are recommendable. His early life was difficult and poor, but he struggled to reach the highest levels of wealth and power. He is tenacious, clever and cunning. His survival instincts and tenacity are his most Jewish character traits. His wife Aurora dominated and stung him in later years, but her "Abraham was tougher than any frog: she stung him...but he did not drown."[60] Yet ultimately Abraham is a monster, a symbol of deception, exploitation, immorality and cold-blooded murder on a massive scale. This is how he responded to minor injustices and humiliations that he had largely caused himself. His readiness to condone a possible nuclear genocide of his own people and benefit from the related financial transactions makes him truly demonic, but also unreal. He is Shylock, Hitler and Madoff in one, in fact too demonic to be credible. *The Moor's Last Sigh* is a mixture of true Indian Jewish history and Western anti-Semitic stereotypes. Such stereotypes existed before Rushdie. "Anti-Semitic mythologies...created in the West became part of the shared codes of knowledge among the Indian reading public," said Egorova.[61] In reality, there is no Indian model for Abraham Zogoiby. The history of the Jews of Cochin is, according to their own tradition, at least two thousand years old. In the Middle Ages many were long-distance traders, and the community received land and protection from the local kings. In the 18th century some became rich and rose to senior positions as political advisors of local rulers. Their economic and cultural interaction with their non-Jewish environment was as far as is known, unproblematic. No Cochini Jew is known to have played a critical, negative role in Kerala's history or beyond, comparable to the imaginary Zogoiby.

If this is the image of the Jew that readers will take from the book, and not Rushdie's respectful description of Cochini Jews in general, then the author will have helped to reinforce an anti-Jewish stereotype. It is true that many of his major characters are negative. His worldview is pessimistic, and his style mordant. Nobody who enters the world of Rushdie's fiction returns as a great soul. The long-term effects of great literature are never predictable. Two years after the *Moor* appeared Arundhati Roy's main book *The God of Small Things,* which is also set in Kerala, was published in 1997. Critics noted structural similarities between the two novels and emphasized Rushdie's pervasive influence on Indian literature.

—*Shalimar the Clown.*[62] *Shalimar the Clown* (2005) is Rushdie's second fiction with a Jew as major character, not an Indian Jew this time, but an American of French origin. In *Shalimar* there are no longer any miracles and fairy tales. What occurs in this novel is extraordinary but not impossible in the real world. It is one of Rushdie's most personal books. Here he opens his wounded heart. The book has a dedication: "In loving memory of my Kashmiri grandparents." *Shalimar the Clown* is about the tragedy of Kashmir, the agony of a once great civilization where Hindus and Muslims lived in peace and more rarely, even intermarried. It is about a Paradise Lost, and as for all lost paradises, Rushdie's story too may embellish past history.

The action takes place in two regions: California and Kashmir. It centers on four persons: the American Jew and famous ambassador to India, Max Ophuls; the Kashmiri Muslim Shalimar Noman, called "the Clown" because he was an amazingly agile tight-rope walker in a Kashmiri circus troupe; Boonyi Kaul, a ravishingly beautiful Kashmiri Hindu girl who becomes first Shalimar's wife and then deserts him for America to become Max Ophuls' mistress; and India Ophuls, the daughter whom Ophuls fathered with Boonyi Kaul. After Boonyi elopes with the ambassador, Shalimar swears that he will not rest until he has killed both of them as well as the offspring they might have. "Honour ranked above everything else." He prepares his revenge for twenty years, succeeds to enter the aging, unsuspecting ambassador's Californian household as a servant and slits his throat. Max Ophuls had long before tired of Boonyi and sent her back to Kashmir—now a desperate, prematurely aged and heavily overweight woman. Shalimar discovers and murders her. He then goes back to America to fulfill the last part of his vow, that is, to kill India Ophuls, but is arrested and condemned to death for the murder of her father Max. He flees from the San Quentin State Prison and breaks into the home of India Ophuls who now calls herself Kashmira Ophuls. Kashmira, a master archer, is waiting for him, her weapon ready. The book ends with suspense. We do not learn who will kill whom. During the twenty-five years of this family drama, the greater drama of Kashmir is unfolding. A Muslim insurgency is fueled by Islamist propaganda and foreign-trained terrorists, and is put down by the army's equally cruel counterinsurgency. Rushdie shares the pain of both Hindus and Muslims and a few times lets his personal rage burst out, reporting barbaric horrors in harrowing detail.

The personal stories of Shalimar and Boonyi and the story of Kashmir would have been equally gripping if the American ambassador had not been a Jew. Did he have to be a Jew, and which of his traits could be regarded as typically Jewish? First, his name. The famous novelist and critic John Updike published a review of *Shalimar the Clown* as soon as it appeared: "Why, oh why did Salman Rushdie call one of his major characters Maximilian Ophuls? Max Ophuls is a highly distinctive name, well known to movie lovers as that of a German-born actor and stage director...Why has Rushdie attached a gaudy celebrity name to a different sort of celebrity...?"[63] The answer is that Rushdie knew something that Updike ignored. The real Max Ophuls was a German Jew, born Maximilian Oppenheimer. He did not want to carry this most Jewish of all German names in a time of rising anti-Semitism before World War II. Rushdie's Max Ophuls bears a name transferred from another Jew who also had an issue with his identity and wanted to hide it.

Rushdie's picture of Max Ophuls is larger than life. There is a touch of unreality in his achievements. Max grows up in Strasbourg as son of "highly cultured Ashkenazi Jews," in a street that is today "La rue du Grand Rabbin René Hirschler."[64] When the Germans occupy France Max joins the French Resistance, which needs his exceptional talents. There seem to be no limits to Ophuls' aptitudes. He turns out to be also an outstanding aircraft pilot, a flying ace who flees in a small plane to London. Apart from such fantasies, Rushdie's description of the German occupation and the fate of the Jews of France is meticulously researched, as was his description of the Jews of Cochin. After the war, Max Ophuls turns his back on France and immigrates to the United States where he embarks on a truly dazzling career. He becomes "one of the architects of the post-war world, of its international structures, its agreed economic and diplomatic conventions"[65]—in short, he personifies at least three American presidents and five secretaries of state. Rushdie's enumeration of Max Ophuls' achievements tests the reader's imagination. He is in addition, a terrifically handsome and attractive man, a tennis champion, a dandy and lady killer, and a sexual predator until his eighties, like Zogoiby.

The destruction of Kashmir burdens Ophuls, and he denounces it on television. He even claims to see a parallel between the suffering of the Jews and that of the Kashmiris. But poor Boonyi, his Kashmiri mistress, sees no such parallels when she understands that her former lover has decided to discard her: "I should have known...I should have known better than to lie with a Jew. The Jews are our enemy and I should have known."[66] Did

Rushdie slip into one of the vilest anti-Semitic propaganda stereotypes of the Nazis—about rich, lecherous Jews who seduce and rape innocent German girls? Ophuls is stung by her anti-Semitic slur: "The past reared up. Briefly he saw again the army of the Jewish fallen....In this moment of the story he was not the victim. In this moment she and not he had the right to claim kinship with the lost." In other words, in a moment of passion, Boonyi had willingly left her husband and ran off with a rich lover. Now she finds herself cheated and abandoned. She is not the first girl in this situation and will not be the last. Is her fate really equal to the death of millions of Holocaust victims? Rushdie cannot possibly mean this. The bitter argument between Boonyi and Max is a metaphor for something much larger. In the meantime Max Ophuls falls from grace and loses his ambassadorial position when the scandal comes to light. But the United States cannot do without him. He becomes the "United States Counter-Terrorism Chief," a secret position. He is "the occult servant of American geopolitical interest," the "invisible Max, on whose hands...there almost certainly was...a quantity of the world's visible and invisible blood."[67] Now Shalimar's revenge—at first sight no more than a traditional Muslim honor killing—takes on a cosmic significance. Was not Shalimar "the hand of justice, the appointed executioner of some unseen high court...in response to his [Ophul's] unknown unlisted unseen crimes of power?"

Did Henry Kissinger inspire Rushdie's image of this powerful but controversial American Jewish policymaker? Rushdie's message is unambiguous. Max Ophuls is a metaphor for the United States under the Bush administration—the book appears in 2005. He is a Jew because he symbolizes the alleged Jewish influence on American politics as well as the alliance between the United States, Israel and the Jewish people in the fight against Islamic terrorism. *Shalimar the Clown* can be seen as an indictment of President Bush's controversial "War on Terror." The Kashmiri Boonyi Kaul's bitter complaint that she was wrong to "lie with a Jew" may also be an indictment of India's increasingly close links with an allegedly Jewish-dominated America and with Israel at the time of the Bush administration. India's left-wingers were and are loudly protesting against this link. Does Boonyi's complaint also signify more specifically a more widespread Indian or Rushdie's personal conviction that America shares responsibility for the bloodshed in Kashmir? The Clinton administration did indeed interfere, regarded Kashmir as an international and not only internal Indian problem and did not clearly take India's side against Pakistan. Rushdie uses the Muslim and Western anti-Semitic myth of a Jewish world conspiracy that had infiltrated India long before[68] as a literary motif, although it is most unlikely that he believed in it himself. *Shalimar the Clown* is great literature and could survive longer than the memories of specific policies of the Bush years. It contains so far Rushdie's most unflattering perception of a Jew—and of America. Max Ophuls, the immensely successful but morally questionable American Jew appears much less as a fantasy than the invented Cochini Jew Abraham Zogoiby. Other reviewers too have seen in Max Ophuls a metaphor for a Jewish-influenced America. One review has the title "Fear of a Jewish Planet?"[69] The reviewer is rightly concerned that Rushdie now "risks falling into older (that is anti-Semitic) stereotypes." Rushdie's Jewish readers and friends will look with anticipation and perhaps some concern for his future books.

Rushdie has written two earlier books—if not more—that are interesting from a Jewish point of view.

—*Midnight's Children.*[70] This is Rushdie's second book of fiction, published in 1981, and the one that first made him famous. It does not speak of Jews, but it already shows Rushdie's deep preoccupation with Islam. *Midnight's Children* amalgamates miraculous fairy tales, invented but credible details and India's real history into an inseparable narrative. This mixture of marvels, fiction and truth has roots in India's oldest literary traditions and would remain a trademark of much of Rushdie's future work. In the West, *Midnight's Children* was read as a fantasy, in India as almost history amongst others because the author attacked

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi whom he abhorred. The book spans events from independence to the war with Pakistan in 1965 and the Bangladesh war of 1971, which ended in the mass slaughter of the country's civil population by the Pakistani army. Rushdie dwells in horrible detail on this crime in which the world has never taken much interest. His reading of India's contemporary history is irreverent and bold: "A nation which had never previously existed was about to win its freedom..."[71]

He does not hesitate to challenge deeply held Islamic beliefs. He argues for re-editing the Koran, putting the chapters in chronological order so that the book would make more sense.[72] Rushdie speculates about the beginnings of Islam, but there is not a word about the numerous Jewish, that is biblical, Talmudic and Midrashic sources of the Koran, or the critical, adversarial place of the Jews of Arabia in the prophet's life and teaching. Chinese Islam experts have said that one cannot understand Islam if one does not know Judaism.[73] We found no similar awareness in Rushdie's work or in that of other Indian authors. The issue is a blank page. We encountered the problem previously in *The Satanic Verses* and in Amitav Gosh's *In an Antique Land* and spoke of a "taboo" area.

—*Shame.*[74] Soon after *Midnight's Children* the novel *Shame* (1983) was published. Now it was Pakistan that received Rushdie's unflattering attention. It came in the form of a political satire that is as sarcastic as *Midnight's Children*, but even more devastating: "Pakistan, the peeling, fragmenting palimpsest, increasingly at war with itself."[75] Choosing "shame" as title for a fiction about Pakistan is revealing: "Wherever I turn there is something of which to be ashamed."[76] Rushdie understands why a Pakistani father murders his young daughter after she has gone out with a white boy; this is a culture nourished by a "diet of honour and shame." The same culture explains Pakistan's unhappy history. There is a rare and insightful comment on current Muslim anti-Semitism: "Anti-Semitism, an interesting phenomenon, under whose influence people who have never met a Jew vilify all Jews for the sake of maintaining solidarity with the Arab states which offer Pakistan workers, these days, employment and much needed foreign exchange..."[77] However, Islamic anti-Jewishness has deep theological and historic roots that are much older than the needs of oil-poor countries to fawn upon oil-rich Arabs, but Rushdie avoids this subject. And there is an even rarer mention of Israel, a simple quip: Iran is one of the only two theocracies on earth, "Israel being the other one."[78] In 1983 Israel's prime minister was Yitzchak Shamir, a dogmatic nationalist but no religious man, and his foreign minister was Shimon Peres, not an Orthodox Jew either. The defamatory comparison with Iran—if it is not meant as a joke—may illustrate more widespread misunderstandings about Israel among Indian intellectuals.

4. Vikram Seth

Vikram Seth, born in 1952 in Calcutta (Kolkata) is one of the most famous Indian writers of the postwar generation. He is from Bengal, like Anita Desai, Amitav Gosh, the early 20th-century poet Rabindranath Tagore and many others. Bengal was a cradle of modern Indian literature and poetry. Vikram Seth is a novelist, poet and travel writer who masters, apart from Hindi, Urdu and English, also Chinese, German and French. His *Two Lives* (2005) is together with Rushdie's *Shalimar*, the most recent Indian book with a major Jewish theme. Twelve years earlier, in 1993, a book appeared that the critics would call his unparalleled master work, *A Suitable Boy*. This book contains Seth's worldviews, shaped by India's violent history of the 20th century. It is with these views that the author, already prejudiced against Israel, later visited Israel and judged—misjudged—the country.

—*Two Lives.*[79] Seth's visit to Israel is mentioned at the end of the nonfiction book *Two Lives*, which was published in 2005. These two polemical pages are the weakest part of the book. Otherwise this is arguably the most touching book that an Indian novelist has written so far about a Jew and the Jewish fate. Like Anita Desai's *Baumgartner's Bombay* of 1988,

the book is about the Holocaust, but in contrast to hers, this one is based on intimate personal knowledge. It was an immediate success, reprinted several times and translated into foreign languages.

The "two lives" are those of Vikram Seth's granduncle, the dentist Dr. Shanti Behari Seth from North India, and his Jewish wife Henny Caro from Berlin. For an Indian it goes without saying that a person's life always involves also the life of his entire extended family, which means in the case of "Aunty Henny" the life of her mother Ella and her beloved sister Lola, both murdered by the Nazis. Shanti Seth began to study dentistry in Berlin in 1931. In 1933 he looked for a room and moved in with the Caro family. An Indian risked nothing in Nazi Germany. Shanti's British passport, issued in 1938 had the entry "Race and Caste: Aryan [sic!] Hindu (Khatri)."[80] Henny fled to London one month before the war, and in 1940 Shanti enlisted with the British Army. Back to London, he finally married Henny in 1951. In 1969 when Vikram Seth was 17 years old, he moved in with his granduncle and aunt who treated him like their own son. Henny died in 1989. The inconsolable Shanti destroyed all documents related to Henny but missed a trove of letters left by her in the attic. Vikram discovers it and decides in 1994 to write this book. He looks for all available traces of Henny's murdered family. He visits Israel for this reason. Sitting before a computer in Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust museum, Vikram discovers the Gestapo records of mother Ella's and sister Lola's deportation in 1943. Ella perishes in Theresienstadt, Lola in Auschwitz-Birkenau. The sequence of Lola's martyrdom is well known because she shared it with millions. Vikram Seth describes the probable events in excruciating detail, from the selection at the railway ramp in Auschwitz and the sadism of the SS guards to the agony in the gas chamber and the removal of gold teeth and hair from the corpses. As he stares at the documents on the computer, he is suddenly gripped by psychosomatic symptoms that have been observed among other family members who identify with the suffering and death of their loved ones. He, the "quasi-agnostic Hindu" as he calls himself[81] begins to shake violently and uncontrollably. A German school boy who visits the Holocaust Museum with his class sees Vikrams' distress and offers help. Vikram rejects it; the last person he wants to come near to him is a German, any German. Soon other symptoms appear. Vikram can no longer stand the German language, which he had liked so much before. He refuses to use German, an attitude well known from Holocaust victims in Israel—the writer Aharon Appelfeld is among them. "The stench of the language in which I had read the phrases from the Gestapo letter clung....The very verbs stank."[82] After the war, Henny refused to speak to her Indian husband about the death of her mother and sister and evaded young Vikram's questions. Husband Shanti never knew how much Henny had mourned for them, but Vikram Seth reads the letters from the attic and discovers her silent pain: "I have suffered unending torment over the fate of my loved ones, and will never get over it," she wrote to a Jewish friend.[83] The silence of Holocaust survivors noted by Vikram Seth; their refusal to speak of the unspeakable is a symptom that has often been found in Israel and elsewhere. Vikram Seth's portrays his "Aunty Henny" with great sensitivity. He shows deep insight into the long-term psychological consequences of the Holocaust. It will be difficult to find another non-Jewish author from a remote, not directly affected country with the same sensitivity.

The fate of Henny's family spurned Vikram Seth on to learn more about the history of Germany and that of the Jewish people, including Israel. India's knowledge of the latter is "sporadic," he admits, with some understatement. The only history and geography he had learned in school was that of India and the former British Empire. Jews and Judaism played no noticeable role in Indian history, he says. But Vikram Seth's ignorance extends to many elements of Judaism and Jewish history. He believes that the roots of Zionism were in Germany, which is wrong. He mentions that Indian Jews left for Israel "largely for economic and social reasons,"[84] which is partly correct but he omits the longing for Zion, the memory of the old homeland that played a considerable role in Indian Jewish ritual and folklore no less than in Jewish prayers everywhere else. Before Vikram Seth came to Israel he had

worked out his own views on the Jewish state, he asserts confidently, but these views are anything but original. They are copies of Gandhi's anti-Zionism of the 1930s, but they ignore Gandhi's subtle change of mind after the Holocaust, when he conceded, as Kumaraswamy and others have shown, that Jews too had a historic claim to Palestine. Gandhi's erstwhile anti-Zionism was primarily inspired by his fervent hope to keep India together, prevent the dreaded partition of the country and for this reason showed his sympathy with Muslim concerns in general. Vikram Seth, however, did not need to feel bound by such political calculations—certainly not so many years after India's partition.

His comments about Israel provide an introduction into the mindset of a part of the Indian intelligentsia. Kumaraswamy characterized this hostility toward Israel as dominated by "a very selective sense of morality" and "moral self-righteousness."[85] Both qualifications fully apply to Seth. Apart from his research in the Yad Vashem Museum he reports no relevant observation from his visit to Israel yet claims that the country presents a "picture of terror, injustice and arbitrariness"[86] almost since 1948. In *A Suitable Boy* he flayed Hindu extremism, not the Republic of India itself. He would never question India's or Pakistan's right to exist, irrespective of the millions who were killed or expelled by both sides after 1947, but he questions Israel's. He concedes that during the Nazi persecutions, the Palestinian Arabs should have shared some space with the oppressed Jews—the fact is that they refused to do so—"but that the Jews could then carve out their own state in Palestine does not follow."[87] Vikram Seth directs his particular ire against the notion of a Jewish state, as for him "Jewish" can only mean a religion. He adopts Nehru's distaste of a possible Hindu state that would discriminate against Muslims just like Pakistan was discriminating against non-Muslims. "As for states...that deliberately favour one religion over another...these in effect perpetuate inequality and injustice...Jewish control of the nation is central to the idea of Israel....Historic yearning for certain religious sites or landscapes or a belief that one is divinely ordained to possess a particular part of the earth is hardly an excuse for creating one's living space at the expense of others."[88] The author belongs to India's large Hindu majority and ignores what it meant for Jews to be only a small, defenseless minority wherever they went. He also ignores that the Arab states have destroyed the "living space" of nearly one million Jews, nearly all of their Jewish inhabitants. Most of these had nowhere else to flee but to Israel. Also he refuses to see the Jews as a people, a nation, a civilization with a history linked to a specific land. Vikram Seth found in aunt Henny's letter trove in the attic a Hebrew-German prayer book. At the end of *Two Lives* he is reading Henny's Jewish prayers to his imaginary Jewish-Israeli audience, preaching to them "love our neighbour" and more. During the European Middle Ages and later, some of the Christian clergy too liked to quote from Jewish scripture to upbraid the recalcitrant Jews who resisted their pressure to convert to Christianity. The tact with which Seth had described the tragedy of Aunt Henny and her Jewish family has now vanished. The author is not alone in this respect. The combination of deep sympathy for the dead Jews of the Holocaust with equally deep antipathy for the living ones of Israel is well known in the West. What can also be found in the West is Seth's double standard. The radical Indian writer Arundhati Roy (who will be discussed later), attacks Israel with the same vigor as Seth. But she attacks her own country, India, even more severely for perceived human rights violations. Nobody can blame her for double standards. Not so Seth. There is only one black sheep: Israel.

—A Suitable Boy.[89] *A Suitable Boy* is important for our context because it helps to explain why not only the author, but also other important members of the Indian elite were—and some still are—so hostile to Israel. Filling almost 1,500 densely spaced pages, *A Suitable Boy* is one of the longest English-language novels ever written. It is today regarded as one of the great classics not only of Indian, but also of 20th-century world literature. The story is set in postpartition India of 1951/1952, at the time of the country's first general elections. The place is a fictional town, Brahmpur near the Ganges River. Seth's narrative weaves together the fate of four upper-class families of Brahmpur. Three are Hindus, one is Muslim.

Their lives evolve against the background of India's tumultuous history of the early 1950s. Vikram Seth is a master of connecting personal lives to India's grand history. Prime Minister Nehru arrives on the scene on pages 1035-1037 to help in an election and stays involved in the story until the end. Seth describes the material and spiritual culture of India's upper classes in great detail. He sees India very much through upper-class eyes. The "Dalit" or Untouchables, the starving landless peasants, the emaciated beggars remain in the shadow, mostly silent, although their suffering is recognized. The offspring of the well-off live in a world that looks back to that of the ruling Mogul Courts of the 17th and 18th centuries. This world is no longer the India of the 21st century.

The novel examines many of India's topical problems. The Hindu-Muslim strife is on top of the list. Vikram Seth will later transfer his Indian expertise in this subject to the Middle East in order to judge the Arab-Israeli conundrum. In 1951 the pain of partition remains acute in India and the danger of new wars with Pakistan is on many people's mind. But the main problem is inside India. Vikram Seth is a moderate Hindu who fears Hindu extremism more than that of any other creed or party. Forty years before, Nehru had the same fears. Seth continues to back Nehru's past moderation about Islam and Pakistan, against the "Hindu chauvinist right-wing" which disparaged him as "almost an honorary Muslim."[90] Seth's detailed descriptions of religious beliefs, practices and events will not endear Hinduism to his readers. Seth introduces an upper-class Hindu extremist who liked to "talk about his favourite great man—Hitler; six years dead but still revered by him like a god...and how atavistic and admirable a force the Indo-Germanic bond was."[91] Such opinions could indeed be heard in India—Arundhati Roy too refers to them because they have still not died out—but India is not free of Muslim fanaticism either. The narrative's dramatic peak comes when a Shiite mourning procession in Brahmpur inadvertently crosses the way of a joyful procession in honor of a Hindu god. Both sides believe that they are victims of provocation and tear each other apart in a horrific orgy of bloodshed and arson.

Although Seth tends to see the Muslims as the most aggrieved community, he is not blind to Hindu pain and bitterness. Hindus do not despise other religions, whereas Muslims in his story show their contempt for Hinduism in provocative words or gestures. Hindus still harbor a deep resentment of the persecutions they suffered two and a half centuries ago when the Mogul Emperor Aurangzeb, a fanatical Muslim, began to destroy their temples. And the horrors of partition left deep traumas in Hindus that have not healed. "At the word Pakistan...withered old Mrs. Tandon flinched. Three years ago her whole family had had to flee the blood and flames and unforgettable terror of Lahore....Several of her friends had been butchered....It was too much for her imagination. She felt ill. The pleasant chatter in the garden of Brahmpur was amplified into the cries of the blood-mad mobs..."[92] Seth knows that such deep traumas have not only psychological but also long-term political consequences. Nehru was already afraid that Hindu India would be tempted to take revenge for past Hindu sufferings. If Pakistan treated minorities barbarically this was no reason for India to do the same: "The thought of India as a Hindu state with its minorities treated as second-class citizens sickened him."[93] And as said at the beginning of the review of Seth, it is with this thought in mind, born in India's cruel and complicated history that Vikram Seth visited Israel a few years later.

II. Two Radical Writers

We call two of the best-known Indian writers "radical" because they diverge from the moderate consensus of mainstream authors when they speak of the role of Muslims in India's religious tensions and past history. They represent two contradictory extremes in a wide spectrum of opinions. The Nobel laureate V.S. Naipaul is bitterly hostile to Islam and to the Arabs who forced their religion on others. He sees Islam as a brutal, imperialistic creed that has done untold damage to India and the rest of Asia. The writer Arundhati Roy is a human rights campaigner and according to official Indian views, also a left-wing trouble-

maker. She sees the Muslims in India and elsewhere as an oppressed and discriminated against minority and keeps protesting to defend their rights. The work of both Naipaul and Roy confirms that Islam was, and perhaps still remains India's central preoccupation. Neither of the two has written a book about Jews, but their books contain comments about Jews or Israel and their relationship with Islam that are likely to reflect the convictions of other Indians as well.

5. Vidiadar Surajprasad Naipaul

V.S. (Vidiadar Surajprasad) Naipaul, grandson of an impoverished village Brahmin from Uttar Pradesh, was born in 1932 on the West Indian Island of Trinidad. His poor rural origin sets him apart from the other, middle- and upper-class novelists, and he is also the only Indian who received the Nobel Prize for literature (2001). He is the only diaspora Indian among them.

Our survey is based on seven of his books: five nonfiction, one fiction and one mixed. The fictional *Half a Life*[94] and the collection *The Writer and the World: Essays*[95] will be used when appropriate. Naipaul is deeply concerned with the history and future of India. He looks at the country's failings with the critical eyes of a diaspora Indian who is both an outsider and insider. He expressed this concern mainly in three travelogues written after his visits to India in 1962, 1975, and 1995/1997.

—*An Area of Darkness.*[96] This is the first of his three travelogues, known as his "Indian Trilogy." In 1964 Naipaul was 29 years old when he visited India for the first time. From the minute he arrived in Bombay he was gripped by a feeling of alienation from the land of his ancestors. "It has taken me much time to come to terms with the strangeness of India," he wrote in his second travel book, *India: A Wounded Civilization*.[97] He was torn between engagement and repulsion, interest and despair. There is an obvious parallel to Naipaul's deep ambivalence. It is the conflicted attitude of some Jewish Diaspora intellectuals toward Israel: they too are attracted and repelled, sometimes engaged but more often critical. However, diaspora Indians can also be endowed with a clear-sightedness that people who never left India are lacking. When Naipaul speaks of the Mahatma Gandhi who settled in India only at the age of 46, he keeps emphasizing this particular advantage. "He looked at India as no Indian was able to....He does not ignore the obvious. He sees the beggars and the shameless pundits and the filth of Banares....He sees the Indian callousness, the Indian refusal to see."[98] Naipaul was not prepared for India's immense poverty, its panic in face of the Chinese invasion of 1962, the paralyzing caste system. He also reveals his deep bitterness about what Islam has done to India, a subject to which he will often return. "India had not worked its magic on me. It remained...an area of darkness."[99]

—*India: A Wounded Civilization*.[100] The crisis of India is not only political or economic; it is the crisis of a "wounded civilization," cites his second travel book in 1975. Maybe Gandhian India had been created too swiftly: "The India to which independence came was a land of far older defeat."[101] Critics attacked him for allegedly supporting Hindu extremists or for being one himself. Salman Rushdie mocked him: "Heavyweight figures in the intellectual tier spoke of a new awakening of the suppressed cultural energy of the Hindu masses."[102] But Naipaul flays his own religion, Hinduism, with the same vehemence that he usually reserves for Islam. Hindu India is eternal, but this "India taught the vanity of all action."[103] This provided security and equilibrium, but the ultimate consequence was disastrous: "Hinduism has...exposed us to a thousand years of defeat and stagnation."[104] But his deepest criticism is moral and philosophical: Hindus have no obligation outside their clans, so he argues; no higher idea of human association; no general idea of the responsibility of man to his fellow. Speaking of the oil shock of 1973, which impoverished India and enriched

the Arabs, his bitterness comes to the surface: "India is again at the periphery of this new Arabian world."[105]

—*India: A Million Mutinies Now*.[106] When Naipaul returned for the third time to India in 1988/1990, he found a fast changing country. Everything was stirring. If independence had been like a revolution, "now there were many revolutions within that revolution."[107] These revolutions should not be wished away; the "liberation of the spirit" that had come to India had to come as a disturbance, a rage, a revolt. Now the commitments to individual regions, castes and classes came into the open and struggled to assert themselves. When India decided to drop its one-sided hostility to Israel and accept diplomatic relations with the country in 1992, it did so in a general climate of challenging past assumptions and policies. And in midst of this pandemonium of "a million mutinies now" Naipaul detects the contours of a new India, an India with a national idea. The unexpected optimism of this avowed pessimist, which has so far been justified, comes through at the end of the book.

Naipaul's main resentment and preoccupation is with Islam. He never lived in a Muslim country but after the Iranian revolution of 1979 he spent seven months visiting Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia. In 1995 he visited the same four countries again. He conducted a large number of interviews with people from all walks of life and published two landmark travel narratives that were widely read and debated: *Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey* (1981)[108] and *Beyond Belief: Islamic Excursions among the Converted Peoples* (1998).[109] Naipaul shows little interest in the Arab world. He wants to understand how the Arabs spread their religion in Asia and converted so many to Islam, eliminating and "vandalising"—Naipaul's own term—the older Indian religions, Hinduism and Buddhism. He uses stark words, which few writers of the same caliber have dared to say in public:

> "The Arabs were the most successful imperialists of all time, since to be conquered by them...is still, in the minds of the faithful, to be saved."[110] "Everyone not an Arab who is a Muslim is a convert. Islam is not simply a matter of conscience or private belief. It makes imperial demands. A convert's worldview alters. His holy places are in Arab lands; his sacred language is Arabic. His idea of history alters. He rejects his own; he becomes, whether he likes it or not, a part of the Arab story. The convert has to turn away from everything that is his. The disturbance for societies is immense, and even after a thousand years can remain unresolved; the turning away has to be done again and again...In the Islam of converted countries there is an element of neurosis and nihilism. These countries can be easily set on the boil."[111] "The cruelty of Islamic fundamentalism is that it allows only to one people, the Arabs...a past and sacred places....Converted peoples have to strip themselves of their past..."[112]

The list of similar quotes could go on and on. Of course he became very controversial and raised a lot of anger because he could not simply be dismissed as an ignorant rabble-rouser. Pakistan reviled him. The American professor of Palestinian origin Edward Said assaulted him as a "neo-colonialist." Uncomfortable Indian intellectuals tried to wipe him off the Indian slate by declaring that he was not a genuine Indian because he was not born and raised in the country. Naipaul's rage may be one-sided, but it is still shared by other Hindus. Among India's great English novelists, however, Naipaul is a lone voice in this respect.

In Naipaul's Muslim travel narratives we meet for the first time a number of Jews. Not real Jews of course, but the Jewish ghosts who inhabit the wild fantasies of some Muslims. Naipaul is very attentive to Islamic anti-Semitism. In Iran, Zionism and Israelis are blamed for "sabotage."[113] Pakistanis complain that their nuclear bomb is opposed by "International Zionism" and that a Jewish-Indian-Russian conspiracy is underway to put Pakistan down.[114] More interesting is a long discussion between several people in Malaysia.[115] A *haji* (a Muslim who made the pilgrimage to Mecca) said that most tobacco

manufacturers are Jewish, "and in order to destroy the Jews we must not consume their products." He asks his friends to read Henry Ford's anti-Semitic book about the Jews; "the Jews are the enemies of God." But then the *haji* changes his tack unexpectedly. "What do you know about the history of the Jews?...They are a genius race....This is confirmed by the books of God....Other races are jealous of them because they are a genius race. They have contributed much in the sense of concepts. Karl Marx." But soon enough the *haji* falls back into his old tack. God converted the Jews to monkeys and their prestige declined. And therefore "the Jews are now pulling down the whole society with them." On Naipaul's second visit to Iran, a historian explains to him that the Zionists had made the United States their first idol or false god and now they were turning India into their second idol. "The Zionists are going to wound India again. They will kill Gandhi again...."[116] There is sense in all this madness. Jewish power, whether imaginary or not, is dreaded. The Jewish genius and its beneficial contributions are acknowledged, but how to reconcile this fact with the allegedly well-proven nastiness of the Jews and their degradation remains a riddle. And the just beginning official relations between India and Israel, long before they turned into a major military link, were already an obsession in Iranian and Pakistani minds. Like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Gosh and other Indian novelists, Naipaul keeps away from the biblical roots of the Koran and the Jewish encounters with Mohammed, although these are the roots of Muslim anti-Semitism.

But hostility to Islam does not necessarily guarantee sympathy for, or even interest in Jews and the Jewish state, in India no more than in Europe. There are objective remarks about Jews in Naipaul's books, but they are minor and innocuous. One relates to Gandhi's Jewish associates, "fellow seekers after the truth,"[117] another one to the anti-Semitism of black radicals in Jamaica,[118] a third one to Israeli technical assistance in Africa.[119] The only really important comment we could identify in seven books has an indirect link to Judaism. In the paper "Our Universal Civilization," Naipaul admits again his unhappiness with his Hinduism and his admiration for a biblical core concept, which he presents as Christian. He speaks "of the Christian precept Do unto others as you would have others do unto you. There was no such human consolation in the Hinduism I grew up with, and—although I have never had any religious faith—the simple idea was, and is dazzling to me, perfect as a guide to human behaviour."[120] It is true that the New Testament reports this precept as a word of Jesus,[121] but it has been recognized long ago that this "Golden Rule" is a core principle of Judaism. It is based on the Hebrew Bible and mentioned in Jewish scriptures that predate Jesus. Its final expression can be found in a response from Hillel, one of the most venerated teachers of Rabbinic Judaism who, according to some, was also Jesus' teacher: "What is hateful to you, don't do it to your fellow man. This is the whole Torah. All the rest is commentary. Now go and learn!"[122] Naipaul was no more familiar with the Jewish roots of Christianity than he was with the Jewish roots of Islam. Thus it is Christianity alone that earned his gratitude and admiration—of which the Jews might have claimed a fair share as well.

6. Arundhati Roy

Arundhati Roy lives in New Delhi. She was born in 1961 to a Bengali Hindu father and a Syrian-Christian mother from Kerala, a state of thirty million inhabitants who speak the ancient language Malayalam. Syriac Christianity is one of the Eastern Churches going back to the early centuries of Christianity. Kerala boasts the highest level of literacy of all Indian states and is economically better off than other parts of India. According to the census of 2001, 25 percent of the Keralese are Muslims, and 19 percent Christians. In Kerala's capital of Cochin there was also an old Jewish community, with the oldest (and very beautiful synagogue) in India. They numbered several thousand souls and have nearly all left for Israel. Many Jewish objects are still exhibited in the local museum. A high proportion of Hindus, maybe 30 percent or more, belonged to the lowest caste, the "Untouchables" or

Dalit. Roy spent her younger years in Kerala and was educated at Corpus Christi College, but describes herself as a nonreligious Hindu. Like Anita Desai, the other Indian women writer under discussion, being the child of a "mixed" couple made her particularly attentive to the tensions between cultures, castes and religions.

—*Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy.*[123] Apart from her only novel, the best-selling *The God of Small Things* (see below), Arundhati Roy's publications are political and social. *Listening to Grasshoppers* appeared in 2009. Roy is a radical activist who campaigns against what she perceives as India's grave human rights violations. Her sharp criticisms, including those of Israel, are mostly shared by India's left-wing intellectual elites. Indian observers have said that the influence of radicals is getting weaker. Nevertheless, Arundhati Roy's voice continues to be heard and her work is well known.

Her book is first and foremost a polemic against contemporary India and its politics, elites, democratic institutions, external alliances and economic liberalization. It is a reflection of her deep pessimism about the future of India, the West and the world. Some of Roy's Indian concerns, for example about the judiciary, police abuses or corruption, have been raised by others as well. Roy's sharp English prose expresses an unbridled rage; her choice of words is more than once loose and excessive. In this book, the main reason of for her rage is discrimination of the Muslims of India and Kashmir. "India has a shamefully persecuted, impoverished minority of more than 150 million Muslims who are being targeted as a community and pushed to the wall."[124] The culprits are Hindu nationalists, and particularly the hated BJP, the Bharatiya Janata Party, which was in power from 1996 to 2004. Arundhati Roy is incensed when in 2002 Hindu militants massacred two thousand unarmed Muslim civilians in the state of Gujarat, an event that also plays a major role in Chetan Bhagat's *The 3 Mistakes of my Life* (see section 8 below). She calls the killings "genocide," a term that should not be used lightly. Roy uses it without restraint; it reoccurs dozens of times all through the book. She appropriates not only this loaded term, but also the whole vocabulary of the Nazi Holocaust and transfers it to India to excoriate Hindu extremism. The Hindu perpetrators are "fascists": "Fascism's firm footprint has appeared in India."[125] Worse than that, Hindu extremists "prepare for the Final Solution"[126]—presumably the extermination of all living Muslims ("Final Solution" was the Nazi code word for the extermination of all Jews), and Hindus are allegedly thinking of "founding a global Hindu empire"[127]—a Hindu Reich? Therefore the "parallels between contemporary India and pre-war [that is Nazi-ruled] Germany are chilling."[128] Nazi Germany? Fascism? The Final Solution? Hindu fanatics have indeed said and written horrible things, but they are not India and do not rule India. Roy can live, speak and write freely in India's capital where all her books are available. In any Fascist country she would have been silenced, if not worse, and in Nazi Germany she would have found herself in no time in a concentration camp and almost certainly executed. Of course she knows that the Indian reality is more complex, and she even responds to those who blame her for loose language, arguing that her use of "fascism" is justified for certain crimes. She admits that the Bollywood superstar who is most beloved by all Indians is a Muslim with a typically Muslim name, which could never have happened to a Jewish actor in Nazi Germany; she also knows that Indian Muslims too committed acts of terrorism, but she keeps being carried away by ideology and emotion.

Roy's preferred black sheep is India, but Israel and the United States follow soon after. The growing links between India and Israel, particularly in the defense fields, are a betrayal of Palestine and India's nonaligned past and trigger Roy's repeated indignation. The mere occupation of the Palestinian territories is "genocide in a fishbowl, genocide in slow motion"—again the same irresponsible use of words.[129] "The US and Israeli armies don't hesitate to...drop daisy cutters (8,600 kilogram bombs that were used in Vietnam to flatten forests) on wedding parties in Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan"[130] which is a grotesque lie. She berates "Ariel Sharon's *bestial* invasion of Palestine (*italics* added)"[131] without explaining that he did so to put an end to the horrific Palestinian suicide bombings that had

killed and injured thousands of innocent civilians. Roy's vocabulary is—in this case—ominous, even if inadvertently so. Fanatical Islamist preachers have compared Jews to "pigs and monkeys." Whoever compares any human beings to animals opens the first door to genocide, and in this case the term is justified.

Roy does not speak of Jews or Judaism. Her problem is with Israel. Her pervasive hostility to the Jewish state goes beyond faulty judgments and factual errors. This blanket rejection, coming from a self-proclaimed Hindu with great psychological intuition, calls for an explanation. In India Jews were barely noted and never persecuted. Jews never blamed India for any ill-deeds as European Jews rightly do, thus making Europe feel ill-at-ease. Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist or Jain holy scriptures do not know of Jews who allegedly killed God's son or rejected His Prophet. Nothing in the civilizations of India and China made Jewish life as problematic as it often was in the Christian and Muslim worlds. A confluence of factors explains Arundhati Roy's hostility toward Israel. One of these is her defense of all groups perceived as discriminated minorities. Arundhati Roy, like other Indian radicals, maintains the Congress Party's former, uncompromising hostility toward Zionism and Israel long after India had changed its policy of nonrecognition of Israel.[132] But there could be several other reasons. Arundhati Roy's early Christian education in Kerala's Corpus Christi College and in her home environment could easily have influenced her perception of Jews, even if it is today a subconscious influence. Gandhi himself has made comments about Judaism, which he did not regard as defamatory, although they repeat antagonistic Christian misinterpretations. Finally we have to consider the shared hostility to Israel and the international solidarity of the radical left to which Arundhati Roy belongs. The radicals are meeting, reading and applauding each other across all borders. Just as in the past, the English language, culture and political ideas have "colonized" the mind of many Indians before independence, so do now new ideas coming from the same old Britain and Europe colonize the mind of some post-independence Indians. The anti-Zionism of the Indian left is not entirely home grown; it is partly a foreign import, as much from Europe as from the Arab world, a "mimicry of the West"[133] as Naipaul called the colonial and postcolonial Indian tendency to adopt Western modes of thought. The inimitable Salman Rushdie, sharp eye and nasty tongue, commented on the same tendency and captured it in seven words: "Europe repeats itself, in India, as farce."[134]

—*The God of Small Things.*[135] Published in 1997, this is so far Roy's only book of fiction. It was praised as a "masterpiece." India's Nobel laureate Amartya Sen mentions this book respectfully.[136] In Kerala the Malayalam language edition of her book is said to be very popular. *The God of Small Things* does not mention the Jews of Cochin, Israel or other foreign countries except for a few references to China and England, but it holds one of the keys to Arundhati Roy's political convictions, including her vitriolic hostility toward Israel. Roy is an uncompromising defender of all "under-dogs," in India particularly the Muslims and "Untouchables," and in the Middle East the Palestinians.

Roy's book brings up four major themes: the ways of life of Kerala's Syrian Christians; the evils of a caste system that allows the "Untouchables" to be oppressed and killed by the "Touchables"—Roy's sardonic term for all higher castes; the Communist Party in Kerala; and forbidden love. The story is set in Ayemenem, Kerala, in 1969. The main actors are a well-to-do family of Syrian Christians who have a pair of seven-year-old twins who were born in 1962 "amidst rumours of Chinese occupation and India's impending defeat,"[137] for Indians still a traumatic event. The relations within this extended Christian family are nasty and dominated by intrigues, jealousy and physical violence. Are these Roy's own childhood memories? Maybe her pessimism and permanent revolt against injustice go indeed back to her own childhood.

Maltreatment of the Untouchables enrages Arundhati Roy. Velutha is an untouchable worker in the family's factory who has made himself indispensable by his unmatched technical competence. He is the most sympathetic, honest and humane character in the

whole story. But his professional and human success has given him an assurance that is unacceptable to the "Touchables," the higher castes. When a young cousin who visits from England drowns accidentally, Velutha is accused of murdering her, and when in addition it is discovered that he had a love affair beyond the forbidden caste boundary, his fate is sealed. A police detachment hunts him down and beats him to death. Roy is a left-wing radical, but no friend of the Communist Party. She despises the Communist Party of Kerala, its cynical power games, its corruption and its betrayals. Velutha is ultimately a victim of the Communist's betrayal because they could have saved him but did not do so "for ancient reasons of their own"—even they still adhered to the old caste discriminations.[138]

III. Three New Voices: The 21st Century

Several new, mostly young and hitherto unknown Indian-English fiction writers emerged rather suddenly between 2004 and 2009. Three will be reviewed: Aravind Adiga, Chetan Bhagat and Vikas Swarup. In style and mentality these three have a lot in common, and they differ from the older generation of "classical" novelists. They are bold, funny and irreverent. They too flay India's failings, but they do it in a jocular and less heavy-hearted way than did Desai, Rushdie, Naipaul, Seth and others. All three have already conquered a large Indian audience, mainly among the young, and a few of their books have also become popular in the West. Are they the new voice of India's letters, the voice of a new epoch? It is too early to tell, but it is clear that these authors have struck a chord with India's young urban readers who— to a large degree—have the future of the country in their hands. Those who want to understand India's youth should read Adiga, Bhagat and Swarup.

Adiga, Bhagat and Swarup do not mention Jews in the books we have read. Maybe this has no significance and will change when they continue to publish. Or maybe it is significant and means that this new generation has no use for Jews, the Holocaust, Israel, the Middle East conflict, etc. Their audiences and references are in India, not in the West. They seek the recognition of Mumbai and Bangalore, not of London. Some comments in these new books indicate that foreign models, opinions and events may no longer have the same import that they once had for a preceding generation of readers and writers. This could raise interesting challenges to other countries that plan to increase cultural links with India.

7. Aravind Adiga

Aravind Adiga, born 1974 in Chennai (Madras), Tamil Nadu, became world famous and controversial in India almost over night when he published in 2008 his first book *The White Tiger.*[139] The book contains fictitious letters, which an equally fictitious Balram Halwai writes to "His Excellency Wen Jiabao," Prime Minister of the "Freedom-Loving Nation of China." Thus, the tone is given at the very beginning. It is irresistibly funny, ironic, mordant—and deadly serious if one reads carefully. China's prime minister prepares a state visit to India and needs to better understand this complex country. Balram Halwai generously volunteers his advice to the premier. Balram is a low-caste Hindu from a small village. He can barely support his meagre life as a servant and driver of a rich and corrupt master in Delhi. While feigning obedience to his master he observes his country with a merciless eye and dreams of a better life. None of India's "holy cows" escapes his biting sarcasm. Not Gandhi. Not India's hard-won independence in 1947 when the "law of the zoo" (British rule) was replaced by the "law of the jungle." Not India's much vaunted democracy: "We may not have sewage, drinking water and Olympic gold medals but we *do* have democracy."[140] Not free elections: "the three main diseases of this country" are "typhoid, cholera and election fever." Not India's religious diversity embodied in "thirty-six million plus four" gods, of whom thirty-six million are busily protecting the Hindus, the trinity the Christians and one god the Muslims. Not the grandiloquent claims that India "invented everything from the

Internet to hard-boiled eggs to space-ships before the British stole it all from us."[141] And not India's astounding economic growth. One evening the narrator squats in the open to relieve himself, in line with hundreds of building workers who squat for the same purpose. They live and sleep in the open, near their half-completed skyscrapers. He looks away, ashamed like they are, but then looks up again and begins to laugh. They look back at him and laugh too. What do they laugh at? At the world's admiration for India's economic miracle? At our ignorance of the indignities that accompany it? Six hundred million Indians have no toilet, more than half of the total population. It took this young, irreverent Indian fiction writer to remind his readers of this unpalatable fact, otherwise mentioned among our authors, only by another merciless observer, V.S. Naipaul.[142]

Four issues dominate Balram's thought and fill his letters to Mr. Wen Jiabao: How will India cope with China's rise, how will it cope with its Muslims, with its pervasive corruption and with the horrific injustices committed against the poor and down-trodden? China haunts Balram like so many other Indians: "Parliamentary democracy...We will never catch up with China for this single reason." The Muslims are a riddle. Balram asks for China's advice: "Mr. Premier, have you noticed that all four of the greatest poets in the world are Muslims? And yet all the Muslims you meet are illiterate or covered head to toe in black burkas or looking for buildings to blow up? It's a puzzle, isn't it? If you ever figure these people out send me an e-mail."[143] Balram observes India's corruption from a safe distance until one day it strikes him directly. His master's wife, "Pinky Madam," gets drunk, takes her car and kills a child in a wild hit-and-run drive. Balram is asked to sign a "voluntary" admission that he was the guilty driver. "The jails of Delhi are full of drivers who are there behind bars because they are taking the blame for their good, solid, middle-class masters."[144] Balram's dream to become one of India's great entrepreneurs, which is the only asset India has over China, is compromised. But now a cruel plan begins to grow in his head: "A billion servants are secretly fantasizing about strangling their bosses." This is what Balram finally does, in a gruesome murder scene. He steals his boss's ill-gained money and sets up his own enterprise. His last letter informs the Chinese premier that even if he is caught, he will never regret having slit his master's throat because "it was all worthwhile to know...just for a minute, what it means not to be a servant."[145] Then he adds his new e-mail address, just in case Premier Wen Jiabao wants to reply.

There are no significant references to other nations or cultures in this book except for China. The reason appears toward the end when Balram turns in anger to India's youth. For too long have Indians looked for foreign advice and emulated foreign models: "People in this country are still waiting for the war of their freedom to come from somewhere else—from the jungles, from the mountains, from China, from Pakistan. This will never happen....The book of your revolution sits in the pit of your belly, young Indian. Crap it out, and read. Instead of which, they are all sitting in front of colour TV's and watching cricket and shampoo advertisements."[146] Now Aravind Adiga drops the buffoon's masks and gets serious. Other Indian intellectuals and leaders have made similar statements. But this attitude is not a fertile ground on which links between India and other cultures can flourish. However, Balram/Adiga does not believe for a moment that India is on its way out. On the contrary: "White men will be finished within my lifetime....My humble prediction: in twenty years' time, it will be just us yellow men and brown men at the top of the pyramid, and we'll rule the whole world. And God save everyone else."[147] Adiga's book is also a warning that the trajectory toward this goal might be less trouble-free and straightforward than some enthusiastic Indian authors want to believe.[148] Serious social upheavals could still lie ahead and the Communists or other radical parties may not have said their last word.

Almost hundred years before *The White Tiger,* Oswald Spengler, the German philosopher of history, predicted the end of the West within no more than two hundred years. Spengler left open who would replace the "white man," but today he would applaud Aravind Adiga's book that appeared exactly midway between his own book *The Decline of the West*, first published in 1917, and what he expected to be the final years of the West. Spengler added

that the Jews, for whom he had great sympathy, were doomed and would also disappear because they got themselves inextricably linked to the West.[149] Adiga's book is a useful reminder of Asia's fast-growing importance for the Jewish people.

8. Chetan Bhagat

Chetan Bhagat was born in New Delhi in 1974. By 2010 he had published four novels, the first in 2004 and three others in 2005, 2008 and 2009. They mainly report imaginary discussions between young Indians. Bhagat's success in India is phenomenal. He is the biggest selling English-language novelist in all of India's history. Each of his books was reprinted dozens of times and read by millions. Two books have already been turned into Bollywood movies. Bhagat has found a common language with India's young who turned him into a national cult figure. Is he the voice of a generation? The BBC has interviewed Bhagat extensively, but he is still barely known in the West and his books are difficult to get. We analyze two of them.

—*One Night at the Call Centre* (2005).[150] The writer reports that he wanted to write an Indian youth story. One night he met a beautiful, enigmatic Indian woman on a train ride to Delhi. She advises him to base his story on a call center because what is going on there reflects Indian youth better than the university campus. She also offers to help him to write a good story, but on one condition. He must promise to include in his book the most important call that will come during the night: a call from God. The writer is startled but agrees reluctantly. *One Night at the Call Centre* will turn out to be a religious wake-up call. This book is a transcript of imaginary conversations among six employees during one night in a call center in Delhi. Indian call centers help Western, mainly American companies in their operations. They take calls from customers and help them solve technical problems with newly bought appliances. More than 300,000 young Indians work in call centers, always in night shifts because of the time lag with the West.

The young employees of the call center banter about girls, bosses, job security—the same issues that would come up in the West. They have no interest in politics and despise all politicians: "All kinds of people...commit suicide. But politicians never do....People do it because they are really hurt. This means they feel something, but politicians don't. So, basically, this country is run by people who don't feel anything."[151] Not that India's earlier politicians have a greater reputation: India is poor because "the losers who have run our country for the last fifty years couldn't do better than make India one of the poorest countries on earth"[152]—so much for the Nehru dynasty. The six employees are interested in no foreign country or culture except America. Their attitude toward Americans is condescending: "The brain and IQ of a thirty-five-year-old American is the same as the brain of a ten-year old Indian."[153] Americans are "the biggest cowards on this planet"[154] says one of them. But this youth is resolute to help India make up for its lost years and get it out of its poverty and backwardness. Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* will say the same in 2008.

One night all six colleagues take a car for an outing, but they miss the road and the car slides into an open high-rise building site. It stops at the edge of a deep hole. The slightest movement could precipitate all of them falling to their death. They are terrified, and one of them tries to call for help but his cell phone is not connected. And then suddenly God calls. He tells them how to get out of danger and encourages them to correct the mistakes they have made in their recent lives. The caller finds it "unusual for God to use a cell phone, I had never considered my life important enough for God to call me."[155] God explains: "The most important call in the world is the inner call....The voice tells you what you really want....That voice is mine...I have a contract with all human beings: you do your best, and every now and then I will come and give you a supporting push."[156] They are saved and will change their lives.

Ignoring his original promise, our writer would like to leave the part with God out of the story, but his enigmatic lady companion persuades him to let God stays in. The train approaches Delhi. Suddenly her face begins to shine, and he sees an open book at her side with a quote from the Bhagavad-Gita, Hinduism's best-known sacred text: "Always think of Me, become My devotee, worship Me and offer your homage unto Me...."[157] His head begins to spin and she places her hand on it. He loses consciousness. When he opens his eyes she has disappeared. He is kneeling on the floor with his head down. "Do you need help?" asked a passing porter.

One Night at the Call Centre strikes a secular Western reader as naïve if not bizarre. In a Western country stories of a divine appearance or of salvation by miraculous, divine intervention will not become nationwide bestsellers for educated readers. Apparently India is different. Is this the old India that is still alive, or did Bhagat detect a major movement back to religion among India's youth? If this is so, some details of the story are noteworthy. All characters of the story are Hindus, but neither Brahma nor Shiva nor Krishna nor any other Hindu god is ever mentioned. It is always God with a capital "G." A Jew might find the story striking. It contains essential components of his own religion: an invisible, almighty God who speaks to people and controls their fate, who demands of his faithful to worship Him and who in ancient times was sending prophets and intermediaries to proclaim his message. In fact, Hinduism has developed monotheistic streaks, both in ancient times and in the early 19th century. The Hindu reformer Raja Rammohan Roy (1774-1833) called for a far-reaching reform of Hinduism, back to what he regarded as the religion's authentic values, namely belief in the unity of God.[158] What did Chetan Bhagat's have in mind when he introduced such ideas into a bestseller for Indian youth?

—*The 3 Mistakes of my Life: A Story about Business, Cricket and Religion*.[159] *The 3 Mistakes of my Life,* Chetan Bhagat's third novel is a political manifesto. The story's background tells of the dramatic events that occurred in 2001 and 2002 in the state of Gujarat and its capital Ahmedabat where Bhagat had spent most of his happy childhood. In January 2001 an earthquake destroyed a part of the state and buried 30,000 people or more. In February 2002 Hindu extremists incited a mob to massacre hundreds of Muslim civilians, as revenge for an arson attack on a train where more than fifty Hindu pilgrims had been burned alive. Bhagat dedicates the book "to my country, which called me back," and states his goal at the beginning: it is "making India read."[160] He reached his goal in no time: *The 3 Mistakes of my Life* was published in 2008; at the beginning of 2010 it was already into its seventy-fourth reprint!

"Business, cricket and religion," as the subtitle suggests, are three of the main preoccupations of India's young generation. The reader encountered business and religion already in *One Night in a Call Centre*; cricket is new. The background of the story is Ahmedabat's intercommunal violence of 2002. This will engulf four young friends who are ardent cricket fans. Three are agnostic Hindus. The fourth is Ali, a small, subdued Muslim boy from a poor family. Ali shows an extraordinary gift for cricket. He is so outstanding that his three friends decide to invest their money into training for him to turn him into one of India's top national cricket players. But then the earthquake and the anti-Muslim riots that follow the burning of the train with Hindu pilgrims intervene. Ali narrowly survives the riots, recovers from his wounds and becomes one of India's leading national cricket players.

Bhagat's educational novel confronts India's extremism and intolerance and in this particular case Hindu intolerance. "The problem in Indian Hindu-Muslim rivalry is not that the one is right and the other is wrong...It is...that there are no conciliatory mechanisms."[161] And "in India you don't know whether someone will like you or hate you because you are from a certain place."[162] Bhagat published his book in 2008 when the campaigning for India's national elections of 2009 was in its early stages. The outcome was a victory of the secular Congress Party and a relative defeat of religious parties. It seems that Bhagat, like

great fiction writers in other civilizations, was able to gauge the mood of the time better than some of the pollsters who had not predicted this result.

The 3 Mistakes of my Life is not interested in foreign affairs, no more than *One Night in a Call Centre* was. It rarely mentions other countries: Australia several times because India lost a major cricket match to its rival, and once—Israel. After the September 11 attack, "the Israeli Prime Minister" is quoted as saying that "the world will never be the same again."[163] The quote is innocuous and without any positive or negative connotations. However, it does corroborate a research result by the Samuel Neaman Institute in Haifa that found that most of the Indian middle-class individuals polled knew virtually nothing about Israel, and when they did know something, it often centered on the Middle East conflict.[164]

9. Vikas Swarup

Vikas Swarup was born in 1963 in Allahabad. Since 1986 he has been a career diplomat in the Indian Foreign Service. His first record-selling novel *Q and A* about a penniless waiter of Mumbai who becomes the biggest quiz show winner in history was translated into thirty-four languages and turned into the best Hollywood movie of 2008, *Slumdog Millionaire*.

—*Six Suspects.*[165] His second book *Six Suspects* appeared in the same year. Swarup is as bold as Adiga and Bhagat in laying bare all of India's crimes and faults—murder, corruption, theft, inefficiency, dirt—but he is even more hilarious than they are. The book is so funny that some readers might love India more and not less after they have read it. It is very similar in intention and tone to the books of Adiga and Bhagat. The key story is about the murder of a rich, despicable character who is the son of a minister. He had shot dead a young bar-maid who, following Indian laws, had refused to prepare one more drink for him because he was already completely drunk. A short time later he was killed himself. The police pick up six suspects. Who is the murderer? The narrative branches out into a complex web of parallel stories, one of which is about Muslim terrorism and thus interesting in our context. One of the six murder suspects is a simple-minded, obviously innocent Texan forklift driver who was lured to India by a fraudulent marriage advertisement and is relieved of all his money. He is kidnapped by three Muslim terrorists who keep beating him badly and threaten him with execution if the United States does not accept their conditions. Exactly at the moment when he is forced to shovel his own grave a CIA drone strikes their hideout and kills the three Muslims while the Texan survives. Swarup's description of the exchanges between the American who barely understands what is happening to him and his three captors who are not familiar with the American's Texan idiom are among the more hilarious pages of the book: The author turns a cruel kidnapping suspense into a permanent laughing matter. The irreverence with which this Indian diplomat scrutinizes and lampoons the beliefs of the three Muslims is striking. One is an Arab, one is Pakistani and one is an Afghan. Swarup brings to light their sexual obsessions, which are presented as a key source of their religious fanaticism. He shows their lust for money and plunder and their unconcealed addiction to everything American, particularly technology. All three are called Abu-something, the one most interested in computers and other technological gadgets is "Abu Teknikal. As *Six Suspects* was published in 2008, it cannot be seen as a reaction to the Mumbai terror attacks that took place at the end of November 2008. Swarup reacted to earlier Muslim terror and kidnappings in India and the world, and his reaction is ridicule and contempt, not a rationalization of Muslim rage allegedly due to discrimination, foreign occupation, and so forth, as can sometimes be found among Western commentators.

IV. One Philosopher

10. Amartya Sen

Amartya Kumar Sen is a liberal Hindu, born 1933 in West Bengal, today Bangladesh. He is a philosopher and economist who received a Nobel Prize in economics, one of many distinctions that he received from other sources. *Time* magazine counted him as one of the world's one hundred most important intellectuals. He certainly is the foremost Indian intellectual currently living in the West. We include him in this list of fiction writers in order to get an additional and different perspective on the place of Jews and Judaism in contemporary Indian thought. Do Sen's views match those of the great novelists, or do they contradict them? Two of Sen's main books will be reviewed.

—*The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian Culture, History and Identity.*[166] This has become a widely read modern book about Indian culture. It covers a kaleidoscope of subjects and ideas. Sen mentions Indian Jews and their origins from biblical times to the 19th century more than a dozen times, even referring to the ethnographic work of the Israeli scholar Shalva Weil who studied Indian Jewish communities. All his mentions are brief but respectful. "India had the benefit of having Jews much longer than Europe"[167] he writes, a gracious way of using India's long history to convey a discreet compliment to the Jews, though not to Europe. He touches upon the history of world Judaism once, but makes a significant factual error. He emphasizes that Islam had a long tradition of tolerance of other religions and offers as proof the life of Maimonides "who fled the persecution of Jews in Spain in the twelfth century to seek shelter in Emperor Saladin's Egypt."[168] Amartya Sen does apparently not know that Maimonides was forced to flee from the Almohades (fanatical Muslims who massacred the Jews of Spain, drove them out or forced them to convert to Islam). He seems to infer that the persecutors were Christians. What the case of Maimonides shows is that Muslims most often tolerated Jews, but always treated them as inferior and at regular intervals also persecuted them. Sen's historic scholarship is phenomenal but here his scholarship yields to a deeply ingrained Indian ideology according to which Muslims did not persecute or harm Jews, only European Christians did. We have come across the same ideology in the works of some of India's novelists.

Amartya Sen paints a fresco of Indian culture and history that is at variance with some of the West's traditional ideas about his homeland. India, an immensely diverse country, has never been exclusively Hindu. India is quintessentially an "argumentative" civilization. It had to accept doubt, heterodoxy and dialogue. The "roots of scepticism" in India go back a long way, with "masses of arguments and counterarguments spread over incessant debates and disputations."[169] The *Mahabaratha* presents two contrary arguments because we must take note not only of the arguments that won but also of those that lost.

Some of the spiritual and cultural parallels between Indians and Jews are compelling.[170] Judaism too has been called an "argumentative" creed that had often coped with heterodoxy. The Talmud is one giant compendium of "arguments and counterarguments spread over incessant debates and disputations," and the Talmudic text often also carefully records the arguments that lost. "Scepticism" exists already in rabbinic Judaism and became stronger from the 17th century on. Amartya Sen never refers to such parallels, be it that Judaism is too marginal to *The Argumentative Indian*, or that he knows too little of it. And there are more parallels. An Indian genealogical tradition says that "all human beings have the same father"[171]—among ancient civilizations to the west of India probably only the Jews shared the same belief. It is enshrined in the creation story of *Genesis*. Another parallel can be found in Indian Buddhism. Buddhism like Judaism enhanced the social importance of literacy because of the religious importance of the written text.[172] Sen points to the importance of literacy and heterodoxy as among the main roots of scientific creativity, which developed in ancient India. There are similar explanations for

scientific excellence among the Jews of modern times. It is scepticism and the departure from orthodoxy that nourished in both civilizations the "courage to disagree,"[173] which is so essential to scientific discovery. An in-depth comparison of Indian and Jewish civilizations remains to be done. Amartya Sen does not do it. He is not at all prejudiced against Judaism, on the contrary. He is at home in Western, Indian, Chinese, Muslim cultures and philosophies, but perhaps less so in Judaism. This seems to confirm what we found among Indian fiction writers too.

—*The Idea of Justice.*[174] This is Amartya Sen's latest (2009) major work, which has been greeted as an epoch-making contribution to the history of philosophy and to the improvement of our troubled, imperfect world. Sen defines his aim most succinctly: "What is presented here is a theory of justice in a very broad sense. Its aim is to clarify how we can proceed to address questions of enhancing justice and removing injustice, rather than to offer resolutions of questions about the nature of perfect justice."[175] Amartya Sen proposes a political philosophy that aims at reducing injustices on earth rather then drawing up blueprints for an ideally just but utopian state. Reducing injustice calls for alternative assessments, criteria for a comparative justice and global perspectives.

The idea of justice is absolutely essential to every period of Jewish history and every branch of Judaism, biblical and rabbinic, orthodox and liberal. Judaism can be seen as a permanent debate about the nature and practice of justice and an unending fight against injustice. Amartya Sen offers many concrete examples from the history of the West, of Greece, India and Islam, but only one that can be called Jewish, though with reservations. It is the story of the "Good Samaritan" in the New Testament.[176] "Love your neighbor as yourself"[177] is a central commandment of the Jewish Bible, repeated in various forms in the Christian Bible too. But "who is our neighbor?" asks Amartya Sen. The answer to this question will help define justice as well as injustice.

The story of the Good Samaritan claims to answer the question of "who is our neighbor." A Jew is attacked and gravely injured by robbers who leave him bleeding on the wayside. A priest and a Levite from the temple of Jerusalem pass by and ignore him. It is a Samaritan who belongs to a minority shunned by the Jews, who saves the injured man. Hence, says Jesus who is reported as telling the story, it is a foreigner, a Samaritan who acted as the real "neighbor" to the injured Jew, not the servants of the Jewish temple. Jesus's point is that the definition and borders of "neighborhood" must be flexible. The story as narrated in *Luke* has an obviously polemical, anti-Jewish, intent. The historian Geza Vermes notes that the story conflicts with other New Testament quotes of Jesus who is reported as sharing the general Jewish hostility against the Samaritans. Vermes therefore suggests that the version in *Luke* is not authentic but was created by the early Church.[178] In fact there were intense rabbinic discussions about the scope and meaning of the "love-your-neighbor" commandment both before and after Jesus, but Amartya Sen is probably not aware of them. He knows this key component of Jewish ethics only after it was passed through a Christian filter used to prove the superiority of the Christian faith. The same problem emerged already in the work of another Indian, V.S. Naipaul. He refers to the "Golden Rule"—"do unto others as you would have others do unto you"—as the basis of his own ethics and calls it a Christian principle when originally it is an older, Jewish one. Neither Sen nor Naipaul are Christian. Both know and cherish principles of Jewish ethics, but only in a modified and partly polemical Christian form as many Western Christians do. We argued earlier that the encounter of the Jewish people with the great civilizations of Asia could be a historic chance because these civilizations carry no anti-Jewish baggage; they have no theological argument with Judaism. Of course, if Judaism is known only through a Christian prism as is sometimes the case in India, this chance could easily turn into a liability. To sum up, one may say that Amartya Sen's work corroborates several conclusions that can also be drawn from the lecture of great Indian fiction.

India in Contemporary Jewish Fiction

We will ask a reverse question, complementary to the one that this article has tried to answer. What is the image of India in Jewish and Israeli fiction, and how does it compare to the image of Judaism in Indian fiction? We found only two Jewish novelists who wrote books with Indian themes in English or were translated into English: the Indian Jewish author Esther David and the Israeli A.B. Yehoshua. There are a few more books by lesser known authors in Hebrew. They have not been translated and critics have said that they are of low literary quality. Apparently no American or other well-known Jewish novelist has written fiction about India. In spite of the limited material available, a comparison between the two views—the Indian literary view about Jews and the Jewish literary view about India—is revealing. It shows profound understanding and sympathy for India by two important Jewish mainstream authors, not matched by equally strong sympathy for Jews and Israel by Indian authors.

1. Esther David

Esther David was born in 1945 to a Jewish (Bene Israel) family in Ahmedabat, the capital of Gujarat where she often lives. She wrote, among others, five partly fictional and partly autobiographic books about the Jews of India. Her work is a beautiful testimony to the saga of her people, but though some of her books have been translated into Gujarati she has no national following in India comparable to that of the great Indian novelists reviewed in the preceding pages. India has never known any antagonism to Jews but has never shown much interest in them either. The Jews were unproblematic and too few.

Regrettably, Esther David is not sufficiently known to the Jewish and Israeli reading public. The history and culture of India's Jews is a fascinating chapter of Jewish Diaspora history. Indian Jews have shown a capacity for creative cultural interaction with religions and civilizations not linked to the Bible. Hindu civilization is very different from most other civilizations the Jews have encountered in their long history, except for China of course. The prosperity and longevity of the Jewish communities in India shed doubt on a Western theory according to which Jews remained Jews for so long only because of external pressure. There was little or no hostile external pressure on the Jews of India yet most remained Jews to the core and did not forget the land of Israel. However, Esther David's stories also show that India's independence brought changes when it became easier to cross the visible and invisible walls between religions and communities. Jewish children had Hindu friends and became more familiar with Hindu practices. Some of their elders began to fear a danger of "assimilation," but just then the State of Israel was born. The immigration of the bulk of the community put an end to most Hindu-Jewish interaction and with it also to many dilemmas. The history of Indian Jews raises fundamental questions about Jewish world history. How would Diaspora Judaism, Jewish law and history have developed in the absence of daily interaction with, and hostility from Christianity and Islam? It will never be known for sure, but Indian Judaism allows for some fascinating "virtual history" speculations.

—*The Walled City.*[179] Esther David's first novel (1997) is an autobiography of her childhood and adolescence in the "Walled City," the old inner city of Ahmedabat where she grew up in a tightly knit traditional Jewish environment. The book traces the strictly controlled lives of three generations of women in an extended Jewish family. The stone walls of Ahmedabat are a metaphor for many other walls: walls between religions and communities and walls between generations. But the winds of change begin to challenge old patterns of life and thought. Some religious tension is in the air. The Hindu majority shows no hostility to Jews, but there is self-questioning among Jewish youngsters. Esther's best friend is a Hindu girl, Subhadra. As a meat-eater Esther is not allowed into Subhadra's family kitchen. "Between

us there is a wall of dead animals and birds," and Esther remembers that she felt "ridden with guilt for the ways of my ancestors."[180] "Sometimes I question my Jewishness." The colorful and noisy Hindu festivals in temples and streets attract her, but she also knows that it is "terribly un-Jewish" to celebrate the festivals of other religions. Could these be signs of a beginning cross-cultural conflict? Esther's beloved maternal grandmother tries to persuade the young generation to immigrate to the recently born State of Israel.

The chronicle of this family develops against the background of the sights, sounds and fragrances of India. Esther David brings the "magic of India" to live like few other novelists. Her description of India's foods, spices and cooking, of animals and plants, of music, scents and textures are enchanting. An Indian reviewer called her book a "living archive," a "visit to the childhood museum." But she also remembers the horrors of India and her childhood fears. She sees an insane woman lying naked in the street, screaming in pain. The woman is giving birth, but the little girl does not understand. Says a bystander: "Men are beasts. They don't even leave a madwoman alone. The child will now belong to the street. The beggars will help." The girl has a bad night but next morning her mother tells her firmly, "You did not hear anything last night. It was a bad dream."[181] Esther David's images of India's dark sides are stark, but it is the enchantment and magic that are likely to carry the day in the memory of her readers.

—*Book of Rachel.*[182] The book's action takes place toward the end of the 20th century in Danda in the Konkan region south of Bombay. A large part of the Bene Israel lived in this and in other villages of the Konkan. Most of them left for Israel. *The Walled City* had shown how Jewish history in India began to unravel; the *Book of Rachel* shows the closing chapters.

Rachel is an aging Bene Israel woman who stayed in India although her daughter and two sons have immigrated to Israel. Her dilemma—having to choose between her love for her family and her love for India, her village and the tomb of her husband—is painful. She cannot imagine living in a country other than India. The Hindus in the village are "caring and affectionate" with her. She speaks Marathi with the right accent and knows all the Maharashtran customs so well that her friends introduce her to other Hindu visitors as a Brahmin. To give her life meaning, Rachel has become the caretaker of the village's abandoned synagogue, but "without a community what was the sense of a house of prayer?"[183] Her life changes completely when she learns that members of the synagogue board have decided to sell the land on which the synagogue stands. Rachel confronts them: "I have been a servant of the Lord, not of your synagogue committee."[184] Then she discovers an 18th- century document proving that the land belonged to her family. It was Shivaji Maharaj, the 17th-century Hindu ruler of the Maratha (current-day Maharashtra) region, who had given the land to her family to show his gratitude for the help he had received from the Jews in his independence struggles. This is Esther David's only reference to an event from India's larger national history. Most of the Jews of the Konkan lived all their lives in their villages, and in Esther David's story they barely took note of India's larger national history.

The synagogue board had already asked a Hindu lawyer to prepare the sale of the land, but the evil scheme comes to naught when the lawyer "had a strange but mystical encounter, a divine one."[185] Suddenly he saw an old man in front of him, astride a horse, and he became paralyzed, unable to move. "I knew it had been a spiritual visitation....At that very moment I decided to cancel the deal." Rachel knew it was the "handiwork of the Prophet Elijah." Indian Jews worshipped Elijah and used to ask him for intercession in case of need. The *Book of Rachel* ends with a divine appearance just like Chetan Bhagat's *One Night at the Call Centre,* which was published one year earlier in 2005. In India, religion intrudes into every aspect of life even today, and divine appearances are apparently still expected to happen to people from all walks of life. There is no criticism of anything Indian

in the entire book. For Esther David's last Konkani Jews, the image of India continues to shine brightly.

2. Abraham B. Yehoshua

Abraham B. Yehoshua was born in 1936 to a fifth-generation Sephardi family in Jerusalem. He is one of Israel's best and most widely known and translated fiction writers. He is a persistent critic of Israeli society and of its government policies and professor emeritus of literature at the University of Haifa. Many of his books are set both in Israel and in a foreign country.

—*Open Heart.*[186] In the Hebrew original, the book's title is *"Shiva me-Hodu," Return from India. Open Heart* is set in Israel and India. A.B. Yehoshua had never visited India when he wrote this book. Yet his images of people, places and ceremonies are so detailed and realistic that they can captivate even readers who know India well. A young Israeli internist, Beniy, accompanies his hospital director and the director's wife to India to bring home the couple's daughter Einat who has come down with a life-threatening case of Hepatitis B. Einat is infatuated with India and its spirituality. The three travelers spend several days in Varanasi to watch the crowds of pilgrims, the funeral pyres and the colorful ceremonies at the border of the Ganges. Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* described similar scenes, which ended in horror. In Seth's narrative a panic had led to hundreds of pilgrims being crushed to death, but this is not the image of India that A.B. Yehoshua wants to convey to his readers.

This book is a discreet homage to the tens of thousands of young Israeli visitors who are attracted by the magic of India. It is also an interrogation about their motives. The writer wants to understand the genuine though often naïve seekers of truth and spirituality who flock to India because they need a respite from Israel. Jewish seekers after Eastern spirituality—Hinduism, Buddhism, Tibet, Zen or whatever—are not a new story. Already the Mahatma Gandhi knew them well and once scolded one of his admirers, a Jewish woman from England who begged him to convert her to Hinduism.[187] A.B. Yehoshua is not sarcastic about these "Indian Israelis," but he has no illusions about them either. "Beyond the poverty and ugliness [of India] there was a spiritual power that could suck them in, especially those whose sense of identity was tenuous, who felt unable to achieve their ambitions, and who were always quick to look for a way of escape."[188] India affects the attitude of visitors toward religion. Beniy marries a friend of Einat, Michaela, who is equally in love with India and has spent a long time there as member of a small team providing free medical help to the poor. When he asks his bride whether Buddhists are allowed to marry, she shoots back in anger, "Buddhism isn't another vicious religion looking for ways to oppress people and frighten them [read: like Judaism], but a means of alleviating inevitable suffering."[189] But under the wedding canopy her feelings change. She likes the strict Orthodox rabbi who performs the ceremony. "She did not find the ceremony too long...(it) excited her with its exoticism. From the day she had left India she had been thirsty for ritual...and enjoyed connecting the mystery she found in our marriage ceremony with all those rites and rituals she had come across in the streets of India."[190] Michaela, Einat and others try to clarify what India does to them. They grapple for words: "There is something very strong here. It's hard to explain. Something very ancient—not like historical ruins in Israel, it's not historical, it's real."[191] The most compelling is the sense of time. Time's different there—it's free, open, not harnessed to some goal....It's the true time, the time that hasn't been spoiled yet."[192]

At the beginning of the story Beniy the young doctor and the hospital director do not share Michaela's, Einat's and other backpackers' enthusiastic longings for India, but the impressions from their first encounter with the country are so strong that they reconsider many of their preconceptions. The hospital director was first "shocked and horrified...and especially indignant at the sight of the sick and maimed lying abandoned," but then began

to ask the question "whether the great gap between our own world and theirs granted us a spiritual advantage too." Perhaps it was just they "who can give us a truer sense of the universe through which we pass so quickly, and help us to assuage the longings we feel for immortality."[193]

A.B. Yehoshua does not ignore India's famished, sick and dying, but does not dwell on the scenes of poverty, disease, corruption and violence as Rushdie, Naipaul, Seth and other Indian novelists like to do. He too knows very well that terrible abuses still happen in India. He describes how Michaela and Einat once watched a widow being burned in a remote village and even for this horror the two young India-lovers try to find explanations if not excuses. Yehoshua's purpose is not to criticize India or Israel; the first he leaves to his Indian colleagues and the second he does abundantly on other occasions: is purpose is to explore India's spiritual meaning for so many young Israelis. *Open Heart* is a little monument of sympathy and an invitation to a meeting between cultures. Esther David's books about the Jews of India are equally respectful of India but do not have the same large audience. A.B. Yehoshua has a large following. His India book was reviewed by many journals and read by a large number of people. The Israeli film director Menahem Golan turned it into the movie *Return from India: A Story of Forbidden Love,* which many Israelis have seen. No other novelist has written anything equally significant about the current links between India, Israel and Jews.

A Summary

The "raw material" of this article are twenty-five English fiction books by nine Indian, and three by two Jewish novelists, all famous 20th- and 21st-century authors. We found five Indian books that place a Jewish hero—or counterhero—into the center of their narrative (Anita Desai, Amitav Gosh, Salman Rushdie with two books and Vikram Seth), and at least five more that contain significant references to Jews, Judaism or Israel. Three Jewish novels set in India (two by Esther David and one by A.B. Yehoshua) were chosen to provide a counterpoint to the Indian novels about Jews.

In order to assess whether the opinions put forward by these Indian books reflect more widely held views among the Indian elites, we needed corroborating evidence from other sources. This we found in the works of three authors: India's internationally best-known economist and philosopher Amartya Sen, India's leading Israel expert P.R. Kumaraswamy and the historian Yulia Egorova, who analyzed the views that important Indian politicians and intellectuals of the last 150 years have voiced about Judaism. It appears that the five Indian novels about Jews represent ideas that are or were more widespread among the Indian reading public.

Five books about Jews and Judaism is a relatively significant number, considering that Jews played almost no role in Indian history and exerted no known influence on India's old civilization, nothing comparable to the enormous role of Jews in the history of Christianity and Islam. These five books were written more than a hundred years after Jews began to appear regularly in Russian, West European and American literature. Thus, after the Holocaust and the creation of the State of Israel, Jews and their fate have for the first time raised interest and entered the conscience of a great civilization from which they had largely been absent before. But interest does not necessarily mean deep understanding or sympathy. There is strong sympathy for the dead Jews of the Holocaust and appreciation of their suffering by Desai, Seth, Rushdie and others, which is important in a country that has 200 million or more Muslims, and in the work of Amitav Gosh there is sympathy for a Jewish 12th-century trader who was linked to India. But generally there is little perceptible knowledge of the Jewish religion and civilization or of Jewish and Israeli history. References to Israel are rare and indifferent, unflattering or plainly hostile. Only Rushdie shows considerable knowledge of Jews and Jewish history in India and the West and a nostalgic respect for the Jews of India who have left the country. However, the Jewish "heroes" in his

two books with Jewish themes are certainly clever and powerful, but also profoundly immoral. This bitter satirist is no more anti-Jewish than he is anti-Islamic, anti-Hindu or anti-Christian, but by borrowing and spreading anti-Semitic stereotypes that were alien to traditional India, he risks doing more harm to Jews than his parodies of individual Muslims, Hindus or Christians would do to their respective communities.

There are certainly Indian intellectuals and diplomats who are as widely read about Judaism and Israel as any Western intellectual, and these are the Indians whom Jews and Israelis are most likely to meet. Nevertheless we suggest that the paucity of knowledge about Jews and Judaism that can be found even in the reviewed books is a widespread Indian phenomenon. A research team of the Samuel Neaman Institute in Haifa has in 2009 come to the same conclusion.[194] Most of the Indian middle-class individuals polled know virtually nothing about Israel—and by inference it is most unlikely that they know more about Judaism. Ignorance is sometimes compounded by a second problem. Indians know more about Christianity and Christians, both local and foreign, than they know about Jews. Therefore, Judaism is sometimes seen through polemical Christian eyes, or cherished principles of biblical morality are presented as purely Christian although their origin is Jewish.

If there is one concern that dominates the work of nearly all Indian authors it is Islam. Indian writers are deeply concerned with the place of Islam in India and the world, with past or current violence between Hindus and Muslims and the need for India's religions to live in peace with each other. One can find many references to the origin and history of Islam in the works of our writers, but nothing on the relationship between Judaism and Islam or Muhammad's brutal encounters with the Jews of Arabia, and almost nothing on the Jews of Islam in our time, particularly the tragedy of their flight and expulsion from Arab and other countries where they had resided for two thousand years. P.R. Kumaraswamy has shown that the Indian intelligentsia has often refused to admit that concern about Indian Muslims has biased India's policy toward Israel. Admitting such an influence would put an unwelcome question mark over the official claim that India is a secular country where no religion can determine foreign policy. In public discourse the issue is for many a "taboo" area. It seems that a similar "taboos" exists even in Indian literature.

A large gap separates the image of India in Jewish literature from the image of Judaism and Jews in Indian literature. Can one speak of a contemporary "Jewish view" of India, and do a few Jewish novels represent such views? The material upon which to base a provisional answer to this question is limited: the books of the Jewish Indian writer Esther David, two of which are included in our inquiry, and one widely read novel by Israel's famous author A.B. Yehoshua. We have not been able to identify novels about India written by other, equally well-known Jewish mainstream writers.

The contrast between Indian and Jewish literature is striking. Esther David and A.B. Yehoshua show not only a broad and sophisticated knowledge of India, but also an intuitive understanding and profound sympathy for the country, its people and culture. Judging from the large number of Israeli backpackers who stream to India and the smaller numbers of Israelis and Jews captivated by Indian spirituality, India seems to be popular among many younger Jews. Esther David and A.B. Yehoshua wrote their books for an already receptive audience.

P.R. Kumaraswamy has reviewed the long, strenuous efforts that Jewish, Zionist and Israeli leaders have made to reach out to India and ask for India's friendship. He compared these efforts to India's often cool, indifferent and sometimes hostile reaction, and spoke of "unrequited love."[195] There seems to be an element of "unrequited love" even in literature: Jewish writers showing deep understanding and sympathy for India, versus Indian writers acknowledging the Holocaust and showing some interest in Jews, but little affection, and certainly not for Israel.

But "India is malleable" said an Indian friend of Israel, and India is changing. One of the tasks of a Jewish and Israeli cultural outreach to India should be to better acquaint

India's writers—at least the younger generation—and their reading public with Judaism and Jewish and Israeli history. The future will be long. Compared to the length of Indian and Jewish history, the literary relationship between the two cultures has barely begun.

Notes

[1] This article is a greatly extended version of Chapter 6 from *India, Israel and the Jewish People: From History to Geopolitics* by Shalom Salomon Wald and Arielle Kandel to be published in late 2014 by Jewish People Policy Institute (JPPI) in Jerusalem. The text has been critically reviewed by several experts: Antoine Halff, Arielle Kandel, Dr. Shimon Low, Dr. Kenneth Robbins, Prof. Yitchak Shichor. Thanks are expressed for their numerous, helpful comments.

[2] See for example Fu Xiaowei, "Chinese Views of Israel and Judaism and the Mission of the CJCS" (The Center of Judaic and Chinese Studies at Sichuan International Studies University in Chongqing), *Points East: The Sino-Judaic Institute*, 25, 1 (March 2010): 12ff.

[3] Yulia Egorova, *Jews and India: Perceptions and Image* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

[4] P.R. Kumaraswamy, *India's Israel Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

[5] *Words on Water: India and Israel in Conversation*, A Meeting between Indian and Israeli Writers in Mishkenoth Shaananim, Jerusalem, December 5, 2011.

[6] V.S. Naipaul, *An Area of Darkness* (London: Picador, 1964, 2002), p. 230.

[7] Egorova, *Jews and India,* pp. 2, 7, 9, 12.

[8] See for example "Top 10 Indian Writers in English Today," www.chillibreeze.com of May 23, 2010, a website that includes Adiga, Bhagat, Desai, Gosh, Rushdie and Seth, that is six of our nine, among the ten most important writers. There are several other, almost identical lists, with the main difference being that most include also Naipaul among the ten.

[9] www.sotosay.worldpress.com/2009/10/21/an-essay-on-nissim-ezekiels-background-casually, April 28, 2013.

[10] www.poemhunter.com/nissim-ezekiel, April 28, 2013.

[11] Rajendra Dengle, "*Ranangan* or Response in Marathi Literature to the Theme of Jewish Emigration," *Jewish Exile in India 1933-1945*, ed. Anil Bhatti and Johannes H. Voigt (New Delhi: Manohar-MaxMuellerBhavan, 1999), pp. 172-85.

[12] Thanks are expressed to the India experts Mr. Shimon Low, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Dr. Kenneth Robbins, Washington, DC and Dr. Ornit Shani, University of Haifa, who helped the author in identifying the relevant Indian fiction books.

[13] Anita Desai, *Baumgartner's Bombay* (London: Vintage Books, 1998; first publ. London: W. Heinemann Ltd., 1988).

[14] Rainer Lotz and Rekha Kamath, "Interculturality: A View from Below: Anita Desai's *Baumgartner's Bombay," Jewish Exile in India 1933-1945,* ed. Anil Bhatti and Johannes H. Voigt (New Delhi: Manohar-MaxMuellerBhavan, 1999), pp. 163ff.

[15] Desai, *Baumgartner,* p. 20.

[16] Ibid., pp. 104ff.

[17] Ibid., p. 27.

[18] Anita Desai, *In Custody* (London: Vintage Books, 1999; first publ. London: W. Heinemann Ltd., 1984).

[19] Anita Desai, *Fasting, Feasting* (London: Vintage Books, 2000; first publ. London: Chatto & Windus, 1999).

[20] Ibid., p. 104.

[21] Amitav Gosh, *In an Antique Land* (London: Granta Books, 1998; first publ. 1992).

[22] Ibid., p. 210.

[23] Ibid., p. 13.

[24] S.D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza,* 5 vols. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967-1988).
[25] The book was completed and published twenty-eight years after Goitein's death. It is a comprehensive collection of the India-related letters from the Cairo *Geniza* in English translation: *India Traders from the Middle Ages—Documents from the Cairo Geniza ("India Book"),* by S.D. Goitein and Mordechai Akiva Friedman (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2008), 918 pages (also published in Hebrew by the Ben-Zvi Institute, Jerusalem).
[26] Gosh, *Antique,* p. 339.
[27] Ibid., p. 95.
[28] Kumaraswamy, *India's Israel Policy,* pp. 15, 68ff.
[29] Egorova, *Jews and India,* p. 62.
[30] Amitav Gosh, *Sea of Poppies* (London: John Murray, 2009; first publ. 2008).
[31] Ibid., p. 521.
[32] Ibid., p. 449.
[33] Ibid., pp. 120, 121.
[34] Ibid., pp. 531ff.
[35] Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* (London: Vintage Books, 2008; first publ. London: Jonathan Cape, 1981).
[36] Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (London: Vintage Books, 2006; first publ. 1988).
[37] Ibid., p. 163.
[38] Ibid., pp. 295ff.
[39] Ibid., p. 298.
[40] Ibid., p. 125.
[41] Ibid., pp. 175ff.
[42] Ibid., p. 323.
[43] Ibid., p. 467.
[44] Salman Rushdie, *The Moor's Last Sigh* (London: Vintage Books, 2006; first publ. London: Jonathan Cape, 1995).
[45] J.M. Coetzee, "Palimpsest Regained," *The New York Review of Books*, 43, 5 (March 21, 1996).
[46] Rushdie, *Moor,* pp. 70ff.
[47] This is mentioned in Maina Chawla Singh, *Being Indian, Being Israeli: Migration, Ethnicity and Gender in the Jewish Homeland* (Delhi: Manohar, 2009), p. 106.
[48] Rushdie, *Moor,* p. 98.
[49] Ibid., p. 87.
[50] This story, reported by Rushdie happened really in 1550 when the allied Cochin and Portuguese armies fought against the Raja of Vatakkenkur. The Raja of Cochin refused to attack on a Saturday because his Jews would not fight and they "were the best warriors he had raised." See David Mandelbaum, "The Jewish Way of Life in Cochin," *Jewish Social Studies,* 1 (Oct. 1939): pp. 423-60.
[51] Rushdie, *Moor*, p. 119.
[52] Oral communication by Dr. Ophira Gamliel, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
[53] Mandelbaum, "Jewish Way of Life," p. 100.
[54] Rushdie, *Moor,* p. 180.
[55] Ibid., p. 337.
[56] Ibid., p. 341.
[57] Singh, *Being Indian,* pp. 56, 96ff.
[58] Rushdie, *Moor,* p. 417.
[59] Ibid., p. 388.
[60] Ibid., p. 170.

[61] Egorova, *Jews and India*, p. 80.
[62] Salman Rushdie, *Shalimar the Clown* (London: Vintage Books, 2006; first publ. London: Jonathan Cape, 2005).
[63] John Updike, "Paradises Lost: Rushdie's Shalimar the Clown," *The New Yorker,* Sept. 5, 2005.
[64] Rushdie, *Shalimar,* p. 221.
[65] Ibid., p. 10.
[66] Ibid., pp. 337ff.
[67] Ibid., pp. 544ff.
[68] See Egorova, *Jews and India,* p. 69.
[69] Anna Guttman, "Fear of a Jewish Planet?: Jewishness, Globalization and Cosmopolitanism in Salman Rushdie's Shalimar the Clown," presented at the Association of Commonwealth Language and Literary Studies Triennial Conference, Vancouver, BC, August 2007.
[70] Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*.
[71] Ibid., p. 150.
[72] Ibid., pp. 107, 182, 411.
[73] Shalom Salomon Wald, *China and the Jewish People: Old Civilizations in a New Era* (Jerusalem: JPPI, 2004), p. 70.
[74] Salman Rushdie, *Shame* (London: Vintage Books, 1995; first publ. London: Jonathan Cape, 1983).
[75] Ibid., p. 87.
[76] Ibid., p. 28.
[77] Ibid., p. 70.
[78] Ibid., p. 251.
[79] Vikram Seth, *Two Lives* (London: Abacus, 2006; first publ. New York: HarperCollins, 2005).
[80] Ibid., p. 101.
[81] Ibid., p. 190.
[82] Ibid., pp. 236ff.
[83] Ibid., p. 245.
[84] Ibid., pp. 389ff.
[85] Kumaraswamy, *India's Israel Policy*, pp. 1ff.
[86] Seth, *Two Lives,* p. 357.
[87] Ibid., p. 356.
[88] Ibid., pp. 356ff.
[89] Vikram Seth, *A Suitable Boy* (London: Phoenix, 1994; first publ. 1993).
[90] Ibid., pp. 1035. A passing reference to Nehru can be found already on p. 319.
[91] Ibid., pp. 505ff.
[92] Ibid., pp. 22ff.
[93] Ibid., p. 1037.
[94] V.S. Naipaul, *Half a Life* (London: Picador, 2002; first publ. 2001).
[95] V.S. Naipaul, *The Writer and the World: Essays* (London: Picador, 2003; first publ. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002).
[96] V.S. Naipaul, *An Area of Darkness* (London: Picador, 2002; first publ. London: André Deutsch, 1964).
[97] V.S. Naipaul, *India: A Wounded Civilization* (London: Picador, 2002; first publ. London: André Deutsch, 1977).
[98] Naipaul, *Darkness,* p. 74.
[99] Ibid., p. 274.
[100] Naipaul, *Wounded.*
[101] Ibid., p. x.

[102] Rushdie, *Shalimar the Clown*, p. 473.
[103] Naipaul, *Wounded,* p. 23.
[104] Ibid., p. 43.
[105] Ibid., p. ix.
[106] V.S. Naipaul, India: *A Million Mutinies Now* (London: Vintage, 1991; first publ. London: W. Heinemann Ltd., 1990).
[107] Ibid., p. 7.
[108] V.S. Naipaul, *Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey* (New York: Vintage Books, 1982; first publ. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981).
[109] V.S. Naipaul, *Beyond Belief: Islamic Excursions among the Converted Peoples* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999; first publ. 1998).
[110] Naipaul, *Believers,* p. 142.
[111] Naipaul, *Beyond Belief,* p. xi.
[112] Ibid., p. 64.
[113] Naipaul, *Believers,* p. 35.
[114] Ibid., pp. 87ff.
[115] Ibid., pp. 270-74.
[116] Naipaul, *Beyond Belief,* p. 219.
[117] Naipaul, *Wounded,* p. 88.
[118] Naipaul, "Power?" *The Writer,* p. 136.
[119] Naipaul, "The Crocodiles of Yamoussoukro," *The Writer,* p. 231.
[120] Naipaul, "Our Universal Civilization," *The Writer,* p. 517.
[121] *Gospels of Matthew* 7:12 and *Lucas* 6:31.
[122] *Bab. Talmud Shabbath* 31a. On this question see Geza Vermes, *The Authentic Gospel of Jesus* (London: Penguin, 2004), pp. 98ff., and Mireille Hadas-Lebel, *Hillel: Un sage au temps de Jésus (*Paris: Albin Michel, 2005), pp. 63, 99ff.
[123] Arundhati Roy, *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy* (London: Hamish Hamilton–Penguin Books, 2009).
[124] Ibid., p. 197.
[125] Ibid., p. 14.
[126] Ibid., p. 9.
[127] Ibid., p. 20.
[128] Ibid., p. 8.
[129] Ibid., p. 142.
[130] Ibid., p. 189.
[131] Ibid., p. 14.
[132] Kumaraswamy, *India's Israel Policy*, follows and explains this policy in great detail from the 1920s to the 1990s.
[133] Naipaul, *Darkness,* p. 230.
[134] Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, p. 256.
[135] Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things* (London: Harper Perennial, 2004; first publ. New York: Random House, 1997).
[136] Amartya Sen, *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian Culture, History and Identity* (London: Penguin Books, 2006; first publ. London: Allan Lane, 2005), pp. 42, 257, 260, 385n.
[137] Roy, *Small Things,* p. 40.
[138] Ibid., p. 121.
[139] Aravind Adiga, *The White Tiger* (London: Atlantic Books, 2008).
[140] Ibid., p. 96.
[141] Ibid., p. 173.

[142] V.S. Naipaul, *An Area of Darkness* (London: Picador, 2002; first publ. London: André Deutsch, 1964), pp.70 ff.
[143] Adiga, *White Tiger*, p. 40.
[144] Ibid., p. 169.
[145] Ibid., p. 321.
[146] Ibid., p. 304.
[147] Ibid., p. 305.
[148] See, e.g., Pavan K. Varma, *Being Indian: Why the 21st Century will be India's* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2004); Nandan Nilekani, *Imagining India: Ideas for the New Century* (London: Allan Lane-Penguin, 2008).
[149] Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes—Umrisse einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte,* 1922, 16th ed. (Ausgabe, München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2003), p. 958 and parallels.
[150] Chetan Bhagat, *One Night at the Call Centre* (London: Black Swan, 2007; first publ. New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2005).
[151] Ibid., p. 63
[152] Ibid., p. 141.
[153] Ibid., p. 63.
[154] Ibid., p. 280
[155] Ibid., p. 250.
[156] Ibid., pp. 252, 259, 260, 261.
[157] Ibid., p. 315.
[158] Dorothy M. Figueira, *Aryans, Jews, Brahmins: Theorizing Authority through Myths of Identity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), Chapter 5, "Rammohan Roy," pp. 90ff.
[159] Chetan Bhagat, *The 3 Mistakes of my Life*, 74th ed. (New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2010; first publ. 2008).
[160] Ibid., p. ix.
[161] Ibid., p. 71.
[162] Ibid., p. 136.
[163] Ibid., p. 188.
[164] Dov Shinar, *A Study on Israeli Public Diplomacy (PD), A Joint Project of the S. Neaman Institute, Technion, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israel.* Haifa: The Neiman Document, March 2009.
[165] Vikas Swarup, *Six Suspects* (London: Black Swan, 2008).
[166] Sen, *The Argumentative Indian.*
[167] Ibid., p. 331.
[168] Ibid., p. 286.
[169] Ibid., p. 3.
[170] Characteristics of Jewish civilization that are also comparable to India are explored in Shalom Salomon Wald, *Rise and Decline of Civilizations: Lessons for the Jewish People, with a Foreword by Simon Peres* (Boston and Jerusalem: Academic Studies Press, 2014), particularly Part IV chapters 1, 3, 10.
[171] Sen, *Argumentative,* p. 11.
[172] Ibid., p. 81.
[173] Ibid., p. 30.
[174] Amartya Sen, *The Idea of Justice* (London: Allan Lane-Penguin, 2009).
[175] Ibid., p. ix.
[176] Ibid., pp. 170ff. The story of the Good Samaritan is in *Luke* 10:30-36.
[177] *Leviticus* 19:18 and 19:34.
[178] Vermes, *The Authentic Gospel of Jesus,* p. 154.

[179] Esther David, *The Walled City* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2002; first publ. Madras: East West Books, 1997).
[180] Ibid., pp. 21ff.
[181] Ibid., p. 5.
[182] Esther David, *Book of Rachel* (New Delhi: Viking, Penguin Books India, 2006).
[183] Ibid., p. 13.
[184] Ibid., p. 29.
[185] Ibid., pp. 169ff.
[186] A.B. Yehoshua, *Open Heart* (New York: Harcourt Inc., 1996).
[187] Gandhi wrote to her "You do not need to be a Hindu to be a true Jewess. If Judaism does not satisfy you, no other faith will give you satisfaction for any length of time. I would advise you to remain a Jewess and appropriate the good of the other faiths," Johannes H. Voight, "Under the Spell of the Mahatma: Dr Margarete Spiegel," *Jewish Exile in India 1933-1945*, ed. Anil Bhatti and Jonannes H. Voight (New Delhi: Manohar-MaxMuellerBhavan, 1999), p. 157.
[188] Yehoshua, *Heart,* p. 233.
[189] Ibid., p. 232.
[190] Ibid., p. 277.
[191] Ibid., p. 70.
[192] Ibid., p. 438.
[193] Ibid., p. 380.
[194] Shinar, *A Study on Israeli Public Diplomacy (PD).*
[195] Kumaraswamy, *India's Israel Policy*, p. 2.

Claimants of Israelite Descent in South Asia

By Navras Jaat Aafreedi

Abstract: There are seven groups in South Asia that claim Israelite descent. Of these, the two that have started practicing Judaism were previously Christian. Thus, the Judaizing movements among them are seen by anthropologists as byproducts of Christianity. Among the five groups that have not yet started following Judaism, four are Muslin and one is Christian. Although they have had traditions of Israelite descent for centuries, they refuse to embrace Judaism or even migrate to Israel, unlike the Christian-turned-Jewish groups in India. There are certain religious Jewish organizations that have been actively involved with the Christian-turned-Jewish groups for the last two decades and have also been instrumental in facilitating the immigration to Israel of a number of members of one of the two groups, the B'nei Menashe. Amishav and Shavei Israel now long for immigration to Israel of the other Indian claimants of Israelite descent as well, as they believe that the dawn of the messianic era depends on the return of the lost tribes of Israel. Their involvement with such groups in India can have great ramifications for world politics.

People who claim descent from the biblical character Jacob, whose alternative name was Israel, but are not necessarily Jewish by faith, are found all over the world, including South Asia, home to seven such groups. This number does not include the three Indian Jewish communities, that is, the Bene Israel, the Cochini, and the Baghdadi. Of these seven groups, four are Muslim, that is, Kashmiri,[1] Pathan,[2] Qidwai/Kidwai,[3] and *Bani Isrāil* (Arabic and Urdu for the Hebrew *B'nei Yisrael*).[4] Of the three non-Muslim groups, the Shinlung/Chikim or *B'nei Menashe* (Children of Menasse) as they call themselves,[5] and the Madiga,[6] who now call themselves *B'nei Ephraim* (Children of Ephraim), have left practicing Christianity for Judaism, the faith of their supposed Israelite ancestors, while the Kenanaya or Syrian Orthodox Christians of Kerala remain Christian.

Except for the Qidwai/Kidwai and the Bani Israil, who trace their descent from Jews and not necessarily the lost tribes, all the groups under study claim descent from the lost tribes of Israel, for they believe that the biblical stories are actually historical events and the characters in these stories really did exist. In terms of evidence, all that these groups (and those who support the theories of their Israelite origins) have been able to present, are alleged similarities of their customs and rituals with the Jewish ones and the mention of their putative Israelite origins in several medieval texts. However, the majority of the scholars remain unconvinced. They either doubt that the lost tribes of Israel even ever existed or hold the view that even if they did exist, they got assimilated in the Assyrian population way back in the seventh century BCE. But the stress in the academic world seems to be more on the lack of evidence rather than on the alleged assimilation in the seventh century. Hence, scholars often see the lost tribes as nothing but a myth. An example is Stuart Kirsch, who argues "that the lost tribes do not exist until they are invented." Kirsch sees "the concept of the lost tribe" as "an example of what Gananath Obeyesekere called a 'European myth model', described 'as an important or paradigmatic myth [which] may serve as a model for other kinds of myth construction.'"[7] Kirsch draws our attention to Obeyesekere's thesis that "a myth model is also 'an underlying set of ideas (a myth structure or cluster of my themes) employed in a variety of narrative forms'. Obeyesekere argues that when political and economic conditions favor a particular role model, it is likely to appear in a variety of contexts and forms.'"[8]

The Qidwais/Kidwais consider their progenitor, sufi saint Qazi Qidwatuddin, popular as Qazi Qidwā, who settled in India in AH 588/1191 CE, Israelite by descent. According to Riaz-ur-Rehman Kidwai, author of the only known book on the community, the available

genealogies trace Qazi Qidwa's lineage from either of the two sons of the biblical character Jacob: Yahuda (Judah) or Lava (perhaps Levi).[9] According to another theory, which finds mention in Maulana Abdul Hai's *Malfuzāt Firangi Mahal*, it was Qazi Qidwa's wife who was a *Bani Israil* (Child of Israel), and it is Qazi Qidwa's descendants from her who are known as Qidwais/Kidwais. The Qidwais/Kidwais are divided into five branches, of which only one is made up of the direct lineal descendants of Qazi Qidwa, while the other four branches consist of his followers.

The *Bani Israil* in Uttar Pradesh, India, trace their genealogy from a Jewish *sahābi* (companion of the prophet Muhammad) Hazrat Abdullah Ibn-i-Salām. They claim that their ancestors settled in India a millennium ago to preach and propagate Islam. Members of this clan generally use *Israili* (Israeli) as their last name. They reside, in both Sambhal s well as Aligarh, in a locality, each called Bani Israil Mohalla or Mohalla Bani Israilān. Many of this clan migrated to Pakistan after its creation in 1947. A prominent member of this clan, who was a professor at Aligarh Muslim University, had the Hebrew sounding name Shimoni Israili, as testified by Joshua M. Benjamin, author of *The Mystery of Israel's Ten Lost Tribes and the Legend of Jesus in India* (2001).[10]

It is only among the Christian groups that the Judaizing movements developed, seen by anthropologists and historians like Parfitt,[11] Weil,[12] Samra,[13] and Egorova[14] as byproducts of Christianity. None of the four Muslim groups under study has moved toward Judaism, in spite of their centuries-old traditions of Israelite origins. And interestingly, the two Christians groups that did move toward Judaism, have never had any traditions of Israelite origins. The traditions of Israelite origins among the Muslim groups cannot, of course, be seen as byproducts of Christianity, as in the case of the B'nei Menashe and B'nei Ephraim, and nor can the traditions be attributed to any Jewish influence, as they have always been resident in areas where there has never been any significant Jewish presence. According to Caroe,[15] the tradition of descent from the lost tribes of Israel among the Pathans emanates from their desire to distance themselves from their pre-Islamic polytheistic past, as it helps them trace their genealogy from the supposed patriarchs and founders of monotheism, accepted by Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike. But if it is so, why did not the other Muslim communities of South Asia do the same? The fact is that it is very difficult to say anything conclusive in regard to the traditions of Israelite origins of the four Muslim groups under study. Why would these groups, which are so strongly anti-Zionist and anti-Israel and also greatly prejudiced against Jews and hence unwilling to immigrate to Israel unlike the B'nei Menashe and the B'nei Ephraim, choose to claim origins from the land of Israel, which is the sanctum sanctorum of Judaism, the core of Zionism, and the geographical location of the modern state of Israel, without any basis?

A number of medieval Persian (Farsi) texts, dating from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries,[16] document the Pathan tradition of descent from a contemporary of Muhammad, Kais/Qais or Kish, believed to be thirty-seventh in descent from the biblical character Saul or Talut.[17] The Mughal courtier and historian Neamatullah writes in his *Makhzan-i-Afghani* (1612 CE):

> ...Khaled sent a letter to the Afghans who had been settled in the mountainous countries about Ghor ever since the time of the expulsion of the Israelites by Bokhtnasser, and informed them of the appearance of the last of the Prophets. On this letter reaching them, several of their chiefs departed from Medina; the mightiest of whom, and of the Afghan people, was Kais, whose pedigree ascends in a series of thirty-seven degrees to Talut, forty-five to Ibrahim...[18]

The probable Israelite origin of Pathans has been written about by medieval Jewish scholars such as the tenth-century Sadia Gaon and the eleventh-century Moses Ibn Ezra; and also by modern scholars such as the Hebrew University anthropologist Shalva Weil,[19] and Itzhak

Ben-Zvi,[20] the second president of Israel and a lost tribes' enthusiast. Ben-Zvi records in his book *The Exiled and the Redeemed* (1957) testimonies provided by Afghan Jewish immigrants to Israel about Pathan practices that are Jewish in nature, that is, the lighting of candles on the Jewish Sabbath, keeping of long sidelocks, wearing of shawls resembling the Jewish prayer shawl *tallith*, circumcision on the eighth day after birth, and Levirate. Curator of a 1991 exhibition at Tel Aviv's Diaspora Museum on "The Myth of the Ten Lost Tribes," Weil writes:

> Even the Pathan students in exile at the University of New Delhi, the most violently anti-Zionist group that I had ever met, reluctantly agreed that they were Bani Israel. "But this has nothing to do with the modern state of Israel," they hastened to inform me when I interviewed them in the nineties.[21]

She also writes:

> Many Afghan and Western scholars, who have investigated the subject from historical, anthropological and philological points of view, are convinced that the Pathans are of Israelite origin. Indeed they appear to be the best candidates among the diverse groups claiming Lost Tribe status. The location is right (2 Kings 17:6), and the Pathans have shown exceptional tenacity in adhering to their story through the centuries.[22]

More than the secular scholars, it is the religious scholars of both Jews as well as Christians who have shown interest in the supposed Israelite credentials of Pathans. By 1926, the belief in the Israelite origin of Pathans became so widely accepted that it drove Jacques Faitlovich, the activist for Ethiopian Jews, to make an unsuccessful attempt to persuade the American Pro-Falasha Committee to send a mission to Afghanistan to explore the Israelite presence there. Finally in 1975 an exploratory team was sent by the Israeli organization Amishav[23] to Afghanistan, and in 1983 to Pakistan, on British passports. Certain alleged similarities between the Pathan and Jewish customs convinced the explorers that the Pathans were actually descendants of lost Israelites. A number of Christian missionaries and European adventurers are known to have taken the lost tribes of Israel as a historical fact and sought to prove the Israelite origin of Pathans.[24] A couple of attempts to prove their Israelite origin through genetic study have also been made, but the results of the DNA analyses were neutral and did not connect them to any group other than the general family of mankind.[25] It is speculated that it could be so because the population chosen for the collection of samples was from their diaspora in India: the Pathans of the Afridi tribe in Malihabad in District Lucknow of Uttar Pradesh, who have failed to retain their tribal purity because of intertribal marriages with the Pathans of the Ghilzai tribe there, which is one of the many tribes of Turkish origin among them. It is only the Pathan tribes of non-Turkish origin who have traditions of Israelite descent and whose origins are shrouded in mystery. But there are geneticists who think that genetic research does lend support to the theory of the Israelite origin of Pathans, such as the medical doctor Amtul Razzaq Carmichael, who points out:

> The genetic abnormalities that lead to a group of genetic diseases affecting the muscles of the body called inclusion body myopathies are located on chromosome 9 in both Afghani and Iraqi Jewish patients, while non-Jewish patients have a different genetic abnormality associated with this disease. The genetic abnormalities causing this disease affect Jews, Arabs and Iranians and are thought to be at least 1,300 years old. All of these findings strongly point towards a common Jewish ancestry with eastward migration of Jewish tribes into Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan, centuries

> ago. Thus, evidence from genetic diseases does indeed lend support to the lost tribes theory and strongly supports a common ancestry of Jews in some Indian and Pashtun populations.[26]

She further writes:

> Interestingly, retinoblastoma, which is a hereditary cancer of the eye, has been found to be genetically different when ethnic Pashtuns were compared to the general Pakistani population. This suggests that Pashtuns are genetically different from the indigenous Pakistani population.[27]

The other Muslim people who claim descent from the lost tribes of Israel are the Kashmiri, inhabitants of the region called Kashmir, a part of which is under Pakistani control. The Pathan villagers of Gutlibagh, about 20 kilometers north of Srinagar, consider themselves descendants of Judah, a son of Jacob/Israel and the progenitor of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Claimants of Israelite descent are also found among the Gujars in Kashmir, who neither plough their fields nor milk their cows on Saturdays. Residents of the Yusmarg valley call themselves Bani Israil, meaning Children of Israel.

The first three early historians of Kashmir, that is, Mullah Nadiri (1378-1416) in his *Tarikh-i-Kashmir*, Mullah Ahmad in his *Waqqya-i-Kashmir*, and Abdul Qadar bin Qazi-ul-Quzat Wasil Ali Khan in *Hashmat-i-Kashmir*, all unanimously accepted the theory of the Israelite origin of Kashmiris.[28] Kashmiri Brahman scholars like Pandit Narain Kaul in his *Guldasta-i-Kashmir* and Pandit Ram Chand Kak in his *Ancient Monuments of Kashmir* agree with the early Kashmiri historians about the Israelite origin of Kashmiris.[29] The fact that some of the Kashmiri Brahmins abstain from traveling or entering a new house on Saturday is often cited in support of the theory of the Israelite origin of Kashmiris.

Khwaja Nazir Ahmad lists some 405 names from Afghanistan, Kashmir, and parts of Pakistan and India in his book *Jesus in Heaven on Earth* (1952) to show similarities and common origin with biblical names.[30] Supporters of the theory of the Israelite origin of Kashmiris lay great stress on the fact that Kashmir is locally known as Kashir and a Kashmiri is called Koshur, which seems to be a variant of the Hebrew *kosher*.[31] They also see parallels in the Kashmiri and Jewish styles of the adjustment of days between the lunar and solar calendars. It is also claimed by them that in the ancient past entry into the Kashmir valley was the exclusive privilege of Jews. The Kashmiri practices of observance of a forty-day purification ritual by women, abstinence from fat while cooking, and the east-west alignment of graves are seen by the proponents of the Israelite origin of Kashmiris as Jewish in nature.[32]

The beliefs that Kashmiris are Israelite by origin and that Jesus survived crucifixion and settled in Kashmir are intertwined. Efforts are made to prove that Jesus went to Kashmir to win the lost tribes of Israel to his new creed and settled there to show the alleged authenticity of the theory of the Israelite origin of Kashmiris, while the alleged presence of the lost Israelites in Kashmir is cited as the stimulant for Jesus' immigration to Kashmir.

The people of the Yusu Marg or Yus Marg ("the Path of Jesus") valley in Kashmir, located on the bridle route followed by merchants from Afghanistan, consider themselves Israelite by descent.

The shrine of Rozabal in Kashmir houses the tomb of the sufi saint Yuz Asaf, which the Ahmadia sect of Muslims believes was the name adopted by Jesus after he allegedly survived the crucifixion and settled in Kashmir to proselytize among the Israelites resident there. This belief of Ahmadis, shared by the New Age movement and the readers of Talmud Jmmanuel, is based on the theory propounded by the founder of the Ahmadi sect Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in his Urdu treatise *Masih Hindustan Mein* (Messiah in India) in 1899. The present structure at Rozabal was perhaps built over the grave during the reign of the

Mughal emperor Shah Jahan (1628-58 CE). The actual tomb of Yuz Asaf is believed to be beneath the existing tombstone, which is said to be in the east-west alignment like the Jewish graves.

Among many other things in support of his theory, Ahmad wrote that the gospel of Barnabas, which according to him must be available in the British Museum, stated that Jesus was neither crucified, nor did he die on the cross. In his book *Masih Hindustan Mein* (Jesus in India) he writes, "hundreds of thousands of people have, with their physical eyes, seen that the tomb of Jesus (on whom be peace) exists in Srinagar."[33]

It was his strong desire to counter as effectively as possible the Christian proselytizers' activity in nineteenth-century India that drove Ahmad to try to prove that Jesus survived crucifixion and went to Kashmir to live up to the ripe old age of 120. The Islamic tradition—that after foiling an attempt to kill him God raised Jesus alive to heaven—was used by Christian missionaries as an argument to demonstrate to the Muslims the superiority of the living Jesus to the deceased Muhammad. *"Inni Mutawaffika"* in Sura 3:55 of the Qur'an was interpreted by Ahmad to mean that God caused Jesus to die naturally, in sharp contrast to the more common interpretation. His rendering of the verse in English is as follows: "I cause you to die and raise you to Myself." Ahmad sees it as a clear indication that Jesus' ascension to heaven took place after his death.[34]

Christian missionary interest in the lost tribes of Israel is triggered by two factors according to Gonen. The belief in the lost tribes of Israel provides an explanation to the resemblance of the customs and beliefs of tribes and people across the world with those of the ancient Israelites. Based on these supposed similarities, the Christian missionaries bestow on them a lost tribe ancestry and then make strong efforts to convert these peoples to Christianity,

> ...believing that such a conversion would have a double benefit. Not only would it add members to the church, but these new members would be of Israelite—or Jewish—origin, as no specific distinction has been made between the two. Moreover, not only would such a conversion be a great achievement to the Christian Church, which has tried for centuries to convert the Jews, but these converts would be innocent of the heavy sins of the Jews—the crucifixion of Jesus—since they had already been lost at the time of that event. If these sinless Israelites recognized Jesus, it would be a crowning accomplishment for the church, and open the way to the Second Coming of Christ.[35]

Although the Christian missionaries were not successful with the Pathans, yet they did manage to convert the tribes of Chin, Lushai, Kuki, and Mizo in northeast India in this manner, and that is where begins the genesis of the Judaizing movements among these tribes. Influenced by the Christian missionaries' stress on the supposed similarities between the practices described in the Bible and the Mizo tribal traditions, the Mizos were convinced of their Israelite origin. The Judaizing movement in these Christian people began in 1936 with the revivalist Saichhunga's declaration that the Mizos were one of the lost tribes of Israel. The idea was further developed in 1951 by Mela Chala, the head deacon of the United Pentecostal Church in Buallawn, north of Aizawl in Mizoram. The movement picked up pace with the Mizo Uprising that started in 1966. By 1972 the notion of descent from Menasseh, one of the progenitors of the twelve tribes of Israel, had become so widely accepted that some of the groups adopted the name *B'nei Menashe*, the Hebrew for the "Children of Menasseh." In 2005, the B'nei Menashe population was estimated to be around 6,000 in India and 800 in Israel.[36]

The religious Jewish scholars came into the picture in the 1970s when the Shinlung/Chikim or B'nei Menashe, as they call themselves, sought contact with the Israelis. Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail, president of Amishav (a religious nationalist organization), came forward to facilitate their immigration to Israel. In 1980-81, Rabbi Avichail brought three

B'nei Menashe to Israel for Jewish theological studies, and in 1988 he arranged for the formal conversion of twenty-four B'nei Menashe in Mumbai and a year later their immigration to Israel. In 1993, Rabbi Avichail was lent moral support by the farmers of Gush Katif in the Gaza strip in his endeavor to bring the B'nei Menashe to Israel. The farmers felt that the B'nei Menashe could replace the Arabs laborers, who could no more be trusted, while financial support came from Dr. Irving Moskowitz of Florida, who bore the expenses of the immigration of two groups of young B'nei Menashe to Israel in 1993 and 1994. Supported by right-wing groups, who saw the B'nei Menashe as the means to boost Jewish population in the disputed territories, the Chief Sephardic Rabbi Shlomo Amar recognized the B'nei Menashe as a lost tribe of Israel in 2005 and sent rabbinical judges to northeast India to formally convert the B'nei Menashe to Judaism to overcome official hurdles in their immigration to Israel. Egorova points out that "if the conversions were a prerequisite for the Bene Menashe aliyah, then proof of a genealogical connection to the rest of the Jewish people was a prerequisite for such conversions."[37] Amishav, was soon joined by a new organization—Shavei Israel—dedicated to the search for the lost tribes of Israel just like Amishav. It was founded by Michael Freund, a former member of Amishav and a close associate of Rabbi Avichail, when he broke up with him. These two organizations took a significant number of the B'nei Menashe to Israel in several stages (between 1981 and 2007) after formally converting them to Judaism. The conversions were brought to a halt when the Indian authorities expressed their objections to the Foreign Ministry of Israel, as they feared it might annoy the predominant Christian population of northeast India where the evangelists had been vehemently opposing these mass conversions.[38] In 2011 the entire 7,000 strong B'nei Menashe community was permitted to settle in Israel, as reported in the media. The first group of new B'nei Menashe immigrants reached Israel in December 2012 to join 1,700 members of their community who had settled there before, some of them two decades ago.[39]

It was only in the year 2004 that the scientists succeeded in obtaining DNA samples from the B'nei Menashe (who had been resisting genetic research for many years as they feared that it could deflate their claim of Israelite descent). The mtDNA and Y chromosome analysis of 414 B'nei Menashe individuals from Mizoram, done by the National DNA Analysis Centre in Kolkata, found traces of genetic relatedness between them and Near Eastern lineages. However, the research was considered unreliable by the Haifa Technion scientists in Israel, according to whom the Kolkata team had not done the complete sequencing of the DNA.[40] But this did not deter the Chief Rabbi of Israel from officially recognizing them as a lost Israelite tribe, thus making them the only such group after the Beta Israel (or Ethiopian Jews) to be so recognized. The immigration of such groups of non-Halachic Jewish descent is a contentious issue in Israel with the right-wing encouraging it and the left-wing opposing it not only because they believe it would "contribute to further oppression of the Palestinians" but also because they tend to doubt the authenticity of the B'nei Menashe's claim to lost tribes status.[41]

Another group among which a Judaizing movement emerged as a byproduct of Christianity, as considered by anthropologists, is the Madiga of the Guntur district in Andhra Pradesh, who follow the development of the B'nei Menashe closely and see them as their brethren, "just as Ephraim and Menashe are brothers in the biblical tradition."[42] They are not the first group to link themselves with ancient Israelites by associating themselves with a group that has come to be recognized as a lost Israelite tribe. It has been observed by historians and anthropologists of Judaizing movements that several African and African American Jewish communities have identified themselves with Ethiopian Jews or Beta Israel, encouraged by their case "which challenged the popular stereotype that Jews had to be of European descent," as pointed out by Egorova and Perwez.[43] In the early 1980s, the leader of the Madiga (a Christian preacher) now known as Shmuel Yacobi attended a conference of Evangelical Christians in Jerusalem, where he saw living Judaism for the first time, which generated his interest in the religion. Upon his return, he and his brother undertook an in-

depth study of the Old Testament and saw in Judaism a means to liberation from their economic plight. Suddenly they became conscious of their alleged tradition of Israelite descent, according to which they had descended from the lost Israelite tribe of Ephraim. As per their alleged tradition, their ancestors settled in India passing through Afghanistan and North India in the ninth or tenth centuries. The brothers renamed themselves Shmuel, Sadok, and Aaron, with Yacobi as the last name, and started observing the Sabbath, Jewish holidays, and life-cycle events. Shmuel established an open university in Vijaywada from where he offered correspondence courses in Jewish theology to Christian seminary students. He secretly used the funds from Christian donors to build a synagogue in 1992, and he persuaded about thirty families in his native village of Kottaredipalam to practice Judaism.[44] The Madiga aspiration to be recognized Jewish by descent stems from their desire to shed away their untouchability. The first attempt in this direction was their conversion to Christianity from Hinduism, which did not bring about the desired rise of their social status. Now their claim of Israelite descent is yet another attempt on their part to accomplish the same objective, but this time it involves not just conversion to another religion but also an effort to prove foreign origin, that is, Israelite.

Ironically, in spite of their practicing Judaism and being largely perceived as Christian by the local population because of the widespread ignorance of the existence of Jews among Indians, they officially continue to represent themselves as Hindus to fit into a category recognized as a Scheduled Caste. Part of the Indian state's affirmative action, Scheduled Caste benefits are reserved for those Dalits who profess any of the Indic religions, that is, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Sikhism, and do not extend to the communities practicing Semitic religions for it is believed there is no caste-based discrimination in the Semitic religions, as everybody is equal according to their philosophies. According to Egorova and Perwez,

> ...the structural inequalities that they are subjected to makes their position in coastal Andhra just as marginal and precarious as that of Hindu Dalits, which means that they cannot afford to refuse the benefits associated with their Scheduled Caste status. Moreover, keeping this status entitles them to state protection against caste-based crimes.[45]

Although the total Madiga population in Andhra Pradesh stands at 12 million (46.94 percent of the total Scheduled Caste population of Andhra Pradesh), yet only 125 families identify as Israelite, according to Shmuel Yacobi.[46]

This phenomenon of conversion to Christianity followed by Judaism was termed "dual conversion" by Weil in her study of the B'nei Menashe.[47] What Lesser writes regarding ethnicity would be helpful in understanding this:

> Ethnicity is not "natural" but constructed and as individuals move among different spaces, the ways in which ethnicity is expressed is ever changing. While such constructions are often implicit, that is not always the case. At times ethnicity/identity/home seems to be a resource that is deployed in response to specific circumstances.[48]

Egorova and Perwez suggest that rhetoric theory could be usefully employed to understand the nature of the rise of the above-mentioned Judaizing movements. They find it particularly useful to draw on the work of scholars "who see identity as a rhetorical strategy rather than a broad ontological category."[49] According to them:

> The case study of the Bene Ephraim provides an exciting site for the development of rhetoric theory. When explored ethnographically, it demonstrates how new audiences are called into being through rhetoric expressed both through narratives and

> practices, and how the boundaries delineating these audiences can be elusive both in the discourse of the rhetors and in these audiences' own self-representation.[50]

The group that remains Christian but claims Jewish descent is that of Kananya or Canaanites, who belong to the Syrian Orthodox Church. In AD 345, according to their tradition, the small Christian community of Malabar in Kerala, India, was reinforced by a group of Israelite migrants from Syria, led by a rich merchant, Thomas of Cana, or Knayi Thoma the Nasarani, or Knayel the merchant.[51] The entourage of Thomas of Cana was comprised of seventy-two families numbering four hundred persons in three ships, which sailed from Mesopotamia (Iraq) across the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea to the shores of Kerala.[52] These four hundred Christian Israelites settled in the district of Kotayyam and the southern fringes of Cochin. Their descendants today form the community of Canaanite/Kananaya/Knanite Christians.[53] The Canaanite/Kananaya/Knanite Christians are locally known as *Thokkumbhagar* (Southists), for they settled in the southern part of the city of Mahadovarpattanam. Another explanation offered is that the name points to the southern kingdom of Judah, from where they originated. As Parfitt reports, "one or two members of the community, which is centered in Kottayam in Kerala, have even converted to Judaism in recent times."[54]

The community uses a special canopy, similar to the Jewish *huppah*, at weddings, and the couple is seated under it. A symbolic sum of money is given to the bride's father, and the bride is escorted by maidens. The Jewish feast of *Passover* is observed by Canaanites/Kananaya on Monday and Thursday after nightfall, at which a drink called "milk" and an unleavened bread is consumed, which is broken into pieces by the head of the family and distributed among all its members, who stand in reverence while receiving the pieces. The red colored wine prepared from coconut milk and a certain plum is specially served on this night. The family members eat their bread dipped in this specially prepared "milk." A bitter herb juice is drunk by Kananaya on Good Friday before eating anything else—perhaps an ancient Passover ritual.

The Canaanites/Kananayas, whose population stood at around 200,000 in the year 1990, remain strictly endogamous as ever and even today use the ancient Aramaic language for all religious purposes.

Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail fully agrees with the Hebrew University anthropologist Dr. Shalva Weil, that the Canaanites/Kananaya are Judaeo-Christians. He believes:

> Hints about their true origin can be gleaned from here and there in some parts of the songs. The term used about Thoma, viz. Nasrani (a modified form of the Greek word Nazarene applied to Jewish Christians), the number 72 as the number of families involved (an important number in Jewish lore), reference to head covering (women at prayer covering the head is a Jewish custom), reverence for the Ten Commandments, mention of a gold crown, and a six-pointed star (in the description of a bridegroom's dress), bridal songs reminiscent of the Song of Songs—all these indicate a definite connection with Judaeo-Christian communities in Edessa and Jerusalem.[55]

As regards the supposed Israelite descent of the above-mentioned groups and others, Rabbi Avichail says:

> In most recent years, we have come to believe that the *giyyur* (conversion) is the main process, and not the question of determining whether the group has some prior Jewish identity. Since we think the question of "motivation" is the central one, we may well decide to help a group even if we are not persuaded scientifically that it has

> some prior Jewish connection. With all these groups, it is almost impossible to make clear definite, non-ambiguous claims about their Jewish connection.[56]

Rabbi Avichail's efforts are motivated by the longstanding belief that the ingathering of the lost tribes will bring about the dawn of the messianic era. He says:

> One important thing that I have learned through the years is that this question of the Ten Tribes is not a question of the coming of the Messiah. But it is we who have the important determining role in what happens, through out the process of the Redemption....I thought that this is our task, to bring small groups (not the whole people) and to prepare them to be teachers, then send them back to their people. What is important is that the *giyyur*, the conversion process, be authentic, that they will be good Jews.[57]

Although traditions of Israelite descent have existed among the Pathans for centuries, yet those who are resident far away from their native places, in the Pathan diaspora of India, are largely ignorant of them. Perhaps, when the Pathans settled in India, they did not mention the traditions of their Israelite origin, as they probably feared losing favor with the non-Pathan Muslim rulers of India at that time, aware as they were of their antagonism toward Jews. As a result, the word was not passed on to the coming generations and subsequently they were largely left ignorant of the traditions of their Israelite descent. Recent attempts at investigating the authenticity of these traditions have stimulated the interest of some young Pathans concerning their putative Israelite roots, which is testified to by the many letters the present author has received from Pathans curious about the results of the analysis of the DNA samples of the Afridi Pathans of Malihabad at the University College London.

One Sameer Khan, an Afridi Pathan of Qa'imganj (District Farrukhabad, Uttar Pradesh, India) wrote:

> I always hated Jews not because of a religion or the current politics however because of an old story by Shakespeare *Merchant of Venice*. In that story there is a old Jew grump who was very clever and was a cruel money-lender. Then when I grew up I saw this hatred in our Muslim community for Jews, which I could never understand.
>
> Recently I watched a movie *Munich* which touched me and I started searching more about the people of Israel (as shown in the movie very courageous and women specially—same like our so called Pathanees (ladies)), and by chance I got a website in which I saw the link between the Afridis [and Jews].
>
> I heard from our elders in my childhood that we are Bani-Israel. This actually enhanced my curiosity, though I am a proud "Pathan" and a follower in Islam and I have no intentions to convert but yes I would like to explore about my forefathers and would love to visit these places.[58]

Another Pathan, this time a Yusufzai from Karachi, Pakistan, Qazi Fazli-Azeem, founder-member of the cyber group www.PakistanIsraelpeace.org, devoted to the task of getting diplomatic relations established between Israel and Pakistan, and the website administrator of www.moderates.com.pk, wrote offering to help the present researcher "in writing any academic material, articles, contacting government or NGO/Think Tank bodies"[59] and also proposed to set up a common forum for Pathans from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India for direct interaction and to help those of them who are interested in immigrating to Israel.[60]

There are also those who are influenced by their non-Pathan Muslim neighbors, who are hostile toward Jews, to see these attempts at researching the probable Israelite origins, as part of a Jewish conspiracy to deprive Islam of its bravest followers, the Pathans, by proving them Israelite by descent and then persuading them to embrace Judaism and immigrate to Israel. Such views have found expression in articles that have appeared in the popular Indian Urdu-language newsweekly *Nai Duniya*[61] and daily newspaper *Roznama Rashtriya Sahara.*[62] They present it as an attempt on the part of Jews to boost their population in the disputed territories in Israel and to use the fearless and sturdy Pathans as cheap labor and as gun-fodder in their fight with the Arabs. How the anti-Israel Muslim press of India has shaped the way Muslims think is clearly reflected when the 92-year-old Afridi Pathan of Malihabad, Qavi Kamaal Khan says that he doesn't want to live to hear that he is descended from a Jew. "It hurts me when I think that my forefathers were from Israel."[63]

A New York-born online writer and blogger, based in Israel, "Ruvy in Jerusalem" expresses the view point of the section of religious Jewry that takes great interest in the above-mentioned claimants of Israelite descent, particularly the Pathans, on a South Asian website:

> For over two millennia, Jews have more or less considered themselves the only remaining Children of Israel, figuring that the other tribes had been lost to history. We have taken a term from the Bible *shearit*—remnant—and applied it to ourselves. Thus, you see the names of many synagogues in the Western world—*Shearit Israel*, Remnant of Israel. Apparently, this may be a misperception.
>
> In addition to all the forced converts away from the religion who are now coming back to the faith, like the descendants of the Spanish and Portuguese "Anusim," we Jews now have to come to grips with the fact that we are only a small portion of a larger people. According to Rabbi Dr. Yehuda Bohrer, one group of Israelites from the general area of Bokhrara claim to be descended from the tribe of Reuven. They never lost their laws or traditions and have retained the links with Jews and are now considered as Jews.
>
> Unlike the members of the tribe of Reuven, the Pakhtun [an alternative term for Pathan] appear to have lost much of the ties to our people. Nevertheless, they have been claiming to be the Children of Israel for over a thousand years; they claim that the original king Afghana, the first king of the royal line of Afghanistan, was a descendant of Sha'ul, of the tribe of Benyamin. Jewish merchants who lived in Kabul always could travel without fear to the Pakhtun lands, where they were recognized by the Pakhtuns as fellow Children of Israel. Today, the Pakhtun, who live in places that have media hostile to the State of Israel, like India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, look upon us Jews as brothers from the wrong side of the tracks....We Jews have the interesting task of "recognizing Joseph" (Ephraim was a son of Joseph). And the Pakhtun are going to have to get to know their brothers, the Jews.[64]

A letter to the present author from a Jerusalem-based religious Jew, Gerald Parkoff, further reflects the religious Jewish perception of Pathans:

> I consulted with Rabbi Chaim Wasserman, my Rav and teacher for over 23 years and he is of the opinion that the situation of the Pathans and other descendants of the "Ten Tribes" is comparable to that of the Anusim, those who were forcibly converted to Christianity by the Spaniards and the Portuguese in the 1300s, 1400s and early 1500s. The Rabbinim were favorably disposed towards extending a

> hand to bring them back. The difference is that your [Pathans'] separation from the body of the Jewish People was more than 1000 years before the Spanish Expulsion. That means not only do you [the Pathans] come from a much earlier period in our history (*Bayit Rishon*—the period of the First Temple), but that you had a longer amount of time to forget everything. Being cut off even 200 years from those Anusim who fled Amsterdam in the 1600s resulted in a jarring clash of cultures and a difficult time to re-acculturize, since these people were steeped in Christian culture and religion for such a long period....Don't you think we yearn for every Jew to return to Torah Observance? Every Motzai Shabbat (Saturday Nite) we quote the prophet *Shalom, Shalom le Karov ule Rachok Urfativ*—Peace be unto those that are near and Peace be unto those that are far and I G-d will heal them." (Isaiah 57:19)[65]

This yearning finds echo in the founder and president of the Jerusalem-based Root & Branch Association, Aryeh Gallin's message to the Afridi Pathans of Malihabad, recorded by the present author on June 18, 2007:

> It is time for you Pashtuns/Pakhtuns/Pathans to wake up and come home. And that is the way it is going to be. So let's do it the easy way than the hard way. It's time for that to happen. And no one can stop that. Not the CIA, not the Pakistan Inter-Services, not the whole Saudi money in the world. Victor Hugo said, "Nothing is greater than the power of an idea whose time has come." So the time has come when you all have to come home to Jerusalem. We will have a party right here.

The same sentiment finds expression in Israeli writer Reuven Kossover's message to the Afridi Pathans of Malihabad, again recorded by the present author on June 18, 2007, in Jerusalem:

> We are the descendants of the tribe of Yehuda. You are most likely the descendants of the tribe of Ephraim. Jews and Israelites have fought wars in the past in this country. That's in our history. However, time has arrived when the tribe of Ephraim will come to be one with the tribe of Yehuda. That all of Am-Israel, people of Israel, will be one joined with one: one tree being called Ephraim and one tree being called Yehuda. We are Jews; you are Ephraim. I invite you to look at it from that point of view. Our prophets said this will happen....These things will happen because you believe it and because we believe it. We are one people; never forget.

Described as "the leading ten-tribe traveler today," whose "work has had concrete, practical consequences," Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail says:

> We as well as the Pathans themselves, have a very clear tradition that they, especially those of them who have the names of our tribes, belong to the ten tribes of Israel. According to the Book of Psalms, after Menasse God will bring Ephraim to the land of Israel. So my dream is now to help the Afridi to come back to their roots, to come back, after Menasse, to Israel. Ephraim is more important. When Ephraim will be here, it will change a lot of things. As the Afridi Pathans of Malihabad (District Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh) are in India, and not in Afghanistan or Pakistan, from one point of view it is easier for me to help them. The only problem is that the government of India has stopped me from going there. They think that I want to convert the people there, and the fact is that this is not my intention. I want to go there to teach, to learn, and to spread knowledge....The Afridis can even come just to

visit Israel, if not for immigration. And if you do come I will be your friend. Would be glad to invite you home and to help you in every possible way.[66]

Although Rabbi Avichail agrees with the traditional view that the messianic ingathering of the exiles depends solely on providential will, yet he justifies his efforts to facilitate the immigration of the supposed Israelites by drawing on mystical texts, which teach that human actions are interrelated to divine actions, and stresses that human effort toward bringing the Messiah will hasten God's intervention in the matter. Thus, he considers it the responsibility of every Jew to search for the lost tribes of Israel and to try to bring them to Israel.

The involvement of religious Jewish organizations with the claimants of Israelite descent in India—active with only two until now, the B'nei Menashe in northeast India and the B'nei Ephraim in South India—can have great ramifications for India, Israel, and world Jewry at large

Notes

[1] The people of the northern Indian state of Kashmir, a part of which is under Pakistani control. Their population is 12.54 million in the Indian controlled Kashmir according to the Indian census of 2011 (http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/prov_data_products_J&K.html) and their population in the Pakistani controlled Kashmir was estimated to be 3.8684 million in 2094 (Source: http://www.ajk.gov.pk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=28&Itemid=11).

[2] A warlike people, divided into sixty tribes and four hundred clans, inhabiting eastern Afghanistan and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan. There are also a few Pathan settlements in India. Pathans, Pashtuns, Pakhtuns, and Afghans are names that are often used interchangeably. There is nothing wrong with this usage, but it would be better to understand what each means. Those who inhabit plains and plateaus are entitled to the name Afghan, which has a far wider connotation than that of a subject of the modern state of Afghanistan, founded only in 1747 CE. The northern highlanders call themselves Pakhtuns, while the southern highlanders are known as Pashtuns. The appellation Pathan is the Indian variant of Pakhtanah, the plural of Pakhtun. The overwhelming majority of Pathans are Sunni Muslim. Only some of the border tribes such as the Turis of Kurram, some Orakzais of Tira, and certain Bangash clans are of Shia persuasion (see *Encyclopaedia Britannica*). There are no reliable figures available of the Pashtun population in Afghanistan because of the many problems involved in conducting a census as pointed out by the *Guardian* correspondent Emma Graham-Harrison in her article, "Afghan census dodges questions of ethnicity and language" (*The Guardian*, January 3, 2013; accessed on March 15, 2013 at http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/jan/03/afghan-census-questions-of-ethnicity). Pashtuns are 15.42 percent of the population of Pakistan and 42 percent of the population of Afghanistan, according to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The population of Pakistan was estimated to be about 179 million and that of Afghanistan, 33.4 million in 2012 by the United Nations, which implies that the Pashtun population in Pakistan was 27.60 million and in Afghanistan it was 14.02 million in 2012. Thus the total Pashtun population of the two countries in which most of the Pashtuns live was 41.62 million that year. A number of them are also found in India, particularly in certain districts of the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Andhra Pradesh. These Pathan settlements in India were founded between 1206 CE and 1818 CE, when the Pathans were employed by the Sultans of Delhi and the Mughal emperors in the later Mughal period by the smaller kingdoms and principalities.

[3] A Sunni Muslim community centered in the Barabanki district of Uttar Pradesh, with individuals scattered all over the world.
[4] A Sunni Muslim clan in Sambhal (District Moradabad) and Aligarh in Uttar Pradesh.
[5] Those members of the tribes of Chin, Lushai, and Kuki, in the states of Manipur and Mizoram in northeast India, who have moved toward Judaism.
[6] Located in the Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh.
[7] Stuart Kirsch, "Lost Tribes: Indigenous People and the Social Imaginary," *Anthropological Quarterly*, 70, 2 (April 1997): 58.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Riaz-ur-Rehman Kidwai, *Biographical Sketch of Kidwais of Avadh with Special Reference to Barabanki Families* (Aligarh: Kitab Ghar, 1989), p. 1.
[10] Joshua M. Benjamin, *The Mystery of Israel's Ten Lost Tribes and the Legend of Jesus in India*, 2nd ed. (New Delhi: Mosaic Books, 2001), p. 111.
[11] See Tudor Parfitt, *The Lost Tribes of Israel: The History of a Myth* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2002); Tudor Parfitt and Emanuela Trevisan Semi, *Judaising Movements: Studies in the Margins of Judaism* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002).
[12] See Shalva Weil, "Lost Israelites from the Indo-Burmese Borderlands: Re-Traditionalisation and Conversion Among the Shinlung or Bene Menasseh," in *The Anthropologist*, 6, 3 (2004): 219-33.
[13] See Myer Samra, "The Tribe of Manasseh: 'Judaism' in the Hills of Manipur and Mizoram, *Man in India*, 71, 1 (1991 Special ed.): 183-202; "Judaism in Manipur and Mizoram: By-Product of Christian Mission," *The Australian Journal of Jewish Studies*, 6, 1 (1992): 7-22; "Buallawn Israel: The Emergence of a Judaising Movement in Mizoram, Northeast India," in Lynette Olson, ed., *Religious Change, Conversion and Culture* (Sydney: Sydney Association for Study in Society and Culture, 1996), pp. 105-31.
[14] See Yulia Egorova, *Jews and India: Perceptions and Image* (New York: Routledge, 2006).
[15] See Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans: 550 B.C.–A.D. 1957* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1958; reprint 1964).
[16] *Hayat-I-Afghani* of Muhammad Hayat Khan; *Khulasat-ul-Ansab* of Hafiz Rahmat; *Majma-ul-Ansab* of Hamidullah Mustawfi; *Mirat-al-Afghani* of Qutb Khan, Sarmast Khan Abdali, Hamza Khan, Umar Khan Kakarr and Zarif Khan—the five historians commissioned by Khwaja Ni'matullah, courtier of the Mughal emperor of India Jahangir, to investigate the origins of Pathans in 1621 CE; *Mirat-ul-Alam* of Bukhtawar Khan; *Rauza ul-Bab Twarikh ul Akbar-wal-Ansab* of Abu Sulayman Daud (1310 CE); *Tarikh-i-Guzeedah* of Hamidullah Mustawfi (AH 730/1326 CE); *Tadhkirat al-Awliya* of Sulayman Maku (13th c.); and *Tadhkirat al-Abrar* of Akhund Darwiza (1611 CE).
[17] Although the highland Pathan tribes of Afridi, Khatak, Orakzai, Bangash, Wazir, Mahsud, Turi, Jaji, Dilazak, Khostwal, Jadran, Usman Khel, Wardak, and Mangal do not claim descent from Qais, unlike the Pathan/Afghan tribes of plains and plateaus, yet they also have the tradition of Israelite descent and call themselves *Bani Israil* (Arabic, Farsi, Pashto, and Urdu for the Hebrew *B'nei Yisrael*). They are presented in genealogical legend as descended from a founding common ancestor named Karlanri or Karlan, who had two sons: Koday and Kakay. The northerners who speak the hard variety of Pakhto are the descendants of Koday and the southerners who speak the soft variety of Pashto are the descendants of Kakay. Karlan or Karlanri is believed to have been adopted by a grandson of Sarbanr, one of the three sons of Qais or Kais (see Caroe, *The Pathans*).
[18] *Makhzan-i-Afghani* (History of the Afghans) of Neamatullah (1612 CE), trans. Bernhard Dorn, Part I, Oriental Translation Committee, London, 1829, p. 37.
[19] Shalva Weil, "Our Brethren the Taliban?" *The Jerusalem Report*, October 22, 2001, p. 22.
[20] See Izhak Ben-Zvi, trans. Isaac A. Abbady, *The Exiled and the Redeemed*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi Publications, 1976), pp. 209-26. The book was originally

published by The Jewish Publication Society of America in 1957. Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi brought their edition of the book in 1976 and called it the "second edition."

[21] Weil, "Our Brethren the Taliban?" p. 22.

[22] Ibid.

[23] A Jerusalem-based organization founded in 1975, dedicated to the search for the lost tribes of Israel across the world and facilitating their emigration to Israel. A new organization called Shavei Israel, dedicated to the same purpose, was founded by a close associate of Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail and former member of Amishav, Michael Freund, when he broke up with Rabbi Avichail.

[24] For instance M.W. Bellew, J.P. Ferrier, A.K. Johnson, Sir William Jones, Captain Riley, John Chamberlain, Sir Alexander Burnes, William Carey, John Marshman, J. Samuel, and Theodore Pennel.

[25] Professor Tudor Parfitt and Dr. Yulia Egorova collected DNA samples of fifty paternally unrelated Afridi males in Malihabad in November 2002, which were later analyzed by Dr. Neil Bradman and Dr. Mark Thomas at University College, London. The second attempt was made in 2009 by an Indian geneticist Shahnaz Ali under the supervision of Professor Karl Skorecki at the Israel Institute of Technology (Technion) in Haifa, Israel.

[26] Amtul Razzaq Carmichael, "The Lost Tribes of Israel in India—A Genetic Perspective," *The Review of Religions*, March 2012 [Accessed on March 15, 2014 at http://www.reviewofreligions.org/6107/the-lost-tribes-of-israel-in-india-a-genetic-perspective/]

[27] Ibid.

[28] M.M. Ahmad, "The Lost Tribes of Israel," *The Muslim Sunrise* (Summer 1991); accessible online at: http://www.alislam.org/library/links/00000094.html

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

[31] M. Ashraf, "A Paradox of Sorts, a Place Called Kashmir," in Kashmir First; accessible online at: http://www.greaterkashmir.com/full_story.asp?Date=28_10_2006&ItemID=4&cat=11

[32] Ibid.

[33] Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, *Jesus in India* (Islam International Publication Ltd., 1989); accessible online at http://www.alislam.org/library/books/jesus-in-india/ch2.html

[34] Yohanan Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous: Aspects of Ahmadi Religious Thought and Medieval Background* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 111-15.

[35] Rikva Gonen, *The Quest for the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel to the Ends of the Earth* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 2002), pp. 186-87.

[36] Egorova, *Jews and India*, p. 118.

[37] Yulia Egorova and Shahid Perwez, *The Jews of Andhra Pradesh: Contesting Caste and Religion in South India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 131.

[38] Egorova, *Jews and India*, pp. 115–19; Tudor Parfitt and Yulia Egorova, *Genetics, Mass Media and Identity: A Case Study of the Genetic Research on the Lemba and Bene Israel* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 92-93.

[39] Egorova and Perwez, *The Jews of Andhra Pradesh,* p. 120.

[40] Parfitt and Egorova, *Genetics, Mass Media and Identity*, pp. 123-25.

[41] Ibid., pp. 124-25.

[42] Egorova and Perwez, *The Jews of Andhra Pradesh*, p. 74.

[43] Ibid., p. 75.

[44] Egorova, *Jews and India*, pp. 119-27; Parfitt and Egorova, *Genetics, Mass Media and Identity*, p. 94.

[45] Egorova and Perwez, *The Jews of Andhra Pradesh*, pp. 55-56.
[46] Ibid., p. 43
[47] Weil, "Lost Israelites from the Indo-Burmese Borderlands," pp. 219-33.
[48] Jeffrey Lesser, "How the Jews became Japanese and Other Stories of Nation and Ethnicity," *Jewish History* 18 (2004): 8.
[49] Egorova and Perwez, *The Jews of Andhra Pradesh,* p. 19.
[50] Ibid., p. 21.
[51] Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail, *The Tribes of Israel: The Lost and the Dispersed* (Jerusalem: Amishav, 1990), p. 162.
[52] Joseph Chazhicattu, "Origin of Syrian Christians," *Jews of Cochin—India* (New Delhi: Jewish Welfare Association, 1999), p. 34.
[53] Joshua M. Benjamin, *The Mystery of Israel's Ten Lost Tribes and the Legend of Jesus in India*, 2nd ed. (New Delhi: Mosaic Books, 2001), p. 102.
[54] Tudor Parfitt, "Tribal Jews," in Nathan Katz et al., *Indo-Judaic Studies in the Twenty-First Century: A View from the Margin* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 181.
[55] Avichail, *The Tribes of Israel*, p. 163.
[56] Shalom Freedman, *Learning in Jerusalem: Dialogues with Distinguished Teachers of Judaism* (Northvale, NJ and Jerusalem: Jason Aronson Inc., 1998), p. 36.
[57] Ibid., pp. 39-40.
[58] Sameer Khan's email to the present author, August 11, 2007.
[59] Qazi Fazl-i-Azeem's email to the present author, August 14, 2007.
[60] Qazi Fazl-i-Azeem's email to the present author, September 5, 2007.
[61] "Andhé ko badi dūr ki sūjhi: Malihabadi Pathanon ko Israel āné ki dāvat," *Nai Duniya*, November 13-19, 2003 [Urdu].
[62] Hasan Kamaal, "Chai ki payāli méin tūfān uthāné ki koṣiṣ," *Roznama Rashtriya Sahara*, May 26, 2007 [Urdu].
[63] Agniva Banerjee, "When a Pathan is called a Jew," *Sunday Times of India*, New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, May 20, 2007.
[64] Ruvy in Jerusalem, "Ruminations on the Destiny of the People of Israel," on the website *DesiCritics.org*, January 18, 2007, http://desicritics.org/2007/01/18/021132.php
[65] Gerald Parkoff's email to the present author, December 24, 2006.
[66] Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail's message to the Afridi Pathans of Malihabad, video recorded by the present author at the rabbi's Jerusalem residence on June 14, 2007.

The Indian Jewish Community and its Association with the Holocaust and Yom HaShoah: A Preliminary Study

By Anuradha Bhattacharjee

Abstract

In 2011, a major Indian newspaper reported that only 20 people attended a Holocaust commemoration event held at Mumbai.[1] The 2000-year-old Indian Jewish community is Indian and Jewish concurrently. Often maligned as "impure" but rescued from ignominy by scientific study, they do not have a strong direct association with the Holocaust and the Yom HaShoah, being far removed from the happenings in Europe (see Exhibit 1).

Exhibit 1 News Report in Hindustan Times

hindustantimes

HINDUSTAN TIMES, TUESDAY, MAY

pay homage to Holocaust martyrs

world rejoiced ama bin Laden was a day of re than 13 mil- s the world, as e 66th anniver- caust martyrs. lews were mur- azis during the War, and over identities have with numbers," , consul gener- memorial serv- n the occasion Memorial Day' in Jewish Joint mmitten. ist is significant personal level, nother survived was there to tell rture meted out zis," said Sagiv. agony have left s," Sagiv added. hai-based Jews memorial serv-

A film being screened at DG Ruparel College, Matunga, on Monday as part of Holocaust Memorial Day. KALPAK PATHAK

ice, at DG Ruparel College, Matunga, watched the consul generals of Israel and Germany sitting beside one another, discussing peace and unity.

"It is important to note that while the Jews were specific victims of the Holocaust, the implications have been universal," said German consul general Leopold-Theodor Heldman. "The magnitude of the genocide will never be justified and thus, we, as Germans, will continue to strive for justice of Jews," he added.

A MEMORIAL SERVICE WAS ORGANISED BY THE AMERICAN JEWISH JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE

addition to hefty fees.

A division bench of chief justice Mohit Shah and justice DG Karnik asked the advocate for the petitioner, AL Gore, whether the NGO had made a comparative study of education provided by international and other schools. "Education at international schools may be different," Karnik said. The court suggested that the higher fee could be for facilities provided and the varied syllabus. "Someone may want to study in air-conditioned classes," Shah said.

Helekar argued that the schools that had not provided information had not been made respondents in the PIL. The court said it would first go through the government report and then decide whether there was need to add international schools as respondents. The court has asked the government to submit a report by June 28.

The PIL alleges that despite the Maharashtra Educational Institutions (Prohibition of Capitation Fee) Act to deal with schools demanding capitation fees, the government doesn't take any action. The PIL has sought an inquiry into the financial affairs of all international schools in the state. HTC

17 Outcome of discussion rumoured to be regressive about Channel Islands (8)
19 Iron bar repelled by a hat (6)
22 One lyric I retract, savaged by him? (8,6)
24 Section of tree used in black boat (4)
25 One ingredient of Chinese soup drunk by men, or different soup (10)
26 The first in action united in shock (4)
27 Basic gardening issue? (5-5)

DOWN
1 Demonstration heading off for major architectural feature (4)
2 Dog inclined to leave people in difficulties? (7)
3 They'd cut you to the quick if mishandled (4-8)
4 Falsehood's underhand — don't

SOLUTION TO CROS

Murder case registere medical student's deat

HT Correspondent
htmetro@hindustantimes.com

MUMBAI: More than a year after a medical student's body was found in his car at CST Road in Kurla (West), the police registered a case of murder based on the result of the viscera report sent by the Kalina and Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL). The

Kurla police had dental death rep body of Mukund Andheri East resid in his Santro car

The viscera rep police on Monda Kedia was strangu said Kurla police.

istered a murder ior inspector Laxr

BRUSH WITH ART

ents paint their thoughts

ated over the past two years, in a week-long exhibition organised by the Department of Atomic Energy.

For these students, pursuing pure science and art are complementary.

"Science explores nature around us or makes discoveries. Similarly, art explores a new thought or style within oneself," said Amit Betha, 21, second year student.

COLLEGE GETS POLICE COVER

HT Correspondent
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MUMBAI: The Bombay high court on Monday granted police protection to the Zoroastrian College in Sanjan, Gujarat, where a Parsian Zoroastrian was allegedly attacked by members of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet in 2010 during a ceremony inducting him into priesthood.

Mother Master Mooe, presi-

WEATHER FORECAS

Mumbai...

TODAY
A mainly clear sky becomes partly cloudy over the commercial capital. A warm and sunny afternoon followed by an enjoyable evening and night. High 33°C Low 26°C. Max R.H. 84%

THURSDAY
Minor change in temperatures are likely. The sky becomes partly cloudy on a humid afternoon. Thundery build-up is likely at night. High 33°C Low 27°C

THURSDAY
A partly cloudy sky will persist over the region. A comfy morning turns into a very warm and breezy afternoon. A pleasant night. High 33°C Low 26°C

Highlights: Extensive thunderstorms or rain would continue over sub-Himalayan WB, Sikkim, NE states, Jalshahoong and Andaman Islands. Rain is also expected at some places over Kerala, Karnataka, east and central India.
FORECAST:
Hottest: Ganganagar, Rajasthan 44°C
Coldest: Shimla, Kullu -1°C
Wettest: Minicoy, Lakshadweep

***Jews pay homage to Holocaust martyrs. Hindustan Times*, Mumbai, May 3, 2011**

Note: The function was organized by the Israeli and German consuls in Mumbai, jointly. 20 members of the Indian Jewish community attended the event.

Fully integrated with Indians, including Muslims, and never having faced any form of anti-Semitism ever in history, they are distinct from their European and American co-religionists in physiognomy and thought process. The Indian Jews are "Indians" and "Jews" concurrently and in fact the rare diaspora that did not face anti-Semitism at any time from their host community.

Spurred by the newspaper report, this preliminary research from qualitative interviews with members of the community in three Indian cities locates the relationship of the Indian Jewish people within the growing centrality of the Holocaust and Yom HaShoah as markers of the Jewish identity and identity creation. Dwindling in numbers on account of economic demand pull migration and mixed marriages, members of the diminishing community are on the cusp of being left out of the ever increasing marker of Jewish identity if they did not accept a practice they do not relate to. The Indian Jewish community could well be the much needed "control group" of Jews who have lived and been accepted in foreign lands, but on their own terms, the lack of which was lamented by Lang (2001)

Introduction

In 2011, a major Indian newspaper reported that only 20 people attended a Holocaust commemoration event held at Mumbai.[2] The report detailed that the event had been organized by the German and Israeli consulates in Mumbai. The thin attendance was deemed to be a demonstration for the need to "educate the Indians," for which the major newspapers were drawn in. The 2000-year-old Indian Jewish community is Indian and Jewish concurrently, and their lack of involvement in an event that has become a marker of Jewish identity in recent times became the starting point of this inquiry.

May (2010) has opined that a person is merely the constellation or intersection of group memberships. To try to single out just one of these group memberships for the purpose of identifying who one is, misses the fact that there are many other group memberships that that person could also be identified with.[3]

Novick (1999) states that the "Holocaust consciousness" became a central concern among Jews and other Americans approximately 20 years after WW II with the development of "identity politics."[4] Commenting on Novick's work, Whitfield (n.d.) writes that remembrance has been enlisted to shore up a faltering Jewish identity in the United States. American Jewish civil service increasingly attached itself to the Holocaust as entwining a fragmented and assimilated community into one.[5] The organizations were so successful, that by 1989 the Shoah ranked first as a marker of identity for American Jews, and media-savvy Jews manipulated the Holocaust to the center of American consciousness.[6]

In fact Laura Levitt has reported the emerging practice of 'Holocaust Appropriation"[7] in the United States as people try to identify their families with one or the other from the 'Tower of Faces" at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM).

According to Lang (2001), "the issue of American Jewish identity has been a widespread communal concern. That antisemitism has been a causal factor in shaping Jewish identity in the United States and elsewhere is also widely accepted, though more difficult to demonstrate because of the lack of control groups (for example, societies that accepted Jews as a minority but on the Jews' own terms)."[8]

With the Holocaust and Yom HaShoah becoming the central motif of Jewish identity globally, this article explores the identity of Indian Jews and their relationship with the event and the day of commemoration now observed as a part of the religious observations globally and discusses the findings.

In fact Sand (2009) has observed that Jews resemble in appearance, physical conduct, gestures, and mental qualities, the population among whom they lived, far more than they resembled their co-religionists elsewhere.[9] Though Sand's work is controversial, it is mentioned here simply as a reference to the full range of literature on the subject.

At the zenith of the Zionist movement in 1917 Montagu stuck to the issue that the homeland of British Jewry was Britain rather than Palestine.[10] Snyder (2010) has explored the relationship between the state and the Holocaust and opines that Jewish people were severely affected only when the European states had been broken down by one or both the totalitarian powers.[11] During WW II, when information about the Holocaust began to dribble in, Britain restricted immigration of the European Jewish people to Britain under the Aliens Act of 1905, but granted visas for travel to India, possibly capitalizing on the prior peaceful existence of the community there.

The native Indian Jewish community was located far away from Europe in a stable state. There was no targeted violence against the community, internally or externally historically. These two factors influenced the Indian Jewish community in a way that is distinct from their co-religionists in continental Europe and the reverberations of the European experience in other parts of the world.

Indian Jews Faced with the Holocaust

As Hitler began to put his policies, which were first elaborated in his book *Mien Kampf*, into effect, Hitler's political policies and those against the Jews began to appear in the Indian press too.[12] According to Sareen (2005), the first outspoken condemnation was voiced by Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru and he wrote, "Few people can withhold their deep sympathy from the Jews for the long centuries of most terrible oppression to which they have been subjected all over Europe. Fewer still can repress their indignation at the barbarities and racial suppression of Jews which the Nazis have indulged in, during the last few years and which continues even today. Even outside Germany Jew baiting has become a favourable pastime of various fascist groups."[13] Subsequently the All-India Congress Committee received many applications from Jewish members of the German Indian Society, German Emergency Committee, and other organizations functioning in Europe.[14] India became a transit point for the Jews escaping Nazi persecution in Germany, occupied Poland, and other regions. The acting Dutch consul in Lithuania, Jan Zwartendijk, and the Japanese consul in Lithuania, Chiune Sugihara, issued more than 4,400 transit visas that paved the way for an escape route from the east. Zwartendjik issued visas for Curacao and other islands of the Dutch West Indies, while Sugihara issued more than 2,000 transit visas through Japan to people who had the dubious "Curacao visa" or even nothing that served as a final destination visa.[15] The British consuls at Kovno in Lithuania and Kobe, Japan, issued visas for Palestine and other British dominions of South Africa, Australia, and India.[16]

Bombay, in India, became a major transit point, where many Jewish people often had to wait for months for onward visas to Palestine, South Africa, and Brazil amongst other places. In between, Iraq and Egypt declined transit facilities to these people owing to Arab sentiments. Matters came to a head when six Jewish refugees with visas for Palestine were refused permission to land at Basra and had to return to Bombay in the same vessel in December 1940.[17] About 30 Polish Jews who reached Calcutta after the ship they had boarded at Singapore, docked for emergency repairs.[18] The Jewish Relief Association (JRA) had set up offices in Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras.

The Polish Consulate in Bombay, functional since 1933, immediately constituted the Polish Relief Committee (PRC) and became active in extending relief to these people, in association with the JRA (a worldwide body, who was "preventing them from starving.")[19] Several Indian industrialists and charitable institutions including the Tatas contributed generously to this fund.[20] People arrived with little or no money for their onward journey and became destitutes.[21] While some took up whatever employment was available, the rest were becoming the responsibility of the Polish consulate for relief. The Bombay government granted visas for 330 people to be evacuated out of Romania and Yugoslavia. The Iraqi and Egyptian governments declined transit facilities and the Bombay government kept a strict

vigil on the state of the finances of the Polish refugees coming into India, especially those aboard the *S.S. Hosimi Maru*, which reached on June 14, 1941. The Bombay government wanted the cost of maintaining these refugees to be borne by the central government, who could recover it from HMG, and who in turn could bill it to the Polish government in England.[22] The Foreign Office informed the Polish government about their "embarrassment" by the presence of destitutes among these people in June 1941, when the PRC was short of funds.[23]

It was at this time that the Indian Jewish community in Bombay and Calcutta really crossed paths with the European Jewry. Weil (2005) describes the situation as: A dialectic exists between the Jewish host communities in India and the Jewish emigrants who came to live in their midst in the 1930s and 1940s. While members of the former never suffered from anti-Semitism in any form in India (except during a brief period in the 16th century at the hands of the Portuguese), most of the latter were escaping the persecution resulting from a macabre racism. The contrast was incredible. In India, the Jews lived a comfortable existence, incorporated, as they were, into the hierarchical system of things. The Jews from Germany, certainly by the 1940s, had narrowly escaped one of the greatest tragedies of the modern world. They came to India, the most tolerant country in the world for Jews, but even there they had to find their place in a society where colour and caste determined the status of the individual and the community, and the British Government still regarded them as "enemy aliens."[24]

Weil continues that during the period of 1930-40s a number of Jews from Persia, Bukhara, and Afghanistan came to India, and brought with them their own particular rituals, customs, and special songs. During their stay in India, these Eastern Jews joined the "Baghdadi" community in religious worship. The European Jews too preferred to affiliate themselves with the Anglecized "Baghdadi" Jews. Sometimes the aristocratic Ezra or Sassoon families mingled with the educated refugees. In Bombay, the European Jews tended to attend the Knesset Eliahu synagogue in the Fort business district, rented their own prayer halls during High Holy Days, Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, when more people would attend the synagogue. Some of the poorer European Jews started attending the Baghdadi "Magen David" synagogue after the Kneset Eliyahu synagogue started charging for seats. Some of the European Jews shared cemeteries with the Baghdadi Jews.[25]

During this period the Zionist movement gained ground, and the various Jewish groups had their own opinions. The thoroughly indigenized Bene Israeli (BI) related the least to the Zionist cause and often wrote strongly against the formation of the Israeli State. According to Weil "the relations between the Bene Israel and the emigrant refugees can be best expressed in the words of Sarah Israel: 'The main contact which we had with the refugee Jewish people who came to India was on a 'personal' basis rather than a 'community' basis."[26]

While not enough is known about the trade-related family linkages of the Baghdadi Jews to Europe and their experiences during the Holocaust or the subsequent migration of most members to the United States, the Bene Israel and Cochini Jewish community did not have a member affected by the Holocaust. The attempt at assimilation of the Bene Israel was reported by Rabbi Weinberger even as he extolled them to unite with other Jews of the world in a publication dated 1960.[27] There is even a mention of a rabbi being dispatched to Bombay to "instruct" the Jews of India.

David (2007) in a fictionalized version of a real incident describes how one of the Bene Israeli women invited her for a Yom HaShoah "celebration." There was a poster pasted on the synagogue wall saying "Happy Yom HaShoah," and David describes how the hostess and other invitees were dressed for a party and were laughing and joking while standing around a table where snacks and drinks were being served.[28]

Absence of Anti-Semitism in India

The Jews of India comprise one of the rare Jewish communities who have lived in a diasporic atmosphere in peace and harmony. Indian Jewry never faced any kind of persecution or anti-Semitism living in India. They practiced the Jewish faith and customs without any hindrances, except for a few years during the Portuguese rule, which was an extension of the inquisitions into India.[29] According to local lore, several Jewish families converted to Christianity during that period, but practiced Jewish rituals secretly. Those six to eight families formed themselves into a group and did not intermarry outside.

Elsewhere, most of the Jews lived in villages and had cordial relations with their non-Jewish neighbors.[30] According to Oomen 84.4% of Cochinis interviewed by him in Israel stated that they were emotionally attached to India, visited Kerala, had huge collections of Malyalam movies, subscribed to Malyalam TV channels, newspapers, and books.[31]

According to Israel:

> the image of the Jew to the Christian and the Islamic world was of a creature living precariously at the capricious mercy was never true in India. The Bene Israeli never saw any danger in free intercourse with their non-Jewish neighbours and enjoyed full participation in the life of the general community. None of the traditionally Jewish occupations elsewhere, such as high finance and international trade, were entered into by the Bene Israel. In fact, after they had given up their traditional occupation of oil-pressing, the Bene Israel could no longer be identified with any particular calling. It was their very 'normality' which made them such strange Jews, strange to Jews of other lands and strange to the educated Indians who derive their image of a Jew from English books. This 'normality' may be similar to that now seen in the Israeli Sabra which has the appearance of an abandonment of Judaism.[32]

The book from which this passage is drawn was first published in 1982, and the author states that he had drawn this passage from a writing a decade earlier. This passage more or less sums up a very important aspect of Jewish life in India of a well-integrated community that has retained its identity for more than 2000 years while there. Thus the Jews in India were completely/fully integrated members of Indian life when it was still a concept and aspirational state in Europe at the beginning of the Zionist movement, only to be achieved after 1948 with the creation of the State of Israel and championed after 1960s.

Who Are the Indian Jews Historically?

The Indian Jewish community is microscopic and quite fragmented—6,000 in the last census of 2011. Their existence is barely known except in the concerned areas. In 1948 the numbers are said to have been 25,000. The Bene Israel (BI) have lived in the Konkan region of Maharashtra in western India since 175 BC according to Kehimkar, cited by Israel.[33] Though controversial, a 2002 study by Parfitt, places them as the direct descendants of the Cohanim, of the Second Temple of Jerusalem.[34] Parfitt's study is cited here only to cover the full range of the discourse on the subject. The BI people speak Marathi and/or Konkani as their mother tongue to date and are fully assimilated in the Maharashtrian culture and life. An example are the Marathi calendars: *Kalnirnaya* is a regular Marathi calendar that can be found in every Maharashtrian's house and has all the festivals marked on it and includes the Jewish festivals of Passover, Rosh Hashannah, and so forth in Marathi with an identification with the Jewish community. Similarly, Jewish calendars in Hebrew are printed by local printers in Mumbai. After immigration to Israel opened up, many BI families migrated in search of a better life. They faced a mixed reception as described by Robin David via an incident his book *City of Fear.*[35]

The Cochini Jews are settled in and around Cochin in the Malabar region of the southern Indian state of Kerala. The oral history holds that the Jewish community welcomed the Syrian Christians who arrived in Cranganore in the third century AD.[36] Divided between Malabarees and White Jews they have been active in trade and shipbuilding since their arrival. The White Jews were the rich traders and monopolized the pepper, timber, amber, rice, and cotton trades of Kerala and acted as business advisors to the Cochin Maharaja in matters of maritime trade. The cordial relations between the Jews and the Maharaja of Cochin are documented by the Dutch traveler Van Linschoten who visited Cochin in 1589.[37] Some of the Malabarees were shipbuilders and helped the local Rajas in maritime trade.[38]

The first Baghdadi Jewish settler was Shalom ben Aaron ben Obadiah Ha-Kohen of Allepo, Syria who arrived in September 1790 and settled in Surat, in western India.[39] His son-in-law Moses Duek Cohen is credited with founding the Jewish community in Calcutta and catering to their religious needs. In the nineteenth century there were about 100 Jews from Baghdad, Basra, Aleppo, and Yemen, who formed the Arabic-speaking Jewish colony of Surat, and came to be known as Baghdadi or Iraqi Jews. They are most likely the very distinct Maghribi trading community referred to extensively by Avner Grief in economic history literature.[40] The foremost among them have been the Sassoon family, that led a trading dynasty that stretched from Calcutta and Bombay to Singapore and Shanghai and earned the sobriquet "Rothschild of the East." Their fortunes were made through trade in cotton, silk, jute, tobacco, indigo, and opium operating from Kolkata (Calcutta). Fergusson (2008) notes that one of the best lines of business of the famous William Jardine and James Matheson was importing government-produced opium from India.[41] The ultraluxurious Peace Hotel built by Victor Sassoon, as well as the Sasson Park in Shanghai bear testimony to the close association that the Baghdadi Jewish traders had with Jardine and Matheson and other European traders at the time.

Since the fortunes of the Baghdadi Jews were closely linked to Jardine and Matheson and other the European traders, they assimilated the European lifestyle completely, including their prejudices. Following the Independence of India, most Baghdadis immigrated to the West and never really preserved their Indian identity.[42] The famous hair dresser Vidal Sassoon and academic Daniel Sassoon are from the same ancestry, but make no reference to their Indian heritage.

Methodology

A convenience sample of members of the shrinking community in Pune, Ahmedabad, and Mumbai, who were willing to answer a questionnaire were interviewed either in the synagogue or in their homes (since this is a preliminary study).

Since the size of the community in Ahmedabad, Pune, and Mumbai was estimated to be around 200 people each, about 12 people each from the three cities were interviewed. The group was evenly divided across gender, education level, and age group for a homogenous representation of the dwindling community. The respondents were adult members of the Jewish community of both genders in Pune, Ahmedabad, and Mumbai.

The community in Delhi could not be tapped as the synagogue official informed that the microscopic community of Indian Jewish people in central government services had retired, passed on, or moved back with their families in other Indian cities or overseas. The prayer hall in Delhi functioned mostly for the religious needs of the visiting international community in the city.

Most members of the Indian Jewish community had received tertiary education in English and were professionally qualified as doctors, academicians, members of the armed forces, and corporate executives. There were very few children in the sample as the diaspora is small and largely aging. Most young people have immigrated to the United States directly or via Israel for superior economic prospects capitalizing on their Jewish identity. Others were not married or had partners from other faiths and children that were

being raised as secular, after the performance of the basic rituals. All the respondents were from the middle or high income brackets, which means who were well educated and had a conscious engagement with their faith and rituals.

No quantitative analysis of the responses has been carried out since the sample size was rather small (this being a preliminary study). The essence of the qualitative responses is presented here to identify the dominant thought processes. There was very little variation in the responses, hence the best representative sentence is being reported.

Findings

Members of the Indian Jewish community clearly identified Yom HaShoah as a day of mourning, commemorating the Holocaust vis-à-vis all the other Jewish festivals that have a festive spirit about them and stated that Yom HaShoah was not a traditional observance in the category of Passover and Hanukkah and was a comparatively recent addition to the Jewish calendar estimating the practice to be about ten years old. However, there were no special commemoration services held at the synagogues in Pune or Ahmedabad. It was only held in Mumbai and attended by the Consul General of Israel, who usually leads the service with films and pictures about the Holocaust.

No one from the community in India can recall a relative affected by the Holocaust. The nearest relation with anyone affected by the Holocaust was one by marriage in Israel, where the parents or older sibling of spouse was a Holocaust survivor. The majority of the responses were: "We know what it is about, but we don't observe it as strictly as in Israel, since we do not exactly relate to it."

They attended the meeting more for social reasons than any other. A newspaper report on 2010 reported an attendance by merely twenty people in Mumbai. The day is not observed in smaller Jewish centers in cities such as Pune and Ahmedabad. Residents recalled a one off exhibition of pictures of the Holocaust and a talk given by a visiting Israeli in Ahmedabad some years ago. Since there was no definite communication on observing the day from the rabbinate in Israel, it was a largely private affair, leaving it to the individuals to observe the day of mourning privately. Some members said the 15-minute *Kaddish* (the prayer for the dead), and some others lit the memorial lamp, but all the respondents said that it was more out of a feeling of Jewish brotherhood and solidarity than any personal/ filial association with the event.

Most of the respondents have traveled to Israel and/or the United States and participated in religious observances there at the behest of the community. All the respondents said that there was no comparison on the scale on which the Yom HaShoah was observed in Israel, with the blowing of the siren and a closed period for three days. In India, even when communally observed as in Mumbai, it was a workday as usual both, at home and at the synagogue.

The Indian Jewish community is reverential and it is more due to a sense of solidarity with their Jewish brethren than as a sense of duty. Responses varied from "Our relatives who have migrated to Israel observe it" or "Our relatives in Israel light a 24-hour memorial candle. Since our visit there, we too light a candle and say the *Kaddish*." A senior academic who is an active member of the JRA in Pune said, "We tried to hold an exhibition of pictures obtained from the consulate once. Yom HaShoah is anyway a solemn event and the exhibition of Holocaust pictures made it even more grim and depressing. The practice has been discontinued and left to the people to observe it in their own way." He continued, "Some material in Marathi has been created for the benefit of those who cannot access information in English, the number of which might be almost negligible, but the rest of us have read *Diary of Anne Frank, Mila 18, Exodus* etc and watched films like *Life is Beautiful, Schindler's List* etc." It needs to be reinforced here that all the members of the Bene Israeli

community interviewed for this article spoke English and have had access to the literature, films, and web sources in English, to address their need for information.

The question "What does the Yom HaShoah mean to **you**?" evoked responses such as "They were our Jewish brethren whether they were related or not," and

> In India we don't associate with the Holocaust and Yom HaShoah, since we have been sheltered from the event. It was discussed by our parents and older siblings in our hometowns, during the war years, especially after a lot of people fleeing Europe and the ongoing event were in Bombay and news had started trickling in. An awareness about the happenings had started building up. At that time we were asked to give a tenth of our salary/earnings towards charity. But observing the Yom HaShoah as a Commemoration Day has come much later.[43]

Several others said,

> It was a ghastly policy followed by one despot in History. The Jews were merely a part of the several million people affected by his despotic policies which affected other people too. We are now coming to know that Stalin too followed similar policy of extermination for his own people as well as people from other nationalities. It was a complete bloodbath in Europe at that time. In fact not long after many died in India as well—the famine and Partition. So we observe to pray for all who died during the period.

In fact drawing from the Hindu mythological concept of *pralaya* or cataclysm, this respondent compared the WW II period to it and noted,

> Those years were *pralaya kaal* and the dance of death marked the whole world directly or indirectly—the deaths caused by the numerous battles fought everywhere, Holocaust, inside Soviet Union, nuclear holocaust of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, famine in Bengal, Partition of India,...large number of deaths just about everywhere all over the world. So I pray for them all and to be lucky to have survived.

On their Jewish identity affecting their professional lives in a country often wracked by bigotry, the response of the older generation in unison was, "It made no difference. We are a part of the mainstream in India, with equal access to education, jobs and promotions, achieving what we were personally capable of achieving." Some of the younger members of the community felt that it often worked to their favor in the globalized world. One person mentioned being absolved of certain duties as a student in the UK and another spoke of a career growth far higher than his peers since his discovery as being Jewish by one of the movers and shakers of the professional establishment.

On whether the members of the community had ever tried to educate the general Indian people about the Holocaust, all respondents responded negatively, saying, "There is no need. Nothing comparable has ever happened in India." In fact all respondents said that they did not want to attract attention to themselves as Jews in the present global scenario of rampant terrorism and community targeting, especially after the Mumbai siege of 2008 and the bombing of the restaurant opposite the Chabad House in Pune, popularly known as the German bakery blast of 2009. Members of the community preferred to remain the small well-adjusted and well-integrated people in the overall Indian scheme of things, preferring their anonymity in the present global situation. It might be prudent to mention here that the Ohiel David Synagogue in Pune was subjected to arson by a group of Palestinian students a little over a decade ago. Antique Torahs etc., were lost. After the 2008 Mumbai blast and the 2009 German bakery blast in Pune, police have been posted to

guard the synagogues in Pune and Mumbai. There is a noticeable police presence near the synagogue of Ahmedabad too.

It must be cited that the above-mentioned incidents occurred at the proximity of places thronged by the Jewish people of foreign origin, whereas the Bene Israel synagogues are located in predominantly Muslim areas in Pune, Ahmedabad, and Mumbai. To date the institutions are safe and event-free and no incident has ever been reported from any of these synagogues. They are protected by members of both communities: the Jewish as well as the local Muslims.

However, owing to the current global scenario, all the respondents preferred to keep a low profile by not playing up their Jewish identity. All said, "Those who know us personally, know about our being Jews. For the rest, they need not know it. Owing to our Biblical names, many assume that we are Christians and we do not choose to correct them." One lady in the teaching profession said, "I am flooded with greetings from my students on Christmas and Easter. Up to some years ago, I would often explain to my pupils that I was Jewish, and not Christian, but now I don't. I don't want to get identified by some fanatic, bearing a grudge on the matters of the Middle-East, and have my person and family targeted simply on account of our faith."[44] In fact on the subject of being targeted for discrimination, most respondents reported to being targeted by the Christians in the missionary schools and often branded as "killers of Christ," rather than anything faced from Hindus and Muslims.[45] As young children, the targeting in school by a member of the missionary staff, left them completely flummoxed and unsettled.

Addressing queries exploring the Indian aspect of their identity and orientation toward the partition of the subcontinent, most members responded, "We will join the people as and when any commemoration is organized for Partition/communal violence anywhere at a secular place. We pray for the dead as well as living, Jewish or not in our regular prayers at the synagogue. Whenever there has been any kind of a calamity natural or otherwise, we have collected donations at the synagogue and sent it to the relevant authority."

The Gujarat riots of 2002, where Hindus and Muslims clashed very violently for three weeks in the Indian state of Gujarat, have been compared to the Holocaust by the media. Two Jewish writers, Esther David and Robin David, have made it the focus of their writings in the recent times, while commenting on the state of affairs in India and especially in Gujarat under the current leader Narendra Modi.[46] To queries on events in India that were comparable to the Holocaust, some members of the community from Ahmedabad responded with: "the 2002 Godhra riots that spilled to Ahmedabad and some other cities of Gujarat."[47] Others in Ahmedabad, Pune, and Mumbai said, "There has not been any event in India that was even remotely comparable to the Holocaust."

Since the riots were communal in nature—Hindus and Muslims fighting and targeting each other—the David duo (Esther and Robin), have made it the subject of their numerous books. Robin David (2007) mentions how he feared Hindu mobs owing to his circumcized penis, as per Jewish custom and tradition.[48] Esther David's two books *Shalom India Housing Society*[49] and *The Man with Enormous Wings*[50] though fiction, have a dominant thread of the 2002 riots running through them both. However, few members of the community could relate to the fears expressed by David. The usual response was, "A riot is a serious situation. Anyone who gets caught in the crossfire will be affected regardless of their denomination and/or personal beliefs. So it always better to keep low profile in general and specifically during riots and stay indoors."

No respondent from Pune or Mumbai could identify with the situation described/portrayed by the David duo. The Jews of Maharashtra enjoy a high degree of inclusion. According to Irene Judah, cadres of the Shiv Sena, one of the Hindu fundamentalist political parties of the region, is perfectly aware of the presence of the Jewish community in Maharashtra, especially Mumbai up to the point of identified Jewish families. She mentions that they are at all times helped and taken care of, including during emergency situations.[51]

Other research findings include that most members of the community have visited Israel and/or other countries. In a country where families traveling overseas is still a luxury that few can afford, such visits facilitated by the Joint Distribution Agency mean a lot for the people. Most members reported that the AJDC organizes summer camps for the children in Europe where they learn about Jewish history and the Holocaust. They reported that the offer was taken more as a chance to travel and see the world rather than absorb the indoctrination that was a part of these trips.

All members reported that there had never been any movement from the community toward getting a "minority community" status and related affirmative action from the government of India. All the respondents opined, "We don't need it" citing several reasons as (a) we are not so large in numbers as a community to be relevant in the numbers driven democracy of India; (b) we can access all the education and job opportunities that we want to without needing recourse to any kind of affirmative action; (c) We can achieve all that professional heights that we aspire toward within the existing framework of things in India. It might be interesting to note that the Jewish community of India has produced luminaries in most fields, studied in detail by Kenneth Robbins in a multivolume history of the Jews of India, co-edited with Marvin Tokayer (see http://wwwuser.gwdg.de/~jkeune/msg/documents/RobbinsPLFeb2012.pdf).

Conclusions

The Indian Jewish community is over 2000 years old and is a well-assimilated and fully integrated part of Indian political and cultural life; they have retained their identity, very much the *sabra* (the objective of the Zionist movement that led to the creation of the State of Israel). It must be mentioned that the incidents of Mumbai in 2008 and Pune in 2009 occurred at the proximity of places thronged by the Jewish people of foreign origin, whereas the Bene Israeli synagogues are located in predominantly Muslim areas in Pune, Ahmedabad and Mumbai. To date the institutions are safe and event-free, protected by members of both communities. No incident has ever been reported from any of these synagogues. In fact this brings out yet another global exception of Jews and Muslims living together in harmony and respecting and protecting each other's places of worship. How long this culture will endure in the face of growing global polarization is a guesstimate at best.

In fact even the outcry "never again" failed to prevent the establishment of killing fields in the former Yugoslavia and in sub-Saharan Africa in the 1990s. "Holocaust-fixation" may have aroused concern for the unwarranted suffering of countless and anonymous millions during the entire period of the WW II and immediately following it. In fact the publicizing of the Holocaust only may have created a disincentive for effective international action—since no other social catastrophes have seemed as appalling. Nor have any qualifying benchmark figures been arrived at for other mass killings to be judged as "a holocaust."

The emerging practice of "Holocaust Appropriation" in the United States as reported by Levitt[52] is demonstrative of Holocaust-centrism in the construction of the American Jewish identity and derives from a still more fundamental but tacit premise of Novick's argument.

At present Yom HaShoah is a superimposition on the basic Jewish identity of the Indian Jewish community by forces from other countries. Since the Indian Jews have faced acceptability issues from their brethren in the past, the members of the Indian Jewish community are accepting the imposition of observing the Yom HaShoah in spite of not identifying with it and in keeping with a basic Indian value of deference. As one member put it,

The Jewish people have weathered several crises throughout their history. Pessah/Passover and Hanukkah are two festivals that rejoice the overcoming of difficult times by the

community by keeping faith. Perhaps if the Yom HaShoah becomes a celebration of having survived the Holocaust and another marker of the durability of the faith, it would be better accepted by the celebration loving Indian Jewish community. After all, after centuries in India, we have absorbed the Indian love for celebrations. Also, it is better to celebrate than to mourn!

These views of the BI Jewish respondents reflect traditional Indian values of tolerance, peaceful cohabitation with other communities, and a love for celebrations.

The Indian Jewish community does not have a strong direct association with the Holocaust and the Yom HaShoah since they were far removed from the episode in Europe. They follow the traditions and religious practices of their forefathers, yet have absorbed the language, dress, and values of the Indian community closest to them. In fact some members said that Yom HaShoah was beginning to resemble the observance of Muharram, the day of mourning commemorating the death of the Prophet by Muslims. But most important, the results of this study is a ratification of Novick's (1999) study that states that the "Holocaust consciousness" became a central concern among Jews and other Americans approximately twenty years after WW II with the development of "identity politics." Novick continues that American policymakers embraced a carefully edited version of the Holocaust after 1973, as it provided the moral cover for U.S. aims: Holocaust remembrances fail to inquire into any disturbing issues, but serves to obfuscate the class issues, whether in Nazi Germany, Roosevelt in America, or within Israel itself.[53]

According to Gilmour (1994), British Foreign Secretary Arthur J. Balfour during the interwar period, believed that a pro-Zionist declaration was necessary to gain the support of American Jews who might provide *financial aid to Allies* [emphasis added] as also the Russian Jews who might help persuade their government to stay in the war and pre-empt a similar move by Germany.[54]

Despite these initiatives, the Holocaust gripped continental Europe, affecting the citizens of destroyed states the worst. The postwar immigration of surviving European Jews to America and Israel saw a surge in Holocaust sentiments. The HaShoah assumed a definite centrality in the Jewish identity globally led by "American Jewry," most of whom traced their ancestry back to continental Europe and who even retained the language and some other cultural markers.

Indian Jews who retained their cultural markers but without the memory of the Holocaust, since they were not affected by it on account of distance and the safety of the British-Indian state, have had their faith and purity questioned and risk it again at a later date, in a resonance of the discrimination faced by them from their brethren from other parts of the world.

The Indian Jew would not be able to appropriate the Holocaust as is the emerging trend in United States due to distinct physiological differences, leaving them at a higher risk of alienation from the community at some time in the future.

Having lived a life without being faced with prejudices for centuries, the Indian Jewish community could well be the much needed "control group" of Jews who have lived and been accepted in foreign lands, but on their own terms, the absence of which was lamented by Lang (2001).

However, the observation "Those years were *pralaya kaal* and the dance of death marked the whole world directly or indirectly—the deaths caused by the numerous battles fought everywhere, Holocaust, large scale deaths inside Soviet Union, nuclear holocaust of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, famine in Bengal, Partition of India,...large number of deaths just about everywhere all over the world. So I pray for them all and feel lucky to have survived" by a member of the community who preferred to remain anonymous has the seed of the Yom HaShoah becoming the thought leader of a larger message of peace with global

resonance and inclusiveness, endorsing the survival, durability of the faith and tenaciousness as in the concept of the March of the Living.

Notes

[1] "Jews Pay Homage to Holocaust Martyrs," *Hindustan Times* (Mumbai), May 3, 2011, Appendix 1, p. 2.
[2] Ibid.
[3] L. May, *Genocide: A Normative Account* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 45.
[4] P. Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), p. 156.
[5] S.J.Whitfield, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0411/is_4_49/ai_68738715/?tag=content;col1
[6] Ibid.
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[8] B. Lang, "On Peter Novick's *The Holocaust in American Life," Jewish Social Studies* 7, 3 (Spring/Summer 2001): 149-56.
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[19] NAI, 186/-X/40(Secret), Thomas Cook & Son to Capt. RKM Saker, dated 22 Feb., 1941.
[20] TCA, DTT Collection, Minutes of 65, 67 and 80th Meeting.
[21] NAI, EAD 186/-X/40(Secret).
[22] Ibid., Folio 29-31, RKM Saker.
[23] AAN, S 38-39 (File number cannot be given, but scanned copy of letter with author).
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[26] Ibid., p. 77.
[27] *"Jews in India Unite: Orthodox Union Established, Rabbi Reports Here,"* New York Times, *August 18, 1960, p. 2.*
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[30] S. Koder, *History of the Jews of Kerala* (Cochin: published by the author, 1974), pp. 21-22.

[31] G.Z. Oomen, *Ethnicity, Marginality and Identity: The Jews of Cochin in Israel* (New Delhi: Manak, 2011), p. 203.
[32] B.J. Israel, *The Jews of India* (New Delhi: Mosaic Books, 1984), pp. 16-17.
[33] H.S. Kehimkar, *The History of Bene Israel in India* (1897; Tel Aviv: N.P, 1937). See http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0012_0_11003.html
[34] R.Z. Ahmed, "Marathi Jews are Moses' Kin, Says Study," *Sunday Times* of India (July 21, 2002), p. 1.
[35] R. David, *City of Fear* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2007), pp. 57-59.
[36] Y.P. Doss, *The Shingly Hebrews* (Trivandrum: Sachethana, 1990), pp. 15-16.
[37] M.D. Japeth, *Jews of Indis: A Brief History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 92.
[38] Ibid., p. 90.
[39] Israel, *Jews of India*, p 49.
[40] Jewish traders who lived in the Abbasid caliphate (centered in Baghdad) until the first half of the tenth century, when they immigrated to North Africa (a part of the Maghrib, the Muslim world's West), mainly to Tunisia. Although the Maghribi immigrants integrated into existing Jewish communities, they also retained a strong sense of identity and solidarity among themselves. In their letters (geniza documents) they refer to themselves as "our people, the Maghribis, the travelers [traders]" or "our people." The distinct identity of the Maghribi traders within the Jewish communities is also suggested by letters written by Jews other than the Maghribi traders. In 1030 a letter from Fustat to the head of the yeshiva in Jerusalem happily reports that some Maghribis have joined the Fustat yeshiva's synagogue. Twenty-four years later, in a report sent to Jerusalem concerning the condition of that synagogue, the "Maghribi people" are still mentioned as a separate group. The Maghribi traders did not establish a separate religious-ethnic community apart from the Jewish community. See A. Greif, "Reputation and Coalitions in Medieval Trade: Evidence on the Maghribi Traders," *The Journal of Economic History* 49, 4 (December 1989): 861-62.
[41] N. Ferguson, *The Ascent of Money: A Financial History of the World* (London: Penguin, 2008), p. 290 and E. Fernandes, The Last Jews of Kerala (New Delhi: Penguin, 2008), p. 105.
[42] E. Fernandes, *The Last Jews of Kerala*, p. 105.
[43] Interview with Drs. George & Irene Judah, Pune, May 11, 2011.
[44] Daya Aston, personal interview with author, May 11, 2011. Daya was born a Hindu to a prominent family and converted to Judaism during her marriage to Dr. Nathan Aston.
[45] Personal interview with author, May 2011. Respondents requested anonymity.
[46] Narendra Modi, Chief Minister, Gujarat, had just recently taken office when the 2002 riots broke out in Godhra in response to the felling of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in UP, another distant state in India. The riots spread quickly to Ahmedabad, which had a history of bi-ennial communal riots. Modi and his administration were slammed by global media for inadequate measures to prevent and contain the situation. According to the official figures, the riots resulted in the deaths of 790 Muslims and 254 Hindus; 2,500 people were injured non-fatally, and 223 more were reported missing. Some unconfirmed estimates put the number of Muslim casualties at 2,000. The Special Investigation Team (SIT) set up by the Supreme Court of India absolved Modi of alleged complicity in 2012. The order was upheld again in 2013 when it had been appealed.
[47] The riots had broken out in January 2002 after carriage full of Hindu volunteers returning from the disputed site of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya were torched to death at Godhra in Gujarat, ostensibly by Muslim activists. A Hindu backlash followed in several cities of Gujarat. Mobs of one group were targeting members of the other group. The rioting lasted about ten days.

[48] David, *City of Fear,* pp. 43-44.
[49] David, *Shalom India Housing Society.*
[50] E. David, *The Man with Enormous Wings* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2010).
[51] I. Judah, personal interview with author, Pune, May 10, 2011.
[52] Levitt, "Looking Out from Under a Long Shadow."
[53] P. Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), p. 156.
[54] Gilmour, *Curzon,* p. 481.

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Personal Interviews: All participants requested not to be identified too precisely on account of personal security concerns, so places of ordinary residence withheld. Names are in alphabetical order of family names.

Dr. and Mrs. N.M. Aston
Mr. & Mrs. Joshua Aston
Brig. (Retd.) & Mrs. B.M. Daniels

Ms. Esther David
Mr. & Mrs. Robin David
Mr. & Mrs. Aviv Divekar
Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Gadkar
Mr. & Mrs. Raymond Israel
Lt. Gen. (Retd.) J.F.R. Jacob
Drs. Irene and George Judah
Lt. Gen. (Retd.) & Mrs. Mordecai
Mr. & Mrs. Moses Penkar
Mr. & Mrs. Benjamin Reuben
Admiral (Retd.) & Mrs. Samson

Report to the London Bet Din on the Calcutta Jewish Community (1965)

By Rabbi Daniel Sperber

Note from Rabbi Sperber

When I was studying in Yeshivot in Jerusalem in the late 1950s, early 1960s, I would take off a month or two and "go east," hitchhiking each time further east, via Turkey, Persia (now Iran), Pakistan (southern route), Afghanistan (northern route), India, Nepal, East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), etc. During this time I crisscrossed India, north to south, east to west. Later after finishing my B.A. in Art History at the Courtauld Institute of Art, London, and before beginning my doctorate in Ancient History and Hebrew Studies at University College London, I found I had a "time-gap." Happily, I was requested to go to India by the British rabbinate, to serve as a rabbi and deal with various problems facing the Indian Jewish community, such as divorces between spouses separated by continents, conversions of Malay wives to Indian Jewish (mainly Baghdadi) husbands, checking and repairing mikvaot, transferring funds from Indian Jewish foundations to Indian Jewish communities in the Sterling area, etc.

I first arrived in Bombay with Dayan Swift, a member of the London Bet Din. We were there together for some two weeks, both in Bombay and Calcutta, solved what we could solve, and then, after I had been "broken in," I stayed on in Calcutta to serve as a temporary rabbi. There I stayed for quite a while at the house of the late Bertie Meier, the CEO of the B.N. Elias Co., a wealthy and very generous individual. When I returned to London, I wrote the following report for the London Bet Din. My journey had been funded by the late Rabbi Solomon David Sasoon.

It was in those days that I developed a sort of spiritual kinship for India. In subsequent years I had occasion to visit India in various capacities. More recently, as member of the Israeli rabbinate's interfaith team, I went to New Delhi to attend the first Hindu-Jewish Leadership Summit in 2007 and met there with many leading swamis and Acariahs. What followed this meeting was an ongoing dialogue with Hindu religious leaders, and several meetings in Jerusalem and New Delhi, and as a result I am close to completing a volume on "The Halachic Status of Judaism."

Population, etc.

The population of the Calcutta Jewish Community numbers ±500 (probably -500 by now—1963). It comprises for the most part second- or third- generation Indian Jews of Iraqi (Baghdadi) origin. There are however a certain number of Burmese-born Jews (from Rangoon and Aciab in the main) and also some from Singapore. These too are ultimately of Baghdadi or Chalebi (Aleppo, Syria) origin. The whole community is only about 130 years old and up to 12 years ago numbered approximately 5,000. The rapid diminution in numbers of the community over the last decade, resulting in the present 10% "remained," has been due to two main causes: (1) the progressive deterioration of Indian economic affairs since their independence (1947) and all its cognate effects upon social order, and (2) the increasing attraction of the State of Israel since the advent of her own independence in 1948. The emigration of Calcutta Jews from India has been to England, Israel, Australia, Canada, and the United States probably in that order of popularity.

At the present moment the composition of the population is approximately: 30% (c. 150) up to the age of 22, probably about 60% over the age of 45, and only 10% of the intervening age level, 22-45. The relationship of the sexes is about two females to every male in the youngest age group (to 22 years old), perhaps as many as three females to

every one male in the second age group (22-45) and probably five females to four males in the oldest age group. The reason for the disproportionate ratios in favor of women in the first two age levels is due to the patterns of emigration. Thus young able-bodied men tend to leave the country to find work abroad more readily than the girls. The Jewish Agency (Aliyah dept.) accepts for immigration to Israel people up to the age of 45 as a rule. That means that late middle-aged parents remain behind, and in very many cases, daughters likewise remain behind to look after the parents. These and other such considerations account for the peculiarities in the make-up of the population.

The majority of the population is poor, and only three or four families can now be said to be wealthy. (The wealthier class moved out some time ago, primarily into Sterling Area countries.) The wage-earners in this poorer class are petty traders, hawkers (in the markets, etc.), lowly clerics, or simple manual laborers in factories (jute mills, etc.). From the wages they receive they can certainly not put away any money in savings, and in all too many cases neither can they support their large families properly. In such cases they have the right to benefit from the various Jewish charitable funds, from which they receive monthly allowances or annual gifts (see below section on "Institutions, Organizations, etc.". For such people the prospect of going to Israel, receiving a flat, job, education, etc., is a great attraction. This means that in the future the pattern of emigration will shift so that Israel and not (as is still the case) England will be first in emigrational popularity.

The present rate of emigration is from 12-20 persons per month. This would at first seem to suggest that within less than half a decade there should be hardly a Jew left in Calcutta. However, this will probably not be the case. First, Indian foreign currency restrictions are such as to discourage leaving the country. Second, England's immigration laws will limit immigration to this country. Third, the large number of over 45 year olds will probably not be accepted by the Jewish Agency for immigration to Israel unless they can financially provide for themselves. But in most cases they cannot. Furthermore Indian currency restrictions will hardly allow those of moderate means who might at some time have been able to support themselves, to do so now. Thus the pattern of population decrease will probably be a rapid fall within the next three years to about +250 and then a gradual dwindling due in the main to natural causes. This pattern might, however, be changed if the Jewish charities could somehow be used to finance the emigration of the remaining few.

Due to the pattern of the distribution of sex groups and age levels, there are very few marriages and very few births (there were two brit milas in the last year). Thus there is virtually no natural increase in population to offset the loss thereof. But where there is a population increase it is amongst the poorest classes.

Institutions, Organizations, etc.

Education. Calcutta has two Jewish schools, one for boys and one for girls. The boys' school is called the Elias Meyer Free School and Talmud Torah. At the moment it has about 90 pupils, only a third of whom (c. 32) are Jewish. It also has a hostel for poor *Jewish* boys, which has at the moment eight boarders. The school caters for the full age span of 5-18, and it has a natural capacity of well over 200. Due to the present paucity of pupils there exists the peculiar situation where one pupil may constitute a whole class. Under such circumstances educational standards necessarily suffer in all subjects, and the standard of Hebrew and Jewish religious knowledge (taught very informally but quite successfully by an old crippled gentleman) is consequently very low. The Jewish children (non-paying pupils) are all of poor families, and this too does not contribute to raising the general level of the school. The headmaster is Jewish, and intelligent, but not overpopular with prominent members of the community and this likewise has its ill effects upon the school. Non-Jewish children are all paying members, hence of better families, and this fact to (unfortunately only) a small extent offsets the general drop in the social and cultural level of the school. At

the present moment the school is getting less and less Jewish pupils and more and more non-Jewish ones. It is woefully dingy and dilapidated and is not of the type to attract teachers of the best kind.

The girls' school is in somewhat better circumstances. It is called Jewish Girls' School and Jeshurun Free School and is in fact an amalgamation (for all but some purely administrative purposes) of two formerly separate institutions contained in its present name. It has 164 pupils (ages 5-18), 64 of whom are Jewish (or half-Jewish; likewise in the boys' school—see below). The Jeshurun Free School was formerly for poor Jewish children only, but now all Jewish children may be (if necessary) non-paying, whereas all non-Jewish children are paying members (hence of a higher social level, etc.). There is a Jewish Girls' Hostel adjacent to the school in the same compound, which is in fact wholly independent of the school, having its own matron, budget, funds, etc., and which at the moment houses 22 (Jewish) boarders, all non-paying. The headmistress is an intelligent, friendly, and understanding Hindu lady. Hebrew and Jewish religious knowledge are taught to all Jewish girls by a fine elderly lady of limited knowledge. Here again the tendency is to a rapid decrease in Jewish members and a reciprocal increase in non-Jewish members. The school has a capacity considerably above its present membership (well over 200).

Both schools are partly state aided and hence come under the aegis of state educational legislation and supervision. They have to accept non-Jewish pupils, and at the moment limit their number by demanding high fees (which right they have). In the case of the girls' school there has recently been an added complication, namely that according to a newly passed law, the headmaster/mistress of a school must be a member of the Board of Governors and/or Trustees of that school. For a Jewish school to have a non-Jew as a (powerful and active) member of its administrative board (a board that among other things dictates policies to limit non-Jewish members and so forth) must be at times awkward, to say the least.

The disparity in numbers between the boys' and girls' school has already been explained in the section entitled Population, etc. Here a further point of considerable importance should be made: There are, in both schools, far more children of the up-to-12 age group than of the older type. On the other hand among the older girls there are less who are the result of mixed marriages. In both schools, however, fully two-thirds of all Jewish children are born of mixed-marriages (of Jewish or non-Jewish, converted or unconverted mothers). The child of an unconverted mother or father is granted admittance to both schools, but to neither hostel.

The standard of Hebrew and Jewish religious knowledge in both schools is woefully low. The eldest pupils (15-18 years old) could not pass the Indian equivalent of the Hebrew O Level. Nor indeed are they taught to that level, that is, the educational aim is to a standard far lower than the O Level. The children can speak a (very) little and read a little Hebrew, know some bible stories, and something about the festivals. The children who know more than that can pray in a synagogue, etc., and have acquired this knowledge outside the school (at home).

Synagogues. There are at the moment in Calcutta four functioning synagogues: Magen David, Nevei Shalom, Bethel, and Shaarei Ratzon. (There was yet another—the Magen Avot—but that was closed some years ago.) On an average these synagogues get about 10-15 worshippers on a Shabbat, some of whom are paid "minyan men." Officially, they all have a daily morning service (through the paid "minyan men") but in practice only Shaarei Ratzon does. The latter [Shaarei Ratzon], gets a Shabbat attendance of 15-20 persons (in the monsoon season, and more in the clement periods) and 7-15 women as well. Bethel has the only Mikvah in Calcutta, and it is kosher although little used. Magen David has a real regular income, which will go up considerably in two years' time when certain projects (building, renting, etc.) will be completed. Bethel Synagogue supports itself and has a little left over for charities. Bethel and Magen David have regular "chazzanim,"

while in Shaarei Ratzon the duties are divided up among various selected (Sabbath-observing) members. Magen David and Bethel also have charitable funds that are distributed at various times (see below).

The overall majority of synagogue-goers are religious people, but not necessarily "Shomrei Shabbat." Thus Sabbath-morning prayers start very early in the morning, so that people should be able to get to work on time. But they will all come again to Mincha, and say their Tehilim, (those that can read them).

Charities and Misc. Institutions. There are a number of charities functioning that cover a large part of the present community. The Jewish Women's League distributes some 2,000 rupees (=£100 approximately) per month to some 52 names (some representing individuals, some families). (Mrs. Simha Lanyado is the main trustee and distributor.) The Rama and Benjamin Elias Trust, distributes 1,870 rupees per month (approximately £93) to more or less the same number of names and to the same names. (B.N. Elias and Co. meaning in this case, A.F. Meyer, is the main trustee and distributor.) Magen David Synagogue distributes a certain sum per month (Mr. Jack David is trustee), while Bethel Synagogue distributes charities twice a year (Gala Gubbay and Elias Meyer are trustees). Every trust is either with the Official Trustee West Bengal or the Treasurer of Charitable Endowments, Central Government. The result is that the government does not allow the capital to be untouched (even reinvested), and only the interest accrued is utilized. Needless to say, the government does not allow any of the capital to be taken out of the country or to be recanalized to other ends, for example, Jewish education, etc.

There is a Jewish Hospital, the Ezra Hospital, which though government controlled is run on a Jewish fund, and has four beds specifically and permanently reserved for the Jewish sick. It grants free treatment for Jews, as does the Jewish Clinic (run incidentally by the burial board), which supplies free medicines and other such services. Poor mothers are also given six months' free milk for their babies.

The Jewish Burial Board is an organization wholly independent of the synagogue, etc. As a rule people do not pay toward it in their own lifetime, but rather the family arranges matters after death. The prices are very flexible, to allow full facilities even for the poorest.

The central governing authority of the community is the Jewish Association, which among other things registers births, marriages, and deaths. All other organizations are represented on its committee.

There is a Jewish Youth Club (Maccabi) that uses the premises of the Jewish Girls' School for its meeting place. It comprises two main age-groups, 6-11 and 14-20. Needless to say, these two groups can hardly mix properly, and on the other hand there are too few people to organize two separate sets of club activities. This is partly the reason for its gradual decline in popularity and success as an instrument of education. Now its main activities are games and sports (basketball, table tennis). They have no Hebrew or Jewish religious educational schemes among their various activities and indeed can find no one to make practical any such schemes. However, they were very open to suggestions of including cultural activities within their program and the main problem is finding someone to implement them.

There is one Jewish Club for older people, but this has rapidly deteriorated into a drinking and gambling joint, where the minority are Jews, and then not of the best type.

All these organizations, institutions, charitable trusts, etc., are evidence of a once-thriving, highly organized, and socially conscious community, which is now rapidly dwindling in numbers and declining in standards. Thus, there is now no rabbi, no mohel, no Hebrew teacher (other than the ones in the boys' and girls' schools, who have very limited knowledge), only two chazzanim, etc. There are two shochtim (for fowl, see the below section on Religious Problems), an old man (whose hands already shake a little), and his son. In the case of a mila, a mohel must be brought from Bombay (2½ days' journey by train), and the mila is rarely on the eighth day. The community is keenly interested in Hebrew and things Jewish. Thus I gave shiyurim, derushim on Shabbat, and Hebrew lessons

in the week that were well attended—15 or so for Hebrew lessons, 20 for derushim, 10 for shiyurim—despite the difficulties of getting around in the monsoon period. They need educators, youth leaders, and a spiritual head (all in one perhaps) and have no one.

General Remarks

Because of the singular lack of males (see Population, etc., above), girls seek non-Jewish husbands. As they are generally of the poorer classes they meet with and would marry poor Hindus, Moslems, etc. These non-Jews, for their part, are quite pleased to satisfy their prospective wives (who are religiously minded by their own standards) and become Jewish. For by becoming Jewish, they gain the right to benefit from the various Jewish charities and gain other such advantages. Their children are educated, not at their own expense, kept and fed at the community's expense, their wives give birth at the community's expense, they themselves draw monthly allowances from the community kitties, and so forth. Judaism viewed thus, presents a singularly attractive proposition. When there was a rabbi in Calcutta (one R. Masliah, 1952-69), he made it very easy to become Jewish, demanding little knowledge, and a reasonable fee. When he left, he took with him the lists of his converts, and so it is not clear how many conversions he performed. After he left, certain individuals were prevailed upon (with little difficulty) to continue his work at more or less the same charge ("a gift, not a fee"). One particularly popular converter (Abraham Dabul Ezekiel) claims to have converted only eight: six or seven of whom are now in Israel, but I myself have spoken to more than five who claim to be "Dabul converts." In another case, the shochet Eliahu (Elias) Zion was prevailed upon to write a "Get," even though he had never done such a thing before and did not know the rules and regulations for writing such a document. Nonetheless, he carried out the job and received the customary "gift." There is no record as to the number of conversions in Calcutta and/or in the countries to which members of the community have emigrated. Yet there are about 20 boys and 40 girls who are born out of mixed marriages of all sorts in both schools (see above Section on "Institutions, Organizations, etc."). What seems to be quite clear is that the majority of mixed marriages and conversions have taken place in the poorer homes, though not exclusively so.

Religious Problems

Kosher Meat. There are at the moment two shochtim in Calcutta, an elderly father and his son, who are both qualified to slaughter fowl. Beef is hardly eaten in Calcutta, and Kosher beef (because of the physical condition of most Indian cows) would be very expensive, and available only to the smallest circle who would be financially able to afford such a luxury. Such individuals can always get tinned beef from abroad should they so wish to do so. For the time being, then, kashrut does not constitute a real problem.

Mila. There is no mohel in Calcutta, but on the other hand there are relatively few births (two brit milahs last year). The mohel must be brought from Bombay (2½ days away by train) and rarely arrives on the eighth day. As most children are born into poorer families, which cannot afford to pay the mohel's fares from Bombay and back, etc., the expenses are usually carried by the community (out of the various charities).

Sabbath Observance. There are now in Calcutta very few Jewish employers (and most of the wealthier people have left): hence, most Jewish employees have to work Saturdays. The economic conditions are so desperate nowadays (among the poorer classes) that no one with the responsibility of a family to support (or even only himself to support) can possibly afford to give up a job. In a society with such a great deal of unemployment one can hardly make demands for special religious concessions, such as not working one

day a week. (Jewish employers, were they to free Jewish employees from working Saturdays, would probably run into considerable difficulties from the unions.)

There is no immediate and obvious solution to this problem, and only constant sound advice of someone really aware of local conditions could have any possible positive effect.

Educational Media. An important medium for religious education is undoubtedly the Sabbath "darush" (derasha). This, if successfully carried out, will be instantly popular and effective in commanding a good audience. The preacher would be best advised to give his "derushim" in Shaarei Ratzon on one Sabbath and either Magen David or Bethel (geographically close enough to constitute a single unit for this purpose) on the alternate Sabbath. The time of the darush should be after Minha when the people are not in a rush to get to work, which they are at the morning service. In this way a significant 10% of the population can be reached. However, during the monsoon period (July to September), one could only preach in the synagogue nearest one's residence—preferably Shaarei Ratzon, which has the largest natural attendance.

Sabbath shiyurim of a popular but instructive nature would also draw their attendance, if fairly conveniently placed (i.e., centrally). Here again, during the monsoon period, the attendance would naturally dwindle.

Hebrew language lessons are very popular, and could be held—as they have in the past—in the Jewish Girls' School. A certain amount of religious interest could, no doubt, be introduced into them, and this would only add to their potential measure of success. However, they should always be directed toward a knowledge of colloquial Hebrew.

The Maccabi, which should be clearly seen as two separate age groups, should be given a certain degree of cultural input. The younger children could be told Bible stories and so forth, while religious discussion groups, historical talks, joint projects of a religious cultural nature (plays, etc.) could well be carried out among the more senior members. Maccabi is a particularly important institution to develop, as there are all too few common meeting places for Jewish youth in Calcutta.

The boys and girls in the hostels could be given occasional talks. It is a great pity that they do not take a more active part in Maccabi and are not taken to the synagogue on Sabbaths.

In Conclusion

In conclusion, I should like to make the following observation, namely that Dayan Swift's recent brief visit to Calcutta was of paramount significance and value for a number of reasons. First, he solved a number of local problems, and in doing so incidentally also impressed the persons involved (and their circle of acquaintances) with the way in which the law can and does solve personal human problems. Second, and this too is important, he impressed upon the Jews of Calcutta the fact that there is at present no one in their community qualified to carry out conversions and that all cases of prospective conversion must be forwarded to properly qualified authorities. Finally, and most important of all, his presence served as a great source of inspiration and encouragement for the otherwise rather despondent community. He made them aware of the fact that they were not a forgotten remnant but a significant part of "klal Yisrael," cared for and about even as far away as England. If such visits could be regularly repeated at yearly or eighteen-monthly intervals, they would serve not only to solve the problems of the absence of a permanent rabbi—problems could be referred to the Bet-Din, or held over until the visit of a Dayan—but also as a source of moral support and encouragement. It is such encouragement and spiritual revitalization that the community needs above all else.

Book Review

Yulia Egorova and Shahid Perwez, *The Jews of Andhra Pradesh: Contesting Caste and Religion in South India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 208 pages

Reviewed by Priya Singh

Yulia Egorova and Shahid Perwez's recent book, *The Jews of Andhra Pradesh: Contesting Caste and Religion in South India* depicts the story of the Bene Ephraim community, a group of Christianized Madiga Dalits (untouchables) of Andhra Pradesh, who in the late 1980s proclaimed their descent from the Lost Tribes of Israel and their links with Judaism. The book is essentially in the nature of an anthropological study. It contends with the varied connotations of Jewishness, as well as the manner in which these connotations are utilized and extended by a Dalit group in pursuit of its place both in Indian society and in the world at large. It attempts to validate how this Dalit group has deconstructed "Jewishness" as a form of social protest. It analyses the precise nature of Bene Ephraim Judaism, the community's identification with Jewish culture, and the contraptions through which their practice is evolving. It also reflects on how the Bene Ephraim are perceived by a wide range of actors, from their neighbors in the village and the local authorities, to Jewish communities around the world and of course in the State of Israel. In other words, it places the community in the wider political and social context. Likewise, the book compares the Bene Ephraim to other Judaizing communities around the world, bringing forth the inherent challenges that such communities pose to the conformist identifications of the category termed as "Jewish."

The first or introductory essay outlines the structure of the book and spells out the intentions of the authors. The second chapter dissects the caste system in India and attempts to place the Bene Ephraim community's life in the context of the socio-economic situation of other Dalit groups in the village (Kothareddypalem) and in the state (Andhra Pradesh). It reviews the community's main narratives of origin and religious practices against the background of the more inclusive Madiga traditions. It probes into the community's reinterpretation of the Madiga experiences of untouchability in light of Jewish history and in the process offers a new way of celebrating not only their Israelite but also the Madiga or even a more general Dalit heritage. The chapter initiates a discussion on whether the Judaization of the Bene Ephraim led to any perceptible changes in their social, economic, or cultural standing in the local hierarchy and reflects on the way they relate to wider Dalit movements.

The succeeding chapter focuses on the diversity of the Bene Ephraim tradition in Kothareddypalem. It analyses the constraints that the community is under in evolving their narratives of origin and practices, but despite these limitations the chapter contends that the Judaization of the Bene Ephraim developed as a "site of activity/agency," with different community members offering numerous yet dissimilar interpretations of what it entails to be Jewish, Israelite, or Bene Ephraim. The subsequent chapter moves beyond the local ethnographic context of the Bene Ephraim and offers a discussion of their interaction/interface with international Jewish organizations that support emerging Jewish groups. It argues that their relationship with the Bene Ephraim and other Judaizing groups reveal that in contemporary Judaism the "mainstream" and the "marginal" are mutually caught up and that this relationship problematizes the perceived divide between "recognized" and "emerging" Jewish communities. The ensuing chapter builds upon this theme and considers the Bene Ephraim in the context of public and academic debates about the immigration policies of the State of Israel. It looks into the movement of the Bene Menashe (a Lost Tribe from Northeast India) and its probable implications for the Bene Ephraim. It also analyses their relationship with the Israeli authorities, the process of Jewish

immigration and Israeli citizenship and their cumulative effect on the development of the Bene Ephraim practices, narratives, and notions of belongingness.

In the next chapter the scene moves back to Andhra Pradesh and discussions revolve around the Christian groups who, after becoming aware of and fascinated by the Bene Ephraim movement, established synagogues and eventually became a more numerous category than the Bene Ephraim of Kothareddypalem. Though the "Other Bene Ephraim" (as they are referred to) are willing to be recognized as Jewish and some of the members have expressed an interest in settling in Israel, unlike the Bene Ephraim, these "new" communities do not emphasize oral narratives linking them to Jewish history; instead, they give prominence to their spiritual connection with the State of Israel. The chapter elaborates on the nature and consequences of the Jewish-Christian syncretism of Telugu Jews and endeavors to situate the new Israelite groups and their relationship with Bene Ephraim in the wider historical and social context of the development of Christianity and of caste relations in the region.

Egorova and Perwez's study recounts the story of the Bene Ephraim, grasping the way it emphasizes, confronts, and encompasses contemporary understandings of Jewishness. It indicates how narratives of Jewish origin can be used as a form of social protest and provides a radical new direction in the Indian Dalit discourse. The authors also arrive at certain conclusions. On the question of Jewishness—or rather the lack of it—they conclude, "Nevertheless, the story of the Bene Ephraim, as well as the history of other Judaizing movements, suggests that the Jewish tradition offers enough conceptual space to reconfigure the genealogical aspect of Jewishness into a site of openness and thus blur the division between the particularist and the universalist dimensions of Judaism" (p. 169).

In chapter 5, once again, the authors specifically state that the Bene Menashe would have probably struggled to be allowed to convert if they had not had the tradition of belonging to the Lost Tribes of Israel, reiterating the ambiguity within Judaism that induces within it an aspect of inclusiveness. Furthermore, the authors have proposed that it is "the perceived 'genealogical dimension' of Judaism that makes it an attractive tradition for Judaizing movements, particularly if they stem from socially disadvantaged groups, as it allows them to re-conceptualise their condition of discrimination within the context of Jewish history, and in some cases, to embrace origin narratives that are more positive than the ones imposed on them by their societies 'dominant groups'" (p. 170).

The example of the Bene Ephraim exemplifies that even such a small community can construct wide-ranging meanings of "Who is a Jew." The tale of the Bene Ephraim contests the approach that places Jewishness and Judaism along an evolving trajectory, from the "emerging" to the "mainstream," from the "periphery" to the "core," facilitating the student of Jewish culture to move beyond debates about assigning it into "thick" and "thin." It instead emphasizes the malleability of the Jewish tradition, suggestive of multiple features, which can switch from "dominant" to the "peripheral" from one context to another. The case of the Bene Ephraim unsettles the time-honored notions of the core and the periphery not only from the perspective of the Jewish tradition, but also within the Indian social order.

Egorova and Perwez acknowledge that the Jews in India signify a very different type of "other." The nonrecognition of the Jews as a category on the sociopolitical setting of Andhra Pradesh makes the Judaization project of the Bene Ephraim daunting in terms of attaining the recognition of the local authorities. Simultaneously, it permeates this process with an opportunity for cultural emancipation. The authors submit they have focused on the Bene Ephraim community engaging with or expanding and developing the notions of Jewishness, rather than talking about the Bene Ephraim as adopting Jewish identity.

They argue that their ethnography highlights the elusiveness of the boundaries of Jewishness. Notions of Jewishness interweave with notions about what it means to be Madiga. The Bene Ephraim use traditional images of Jewish history, belief, and practice to protest against caste discrimination and to honor their Madiga heritage. While at the moment, for most Bene Ephraim, declaring their attachment to the Jewish people appears

to be a matter of choice, for their children Jewishness may one day turn into an recognized category, which they will respect and conceal, rejoice and discard, accept as a given and inject with new meanings. However, irrespective of their intention to acquire Israeli citizenship, it is evident that many Bene Ephraim do not see enough potential for their community's self-realization either as Jews or as Madiga in India. The process of Judaization of the Bene Ephraim, according to the authors, has barely created any perceptible economic emancipation of their lot in the village. Similarly, the embracing of the Lost Tribes narrative did not bequeath upon the Bene Ephraim social mobility. Their community is still perceived as untouchable and as such it may be argued that the Judaization of the Bene Ephraim can be interpreted as a conduit to social, spiritual, and intellectual liberation and self-empowerment, but not as means for social mobility.

Yulia Egorova and Shahid Perwez's book, *The Jews of Andhra Pradesh: Contesting Caste and Religion in South India* is intended for serious reading. It adds another dimension to the ongoing debates on broader issues of what constitutes the categories of "Jews," "Jewishness," and "Judaism," the notions of "Jews by choice" or "Jews by descent" as well as the concept of "soul citizenship," by way of the remarkable example of the Bene Ephraim community. At the same time, this book elicits reservations in the reader's mind about the motive for such an exercise among a disadvantaged group. Was it the absence of dignity, social and economic, or the absence of an adequate role in the process of nation-building that encouraged the use/exploitation of the process of Judaization as a means of social, political, and economic liberation? Both the dimensions—whether it be the "rhetoric of Jewishness" and/or the "quest for social emancipation" in the case of the Bene Ephraim—are dealt with adeptly by the authors.

Book Review

Kenneth Robbins and Marvin Tokayer, eds., *Western Jews in India: From the Fifteenth Century to the Present* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2013), 310 pp.

By Jael Silliman

Kenneth Robbins and Marvin Tokayer have put together an intriguing collection of essays documenting the varied contributions of Western Jews to the subcontinent. This project stemmed from Robbins' collection of art, stamps, coins, photographs, and documents of princely India, where he often came across references to Western Jews in the service of the princes. This lead him to start collecting whatever he could find on Jews in the subcontinent, both indigenous and European. The book, primarily written by Robbins, draws from his collection to illustrate the presence of European Jews in India. The book is a treasure trove of new information and, with colored photographs on almost every page, is a visual treat for both historians and collectors.

This unique book excavates the range of contributions made by Western Jews in so many spheres of life in the South Asia region. Robbins has traced the Jewish roots of many colorful personalities without tying their contributions to an agenda or thesis. Rather this book is straight forward in its effort to illustrate the many ways in which European Jews have provided spiritual leadership; contributed to art, architecture, and medicine; engaged in administrative and military service; and become involved in national-level politics of the region. To date the field of Indo-Judaic studies has documented the history of the indigenous Jews but the role that European Jews have played has not been the subject of much study. This book shows that the role of Western Jews was significant and worthy of further research. It is exciting to know that a separate volume is forthcoming from the Museum fur Asiatische Kunst (Berlin) that will focus on the role that European Jews played in the Indian national art project that Robbins touches upon in this volume.

In the second chapter, Robbins puts together a collective timeline of the Jews in India. What is fascinating about this timeline is the way in which he weaves the European Jewish interface with the subcontinent alongside the arrival and contributions of the three major communities of Jews in India (Bene Israel, Cochini, and Baghdadi). The timeline dates back to the tenth century BCE when Solomon's kingdom traded with the Malabar Coast and ends in 2010 with Carmel Berkson, an American Jew, being awarded a Padma Shri for her sculpture and photography. It is this long and sustained interaction between Jews from Europe and the Middle East that is very striking. To date there are no other accounts that bring together these various types of interactions between Jews and South Asians in one place.

Another important feature of this volume is that it does not seek to build grand theories of why European Jews came to India. Rather the book sets out to record what roles Jews have played enabling others to take the research in new directions. The varied roles that Jews played, under various rulers, counters the stereotypical Western narrative of the Jew as financer, trader, or banker. This book shows that none of the European Jews who came to the subcontinent were engaged in these professions. In this way, the European Jews were quite different from the Baghdadi Jews who came primarily as traders and excelled in finance.

The European Jews were drawn to the subcontinent for a range of personal and professional reasons. There were those who came in search for spiritual truths. The interactions between Western Jews and all the major religions of the sub-continent—Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism—is not a twentieth-century phenomena. Rather, as this book underlines, it has occurred over the centuries. Robbins has a fascinating chapter on the transformation of Leopold Weiss into Muhammad Asad (1900–1992), who describes his

conversion to Islam in *The Road to Mecca.* Weiss came from a family of Orthodox rabbis in Ukraine and went against his father's wishes that he pursue rabbinical studies and chose to study law instead. He was widely traveled and worked as a Middle Eastern correspondent that enabled him to travel extensively in the Middle East giving him a deep understanding of the Islamic way of life. Though a European Jew, he identified with the Arabs of the past. He converted to Islam in 1926. The British exiled him to India in 1932, as they were suspicious of his political agenda. Asad wrote important studies on the nature of a democratic Islamic state, and he translated the Qur'an into English. He was attracted to the concept of Pakistan as a Muslim polity. He served Pakistan as the Director of the Middle East Division of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. There is another chapter on the Mother of Auroville, born Mirra Alfassa who worked closely with Sri Aurobindo. Her ancestors were well-known rabbinical scholars who moved from Fez to Spain in the eleventh century, though her nuclear family was secular. Alfassa became a goddess for her followers and was worshipped as Durga, Kali, and Saraswati as well as being deified as Mother India.

Robbins also has a chapter on Jean Baptiste Ventura (originally an Italian Jew who converted to Catholicism). He was among the European Jews who came to serve princely or colonial rulers and worked in numerous professions. Ventura was a commander in the army of Ranjit Singh, a patron of the arts, as well as had a keen interest in archaeology. He was the first European to excavate a Buddhist *stupa* (a mound that contains Buddhist relics). In the 1940s India was a site of refuge for many European Jews fleeing the Holocaust. While in India these refugees worked as doctors, engineers, artists, and architects and several made significant contributions to the National Art Project and the nationalist struggles.

The book is full of surprises. While it is known that Spanish Jews based in North Africa engaged with trade to India for over a thousand years, Robbins documents how Vasco de Gama was greeted by Gaspar de Gama, a Polish Jewish convert, when he landed on Andejiva island, near Goa (1498). Robbins then follows the career of Gaspar to show us the roles he played as a linguist, navigator, soldier, and agent in the Portuguese exploration of India.

Robbins also documents the role that Jews played as artists on the subcontinent. Among them was Anna Molka Ahmed who is considered Pakistan's national artist. Anna married Sheikh Ahmed, an Indian artist, and moved to India in 1939 and later converted to Islam. In 1940 she founded the Fine Arts Department of Punjab University in Lahore. Anna's own painting style drew from European prototypes but she documented daily life in Pakistan in her works. She was commissioned to paint battle scene of the Indo-Pakistan wars. In the same chapter Robbins documents the role that Jewish architects played in the subcontinent that includes Moshe Safdie (who designed the Khalsa Heritage complex in collaboration with Ashok Dhawan), the American Jews Joseph Stein and Louis Kahn.

While Robbins' essays and research on European Jews in the subcontinent is the most extensive, there are other authors in the volume whose work focuses on individuals European Jews or particular regions or periods in India's history. For example, Guy Attewell focuses on the life and contributions of Garcia de Orta, physician and author of the *Coloquios dos simples e drogas e cousas medicinais* da India, published in 1563 in Goa. This work of pharmacology is arranged into fifty-nine coloquies describing plants and medicinal substances in terms of their appearance, origin, distribution, and some therapeutic uses. Orta has become an icon of Portuguese colonial expansion and exploration. Ainslee Embree focuses on the roles that Jews played as British soldiers and takes a more in-depth look at the personalities of Sir Edwin S. Montagu and Lord Reading. Both these high-ranking administrators of the Raj, though not observant Jews, frankly acknowledged how the Jewish experience had shaped their lives. These essays too, as are those of the other contributors, rich with photo documentation.

This book, very much like Ken Robbins' collection, does not seek to offer new truths. Instead, as collectors do, the items collected are placed before the viewer to form a fascinating set of accounts of Western Jews and the ways in which they impacted the

subcontinent. Ken Robbins' tenacity, lively mind, and curiosity has enabled him, once again—as in his account of Africans in India—to open up scholarship on the ways in which unlikely and unknown outsiders have played a role in shaping India's history.

Book Review: Two Books about and by Bombay Baghdadis

Rachel Manasseh, *Baghdadian Jews of Bombay, Their Life & Achievements: A Personal and Historical Account* (Great Neck, NY: Midrash Ben Ish Hai, 2013). xlil + 442 pages. Illustrated with maps and photographs.

Shaul Sapir, Bombay: *Exploring the Jewish Urban Heritage* (Mumbai: Bene Israel Heritage Museum and Research Centre, 2013). 290 pages. Illustrated with maps, sketches, color, and B&W photos.

Reviewed by Nathan Katz

Two recent books fill a gap in the literature on Indian Jews. While Jews from Kolkata, Kochi, and the Bene Israel have been prolific, there has been a perplexing literary silence from the Baghdadis of Mumbai.

Not so in other Indian Jews communities. Kochi Jews began writing about themselves in 1791 when Ezekiel Rahabi wrote a letter describing the history and customs of Kochi.[1] He was followed by Naphtali Roby (1911), A.B. Salem's diaries (1913-1959), A.I. Simon (1947), I.S. Hallegua's manuscripts from the 1980s mostly, and Ruby Daniel's memoir (1995).

The Bene Israel have been the most prolific. Their best-known writer was the lauded poet and playwright, Nissim Ezekiel, who built upon a literary tradition that began with Solomon Daniel Nandgoankar's Marathi-language book about the Bene Israel (1880) and was followed by Samuel Shalome Kurulkar's Marathi novel (1878), Rebecca Reuben (1913), Ezekiel Solomon Divekar in Marathi (1923). Hayeem Samuel Kehimkar wrote a definitive study of the community in 1897, eventually published in Tel Aviv in 1937. Benjamin J. Israel wrote a number of significant works on the Bene Israel, all in English (1960, 1962, 1963, 1982 and 1984), as did Shellim Samuel (1963) and D.B. Reubens (1990). Esther David's novels (1997, 1999, 2002) have attracted critical attention. Other novelists include B.B. Dandekar (1991, 1993) and Meera Mahadevan (in Marathi, 1961 and 1975). There are also memoirs by Flora Samuel (1996) and Carmit Delma's acclaimed work (2002).

Kolkata's Jews, too, have written prodigiously. The most substantial histories are by Rabbi Ezekiel N. Musleah (1960, 1975, 1983, 2003) and Esmond D. Ezra (1984, 1986). Both Musleah and Ezra are writing about their communities, but in truth theirs are more family histories. More on this below. Kolkata Jews began writing about themselves early in the twentieth century, starting with I.A. Isaac (1917), C.S. Abraham (1925), Abraham S. Abraham (1969), Elias Flower and Judith Elias Cooper (1974), Rahel Musleah (1991), Mavis Hyman (1995), Solly Solomon (1998), and Yohanan ben David (2002). Jael Silliman's 2001 book is in a separate category, as the author wrote about her family as a trained anthropologist and professor of women's studies at the University of Iowa.

But what about Mumbai's Baghdadis? Their literary output until now has been limited to some rather well-done synagogue commemoration books, especially the one edited by Sophy Kelly (1985). Baghdadi Jews in Burma, incidentally, also published some valuable commemoration volumes. Even the elite Sassoon family produced very little beyond an important catalogue (1932) and an article (1933) by David Sassoon.

Two 2013 books will inspire others from the Baghdadi community of Mumbai, one hopes. The first, Baghdadian Jews of Bombay, Their Life and Achievements by Rachel Manasseh, is subtitled "A Personal and Historical Account." Manasseh views the large sweeps of history and culture through the prism or her family. It is an intimate view, to be sure, a "micro" take on the "macro." As essentially a family history, this work is in a genre well established by Kolkata Baghdadis.

Manasseh's book starts with a chapter called "Family Recollections," and it clearly is researched very thoroughly, culling stories from friends and relatives and richly illustrated with photographs from as early as 1919. Looking back to the history of the community, Manasseh pays considerable attention to the towering figure of David Sassoon, his family, and his mercantile empire. It is through the Sassoon family that Manasseh tells the community's story from its inception to World War I, at the zenith of both the British Empire and the Baghdadis of India. She provides valuable studies of the many community organizations that flourish during the interwar period: the many trusts and charities, schools and libraries, hospitals and research institutions. She describes the Bombay Zionist Association, the Bombay Jewish Women's League, the Bombay Jewish Association, the Central Jewish Board, and the Indo-Israel Friendship League.

Highly interesting is her chapter on women in the community. Rather than rely on generalities, she discusses the life and contributions of such luminaries as Flora Sassoon, Lady Rachel Ezra, Lady Rachel Sassoon, Hannah Gourgey, Georgette Reuben Ani, Sophie Ellis Judah, and Sophy Kelly. Each made significant contributions not only to the Jewish community, but also to civil society as well.

The focus then shifts to Albert Manasseh, the author's late husband and community leader during the middle of the last century. He is described as pious and learned, a pillar of Kenesseth Eliyahoo Synagogue, deeply immersed in charitable trusts and educational institutions. Due to her extensive access, this chapter is a detailed and nuanced description of an elite Mumbai Baghdadi's many activities, travels, concerns, and faith.

Subsequent chapters discuss the Jewish educational institutions of Mumbai and the many youth organizations: Habonim (India), 'Aliyah, Bnei Akiva, and the sports club, Maccabi. Of keen interest is a chapter on the huge role the community played in the development of Bollywood, starts, technicians, and moghuls alike.

The book is profusely illustrated with black-and-white photographs. It fills an important gap as the first "family history" of the community. While the bibliography is extensive, there are important works of which the author is apparently unaware (including mine!) that would have added depth and context. Nevertheless, this book is entirely welcome.

Like Manasseh, Shaul Sapir is native to the Mumbai Baghdadi community. He made aliyah and studied geography, archaeology, and education at Hebrew University, were he earned his Ph.D. He has written widely on Jerusalem, employing the same methodology of historical geography that he skillfully uses in this outstanding book, Bombay: Exploring the Jewish Urban Heritage.

Sapir's book starts with the macrocosm that is Mumbai history, situating Jewish architectural contributions within the history of Mumbai. His meticulous research and archival acumen survey Mumbai's development, starting even before the beginning with rare etchings from 1757. Profusely illustrated, the architecture of the city comes alive. Leafing through its pages, it reveals Mumbai to be an organism: its topography gradually becomes overlaid with buildings and parks as the frontier town of British India becomes the staggering megalopolis that she is today. Gradually, Jews are introduced into his narrative: the Sassoons and his own family as well. There is a touch of "family history" in Sapir's work, but only fleetingly. Sapir's writing is more interested in Mumbai than in his family, which adds a personal touch to his expansive tale.

Like Manasseh, Sapir devoted chapters to Jewish roles in education, where they established Hebrew-, English-, and Marathi medium schools. Some were religious, some secular, some occupational, some technical, and one was a reformatory. Jews were also major benefactors of the elite government school, Elphinstone College.

The role of Jews in the city's banking focuses on Sheikh David Sassoon, founder of the Bank of India, who played a key role in the city's commerce, industry hotels, and real estate. And the Jewish community also built hospitals, clinics, and a medical research institute that remains a center of excellence.

Monuments proliferated, most notably the Gateway to India (constructed by Sassoon and Parsi leader Jamsetji Jheejheebhoy), the Victoria and Albert Museum and its famous clock tower, and much of the statuary of the city. They built beautiful homes for themselves (notably Sassoon's Sans Souci) and for their congregations: Maghen Abraham in Byculla (1861) and Kenesseth Eliyahoo in Fort (1884). Sapir does not neglect the Bene Israel synagogues, which predate the Baghdadis' houses of worship.

All of the communal buildings were once bustling with activity, and Sapir tells the story of youth clubs, sporting groups, Zionist organizations, and social clubs.

The book is in a large format and is richly illustrated with color as well as black-and-white photographs, maps, and etchings. It serves well as a coffee table book for casual perusal, and at the same time makes its mark as an important academic contribution to the history of India (Mumbai in particular of course), to Jewish history, to architecture, and to urban historical anthropology. It is very highly recommended for all: armchair travelers, academicians, as well as Mumbaikars and Mumbaikar-wannabees.

Note

[1] Full references for all of the works mentioned may be found in Nathan Katz, *Indian Jews: An Annotated Bibliography 1665-2005* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2013).

Book Review

Jael Silliman, *The Man with Many Hats* (Kolkata: Jael Silliman; New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors Pvt Ltd., 2013). ISBN 978 81704 6 350 4

Reviewed by Shalva Weil

Jael Silliman's book *Jewish Portraits, Indian Frames* was a pioneering masterpiece exploring four generations of her own Calcutta Jewish family. It began with her maternal great-grandmother, Farha, and continued with the story of her maternal grandmother Miriam. It moved to her mother Flower and ended up with a reflexive sketch of herself. Even in Silliman's great-grandmothers' day, when family businesses extended throughout the East from Calcutta to Rangoon to Singapore and China, Farha traveled extensively, but social interaction with others took place exclusively within the confines of the Jewish community; the influences upon her were heavily Judeo-Arabic. Miriam, by contrast, called herself Mary and led a far more Anglicized existence, hobnobbing with the British colonialists and enjoying tennis and English tea. Jael's mother, Flower, lived through Indian Independence and the immigration of many members of her community to English-speaking countries and to Israel.

The "Baghdadi" Jewish community, as it became known, settled in two major centers in India: Calcutta and Mumbai. One of the legendary founders of the Calcutta Jewish community was Shalome Cohen, a merchant born in Aleppo, Syria, who settled there in 1798. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, thousands of "Baghdadis" lived in Calcutta; at their height during the Second World War they numbered 5,000 souls. As many as eight synagogues operated regularly, and several publishing houses simultaneously translated holy texts into Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic. The Jews of the Raj 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. The "Baghdadis" were different from the British in color, religion, and status. Yet, in different contexts, they identified with those very colonizers. After the withdrawal of the British from India, with whom they had associated as non-Indians, many Baghdadi Jews decided to immigrate to the United States and other English-speaking countries. *Jewish Portraits, Indian Frames* belongs to a genre of books, notable among which can be mentioned *Hooghly Tales*, *Jews of the Raj*, *The Jews of Calcutta,* and *Turning Back the Pages: A Chronicle of Calcutta Jewry*, all of which attempt, in their own individual manner, to record and preserve historical memory of the fading Jewish life in Calcutta by interspersing personal recollection with community history. They are all written by educated, members or ex-members of the Calcutta community, who, like Silliman, feel the urge to record for posterity the curious history and day-to-day life of this remarkable tiny community, which impacted India in such a relatively short time. The originality in *Jewish Portraits, Indian Frames* was the feminist narrative and the attempt to uncover history matrilineally.

In *The Man with Many Hats* Silliman has returned in a new Indian reincarnation and instead of the family history intertwined with communal, national, and international episodes she had narrated in *Jewish Portraits*, she now presents to us a personal novel based on her own life-story and on other Calcutta Jewish figures. Silliman claims that it is a work of fiction inspired by characters she knew in the Calcutta Jewish community. She admits that some of the incidents are derived from her own experience. A battery of relatives and close friends helped her bring the novel into being, and, according to Silliman, at times, the characters acquired lives of their own.

The novel is interesting for researchers of Indian Jewish communities or scholars of ethnic minorities in India, and specifically for members of the once thriving Calcutta Jewish community. It recalls an India that has all but disappeared and the post-independence Jewish community of Calcutta before its final demise. Featured in the novel are descriptions

of the Jewish institutions such as the synagogue or the Maccabi sports club, as well as of Calcutta's numerous non-Jewish institutions frequented by the Jews, such as the Metro cinema (inaugurated in 1935 to promote Metro-Mayer-Goldwyn films) or Loreto School, the prim school run by the Irish Roman Catholic nuns, to which many of the wealthier Jewish girls were sent.

The passages on the Jewish festival recapture a past never to be repeated. The heroine's brother had a bar mitzvah at Neveh Shalome synagogue on Simchat Torah. Silliman writes: "Over 80 parokhet (sic) hung from the ladies' gallery. The large, brightly coloured velvet hangings were richly embroidered with coloured and metal threads... The warm glow of the oil lamps hanging from the high ceilings of the inner sanctuary threw intermittent patterns of flickering light on the multicoloured tile flooring that encircled the inner sanctuary. Community members and relations from the Maghen David and the Beth El synagogue came for Jacob's maftir (sic)..." (p. 74).

However, *The Man with Many Hats* is not a very good novel. There is no plot, no adventure, no story, just a never-ending narrative on fragmented lives. The book is in fact a quasi-autobiographical account of the authoress' trajectory with detailed explorations into her relations with her father, whom she had almost obliterated from *Jewish Portraits* in that it was a matrilineal history. In *The Man with Many Hats*, her father is the major character, but for the reader, it is much like reading psychoanalytical reports emanating from dozens of sessions on the couch. The novel examines the bullying and negative traits of the heroine's (and author's) father and her eventual reconciliation with this lonely character after her own marriage crumbles. Rachel is the main character and narrator: Her natal family disintegrates, her Orthodox Jewish grandmother departs for a secure Jewish community in Golders Green in London, her mother and brother immigrate to Israel, her father remains in Calcutta and turns their home into a bachelor pad replete with drinking and card parties throughout the night, and she herself immigrates to the United States and marries a Bengali Hindu. In turn, Rachel's marriage disintegrates after many years, when she discovers that her husband is cheating on her; coming full circle, she returns to reside in her ancestral home in Calcutta.

While Silliman's own personal history is interesting portraying a new type of Indian, born in 1955, yet part of a postcolonial world, which is on the one hand more cosmopolitan, and on the one hand, more Indian but distinctly less Jewish, the novel itself fails to retain interest. In fact, parts of it are quite boring, even to a person such as myself who loves historical depictions of Jewish life now gone. Nevertheless, the novel remains an important ethnographic document with valuable descriptions that will never be able to be reconstructed again.

Calcutta today is a miserable place for Jews. Only one synagogue is open occasionally—if enough tourists visit to make up a *minyan* (quorum). There are less than 25 Jews residing in the city. Even Nahoum from the mouth-watering bakery in New Market passed away in March 2013 leaving a void difficult to express.

European Association for South Asian Studies: Panel on Jews at Its 23rd Conference for the First Time in Its History

By Navras Jaat Aafreedi

The European Association for South Asian Studies (EASAS) is "a charitable, academic association engaged in the support of research and teaching concerning South Asia with regard to all periods and fields of study" as it describes itself on its website.[1] It holds a conference every two years. Its twenty-third conference took place at the University of Zurich from July 22-26, 2014, during which 460 from 33 countries discussed their work through its 51 panels and 400 presentations. What made this conference particularly memorable is the fact that for the first time in the history of the EASAS there was a panel on Jews and Judaism in South Asia. The panel, jointly convened by Heinz Werner Wessler of the Department of Linguistics and Philology, University of Uppsala, Sweden; Boaz Huss of Ben Gurion University; and Shimon Lev of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel, focused on cultural encounters and social transformations. The panel examined the diverse transformations of Jewish identities in South Asia and the cultural dynamics of the encounters between Judaism and South Asian cultures in colonial and postcolonial contexts.

The theme of the panel was described on the conference website in the following words:

> The migration of Jews into South Asia in the nineteenth and twentieth century, as well as the mass migration of Jews to Israel in the mid-twentieth century had a significant impact on the identity of the Jewish South Asian communities. Old forms of Jewish identity were redefined and new forms constructed. At the same period, various forms of cultural interactions occurred between Jewish and South Asian cultures. In this context, the interactions between prominent Indian leaders and intellectuals such as Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru with Martin Buber, Hugo Bergman and others play an important role in the intellectual history of the twentieth century.
>
> The panel tried to investigate diverse aspects of Jewish identities in South Asia, since the nineteenth century to our days and to explore their political, literary and religious expressions. The panelists also discussed the dynamics of the cultural exchanges between Jews and non-Jews that took place in the colonial and postcolonial eras in the context of the parallel growth of their respective national movements.[2]

At the panel, Boaz Huss of Ben Gurion University presented a paper titled, "A Jew Living in an Ashram: Theosophy, Advaita, and Jewish Nationalism in the Life and Writings of S.S. Cohen." He presented his paper through Skype as he could not make it to the venue because of the ongoing Gaza conflict. The paper described S.S Cohen and traced his spiritual journey from the Theosophical Society to Ramanashram. It also examined Cohen's integration of Theosophical ideas, the teaching of Ramana, and Zionism, and analyzed the significance of the encounters between the Theosophical Society, modern Hindu spirituality, and Jewish nationalism. In the abstract of the paper, Huss wrote:

> In 1952, S.S Cohen, who described himself as "A Jew Living in an Ashram", wrote a letter to the editor of the journal "India and Israel", concerning the question of dignity of labor in Judaism and Hinduism. Cohen, who resided at the time in Ramanashram in Tiruvannamalai, included in his letter an enthusiastic description of the recently established Jewish state and its accomplishments.

The author of the letter, S.S Cohen was born in Iraq in 1895. He arrived as a young man in India, became active in the Theosophical Society and was one of the founders of the Association of Hebrew Theosophist, in Adyar in 1925. In 1936, Cohen visited Tiruvannamalai, and became a close disciple of Sri Ramana. Cohen, who died in 1980, and was buried in Ramana's Ashram, published several books on Sri Ramana and on Advaitic Sadhana.

Notwithstanding his Theosophical convictions, and later, his adherence to Sri Ramana, Cohen was very much involved in Jewish matters, and an enthusiastic sympathizer of Zionism and the state of Israel. Cohen wrote on the persecution of the Jews in Germany, on the plights of the Jews in Poland, and on what he described as "unprecedented and unparalleled" heroism of the Jews in Israel.[3]

Joachim Oesterheld of Humboldt Universitaet zu Berlin in his paper titled, "Encounters in Alien Surrounding: German Jewish Refugees in Late Colonial India," examined the scope and content of cultural, intellectual, and social interactions of Jewish refugees in India between 1933 and 1945-47.

The first half of the paper dealt:

...with the problems German Jews faced while trying to find refuge in India. After briefly reconstructing the Government of India's role in permitting entry of Germans and in particular of German Jews to the country, the paper looks at Indian reactions towards the asylum seekers. While it seems obvious that the colonial power and the freedom movement as major actors defined to a certain extent the possibilities and quality of interaction taking place between German Jews and Indian communities before and after arrival, individual support by Indians of different faith and social standing plaid a certain role as well."[4]

The second half of the paper focused:

...on the daily life of the German Jewish refugees. Regarded as enemy aliens they could not escape internment during the first years after the outbreak of World War II. Due to efforts by Jewish organizations and prominent individuals in India and a less strict internment policy by the colonial power, the majority of Jewish refugees remained at large during the war. An attempt [was] made to specify the different professions and the living conditions of German Jewish refugee families, couples and individuals. In their interactions with Indian society what role plaid Indian Jewish communities? To what extent German Jews familiarized themselves with other Indian cultures and what have been the repercussions on their Jewish identity? Is there some kind of legacy German Jews left in India?"[5]

Heinz Werner Wessler of Uppsala University presented on Sheela Rohekar's Hindi novel *Miss Saimyuel: Ek Yahudi Gatha* (2013) and reflected whether it could be considered a swansong on Jewish identity in India. In the abstract of his paper, Wessler wrote:

In her third novel in Hindi, Sheila Rohekar (born 1942) for the first time goes into her own identity as a Bnai Israel Jew. Miss Samuel finds herself in an isolated situation between a father who dreams of emigration to Israel, but never realizes it, and a brother who overstates his Indian identity, downplaying or even negating his Bnai Israel identity. The family members remain isolated from each other as well as from their surrounding society, which puts them either together with Muslims, Parsis or with Christians, but fails to recognize her "difference". However, she sticks to her

belief that "one day this difference will bring the change into the story". Completely isolated at the age of 70, Miss Samuel in her rest home lives off from her memories, trying to put the different strings of her life together, ending up in a dreamless and lonely presence.[6]

Navras Jaat Aafreedi of the School of Humanities & Social Sciences, Gautam Buddha University, India, explored how Jews and non-Jews are portrayed in each other's fiction in India in his paper titled, "Reciprocal (mis-)apprehensions: Jews on Non-Jews, and Non-Jews on Jews in Indian Fiction."

Independent scholar Anton Zykov presented his study of a new phenomenon of Judaization among Indian untouchables in the context of its relations with social hierarchy and state politics of caste. Focused on the Bnei Ephraim community in Andhra Pradesh, Zykov used the data and information collected by him through personal interviews during his fieldwork in his paper titled, "The Bnei Ephraim Community: Judaisation, Social Hierarchy and Caste Reservation."

The paper discusses two aspects of the Judaizing movements in India with regard to the Bnei Ephraim community of Telugu untouchables in Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh. Based on the existing research (primarily Egorova and Shahid studies) and the author's field work in the village of Kothareddypalem conducted in November-December 2012, his essay considered "the impact that 'Judaisation' of the concerned Madiga untouchable group has made on its social and hierarchical status in their native village and beyond."[7]

Further, the paper also researched the legal aspect of the issue with potential circumstances that Judaization movements among India's socially backward communities have created for the state and its caste policies, with a special view on the reservation issue. The work approached the history of Bnei Ephraim as an untouchable community claiming the status and rights that characterize other Jewish communities of India, but at the same time being a subject of reservation.

Among the work's major themes was "the emergence of India's Judaizing movements" and their "self-identification in the framework of social hierarchies and politics of caste on the local and union levels."[8] Particular attention was drawn to the social change caused by the development of these movements as well as both local and international reaction on their activities.

Shimon Lev, one of the three conveners of the panel, was expected to present as part the panel but could not make it to the conference because of the Gaza conflict. But it is hoped that he will contribute his paper to the edited volume that all the panelists have agreed to publish. It will "discuss and demonstrate how through the connections and encounters of Gandhi and especially Tagore with the Jewish world, and their different approaches of Judaism, it is possible to examine the reciprocal understanding of the Indian and Jewish cultures at the time."

The discussion that ensued after the presentation of papers greatly benefited from the intervention of Yulia Egorova, author of *Jews and India: Image and Perceptions* (Routledge, 2006) and co-author of *The Jews of Andhra Pradesh* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

Notes

[1] http://www.easas.org/
[2] http://www.nomadit.co.uk/easas/ecsas2014/panels.php5?PanelID=2502
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.

Notes on Contributors

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Michael Bender received an M.A. in Religious Studies from Florida International University in 2011 for his research on interfaith dialogue, Hindu-Jewish relations, and the Jews of India. He is currently enrolled in the Ph.D. program in International Relations at FIU where he studies relations between the Middle East and South Asia, specifically the role of identity in the Indian-Israeli relationship.

Anuradha Bhattacharjee earned her Ph.D. from the London School of Economics and is a Fellow in the Charles Wallace India Trust. She is the author of *The Second Homeland: Polish Refugees in India* (Sage, 2012).

Kaustav Chakrabarti is Assistant Professor of History at Fakir Chand College in Kolkata. He did his Ph.D. on the Baghdadi Jewish Community of Calcutta at the University of Calcutta. He has also contributed articles on Jewish and Israeli history in university journals in India, and he contributes regularly for the website www.think-israel.org. He has been a Visiting Research Fellow at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem as part of an Israel Government Scholarship Programme for the academic session 2005-2006.

Nathan Katz, co-founder and co-editor of this journal, is Distinguished Professor in the School of International and Public Affairs at Florida International University. His most recent book, his fifteenth, is *Indian Jews: An Annotated Bibliography, 1665-2005* (Manohar: New Delhi, 2013).

Amos Nevo is Israeli born living near Jerusalem. He has a Ph.D. degree in Indian studies from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and is a graduate of Middle Eastern studies and philosophy of education. He is retired after 30 years of service as supervisor at the Israeli Ministry of Education, both in the Arab and Hebrew sectors. His main field of interest is Advaita Vedanta philosophy.

Priya Singh is a Fellow at the Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, Kolkata, India. Her area of interest and specialization is West Asia/Middle East in general and Israel in particular. She has published on varied subjects pertaining to the region, including the Arab-Israeli conflict, Israeli society and politics, comparative ethnic relations in the region, nationalism and postnationalism, and comparative politics and democracy. Her current project is on the *Rhetoric of the Arab Spring.*

Jael Silliman was an Associate Professor of Women Studies at the University of Iowa. Her books include *Jewish Portraits, Indian Frames: Women's Narratives from a Diaspora of Hope*, and *Undivided Rights: Women of Color Organizing for Reproductive Justice.* She has self-published her first novel *The Man with Many Hats* (2013) and has developed a digital archive, "Recalling Jewish Calcutta," that was launched in September 2014. She published some of her initial research in the first issue of *JIJS.*

Daniel Sperber is the Milan Roven Professor of Talmud at Bar-Ilan University in Israel, where he is also the president of the Ludwig and Erica Jesselson Institute for Advanced Torah Studies. He is also rabbi of Menachem Zion Synagogue in the Old City of Jerusalem. In 2010, Rabbi Sperber accepted an appointment as honorary Chancellor of the Canadian Yeshiva & Rabbinical School in Toronto. In 1992, Sperber won the highly prestigous Israel Prize for Jewish studies. He is the author of *Minhagei Yisrael: Origins and History* on the character and evolution of Jewish customs. He has written extensively on many issues regarding how Jewish law can and has evolved. This includes a call for a greater inclusion of women in certain ritual services, including ordination.

Shalom Salomon Wald is a Senior Fellow at the Jewish People Policy Institute (JPPI) in Jerusalem. His work focuses on the relations between the Jewish people, including Israel, and the growing powers of Asia, China, and India, as well as on the history of Jewish civilization. His *China and the Jewish People: Old Civilizations in a New Era* (Jerusalem: JPPI), appeared in 2003 for the English edition and 2004 for the Hebrew edition; his *Rise and Decline of Civilizations: Lessons for the Jewish People*, with a foreword by President Shimon Peres, was published in Hebrew in 2013 and in English in 2014 (Boston: Academic Studies Press). A new book, *India, Israel and the Jewish People: From History to Geopolitics*, co-authored with A. Kandel was published in late 2014. He was born in Italy and earned his Ph.D. in economics, sociology, and history in Basel, Switzerland. He was principal administrator and expert at the Paris-based Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development, where he specialized in science and technology policy until he retired in 2001.

Shalva Weil is Senior Researcher at the Research Institute for Innovation in Education at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She has published over 60 scientific articles on the history, religion, and culture of the Jews of India. She edited *India's Jewish Heritage: Ritual, Art and Life-Cycle* (Mumbai: Marg Publications, first published in 2002; 3rd ed. 2009), co-edited with Nathan Katz, Ranabir Chakravarti, and Braj M. Sinha, *Indo-Judaic Studies in the Twenty-First Century: A Perspective from the Margin* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan Press, 2007), and co-edited with David Shulman *Karmic Passages: Israeli Scholarship on India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008).