HISTORY AND ANTHROPOLOGY
2023, VOL. 34, NO. 5, 904–931
https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2023.2237064

Nationalism and knowledge: Othering and the disciplin(e)ing of anthropology in India

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ABSTRACT

This essay is about how Indian anthropology-sociology has historically theorized Islam and Muslims. In it, I demonstrate how anthropologists' discourse on Islam and the majoritarian Hindu discourse on nation – Muslims being its constitutive other – dovetail into each other. Three main catalogues through which anthropology has dealt with Muslims are: silence, alienness and erasure. Against anthropology's self-perception as the most reflexive discipline, I argue how Indian anthropology has been intertwined with nation-state as both an ideology and a set of practices. I also identify connections between symbolic violence of anthropology-sociology manifest in the othering of Islam and anti-Muslim political violence in postcolonial India. Discussing influential texts, schools of thoughts, departments, individuals, institutions, professional association in a framework that comparatively alludes to the 'anomaly' of Jews vis-à-vis German anthropology, this essay also charts out a different genealogy of anthropology in India, one that remains hushed in the regnant accounts. In so doing, it maps the discipline's trajectory from its moment of formation to the present. One key aim of the essay is to unveil the theory behind methodological nationalism to discuss the (im)possibility of writing an alternative anthropology-sociology of India.

KEYWORDS

Methodological nationalism; Hinduism; Islam; Ghurye; Geddes; violence

> … anthropologists want to make a contribution to the understanding of what is understood to be the 'dominant culture' of the majority. They thereby unwittingly support Hindu nationalism. (van der Veer 1994a, 196)

> … the significance of the term 'nationalism' is quite clear in so far as it relates to devotion to the interests of the State. (Boas 2009, 82)

Introduction: the novel style of an anthropologist

In *The Imam and the Indian*, anthropologist-turned-novelist Amitav Ghosh writes about his fieldwork in Egypt. He seemed pleased with all questions his informants asked, except those about cow and burning of the dead. When asked if 'in your country you burn your dead', Ghosh writes: 'This was a conversation I usually went through at least once

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a day and I was desperately tired of it. "Yes", I said … ' (2002, 6–7). The village Imam also asked if Ghosh had 'ever seen them [the West] burning their dead?' Ghosh replied: 'They do burn their dead in the West'. The Imam reiterated: 'They don't … they have science, they have … tanks and bombs'. Ghosh retorted:

> We have guns and tanks and bombs. And they are better than anything you have … in my country we have even had a nuclear explosion. You won't be able to match that in a hundred years. (2002, 10–11)

Reflecting on this exchange, Ghosh concludes how the Imam and he both understood the language of violence and West's inescapability. Partially agreeing with this, I explore a possibility Ghosh is silent about. India informs Ghosh's observation about Egypt. Questions about irrigation in Egypt thus take him to his native West Bengal. So, when asked if 'you have crops and fields and canals like we do', he replied: 'In some parts of my country they are not needed because it rains all the year around'. A similar response is absent when asked if it was true that 'in your country you burn your dead'. So the question I ask: would the conversation between his informants and Ghosh have flowed differently had Ghosh paused to reflect on the fact that every dead Hindu was not burnt[1] and that many – for instance, Indian Muslims – buried their dead.

If Egyptian villagers called him '*doktor al-Hindi* [the Indian doctor]', Ghosh performed his Indianness asserting: 'in *my country*', or '*We* have guns and tanks and bombs. And they are better than anything … *you* have … ' (italics added). The question if Indians burned their dead did not take Ghosh to that Bengal where Muslims, like Egyptians, do not burn the dead. Currently, in West Bengal Muslims, thoroughly marginalized, form twenty five per cent of the population (Kulkarni 2010, 114). If the imperial cartography divided the world whereby geography and nation conjoined to fashion a national culture/religion (Ludden 2000), nationalisms authorized and reproduced it. The Middle East became Muslim, India Hindu. Thus viewed, despite the momentous difference between them, Ghosh and his Egyptian informants shared the ground of nationalism. To some, my reading of Ghosh as a nationalist may require qualifications because he is often taken as a critic of nationalism's exclusivity and a votary of premodern inclusive syncretism. However, scholars have marked the persistence of exclusivity even in the apparent criticism of nationalism by Ghosh. To Viswanathan (1995, 31), Ghosh's attempt to question nationalism results in its very (re)inscription because the notion of 'syncretism' is 'a purposeful fiction constitutive of the will to nationhood'. Majeed (1995:, 55) concludes that the text is less about premodern syncretism and more about Ghosh 'failing to come to terms with his own exclusive identity'. Almond (2020, 14) perceptively shows how *In An Antique Land* is 'indebted to a branch of the [Orientalist] apparatus it purports to denounce' (note that the story by Ghosh I cite here is an essay in an anthology; the same story differently figures in *In An Antique Land*; see Bhattacharji 2004, 211).

Organized into three sections, this essay discusses how Indian anthropology has theorized Muslims. In line with Indian practice, I use sociology and anthropology interchangeably.[2] In the first section, I outline my argument. Thinking past notion like 'the anthropology of nations and nationalism' by Boyer and Lomnitz (2005) – it posits anthropology and nation as disjointed – I contend that Indian anthropology and ideology of nationalism are entwined such that it is risky to disentangle them. Engaging with writings on methodological nationalism, I demonstrate how anthropologists' discourse on

Muslims and the dominant discourse on the Indian nation profoundly inform each other. A flaw in critiques of methodological nationalism, I aver, is the neglect of civilization[3], a constituent of nationalism. Consequently, these critiques fall short of recognizing tension inherent in it. Here I also show limits to self-perception of sociology as the most reflexive discipline. In next section, I delineate three main catalogues through which sociology has treated Muslims: *silence*, *alienness,* and *erasure*. These catalogues are heuristic, not neatly separate. Discussing the formation of Indian Sociological Society (ISS) in 1951, I also unpack its call for sociologist to be Indian first and sociologist only later. Rejecting this dualism, I ask if there is a possibility for a sociologist to be other than Indian first. In concluding section, I discuss the link between symbolic violence of sociology manifest in the othering of Muslims and anti-Muslim political violence popularly called 'riots'. Here I also briefly compare anthropology and its entanglement with mythologies of the nation-state in India, Germany, Mexico and the USSR.

Obviously, otherness of Islam this essay dwells on is not the only form of otherness. Sociological discourses on Dalits, tribes and other marginalized communities also signify otherness. However, the *differentia specifica* of Islam's putative otherness revolving around its foreignness (a religion from 'outside') obtains neither vis-à-vis Dalits nor vis-à-vis tribes. That they are indigenous (compared to the Aryans) is firmly established. Furthermore, unlike that of Muslims, their loyalty to India as a state-nation, or to invoke Franz Boas (see epigraph), their 'devotion to the interests of the State', is rarely in doubt.[4] Before I proceed further, let me clarify that this essay does not discuss each dimension of the ubiquitous identification of Indian anthropology with the Hindu nation or society. Instead, it focusses on one key dimension – the othering of Islam and Muslims – that informs the founding fathers as well as the contemporary generation of anthropologists. As demonstrated in the pages ahead, even those few contemporary sociologists who appear to criticize the first generation sociologists for their exclusive identification of India with Hinduism do so by only reproducing the assumptions of the latter.

The argument: methodological nationalism and heterogeneous singularity

Since its coinage in 1970s, 'methodological nationalism' has recently witnessed a revival. Smith (1979, 191) argued that the 'study of "society" today is … equated with the … nation-states' and 'the theoretical underpinning derives much of its force from acceptance of nationalist conceptions' (also see Giddens 1990, 13). Calling for a 'transnational science' in a changing world, Ulrich Beck (2002, 54) urged social scientists to liberate concepts from 'the fetters of methodological nationalism'. Appadurai (1986) questioned the naturalized link between a 'place' and key themes in post WWII anthropology. He argued how over time certain places became 'showcases' for dominant issues: Polynesia for reciprocity; Africa for lineage and segment; the Mediterranean for honour and India for caste. Appadurai's usage of place, however, was imprecise and seldom did he link nation-state and 'place'. Gupta and Ferguson did. My intervention, however, does not relate to Gupta's and Ferguson's (1992, 7) 'migrant workers, nomads, and … the transnational business and professional elite'. I write about Muslims in India who live within the border but do not and/or cannot belong to the nation. If the essence of a nation lies in what Fichte called 'interior frontier' (Stoler 1997), to what extent can anthropology help grasp this

phenomenon? Moreover, what if anthropology itself is complicit in erecting and sanctifying the 'interior frontier' by othering Muslims?

This essay makes four interwoven arguments. *First*, I show how Indian anthropological discourses, including the 'postcolonial' ones, offer a compelling illustration of methodological nationalism as knowledge/power matrix (Foucault 1980). By methodological nationalism, I mean the ways in which anthropologists-sociologists craft, adopt, elaborate, supply as well as apply the definition of Indian society/nation-state, which the political discourse furnishes. My argument builds on Herzfeld's (1987, 6, 16–18) who objects to the 'claims [that] nationalism bears no resemblance whatsoever to those of anthropological theory' and Wimmer's and Schiller's (2002, 306) who tellingly note the 'naturalization of the nation-state in different disciplines'. I describe three catalogues through which Indian sociology and nationalism have treated Islam: *silence*, *alienness,* and *erasure*. Before I am misunderstood, let me clarify that my contention is not that there is a direct, mechanistic relationship between anthropology and nationalism. Nor am I inattentive to the discursive specificity of sociology (Wagner 1989), including its customs, norms, even networks of caste and kinship. However, anthropology as a field (Bourdieu 2010) is far from autonomous; it is one among many knots consolidating and exhibiting the knowledge/power machine.

My contention about the confluence between majoritarian nationalism and sociology-anthropology differs from the scant allusion made on this subject. For instance, Upadhya (2007, 243) writes that under the guidance of G.S. Ghurye, now considered as the founding father of the discipline (see below), 'sociology came to be defined as the study of Indian (i.e. Hindu) civilization'. Sundar (2007, 390–91) detects a similar stance in Iravati Karve, first woman anthropologist and an influential figure of the formative era (more below). The allusion by Upadhya and Sundar to the ubiquity of Hinduism and simultaneous erasure of Muslims in anthropology, however, is anchored in the biographies of Ghurye and Karve. There is no sustained attempt to connect it to theoretical discussion on nationalism and methodological nationalism as this essay does. Nor do they mention any sociological work on Islam and Muslims, let alone discuss how they relate to the premise of India as a Hindu society/nation. In contrast, my intervention maps sociology/anthropology across biographies, institutes, departments, texts, regions and schools of thoughts to demonstrate the cohabitation between nationalism and anthropology/sociology. Sundar's account of Karve in fact reproduces what she finds problematic in Karve's notion of Indian society. While situating Karve's works in the backdrop of socio-religious movements in Western India, Sundar mentions no Muslim reform movement such as Anjuman-e-Islam in Maharashtra (Green 2011). Sundar notes that 'most of the scholar-pedagogues have been upper caste and upper class'. Since she assumes scholar-pedagogues to be 'Hindus' there is no need, it seems, to add religion along with caste and class. One may also note a contradiction in the description of Karve's 'cosmopolitanism' by Sundar and her assertion in the same breath that Karve 'never accepted Islam or Christianity as integral to … Indian society' (2007, 364, 363, 393).

Second, I argue that the literature on methodological nationalism (see Chernilo 2007) does not adequately account for tension inherent within. The discourse of nation presupposes a world of nation-states representing specific civilizations. As nations, France and Britain saw themselves as flag-bearers of *the* civilization. Thus, nationalist discourses in the nineteenth century and later already contained elements of civilizational

pan-European identity. August Wilhelm was a German nationalist simultaneously wedded to the civilizational 'European patriotism' (Ahmad 2013a, 238–40; Elias 1998). For Hindu nationalists and sociologists too India is at once a civilization and nation-state (Mukerjee 1958). If my framing is correct, then, we are faced with a paradox: nationalism is comprehensible only in an international world of nation-states like the Indian one, which historically has designed Muslims within its territory as the other of the nation. That is, how do we account for tension in Indian nationalism's ready appropriation of many elements of foreign West on the one hand and simultaneous inscription of Indian Muslims as 'foreign other' on the other.

Third, I contend that beneath the heterogeneity – of regions, institutions, departments, theoretical frameworks – of both political and anthropological discourses there is a recognizable singularity vis-à-vis Islam and discourses of the nation. Since the dominant practice of a majoritarian nation pervades these divides, sociology reflects as much as shapes it. The delineation of sociology's four schools of thought – (a) Bombay School as 'a promoter of nationalist sociology', (b) Mysore with 'social philosophical orientation', (c) Calcutta with 'an anthropological perspective' and (d) Lucknow with 'an interdisciplinary indigenous approach' by Patel (2002, 273; NCERT 1990, 33–34), or frameworks like structural functional, Marxist, Marxiologist (as Dhurjati Prasad[5] called himself) subaltern, cultural or approaches such as descriptive, explanatory or diagnostic or scales of analyses like macro and micro (Ramkrishna Mukherjee 1976; Singh 1986; Singhi 1996) – is less than meaningful for, as I show below, they all, bearing as they do the signature of nation, view Islam as 'other'.

Finally, I critique the heroic self-image of anthropology. Spencer (2007, 182, italics mine) argues that 'anthropology is *necessarily always* aspiring to some sort of counter-politics' and that when Huntington and his lieutenants 'set out their divisions between "friend" and "foe" and locate them at … civilizational level, *anthropology can only object*'. To me, there is nothing intrinsic which renders anthropology to counter-politics. To recall, anthropology and anthropologists *also* had relations with colonialism (Asad 1973; Fabian 1991). Gough (1968, 403) termed it as 'a child of Western imperialism'. Anthropologists were also employed in the War-on-Terror related Human Terrain System (Giroux 2004; Lutz 2009; Price 2011).[6] Long before Huntington, anthropologist Karve indeed instituted the 'us' versus 'them' dualism (see below). Likewise, I object to Sujata Patel's (2002, 270) claim that while 'knowledge and those perspectives which should not be researched' have divided the discipline of history, they are absent in sociology. This claim indeed is upsetting because the absence of such debates might as well mean that anthropology echoed, if unwittingly, what the Hindu Right aspires, erasing thereby any dissensus (Rancière 1999). Similarly, the claim that 'no other discipline in India has shown … reflexivity' as sociology does (Patel 2011, 427; Uberoi 2000) is untenable and narcissistic to boot. Valuing anthropology should also make us aware, following Wallerstein (2003), of such naval-gazing claims tend to immunize anthropology by not adequately interrogating the dynamic of power/knowledge and nation thinking it is part of.

Before beginning the next section, some qualifications are in order. Sociologists-anthropologists I discuss are makers of the discipline as leaders/theoreticians, editors of journals, office bearers of professional association, founders of departments/centres, vice chancellors and authors of books read by lakhs of students (see Note

11). This essay gives more attention to the founding moment of anthropology/sociology because it shaped subsequent professionalization of the discipline.[7] However, it equally discusses the development of anthropology vis-à-vis Muslims (for an overview, see Fazalbhoy 1997) well into the twenty-first century. Sociology's conceptualization of India as exclusively Hindu during its formative phase persists until today as evident, inter alia, in three volumes surveying research developments in sociology until 2010 and published in 2014 by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (Singh 2014; see Note 9). To demonstrate this essay's contention, it is neither possible nor necessary to include every sociologist or text.[8] The value of my intervention lies not so much in the extent to which it is statistically 'representative' of the discipline, but in advancing a hypothesis for a critical debate on history, ideology and practice of anthropology. In short, this essay is an anthropology of anthropology entwined with ambitions and protocols of nation-state. To this end, it charts out a different genealogy of anthropology. In so doing, I use standard texts and bring to light what remains forgotten, buried or misread. In narratives of coherence, I ask if they disguise subjugated or stigmatized knowledge (Barkun 2003; Foucault 1994). I also aim to understand how canonization of texts and persons works. Put tersely, instead of taking them as truth, sociological knowledge, its premise, constitution and source in themselves are subject of my critical inquiry. If and how my argument is valid in other disciplines entails separate studies.

The catalogue of silence

Ghosh's story I began with illustrates the catalogue of silence. Indian sociology has plenty of it, including about superseding of one father of sociology by another and ignored relationships between them: Patrick Geddes (1854–1932) and Govind Sadashiv Ghurye (1893–1983).

While reading for my Intermediate Degree in Hindi-medium at B.N. College at Patna University in the 1980s (with sociology as a subsidiary subject), I do not recall reading/hearing about the father of Indian sociology. We were asked to memorize definitions of terms like 'culture' and 'society'. During my Bachelor's in sociology at Jamia Millia Islamia University and Masters in sociology at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), I came to know of Ghurye as father of sociology. In writings prior to 1990s, Ghurye, however, rarely figured as its father. I.P. Desai (1996) who studied under Ghurye did not mention him as father; he wrote about 'founding father**s**'. The 1982 sociology textbook by National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT 1982) did not even mention his name. Eight years later, *Sociology: An Introduction* (NCERT 1990, 33) described 'Pattrick Giddis [*sic*] and G.S. Ghurye (Bombay), Radhakamal Mukerjee and DP Mukerjee (Lucknow) and AR Wadia (Mysore)' as 'propagators of sociology'. The father of sociology was Patrick Geddes as Chandrasekher (1976, viii) had noted in 1976. However, recently this title is bestowed on Ghurye as the 2006 NCERT (2006, 85) textbook called him 'founder of institutionalized sociology' as did Patel (2010, 282) and others. So, who was Geddes?

Most accounts of Geddes and sociology remain sketchy; in some, Geddes is not even mentioned (NCERT 2006, Chapter 5) for his influence on sociology is considered 'negligible' (Munshi 2007, 174).This position needs to be examined.

A Scot, born in Aberdeen, town planning was Geddes' field. In 1903, he became the founder member of British Sociological Society (Scott and Bromley 2013). Crucial to his approach to city-making was respect for past. Geddes paid 'rich tributes to Indian civilization' and was impressed by its 'traditional architecture and planning in the temple towns of the south' (Munshi 2007, 185). He particularly appreciated the 'proud place given to the venerated *tulsi* plant (symbol of the well-kept Hindu home)'. In 1914, the Governor of Madras, invited Geddes to show his town planning exhibition. For next several years, Geddes worked for the British Empire and local Indian princes. To the king of Indore, Geddes suggested a university scheme, a copy of which he sent to his friend David Eder, a British representative of the Zionist Executive in Palestine. After the Balfour Declaration and occupation of Palestine by Britain, in 1918, Geddes had made suggestions for planning Jerusalem. Chaim Weizmann, chief of the Zionist Commission to Palestine, recruited Geddes to plan Hebrew University and new colonies (Rubin 2011, 234–235). Geddes' correspondence with Zionists took place during his stay in India where he gave lectures at Bombay, Calcutta, Darjeeling and Lucknow. In 1919, the Vice Chancellor of Bombay University offered Geddes Professorship to launch Sociology. As Figure 1 below shows, his time was to be divided between India and Palestine. Accounts of Geddes by Munshi, and Madan (2011), however, do not mention Geddes' imperial-sociological role in Palestine.

At Bombay, not only he launched the department and trained scores of students, Geddes mentored G.S. Ghurye and N.A. Toothi. He arranged scholarships for both to study in the UK. On his return to India, Toothi propagated Geddes' ideas. In Ghurye, who earned his doctorate from Cambridge, Geddes saw his future collaborator (Munshi 2007, 174). Geddes influenced Radhakamal Mukerji (1889-1968), 'founder of the Lucknow school' of sociology (Joshi 1986, 1457). Radhakamal, later to become Vice Chancellor of Lucknow University and Director of JK Institute of Sociology and Human Relations (Mukerjee 1958, iii) developed close ties with Geddes. Radhakamal termed Geddes as 'one of the greatest minds' (in Madan 2011, 121). Though Ghurye dismissed Geddes's influence (Madan 2011, 139), I document a convergence amongst Geddes, Radhakamal and Ghurye about their conceptualization of nation-society, its past, temporality, tradition and civilization – a conceptualization instituted at the very moment of sociology's birth, which crucially shaped the discipline in the so-called post-colonial era.

As put to work in Palestine, Geddes' notion of the past meant installing an ancient Hebrew civilization, the biblical people who supposedly constituted the earliest phase of the Western civilization. Geddes suggested destroying all that was alien to the biblical civilization like the Turkish clock tower. He lived up to what the Zionist Commission opined about him: 'Professor Geddes knows how to maintain what is traditional and beautiful of the past whilst combining it with … modern requirements' (Rubin 2011, 235–236). What was 'beautiful of the past' derived from the settler Zionist design in which nearly all that was Islamic became undesirable (on archaeology and Israeli nationalism, see El-Haj 1998). A similar notion of India's past and tradition was evident in Ghurye, Radhakamal and others.

Central to Ghurye's sociology was 'to demonstrate the unity and antiquity of Indian civilization' where Islam appears at best as detrimental for 'Hinduism is at the centre of India's civilizational unity' from which the nation-state, India, or as Ghurye (1968, 113, 117, 426) preferred to call it Bharat, flowed (Upadhya 2007, 215). Describing Muslims as

TO PLAN NEW JERUSALEM.

International Zionist Convention Engages Patrick Geddes for Work.

LONDON, Sept. 1, (Correspondence of Associated Press.)—The planning of New Jerusalem and its proposed university has been intrusted by the International Zionist Commission to Patrick Geddes, Professor of Botany at St. Andrew's University, Scotland.

Mr. Geddes, who is considered one of the greatest living authorities in civics and social survey, will work in co-operation with Dr. Weizmann, head of the British Zionist Commission. While in Palestine he will organize a department of sociology and civics for Bombay University, and in the cold season will carry out the Indian town planning work at which he was previously employed.

Figure 1. *New York Times'* 1919 announcement of Patrick Geddes' employment by International Zionist Convention and Bombay University.

'conquers for a fairly long time', Ghurye (1968, viii) argued that the 'native Hindu' and 'incoming Muslims' 'in foreign lands' remained 'separate and distinct'. Dismissing the thesis of Hindu-Muslim synthesis, he wrote: 'Just like the lotus leaf in water Hindu … architectural talent have kept themselves above the water of dilution and untainted by it' (1968, 258). Radhakamal's conceptualization of past was similar; he held that the 'scope of social sciences in India should be rooted in the specificities of Indian culture, which for Radhakamal meant upper-caste Hindu culture' (Madan 2011, 135). In *A History of Indian Civilization,* Radhakamal noted 'the unrelenting, advancing sword of Islam', 'Muslim invasion and conquest' to foreground 'Indian historiography … embodied in

the Purāṇas and Itihāsasa' with 'notion of cultural cycles of four world-*yugas* or great eons' where 'Brahmā the Creator succeeds another Brahmā in each of these countless worlds … ' (1958, 17, 55).

Such a conceptualization of India silencing Muslims is recurrent in sociology. Nirmal Kumar Bose (d.1972) edited the journal *Man in India* (from 1951 until 1972) and directed the Anthropological Survey of India from 1959 to 1964. He served as Bengali interpreter and secretary to Mohandas Gandhi who, Bose (1961[1929], 82) held, 'tacitly formed an alliance with those who believed in a restoration of Hindu domination … ' Discussing Clark Wissler's definition of culture, Bose offered his own about India:

> In the Hindu scriptures, the desires of mankind are classified into three categories … (1) *Artha* or economic needs, (2) *Kama* or sexual desires, and (3) *Moksha* or the desire for peace through spiritual emancipation … Now, all that we understand by culture goes to satisfy one or more of these impulses … The observance of *Achara* or customary practices prevalent in a country or in a particular social group existing there in, is thus *Dharma*, which literally means that which sustains life. The observance of culture thus can be reduced to a threefold *Dharma*, viz. *Arthdharma*, *Kamadharma*, *Mokshadharma*. (in Saraswati 2002, 10–11)

Based on this definition, Bose's *Cultural Anthropology* silenced how Muslims' traditions and values construed culture and how that construal differed from his exclusivist definition which substituted Indian culture with Brahmanical Hinduism. Conceiving India chronologically, he began with the 'first period in Indian history marked by the expansion of the Vedic Aryans' (Bose 1961, 23) through Mahabharata to the present. To 'Muslim conquest', he attributed the downfall of Hindus: 'The depression of the Sudras, the abolition of mixed marriages, the custom of suttee and similar other devices were Brahmanism's attempts to save itself from the mire of post-Mohammedan decadence' (Bose 1961, 87). Bose (1967, 203–204) also discussed how the culture of tribes, who the British did not count as Hindus, and that of Hindus intersected making the tribes 'full-fledged Hindus'.

In *Problems of Indian Nationalism*, Bose argued that Hindus readily took to modern/Western education whereas Muslims, 'firmly entrenched in Islam', did not, or when some of them did, they accepted it 'not at … cultural levels', thereby 'the Moslem became more Moslem, while the Hindu became less of a Hindu … ' (1969, 16–17). Bose offered no evidence for his claim. Importantly, he called Bengal peasants 'Wahhabi' – a term used by W.W. Hunter (1871), a colonial civil servant in India and honourary fellow simultaneously of Ethnological Society, London and the Royal Institute of Netherlands India, The Hague. Hunter's use of the term 'Wahhabi' was part of the imperialist strategy to classify every resistance by Muslims against Western imperialism from Africa to Asia into one enemy, i.e. Muslims/Islam. The Bengal peasants resisting the British did not call themselves Wahhabi, though (Ahmad 2015; Dallal 1993). Bose's (1969) debt to colonial-orientalist epistemology was so unwavering that he did not consider the rebellion led by Dudu Mian as 'revolt' because those enacting it were mostly Muslims. On Islam and Muslims, Ramkrishna Mukherjee (1976), President of *Indian Sociological Society* in early 1970s, held a similar view.

To conclude this section, I discuss Deshpande's (2003) *Contemporary India: A Sociological View*. In it, he occasionally mentions Muslims but only as an object of Hindutva's design, with no subjectivity of their own. Like his predecessors, Deshpanede discusses

modernity without any reference to Islam. He writes: 'Indeed, Indian-Hindu religio-spiritual traditions and culture were the crucial fulcrum on which nationalist ideology leveraged itself'. His overall argument goes as follows: since the nineteenth century until the death of Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, nation was imagined as an economy (Chapter 3); the rise of Hindutva marked a shift to a religious identity (Chapter 4). The first premise itself is untenable; the era of imagined economy was also the era of religious mobilization. Deshpande crafts a shift where there is none because religious identity is enmeshed in economy as economy is inextricable from religion. Deshpande goes on to repeat the nationalist doxa of 'Nehruvian era of … secularism', (2003, 53, 72) without saying why secularism entered the Constitution only in 1970s, long after Nehru's death?[9]

The catalogue of alienness

S.C. Dube (1922-1996) was an influential sociologist and academic-bureaucrat. He chaired NCERT's (1982: Foreword) board of sociology textbooks. He wrote, among others, *Indian Society*, reprinted regularly and read by lakhs of students preparing for civil services (see Note 11). Describing Muslims as 'invading Arabs', Dube held that Islam spread due to violence. He devoted six pages to Muslim invasion and not even one page to the British who simply 'came to India' (1990, 27).

> For nearly 3 centuries, the aggressive designs of Islamic invaders were blunted, but later they could not be contained. What had happened in half of the world earlier was then repeated in India … India had known other conquest … , the confrontation with the Islamic invaders was longer and more bitter as they brought with them their own theology and considered only their religion as true.

Dube only restated a position central to the Indian 'renaissance' and 'liberalism'.[10] Karve (d.1970), India's 'first woman anthropologist' trained in Germany (Sunder 2007, 360), wrote:

> The Mohammedans have been in India for about a thousand years. They created the *first breach* in the cultural unity of India. … their religious centre is *outside* India and their co-religionists have spread all over the world … This consciousness of solidarity with outside Muslims … and *religious fanaticism* which sets at naught all human values arising out of thousand years of association, make it almost impossible to arrive at cultural compromise with this element in the Indian population. They neither respect nor understand the religious, ethical, or aesthetic creation of other people. … They have left *terror and destruction* in their wake in historical times. (Karve 1947, 45–46, italics added)

Karve's anthropology based on enmity against Islam belies Spencer's (2007) claim that anthropology will necessarily object to the politics of friend and foe. She anthropologically voiced what V.D. Savarkar (1883-966), an ideologue of ethnic Hindutva, did politically: 'Their [Muslims'] holy land is far off in Arabia and Palestine. Consequently, their names and their outlook smack of *foreign origin*. Their love is divided' (in Jaffrelot 2007, 95).

According to Dhurjati Prasad, co-founder of Lucknow School of sociology, Islamic invasion would have changed India but Buddhism worked as a cushion: 'Muslims just reigned, but seldom ruled' (in Madan 1996, 394). Muslims as alien are equally prominent in *Modernization of Indian Tradition* by Yogendra Singh, founder of sociology at JNU (Das and

Pathak 2020). It aims to explain 'the causation of social change … both from within and without'. For changes brought about internally, Singh uses the term orthogenetic whereas he terms sources of change from outside heterogenetic (1986, 25). Singh regards Islam as heterogenetic (see Table 1). Singh's terminological choice is far from innocent. In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, heterogenetic in philosophy relates to 'external origination' and in medicine to 'infection from outside the body'. By calling it heterogenetic, Singh thus renders Islam as an entity external to India, in both philosophical and medicinal senses. Discussing encounter between 'indigenous and non-indigenous cultural tradition' he refers to Muslims as 'colonizers and conquerors' (1986, 60). The last six pages of a chapter in Singh's *Social Stratification and Change in India* (1997), are subtitled 'Social Stratification among non-Hindu Communities'. There is no subtitle in the first 32 pages. Throughout in that section, Singh takes India to be Hindu.

Louis Dumont who greatly influenced sociology in post-1947 India contributed to Islam's alienness, an idea inscribed, as historian Manan Asif (2020) shows, first by Portuguese and later by British and Western Orientalism at large. Muslims appear in *Homo Hierachicus* at the far end. Imtiaz Ahmed (1972, 173), regarded as *the* authority on anthropology of Indian Muslims, found Dumont 'in a hurry to finish the discussion'. Contra Ahmed, Dumont's reason was conceptual. In Dumont's view, Muslims did not matter for they were 'foreign' but subsumed within Hinduism, main concern of Dumont. To Dumont (1970, 207), Muslims 'are contaminated by the caste spirit, although they have not … succumbed to it'. This, however, did not deter Dumont from (contrarily) saying that Muslims and Hindus held antithetical values (van der Veer 1993, 32–36).

Leela Dube's (1969) *Matriliny and Islam* also belongs to the catalogues of alienness. Her key aim, contrary to the pervasive view, was not to study kinship per se but 'to discern the impact of Islam in the realm of kinship' in Lakshadweep. Given her premise that Islam has an 'inflexible and all-pervasive character', she aimed to know if in India it was different from 'countries where it first spread and developed'. To Dube, 'Islam in its ideology … assumes and emphasizes a patrilineal social structure'. Hence, her declaration that Islam and matrilineal community are 'incompatible systems' for her account of Lakshadweep showed the 'persistence of all the significant structural features of the social system

Table 1. Yogendra Singh's (1986 [1972], 25) Paradigm Showing Islam as An External, "Heterogenetic" Faith.[11]

Sources of change	Cultural structure		Modernization Social structure	
	Little tradition	*Great tradition*	*Micro structure*	*Macro structure*
Heterogenetic changes	Islamization	Secondary-Islamic Impact	Role-Differentiation	Political Innovation
	Primary-Westernization	Secondary-Westernization or (modernization)	New Legitimation	New Structures of Elites, Bureaucracy, Industry, etc.
Orthogenetic changes	Sanskritization or Traditionalization	Cultural Renaissance	Pattern Recurrence, Compulsive Migration or Population Shift	Elite Circulation, Succession of Kings, Rise and Fall of Cities and Trade Centres
			Traditionalization	

in spite of its envelopment by Islam'! Leaving aside her prejudiced description of Malayalam spoken with Arabic words and written in Arabic-Persian script in Lakshadweep as 'corrupt', let me explain the edifice of her theoretical assumption (Dube 1969, 88, 3, 7, 78). Dube's assumption about incompatibility between Islam and matriliny was part of the larger orientalist vocabulary of incompatibility (Bonate 2006, 140). That equation of Islam with patriliny and patriarchy was an orientalist trope instituted by Robertson Smith in the nineteenth century and later revived by Montgomery Watt, as Leila Ahmed notes (1992, 43), did not figure in Dube's text. Her Hindu nationalist premise of India as primarily Hindu – Islam being a foreign element – perfectly dovetailed into orientalist premise of Islam's hostility to matriliny for 'European orientalism and Indian nationalism colluded', writes Wolfe (2002, 374), to create Muslims as 'Other'

Such foreignifications of Islam rest on the premise of 'home' and 'host'. In *Religion in India*, Madan (1991, 15; italics mine), founding editor of *Contributions to Indian Sociology (New Series)* from 1967 up to 1991, states: 'India is the *home* of many religions and long-time *host* to some'. Veena Das' (1984, 293) rejoinder to Robinson's provocative intervention with which the next sub-section starts too seems to partake, unwittingly or otherwise, in the nationalist language of home as she wrote about Islam's 'original home'. Das' choice of 'original home' is not incidental because it is central to the European colonial imagination in which Muslims were designed as 'always outside, … in the Arab world, not in the subcontinent'. In his important book, *The Loss of Hindustan*, Asif (2020, 44) who I referred to earlier, further shows how the 'originary myth' of Muslims' 'homeland' as outside India was bound up with 'the paradigm of Muslim conquest' of India and the liberation of 'native' Hindus from Muslims by the British. To return to Madan, clearly, his 'home' and 'host' are at the core of nationalism that sociology/anthropology replayed rather than critically investigate (Ahmad 2013a). The nationalist-sociological doxa that Muslims are foreigners erase the simple fact that most Muslims are/were converts from 'indigenous' Hindus (Nadvi 1992, 182–83). The doxa, however, continues to reign classifying religion into 'Indic' and 'non-Indic' (cf. Oommen 1996). Whereas Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism are Indic, Christianity and Islam are not (Madan 2003). In the formulation of Agehananda Bharati (d.1991), a Sanskritist-anthropologist at the Syracuse University and whose original name was Leopold Fischer, Islam is 'non-indigenous' and 'alien' (1981, 72-73).

With Islam's foreignness enshrined in Indian anthropology, it is logical that the discipline has made massive investments to render it 'Indic'. There is a variety of ways in which this indigenization (read assimilation) is enacted. Discourse of syncretism is one principal medium. It is this third catalogue of syncretism that now I turn to.

The catalogue of erasure: syncretism as assimilation

In 1983, Robinson's (1983) article in *Contributions to Indian Sociology* generated a heated debate. Robinson contested the framework of volumes edited by Imtiaz Ahmed, main proponent of the idea that Muslims in India are syncretic and not like those in the Middle East and that there is an *Indian* Islam inescapably influenced by Hinduism deemed as a tolerant religion. The debate did not lead to any resolution.[12] However, Ahmed's approach continues to dominate the under-studied field of Indian Muslims as also the mainstream thinking outside academy. Echoing sociological doxa of Islam's

alienness/intolerance, and calling it 'an extremely reified religious tradition', Ahmed (1981, vii; italics added) stated:

> Unlike Hinduism, Islam was *intrusive* in India. It *arrived* in the midst of an established civilization and gradually won over a large *indigenous* population to its fold. Because of its *intrusive character* and the recruitment to it of a large indigenous population which brought along previous religious beliefs and orientation into the faith upon conversion, *the Islamic faith in India acquired a typically indigenous flavor*.

As it is evident, Ahmed's conceptualization of Indian Muslims is illustrative of nation-thinking derived from and exemplified in a nationalized geography the imaginative capacity of which can express itself only in the idiom of 'arrival', 'indigenous', 'outsiders', 'original', 'heartland' and so on. Also, read this:

> … the version of Islam which had been introduced into India was quite different from what it had been in its *original heartland*. On *arrival* in India, it had been *further diluted through conversion to its fold of large groups of local converts* who were bound to bring their pre-conversion beliefs and practices into the faith. Thus, it was almost inevitable that the religious tradition of the Muslims in India should comprise two distinct elements: one ultimate and formal, derived from the Islamic texts; the other proximate and local, validated by customs. (Ahmed 1981, 15; italics mine)

That a dichotomized understanding hostage to the binaries such as ultimate-formal versus local-customary – central also to accounts by Ernest Gellner and Clifford Geertz (Asad 1986) – is faulty, not to say conceptually impoverished, should not detain us here. It remains important to interrogate rather than reproduce the foreignness of Islam and its 'heartland' in sociology. To legitimize the colonial rule, the British fashioned the myth that they were not the first outsiders to rule India; Muslims too were outsiders/foreigners (Nasr 1999, 581). In his 1913 book, *The Peoples of India*, J. D. Anderson wrote: 'During the preceding five centuries Hindu India suffered much oppression … at the hands of Muhammadan invaders, but *Islam had made no attempt to become an Indian religion*' (Anderson 1913, 98, italics mine). The rehearsing of the colonial myth by postcolonial Indian sociology makes the 'post' in postcolonial suspect. Another mechanism the British used to perpetuate their rule was to accentuate the existing differences between Muslims and Hindus and create where they did not exist. Laws, languages and census were some key arenas in which the religious divisions were instituted or intensified (Cohn 1996).

As regards the conceptualization of 'original heartland' of Islam by Ahmed, his nationalism presupposes rather than examine a reified Arab Islam as intolerant, exclusive and formal. This also explains the notions of a uniquely African, Indonesian, Senegalese, or Bangladeshi Islam; and more recently an 'Euro-Islam' (Ahmad 2013a). Indeed solidification of a 'tolerant' Turkish Islam, contra the conservative Arab Islam, in post-Kemalist era (Ozdalga 2006) is a perfect analogy to Ahmed's sociological project of enshrining Indian/Hindu nationalism vis-à-vis Muslims. The connecting thread across Ahmed's (1973, 1977, 1981) edited volumes is this: there is an adaptive *Indian* Islam different from a closed Arab Islam. This difference lies in Muslims influenced by Hinduism. To Ahmed (1986:, 207), castes among Muslims 'betray a Hindu ancestry or demonstrate nearness of Muslim communities … to the … Hindu cultural ethos'. Lindhom's (1986) argument that what Ahmed takes as uniquely Indian is also present elsewhere fell flat. The covers of Ahmed's volumes carried the image of Ashoka's wheel (in colour), a sign on India's national flag.

That traditions interact with one another is an anthropological truism. That Muslims have influenced and haven been influenced by non-Muslims is neither novel nor surprising. However, syncretism preceding nationalism becomes a different beast when it gets yoked to nationalism with its ethnic impulse for uniformity and assimilation. It is this particular meaning of syncretism aimed at effacing the Muslim difference that I elaborate below.

Madan's (2007) DN Majumdar lecture, arguably a summary of his life-long scholarship on Islam, splits Islam into Great and Little traditions – a split introduced by Robert Redfield and applied in India by his associates like Singer (1955; see Note 3). The former is orthodox, exclusive and intolerant. The latter is accommodating, syncretic as they are influenced by Hinduism's putative tolerance. Unlike Great and Little traditions in Hinduism where both are supposedly indigenous, with the designation of Islam's Great tradition as 'foreign' and the valorization of its Little traditions deemed indigenous (read Hindu) the ground for assimilation is set. Madan also connects Islam and terrorism, especially in Kashmir (saying nothing about violence by the state). Like Madan, Srinivas (1991, 1), a disciple of Ghurye and Radcliffe-Brown, held that the ubiquity of caste in Hinduism fostered tolerance of diversity; hence his assertion that no religion in India remained uninfluenced by Hinduism (Srinivas 2002, 362–363). Like Bose, Ghurye and others, Srinivas maintained that tribes were/are essentially Hindus. The colonial Census counted tribes (also Jews) as non-Hindus, an 'anomaly', which, Srinivas approvingly wrote, was corrected in the 1961 census. For both Srinivas and the 'secular' Constitution of India 'Hindu' includes Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs. The fusion between Srinivas' sociology and Hinduism was stark. 'The Concept of the Unity of India', he wrote, 'is inherent in Hinduism' (Srinivas 1991, 31, 2).

Ghaus Ansari contested formulation like Srinivas' that tolerance was innate to Hinduism. In *Muslim Caste in Uttar Pradesh*, Ansari (1960, 66, 67) argued that 'communalism in India has its roots largely in caste system'. Framing it through the theory of social distance, Ansari argued that caste prohibitions narrowed individual outlook. It was in relation to this thesis that he showed how Muslims under Hinduism's influence developed caste-like features. In foreword to Ansari's book, J.H. Hutton, an anthropologist at the University of Cambridge and former Indian civil servant of the British Empire (Pitt Rivers Museum 2017), rejected his thesis (*sans* any explanation), saying that the merit of Ansari's book instead lay in 'what the two communities have in common' (v). Sociologists read Ansari's treatise along the line set by Hutton. Recently, Madan (2007, 15) cited Ansari to demonstrate caste 'standing at its [society's] centre among Hindus as well as Muslims'. It is bewildering that Madan, Imtiaz Ahmed and several others continue to quote Ansari's 'pioneering' work, eliminating Ansari's own assertion that 'it is more difficult to determine whether the term 'caste' can appropriately be applied to … a non-Hindu community' (1960, 2). What was secondary in Ansari's thesis was turned into primary and vice versa so as to coopt it by re-signifying it into a nationalist, ethnic sociology.[13]

To close this section, let us return to Bharati. His book on Hindu-Muslim interface is a powerful illustration of syncretism. He held that 'where there is a Muslim majority in any specific region … there is a more rigid ideological separation'. In contrast, 'tolerance, and some degree of adaptation are strengthened when there is a Hindu majority' (Bharati 1981, 75). Bharati's formulation is well alive. During my fieldwork in 2010 on media and terrorism (Ahmad 2014), I met a noted journalist in Delhi, who told me: 'See, where did

India have serious problems of terrorism? Kashmir and Punjab, right? In both places Hindus are in a minority'. The politics beneath the discourse of syncretism, however, is unwittingly and perversely revealed in media's portrayal of cases of terrorism in which Muslim youth are framed. The media report about such framed Muslims as having no sign of syncretism: linguistic, cultural, religious or otherwise. Erasing the banal reality of Muslims having everyday relations with Hindus and people of other faiths, media across the board depict such young Muslims interacting only with other Muslims who visit no place other than a mosque, madrasa or other Islamic places which 'radicalize' them (Ahmad 2017b; Sethi 2014).

Anthropology of nationalism or nationalism of anthropology?

Following Bourdieu's (2003) call 'to objectivize those who ordinarily objectivize', the illustration of three catalogues of Indian anthropology is a call to anthropologize the nationalism of anthropology supposed to anthropologize the nation-state (cf. Boyer and Lomnitz 2005). If anthropological-sociological works I discussed speak in unison vis-à-vis Islam it is because they share the premise of nationalism with Hinduism as its core. 'Muslim difference' has been a key theme of Indian nationalism (Ahmad 2019; Mufti 2007; Naqvi 2016) as well as of anthropology-sociology. Clearly, not all sociologists share the nationalist ideology identically; some indeed do not belong formally to a specific school. Indeed, there are diverse schools of thoughts – Bombay, Lucknow, Calcutta, and perhaps Delhi. But beneath them all lies a thread of Muslims as other. From within the framework of this essay, these differences thus exemplify *heterogeneous singularity* of the nation; ergo, of anthropology.

To argue about anthropology's confluence with nationalism, it is important to return to Ghurye. For Ghurye, Islam did not exist, or if it did, it existed as a foreign entity polluting the Hindu nation. Ghurye's trilogy *Social Tensions in India* (1968), *Whither India* (1974), and *India Recreates Democracy* (1978) represent this position more explicitly (Upadhya 2007). He shaped sociology at Bombay where, in 1951, he founded *Indian Sociological Society* (ISS) and was its President for 15 years. He launched and until 1966 edited *Sociological Bulletin* where he published whatever he liked. He supervised 80 PhDs. During 1950s – 1960s there was no department whose head was not his disciple (Upadhya 2007). In the first Presidential address to All-India Sociological Conference, (in 1966, it merged with ISS), Dhurjati Prasad nationalized sociology as follows:

> … it is not enough for the Indian sociologist to be a sociologist. He must be an Indian first, that is, he is to share the folkways, mores, customs and traditions, for the purpose of understanding his social system and what lies beneath it and beyond it. (in Mukherjee 1976, 90)

Dhurjati Prasad held that Ghurye was the 'only Indian sociologist today'; others were mere sociologists *in* India (in Madan 1996, 400). Ghurye's *Social Tensions in India* discussed the 1962 India-China War in the wake of which a Defense Fund was created. To Ghurye, the Fund was 'a better index of the extent of [Muslims'] integration in the country'. Counting the religion of institutions which donated to the Fund and noting that 'Aligarh Muslim University didn't figure in the list of donors', he wrote: 'I have reason to conclude that the response … was very poor among Muslim … institutions and students' (1968, 528, 529). Leaving aside that Hindus contributing to the Fund figured more in media in no

way meant that every Hindu contributed to it, Ghurye's religious cataloging of donations amounts to subjecting Muslims to write exams of national loyalty. Ghaus Ansari I discussed earlier left India to lead an anthropological career in the UK, Austria and the Middle East. In his autobiography, he writes how the Indian embassy in London (in 1950s) fired him from his temporary clerk position on the allegation of supplying information to Pakistan and the USSR. While teaching anthropology in Baghdad in 1960s, Indian diplomats warned him that if he stopped help gather soft intelligence (which he did without knowing it), he would be marked as signing loyalty to Pakistan – i.e. treason against India (Ansari 2004, 34–36, 161-163).

The otherness of Islam in Indian sociology this essay has critically broached resonates with otherness of Jews in German anthropology. It is the cohabitation of nationalism and anthropology – now covert, now overt – that presides over the othering of the respective collectivity or community and its traditions. This cohabitation informs the discipline's trajectories across the continents. In her study of the formation of the USSR, historian Francine Hirsch richly documents the interface between ethnographic knowledge and the Bolsheviks. The interface was evident in the census, government commissions, delimiting of the internal borders, exhibitions about 'peoples' of the USSR and more. 'Ethnographers and other experts', writes Hirsch, played an 'active role in the process of Soviet state formation', including during Stalin's reign of terror. She concludes that ethnographers as experts 'helped subordinate the population to Soviet power and brought about the complete Sovietization of their discipline' (Hirsch 2005, 308). Based on a historical inquiry into the development of anthropology in Mexico from the nineteenth century to the present, historian-anthropologist Lomnitz comes to a conclusion similar to Hirsch's. Describing Mexican anthropology as a 'national anthropology', he observes how it 'contributed to the formation and presentation of a convincing national teleology' (Lomnitz 2000, 348, 374). Thus, it is unsurprising that there are 'national anthropologies', 'little nations' in their own right (Hauschild 1997, 746). In German anthropology an important debate has been about *volkskunde* and *volkerkunde*. Whereas *Volkskunde* was the study of 'us' Germans, *volkerkunde* studied exotic other outside (Gingrich 2005). The non-European 'savages' formed one catalogue of otherness; Jews did another. Neither *volkskunde* nor *volkerkunde* could, however, claim Jews as a subject of study. 'As an object of anthropological study, the … Jewish tradition was neither *volkskunde* … nor *volkerkund*, it was thus relegated to a little academic "ghetto of spirits"' (Hauschild 1997, 748).[14]

An analogous process is at work in Indian anthropology vis-à-vis Muslims. In their manifesto-like formulation, Dumont and Pocock (1957, 9) postulated that 'a Sociology of India lies at the point of confluence of Sociology and Indology'. The word Indology is crucial here. Older than anthropology or sociology, Indology as a discipline and integral to the colonial episteme emerged precisely to efface 'Hindustan' as a dynamic, inclusive, multi-cultural idea and instead institute 'India' as coterminous with and excusive to Hinduism, itself largely a colonial construct. Indology thus became preoccupied with 'Sanskrit texts (and thus with Vedic cosmologies)' (Asif 2020, 33) and 'Hindu civilization' (van der Veer 1994b, 251). Not surprisingly, Dumont's (1970) treatment of Islam in his sociology of India is at best peripheral subsuming as it does Muslims within the assimilationist Indological frame. Of course, Indology later underwent many changes as it got reconfigured as area studies, South Asian studies and globalization studies (Houben 2008). However, invisibilization and externalization of Islam and Muslims, as this essay shows, did not. In this

context, the observation of anthropologist Peter van der Veer (2008, 385), previously trained as an Indologist, that 'students of Indian Islam almost form a separate community … reflecting the separateness of the community they study, almost implicitly acknowledging that Muslims don't 'belong' to India', therefore, becomes so apt and profound. Though phrased differently, in spirit his remark approximates Hauschild's description of German anthropology's treatment of Jews as a little academic ghetto of spirits.

I graduated reading many works I discussed in this essay. [15] It is a lesson in how anthropology as a discipline disciplines thoughts and practices. There was a radical dissonance between what I learned during my years as a student in an Urdu *maktab* and madrasa, what my parents, family and community taught about Islam, India and the world on the one hand and what anthropology taught me on the other. In the latter many like myself appeared as an object of abject othering and mass simplification subservient to a state-nation summoning Muslims to be part of it while constitutively setting them apart from it. In contrast, for students from the community nationalism took as its core there was a kissing consonance between perspectives imparted at home and those in colleges/universities. Soon after his election as Prime Minister in 2014, Narendra Modi articulated in Parliament what Bose (Calcutta School), Ghurye and Karve (Bombay School), Radhakamal and Dhurjati Prasad Mukerjees (Lucknow School), Yogendra Singh (JNU) and Srinivas (Delhi School of Economics) and various others had already done in sociology/anthropology long ago. Modi spoke of '1, 200 years of slave mentality'. To Modi, Muslims as foreigners had enslaved India for twelve centuries (FirstPost 2014). In parenthesis, it is instructive to note that while most Indians sweetly accept chilly which came to India from South America as truly Indian, they bitterly regard as outsiders the existence and lives of Muslims most of whom are actually as indigenous as most Hindus claim to be.

Conclusion: bringing human in

The fundamental aim of this essay has been to demonstrate historical as well as contemporary affinity between the practices, concepts and assumptions of the discipline of anthropology and Indian/Hindu nationalism as a cultural-political project. To this end, I focused on the subject of Islam and Muslims in Indian anthropology-sociology. In documenting the affinity between anthropology and nationalism, this essay departs from a dominant trend in anthropology scholarship, which underlines the imbrication of intellectuals and their knowledge with nationalism but exempts, oddly enough, anthropology form this very imbrication. In their outline of 'the anthropology of nations and nationalism', Boyer and Lomnitz (2005) discuss how intellectuals and the social formation of knowledge are constituted by and constitute nationalism within as well as outside the state. However, they refrain from extending this important insight to the discipline of anthropology and its intellectuals. That is, anthropology *of* nationalism of this sort tends to disregard anthropology *within* nationalism as well as nationalism *within* anthropology. In many important ways, the rejoinder by Veena Das (1984) to Francis Robinson (1983), discussed earlier, exemplifies this approach.

Das correctly marks the similarity in constructing 'their basic system of opposition' beneath the apparently divergent positions between Robinson and Imtiaz Ahmed who respectively stress textual, normative Islam and folk practices of ordinary Muslims, 'syncretism'. Against the dichotomy between elite theology (Robinson) and folk syncretism

(Ahmed), Das (1984, 294, 297, 296) offers the alternative of 'folk theology'. Fine! What, however, is the terrain on which this folk theology operates? It is ultimately the nation-state, the substitute term of which, for Das, is 'Indian society' . As elucidated in the argument section of this article, methodological nationalism takes nation-state and society as synonyms. This is evident throughout Das' rejoinder. For instance, like his Orientalist rendition of sharia as 'holy law', she does not find it problematic that Robinson (1983, 201, 186) describes Muslim politics as 'separatist'. Before my point is taken as trivial oversight by Das, let me stress that in the vocabulary of Indian nationalism 'separatism' is a loaded term to stigmatize any autonomous Muslim political initiative while assuming politics by Hindus as pertaining to their innate 'nationalism' (Jalal 1997; Pandey 1999), which in turn is deemed as benevolent. This grammar of nationalism is further manifest in Das' exposition of folk theology as syncretism, which she takes as self-evident rather than critically examine it.

Drawing on Peter van der Veer, Viswathan offers a genealogy of syncretism in modern European political and religious thought and applies it to India to show how it is 'constitutive of the will to [Hindu] nationhood'. This specific notion, not the generic meaning of syncretism, is in full play in Das' prose. Consider the only examples Das (1984, 296), offers: 'the use of Hindu symbols … in *sufiana* [Sufi] music and poetry … propagated a different way of approaching God than the enunciation of Islamic ideals in the writings and speeches of the *tabliki* [*sic*] *jamats* … ' and 'one cannot dismiss the engagement of medieval Muslim scholars with Hindu symbols … ' As these examples show, Das' syncretism is a one-way traffic to mark Hinduism's influence on Islam, not the other way round as syncretism semantically has it. This is similar to Ashis Nandy's (1988, 178) celebration of the 1911 census category of Muslims as 'Mohammedan Hindus'. Importantly, the dichotomy between elite and folk Das (1984, 296) aims to dislodge survives – nay, thrives – in her own exposition because she too reads the history of exegesis of the Qur'an as a 'tension' 'between the *ulama* and the *Sufi* saints' (cf. Asad 1986). Notably, the question with which she opens her essay – 'does a single, true Islam exist at all?' (Das 1984, 293) – is not extended to Hinduism whose 'symbols' are assumed to be singular and true. More telling is Das' response to Robinson's main thesis that anthropology of Islam characterized by syncretism and led by Imtiaz Ahmed (and some historians too) aims to prove 'that there is no reason why they [Muslims] cannot be good and loyal citizens of the Republic of India' (in Das 1984, 298). Das took Robinson's thesis as 'insinuation' because he connected anthropologists' ideas to the premise and goal of nationalism. Hence Das' reluctance to 'engage with an argument like this' that 'serve extra academic interests' (Das 1984, 299).

Against the approach like Das', which takes nationalism and anthropological knowledge as neatly disjointed, there is, however, another approach which reads them entwined. Herzfeld (1987) not only objects to the 'claims [that] nationalism bears no resemblance whatsoever to those of anthropological theory', he also underlines 'the difficulty of analytically separating the anthropological enterprise from its object of study [ethnicity and nationalism]' (1997, 310). Pursuing this path of inquiry, this essay has demonstrated multiple forms of conjunctions between anthropology and Indian nationalism as well as modalities of their operation. To this end, I elaborated the othering of Islam organized into three catalogues of silence, alienness and erasure. I discussed texts, figures, institutions, departments, centres, individuals, journals and how they bear the signature of nation. The multiple catalogues of othering documented in Indian

anthropology is not autonomous in that it draws on, as Asif (2020, 5, 32-33, 29, 12) dwells on in his critical book, on the 'colonial episteme', a violent outcome of which was equating of Hindustan with Muslims and of India with Hindus and Indology. This equation, moreover, rested on the premise of 'five thousand years' of India's/Hindus' timeless history with its Golden Age, which 'the Muslim invasion' destroyed to usher India into darkness. Consequently, the European colonial imagination designated Muslims 'always outside … in the Arab world, not in the subcontinent', or to use Das' words, 'original home'. While mindful of this colonial history that crucially shaped anthropological knowledge, it should be noted that history historians such as Jadunath Sarkar (who Asif discusses) wrote rested on a prior notion of Indian/Hindu society (cf. Ahmad 2022b).

This essay also advances a subsidiary hypothesis that there exists an affinity between the symbolic violence of anthropology/sociology vis-à-vis Islam and political violence against Muslims, often referred to as 'riots' (Ahmad 2022a).[16] An important factor behind these acts of anti-Muslim violence has been, as many works point out (Brass 2006; Eckert 2005; Engineer and Narang 2006), the biased role of the top police, civil, law professionals and other authorities. Chopra and Jha (2014) note that their biased roles in anti-Muslim violence are systemic, not episodic. While writing exams to become civil servants, most such authorities have read (see Note 11), as *Indians*, many sociology books I discuss here. The 2019 survey conducted by Common Cause and Lokniti – Centre for the Study Developing Societies indeed concluded that in the police force every second personnel believed that Muslims were 'naturally prone towards committing crime' (The Quint 2019).

Faced with this disciplinary power of anthropology-sociology, should one, then, strive to become Indian first and sociologist second as Dhurjati Prasad mandated. Perhaps there is another path: to resist becoming chained within and by the nation-state and strive to become a human first, an option that Dhurjati Prasad did not imagine. Poet Mirza Ghalib (d.1869) philosophized: 'Even man is not fated to become a human, *ādmī ko bẖī mayassar nahī insāñ hōnā*'. Ghalib's human I invoke should not be conflated with the Western Enlightenment's human (Ahmad 2017a). The Indian police recently described Ghalib's poetry as promoting terrorism and, therefore, as anti-national (DNA 2012). The absurdity of this description is too obvious to merit any further comment. From the perspective of this essay, Ghalib and his poems were certainly ant**e**-national (i.e. pre-national). Due precisely to this, they possibly offer signpost to humans to begin thinking beyond the violence constitutive of nationalism (Ahmad and van der Veer 2022) and which disciplinary formation like anthropology-sociology, as this essay has demonstrated, uncritically authorized and shaped.

So, to return to the dualism Dhurjati Prasad posed between being a sociologist first and an Indian first, we can soberly ask: who needs this dualistic choice between being a sociologist first and an Indian first? Moreover, who profits from this dualism?

Esteemed readers, let us work to fully realize our potential beyond such a dark dualism offered by nation-state or state-nation. Lift your beautiful eyes up to the vast blue sky and with calmness approximating the innocence in the prayer by a child, watch the stars – big and small, near and distant, dim and bright, lonely and constellated – and let your ecstasy and imagination travel unfettered beyond the borders: domestic, national, international or of any other type that is yet to come.

Coda

If responses to this essay from its presentation in conferences and seminars across continents (e.g. Australia, Germany, India, the USA) are any indicator, while some applauded its 'novelty' and 'boldness', most were often perturbed. A senior academic in the anthropology seminar at Australian National University asked: what about the treatment of Hindus in sociology in Pakistan or minorities in other Islamic nations? Another participant remarked: you should note that the same anthropology you 'accuse of' silencing Muslims offered this platform for your seminar. Readers and audience elsewhere responded differently. One took it as a 'dissenting' voice in Indian anthropology. Among those mostly sympathetic to my inquiry, some remarked that the argument was not as novel as it appeared. To such interlocuters, let me say that in social sciences any claim of absolute novelty is suspicious. Nothing 'new' emerges out of nowhere. The newness lies not in the sense of 'brand new' used in advertising; it lies instead in weaving together things and ideas, which stand or appear separated, unamplified or silenced and putting them in a frame proper to the phenomena the argument stems from as well as it illustrates to signal potentiality for comparative investigation. I am aware that others have differently touched on some aspects of the broader theme this essay elucidates (e.g. Oommen 1986; Osella and Osella 2008). More recent scholarship, only some of which I can mention here (e.g. Ibrahim 2020; Menon 2015; Taneja 2017), evidently does not follow the dominant trend I critique. However, to the best of my knowledge, there is hardly any writing, including the ones just mentioned, that frontally addresses the issues of nationalism, anthropological knowledge and place of Islam and Muslims in Indian anthropology from the framework, data and method the essay is built on. For instance, none pursues, even remotely, the alternative genealogy of sociology I present here. The salience and novelty of an argument, I want to stress, lies not only in its content but also where it comes from, which sources it employs, how it is conducted and what horizon of research it opens up for further inquiry.

Notes

1. Hindu children and ascetics are not burnt (Das 1976, 255) as are Hindus meeting "bad death," e.g. those killed in accidents. Imperfect body like that of a leper is immersed in the Ganges (Parry 1994, 163). Sri Lanka's Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam buried their fighters.
2. In West, anthropology's distinction lay in studying "primitive", "savage" or "simple" societies (Kuper 1983) and sociology's in what Durkheim (1982, 209) called "the great civilized societies of the West." Indian anthropologist disavowed that distinction, arguing that diversity of India included forms of life from nomadism to modern towns (Beteille 2002). Veena Das-edited volume was thus titled *The Oxford Indian Companion to Sociology and Social Anthropology* (2003). This position, however, assumes a monolithic West. Thus, in Europe, the US and Australia, modes of lives of the white settlers, aboriginals, Roma Gypsies and slaves were no less diverse than what Srinivas, Shah and Ramaswamy (1979, 1) claimed about India.
3. Unlike its eighteenth century use connoting, as Williams (1983, 58) noted, modernity with the "spirit of the Enlightenment, with its emphasis on secular and progressive human self-development," for Hindu nationalists and anthropologist alike, the golden Indian civilization flourished only in ancient times, well before the "Muslim" era. To anthropologist Singer (1955, 23, 34–35), India was an "indigenous", "total" civilization marked by "cultural continuity" and "essential similarities of mental outlook" transmitted by Brahmins through Hindu scriptures and sacred centers. In Singer's conceptualization, there was no Islamic or non-Hindu

traditions. Nearly all influential sociologists, including Ghurye, Srinivas, McKim Marriott and others (see Mukerjee 1958; Singh 1986) shared Singer's rendition of civilization.

4. For an anthropological account of Hinduisation of Dalits, with Muslims as *the* other, see Narayan (2009). Also, see Guru (1991) and *Dalit Voice* (2002).
5. As there are three Mukerjees here – Radhakamal, Dhurjati Prasad and Ramkrishna – I use their first names to ward off confusions.
6. During the 2009 American Anthropological Conference in Philadelphia, one afternoon I was having coffee in the almost empty cafe on the ground level. A middle-aged person repeatedly smiled and waved at me from a distance. Embarrassed when I responded, he came to me to ask what my profession was. Knowing that I was an anthropologist, he told me that he needed "smart, intelligent" people like me in Afghanistan. My economic condition, he promised, would improve. He gave me his business card with association to the US army.
7. Writing about anthropology in Europe, Hann (2005, viii) notes how it has been "deeply marked" by "nationalism". Even when Marxist theories influenced national anthropologies, he avers, "continuities [with nationalism] remain substantial".
8. A comparative study of how India's double Partition (Mufti 2007) shaped sociology in the subcontinent is awaited.
9. The three volumes commissioned by Indian Council of Social Science Research to survey researches and developments in Indian sociology from 2003 to 2010 (see Singh 2014) fall under the catalogue of silence for none of them have a specific chapter on Muslims. Sociological works verily take Muslims as a statistical entity. That they represent traditions irreducible to "national culture" and "national security" is seldom theorized (Ahmad 2017a). The ICSSR volumes did not even mention author's monograph (Ahmad 2009), one of the few anthropological works on Muslims published within the ICSSR time frame. Nor did *Sociological Bulletin*, journal of the *Indian Sociological Society* publish its review. I mention these facts qua facts.
10. Called "Christ of the Indian Renaissance" and "the first Indian liberal", Rammohun Roy (1772–1833) viewed the English not as "conquerors, but … as deliverers" from Muslim rule (in Dhar 1987). Contemporary liberals like Amartya Sen too see no problem in Roy's liberalism (Ahmad 2017a).
11. To ascertain the impact of books by sociologists like Singh on the public life, some data are in order. Singh's *Modernization of Indian Tradition*, Dube's *Indian Society*, Srinivas' *Social Change* are all translated into Hindi and read by thousands of students who prepare for the civil service exams at federal and provincial levels. At Jawahar bookshop in Delhi alone, every year at least 1,000 copies of these three books are sold (excluding their photocopies). Around 300 copies of Madan's *Religion in India* (see below) are annually sold. This note is based on interview (in February 2011) with the owner, Jawahar, of Jawahar bookshop, established in 1969, at JNU.
12. In her 2004 account of Indian anthropology, Das (2004, 33) simply mentioned this debate without connecting it to the present. This non-connection was, to say the least, puzzling for the Global War on Terror had made knowledge about Muslims both globally and nationally pivotal (Ahmad 2013b).
13. Due to word constrain, I cannot discuss other works on Muslims such as by Mayaram (1997) and Mehta (1997). They also do not add to this essay's argument. Under the banner of "liminality", Mayaram too effaces the Muslim difference.
14. Here I do not include Binoy Kumar Sarkar's (1914) *The Positive Background of Hindu Sociology,* as it does not figure in mainstream accounts of sociology's history. Historian Zachariah (2015, 651) recently noted Sarkar's connection with European fascism.
15. A minor exception to the orientation of Indian sociology is Oommen (1996; 1986).
16. With remarkable consistency, Das' (1985, 1990, 1995) multiple writings over time describes the 1984 anti-Sikh political violence as "riot", not "pogrom" or "massacre".

Acknowledgements

I presented earlier versions of this article, in the making for over a decade, at a number of places: workshop titled 'Studying Spaces of Non-Existence: Methodological Concerns', Murdoch University, Perth, Australia (2010); the inaugural Australia-India Institute seminar, Melbourne (2010); Anthropology department seminar, Australian National University (2010); Anthropology Colloquium, Macquarie University, Sydney (2011); Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Gottingen, Germany (2011); Sociology department seminar, University of Hyderabad, India (2014) and American Anthropological Association Conference, San Jose (2018). I am thankful to Assa Doron (Australian National University), Chris Houston (Macquarie University), Vinod Jairath (University of Hyderabad), Barak Kalir (University of Amsterdam) and Peter van der Veer (Max Planck Institute, Gottingen) for the invitation. My utmost gratitude goes to the anonymous readers of *History and Anthropology* for their probing, constructive comments, as it extends to David Henig, the editor, for offering a set of valuable suggestions that have significantly enhanced the quality, style and structure of the article.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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