

119 | special guest contribution: is love without borders possible?

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abstract

This article focuses on 'Love Jihad,' the neologism that Hindutva, or Hindu Extremism, has invented to incite suspicion and violence against Indian Muslims. I begin with a brief discussion of several characteristics of the Hindutva organisational and ideological apparatus. Then I discuss anti-Love Jihad campaigns as a strategy to assert Hindu extremism in interpersonal relations. I go on to highlight specific episodes of 'Love Jihad' attacks by the Hindu Right that have targeted and made a political spectacle of love and marriage across community boundaries. I suggest that Love Jihad campaigns become a mode of producing docile, submissive subjects who will not question regimes of power, be it neoliberalism, religious majoritarianism or social hierarchies and injustice.

keywords

Hindutva; gender; India; communalism; moral policing

introduction

Hindutva¹ is a 92-year-old political formation which is calibrated by an apex organisation, the Rashtrya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). The RSS runs daily, biweekly and weekly training centres (*shakhas*) all across the country, imparting ideological and combat training lessons to millions, from mere infants to the elderly. It also runs the largest chain of non-governmental schools in the country (Sarkar, 2005; Bakaya, 2009). It hand-picks leaders for its electoral front (Bharatiya Janata Party or BJP) (Hansen and Jaffrelot, 1998) and for its ecclesiastical wing (Vishva Hindu Parishad or VHP) (Katju, 2003). A system of interlocking membership unifies the multifaceted combine, and most BJP and VHP leaders also belong to the RSS.² This includes Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has been a full-time RSS preacher, or *pracharak*, for much of his life. Hindutva aspires to electoral power as well as to social hegemony. It is a system that has persisted longer, and more continuously and pervasively, than other totalitarian counterparts.

The RSS has its own students' and teachers' organisations, as well as its women's wing. Its affiliates have spawned myriad sub-affiliates: trade unions, youth and women's organisations, charitable bodies, associations of religious leaders, networks of temples, cells in the army and media, cultural organisations, entertainment and leisure industries. Together, they bite deep into diverse social levels and into the everyday with formal organisations as well as with informal personal contacts in neighbourhoods, workplaces and kin groups: saturating each with hatred against religious minorities (Hansen and Jaffrelot, 1998; see also Jha, 2017). The women's wing of the RSS is particularly adept at disseminating propaganda—which they describe as interpreting daily news—in ordinary, daily conversations. Very similar work by women of the Ku Klux Klan in the US has been described as 'whispering campaigns of poison' (Blee, 1991, p. 16). Through a steady drip-drip-drip of 'information', rumours, reinterpretation of history and reshaping of memory, it prepares a committed support base that can launch into violent action, without any extra effort, at moments of aggression (Sarkar, 1999; Bacchetta, 2004; Dixit, 2013).

More than anything else, intercommunity violence makes community divisions inflexible. Periodic 'riots', therefore, are as important as daily training. Hindutva combines a creeping hegemonising process with spectacular aggression (Sarkar, 1999). Anti-Love Jihad campaigns help both projects: attacks on Muslims as well as segregating communities with deep mutual suspicion and ghettoising Muslim spaces.

I argue that the RSS builds on a firm foundation of Hindu societal common sense that predates and exceeds it. The combine gives an inchoate mass of beliefs, rumours and prejudices a precise and purposeful direction, a determined thrust. Its real power derives from the fact that it works along the grain of, rather than against, cherished social and moral norms.

There are, of course, alternative resources within Hindu religious understandings. But these lack cohesion and organisations to challenge Hindutva's Hinduism. Hindutva, in contrast, controls important Hindu religious authorities and networks. The VHP trains temple and domestic priests and organises associations of *sadhus* and *mohunts*: sectarian and monastic establishments and ascetics (Katju, 2003).

¹The word was used by V.D. Savarkar (1989 [1923]). The premier Hindu Extremist organisation, generally called the Sangh Parivar (RSS Family of Organisations), uses it as its self-designation.

²For more on the RSS combine, see, among others, Anderson and Damle (1987), Basu et al. (1993), Hansen (1999) and Jaffrelot (1999).

In sharp contrast to its organisational sprawl, depth, intricacy and innovativeness, the ideological apparatus of Hindutva is remarkably thin. Its fundamental tenets were laid out in 1923 by its ideological guru, V.D. Savarkar. Savarkar (1989 [1923]) argued that India is a Hindu nation in its cultural essence and all religions that have originated from outside its territorial boundaries—Islam and Christianity—are alien to it. India, he said, must be represented in terms of linguistic and religious majoritarianism: ‘Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan’ being his definition of our nationhood, embodying one language, one faith and one territory. Savarkar, moreover, compressed Indian history into a single-axis narrative: of non-stop Hindu resistance against Muslim invasions and tyranny.

M.S. Golwalkar (1939, p. 27) as second supremo of the RSS had a particular model in sight: ‘To keep up the purity of the nation and its culture, Germany shocked the world by her purging the country of the semitic races ... National pride at its highest has been manifested here’. For Golwalkar, the Nazi lesson for India was that ‘they [non-Hindus] may stay in the country wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges ... not even citizen’s rights’ (*ibid.* p. 27). In the last three years under BJP rule, we have come very close to his ideal.

The Sangh combine has never faced colonial repression, nor participated collectively in any phase of anti-colonial movements. Nor has it ever organised movements against social injustices of caste, class and gender.

The women’s wing, Rashtrasevika Samiti, was founded in 1936. It was set up after Lakshmibai Kelkar vainly pleaded with Golwalkar to admit women to RSS *shakhas* (Bacchetta, 1996). The RSS remains an adamantly all-male organisation. Golwalkar (1980) saw the Samiti as a site for training ideal mothers of the Hindu nation who would then pass on Sangh values—*sanskaras*—to infants. It was for Golwalkar an extension of domestic functions, albeit operating in a non-familial space. In practice, Samiti women are mothers with a difference; they are endowed with a militant—indeed, militaristic—ideological mission since, as Samiti activists and as mothers, they diligently fan hatred for non-Hindus (*ibid.*). The Samiti follows an identical schedule of ideological and combat training to that of the RSS and holds camps for married women as well as women who marry into RSS families from outside. It recruits members largely from RSS families and from a conservative, urban, middle-class and upper-caste social milieu (Tyagi, 2017).

These women, I have argued, certainly acquire a political space and a public identity for themselves, as well as recognition and a rare bargaining power at home, from their involvement with the RSS agenda (Sarkar, 1995). Personal empowerment notwithstanding, their social perspective remains profoundly conservative. They see Muslim polygamy as a source of power for Muslim men that is wrongly withheld from Hindu men (post-Independence reform of ‘Hindu personal law’³ abolished polygamy for Hindus though it is still covertly practised on a large scale). They argue that divorce is unacceptable and that domestic violence and discord are signs of a woman’s failure. They do not run shelters or counselling services for abused women, and rather than oppose the dowry system, they put together dowries for poorer family members (*ibid.*). They insist that the primary responsibilities of women are marriage and child-rearing.

³From the 1770s, the British in India segregated the ‘personal laws’ of Hindus and Muslims, laying it down that both would be governed according to the scriptures and customs of the two communities. They covered caste, belief, marriage, divorce, succession, dower, adoption and inheritance (See Sarkar, 2009).

Paradoxically, conservative domesticity folds smoothly into aggressive militancy. Women activists of the VHP train young girls in the use of guns, but they also tell them that they should marry at sixteen, bring up at least ten children each and accept the discipline imposed by fathers and husbands willingly.⁴ At the same time, the BJP counts a number of women politicians at the highest levels: the current defence minister, for instance, or the chief minister of Rajasthan. The VHP has prominent *sadhvis* (female ascetics) in leading roles who have helped a great deal in stoking violence against Muslims (Sarkar, 2001).

During the 2014 national elections, Prime Minister Modi's campaigns provided Hindutva with an ideological double. But the real face of the new Modi-led BJP is 'Hindutva-modern', because it promises to liberally open up India's land, livelihood, labour force and environment to multinational/transnational corporate investments. Modi's neoliberalism somehow insulates his image from violent intolerance, notwithstanding the Gujarat massacres of Muslims in 2002 when he was chief minister of Gujarat (Sarkar, 2002; International Initiative for Justice, 2003) and despite repeated attacks on minority lives under his premiership.

Whether archaic or modern, Hindutva's perspective on gender remains unchanged. BJP has opposed criminalisation of marital rape on the ground that it would destroy the family (Nair, 2017). So, while love is repressed in one case, force is legalised in another.

Hindutva and neoliberalism have this in common: both offer benign names to operations that are profoundly aggressive and unjust. If brutal dispossession of the poor becomes 'reform' and 'development', forced conversions are called 'homecomings'. And intercommunity love gets renamed as 'Love Jihad' or 'Romeo Jihad'—the latter coined by Yogi Adityanath, a Hindu-sect leader with a reputation for violent anti-Muslim politics and recently made Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh (UP) in a remarkable contravention of secular principles to which India still formally adheres (Verma, 2017). Romeo, icon of doomed, tragic love, is translated as terrorist and rapist, as we shall see.

love in the time of Hindutva

A fundamental tenet of Hindutva is that Hindus and Muslims are inherently different and do not share a common humanity. Love, even friendship, between them is unnatural. When couples defy this interdiction, Hindutva translates love as war by other means. It is true that conservatives from all Indian communities oppose love across religious boundaries: indeed, they oppose love marriage in favour of marriages arranged strictly by families. But what is new under Modi's regime is a concentrated focus on intercommunity love and marriages that are renamed as Jihad: the Islamic term for holy war.⁵ What is also new is the coming together of state police, family controls and Hindutva organisations to destroy such love. Anti-Love Jihad campaigns are accompanied with public attacks on courting couples, especially during Valentine's Day celebrations, by VHP activists, men and women (*The World Before Her*, 2012). Recently, so-called 'anti-Romeo' brigades have been formed to capture and humiliate couples in

⁴This has been documented in the film *The World Before Her* (2012).

⁵This overlooks the fact that Islam mentions two kinds of Jihad: one, a war against its enemies, which is the lower kind, and the higher one which is always fought against anti-Islamic elements amongst Muslims.

public places. Attackers are Hindutva men and women—in one case, a BJP Member of Parliament slapped a woman in public. Love outside marriage is generally becoming more and more difficult to practise, although it has always faced difficulties.⁶

Love Jihad refers to love between a Hindu woman and a Muslim man which, as a transgression of communal boundaries, is alleged to be a conspiracy to convert Hindu women. Since the 1970s, much violence against Muslim youths and their families has been organised under this banner, especially in Kerala and Mangalore (Yasser Arafath, 2014). It is not merely at the community level where transgressions of communal boundaries are policed. Authorities across different parties are also known to step in to give communal opposition to intercommunity marriage an official status. Let me cite an early instance from Delhi (Alam, 2014). In 1970, Javeed Alam and Jayanti Guha, a Muslim college teacher and a Hindu research scholar, married under the civil marriage act (*Special Marriage Act, 1954*, 1954), and both families warmly welcomed the match. But the principal of the Delhi college where Alam taught sacked him on grounds of abduction, and Hindutva posters shrieked all over Delhi, 'Where is Jayanti?', alleging abduction and forced conversion to Islam. Rumours vitiated Delhi even after Guha's father wrote to the entire national media denying the charges. A supportive vice chancellor of Delhi University and the teachers' union protested against the principal's conduct, and finally Alam's dismissal was countermanded. But allegations of coercion stuck irrevocably to the Muslim man (*ibid.*). All ingredients of what would later be called 'Love Jihad' are already in place in this early instance.

Another example of institutions projecting and policing the communal Love Jihad agenda can be taken from an interview with B.L. Sharma, a Delhi VHP leader, who told us in 1990 that their men routinely scour registry offices to scan marriage notices that have to be put up in advance.⁷ If they find an announcement of an intercommunity marriage, they ask the parents whether they know and approve of it. If they do not, they try to block such marriages and, if they do approve, they try to dissuade them: the rationale being that such marriages are a prelude to, and a pretext for, conversion to Islam and for sexual annexation and exploitation of Hindu womanhood. In fact, Muslim masculinity and rape are practically synonymous in Hindutva discourses. Sharma went into a long and repulsively graphic account of Muslim lust from which Hindu female purity must be saved at all costs.⁸ A Samiti leader stated in 1999: that Muslims have raped Hindus and therefore Hindus must rape Muslims (Sarkar, 1999). In the same sentence, the Hindu subject becomes the raped as well as the rapist: occupying a doubled sexual identity.

Anti-Love Jihad campaigns later shifted to North India, especially to Uttar Pradesh, a very large state that is key to Indian politics and which was, until very recently, ruled by a non-BJP regional party (Bhatnagar, 2015). The campaigns are a part of a larger package of pretexts for violence, where each issue reinforces all others and creates the perpetual ground for perpetual violence against Muslims—and sometimes against Dalits or untouchable castes. Anti-Love Jihad episodes in UP overlapped with mob lynching of Dalits and of Muslims who had allegedly slaughtered cows, sacred to caste Hindus (Citizens

⁶See *The Indian Express*, Delhi edition, issues from 7 to 14 September 2017.

⁷Between 1990 and 1993, I, along with Sumit Sarkar, Tapan Basu, Sambudha Sen and P.K. Datta, investigated various institutions and leaders of the Hindutva combine in North India. We also enquired into two riots. The findings were published in Basu, *et al.*'s, *Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags: A Critique of the Hindu Right* (1993). Later, I continued to research Delhi-based women's organisations between 1990 and 2000. The references to conversations in this article come from those interviews.

⁸See interview with B.L. Sharma Prem conducted in Delhi, March 1990 in the chapter 'The VHP: organising mass communalism' in Basu *et al.* (1993, pp. 56–111).

Against Hate Report, 2017). They, moreover, smoothly slide into longstanding allegations of forced conversion to Islam and Christianity, for reasons which will be discussed later. While cow vigilantes aggravate the vulnerability of Muslims and Dalits, Hindutva campaigns against Love Jihad and conversions share a common logic, as I will soon discuss.

The BJP eventually collected a spectacular electoral harvest from the package. Remarkably, intercommunity marriage, conversion nor cow slaughter is *per se* illegal or unconstitutional—the last being so only in a few states and under specific conditions (Sarkar and Sarkar, 2016). The larger purpose, for all such episodes, was to demonstrate that Hindutva mob rule is allowed to countermand the laws of the land.

'Love Jihad' incidents became abundant and massively publicised between 2012 and 2015 (Bhatnagar, 2015). Hindutva women formed the Women from India Against Love Jihad, and the media loudly reported all cases of intercommunity romance as episodes of rape, abduction and forced conversion of Hindu women (see, for example, the Meerut case reported in Koshy, 2015). Reports were embellished with garish visual illustrations of Hindu female vulnerability and Muslim male lust and ferocity. Yogi Adityanath said that these signified more than individual grossness among Muslims: these were nothing less than an 'international conspiracy' (Koshy, 2015). The notion of a conspiracy is implicit in the Love Jihad narrative. Neighbouring Pakistan is commonly cited as a training ground of Muslim youths in the art of seduction: to pretend to love innocent Hindu women, elope with and marry them, at which point they are then converted to Islam. There is also a parallel narrative, wherein women are abducted and forced to marry and convert. Either way, after marriage, the woman is forced to bear Muslim children and to provide slave labour to the entire family as well as sexual services to male relatives of her husband. She is then supposedly trafficked to Muslim countries.⁹

So we have a dual beginning, in either fake love or in force. Both are projected as typical elements of the Muslim male personality: indicating sly manipulation of trusting Hindu sentiments on the one hand, and ruthlessness and cruelty on the other. Lust for Hindu womanhood and ingrained terroristic traits are blended together and both are routinely traced back to histories of Muslim conquests of Hindu dynasties in medieval times. Savarkar had attributed these conquests not so much to the desire for territories that typify all empires, but to a more specific Muslim desire for possessing Hindu female bodies: transposing the imperial onto a sexual register (Agarwal, 1995).¹⁰

In an interview conducted in 2015, a VHP activist said that they have narrated these accounts at great length at various schools in Bhopal, the capital city of Madhya Pradesh and currently ruled by the BJP.¹¹ When the principal of a Christian convent school objected, the entire local VHP was mobilised to blockade the school and she was forced to allow them in to address the students. Hindu girls were told to avoid even friendship with Muslim girls, lest they be lured into the family.

Let me briefly dwell on a couple of typical Love Jihad cases to underline certain generic features. In a highly publicised and sensationalised incident on 12 September 2014, a Hindu woman eloped with a Muslim man from a UP village, and the father alleged abduction. The Allahabad High Court, however,

⁹VHP activist, interview conducted by Angshu Saluja, Bhopal, December 2015.

¹⁰See also Blee (1991) for a similar racist stereotyping of African American masculinity by women of the Klu Klux Klan.

¹¹VHP activist, interview conducted by Angshu Saluja, Bhopal, December 2015.

endorsed their decision as a consensual one. But after they returned home, the woman's father threatened to kill her and forced her to file a First Information Report (FIR) at the police station that alleged rape, abduction and forced conversion. The case dragged on while the media was flooded with grisly horror stories of her fate in the Muslim household. The man was arrested and his family was harassed. But in October, the woman appeared in court, retracted her allegations and said that they were made under parental duress (Dixit, 2014).

A similar case was reported from Mainpuri district, UP. Muhammad Reyaz and Priya Gupta eloped; the village council met and decided to call it abduction; a police case was filed; and tensions ran high. Again, the woman deposed in court that the allegations were false. By then, however, Muslims had been attacked and their houses burnt (Suresh, 2016).

I personally knew of a 16-year-old Hindu girl who had a relationship with a local Muslim man.¹² At one point, the man wanted to break off the relationship. Outraged, she went to the local VHP don and complained of betrayal. They immediately took her to the police, and, in front of policemen, they held her hand and forced her into writing a story of rape despite her protests. Since she was under the statutory age of consent of 18 years and the police found evidence of sexual cohabitation, her later anguished plea that sex was consensual was useless and the man was arrested for rape. With her family's support, and with extraordinary strength of mind, she then withstood VHP and police pressure and claimed that her sexual connections had not been with the Muslim man but with a Hindu one who has now vanished from sight. The complicated legal fiction led to the release of the man on bail, but, in the meantime, social ostracism was total, his family was under tremendous pressure, and he was forced to leave his job and the neighbourhood.¹³

The stories share some common elements, though there are significant individual variations as well. Most often, families of the woman and the police join hands with VHP activists in fabricating a case of rape. There is tremendous pressure on the woman to file a rape and abduction charge. If the couple elopes, she is brought back and often made to stay with her parents while the case drags on. Parents then redouble intimidation to force the woman to repeat the story of rape in court. However, quite often, love wins and she retracts her report. A great deal, then, depends on how the courts deal with the cases.

Adding a relatively recent twist to the plot, in May 2017, Hadiya, a Hindu woman, converted to Islam and married a Muslim. The father complained, Hindutva outfits moved into action, but her decision stayed firm. The case went through the National Investigation Agency and the Kerala High Court, which ruled to annul the marriage and conversion and returned Hadiya to her parents. Her husband filed an appeal with the Supreme Court, which countermanded the ruling since Hadiya was an adult at 24 years of age. The appeal also said that investigations should be carried out to establish if there is a pattern of international conspiracy behind such actions (Ananthakrishnan, 2017). Clearly, allegations by an extremist outfit have now acquired resonance at the highest judicial levels.

Even when families approve of a romance, there is already an overarching conspiracy theory in place that forces the narrative back to its predestined route. Muslim men are portrayed as generically lustful, the

¹²This happened in a South Delhi slum in 2014. I will not disclose the girl's identity for reasons of her personal security.

¹³I came across this case through personal connections. The case is still pending, and out of consideration for the safety of the woman and the man, the names are not mentioned.

lust being deliberately directed at Hindu women. Second, Hindu young women, in their innocence, are often portrayed as being dazzled by their guile and charm. Third, it is alleged that Pakistan masterminds intercommunity love affairs with training that imparts seduction skills to Muslim men. Entire families are complicit in the conspiracy and unite in forced conversion and marriage, in brutal conduct and in trafficking: erasing, thereby, all boundaries between Indian Muslim men and families and global Islamic terror. It is interesting that the supposedly superior charm and attraction of the Muslim man are implicitly acknowledged in the subtext, perhaps indicating an anxiety about an imagined surplus of those qualities in Muslim men and their deficit among Hindus.

The real purpose of Muslim male love, then, is to turn Hindus into Muslims. First, by converting her, then by filling her womb with Muslim progeny. The Hindu numerical majority in India is thereby undermined, and India is fast turning into a Muslim majority country: easy prey to terrorists and Pakistanis who, too, are synonymous. One VHP activist from Bhopal bemoaned that Hindu men cannot counterattack in the same way as they find Muslim women unclean and disgusting.¹⁴

Significantly, such reinterpretation of love does not apply when a Muslim woman marries a Hindu man. Demographic calculations get reversed in such cases, and the trope of the wily Muslim man with his voracious sexual appetite finds no purchase in the image of the Hindu man who has won a Muslim woman. Demographic anxieties are, moreover, constantly stoked by a bizarre arithmetic which is widely disseminated and absorbed. Each Muslim man apparently marries four wives, they say, as polygamy is allowed under 'Muslim personal law'.¹⁵ Each Muslim man then breeds at least twenty children at a time, whereas Hindus, condemned to monogamy, produce far fewer numbers. The arithmetic overlooks the fact that whether four women are impregnated by four different men or by one man, each will bear only one child at a time; therefore, neither monogamy nor polygamy makes the least bit of difference to the number of children a woman can have.

Love Jihad propaganda has, however, even longer roots. Abduction tales patterned along identical lines have reigned in UP and Bengal since the 1920s (Gupta, 2014). They merged with narratives of forced or fraudulent conversions to Islam. In both cases, abducted women and their future children, along with converted Hindus, add to Muslim or Christian numbers to undermine the Hindu majority.¹⁶ By alleging an imagined act of force in the conversion of Hindus, Hindutva justifies the blatant use of its own aggression to 'reconvert' Muslims and Christians.

Why is demographic competition so important? It originated in 1919 pre-Partition India, when colonial constitutional reforms opened up some space for elections to legislative bodies. Muslims were then a very much larger minority population, and they had been given separate electorates even earlier. In the early 1930s, B.R. Ambedkar, the great Dalit leader, demanded separate electorates for untouchable Dalit castes, which threatened to further impoverish the Hindu numerical majority. In post-Partition India, however, the old fears are continuously replayed and strengthened in a fundamentally changed situation, where Indian Muslims have been reduced to much smaller figures and to a condition of enormous political, social and economic vulnerability and insecurity. Now the intent is internal colonisation.

¹⁴VHP activist, interview conducted by Angshu Saluja, Bhopal, December 2015.

¹⁵See Footnote 3.

¹⁶VHP Chief Pravin Togadia commanded 'immediate conversion' of fifty lakhs (i.e. five million) of non-Hindus and to ensure that not a single non-Hindu is eventually left in India; see *The Indian Express* coverage in their 29 and 30 July 2015 issues. Reconversion drives target Christian tribals especially and have led to brutal massacres and displacements; on Orissa cases, see Chatterjee (2009).

Love Jihad as the policing of borders

Renaming love as Jihad is the subtle politics that transvalues the meanings and possibilities of desire. If the words are new, the idea has old and tenacious roots in sacred texts and in political history. Brahmanical scripture prescribes indissoluble, non-consensual infant marriages for women that become fixed and permanent for her even beyond the death of her husband: hence widows should not remarry. In the early twentieth century, therefore, Hindu anxiety about unproductive wombs of Hindu widows, and about the fertility of remarried Muslim ones, became acute, and numerical worries were transformed into myths of planned abduction of Hindu women. Since the 1920s, such rumours have often led to subcontinental violence (Datta, 1999).

During the Hindu-Muslim communal attacks that occurred before and during partition, rapes and abductions happened in equal numbers among Hindus and Muslims. Hindutva narratives carefully excise episodes of Hindu rapes and weave in memories of Muslim rapes—actual, manufactured or exaggerated—into a seamless story of one-sided sexual violence. There are, therefore, three temporal moments in the Hindutva reconstruction of public history: the time of Muslim dynasties in medieval India; the 1920s when communal violence became subcontinental in scale; and partition. When current Love Jihad stories are inserted into this history, all older ‘memories’ get reactivated.

Hindu marriage, moreover, is traditionally endogamous, and inter-caste marriages are as much an offence as intercommunity marriages are to social morality. In practice, marriages between Dalit and non-Dalit castes fetch horrifying penalties, and Dalit families also, sometimes punish love for non-Dalits.¹⁷ But a curious discursive difference separates inter-caste marriages from intercommunity ones. In Hindutva rhetoric, Hindus constitute an organic, indivisible unity, despite gross inequalities among castes (Savarkar, 1989 [1923]). So, actual practices of endogamy notwithstanding, inter-caste marriages cannot be publicly ostracised nor stigmatised by a negative naming. They can be, and indeed are, punished within the community and the family in a most atrocious manner, especially if a woman from a higher caste has a relationship with a Dalit man but also even when a friendship is suspected. But they do not generate political campaigns, which intercommunity marriages do.

The proscription of love beyond boundaries is not unique to Hindutva or to endogamous Hindus. When a Kochi café suspected as a site for intercommunity romances was attacked in Kerala in October 2014 by Hindutva mobs (Giril, 2014), several Muslim organisations also criticised relationships outside community borders. They ostracised public kissing, inspired by nationwide ‘Kiss of Love’ campaigns that opposed moral policing by the VHP. However, the orthodoxy of a political and numerical majority carries far greater weight and power in the body politic of the nation than that of a besieged minority community.

There are three constraints on love without parental sanction in Indian social conventions; they are against pre-marital love, against love marriages and against intercommunity love. The last is a part of the general structure of prohibitory norms and the worst case scenario. Love, therefore, is a potent political danger as well as a social one. The strength of undisciplined, unsanctioned mutual desire challenges the logic of rigorously policed borders between caste and caste, community and community. It beckons persons to disobey family and sacred prescriptions. The price, consequently, is always high. At a

¹⁷ A 19-year-old Dalit woman was stoned to death by her father and brother for going out with a man from another village in UP. Endogamy, therefore, may indicate narrower boundaries than castes (Ghosal, 2015).

workshop organised by the National Federation of Indian Women in Delhi in November 2014, many couples who married across community borders described the penalties they have faced and still face (see also Basu *et al.*, 1993, pp. 15–18). Even if their families now want reconciliation, village *panchayats* will not allow it. Some couples can briefly visit parental homes only under police protection. Many others have faced death by violence, even at the hands of their own families.

The discourse on Love Jihad, moreover, represents the Hindu woman as innocent and helpless, without a mind of her own, not able to differentiate between love and seduction; in other words, she is not capable of making her own choices. A perpetual child, she needs constant surveillance: by family and by community.

But it is not women alone who are subjects of totalitarian discipline. Forbidding intercommunity love is a very important first step towards preserving family controls over marriages and over the autonomy of young people in general, for men as well as for women. Unsanctioned love undermines parental controls over the future of children. From parents, we move on to caste and community norms that firmly imprison the person within ever-widening matrices of authority and stifle individual will, desire and decision-making.

In its broadest sense, therefore, Love Jihad campaigns derive their energy and legitimacy from an entrenched structure of sensibilities. They are a mode of making ideal citizens—both men and women—of Hindu *Rashtra* (Hindu nation state), of producing docile, submissive subjects who will not question regimes of power, be it parents and families, social norms, neoliberalism, religious majoritarianism or social hierarchies and injustice. Inequality, like charity, begins at home, among different generations and between genders, and hegemonic social injunctions are taught first in the intimate sphere from where it is carried into a person's relationship with broader social and state injunctions. The family is also the primary unit from which imagined nations are conjugated—as communities of affect but also as communities that are forever endangered by others. Nations are primarily structured by a sense of ineffable enmities. Savarkar (1989 [1923]) had said that nothing unifies a nation more than the presence of an external foe. So hatred of the imagined other becomes the mandatory way of loving one's faith and nation, while love-in-freedom becomes a threatening commodity.

Inter-caste and intercommunity civil marriages were legalised in India after a long and protracted struggle. Public opinion was so vehemently opposed to the concept that the law eventually restricted it to partners who would proclaim that they were not Hindus, Muslims or Christians: that is, love had to be traded off against religious identity in an implicit recognition that faith does not permit love across borders. In actual practice, it was more or less reserved for a small reformist sect of Brahmos alone (Mody, 2002). It was only after Independence that Ambedkar, as the first law minister of India, eradicated all restrictions within civil marriage, producing a most intense backlash from the Hindu Mahasabha, RSS and even some Congress politicians, as well as from large swathes of public opinion. The Love Jihad concept builds on a tenacious historical tradition.

When social power merges into state power, when the authority of family, community and faith is conjoined with the state apparatus, the absolutism of the mechanism knows no bounds. The function of love as a solvent of disciplinary structures, therefore, exceeds persons in love, and love becomes something more than itself.

acknowledgements

I am very grateful to the guest editors of this special issue, Navtej Purewal, Jennifer Ung Loh and Kalpana Wilson, for their generous support and extensive editorial help.

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<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41305-018-0120-0>