



## Survival of Violence: Violence of Survival

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Philia begins with the possibility of survival. Surviving—that is the other name of a mourning whose possibility is never to be awaited.—Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*.

### *Mr. & Mrs. Iyer*

A bus full of passengers makes its way through the hilly tracts of the southern part of India. As the bus makes its way through the hills, a riot breaks out somewhere on the route the bus is to follow. The bus is invaded by a group of Hindu fanatics. They are in search of Muslims. They undress one by one the male passengers of the bus, to find out who among them are Muslims. As they go about doing this, one passenger, presumably in a bid to save all the passengers of the bus cries out: *hum sab Hindu hain* (we are all Hindus). It is at this moment that a 'male passenger' (named Cohen) seated at the rear end of the bus interjects: *no... not all are Hindus... they are not Hindus*. And he points at an old couple seated in the left hand corner of the bus: *they are Muslims... they are not Hindus*. The old couple is dragged out of the bus, never to be seen again. When asked later why he did such a thing, the visibly dejected and crestfallen Cohen answers: *They would have caught me... I am a Jew... I do not have a foreskin. It was as though he was saying—I did not wish to do such a thing... but there was no way I could have saved my own life... my survival depended solely on the non-survival of the old Muslim couple. I would have to single them out as Muslims... I would have to hand them over to the Hindu fanatics if I were to prevent their examining my private anatomy.*

The above narration tries to follow somewhat faithfully a scene depicted in the film *Mr. & Mrs. Iyer*, directed by Aparna Sen. The film is the story of a certain Mrs. Iyer, a 'conservative' Hindu woman and a certain Jahangir Chaudhury, an 'enlightened' yet sensitive Muslim man—named—re-christened 'Mr. Iyer' by Mrs. Iyer herself in a bid to save his life, save him from being dragged similarly out

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of the bus and killed. Mrs. Iyer, along with her child and Jahangir Chaudhury happen to be co-travellers in the same bus. In the scene depicted above, they are seated side by side as they watch with bewilderment the dragging out of the old Muslim couple. A few minutes back, Mrs. Iyer had come to know that Jahangir Chaudhury was a Muslim. She had not taken too kindly to his being a Muslim.<sup>2</sup> The fact of her being a Hindu and his being a Muslim was about to produce a certain rift, a divide in their emerging association. But the overt violence on the old Muslim couple had perhaps redrawn boundaries once again. A few minutes back Mrs. Iyer and Jahangir Chaudhury were on opposite sides of the 'religious divide'—now they were both on the same side of another divide—the divide of those on the side of violence and those on the side of non-violence.

In the same scene as the fanatics are about to approach Jahangir Chaudhury, Mrs. Iyer, seated just beside him, places her child on his lap and cries out, as if to declare their common identity: *Mr. and Mrs. Iyer.*

This singular act of naming—naming in the reverse because in Hindu communities it is the man who (re)names the woman—the woman is made to take up the (sur)name of her husband after marriage—by a conservative Hindu woman ensures the survival (at least for the time being) of the Muslim man. I wish to sharply distinguish between Mrs. Iyer's and Cohen's approach to the question of survival. Cohen ensures his survival at the cost of the survival of two others while Mrs. Iyer ensures the survival of another—an other—by putting at risk her own survival. The very fact that Mrs. Iyer was lying to the Hindu fanatics could well have jeopardised her own survival had they come to know of the 'original' identity of Jahangir Chaudhury. This distinction between the two approaches is not to make a moral comment on one (here Cohen), but to bring up somewhat metaphorically the question of an ethics of survival. While one can never deny one's 'right to survive', one's 'right to live' (here Cohen's right to live), one could in one's self-survival still be unself-consciously sensitive (without being abrasively en-nobling) to the question of the other—to a certain ethics of survival—where one does not just ensure one's self-survival, where one does not just lay and pursue a claim to the right to one's own survival, but remains at the same time sensitive to the question of the simultaneous survival of the other.<sup>3</sup> In other words, one attaches, one links up one's own survival to the concomitant survival of another—survival of the other—something which Mrs. Iyer had done, with a certain risk-taking. This is important not just because our survival is sometimes too intimately and too substantively tied to the survival of the other, say the survival of the human species on the one hand, and the survival of nature on the other, but because this relates to a more general question of ethics: would the self survive, survive even metaphorically, to the exclusion of the other or would the self survive, in critical yet firm embrace with the other?

Trying to move (not altogether) beyond a simple rights paradigm, this work of writing tries to explore the question of survival also at a more ethical level. This is important because the question of violence is related in ways more than one to the question of survival, the 'simple' desire to live, Cohen's violence on the old Muslim couple is not borne out of the wish to be violent per se. In fact, he could well have been an extremely non-violent person, but is borne out of his 'simple' desire to live—a desire that cannot be put to question but that which somewhat paradoxically puts two others to death. Who can deny Cohen his right to live? At the same time, who can deny the right of the old Muslim couple to live? What if the right of one

appears to infringe upon the right of another? What resolutions can one expect within the rights paradigm, within a discourse of rights? Or, does one need to move beyond the question of rights and move instead to the question of an ethics of survival?

### Ethics of Surviving Selves

This is a writing on a possible ethics of survival, on the ethics of surviving selves, on life. This is also because the dead do not as a rule write.<sup>4</sup> They are written about. The dead do not 'know' their own death. Although only the dead may, yet, have an experience of death—a somewhat singular experience that is nearly inaccessible to all others—there is perhaps never enough time to 'know'<sup>5</sup> death. It is the living we who try to make sense of death. We write on death. We cheer, condemn, co-opt or cash in on death.

This is not much of a writing on death.

This is much less a writing.

It is more an act of mourning, or melancholia (Freud, 1957, 237-58), perhaps, in the most perpetual sense.

But then, how do we mourn the dead? How do we mourn the loss of the other? Mourning is both a Statist and a Brahminical affair. Keeping flags half-mast for seven days and then ritual service every year, year after year, which in actuality is perhaps an act of forgetting. We remain instead, in perpetual melancholia, in mourning that is forever suspended, deferred, that is never complete — the letter that never reaches its destination. The lost other remains encrypted within us. The other is not engulfed.

*Encryptment* ... not interiorisation.

The 'crypt' is perhaps an apt metaphor because the ego comes to contain and keep alive within itself the 'cadaver' of the other. Instead of the cadaver being consigned to a 'legal burial place' his or her memory is 'entombed in a fast and secure place . . . (through) the setting up within the ego of a closed-off space, a *crypt* . . . a kind of anti-introjection, comparable to the formation of a cocoon around the chrysalis'. In encryptment there is an enveloping within one's boundaries of an other that remains undigested.

This is much less a writing on death. It is more a writing on life,<sup>6</sup> on survival, on survivors who have put the other to death in order to secure their survival.<sup>7</sup> It is a writing on their perceived threat to survival and on the 'violence of their survival'. It also a writing on a possible 'ethics of survival'. It is a search for an ethics where the other is not cannibalised.

The cannibal survived by eating the other. His survival, his continued existence, was dependent upon the non-existence of the other.

We look instead for an ethics of survival where the desire of the 'self' to survive neither devours nor annihilates the other.

But that would also necessitate an engagement with the moment of the Hegelian 'trial by death' (Hegel 1998:114) and the resolution of the 'trial by death' in relations of lordship and bondage—in relations that are not explicitly coercive but hegemonic.

Our journey, our search for an ethics of survival, a search that remains crucial in our cherished escape from violence starts from Ahmedabad, passes through Auschwitz, passes through nineteenth century Bengali writings on the imagined extinction of the Hindu community, passes through Hindu masculine self-assertion in Suddhi and Sangathan movements, passes through Godse's assassination of Gandhi and arrives once again at Ahmedabad.

### Ahmedabad: meta-name of violence or metonym of violence or both...

... henceforth, growing old will not bring (them, the survivors) closer to death, but quite on the contrary carry (them) away from it. (Semprun 1998:15)

Somewhat without respite, without a break, breather, lull, relief or let up we move, move from one killing field to another, until we find ourselves engulfed, swallowed up by killing fields, swallowed up by the somewhat curious odour of killing fields—'sweetish, cloying, with a bitter and truly nauseating edge to it'—a haunting smell that somewhat tenaciously follows us. The slightest distraction of a memory brimful of trifles, of petty joys would be enough to summon the smell. 'Distraction from the shimmering opacity of life's offerings ... distraction from oneself, from the existence that inhabits and possesses us, stubbornly, obtusely: the obscure desire to go on living, to persevere in this obstinacy for whatever reason, or unreason. It would take only a single instance of distraction from oneself and the strange smell would always return ... at random, out of the blue, at point blank range' (Semprun 1998).

The smell from the killing fields... estuaries of death... from crematory ovens.

Killing fields, from insignificant ones to some more catastrophic ones, ones that take up Auschwitz-like proportions. Why name Auschwitz as the reference point any more? Ahmedabad may well be considered the more clandestine re-incarnation of Auschwitz. Ahmedabad, with 'Sabarmati', a worn out inspiration, perhaps, only a few miles away. Now they are light years apart. They lost each other the moment Godse fired the first shot from his gun. Ahmedabad now becomes the fitting reply of the harassed children of midnight to the Father—the Father who failed to protect his daughters at Noakhali. And Sabarmati flows, a solitary soul, head bowed, 'crimson to this day with the blood of dead deer'.

Our steps remain marked by two apparently contradictory moves. As a first move we zoom onto the killing field, onto the acts and facts of violence that Ahmedabad so cruelly symbolises. Unparalleled<sup>8</sup> in magnitude by all other forms of violence—as practically the most grotesque face of violence—Ahmedabad becomes the meta-name of all forms of violence. And then as a second and subsequent move, a somewhat paradoxical move, we, however impossible it may seem, try to move out of the particularity of the killing fields. We have to—because Ahmedabad is just one. Here Ahmedabad is nothing more than a metonym of all the violence that goes on around us. Reading Ahmedabad as a metonym, we try to move out, albeit for a

while, out of particular acts of violence, acts which are nevertheless gruesome, acts which are nevertheless to be condemned, to maybe a more robust reading of violence. We move, or at least try to move to a possible space where violence is conceptualised more as a pervasive phenomenon—hence the need of a more robust analysis—and less as simply the organised (i.e. pogrom-like) or mad (i.e. riot-like) act of individuals or groups of people. This is not to, in any way, trivialise, downplay, dilute, distort or distance ourselves (into the insulation of a theoretical cocoon) from the concrete pain and suffering that Ahmedabad was and still is.

Ahmedabad, therefore, for the span of this act of writing, or maybe, not even for the entire span of this writing is '(o)ne name for another, a part for the whole' (Derrida 1994). The historic violence of Ahmedabad is treated here as a metonymy. 'By diverse paths (condensation, displacement, expression or representation)' we try to decipher through the singularity that Ahmedabad is 'so many other kinds of violence going on in the world. At once part, cause, effect, example, what is happening there translates what takes place here, always here, wherever one is and wherever one looks, closest to home' (Derrida 1994). We take a close look at what takes place here, always here, wherever one is and wherever one looks. And we do this, we try to get near violence, get nearly at violence in order 'to get as far away as possible' (Theweleit 1987) from violence. Such an approach to violence necessitates, in turn, the abandoning of secure oppositions of Us and Them; where Us and Them represent the opposing arms of a binary. Instead, one needs to see how we and our selves... how we... ourselves... how the very secure and untouched repository of the Us remain implicated in violence.

Us/Them, Secular/Rioter, Human/Animal, Tolerant/Bigot, Sage/Savage, Modern/Feudal, Enlightened/Superstitious, Rational/Emotional, Scientific/Believer-Follower of Faith, Non-violent/Violent...

The binary of Us/Them operates through a maximising of the difference between the two arms of the binary; a certain absolute impenetrability of forms of 'self' and 'other'. The subsequent impulse at correcting this difference and this gap would be an erasure of difference through a hegemony of the secular and enlightened Us over Them, which in other words, is a homogenising impulse, a Statist impulse. An impulse at reducing all differences, all unassimilated 'others' to the logic of the One and the Same through law and legality—either the sameness of nationhood and or of citizenship.

Here the other is not (an)other—but is myself—the other is my self.

A more complicated understanding of the binaries Us/Them would entail an appreciation of the complicity of Us, even if implicit, in structures of violence closest to home. Maybe, not overt acts of violence. But complicity in the somewhat covert<sup>9</sup> flow of violence, the silent, almost surreptitious survival of violence, violence sustained in the 'rule of order', violence sustained in everyday life, which in other words, is the everyday life of violence—violence in family, home, workplace, school—violence in the individual, in peers, in groups—in communities, in institutions—in the state, judiciary, army—violence in our very survival. A certain imperialism of violence—violence that colonises—violence that is associated inalienably in the order of things, in governmentality, in operations of power—power that produces.

Violence... that is there within us.

Violence... we desire, somewhat unconsciously... which gives violence its unconscious psychic life. Violence that is considered legitimate—violence of the state, the police, the army, the judiciary over the errant, the deviant; legitimate violence of colonialism—of the sponsored development of the 'third world'. Violence that is considered necessary—violence of the party, the mass organisation getting out at the 'others', at the 'deviation' of the others; a certain liquidation of opposition—of dissent—of the non-conformist. Violence that is considered normal—violence of the parent over the child, the teacher over the student, the doctor over the patient, the nurse over the psychotic.<sup>10</sup>

Does the violence of everyday life, everyday violence, legitimate, necessary and normal in some way prepare and secure the ground for a much larger violence? Do they serve as nurturing nursery beds for a more grotesque form of violence? Surely, one cannot think of just one cause that produces the effect called 'Ahmedabad'. Economic, political and cultural processes (Resnick & Wolff 1987), processes related to class, race, gender, sexuality, nature, all play a mutually constitutive part in the production of 'Ahmedabad'.

#### A further question...

But then a further question haunts the 'act of speculation' that this work of writing is, a question that can perhaps be asked only to the self that is surviving at the cost of the other. Or perhaps, are we not all surviving at the cost of others? Is not Israel surviving at the cost of Palestine? But then, what is so natural about the survival of self, survival at any cost, at the cost of the other? Is survival then always already violent, something that intrinsically impinges on the survival of the other? Is there anything natural about the violence of survival, is there anything natural about the annihilation of the 'other' for the survival of 'self'? Is the 'survival' of the 'self', both 'survival' and the 'survival of the self' to the exclusion of the 'other', nothing but natural? Or is it made to look natural—naturalized discursively—the naturalness of the natural produced and reproduced through reiterative performative gestures, that in turn make us get used to violence, to violent ways of being?

This is not to question survival per se. That would be too counterproductive a gesture after the Gujarat carnage.<sup>11</sup> This is to question the obsessive rhetoric of survival of self in the face of a threat to survival that fuels or is invoked to fuel acts of violence on the other. This is to question the obvious fact of survival made obvious by the science of survival. This is to question a science premised somewhat teleologically on a founding threat to survival, a subsequent struggle for survival, a natural selection thereafter—and finally a survival of the fittest. This is not to produce opposing facts/truths that demonstrate the imaginary nature of a perceived threat to survival, that describe the threat as more imagined than real, though such a move remains quite necessary. Rather this is a move towards an ethics of survival taking into consideration the fact that even if the threat is at times not real in a very realist sense it is nevertheless productive of subjectivities, of structures and layers of identity that guide us in our actions, that exert navigational pull in the way we organise our lives. Interpellated, as we are, by this threat of 'a dying race', this threat however much imagined, however phantasmatic it is, produces effects/affects.<sup>12</sup>

## A Dying Race

Dwarakanath Bidyabhusan echoing the anxiety of 'a dying race' wrote in Nababarsiki in the year 1880 an article titled 'Banglar Loksonkhya' (Census in Bengal):

another subject/cause for worry is that the number of Muslims have increased and have slowly become equal to that of the Hindus. The Hindus outnumber Muslims by only five lakhs.<sup>13</sup> For a number of reasons the regeneration/reproduction of Muslims families is being greater than Hindus. Who can say, India would not become the land of the Muslims some day?<sup>14</sup> (my translation)

C. A. O'Donnell, census commissioner for 1891, on the basis of the slower growth rates of Hindus as observed in and from the figures of the census, 'leapfrogged across simple logic to deduce the number of years for Hindus to disappear altogether'.<sup>15</sup> H. H. Risley, Home Secretary, Government of India, who had proposed the partition of Bengal in 1903, speculated: "Can the figures of the last census be regarded in any sense the forerunner of an Islamic or Christian revival which will threaten the citadel of Hinduism or will Hinduism hold its own in the future as it has done through the long ages of the past?"<sup>16</sup> U. N. Mukherjee's *Hindus—A Dying Race* 'was serialized in *The Bengalee* during the month of June in 1909... It was published twice as a book in 1910 and sold at four annas, which was an easily affordable price for its English language readership. The author followed this up by writing the *Coming Census*, a Bengali translation of which he distributed 25,000 copies free of cost. Another 25,000 copies of a modified Bengali version of *Hindus—A Dying Race* called *Hindu Samaj* were also distributed free... the debate on the census was acquiring a nation-wide importance... the appearance of Lala Lajpat Rai's "The Depressed Classes" in *The Modern Review* in July 1909—barely a month after the publication of *Hindus—A Dying Race*— provided a sense of shared concern' (Datta 1999:27). Seventy years later a Hindu Mahasabha publication is seen to echo nearly the same anxiety. The Hindu Mahasabha publication carries its title *They Count Their Gains—We Calculate Our Losses* (Indra Prakash, New Delhi 1979) drawn from the concluding lines of one of U. N. Mukherjee's texts (Datta 1999:22).

How would *Hindus—A Dying Race* respond to its own imminent death? The imagination of the nation named 'India' was not just driven by hegemonic Hindu ideals—ideals perpetuated by 'Shuddhi' and 'Sangathan' Movements in the 1920s. The imagination was somewhat premised on violent ways of be-ing, on forms of Hindu virile manhood<sup>17</sup> perhaps from the very beginning. One could see somewhat from the very beginning a clash of imaginations—idea(l)s—idols.

Hindus rise, why are you bearing pain. What are you worrying for and so getting defeated? To live without courage is useless (Gupta 1998).

In the face of the threat of extinction, threat of being wiped out by the castrating Self/other, threat of vivisection, the only way to survival was retaliation—retaliation to the extent that one now cannibalises the threatening Self/other. It could be a day of mindless mad outrage-outburst as in 'Chauri Chaura'.<sup>18</sup> Or it could be a day of willed conscious cognizant planned assassination.

I reproduce below an excerpt from *Why I Assassinated Mahatma Gandhi (And the Events the Accused, and the Epilogue)* to delineate the trajectories and contours of an emerging Hindu self. I reproduce thereafter excerpts from pamphlets circulated in Gujarat before and during the 'pogrom' to demonstrate how the 'emerging Hindu self' found fruition on the very banks of the Sabarmati.

***Why I assassinated Mahatma Gandhi?*<sup>19</sup>**

I, Nathuram Vinayak Godse, the first accused above named respectfully beg to state ... that the teachings of absolute 'Ahimsa' as advocated by Gandhiji would ultimately result in the emasculation of the Hindu Community and thus make the community incapable of resisting the aggression or inroads of other communities especially the Muslims. To counteract this evil... Apte and myself... started a daily newspaper 'Agrani'... I always strongly criticized Gandhiji's views and his methods such as 'fast' for achieving his object, and after Gandhiji started holding prayer meetings, we... decided to stage peaceful demonstrations showing opposition... There was a *wide gulf between the two ideologies* and it became wider and wider as concessions after concessions were being made to the Muslims... culminating in the partition of the country.

... Having reached Delhi in great despair, I visited the refugee camps at Delhi. While moving in the camps my thoughts took a definite and final turn... I spent the night of the 29th thinking and re-thinking about my resolve to end the... further destruction of the Hindus.

... In 1946 or thereabout the Muslim atrocities perpetrated on the Hindus... in Noakhali, made our blood boil. Our shame and indignation knew no bounds... I (was) determined to prove to Gandhiji that the Hindu too could be intolerant when his honour was insulted.

... Gandhiji is being referred to as the Father of the Nation .... But if so, he has failed in his paternal duty in as much as he has acted very *treacherously* to the nation by his consenting to the partitioning of it... It was for this reason alone that I as a *dutiful son of Mother India* thought it my duty to put an end to the *so-called* Father of the Nation—who had played a very prominent part in bringing about the vivisection of the country—Our Motherland... I... believe... non-violence... will lead the nation to ruin... Indian politics in the absence of Gandhiji would surely be *practical, able to retaliate, and would be powerful with armed forces*... the nation would be free to follow the course founded on *reason*, which I consider to be necessary for sound nation building. (Answer to Charge Sheet by Nathuram Vinayak Godse on 8.11.1948, italics mine).

Godse was looking for in Gandhi a somewhat *menacing abstraction of the paternal role as the possessor-protector of the mother and the place of the Law*. Instead Gandhi happened to be the *effeminate internal other* of the nationalist Hindu self. One had to do away with the *internal other*—the perpetual *spur* in the somewhat virile re-construction of nationalist Hindu self. One had to do away with competing signifiers that somehow skewed the quilting and the sedimen-

tation of virile Hindu 'identity'.<sup>20</sup> And this *foreclosure*<sup>21</sup> of the *inassimilable internal* other could be done only in the name of the survival of a dying race. The concessions the internal other were making to the threatening other... the other that was a threat to the survival of the Hindu could be cited as justification for the doing away of the *internal other*. Hence an *assassination*—an assassination that in turn sets up possibilities for a more violent encounter with the threatening other—the other as foreigner, as outsider—as the *external other*<sup>22</sup> of hegemonic Hindu identity.

To demonstrate how a more virile Hindu self sets up the grounds for a more violent encounter with the threatening other, the other as outsider, the other as the external other of hegemonic Hindu identity, I reproduce below an excerpt from a pamphlet published by the C. G. Road Shop Owner's Association, C. G. Road Ahmedabad, 380009. The pamphlet contains in print the speech of Chinubhai N. Patel, Vishwa Hindu Parishad state leader delivered on 4 April 2002.

Dearest soul brothers,

Namaste!... I want to talk to you about something very important... You are a very important and responsible person of this country and your life is valuable. There is a great danger to your life and that of your family. I have come to warn you. In the secure and safe Hindu localities in spite of security guards outside how safe are you in your bungalows? The traitorous Muslims will come in truckloads kill the guards and then enter the bungalows. They will kill you in your bedrooms and drawing rooms. Today lakhs of Hindus are afraid of this happening and those living in mohallas stay up all night in groups to guard us... In 1947, first in Sindh province, then in Punjab and Bengal, they attacked Hindu bungalows and killed about 15 lakh Hindus cruelly and without any pity. This is a historic fact and it can be repeated today. Then how safe are you and I in our own homes... At the time of partition... they... while carrying sticks, swords, knives, and lighted torches, raped lakhs of our Hindu mothers, sisters and daughters and then killed them... About 15 lakh Hindus were killed cruelly and Hindus were wiped out in their own country. The land turned red with the blood of Hindus... If a nation forgets its history it is doomed to live it again. 'History repeats itself.' After breaking up the nation... the Muslim population in the country has again reached 16 crores. They are plotting to kill crores of Hindus... The Godhra incident is just one symptom of the cancer... Godhra is only the trailer... in the last thousand years of Muslim rule in India two crore Hindus were murdered ...

Hindus have now woken up... to combat the atrocities that the Muslims have handed down to us... If we are attacked we will attack right back... we will not be able to survive if we do not unite... to give monetary help to Hindus is an investment for our safety and security... Hindus have no option but to unite—otherwise they will not survive... the country that learns its lessons from history and plans its future accordingly always survives, while others are destroyed—etch this truth in your heart (*italics mine*).

Another excerpt from another pamphlet published by 'An Indian':

Reply to bricks with stones<sup>23</sup>

When India got her independence, there were 3 crore Muslims in India. Now... there are 35 crores... My Hindu brethren, unite and form a free Indian army... annihilate the enemy ... take Ram's name and attack,

We will kill Muslims...

We will burn Jamalpur and empty Dariapur...

We Hindustanis swear we will seek you out and kill you,

This is the tradition of Raghukul...

We will cut them and their blood will flow like rivers.

Gujarat followed Godse. Godse followed the impulse of Suddhi and Sangathan movements. U. N. Mukherjee followed Dwarakanath Bidyabhusan. Inder Prakash followed U. N. Mukherjee. H. H. Risley followed C. A. O'Donnell. And all of them in their respective philosophies seem to follow a nearly commonsensical understanding of a 'tooth and claw' struggle for survival—a natural selection among the ones engaged in struggle—and ultimately only the survival of the fittest. What feeds, nourishes this understanding of 'life'?

Is it nurtured by Science? Is it nurtured by the Science of Survival?

The way nature is described in and by Science?

The way (human) nature is?

### The Science of Survival: What is

Without an ultimate goal or end, there can be no lesser goals or means: a series of means going off into an infinite progression towards a non-existent end is a metaphysical and epistemological impossibility. It is only an ultimate goal, an end in itself that makes the existence of values possible. Metaphysically, life is the only phenomenon that is an end in itself: a value gained and kept by a constant process of action. Epistemologically, the concept 'value' is genetically dependent upon and derived from the antecedent concept of 'life'.—Ayn Rand.

Would ethical 'value' be then derived from the antecedent concept of 'life'—'life' as the only phenomenon that is an end in itself? Perhaps in estuaries of death, amidst the arid door of crematory ovens, one can only fall back on 'life' and draw rather intuitively upon an ethical responsibility to 'life'. But when we find ourselves trapped in an obsessive rhetoric of survival (the unreservedly over-valued survival of just the 'Americans' as against all others) derived from a rather overwrought notion of a threatening other (the Taliban), something that provides theoretical ground to and justification for an annihilation-exclusion of the threatening other for the sole survival of Self, for a certain metaphysics of Self-Survival (as in the war of America against Afghanistan) over all others in a posited war of all against all—one finds it quite difficult to pursue an ethical value derived solely from the antecedent concept of life. The ques-

tions that keeps coming up somewhat without respite: Is 'nature', in Tennyson's redolent metaphor 'red in tooth and claw'? Is our very survival, our existence, the very fact that we are, that we are to discuss violence, borne on a certain foundational and fundamental violence? Is the very survival of 'self' predicated on a certain, violence on the 'other', on 'others', on 'others' that provide the 'material', 'discursive' substratum for the survival of 'self'? Or perhaps, it is the very question and possibility of survival that makes 'self' and 'others'. The possibility of the survival of an individual... the survival of a species that by far bypasses the survival of an individual... and ultimately the survival of 'genes' that carry within them the potential to survive well beyond the extinction of a certain species, survival as the sole metaphysics of presence.

On the one hand we have the beguiling image of independent DNA replicators, skipping like chamois,<sup>24</sup> free and untrammelled down the generations, temporarily brought together in throwaway survival machines, immortal coils shuffling off an endless succession of mortal ones as they forge towards their separate eternities. On the other hand we look at the individual bodies themselves and each one is obviously a coherent, integrated, immensely complicated machine, with a conspicuous unity of purpose. A body doesn't look like the product of a loose and temporary federation of warring genetic agents who hardly have time to get acquainted before embarking in sperm or egg for the next leg of the great genetic Diaspora (Dawkins 1989:234).

Richard Dawkins's *The Selfish Gene*, originally published in 1976, makes some startling assertions with respect to the question of survival. 'We are born selfish', says Dawkins. Although he says at places that 'genes have no foresight' and 'they do not plan ahead', Dawkins imbues genes with a 'consciousness' that transcends bodies and the limits of bodies, limits in both space and time. Through an almost natural and in-built selfishness genes strive to replicate themselves beyond mortal bodies and the mortality of bodies, as if they are consciously planning how best their survival could be achieved:

Certainly in principle, and also in fact, the gene reaches out through the individual body wall and manipulates objects in the world outside, some of them inanimate, some of them other living beings, some of them a long way away. With only a little imagination we can see the gene as sitting at the centre of a radiating web of extended phenotypic power. And an object in the world is the centre of a converging web of influences from many genes sitting in many organisms. The long reach of the gene knows no obvious boundaries (Dawkins 1989:86).

Because for Dawkins individual organisms do not survive from one generation to another, while genes do, it follows that 'natural selection' acts on what survives, namely, the genes. Therefore, all selection acts ultimately at the level of DNA. At the same time, each gene is in competition with each other to reproduce themselves in the next generation. What after all, is so special about genes? The answer is that they are replicators, survival machines, that mechanically reproduce survival.

In this view, the replicator of life is the gene; thus the organism is simply the vehicle for the genes ('survival machines—robot vehicles blindly programmed to preserve the selfish molecules known as genes'... 'they swarm in huge colonies, safe inside gigantic lumbering

robots'). It is a recasting of a famous aphorism that a hen is simply the egg's way of making another egg. An animal, for Dawkins, is only the DNA's way of making more DNA to the extent that the DNA molecule might desire the demise of the harbouring animal if it suits the survival statistics of the said DNA. It is as if a somewhat instrumental Reason and a disinterested 'DNADESIRE' doing away with every hindrance in the path of its propagation... even if that hindrance is the 'harbouring other'. Dawkins imbues genes with certain mystical qualities for survival, qualities that are essentially teleological.<sup>25</sup> Qualities that try to explain what is... what nature and human nature is. The question of what ought remains entirely subservient to what is. What is would in a unidirectional cause-effect relation determine what would... what look nature and human nature would take. So any innovation in the realm of what we ought to do/be is bound to fail as it runs counter to what is. For instance, he would say: 'Contraception is sometimes attacked as "unnatural". So it is, very unnatural. The trouble is, so is the welfare state. I think that most of us believe the welfare state is highly desirable. But you cannot have an unnatural welfare state, unless you also have unnatural birth control, otherwise the end result will be misery even greater than that which obtains in nature'. He continues, 'the welfare state is perhaps the greatest altruistic system the animal kingdom has ever known. But any altruistic system is inherently unstable, because it is open to abuse by selfish individuals, ready to exploit it. Individual humans who have more children than they are capable of rearing are probably too ignorant in most cases to be accused of conscious malevolent exploitation'. According to Dawkins, child adoption is against the instincts and interests of our 'selfish genes'. 'In most cases we should probably regard adoption, however touching it may seem, as a misfiring of an in-built rule', says Dawkins. 'This is because the generous female is doing her own genes no good by caring for the orphan. She is wasting time and energy, which she could be investing in the lives of her own kin, particularly future children of her own. It is presumably a mistake which happens too seldom for natural selection to have "bothered" to change the rule by making the maternal instinct more selective'.

Here one encounters two questions. One, will evolutionary theory (the what is of human 'nature') at all be the ground for/of ethics (the what ought of the human 'culture')? Two, if so, will it necessarily flow from Dawkins's theory of evolution? Stephen J. Gould and Donna Haraway<sup>26</sup> have offered alternative readings of evolution that could also be the ground for a conceptualisation of ethics. In more ways than one Darwin himself laid the theoretical foundation for what later came to be called evolutionary ethics. One of his contributions was a more sophisticated understanding of natural selection and its behavioural implications than is found in many Social Darwinist (and neo-Darwinist) caricatures. His most famous slogan 'the struggle for existence' was, as Darwin himself pointed out, somewhat hyperbolic. The problem of survival and reproduction in fact encompasses a great variety of specific circumstances, from plentiful resources and easy living to extreme scarcity, from mutual symbioses to literal cases of 'nature, red in tooth and claw'. As Darwin wrote in *The Origin of Species*:

Animals of many kinds are social; we find even distinct species living together; for example, some American monkeys; and united flocks of rooks, jackdaws and starlings... The most common mutual service in the higher animals is to warn one another of danger by the united senses of all... Social animals perform many little services for each other; horses nibble and cows lick each other for external parasites... Animals

also render more important services to one another; thus wolves and some other beasts of prey hunt in packs, and aid one another in attacking their victims. Pelicans fish in concert. The Hamadryas baboons turn over stones to find insects, etc.; and when they come to a large one, as many as can stand around, turn it over together and share the booty. Social animals mutually defend each other. Bull bisons in North America, when there is danger, drive the cows and calves into the middle of the herd, while they defend the outside...

In fact, in *The Origin of Species* Darwin explicitly theorised that co-operative behaviours, including the division of labour and even altruism, could well have evolved via natural selection. In *The Descent of Man*, Darwin carried his reasoning about natural selection and sociality two significant steps further. Seeking to account for the emergence of 'social and moral faculties' in evolving hominids, Darwin proposed that three distinct evolutionary mechanisms were involved: (1) 'family selection' (kin selection), (2) mutualistic co-operation, which modern theorists have variously labelled 'intraspecific mutualism' (West Eberhard), 'tit-for-tat' (Axelrod and Hamilton), 'inclusive fitness' (Hamilton), 'reciprocity selection' (Boorman and Levitt), 'synergistic selection' (Maynard Smith) and 'egoistic co-operation' (Corning), and (3) group selection, or the differential survival of groups of co-operators. Darwin emphasised that these mechanisms were not necessarily antagonistic but could well have been complementary and mutually reinforcing. (Corning, 'Evolution and Ethics: An Idea Whose Time Has Come?' (Part I), *Journal of Social and Evolutionary Systems*, 19(3):277-285, 1996).

On the other hand, in Dawkins's scheme, societies are broken down into organisms, organisms into cells, cells into molecules, and molecules into atoms. For Dawkins, human nature is to be understood by analysing human DNA. In his highly atomised worldview he leaves little room for the existence of either multiple levels of analysis or complex modes of (over)determination. He ignores relations or connections between cells and organisms, between parts and wholes, between selves and others.

Do we then need to work further on the importance of an ethical reflection in one's organisation of 'self'? The 'self' understood as cannibal—as naturally cannibal—as that which can, as if, continue to survive only through a devouring of the 'other'—an eating of the 'other'—a thorough digestion—an appropriation and internalisation of the 'other'... in a war of all against all.

An excerpt once again from a pamphlet circulated by the VHP and the Bajrang Dal just before the carnage at Ahmedabad reiterates:

Your life is in danger. You might be killed any time.

Lord Sri Krishna told Arjuna—'Lift your weapons and kill the non-religious'.

The Lord wants to tell us something also...

The Lord wants to tell us something also. The Lord, religious or scientific, tells us perhaps: your survival depends on the non-survival of a few 'others', on the extermination of some 'others', on the termination of the continued survival of some.

## The Ethics of Survival: What Ought

We look for an ethics of survival that is not cannibalistic<sup>27</sup>—that is not merely appropriative—an ethics where the other is not transformed into ‘my property, my object’, where s/he is not reduced to ‘what is mine, into mine, meaning what is already a part of my field of existential or material properties’. And yet, where the other is not put to neglect.

We need ‘to learn to live finally’. Learn to live. Can one learn to live by itself—‘all by itself—out of context? To learn to live, ‘to learn it from oneself and by oneself, all alone, to teach oneself to live... is that not impossible for a living being? Is it not what logic itself forbids? To live, by definition, is not something one learns. Not from oneself, it is not learned from life, taught by life’ (Derrida 1994: xvii-xx). It is learnt perhaps from the other, perhaps by and from and through death; at least from the other at the edge of life. ‘At the internal border or the external border, (perhaps) it is (more) a heterodidactics between life and death... (and) nothing is more necessary than this wisdom. It is ethics itself: to learn to live... does one ever do anything else but learn to live... This is, therefore, a strange commitment, both impossible and necessary... It has no sense and cannot be just unless it comes to terms with death. Mine as (well as) that of the other. Between life and death, then, this is indeed the place of a sententious injunction that always feigns to speak like the just’ (Derrida 1994: xvii-xx).

What follows then? What happens between the two, between life and death, or maybe between all such similar ‘twos’, between the fort/da (gone-far away/return; there/here) of the Freudian spool, between what the child disperses and what the child reassembles, between disappearances and re-turns, between lack and re-presentation, between absence and presence? Does it not follow from here that if ‘learning to live’ remains to be done, it can happen only between life and death, in-between life and death, neither in life nor in death alone, neither in the pure ecstasy of living nor in the pure anguish of death, neither in the pure principle of pleasure nor in the drive of death. But perhaps, in that which limits the full presence of both life and death, in the spectral, in the living on beyond death, in the mark of the deadly finitude of death, death as finitude beyond life, beyond the pure pursuit of the pleasures of living... as the *Beyond of the Pleasure Principle* (Derrida 1987:292-337).

### **Beyond the Pleasure Principle: Beyond Survival**

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) Freud replaced the pairing of drives—the ‘libidinal’ and the ‘egoistic’—that had served him for more than a decade of psychoanalytic theorising with a new and more dramatic pair of contestants: life against death. Or maybe he was not in any way positing another pair, metaphysical and secure in their binarisms. This was more an encounter of the theorist of the ‘pleasure principle’ with the beyond of the ‘pleasure principle’, with what limits the infinite play of the ‘pleasure principle’, what produces a certain finitude, what cracks, splits, ruptures the secure organisation and teleology of pleasure, pleasure and the pursuit of pleasure with as if, a life of its own, desire seeking out of its own desire objects of desire. This encounter of Freud with finitude, with the traumatic knowledge of vulnerability-mutability in the face of a desire for immortality and the subsequent detour in psychoanalytic theorising that follows thereafter sets in motion the Freudian fort/da, the somewhat alluring

Freudian engagement with absence/presence, with an 'inscription' and an 'erasure' that is never comprehensive, never total, never full.

Freud's inattention to death is particularly striking in his early case studies on which he is said to have based his theories about the 'pleasure principle'. In these cases studies the causes/factors precipitating 'hysterical symptoms' in his three main patients—Anna O., Emmy von N., and Elisabeth von R.—quite markedly involved an encounter with death, an encounter with not just the truth of human mortality, but also the fallibility of symbolic codes. Yet Freud, in his interpretation of each case, either overlooks the connection between hysterical symptoms/trauma and human mortality or translates it into issues of sexually coded loss: castration (loss of the phallus) or abandonment (loss of love). It is in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* that Freud shifts critical attention from the phallus to the omphalos<sup>28</sup>—from an explicit phallogocentrism driven by desire to death—death as the metaphorical navel of all feelings of finitude (Bronfen 1998:16).

But this is not, in any way, a metaphysics of death. Neither is it a metaphysics of survival. It is survival as the site of an ethical relationship of self, of survival itself, of self-survival to that which is an other of survival and of self—a non-violent relationship to the infinite as infinitely other, to the other.

#### **Beyond mere Cannibalism...**

We remain in search for a survival that is not cannibalistic—that is secured not at the expense/extinction of the other. And hence we arrive at a further question: what if the war of all against all does not result in the survival of one and the death of the other; what if the 'trial by death' does not automatically resolve in the survival of one and the death of the other, in the natural selection of one survivor and one non-survivor in the Hegelian duel? What if, there is something other than the duel of the Hegelian double and what if Darwinian 'natural selection' is not the obvious endpoint, the obvious resolution of the duel? What if, the self does not cannibalise the other—does not manage to cannibalise the other? What if both live, but perhaps one driven by the 'pleasure principle' and the other by the 'reality principle'?<sup>29</sup> What resolutions can one expect in the silence of the cemetery that has now descended on Ahmedabad? What would and could be the relations after the carnival of cannibalism is over? In the silence... when all difference has been silenced? In the 'trial of death'<sup>30</sup> between 'self' and 'other', 'survival of the fittest' has remained the organising principle in the self's organisation of self—in the organisation of relations of 'lordship and bondage' (Hegel 1998:111-119). But then, what happens between the 'lord' and the 'bondsmen', who are never lord and never bondsman before their struggle unto death—in fact, before the resolution of their struggle unto death? It is the very resolution of their struggle that produces relations of 'lord' and 'bondsmen', produces relations of self and other, who would hitherto be lord and bondsman. That the 'lord' does not kill (or cannot kill), cannibalise (or cannot cannibalise) the other, that the lord allows (or is forced to allow) the other to survive, that the lord terminates (or is made to terminate) the struggle when he perhaps could have carried it to his victory, his complete mastery over the other where the other is no more, where the other is all but dead, and that the other, when faced with death, considers the principle of survival worthwhile produces

relations far more complex than relations of just self and other, produces, perhaps, the logical dawn of hegemony—or maybe the gloom, the nightfall that *hegemony* was and is.

... one is the independent consciousness whose essential nature is to be *for itself*, the other is the dependent consciousness whose essential nature is simply to live or to be for another. The former is lord, the other is bondsman...The lord puts himself into relation with both... to a *thing* as such, the object of desire, and to the consciousness for which thinghood is the essential characteristic (Hegel 1998:111-119).

In the Hegelian dialectic between lord and bondsman one can now shift focus to the hidden contract between the two: 'the imperative to the bondsman consists in the following formulation: you be my body for me, but do not let me know that the body that you are is my body. The disavowal on the part of the lord is thus doubled: first, the lord disavows his own body, he poses as a disembodied desire and compels the bondsman to act as his body; secondly, the bondsman has to disavow the fact that he acts merely as the lord's body and act as an autonomous agent, as if the bondsman bodily labouring for the lord is not imposed on him but is his autonomous activity ... "a freedom ... enmeshed in servitude"' (Hegel, 1998:119). This structure of double (and thereby self-effacing) disavowal is precisely the moment of *hegemony*<sup>31</sup>—the more crucial moment in our somewhat long and tenuous journey (Butler 1997, Butler Laclau and Žižek 2000, Chaudhury 1994, Chaudhury Das and Chakrabarti 2000). This also takes us further to *multiple forms of othering* as possible expressions of hegemonic operations—thereafter to *multiple layers of violence*—'legitimate', 'necessary', 'normal'—and hence to the need for a more *robust reading of violence*.

### Forms of Othering: Forms of Violence

At the beginning there is perhaps neither Self nor *other*. Self and *other* are perhaps retroactive constructions that we get in the end. But then, let us begin from the end—from Self and *other*—the different possible relations of Self with the *other*.

#### 1. Encounter with the other

- To begin with, one may be *unaware* of the other. One may not know of the existence of the other. The other is unknown... the other is beyond cognition.<sup>32</sup>
- One may all of a sudden *discover* the other. Columbus discovers the other and *names* it America.
- One may thereafter *forget* the other. This being the first act of forgetting.
- One may not forget the other. One may *acknowledge* the other... stand face to face with the other *and embark on a life and death struggle with the other... a battle unto death of one of the two*.

#### 2. Repression of the other

- One may have with the acknowledged other a relation of *lordship* and bondage.

- One may thereafter try to know the other—‘penetrate’ with available epistemological tools the innermost recesses of the *unknown*. In the process one may *objectify* the other. One may *reduce* the other to mere/bare essentials. One may *homogenise* the other. Reduce the other to *stereotypes*. Differences among and in the other are thus disregarded. ‘Homo-hegemonisation’ (Derrida 2002: 371-386) of both arms of binaries produces dualisms.
- One may *banish* the other to the margins.
- One can make the other an *untouchable*. One can relegate the other to the ghetto of the untouchable. The hegemony of the Hindu could only be organised through a recognition... through a consent of the untouchable to her infinite un-touchability... her being infinitely un-touchable... where the self *never* ‘touches the other’.

### 3. Forgetting the other

- One can *forget* the other that was once acknowledged... which in other words is a *backgrounding*... a *denial* of the other... a dependence that is denied... a disavowal. One may forget the fact that one has forgotten the other, a double disavowal. The other vanishes, a radical exclusion, a hyper separation, a *foreclosure*.

We arrive at multiple forms of othering as productive of multiple forms of violence, multiple forms of violence as productive of multiple forms of othering, forms of othering as possible expressions for hegemonic operations. This in turn necessitates a search for violence beyond mere cannibalism, a search into the more subtle and pervasive operations of hegemony. This also necessitates a search for an ethics beyond *both* cannibalism and hegemony.

I separate the moments of cannibalism and hegemony as logical others—as logically other to the other. Perhaps the two inhere, one in the other, and produce overdetermined effects/affects. Primitive accumulation remains as the more rugged, more savage edge of the rule of Capital. Physical cannibalism as the uncouth underside, the grubby substratum of a more civil, more nuanced rule of Law, the Law of the patronymic, the Law of the High Hindu Hegemonic, the hegemonic rule of the Hindu ‘lord’ over the culturally ‘other’, the ‘other’ who is now also the ‘bondsmen’, who is held tightly leashed to a ‘civil’ form of ‘bondage’, a ‘servitude’ masquerading as ‘freedom’. No wonder, *the High Hindu Hegemonic called for elections... called for the more civil moment of representative democracy once the carnival of carnal cannibalism was over.*

*beyond hegemony ... beyond virile masculinity ... beyond feminine passivity...*

Love of *One* is a barbarism;  
for it is exercise at the expense of all others.  
The Love of God, too.—Nietzsche

What then is an ethics of survival—an ethics beyond both cannibalism and hegemony? An ethics where ‘self’ and ‘other’ are linked inalienably in a certain ‘deconstructive embrace’,

where life is lived as the call of the wholly other, lived by and through a responsibility to the other, lived while being bound by accountable reason. Is an ethics of the self—an ethics of the survival of self—the self as responsive to the call of the other an 'experience of the impossible'—an impossible experience between 'self-interest' (the self-interest of Cohen in *Mr. & Mrs. Iyer*) and 'responsibility' (the responsibility to and of Jahangir Chaudhury as taken up by Mrs. Iyer)—an experience that would menace any calculus of interested action?

What will return, not in order to contradict the Pleasure Principle (PP), not to oppose itself to the PP but to mind the PP as its proper stranger, to hollow it into an abyss from a vantage point of an origin more original than it and independent of it, older than it within it, will not be, under the name of the death drive or the repetition compulsion, an other master or a counter master, but something other than mastery, something completely other. In order to be something completely other, it will have to not oppose itself, will have to not enter into a dialectical relation with the master (life, the PP as life, the living PP, the PP alive)... (Derrida 1987:317-18).

What is this something that is other than mastery ... that is something completely other? Can one call it the auto-bio-thanato<sup>33</sup>-hetero-graphic writing of ethics? (Derrida 1987:336)

auto-bio-graphic writing of ethics...<sup>34</sup>

bio-thanato-graphic writing of ethics...

hetero-graphic writing of ethics...

Writing ethics? Writing of ethics?

But then, what is writing without repression?

What is repression without a return of the repressed? This act of writing is addressed to the cannibalistic and the hegemonic—to the 'self' who in the face of a real or imagined threat to survival organises its own survival but in the process either devours or dominates the 'other'. What happens if the threat to survival is not imagined but real, as in the case of the other the self devours or dominates? Would not the terms of the address get severely skewed when one has in mind the survivors of Ahmedabad? Would this writing of ethics become a prescription for feminine passivity in the face of the devouring-dominating other? Although we would like to stubbornly resist violence we remain in search of an ethico-politics beyond both virile masculinity and feminine passivity.

## Notes

1. This act of writing can begin only with a confession: this writing comes more as an appeal—an appeal to the hegemonic community. It is written as if from within the hegemonic community, as if a member of the hegemonic community is making an appeal, an appeal that is made at least with the acute awareness that the author of this paper belongs in pen and paper to the hegemonic community, however much he may deny his identity as such. This paper thus tries to think an ethics for the hegemonic with the belief that a re-thinking

of the ethics of the hegemonic relates in one or the other way to the 'more difficult task of counter-hegemonic ideological production' (Spivak 1988). It looks for an ethics of the hegemonic with the concomitant understanding that the same standard of ethics may not apply for the non-hegemonic community. It thus fails to propose a universal standard for all to follow. Its search for an ethics remains refracted by perspectives of power—who occupies which position in the hierarchy of positions. It also remains refracted by perspectives of class, race, caste, gender, sexuality...

2. It was actually his being a Muslim in her association that Mrs. Iyer had not taken too kindly to, where the onus is on the other as untouchable to not cross the path of the Brahmin as Self.
3. One remains painfully aware, of course, that such an unselfconscious sensitivity is not available to Cohen—he carries the anatomical mark of difference that places him in near-inseparability from that Muslim couple.
4. The dead do write. They may write. As when death comes not as inevitable, nor as fate, but as choice—say in 'suicide', in 'suicide squads', in a situation of 'fast unto death' (Chaudhury 1994; Chaudhury Das, Chakrabarti 2000). Here the dead do write. They do get themselves inscribed—inscribed through death within the Symbolic. But the question that would still remain important: in what ink do the dead get themselves inscribed? Do they write in white ink? Do they speak the language the White speak? Do they speak the same language of violence or the language of the same violence?
5. One of the aporetic experiences touched upon by Derrida (1993) is the experience that 'my death' can never be subject to an experience that would be properly mine, that I can have and account for, yet that there is, at the same time, nothing closer to me and nothing properly mine than 'my death'. 'Aporias are distinguished from logical categories such as dilemmas or paradoxes, as experience is from presupposition. Aporias are known in the experience of being passed through, although they are non-passages; they are thus disclosed in effacement, thus experience of the impossible' (Spivak 1999:427).
6. The shadow of death—of the innumerable who died in Ahmedabad looms large over this writing. And yet, this writing tries somewhat paradoxically to focus on 'life'—on the way we 'live'—on a possible ethics of living. In a milieu where living for one means death for the other, where survival of 'self' can only be secured at the cost of the other, one perhaps needs to focus on life—on a reconfigured ethics of living.
7. This is much less a writing on surviving others who have somehow managed to escape the cannibalism of surviving Selves... who have not been put to death by surviving Selves. They remain as the repressed other of this act of writing and two questions that relate immediately to them haunt this writing. One, does the fact that they have not been put to death in any way spare them the violence perpetrated on their less fortunate associates? Would the fact that they have survived the carnage reduce them to being bondswomen to the Lordship of the high Hindu hegemonic? Two, what could be the ethico-politics of their subsequent survival... a survival over which looms large the real and relentless threat of extinction—both physical and symbolic.

8. Unparalleled by what? By the extent/span/nature of violence? By the number killed? But then, why should it matter how many were killed? What number of the killed would satisfactorily, statistically constitute genocide? At what number does genocide begin—genocide per se? And why should the question of number persist at the centre of all reflections on violence? Is it not enough to know that they are all killing fields—whatever the number of the victims? Ahmedabad is one killing field. Gujarat is another. India is the other killing field that is devouring day in and day out its unassimilated others; 'India' as an imagination produced and reproduced through reiterative gestures, an imagination that is studded with killing fields, that from the day of its naming is killing unnamed others. Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India... could they then be one name for another? Could they be different incarnations of the same virile violence that secures our being—our being within our Nation-State—and the very be-ing of our Nation-State.
9. The distinction between 'overt' and 'covert' is conceptual. Overt and covert are in no way empirical categories—categories that describe the two substantive faces/facets of violence. One can also discern in this distinction perhaps a move between the Marxist understanding of power tied principally to the State and the Foucauldian understanding of the seamless web of power tied to no subject/agent in particular, which in other words, is also a move between 'repressive state apparatus' and the 'ideological state apparatus', or maybe between 'coercion' and 'hegemony'.
10. This rather tentative categorisation of violence into 'legitimate', 'necessary' and 'normal' is only for conceptual convenience. One can surely think of forms outside the three mentioned above. One can also see clearly how one form of violence necessarily bleeds into the other form. In fact, I remain undecided about the category that could accommodate and describe the violence of the *huMAN* over the woman. It could at one and the same time be considered 'legitimate', 'necessary' and 'normal' by the *huMAN*.
11. In fact, living in a virtual estuary of death the survivors of Gujarat can ask a completely different question: what is so natural about death?
12. What happens when the threat is real, as in the case of the Muslims in Gujarat or maybe in the case of the peasants of 'Chauri Chaura'? Can we still think of an ethico-politics in the face of a real threat to survival? Setting aside for a moment the enormous and necessary weight of facts and truths can we think a politics of justice—a justice that remains menaced by the ethical? Can we still form collectives, organise ourselves in 'mobs' that seek justice—justice divorced from Law—but does not necessarily cannibalise the other? But for that one will perhaps have to *move beyond the standard interpretation of collectives as brotherhoods... as brotherhood among men*.
13. The census figures to which Dwarakanath Bidyabhusan refers give the following figures: Hindus = 18100438; Muslims = 17609135; Kaibartadas = 2064394; Chandal = 1620545; Kayastha = 1160478; Brahmins = 1100105; Men = 3 crores 34 lakhs; Women = 3 crores 35 lakhs. The sub-division of the Hindu population according to caste does not add up to make a number that is even remotely close to that of the total Hindu population cited in this text. The number cited for men and women if added up far outnumbers the number of Hindus and Muslims. The author of course builds up a very strong argument in favour of

polygamy for men based on the number of men and women, where women outnumber men by one lakh. According to the author, left to a monogamous arrangement one lakh women would remain unmarried.

14. Dwarakanath Bidyabhusan, 'Banglar Loksonkhya' in *Nababarsiki* (ed. Dwarakanath Bidyabhusan), Calcutta 1880:75-77 (CSSSC/BSP Record No.53; BSP Catalogue No. 236; Acc. No. 1112). A number of articles at around the same time could be seen echoing nearly the same concerns and the same anxieties. Articles titled 'Bharate Mussalman' (Muslims in India) (Bandhab (Nabaparyya), ed. Kaliprasanna Ghosh, Dacca, 1875:187; CSSSC/BSP Record No: 35, BSP Catalogue No: 447/448), 'Bharat Rodan' (India Crying) (Bandhab 1875:307), 'Bharatbarsha Ebong Onanya British Upanibesh' (India and the Other British Colonies) (Bandhab 1876), 'Bharater Projaniti' (The Subject Policy in India) (Bandhab 1878), 'Yavan' (Bandhab 1878), 'Hindu Bhugol' (Hindu Geography) (Bandhab 1878), 'Shibaji' (Bandhab 1878), 'Bharate Aryajati' (The Aryan Race in India) (Bandhab 1878), 'Muhammader Uttarahikari' (The Descendents of Muhammad) (Bandhab, 1878:519) all in one way or another, in metaphorical or in real terms, talk of a dying race and a decline-demise of the Hindu in the hands of the more aggressive Yavan as against the phenomenal rise of the Mussalman since '622 AD', the year of the death of Muhammad. This rise of the Mussalman is attributed to their rather single-minded pursuit of the Kafir in the name of a religious crusade.
15. Census of India, 1891, Vol. III, Bengal, C. A. O'Donnell (ed.), Calcutta, 1893, as cited in Pradip Kumar Datta, *Carving Blocs: Communal Ideology in Early Twentieth-century Bengal*, OUP, 1999:24.
16. Cited in Pradip Kumar Datta, *Carving Blocs: Communal Ideology in Early Twentieth-century Bengal*, OUP, 1999:24.
17. A related question that immediately comes to mind and that is extremely important to any understanding of non-violence: if violence is masculine aggressivity what would be an ethics of non-violence that is not correspondingly feminine passivity? Gandhi and Godse would represent two responses to the death—real or imagined—of the Hindus. We remain somewhat divided—somewhat lost between the virile masculinity of Godse's response and the apparent feminine passivity of Gandhi's response.
18. Amin (1995) shows how the nationalist rendition of this outburst could instead be related to some sense of retributive justice. "'Chauri Chaura'... is not the work of culpable individuals; it is caused by reflex action... paradoxically, this extreme reflex action is seen to stem from the swayam sevaks' disciplined disposition. The extreme consequence, i.e. the murder of twenty-three policemen, is preceded in time, both immediate and historical, by police repression... exceptionally fierce lathi and cavalry charge, and the firing which the disciplined satyagrahis withstood for a long time... It was because they were disciplined for a long time that they finally lost their heads... The assent of the Indian reader is sought by portraying an insufferable scenario... On that day, even a saint would have lost his head' (Amin 1995:51-55).

19. *Why I Assassinated Mahatma Gandhi (And the Events the Accused, and the Epilogue)* is the title of a book written by Gopal Godse (Surya Bharati Parkashan, New Delhi 1993). The book contains the statement of Nathuram Godse originally published under the title 'May it Please Your Honour'.
20. We understand identity not as given, not as an a priori, but as a contingent articulation—a hegemonic articulation organised along certain nodal points—nodal points as 'privileged discursive points of... partial fixation' (Laclau 1990). Nodal points, anchor floating signifiers through metonymic surplus meanings and fix a signifying chain, the process of fixation being always contingent upon a complex process of overdetermination. A single identity—the hegemonic Hindu identity—is thus organised through surplus meanings flowing from nodal points. But what would qualify as a nodal point? This of course would be a matter of constant contestation and would not be only a cultural fact. The moment of the emergence of a certain nodal point remains constituted by economic, political and cultural processes.
21. The hegemonic principle tries to reject the incompatible idea together with the affect, this being the first act of disavowal, and then behave as if the idea had never occurred to the ego at all, this being the act of the subsequent disavowal, the act of double disavowal. This act of double disavowal, one can also name it foreclosure, would embody two complementary or perhaps simultaneous operations: (1) production of the hegemonic Subject through (2) expulsion from this Subject of the traumatic bone of contention—an expulsion that in turn, reproduces the subject as Subject. This in turn produces the apparent sedimentation and stabilisation of the three Lacanian registers—the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real. Gandhi refuses the apparent sedimentation and stabilisation of the three registers. He remains as the traumatic bone of contention within phallogocentric closure, as if as the Real that refuses to be foreclosed, that refuses to be disavowed—disavowed doubly—that remains within, tenaciously within, as the outside that is all too constitutive, as the outside that as if refuses to remain outside, as the constitutive outside of the Symbolic, that hinders/rocks the becoming of the hegemonic, that keeps the high Hindu hegemonic somewhat in a state of suspension (Lacan 1977a, 1977b; Spivak 1999).
22. The external other could be given accommodation and the status of a secondary citizen if it obliged the hegemonic Hindu by paying obeisance to the desire, culture and national imagination of the hegemonic. If it did not play the part of 'bondswoman' it would have to face the wrath of the Lord. If it happens to threaten the Lord, i.e. the survival of the Lord, it would have to pay with its 'life'.
23. This is an excerpt from another pamphlet published by 'An Indian' and received by Communalism Combat on 28.03.2002.
24. The 'chamois' is an extremely agile goat antelope (*Rupicapra rupicapra*) of mountainous regions of Europe, having upright horns with backward-hooked tips.
25. Dawkins was of course, later forced to backtrack to some extent, modifying his arguments in the later editions of *The Selfish Gene* (1989) and in *The Extended Phenotype* (1982). He says his flamboyant language left him open to misrepresentation and misunderstanding.

ing: 'It is all too easy to get carried away, and allow hypothetical genes cognitive wisdom and foresight in planning their "strategy"'. He nevertheless defends his fundamental argument and views life 'in terms of genetic replicators preserving themselves by means of their extended phenotypes'. And that 'natural selection is differential survival of genes'. Dawkins now says, 'genes may modify the effects of other genes, and may modify the effects of the environment. Environmental events, both internal and external, may modify the effects of genes, and may modify the effects of other environmental events'. But this concession aside, Dawkins's main thesis remains.

26. Stephen Jay Gould explains: 'Organisms are much more than amalgamations of genes. They have a history that matters; their parts interact in complex ways. Organisms are built by genes acting in concert, influenced by environments, translated into parts that selection sees and parts invisible to selection. Molecules that determine the properties of water are poor analogues for genes and bodies'. Donna Haraway is equally critical of the impulse that drives Dawkins and his colleagues at the human genome project: 'Most fundamentally ... the human genome projects produce entities of a different ontological kind than flesh-and-blood organisms, "natural races", or any other sort of "normal" organic being... the human genome projects produce ontologically specific things called databases as objects of knowledge and practice. The human to be represented, then, has a particular kind of totality, or species being, as well as a specific kind of individuality... In other words, this data structure is a construct of abstract human-ness, without a body, without a gender, without a history, and without personal and collective narratives. It does not have a culture, and it does not have a voice. This electronically configured human is an a-cultural program. And in this very construction it is deeply culturally determined—we find ourselves confronted with a "universal human", constructed by science as practised in North America at the close of the 20th century. This version of "human unity in diversity" is not liberatory but deeply oppressive. To achieve such a vision in a positive sense, culture cannot be separated from biology. Moving toward this vision requires the respect and protection of all human diversity that is to be found in the cultures and narratives of different peoples, and not in their DNA. All versions of the human story, all human meaning-making, would need to be heard in all their different voices'.
27. Cultural Cannibalism, to use Luce Irigaray's metaphor, is the unethical reduction of the other to the status of 'me' or 'mine', rather than s/he to whom I make the address, s/he who addresses me... Derrida, on the other hand, tries to articulate an ethics on the failure or lack that haunts the site/structure of any cannibalism. The other resists my knowledge and memory of him or her. Derridean ethics allows us to ask if Irigaray's concern that ours is a culture of successful cannibalisms concedes too much to hegemonic articulations. One can then ask—what are the comparative ethics and politics of these articulations—of both the success of cannibalism and somewhat necessary failure of cannibalism? Faced with imminent death the only hope of the other perhaps lies in the fact/belief that cannibalism also has its limits. But then we do not wish to stretch this argument too far nor do we wish to quieten our disturbed selves with the belief that cannibalism has its limits. Instead we see and discern in a cannibalism that is limited—that is lacking—the possibility of hegemony—the possibility of a subtler yet more pervasive rule of the hegemonic. (Deutscher, Internet article). The other critic of cannibalism has come from ecofeminist

circles, where ecofeminists have shown, even at substantive levels, that the 'self' cannot continue to survive in complete exclusion of the 'other'.

28. 'By shifting the emphasis in my reading of the Oedipal story from incest and patricide to failed matricide, and by interpreting the ensuing self-castration as the metonymic substitute for a desire to eradicate the site of one's origin—the mother's womb and the child's remnant of this connection via the navel—I am moving away from the sexual coding of castration. I want to suggest instead that at the epicentre of all traumatic knowledge ... lays a recognition of mortality... The field of mythopoetics has seen the navel as a symbol for the site not only of origin but also of termination... Christian mythology sees the altar as an umbilicus terrae, and stories of antiquity have always drawn on the connection between the navel and the grave, vault, or tomb, this anatomical mark signifying the mortal wound that taints all human life from birth.' (Bronfen 1998:16)
29. In an early formulation Freud makes a theoretical distinction between the pleasure and the reality principles. The pleasure principle aims for immediate gratification. The reality principle involves the internalisation of a deferring mechanism that gradually lessens the need. The reality principle is a kind of survival mechanism. What Freud calls the primary processes produce a kind of discharge that is dangerous if unchecked and so secondary processes, like repression, detour/delay, and deferral, put obstacles in its way.
30. One could obviously inquire into the very justification, historical or otherwise, of any such 'trial of death'. The justification, in the first place, for any such trial—and further, for a trial by death—as being the founding, the organizing principle of relations of 'self' and 'other'. One could ask: why does Hegel propose the 'trial of death' as being the originary impulse in his thought experiment? Why would there be at all some originary moment—a moment that is so intensely decisive—that decides once and for all, the future, the teleology of the 'self' and the 'other'? Could there not be some more mundane, and in a way, a somewhat less spectacular origin, or maybe origins? That would not be origin/origins in the first place.
31. 'The strategy of domination was meant to replace the life-and-death struggle'. In cannibalism death happened through the violence of self on the other. Hegemonic domination, on the other hand, 'was a way of forcing the other to die within the context of life'. (Butler 1997:1-62; 2000)
32. Or perhaps the other is within the self, so inalienably within that the distinction between 'Self' and 'other' is not apparent. Such that both self and other have not drifted apart yet... so far apart that we now find them organized as opposites, binary opposites.
33. Writing thanatos? Writing death, writing destruction when faced with possible extinction, with a rather real threat to survival. Taking responsibility for death-destruction. Drawing up the contours of death-destruction in the service of survival. Showing up the limits of death-destruction... 'destruction art' is a warning system, an aesthetic response to human emergency that occurs in the lapse between theory and practice in terminal culture; it presents the pain of bodies, the anxiety of minds, the epistemology of technology, the specious

claims of ideology, the absence of ecological responsibility, the loss of human integrity and compassion, and the violence that structures both gender and sexual relations.

34. The auto-bio-graphy of ethics. Ethics as autobiographical. The bio-graph of the self, of life, of the survival graph of self—how would it remain sutured to ethics? How it must remain sutured to ethics.

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