

Chapter 1

Exploring the Underlying Thematic Relationship among Religion, Nation-State and Violence: An Introduction

1.1 Understanding the Political: Introducing Religion, Nation-State and Violence

The main concern of this study is to revisit the relationship between religion and nation-state, using the trope of violence, by critically reading select contending perspectives in Indian political thought. The aim in doing so is to suggest the inherently and essentially violent manner in which this relationship has been worked out by dominant perspectives and to possibly suggest a modest alternative. The relationship between religion and nation-state, particularly in the dominant discourses of the west has been conceptualized in an essentially definite institutionalized manner, whether in terms of separation, intervention or juxtaposition: while separation is conceptualized in terms of the principle of secularism; juxtaposition is proffered in terms of the principle of cultural nationalism, and intervention gets muddled in the narratives of what is attributed to as the ‘indigenous’ and alternative (from that of the west) variants of secularism and other discourses that were formed multiple times in varying contexts.¹

All these principles render the relationship between religion and nation-state as a closed, definite and institutionalized principle, which in turn is characterized by violence and injustice. Put differently, violence is characterized or witnessed both in terms of proposing and institutionalizing a secular narrative when secularism becomes increasingly apathetic and therefore violent towards the religious sensibilities of the people, as well as through cultural/religious nationalism that fails to be accommodative and tolerant of the religious others. Interestingly, this is not found so much in illiberal regimes as it is found in liberal regimes. This suggests that there is something that lacks in a modern liberal setup in the relationship between religion and nation-state, which needs to be understood. In a liberal setup, this relationship is often worked out on the promise of secularism. However, recent times have manifested a different picture of the promise.

Over the years there has been an increasing degree of discomfort and aversion that has developed towards the efficacy of liberal secularism in addressing the conflicting and contentious faces of religion and nation-state relationships. This discomfort has escalated to a

greater degree of animosity and hatefulness getting channelized towards the legitimate basis that secularism holds on to, in providing people with liberty along with its security. This has been substantiated in the writings of thinkers within the Indian political tradition as well as contemporary theorists who have sufficiently established a critique of the secular-nationalist narratives and the secular framework of politics.² This promise that secularism would suffice for politics, to control violence in the society that emerges on account of differences in culture and ways of living, increasingly becomes charged with being irresponsible to the relationship amongst religions and cultures, their routine interactions which may create space for potential conflicts and perhaps appear as being disinterested in the role of humans in general as dynamic active functional agents/carriers of the cultural/religious/non-religious identities within a proposed secular space³.

One of the immediate ways of responding to this lack of deliverance of politics in addressing violence is to think and work on a relationship between religion and nation-state by being mindful of violence and also perhaps by shifting its place to foreground the narrativizations taking place within the Indian political tradition, for the sake of our today and tomorrow. Perhaps, it is the undesirability and the impossibility of secularity that explains the swing towards an increasing rise in cultural-nationalist narratives, not only in practice but also as a legitimate space of occupation and identity-formation for the masses.⁴ Violence is found in the site of these narratives where the ossification of identities grounded on culture/ religion shapes the psyche of the minds and weaves it into narratives that legitimize the role of the existing political institutional apparatuses as being mandatory for its ultimate realization.⁵ However, I claim, both sites are extreme ends that entail the closing of the political.

The current thesis proposes to open up this rigid fixation of the political that has been systematically institutionalized and conceptualized through different narratives over the ages. The relations that are perceived as dichotomous such as the paradoxical relation between politics and the political and the sacred and secular in mainstream political theorization in the Indian context, therefore, present innumerable challenges to a researcher intending to unriddle the question of violence in the relationship between religion and nation-state. The opening of politics and the changing of politics go in contradistinction to the fixating nature of the political that tries to 'fix', 'identify' and 'figure out' the nature of the everyday dynamic practice of politics. The political teaches and presents an institutionalized and rather fixed notion of society. Since times immemorial this notion of the political has been developed by many

thinkers in the Western, Indian and other traditions to both discipline as well as legitimize the foundations of understanding society within certain fixed notions of what must constitute the political and what must not.

There is something that, therefore, always is left out, while not necessarily considered as a 'lack' within a certain political structure. In a liberal individualized setup, idealized in contemporary societies, especially societies like India, a conceptual reading of the relationship between religion and nation-state, rooted within the dynamically changing contexts of Indian political thinkers, commands detailed attention. This lack is portrayed by the increasing split between the political and politics, between the self and the other, the friend and the enemy, the good and the bad, the right and the wrong, religion and state and the like.⁶ When what was profane was considered non-proportional to the sacred, and the difference of thinking and perception defined these categories,⁷ in India, the perceptive differences were attributed to the sacred and the secular. These two precisely have been, since times immemorial, conveniently pitched against each other. Therefore, an exploration of the interplay between the two forms an undercurrent to the existing research being carried out, with the intent to read into the ways in which the narratives on religion and nation-state have been developed and formed in the theories, writings, and actions of some select thinkers from the canon of Indian thought.

The study, as mentioned above, argues that the understanding of both religion and the nation-state has so far been understood in purely institutionalized forms, which in turn constitutes the basis for the principles of separation, intervention, and juxtaposition. These principles are interestingly also evident in the constitutional ethos of India. Such processes of institutionalization render the aforementioned relationship definite and closed and in turn violent. Put differently, the relationship is based on a principle of politics and not on an understanding of a political process. What then could be the basis/bases of the relationship(s) between religion and the nation-state in terms of a political process?

Interestingly, India is a society wherein the relationship between religion and state, constitutionally and in our everyday life experiences, is still rendered a procedural one; the relationship between religion and state of which is not conceptualized either in terms of the modern principle of secularism or in terms of the principle of cultural nationalism. The study of this dichotomous relationship shall allow us to engage with violence as the central focal ingredient within the equation shared by religion and nation-state. How then ought we, from

within the Indian context, conceptualize the relationship between religion and the nation-state in a manner which would limit the scope of violence? What is an alternative relationship between religion and the nation-state which is based on an open political reading of both these categories as ‘political’ categories?⁸ In responding to these questions, which I think are imperative for addressing the increasing and routine experiences of violence justified by the principle of secularism and cultural nationalism, I in my study, examine critically some select Indian political thinkers.

In this study, I choose to study three thinkers, namely, Rammohan Roy, Jawaharlal Nehru, and M K Gandhi. I justify my choice in terms of the deep influence these three thinkers have on the formation of the relationship between religion and the nation-state as is reflected majorly in the current constitutional ethos in the country. While there are many more thinkers, equally if not more, credible and important than the selected ones which could have been included in this study, I choose to limit the study to an examination of the three aforementioned thinkers mainly because I do see their arguments and understandings as playing a somewhat pivotal role in the constitutional reading of the relationship between religion and the nation-state. This, in my modest opinion, would only attempt to begin a larger project with many more thinkers being analyzed and brought under conceptual thinking and rethinking within the tradition, with the intent of recontextualizing as well as reconceptualizing them in the current times. Thus, this, in any manner, does not suggest the lesser importance of the other thinkers or the lesser relevance of other paradigms employed to explore the possibilities in the aforementioned relationship within the fixed trope of violence.

I do read the arguments of these three thinkers as underlying a political reading of the relationship between these two entities, rather than one which is astutely politics. The latter has been consciously marked separately from the former,⁹ because this distinction between politics and the political has been kept intact in many discourses, especially in the study of most of the current discourses on the religion-state relationship. It would, therefore, be important to discuss the interplay between politics and the political as means to explore the nature and practice of religion and nation-state in the formation of the public space in India.

1.1.1 Religion: Was the Sacred- Secular dichotomous?

“And yet most individuals enter modernity rather as converts enter a new religion—as a consequence of forces beyond their control.” – Talal Asad¹⁰

“Religion owes its legitimizing force to the fact that it draws its power to convince from its own roots. It is rooted, independently of politics, in notions of salvation and calamity (Heil und Unheil) and in corresponding practices of coping with redemptive and menacing forces.”¹¹

Unlike the essence that this quote carries, religion has not often functioned independently of politics and has remained ingrained in the practice of politics, especially when the political kept getting refurbished in the public space, with religion as one of its primary ingredients in the Indian context. This constituted the nature of the public space which had to cater to the changing faces of religion in varying contexts adorned by the intent to grapple with its relationship with the political. This interplay between politics and the political has quite often generated and continues to produce so much content on the nature and practice of religion, on the nature and politics of public space, and on the degree of violence acceptable or questionable in Indian politics.¹²

While the concept of the political could be explored, studied, and considered as an extension of the politics of ones’ own processes of knowing and being, uncovering such possibilities within the existing knowledge systems, makes it a daunting task, given the looming absence of such narratives applied to the study of thinkers within the Indian tradition. Placing the dominance of knowledge systems in creating meanings and possible sub-narratives on research and inquiry into the deeper realms of understanding makes it a significant task worth attending to, as it continues to determine and define the ways in which we constitute ourselves and our perceptions. What perhaps, one seeks to discard, might be the one binding ones’ sensibilities. In that sense, it is important to watch the ways in which we tend to bracket and categorize thinkers within certain fixed notions, the objective of this research being, drawing instances to the reader’s attention on the non-necessity of such a task as well as the potential frivolity it exhibits while contributing to a potential distortion of what was thought in a given context by the thinker.

The role that religion has, in orchestrating these million sensibilities of and for ‘life’, is rooted in the particularity of its effects, usages, and ‘destined’ presence in the lives of people, its

followers, seekers, and non-followers. The myriad meanings and the multiple perceptions that religion exudes in societies, therefore demand keen attention. It is known that inquiries into and of religion, in the comprehension of modern societies have, time and again, proffered many possibilities of the political. The content that infuses the political has changed over the years, as it should, rooted in contexts yet suspended in time for its future practitioners and recipients. Such a contextual conception of the political also then opens space for newer forms of conceptualizations to be carried out. Perhaps the concerns related to religion have, as Hannah Arendt claims, humiliated politics, as it has opened the concerns for life and the living, which were closed and hidden before.¹³ Not only did politics distance itself from emotions and feelings, but it would have been humiliated and debased if it had to concern itself with life.¹⁴ This humiliation bore a huge brunt on the magnanimous selves of *modernities* that engulfed different spaces in different times and religion continued to exist in these political discourses even though as the apolitical. Over and above that, the temporal and spatial configurations of the political not only separated disciplines from each other but also marred possibilities of operating on the boundaries and pushing the same without getting categorized or branded as the concrete fixed Other. However, while I speak of a scenario where religion has exposed concerns of politics for not catering to life for the sake of life, I intend to claim that religion had been relegated to a 'safe' space and source of conformism, blindness, misery, superstition, conflict, violence, terror, aversion, divisiveness, fear and hatred, by the scientific vocabulary of emancipatory modern scientific rationality in a way that it constituted the modern political.

One must admit that this allegation has remained unchallenged of its intent and authenticity, since times immemorial with the state of wars that the Janus-faced religion has managed to create and consolidate. Religion reveals a dual possibility for better and for worse.¹⁵ However, the very source of this allegation bases itself on the same language that it repels from and provides content to its very formation that it seems to detest. For instance, science here is not stripped off, the vestige of the activity of 'defining the political' while it assumes the position of the Self, while conveniently packaging religion into the space of the Other, perhaps due to its misfit with the scientific temper.¹⁶ However, this Other cannot be the political other, even while it is shown within the scope of the political. The apolitical Moral is, therefore, created, and attributed to religion, in order to keep the Other alive, even though politically dead. The political does not feature this death as a problem but as a necessity that encapsulates the need to redefine the legitimate source of morality within the political. That is where religion gets used by the dominant political narratives to create apolitical forms of moral correctness.

A further interrogation into the nature and practice of religion portrays the forms of moral correctness and legitimate basis of religion being shown as fixated on norms, designed by a notion of the other-worldly, sacred, and what one may understand as phantasmagorical.¹⁷ Thus, attempts to question the moral correctness and legitimacy of religion also would have to question the following ingredients that are intrinsic to the composition of a religion, namely, the agency that makes religion legitimate and overbearing, the nature and composition of religion as a moral-political authority that conducts the affairs of its people. The question also, that one may have to address would be, “Can all religions fall ‘together’ under the matrix when being written off and projected as the moral apolitical space?”

With the advent of modernity in the Western European countries, such questions found prominence in looking down at religion and looking up to science, technology, modernization and secularization as the processes epitomising a political change that is valid and legitimate recipe to progress. Such contextual biases did cloud the attempts made to make sense of the inter-religious and intra-religious dynamics in society, which looked at religion as composed universally and being constituted as a uniform entity. For instance, the intent behind cultural hybridity¹⁸ getting used increasingly by the discipline of political studies also may have been to reconfigure the moral and cater to certain fixed clear presumptions of what should sustain as the political. Within the study of politics, cultural *hybridities* are projected as important only until it caters to the larger project of the supremacy of the modern rational self. Hybridity gets celebrated not for its sake, but for the sake of something else, which makes the entire process a sanctified apolitical space in time.¹⁹ Religion, therefore, loses its legitimacy increasingly even as the agency to continue to remain the Other even while getting rendered increasingly as the cite of struggles from the perspective of both the religious right and the subalterns.

The politics of religion does not render it very necessary to enquire into the essence of religion or explore the purpose for the inhabitants of societies. Such nuanced understandings associated with religion gets lost in the thick rubble of the westernized standardized and systematic methods of analysing society on the grounds of fixed parameters of success and progress. Recent cosmopolitan discourses, exploring the religion-state relationship in contemporary times, gendered and/or an *anthropocenic* reading and critical engagement with the political, show us today a glimpse of the questions that may be raised for newer academic concerns, especially the design of knowledge systems, in particular.²⁰ The complexities involved in the relationship between various theories and ideological positions have evolved as a result of

innumerable contexts that gave birth to the broadening possibilities and dimensions of conflict that could ensue. This in no way is suggestive of the fact that the discourse will ever get exhaustive or extraneous. The ongoing nature of the discourse itself provides appositional value to the imperative of trying to figure out what are the best alternative ways in which the relationships can be configured, changed and what are the entry and exit points of interaction in all of these conceptual formations. Such is the case with the very intrinsic understanding of these concepts. What leads to the creative formations of meanings in the discourse hold potent information regarding the intent and the purpose with which it is carried out.

These aforementioned discourses have explored the possibilities of placing religion as functioning in all the above forms in varying temporal and spatial contexts. They have managed to remove this masquerade that has bracketed religion as either being the responsible Other being wronged, the Other that should be eliminated or the Other that may not be an imperative to life itself. What remains to be seen is the treatment of these concerns today, and the operation and functions religion throws open to us, in the light of a conceptual reading of select political thinkers in modern Indian thought.

Religion has been packaged and perceived in various ways in India. It has its roots in experiential cultural practices, everyday wisdom, fixed regimented rules and norms, places of worship, creed, identities, and interests that allow for a complex mix of individuals and communities. While there have been scholars who have evidently expressed their discontent on the ways in which modern Indian societies have considered religion and discerned with a certain kind of a position for religion, there have also been many who have subscribed to the otherwise.²¹ In his account in *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India*, Peter Van der Veer does expound this by challenging VS Naipaul positing emancipation, freedom and life as being qualified by the modern rational knowledge which gets hindered by religion. Religion is opposed to knowledge as a whole and tradition opposed to history. The essence of this is captured in Veer's elaborate description in his text of the potential problems present in the claims made against Indians regarding their 'mythical fantasies' as causing a hindrance to the employment of "the novel as a tool for social and political inquiry into the 'real' world."²²

The use of religion for the purpose of the current research questions raised in the thesis, caters to the way religion has been perceived, its nature and its position in society that amounted to the corpus of conflict with the other sovereign legitimate institution from which society draws

its existence, the State. Thus, an enquiry into the politics of religion, therefore, leaves one with so much to draw from, in order to an understanding of what constituted the moral-political dynamics that continue to manufacture and build consciousness of the people. As mentioned before, some of the features defining the contemporaneous nature of religion are the theological analysis of religion, the nature of the presence of religion in creating a moral order, the inter-religious interactions, the nature of individuals and communities within and without religion, comparative studies of religions in the light of world religions and the like.²³

Thus, much has been written about religion and many connotations have been associated with religion. There are many ways of perceiving what religion stands to manifest or create for ones' existence. There are multiple meanings and nuanced understandings one could gather from religion and its presence/absence in life. Religion has offered itself as the cite of study for many a reason that has continued to shape the nature of public space for the longest time.

“A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something begins its presenting. Being in the beyond, then, is to inhabit an intervening space, as any dictionary will tell you. But to dwell in the beyond is also, as I have shown, to be a part of the revisionary time, a return to the present to redescribe our cultural contemporaneity, to reinscribe our human, historic commonality, to touch the future on its hither side. In that sense, then, the intervening space beyond, becomes a space of interaction in the here and now.”²⁴

Religion is definitely something that is reflective of the culture of the humankind and this explains why most of us remain inconclusive about it. However, the study and comprehension of religion are much vaster in scope, kind, and character than what we ever make sense of. For some, religion is the study of various values and cultural denominations of the lives of *masses*, while for others it involves the presence of the involvement of the self, as also with that of the other, and therefore only concerns faith. For others, religion, and in my opinion a majority of them, is ritualistic and involves the practice of a rigorous set of rituals, customs, and traditions that encapsulate the potential of getting transferred to generations and generations in the form of a legacy of sorts that then also leads to the formation of identities and new forms of living.

A study on religion, I acknowledge, itself merits a research study entirely on its own. However, for the proposed study, I am inevitably responsible to conceive an exposition of the ways in which religion has manufactured and constructed the notions of the political, moral, politics,

the state, and society relationships. The current thesis is an attempt at highlighting and banking upon the need to understand the question of culture and religion in this realm of ‘the beyond’, which when placed within the thought of the Indian tradition, provides some perspective on the ways in which religion was conceptualized.²⁵

There is no suspicion on the understanding that religion has managed to occupy mental histories for the longest period of time and has left people of all kinds grappling with the range of conflict it offers as crucial to be resolved or made sense of. Any studies on religion carry the burden of dissecting various levels of communication and intersections amongst a host of entities from the level of the personal to that of the public, involving people, masses, nation-state(state), market, groups, and the like. This makes the study sufficiently dependent on knowledge systems that conventionally define disciplinary formations. Therefore, the segment that concerns with religion as an exploration of how the political-moral has been understood within the site of the Indian tradition, becomes a rather sketchy affair given the complexities that have gone behind the processes of meaning-making, the constitution of various practices, the establishment of decrees, creed and institutions, and thereby moulding a certain consciousness that either eulogizes religion or demands against its legitimacy.

That religion, thus, has been used for different purposes in different contexts, is quite known. But what I claim is also that, these usages have been conveniently formed and crystallized within narratives which makes it imperative to impatiently treat the contextual realities and make it into ‘perfected realities’ for the future of an ideal society.²⁶ Thus, there comes a tendency to immediately draw conclusions from the vast reservoir of assumptions and construe a sense of immediacy in the resolution of this conflict, with the intent to ‘perfect’ the relations. This, according to thinkers like M.K. Gandhi and Tagore, was a sign of delusion and impracticality. For thinkers such as Gandhi, the ideal was never devoid of imperfections, and spirituality and religion helped him realize that.²⁷

The trajectory of studies carried out on religion ranges from serious comparative studies on religion to its philosophical and phenomenological presence in the lives of people, the politics of religion and the potential religion has in practically positing itself as one of the most sovereign spaces in the country today. The range of topical analyses possible in and around religion is varied and vast. Religion has assumed many spaces within the political for the longest time known, as either something that consumed politics, or as something that had to

remain disconnected from it.²⁸ This is what led to the shaping of the political which kept composing itself along with creating newer meanings for religion in the public space. At this juncture, with the intent to elaborate a bit on this making of the political, the ways in which politics of religion gets played out in the public space shall be studied.

The politics of religion tends to keep away the philosophical elements of religion in a space that is beyond the realm of the political, or at times conveniently employ it with the purpose of conforming to the political.²⁹ I shall take the example of the principle of tolerance that is conventionally attributed to Hinduism by its proponents, especially the ones carrying the cultural nationalist bearing, in order to make sense of what goes into the shaping of the political. This shaping of the political is connected to the formation of the moral and vice versa and the gaps that are created between the two per se defines the activity of politics. For instance, this explains how Hinduism has, over a period of time, retracted away from establishing the supremacy of its moral claims over beliefs and practices.³⁰ This observation made by Bhikhu Parekh entails the ‘openness’ that Hinduism claimed to practice by keeping the moral away from the political, except when the ‘*dharmic*’ *varna* and *ashrama*-based religious specifications were applied. These specifications, over a period of time, become attributes construing the moral when it gets contextualized and specific within ritualized spatial and temporal realms.

According to the above observations stated, Hinduism, as a religion ‘allowed’ for freedom of the practices within the folds while also negotiating with the borders of the moral. The political, here, limited itself for the most part, on a rather fixed notion of ‘tolerance’ emerging out of these boundaries of the moral and the religious. Not putting it under and within the bounds of the moral solely, is a striking characteristic of this routine phenomenon of construction of the political and the non-political in the meaning-making of moral and the religious, which then is laced within the vocabulary of tolerance for the very reason. This allows for religious proponents and practitioners, and believers to believe and propagate their belief in ‘tolerance’ as intrinsic to the religion, while staying well within the secured boundaries of the moral that was created as a presupposition to the construction of the political, all the while claiming that it is the vice versa that happens. The limitations to tolerance were discovered and projected as necessary to the bringing back of the religious into the foray that long suppressed religion from expressing itself as openly as it would have, but for the presence of the other religions spreading wide across the subcontinent. The limits of this tolerance also, therefore, revolved around these

fixated ideas of the intrinsic unpolluted core that Hinduism hinged upon, where even the moral was left open to interpretations and changes, depending on its visibility and presence and experiences on the realms of contact and interspersions with other religions and cultures.

Tolerance, in concept and practice, was not predicated upon the grounds of the nature and content of this 'moral' nor was the extent to which it would engage with the realm of the political that was located outside of this moral philosophical realm, considered important. So, what defined tolerance was not the content of the moral or the political or the moral-political, but was determined by the activity of politics that constantly shaped these borders, if any. Perhaps, such conversations were also perceived as a threat and that required communication to take place in languages unknown to the practitioners of religion. This allowed for Hinduism to thrive amidst a surge of narratives that sought to legitimize itself by claiming itself to be secular by default and in its intrinsic core value, at a time when secularism as an idea was becoming a prominent western ideal for many, in India.³¹ These statements do not intend to point towards the universal aphorism that is conveniently used which widely sanitizes the possibilities of other perceptions, that is 'everything is political'.³² There is a political that is perceived and believed to be one upon which is predicated the general conceptions of the moral, the religious, and the secular. The activity of politics requires serious introspection at a time when attributions such as tolerance, accommodation, inclusivity, and openness are made to masquerade the complexities behind the whole composition. An instance of such masquerading of values under the institutional attributions made to the formation of the nature of the State, is presented below for a clearer understanding of the aforementioned point.

“When a state is tolerant of religions, it need not lead to religious tolerance in society.”³³

There are innumerable instances of these political turfs escalating into outright head-on conflicts where state and religion have been at loggerheads with each other. The instance explicated here, portraying the underlying complexity involved in this formation of the political-moral, is the ongoing contemporary conflict that has also converted into antagonism across communities, on the headscarf controversy in Karnataka schools in India (2022) as was the case with the Instant Triple Talaq (2019) which offered one opportunity to engage in the depths of the complex relationship that exists today and could exist for future, between religion and state. There must be no dispute about the imperative of attempting to bring out possible explanations of a set of phenomena with reference to or in relation to propositions that make a definite departure from a purely descriptive narrative or mere argumentation of the narratives,

with the intent to simply redefine what previously was considered as a definition, for terms such as secularism, multiculturalism and the likes. For this reason, I shall draw examples from contemporary times to provide ample scope for one to engage with the existing narratives with the intent to resolve the conflict and address the formidable presence of violence in each of the narrativizations and whatever went into its construction.

The contentious debate on the headscarf in Karnataka schools had the state intervening on the grounds of the essential practices within religion and prescribing the way ahead for what must include within the core intrinsic composition of a certain religion, here, Islam.³⁴ In the light of the aforementioned instance, one could safely begin by challenging the attribution that there is a Hijab Ban in place in India, as the proscriptions that are present in the European western countries on the sporting of religious symbols in the public space are not the way in which religion is constitutionally allowed to be practiced in India. In India, there is no law or proscription that delegitimizes the sporting of a religious symbol in the public space. Towards this end, the presence and visibility of religion in the public is hinged upon a chequered and confusing amalgamation of the community, individual, public, and private, but not strictly of the binaries state and society. The state, through the courts, clearly attempts to demarcate the ‘secular’ which may be read as the non-religious here, from that of the religious as far as treatment of the religion is concerned. The employment of constitutional filters such as public order, health and morality, and other considerations become the foundational parameters on which the courts, the adjudicators within the state should plunge into defining and adjudicating on the religious character of a deeply religious society. Such a deeply religious society is made to be aspired into being secular, a secular that does not quite intend on giving much recognition to religion. This is in line with the arguments of Ashis Nandy and T.N. Madan who clearly stated in their works, that even if the state may be institutionally established as secular, it has never managed to secularize the society.³⁵

Amongst these competing claims of the secular nature of the State and the religious nature of the society and their interactions, this instance forced one to comprehend upon and decide on the following questions:

1. What is the extent to which State could speak the language of the ‘non-religious’ how ideal is this exercise?
2. On what grounds should the state keep away from the religious?

We shall see in the proposed study how these questions were dealt with by the canonical thinkers from the modern Indian thought and attempts would be made to recontextualize them into making sense of the conflicts happening today and potential conflict that may occur in future. It is, however, an open-ended question on the implications it harbours for one to understand the patterns of formation and the shaping that has taken place of culturally diverse societies extant in India.

1.2 Religion, Nation-State and the Place of Violence: Introducing the Problem

The problem that I try to work out in this thesis shall be elaborated in the current segment. The entire project of the liberal secular modern ethos was primarily worked out because it was tacitly as well as overtly understood that both state and religion could not occupy the same space. Both the religion and state have been contesting sources of law and sovereignty. There is a tacit underlying narrative in the formation of this understanding within the secular narratives propounded by scholars of the likes of Rajeev Bhargava. While, this aspect of the relationship between religion and state is explicitly pointed out and worked upon as a premise in the works of Ashis Nandy, T.N. Madan and the like, differently. Their commitment was to understand the intermingling between the two entities and propose an alternative to separation or ‘principled distance’ as suggested by the dominant secular versions of the secular narratives.³⁶

The contradictory appeals made in both these aforementioned accounts, with the former critically placing doubts on faith, non-reason, religion and religiosity to guide the public space; and the latter positing ample reasons to completely dethrone the hegemonic legitimacy attributed to the State in the use of reason, evidence, modernity, universality, and objectivity in defining of the public space. This garnered and drew ample attention to the possibilities of exploring the relationship at a time when the modern state/nation-state in India and the narratives surrounding it, were fixated on definite patterns catering to nationalism and moulding of all entities into modern packages to suit the modernizing processes.³⁷ In order to ensure that the average life of an inhabitant of the public space in India becomes less violent, and the space doesn’t turn violent with these contradictory appeals, secularism was brought in as the ideal that would provide for a normative vision to the way societies will emerge, by containing the possibilities of violence with the state becoming the epitome of a tolerant institution that will engage with religion depending on the contextual necessities.³⁸

In the Indian context, there has never been a strict separation between religion and politics in the practice of it. Even though the right to practice any religion of our choice in private spaces and strictly relegating religion within the realms only of the private appeared in the Constituent Assembly Debates (1946 – 1950), the larger consensus was on the acceptance that religion has never featured in a limited capacity only in the private spaces. Hence, the accountability and legitimacy to legislate upon it, form new norms, and raise claims associated with it did not lie only in the ambit of private communes or groups. On the other hand, the no-concern policy of secularism did also ensure the constitutional validity to the practise of religion as being an individual's private affair.³⁹ There are many assumptions one has to hold on to, in order for the separation to be understood as a possibility in the very constitution of what we understand as religion and its politics. Here, the use of the term politics indicates, for now, a series of activities that takes place in the realm of the political (predominantly the public) that is legitimized under the authority of the modern state in 'modern' spaces. In fact, religion is essentially considered as political and also as constituting the political, which seems to be present now. It was, therefore, not only common to locate religion, but also to identify the spaces where it could seed with the modern State, for the benefits of the latter.

1.2.1 Placing Violence as a Central Concern

“The state in India walked a tight rope between the requirement of religious liberty that frequently entails non-interference in the affairs of religious communities, and the demand for equality and justice which necessitates intervention in religiously sanctioned social customs.”⁴⁰

One of the most significant reasons as to why violence has been chosen as a trope in this thesis, to comprehend the relationship between state and religion and their nature, is in order to look into the totality of the following kinds of relations: non-interference from the state for the sake of religious liberty, interventions from the state for establishing justice and equality and intermingling of various religious identities. The tightrope that state walks in order to cater to all of the aforementioned relations in different contexts, is symptomatic of the violence of the episteme. This violence lies in the space occupied by the state and religion which are interspersed with each other. This underlying trope encompasses the need to serve multiple requirements that religion, state, individual and community at large would seek, in order to acquire for its coexistence in the society, the intent and purpose of actively participating in the creation of a common good. I shall explore the concept of violence and the scope it serves in

the current study, in the following passages, with the intent to emphasize on the need to embolden this trope as one of the most promising areas, that should help one aspire for one to be more aware of the violence that persists in most of these formations.

Violence, in all its callousness, has been a perennial reality that has the potential to erupt in its most visibly callous, invisibly convenient, recognizable as well as unidentified forms. Whether or not the ideal of removing conflicts from the society is even desirable to be considered a focal point in the intellectual discourse of peace studies, violence has exposit itself either as absence of peace or as a positive evidence of alienation, violation, repression, domination and the like. As much as it is an abstract concept, laden with value judgments, substantive content of ideas, opinions, world images and events, it is still a manifestation of the societal actions in its co-relation with varied segments such as the political, cultural, social, economic and the like. There hasn't been any phase of intellectual history which hasn't been oblivious of or devoid of important reflective presence of violence in the socio-cultural, political and economic structures, forms and courses, viz a viz issues related to ideological conflicts, physical wars, conduct of diplomatic operations, the problem of order, justice, rights, conflict of interests. Right from physical wars to cultural, ideological conflicts; from visible suppressive/repressive forces to those that are not made obvious; the source and the range of infliction of violence is vast, widespread and sometimes, incomprehensible.

Violence has never left anyone in any sphere untouched. It could have embodied different forms, names and courses such as that of modernity, nationalism, nation-state, cultural-religious domination, as well as systemic knowledge-production. In such a state of crisis, attempting to find the solution of a specific problem amounts to no less than firefighting. Alleviation of the crisis requires radical rearrangements of the relationships between the institutions, structures and values of the political system in accordance with the constantly changing society of our times. Action to solve problems then remains no longer administrative or managerial. It requires sustained political and social interventions, often from outside of the established institutional networks in the existing political system, with a deeper sense of historicized pasts that continue to dominate our present.⁴¹ Various forms of violence have traversed through and rebounded in unprecedented ways making it still the most relevant subject in social sciences. Violence has many connotations and can exclusively become a subject of research. What makes violence a potent force impeachable of facing an existential question of why it exists if it does, for the “destruction of our sense and existence,” is because

of the unprecedented forms it assumes, harbors and operates itself in. Locating violence in the socio-cultural backdrop religion and nation-state; which forms the concern of this research.

Putting aside the metaphysical and philosophical question of violence, the pertinent challenge of conceptualizing and theorizing violence in both the substantive and structural relationship between the functioning of the modern nation-state apparatus and a pluri-religious society attracts significant attention. To comprehend the epistemological and evolutionary trajectory of violence with the baggage of history, suppression and injunction of modernity, calls for a realization of the perils, which the ideological nature of nationalism and the religion in public space have exhibited across centuries. This has led to escalating levels of ‘human alienation’; one of the most direct links and inexorable associations to violence in any form. As formless, eschatological and an incisive concept violence is, it is left out in the open to be moulded, generated into countless forms, right from interstate conflicts, wars, economic despotism, to epistemological control, thereby rendering the task of locating which of the two is more violent, completely unapproachable, if not understandable. The aforementioned points also suggest the looming absence of violence alone getting underscored as a central question in deeper academic engagements within social sciences in general and political theory in particular. Psychopolitical studies suggest how little the concepts such as humiliation, the dignity of the self, and human alienation have been addressed using innovative means that are indigenous to us. Even when these were addressed, the modular forms used to address them were not investigated sufficiently keeping in mind the violence behind its formations.⁴² Such analyses of the religion and nation-state relationship, the interplay of politics and the political, and also of thinkers within the Indian tradition have been carried out in a scattered manner. However, a thematic reading with centrality to violence fares the least of the academic attention within the existing political tradition.⁴³

By employing violence as a trope, I do not claim that the presence of the term, violence, in my thesis is with the intention of emphasizing only on its significance over other tropes in the analysis of politics. By contextualizing violence here, a concept deserving every inch of academic attention in its own merit, into a specific space, I may run into the risk of developing much skewed imaginative possibilities of the relationship between state and religion; but I wish to narrow the scope of this inquiry for academic and intellectual convenience. Most of the intellectual transactions that defined the state and religion may have touched upon the concern of violence at some point. However inimitable the presence of violence has been, the emphasis

on the lack of visibility of a specific method or aspects that can help us bridge/establish a relationship between the two entities only suggests the acknowledgment of the diversity and the obscurity of this concept.⁴⁴

Violence, as mentioned above, is not used in the inquiry as a trope to explain positions and characteristic features of either religion or state. In order to understand where it stands in the discourse, there might be an innate urge to try and identify where it doesn't. However, such an enquiry always posits violence as a thing left upon the researcher to be discovered with matter that constitutes it as a whole. However, such conclusive statements, if any, of such an enquiry shall bind within the perimeters of the immediate question such as the following. Which of the institutional arrangements between a modern state and religion is more (or less) violent from the other? Such an immediacy to locate an answer to this question would mean locating the matter of violence and fixating it within known parameters of callousness, disregard, hatred, and rage.⁴⁵

Neither does the current thesis intend to conduct a study that shall move towards providing conclusive statements on which thinker of all subscribed to more violent means than the other, nor does it claim to locate the presence of violence only of a certain kind as being the indicator of the presence of violence in the entities state and religion. Such generalizations would require one to harbor a generic understanding of violence, which is not only definitive in approach but also non-humanistic in its content. Such an enquiry, however, well-intentioned, might tend to risk entering into a syllogistic puzzle wherein violence ceases to remain an attribute that could assist in making sense of politics and the political (here). Such an engagement would also beat the very purpose of the study which is based on a strong premise of unknowability⁴⁶ and the absence of a knowable solution to the problem of violence.

The attempt will be, most humbly, to explore this unknowable space and analyze how far previous explorations and inquiries have carried out the task with the intention of responding to violence. The attempt also, thus, shall be to theorize/philosophize, reconceptualize and recontextualize some select thinkers in the tradition of Indian thought, who have contributed to the existing constitutional ethos and the understanding of public good. By bringing violence into the equation, we seek to explore the ontological origins of the term in its employability and usage specifically connected to the writings and works of three select thinkers from the dominant Indian political tradition. In order to conduct such an inquiry, from the annals of

colonial history, a historiographical study of the pasts through the eyes of the thinkers and through their readings shall be relied upon. The most significant assumption that I intend to harbour while carrying out the inquiry is abstaining from the *terra firma* thoughts of the past narratives to which ‘facts’⁴⁷ are fixed and held as strongly determining the truth of my existence today. The adherence to this *terra firma* kind of an inquiry that archaeologists usually mention as significant to their orientation while dealing with the pasts,⁴⁸ here, would run into the concretization of the political, which operates in contradiction to the efforts behind the current study. Even if the alternative produced would concretize a new political, the awareness of its formation could be a possible contribution to the ongoing narrativizations.

The current study strives to explore and open up the space of the political and help one comprehend it today in the light of the interplay between the moral and political. The efforts also are towards making oneself and the readers aware of what seemingly would have closed itself to the concerns raised, while responding to violence. With the intent of familiarizing the reader with various positions that have been held by scholars on the state-religion relationship in India, a brief overview of the same will be elucidated in the analysis with the purpose of putting together a nascent attempt at keeping alive the intentionality of exploring and perhaps creating ways in which the moral-political have been thought out.

Another purpose behind this study is to anchor the discourse upon making efforts towards creating a response to violence while also looking into the ontological journey of violence in the writings of Indian political thinkers. Any claims made in the thesis or during the course of the study regarding the potential any theorization holds will be tested in the light of how a relationship between religion and state can help us respond to violence today. Whether the thesis stands the test of time and seeks to contribute to the entire corpus of multi-layered and multi-centered discourses will be left at the discretion of readers, scholars, and academicians. Thus, there is ambiguity in the understanding of politics when confronted with violence and this aporia is something one cannot escape from. Violence can be justified but can never be legitimate. It can be legitimized, nevertheless. This could briefly help one anticipate the tone of the current inquiry. This statement on violence opens up the scope to understand the interplay between politics and the political. When violence gets legitimized, it operates as the space which plays with the political to accommodate and perhaps, mould politics into it. This play signifies the activity of politics, which in turn narrates the composition of the political, the social, the psychological, and the legal.

A compiled elaborate project on such narrativizations carried out by many ecologists, environmentalists, social scientists, was carried out by Ashis Nandy which is an example of the politics-political-violence interplay that have formed institutions of the grotesque kinds, affecting generations.⁴⁹ Anything that seeks legitimacy looks for answers, preferably from the past as if its existence now isn't legitimate just by virtue of existing in a unique or a 'new' time and space despite having drawn influences from the past in the form of shared events, experiences, memories of oppression of joy or of any kind. There is an immanent lack in the present that is observed as a given in this proposition one follows. As a result of which, 'going back' becomes invariably the answer to resolve and perhaps sanctify the riddles and conflicts of our contemporary times from politics. However, going back to the past frequently would want the understanding of the past to come handy, remain secure, easily, if not thoroughly accessible. This demands the process of memory to become stronger than ever for the aforementioned task to happen.⁵⁰

The legitimacy of religion and nation-state that is sustained by the dominant historicist discourse of colonial history as having a linear development of the past histories and exhibiting a propensity for rightfully being able to employ and practice violence, while also portraying a rather convenient celebration of the multiple plural pasts as mere indigenous celebrated feature of the 'Indian', throws light on the areas that need academic attention, possibly through the current study.⁵¹ This is also primarily one of the reasons why anything that makes the past accessible, any tool, approach, discipline, school of thought, theory, or experience attracts the attention of the world to remain and sustain itself as the most important event of all and in some ways exhibit a picture of the past, which may be a glimpse but also become so strong a memory to define and fix the past, to suit our present.⁵² And while one gets stripped out of the vestige of legitimacy by one's own self on account of events happening externally leading to the questioning of one's own identity, one uses this 'lack' as a reason to resort to the worst forms of violence.⁵³ This proposition is based on a strong predilection pointing us toward a potential connection violence has and continues to establish roots in that of legitimacy.

The political thinkers from the canon of what is popularly referred to as Indian Political Thought who are part of this analytical study have been put under the scrutiny of the vocabulary, epistemic assistances, actions, writings, and speeches that then form our understanding of the thinkers within the problem of violence. The study is not carried out with the intent of reading them as static subjects of a dynamic context from the past, but perhaps

more with the purpose of finding out the relationship between religion and state that is based on violation of the dominant one over the other, while staying within the parameters of their respective thought. It is this violation that the thinkers gave significant attention to which allows us to place them within the myriad theoretical and conceptual political contestations of their theories and practices. The current site of analysis is the Indian political tradition which makes it temporal too, and not just a spatial inquiry. The former is, because, it makes the site always contemporary as this inquiry is within the realm of contemporary thinking, the insight of which we hope to decipher in order to deal with the question of violence. The temporality of this inquiry does therefore contribute to the politics and the defining of the political which shifts and moulds in time-based on narratives that have been present in the mainstream of the modern Indian thought and consciousness which predominantly has been conceptualized within the framework of nationalist historiography.

However much this study finds itself located well within the nationalist historiographical questions when placed in time, what makes it contemporaneous and perhaps deviating from the classical concerns of the dominant colonial contextual questions, would be the reading of the moral-political interplay and thereby the politics-political interplay which would seek to question the basis of the formations of State, Religion and Society in general. This shall be performed with a conscious effort to avoid slipping into the fixated meanings of the nationalist text with the intent to cater to the future contingencies where the religion and state would play out their relationships in ways that should be able to address violence.

1.2.2 Religion- Nation-state Relation: Immediacy in the Replication of Past Narratives

An entry into this inquiry may require one to visit the studies that have been meticulously undertaken by various scholars on the way different religions have existed in the subcontinent. The flourishing of various organized religions in India from its classical, medieval times did take place within the confines of some of the following activities such as deep-rooted inter/intra-cultural and inter-religious dynamic assimilations, intermingling, conflicts, invasions, conquests, rejections and contrasting claims made with time, regarding the potential ability to position religion in a secured space, within the matrix.⁵⁴ Intra/Inter-religious and cultural conflicts, confluence of syncretic traditions and a plethora of events became the handiwork for the flourishing of multiple sects, divisions, convergences and new formations of religious beliefs, practices, structures, foundations and institutions. Such a dynamic

environment further produced the need to define and comprehend the complexity of the formations and its influence in the political ordering of society.

There was an increasing need to enquire into religions of all kinds that were present within the region, given the complexities involved in grappling with how religions functioned. Right from organized religions which were confounded within the dictates issued by the religious leaders through the organizational system to religions that did not follow this order, such as the early Hindu religious and cultural formations, the perplexities that confounded the curious outsider gaze and the travelers, traders, invaders, colonial rulers were multifold.⁵⁵ As has been described in many such accounts, there have been instances of an intermingling of the imperial order and the religious order, which eventually got configured within the conflicting dynamic relationship between the orthodoxies and the heterodoxies in the society. T.N. Madan points them out extensively, with an elaborate description of the ways in which religion was perceived, in what has been conventionally and politically timed and periodized as classical/medieval period in India, which were not fixated within definite ways of living. For instance, while the Ulemas, the Sufis, the imperial state and its dynastic order created various kinds of orders and went through several transformations in their functioning and the purpose they served, right from the times of Mohammed Bin Qasim of Sind to Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar, one could sense the extent to which religion became the source of various kinds of value systems, points of contestations, and of assimilations. Here in too, there was ample presence of an endless turf and antagonisms between the imperial order of the state and the religious order of the religious orthodoxies, and between orthodoxies and heterodoxies.⁵⁶

An interest in the study of religious diversities and differences was the matter of a certain kind of gaze that used to be and continues to be employed to look into how different religions operated with each other. Religions were pitted against each other, not only as belonging but also as interjecting and building immersive points of contact within differing cultural universes. An exploration of religion through its intermingling and not only its diversities provide a different set of findings on how religions flourished in the region. An emphasis on such readings has been made by contemporary historians, cultural anthropologists, and the like, which challenged intransigent conclusions that found solace for a long time in the normative vision that usually vouched for the seclusion of religion from the realm of the public or for the least interference from the State, or in other words, the secular narratives. For instance, examples of such an intermingling across Hinduism and Islam was found in the ‘Guru-Pir’⁵⁷

religious practices of the socially and economically underprivileged sections of the society, that operated far away from the orthodoxies of the upper echelons and ‘elites’ of the same religion. Such instances are also elaborated in another account meticulously presented by Muzaffar Alam in *The Languages of Political Islam, c. 1200–1800*, where Islam’s movement into ‘newer lands’ away from the Perso-Islamic context, dilutes and metamorphosizes at the popular mass levels, such as the spread of Sufi movement, while the Perso-Islamic connections remained intact at the elite levels. Thus, it has either been the aspect of intermingling or that of contradistinctions, that have structured narratives explaining the presence, practice and the politics of religions in India.⁵⁸ The political gets proffered the site awaiting an explanation of what the religious means.

The site of the Indian political tradition, as has already been mentioned above, shall be used to make sense of the dynamics that existed between this political-moral-politics interplay. Perhaps, the only thinker who could have reversed this order was M.K. Gandhi, because of which he attracted acute criticisms and suspicions on his penchant for the religious and religiosity.⁵⁹ Thus, proponents of a secular polity, the variants of which are fundamentally different from each other, such as that of Jawaharlal Nehru (strict religion-state separation) and B.R. Ambedkar (state-guided society with religions underneath it and a formidable separation between the two, with state interference, as deemed necessary) did contribute immensely to the existing dominant inclination towards secularism and posed challenges to the likes of M.K. Gandhi, C. Rajagopalachari.

Now, the encounters with religion in the west had more to do with the fixated meanings with which religion was perceived as. For instance, Christianity in its classical orthodox medieval forms that prevailed for a long time in many parts of Europe, is largely believed to have relied upon the following three elements: Church, Creed and Personal Morals.⁶⁰ This controverted religion with science in the following ways and on the following grounds:

- The ways in which reality was perceived.
- The corrupt practices propagated by the Church became the defining factor of what constituted the moral/immoral. Science was able to disprove it with evidences and allegation of corruption against religion lay in the dominance and violent certainty with which such a knowledge was imparted and imposed by the clergy. This provided immense leverage for science to claim its legitimacy in a society that was consumed by

the dictates of religion and by the sufferings it imparted. “Religion is an amazing phenomenon that plays contradictory roles in people’s lives. It can destroy or revitalize, put to sleep or awaken, enslave or emancipate, teach docility or teach revolt.”⁶¹ The Janus-faced religion did, over a period of time, with its engagements with the complex political realities, create ways in which it got studied, perceived as, and comprehended, with the intent of establishing legitimate orders of all kinds.⁶²

- The power and legitimacy that the religious institutions and the creeds harbored had systematically, as pointed out above, created opponents and potential challengers in science. This culminated in the formation of secular narratives that expressed problems with the former and contributed to the ongoing discontent generated against the former. Thus, the secular narratives did birth out of this rigmarole in order to ensure and sustain ways of questioning evilness. Therefore, the construal of a new political-moral that was once monopolized by the Churches gained significance. This, gradually could have provided more leverage to science and the initiation of modernization to impinge upon rising criticisms of the evilness of traditions and the immoral corrupt income generation of the clergy that also threatened its political legitimacy. This overuse of the immoral and the amoral, as attributes to an institutional arrangement and a once-legitimate institution that goes through a transition (and translation),⁶³ formed the beginning of the crisis of legitimation.

Such a usage of the moral in redefining the political, as what may appear to one on the surface, is not disengaged from the political in the very first place. The act of delay and apathetic disregard for a redefinition already forms the foreground to the nourishment of the ‘new’ political even before it changes into something new. The moral gets increasingly used either only for generating newer forms and patterns of legitimacy or for going back to the old secure legitimate patterns. This is classically known as revivalism and/or fundamentalism. Such exposure to the Christian traditions from the nineteenth century onwards in India ironically took place in some of the following events such as the British lifting the ban on proselytization and attributing the Hindu religions and its gods as uncouth for legitimizing means of conversion which also became equivalent to the moral upliftment programs of the masses.⁶⁴

A prequel of such a trend could be traced back to the attribution of Hinduism to signify the totality of practices and worldviews that were lived and experienced by the inhabitants, who were popularly named Hindus, influenced by the term Sindhu. Hence, Arvind Sharma writes,

‘One has only to think of the widely disparate perceptions and attitudes that make up Indian religion to know this is profoundly misleading to lump these together as “Hinduism.”’⁶⁵ Hinduism did not coincide with its practitioners but was created in order to cater to the ‘Other’ that did not practice it. The Greek suffix ‘ism’ gets added to it, therefore, in order to create the sense of a conglomerate picture of the religion of the Hindus. The collective uniformity in the meaning of the term, Hinduism, was symptomatic of the intermingling of Christian experiences with that of the existing diversities and the power dynamics getting created out of such engagements with ‘alien’ religions branded as mysticism, and superstitions of the uncouth kind. Conversions becoming the social cause that colonizers must participate in, for the ‘upliftment’ of the society, became the normative vision for the point of contact that Christianity had through the British, with the other ‘complex’ religions that were already present in the region.⁶⁶ Such exposure to the western aspects of secularity, statehood, and religiosity gradually became now the sanctioned, approved and legitimate project of the state, where the gradual hegemonic influence and imposition of the secular narratives intended to look at religion with a lot of suspicion in the creation of the socio-political order.

1.2.3 Politics- Political Interplay: The Sacred-Secular Debate

According to the above instances that were provided, of the works of contemporary scholars such as Ashis Nandy and T.N. Madan, one could decipher the linkages that the colonial rule in India established with respect to establishing the legitimacy of the State. The State legitimized itself on its developing attitudes toward multiple religions that existed in the subcontinent. Thus, colonial rule in India was not an imperial order that was immune to the religious order. While there has been a disavowal from the believers and followers of religion, of the presence of irrationality in the practice of religion by people, the secular discourse has constantly based itself upon a refutation of this argument, thus making it easier for ‘clear’ antagonisms to be formed in the public space. The recurring patterns of the turf between the papal authority’s orthodoxy and the heterodox traditions in the society continued into the present with the state’s prescriptive and dictatorial authority assuming importance with time, and the latter getting welcomed as the one that should replace the former. The argument that there is the presence of reason and can be increasingly employed in its practice and conduction of the affairs of the public space, formed the formidable basis to secular discourses becoming extremely popular and clubbing with science to displace religion from the public spaces.

This trend was also found in the medieval political orders under Islamic rule and within the religion, Islam itself.⁶⁷ Such continuing and contrasting trends, however, may place the secular as opposed to the sacred, but such representations fall short of the multiple webs of relations that are formed between the religious and the statist conceptions of the good. The placement of these two as opposites only earmark a continuum in time of the trends that were visible between orthodoxy and heterodoxy. This superimposition of the state on the society, with religion playing the linking role and determining the relation, only keeps away many spaces of the political in the dark. The narratives, thereafter formed, lurk above these dark spaces that are kept out of the site of politics. In order to substantiate the points mentioned above, I shall seek assistance from the studies carried out by scholars of the likes of Jurgen Habermas and Charles Taylor.⁶⁸

The passage from *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays* that clearly suggests Jurgen Habermas' position on the nature of the sacred is important to the point raised above on the formation of the secular tropes. They emphasize on the possibilities of transcending sacredness into defining what we materially understand as order.⁶⁹ The passage states the following:

“I do not believe that we, as Europeans, can seriously understand concepts like morality and ethical life, persons and individuality, or freedom and emancipation, without appropriating the substance of the Judeo-Christian understanding of history in terms of salvation.... But, without the transmission through socialization and the transformation through the philosophy of any one of the great world religions, this semantic potential could one day become inaccessible.”⁷⁰

A society is supposed to be held together by values of substantive nature for its sustenance, and not only put together by principles and procedures. Another instance where the same point gets substantiated in Habermas is captured in the following passage. The attribution that a liberal secular state would have little to no affiliation with normative concerns gets challenged.

“Once law has been fully positivized, political rule is at all open to a secular, that is, a nonreligious or postmetaphysical justification. Even if such legitimation is granted, with respect to motivation it remains doubtful whether such an ideologically pluralist community could be stabilized normatively by presuming an at best formal background consensus, one limited to procedures and principles. And even if this doubt could be removed, it remains a fact that liberal systems are dependent upon the solidarity of their

citizens—a solidarity whose sources could dry up completely as a result of a “derailed” secularization of society.”⁷¹

Interestingly, for Charles Taylor, there was a certain degree of secularity needed for one to fight for one’s religious identities.⁷² Such understanding of the conception of the Self for Taylor marks different from the individualist as well as the communitarian or the collectivist notions that are primarily rooted in either the individual or the collective forms. Modernity came with two major events:

1. The collapse of the social hierarchies determined by birth
2. The ideal of authenticity i.e., the interpretation of an identity that is particular to something that is within me.

The logic of sovereignty comes from the logic of authenticity which also may be extended to the formation of concepts such as nation and nationalism; in that there is something authentic and therefore we deserve sovereignty. For such an understanding of sovereignty to exist, there needs to be a radical transformation in the functioning and the existence of the many collectives and their impact on forming various associations with the individual self, that creates a sense of belonging, identification and attachment; which in turn leads to social political and economic hierarchies. This paves the way towards creating a conducive space for any possible misrecognition from getting averted because misrecognition may occur by virtue of one belonging to a certain group or by virtue of one not being recognized for what he, she or they is/are. This misrecognition may stem from or lead to a state of subjugation, alienation, or oppression by virtue of being defined and identified only within a certain group.

Lionel Trilling makes a claim for this, in his ideal of authenticity, that there is something authentic to one’s self even while disconnected or being separated from all existing collective formations and identities.⁷³ This authenticity is inwardly generated as all external connections have been *taken away temporarily*, for getting a sense of the spatial and temporal arrangement of the self and what constitutes it.⁷⁴ Authenticity requires one to have a certain sense of space for being, becoming, and doing irrespective of the outwardly external connections that exist. For instance, if I am linked to an external identity there is nothing authentic in me, if I’m only known or defined on the grounds of that external identity and if there is nothing left in me then that creates very little space for what one can understand conventionally as being sovereign. Such an *individual cultural authenticity* is inwardly generated and anyone has/is capable of having authenticity, amidst the collapse of social hierarchies, which become a pre-requisite for

Taylor building his notion of authenticity. The community cultural associations have ruptured sufficiently in this understanding of authenticity attributed to each individual, irrespective of you being endowed with the qualities of the cultural ties and bonds that you always were a part of. Whoever you are, be it under the burden of identities that are ascribed to you by birth to the extent of them being definitive of your existence and living, there is a certain degree of authenticity that provides you the potential to transcend these.

Following this realization, the construction of identity, therefore, particular to me, is based on authenticity. In reiteration to what arguments above are leading us to, is the following question: How do we identify the grounds on which it is authentic and when do we realize this authenticity? Taylor responds that it begins with the notion that human beings have a moral intuitive sense of what is right or wrong. Such a moral intuitive self works in conjunction with the previous external associations only to the point of it not questioning or shaking the foundations of the claims of the individual authenticity and its supremacy over the ascribed associations that society granted to one. Earlier such a conception of morality and the moral was external and reified in terms of the collectivities and the location and spatialization of the Divine or the State. The divine then became an entity/many entities and formations in time. This external morality then became defined in terms of rewards and punishments that grounded itself on the connections with the God/ Good. This became essential for the formation of a full being. With the advent of modernity, the process of secularization of ethics ensures one relies upon moral intuition and interpreting one's own morality with an engagement with one's intuitive self amidst the collapse of religious institutional supremacy. This is a western Christian notion of what entailed the rise of modernization that simultaneously catered to religion getting opened up for interpretations in the public space.⁷⁵ This authenticity that was previously outwardly generated through my moral position with Good and God, gets shifted inward and is anchored inward, which is also known as individual morality. However, this authenticity is not uninfluenced by the moral conceptions of these external Good/God.

Making the individual sovereign, therefore, also entails a radical correction of the inequalities that collective groups and belonging creates. This is again possible when the individual is understood as an entity that gets defined as the individual even while being conceptualized and realized as one amidst many collectives. The retention of individuality lies in a constant activity of self-comprehension as an 'authentic individual'. In order to experience authenticity, one has to incorporate the moral-political elements of life and living and mould it into an understanding

of our existence with the Other/other, while retaining the primary emphasis on the authentic individual Self. These moral intuitions are, thus, inwardly generated with an ideal of authenticity that requires humans to take charge of their own existence. The differences between humans and the potentially conflicting spaces which they occupy are not merely essentially political by nature. The political is laden with the basic differences in the moral significance that each human being is characterized with. In other words, these differences in humans possess a moral character and moral significance that differs from the other. This also means that each one has an original way of being human. This argument may be made applied to explaining cultural contestations, cultural differences and conflicts, for instance the colonial mission in India and the points of contact between the secularity and religiosity of the many cultures involved in the colonial interaction.

This authenticity or originality is what therefore constitutes the entity that is human. This also applies to human sufferings, exploitation and violence. Just as each entity may be differently understood as a human, each one has a different way of being human and processing one's own position in the world. This suggests that irrespective of one being an atheist, an agnostic or a believer, or part of a collective whether ascribed or innately connected to, one has a degree of authenticity so that one does not get misrecognized because of where one belongs. However, for the one formed within the cluster of group/groups and subjugated within, it is important to detach from the group in order to make sense of this subjugation. Also, the individual does not stand as a free self at a distance, waiting to be discovered. There are conditions external to the individual for freeing the self which need to be employed continuously, in order to free oneself. These conditions cannot be internally created but have to be dialogically understood and construed for a suitable space for the individual to flourish. The fundamental problem that Charles Taylor raises with communitarianism is the absence of a sense of authenticity that is left to the individuals in their recognition of different cultural associations. Individualism's criticism of communitarianism does not contain this as the bone of contention demanding the latter's response. In the light of the current study, thus, Taylor's secularism rooted in fundamental values of religiosity and authenticity shows us a transcend of binaries of the individual and community, the State and Society. However, it still holds on to an intuitive morality (which involves only the self) as being different from the external political (which involves things other than the self).

However, Talal Asad questioned Taylor's conception of a strategic secular located in the moral and beyond the political, as stated by Markha G. Valenta:

"The first of these, as Talal Asad has pointed out, is that Taylor's vision of secular democracy as a form of voluntary self-discipline obscures the extent to which secularism becomes the political ideology through which the state justifies its monopoly on violence—a violence it uses not simply to impose order but to assert what are to count as the core political principles according to which political disputes are resolved. So, while Taylor suggests that the state works through negotiation and persuasion and Asad recognizes "the generous impulse behind this answer," the latter is forced to point out that "the nation-state is not a generous agent and its law does not deal in persuasion."⁷⁶

Thus, from the above contesting claims on the nature of secularity, one could safely state that the imperial order increasingly draws so much from this turf and foundations itself on this sacred-secular dichotomous meanings for its own legitimacy, which has been sufficiently in the narratives presented above. However, this has been proclaimed with an in-depth analysis in the Indian context, by scholars of the likes of TN Madan, Ashis Nandy, Peter Van der Veer, that this sacred-secular relationship has never been as concrete and as dichotomous in any other religion than in Christianity.⁷⁷ Such a predicament was shared by T.N. Madan in great detail in his analysis of the crisis of secularism. It went on to expose the absence of any basis to this dichotomy that was considered ideal for the defenders of secular discourses and its application to the Indian matrix of a complex web of different religions. This complex web of many religions and cultures, and other vernacular attributes of cultural/religious practices such as *Dharma* (righteousness), leading one's lives in *Ibadat* (worship) and service, strived through various phenomena such as revivalism/fundamentalism/existentialism as faith systems and ways of living for the common people.⁷⁸ Such transitions also formed sites of interactions with the formation, emergence and nature of State which was later twinned with the concept of nation and nationhood as forming an intrinsic part of statehood. The rise of the feeling of nationhood in this context also allowed one to make sense of their possible interactions with religion and that in effect led to conversations across religions. This is explicated in the following passage by T.N. Madan:

"My main argument is that neither India's indigenous religious traditions nor Islam recognize the sacred-secular dichotomy in the manner Christianity does so and, therefore, the modern processes of secularization (in the sense of expanding human

control over human lives) proceed in India without the support of an ideology that people in general may warm up to, such as one legitimized by religion. What exists empirically, but not also ideologically, exists but weakly.....The conclusion is not that the secular state should be jettisoned, or, more absurdly, all Indians should become Christians, but that special efforts are needed to give it clear definition, work out its relation to civil society, and reinforce it ideologically.”⁷⁹

The context in which this point has been raised lies in the fallacies of not only the method in which secular discourses have sought to characterize the political order in the State, but also in the absence of the language that would help one communicate the incommunicable that gets manifested in inter and intra religious contestations. Religion gets relegated within the overt conflicting politico-theological positions by opposing and perhaps creating exclusive worldviews and spiritual content within different modes of historical legitimacies⁸⁰ for different organized religions, especially some dominant religions such as Hinduism, Islam and Christianity in India, without much emphasis on the manner in which religion is pitched within the dominant narratives of the changing contexts. This, I seek to claim, becomes one of the major fallacies that one has to encounter while figuring out the problems that these narratives and their debates fail to expose in a certain context, especially in the contemporary times.

The immediacy with which the narrativization takes place with religion immediately getting pitched against historical legitimate accounts, or within the future nationalist imagination, or into the private/personal that must not mingle with the public, or the space that defies rationality and hence must form the apolitical/non-political is where lies the violence of the practice of politics and the formation of the political. This finds semblance in the following passage:

“In recent years, however, and in the midst of a widespread resurgence of interest in the public importance of religion, there has been an increasingly sophisticated series of intellectual interventions challenging us to reconsider our most basic categories of research, analysis, and critique. Just as, in an earlier period, feminists and other scholars raised fundamental questions about the meaning of the public and its relation to the private, today the very categories of the religious and the secular—and of secularism and religion—are being revisited, reworked, and rethought.”⁸¹

1.3 A Review of the Ongoing Discourse: Exploring Select Conceptual Positions

“This is an era where there is an explosion of religious revival and also those who are disinterested in religion.”⁸²

“It is clear that the wall between religion and government is now so porous as to be an unreliable guide to attitudes and actions.”⁸³

The writings underlying the proposed study here and cited in the manifold categorizations and organization of literature, that will be laid down later below, are deemed important on the basis of them having contributed immensely to the concerns stated in the above sections, and/or their contributions, if not capturing in entirety the scope of the current study, have still become a formidable basis of the existing work done. Such a delimitation of the existing theoretical conceptual studies done along similar lines may seem to cater to multiple tropes of normative analysis, that are grounded in contemporary concerns. The current study may not appear to even closely contribute to the complexities involved in deciphering meanings, definitions, and assumptions that go behind the construal of terms such as religion, state, nation-state, politics, and the political. Some of the many challenges one faces in an analytical study is the necessity to develop a keen ear for the assumptions on which many claims are made and questioned. If the existing norms of studying and researching in academics, with emphasis on disciplinary foundations which we call as defining the scope were to be done, one wouldn't have been able to encounter writings that fundamentally challenged the scope of the political itself. This study is committed to not delimiting these conceptual terms in their current form throughout the thesis. It may carry multiple meanings as we proceed through the course of the thesis. This, in no way, suggests that all terms are open-ended and hence, undefinable, in the poststructuralist sense. I perhaps claim the opposite, that is, getting into the meanings with the vision of open-ended possibilities for the future.⁸⁴ Therefore, charting the scope of this study does not delimit its time or space within disciplinary foundations or definite modular forms of inquiry. However, this also simultaneously constitutes the limitations that constitute this study.

In the Indian context, such a study becomes even more complex due to the presence of many religions and their compositions that are diverse and multi-fold, with multiple centers of sovereignty such as religion, state, and market⁸⁵ occupying the public space and the politics of time and space that enables one to raise questions of contemporary nature with the intent of developing normative visions for future. Without such a detailed exploration of the existing

literature, the field shall remain completely intractable and would permit only an off-hand and questionable appraisal of a meaningful study of this complex relationship. In order to make sense of the position of violence in the relationships that are harbored by religion and nation-states in India that have contributed immensely to the epistemological constructions of our time, we need to provide a detailed account of the literature as attempted here. This categorization of the literature studied for current research will provide pertinent suggestions, over a period of time, to the ways in which existing discourses have been formed that concern with the scope laid out above.

This categorization of the literature is two-fold. The first concerns with an exploration of the existing literature on the question of religion and state relationship. This relationship has been studied widely by various scholars using various tropes as its bases, such as liberty, equality, justice, tolerance, political order, legitimacy, and the like, depending on the context. Such studies have been scattered and usually left to contextual contingencies for academic attention. For instance, these and similar other questions have been raised in the Uniform Civil Code debate, which employs the trope of equality in formalizing a certain kind of relationship between religion and state. A well-organized estimation of a basic thought behind the necessity to bring in the Uniform Civil Code as an ideal, because of which it got incorporated as Article 44 of the Directive Principles of State Policy, does help one comprehend what the principle envisioned. It envisioned a state-guided society that had to cater to constitutional parameters of life and living. These constitutional filters could seek to serve multiple purposes. It could have been conceptualized with the intent of legalizing religion for the sake of allowing individuals to practice their respective religious faiths with liberty, dignity, and integrity. The application of these filters could have been for the sake of allowing religion to continue to guide the masses within the bounds of its legal claims and scope. These constitutional provisions with a futuristic normative vision of elevating religion to cater to the basic principles of constitutional morality and human existence perhaps accepted that religion which forms one of the most influential (or perhaps the most influential) of all sources of sovereignty charting peoples' lives, shall continue to remain so for the longest time. There is an inherent acknowledgment seeded in the absence of a fixed nomenclature given to the normative vision that the Constituent Assembly Debates had, on this issue of the religion-state relationship. There is, hence, no mention of secularism or secular in the Indian Constitution, except once which is made to refer to a religious practice.⁸⁶

A brief explanation here, of the Uniform Civil Code, was presented also with the intent to expose the strong and vulnerable points in the entire spectrum of research conducted when an inquiry into this area is carried out within the scientific social discourses. Just like this relationship may be explored with any of the tropes mentioned above, the reason why violence is chosen as a trope here has been elaborately mentioned in the earlier part of the thesis.⁸⁷ Therefore, the broad areas and conceptual positions covered through an exploration of the writings of various scholars have been placed under this thematic of violence as guiding this course of understanding the religion-nation-state relationship.

The writings explored as part of the literature surveyed for the current thesis, therefore, are selected on the basis of the professed claims to them being theoretically and conceptually capable of offering alternatives to the existing challenges violence poses, as a trope. Violence has also been used as one of the many concerns associated with such a reading of the political and in studying its elementary composition. It is not one of the many questions, but the most significant question that shall lead the study towards carrying out the proposed exploration. Hence, the classification of the literature employed here is guided by the requirements of the present scope of my research, to cater to the specific concerns which concisely may be cited as follows:

- Exploring the place of violence in the relationship between religion and nation-state as both are contesting contenders of sovereignty in the public space and therefore influence and constantly affect the formation of the political, which then requires epistemic interventions.
- Understanding the place of violence in the narratives constructed around religion and state relationship with the need to categorize them into dialogical entities of different kinds and thereby construing the complexities involved in perceiving them in instrumental, temporal, and mechanized forms, which rapidly shift, with differing contexts.
- Placing the possibilities of alternatives in Indian political thought by re-reading select thinkers and their contribution to the aforementioned discourse. In order to assess and move ahead, I am going to look at the Indian political thinkers who have contributed to the constitutional vision of these relations and to see if it is possible to think of alternative ways of reading the relations, as opposed to resorting categorizations that have bracketed thinkers within multiple traditions within the canon. The three thinkers

are Rammohan Roy, Jawaharlal Nehru, and M.K. Gandhi. An interesting element connecting all three select thinkers is that neither of them expresses the possibility of an amicable relationship between religion and nation-state. Neither do they look at the relationship as being inherently violent nor do they seek a complete juxtaposition, elimination or complete separation from each other. It is a strange relationship given by these thinkers, where they offer dynamically differing possibilities in the relationship between the two sources of law and the sovereign. I intend to unriddle, explore and open up this relationship with the intent of addressing, if not resolving violence.

As mentioned above, the literature has been classified to cater to these concerns in a two-fold manner.

A) Reading select significant works on religion, modernity, nation-state, and the political, by contemporary scholars who have contributed to the formation of the ongoing discourse on these questions raised above. This literature minimally seeks to grasp the phenomenon under the proposed study in an attempt to re-reading many existing ideas proposed, by providing centrality to the question of violence. It was to mitigate violence that the ideas were prescribed in the first place. The epistemic violence in the positioning of religion and state in the public space is relevant to the extent that it seeks to manipulate the interests of the masses, while inhabiting the same space, of that of sovereignty.

B) Reading select significant works on religion, modernity, nation-state, and the political carried out on select thinkers from the canon of Indian political thought. The thinkers selected for the proposed study are Rammohan Roy, Jawaharlal Nehru, and M.K. Gandhi.

The essential theme of this study is committed to engaging in the concerns just elaborated, which emphasizes the need to theorize about India and its experiences, more so today than ever before. I do not mean to sound nativist at the expense of suggesting the need to explore, recontextualize and investigate keeping in mind the existing norms and conventions affecting human behaviors and aspirations in the country. This theme of the thesis provides, however, a chance for one to academically create a sound ground for the conceptual interrogation of the discipline's formation.

Firstly, a conceptual analysis and a substantive reading of the scholastic output is a significant part of research that seeks to disseminate knowledge of the meaning of the political or rather, what was till now understood as the political. The political becomes a space that thrives on the definitions and categorizations that were conveniently named and verily adhered to by various disciplinary structures. The political was built on the nomenclature of the apolitical, social, cultural, religious, ethnic, tribal, ecological, gendered, and the like. Such deep-rooted meanings associated with the formation of the political do ensure one to understand what created these formations time and again. In the absence of such inquiries, the space of the political might get stagnant and politics shall get reduced to an activity that is formed to sustain this pre-conceived and pre-defined political.⁸⁸ The moral then is constructed within these defined terms, that any mention of a deference or a contestation might just be equated with the destabilization of the political order. This is also the reason why such inquiries ought to be made routine and as comfortable for engagement at various levels of human existence. As Chantal Mouffe rightly pointed out, to be able to make oneself capable of thinking politics, it was mandatory to make sense of the multiplicity of ideas and values attributed to the concerned ‘subject’. It was, thus, a primary requisite to “make a theory of such a ‘detotalized, unconstituted, decentered and constructed at the point of intersection of multiplicity of subject positions.’”⁸⁹

However, such a pre-requisite gets significantly side-lined as inconsequential in the theoretical endeavors associated with legitimizing secularism, because of the fixated assumptions they hold. Further exploration with the help of the following sources referred to, for the current study, will help us understand the problems that we encounter when fixing the ideal within the narratives of secularism, even before ensuring the possible ways through which one could test its efficacy in differing contexts. Replicating the same narratives into different terminologies and decontextualizing them for the present and the future takes place in a rather consistent manner, due to the existing arrangement of a liberal democratic order.⁹⁰ At a time when its efficacy has been questioned even in implementation, for the improbable assumptions of distance and separation, it becomes all the more a reason to explore the nature of the subject, the relations, and henceforth, the public space.⁹¹

For the purpose of the current study following two-fold study of the literature has been carried out. The literature has been classified into two parts, as mentioned above.

The first part deals with select studies carried out by scholars who have immensely contributed to the existing discourse on the religion-state relationship.

A) Classification of Literature: Select works on the question of the Religion-State Relationship

Rajeev Bhargava's Indian Secularism

One of the primary attempts made towards addressing the conflict between religion and state was by proposing the idea of secularism, even without delving into its theoretical possibilities for the longest time in the Indian political situation, dating from independence till about the early 1980s. Within the Indian tradition, this value was taken as a given, for the longest time, as the underwritten narrative guiding the course of Indian imagination, without fixating it as a principle with defined or pre-defined values. India's commitment to secularism and the reasons behind adherence and envisioning of this concept was because there was a violent relationship between reason and non-reason. The epitome of a secular outlook, however, was concretized in the stance adopted by the erstwhile proponent of a state-guided public space, Jawaharlal Nehru. Even though, he never quite conceptualized 'secularism' as an outlook that could necessarily explain the religion-state-individual relationship. By non-reason, one does not strip religion out of the vestige of rationality or logic, as being a possible ingredient of its constitution, but claims the fundamental distinction in the practice of the two upon which the legitimacy of the secular narrative was hinged. That is to say, religion was not perceived or practiced as a thing hinged on reasonable justifications and therefore needn't require a reason to prove its legitimacy and authenticity. Whereas, the secular was a space that had institutions within it invariably brought under the paradigm of reasonable justifications, and hence required reason to form its basis. On the other hand, religion, has always existed since times immemorial and since the origin of man's mental history.⁹²

An anthropological and historical study of the ways in which religions were practiced in the subcontinent and an attempt to garner the trajectories different religions adopted in India, does offer one a domain so broad to deal with, especially in matters concerning the public. Such studies are necessary to be undertaken in order to make sense of the emergence of ideals, value, systems of thought and practise, institutional structures and the like.⁹³ The use of the phrase "Public Religions" suggest the plurality of the religiosity that characterizes a public space, also attributing to the immense possibilities these pluralities can offer.⁹⁴ For instance, in an elaborate account, Bhikhu Parekh writes about the fundamental distinction in the ways in which people practiced and lived by, in Hinduism which also sufficiently contributed to the narratives of tolerance and intolerance, the dark passages of which stands to provide us an idea of what the plurality can offer.⁹⁵ Another claim present along similar lines may be visible in Arvind

Sharma's following statement, "The intellectual, theological, and religious ferment and variegated multiformity of the country had long been brisk."⁹⁶ Hinduism over a period of time did emphasize more on practices than beliefs, however, alternative accounts in B.R. Ambedkar's writings⁹⁷ do portray the essentialization of belief systems in caste hierarchies which became the sole tangible base of the distribution of labour through the *Varnashrama dharma*, as opposed to the *Sadharanadharma* that constituted universally binding moral-political principles and conventions. Many more instances of this kind do show the assimilations, distances, aversion, toleration, respect, inequality, cross-religious influences, and inter-religious distinctions in the worldview as contributing to this quandary of how to manage relationships amongst religions.

This issue has been covered at length by many existing kinds of literature available, especially critics formed against the focus and content of secular discourses and their institutional and legal presence in the country today. These areas shall be touched upon in the account of the following select texts that have been chosen as central to the analysis pertaining to the concerns of this research. To reiterate, the current research in no way is concerned with providing a theological account of which religion is in essence or content more tolerant than the other, or less tolerant to violence. The texts selected for the purpose of covering the scope of the thesis will inform the reader of the existing literature present which has immensely contributed to creating, moulding, and influencing the existing culture of academic interactions concerning religion and nation-state, with keen attention to the position of violence in this relationship.

"Secularism, per se, is devoid of a substantive core; by distancing itself from values, opinions, beliefs, put differently the theological, it remains a mere procedure and in turn results in alienation."⁹⁸

Rajeev Bhargava rejects the Habermasean thought on secularism and develops an indigenous understanding of secularism contextually distinct to India. According to him, the term secularism has got a variety of meanings in the Indian context. Apart from the elaborate explanation of the institutional separation at the level of physical temporal structures, as discussed by Rajeev Bhargava, secularism also was at times attributed to the intermingling of tolerant good forces across religious denominations. This leads to the establishment of a state that is devoid of a strict separation policy but may justify its mingling with religions on reasonable grounds alone. This way, religions interacting with each other also base their points of contact, in accordance with the belief in the possibilities of intermingling at the policy and

end-goals level, if not the institutional level. Further, he goes on to problematize the meanings that are taken as a given within what constitutes the paradigm of secularism. He disagrees with the fixed attributes that are generally granted to an Indian state practising secularism of that of, non-religiosity, non-sacredness, distance from religion and religiosity, neutrality towards all religions either on grounds of equal respect or treating all religions with equal consideration and concern. This, he argues is fundamentally different from the concept of equal treatment of all and sits very well with the nature of the Indian State and in complementarity with the notion of differential treatment on the grounds of justice, welfare and similar requirements, which forms the bedrock of the Indian constitutional order that is committed to public order, health and morality.

In a stark disagreement with the proposition made by Habermas, Bhargava emphasizes on the presence of different ways in which secularism was played out in the Indian imagination, with a specific set of values guiding the institutional separation between organized religions and the State. There have been a combination of contradicting as well as complementary values deciding the fate of secularism in India, which fell well within the fabric of the context deciding which values must be given more importance to.

“It has been argued that so long as the state has taken gradual steps towards social welfare and reform and has not introduced distinctions or classifications that are unreasonable or oppressive, equality before law is not breached. A state interfering in one religion more than in others does not automatically depart from secularism. Indian secularism rejects the assumption that one size fits all.”⁹⁹

He meticulously works out ways to explain the presence and scope of such secularism that he calls contextual secularism¹⁰⁰ and believes could cater to addressing the question of violence. In his works, “The Distinctiveness of Indian Secularism” and *Secularism and its Critics*, he explored the imperative of secularism in Indian societies that could help resolve the pertinent problem of religious presence and inter-religious conflicts that crippled the mental histories of people and provided roots to violence in many forms. Though critics have pointed out that the internal dynamism and the diversities, that spiritual and theological richness and vitality could offer for good ways of life and living, have conveniently been disrobed from the conception of good moral-political order, with the overt emphasis on secular order.¹⁰¹ Bhargava attempts in his writings, the importance of creating an understanding of the uniqueness of India’s secular discourses by working around the problems involved in an overt emphasis on the secular and

therefore the state. In an attempt to resist this tendency to dismiss secularism, Bhargava made an extensive study of secularism's Indian version and stressed upon its feasibility for future conflicts. Also, the inability of secularism to have an Indian origin was completely dismissed in Bhargava's works. Such a tendency to attribute secularism with immense possibilities in the light of the Indian context has time and again been fundamental to the narratives of many scholars in India with some of the recent ones as follows: Neera Chandokhe, (2019), Akeel Bilgrami, (2014); Rochana Bajpai, (2017); Charles Taylor, (2007).

Bhargava, in the text, further goes on to distinguish between different types of regimes, as a classification of sorts, to engage in carving out a historical account of the way secularism made its presence in India from its classical, medieval and modern periods. These temporal contextual explorations allowed Bhargava to ensure the need to decipher at close quarters the meaning of secularism in general and its Indian variant, in particular. This classification that he undertakes in the text on Indian Secularism is premised upon the need to distinguish between different possible relationships that may exist between religion and state and rectify the popular misconception of the secular as being the opposite of the sacred. This has been sufficiently elaborated in his text. The text brings out some pertinent aspects of Bhargava's thought in defence of Indian kind of secularism as it traverses through the course of historical changes. He claims that just as religion, the composition of secular ethics does inhabit a variety of aspects which are subject to contextual changes. What he then goes on to name as contextual secularism forms a major chunk of the normative vision he shared for the religion-state relationship. Along this vein, he emphasizes that competing value claims are present within the narratives of secularism and its practise that may not necessarily sit peacefully with other. Thus, it has the ability to deal with the antagonisms and conflicts created by multiple-value based contexts, be that of privacy, protection or bodily integrity and the like. In a way, he explicitly admits the capacity secular discourses have, in order to deal with the multi-valued competing claims.¹⁰²

However, the substantive essence of secularism is a rather confusing ambit that Bhargava seeks to traverse upon with the intent of questioning the reasoning carried out behind justifying the problems inherent in its conceptualization and implementation. This is reiterated as an underlying theme in the text. However, he defends an idea of Indian secularism that he defines with the intent of dismissing off the existing critiques and suspicions raised against this idea as

being a masquerade for the state to lay down its sovereign footholds. In his immaculate fascination with defending the notion, he does write,

“To make place for itself in a climate of fierce competition it had to marshal all forms of argumentative resources. It could not have survived without being explicit about its normative structure.”¹⁰³

Following are some of the important aspects of the secular narrative that he lays out to create a larger canvas in defence for the idealness of understanding and applying secularism to India in its own ways or even discovering the Indian version through the endeavour.

Secularism is not a fixed doctrine with any defined content and this generic understanding is shared by many scholars.¹⁰⁴ He adds that secularism must be rethought because what it means for the majoritarian religion is not how the minority religions would want to see it apply as. A closer examination of this argument, however, would seem like forming the bedrock of the multicultural narrative, a dimension of which concentrates on the relationship among religions.¹⁰⁵ In order to justify this academic engagement and its relevance to the society at large, Bhargava goes on to emphasize on the need to reconstruct history in order to make sense of the new challenges western secularism is facing and explore the novel variants that could emerge in the context-specific spaces in India. This claim is made simultaneously with an understanding that there is a possibility of there being both modern and Indian at the same time, that one that was worked out in the west may at once be reimagined and revisited in India as well, which then makes it Indian. This observation raised by Bhargava does seem to sufficiently question the assumption underlying the critical claims that that he sought to destabilize with his article on Indian secularism. The critical claims, being, secularism is stripped off the vestige of any values except that of neutrality, distance and non-interference and is therefore inherently western in its content and character. This counter-claim made by Bhargava strives to question the assumption held by the opponents of secularism. He attunes his criticisms to the dominant western stereotype connected with secularism, which entails a “strict separation of religion and the state for the sake of religious liberty and individual autonomy.”¹⁰⁶ This stereotype which also seeped into the Indian subconscious is what Bhargava seeks to prove as a flawed and a simplified unidimensional analysis. This is followed by an exhaustive explanation of the differences between various regimes on the basis of the state-religion relationship, which are covered in the following points:¹⁰⁷

1. Theocratic states are the ones where the political order and the sacerdotal order are bound on all three levels namely the level of ends, purposes and policies.
2. States with the establishment of single religion may be divided into three subtypes: States without the establishment of a church, a single church and multiple churches.
3. States with the establishment of multiple religions.
4. Secular States are of two kinds: One is anti-religious and the other is laden with substantive values.

This classification is then elaborately handled within the framework of tolerance and the liberal democratic principles such as liberty, equality, dignity and self-respect; on the basis of which he comments on which regime would be the ideal-typical and to what extent would the sacerdotal and the state order coexist better. Of all the regimes, a secular regime is, according to the author, the ideal that has to confront various stereotypical assumptions and claims regarding the definitions and pre-definitions related to western secularism, the role of the state in secular narratives, and the place of the religion, the sacred, the nature of public space and the like.¹⁰⁸ Since the conventional meanings of the “idea of strict separation or individualist defense of religious liberty and citizenship rights no longer hold acceptable to the non-protestant middle eastern or south Asian religions”¹⁰⁹, Indian secularism, therefore, may be understood as having multi-value character and practicing principled distance which is poles apart from the one-sided exclusion, mutual exclusion and strict neutrality of the typical modern western secular conception. The Indian secularism being highly contextual and subject to many formations due to the presence of religions of different kinds and diverse forms, pits active hostility with/against certain other aspects of religion bearing active respect within the religious dimensions, and also simultaneously attends to the concerns of intra and inter-religious domination.¹¹⁰ Thus, the secular narrative of the Indian kind is housed in contradictions, or rather according to Bhargava open to them and to not acknowledge it would be turning a virtue into a vice.¹¹¹ This establishes comprehensively his claim that there are multiple connotations to the understanding of the state-religion relationship even within the umbrella of secularism. It emphasizes on separation with either of the following characteristics: It could be with mutual respect, half-hearted respectful indifference, antagonism, mutually opposite, partial separation, thick wall of separation, neutrality, collusion, and the like; all of which are subject to public justification, in the absence of which, the context will determine whether or not to adhere to or distance from religious sensibilities.

Out of these myriad possibilities mentioned above, if the state chooses to be anti-religious in a certain instance, it could do that either by practicing interventionism or non-interventionism, thus fulfilling contradictory functions. Secularism in such cases becomes a political taboo prohibiting certain activities,¹¹² while at times it allows for an intervention keeping in mind certain fundamental notions such as freedom, equality, justice, and the constitutional filters such as public order, health, and morality.¹¹³ For instance, The hyper-substantive and ultra-procedural versions of secularism are some of the stances which have been adopted in India in many cases, one of them being the Shah Bano Case, despite the presence of the Hindu Code Bill.¹¹⁴

The observation made by Bhargava does seek to lay out the kind of secularism that he conceptualizes as the ideal while emphasizing on the growing necessity to reduce the impact of these two aforementioned versions of secularism. The ideal version which he states as also being the constitutional version adopted is named as the contextual secularism rooted in liberal democratic values of liberty, equality, dignity, and self-respect, which combines also with rights-based secular narratives, and thus negotiates the boundaries of the principled distance from time to time. The combination of the two is both remarkable and nondescript at the same time, as it is routinely found in the daily usage of the Constitution¹¹⁵ which seeks to specifically emphasize on “the minority rights and processes of internal religious reforms.”¹¹⁶ Indian Secularism for Bhargava, thus, entails the need to openly acknowledge and accept the importance of religion in defining and constructing the public space, and perhaps its growing significance in the lives of people, which are not restricted only to the affairs of the private. The most ideal form of secularism, therefore, would be to construe religion as something that could never be disconnected from the public and pressed into the private realm. In the very same vein, Bhargava also states that though “religion may not have special public significance antecedently written into and defining the very character of the state or the nation”,¹¹⁷ it continues to form the public consciousness. Just like the sacred-secular dichotomy, the public-private dichotomy may have been shaken a bit, with this concept of contextual secularism committed to liberal democratic principles and mainly that of individual dignity, with the state maintaining a principled distance from religion.

Tariq Modood and the Multicultural Critique

Modood in *Religion, Secularism and Constitutional Democracy*¹¹⁸ bases his disagreement with Bhargava on his views on the separation of religion and state, which becomes important in

order to make sense of the current discourse. However, they are posed not along the lines of policy/laws, but on the points of state structure and the end goals of these institutions. Modood raises the following allegation that there is forms a crisis in considering the arrangement as secularism because the theoretical basis of secularism will not be enough to provide enough justification to the degree of flexibility it could grant. The criticisms raised may be summarized in the following statements as written by Modood in the aforementioned text, to substantiate his point.

“My disagreement with Bhargava is in relation to his analysis of secularism in relation to the other two levels, those of ends and, in particular, at the level of state structure. There he allows no flexibility and works with dichotomous distinctions: He forces, for instance, a choice between “establishment” or secular as he argues that there can be no overlap or duality of function between state and religious personnel. I think, however, that at this level, too, we need elasticity, and this is what a number of European states have done historically and indeed continue to do even in the absence of formal establishment; for example, through corporatist state-church partnerships in relation to education and welfare as in Germany or a state-level consultative council of religions as in Belgium. Such European states certainly have the policy-level connections with organized religions (principally churches), but the connection is not confined to that, and even the latter has a long-term character such that it is more a part of the state structure (e.g., of the tax-funded education system), rather than of policies that change with governments or new programs of action. To think of such long-term state-religion “alliances” simply as a set of policies is to understate them considerably as they overlap with structures of governance and state agencies. With state-religion connections present at more than one level, we have a more substantial connection than Bhargava’s and related theories can include within their conception of legitimate secular states.”¹¹⁹

A potent observation made here by Modood positions him on a different standpoint with respect to that of Bhargava, on the feebleness of the claim made by the latter and the institutional rigidities that might occur on account of the confusions a value-based secular state can posit. His claim emphasizes more on the element of respect to religions and the religious order rather than tolerating it as a position that an ideal ‘secular’ state must adopt. In that sense, he goes on to raise issues that multicultural theorists such as Bhikhu Parekh, Varun Uberoi and the like presented in the context of India.¹²⁰

Akeel Bilgrami and Charles Taylor: Contesting Claims of Secularism

“There is no reason to think that a secularism such as (S)*, even though it does in some sense take a stance against “religion,” cannot display its own wisdom and appeal by showing how the ideals it seeks have their echoes (or presentiments) in religious traditions.”¹²¹

*“(S): Should we be living in a religiously plural society, secularism requires that all religions should have the privilege of free exercise and be evenhandedly treated except when a religion’s practices are inconsistent with the ideals that a polity seeks to achieve (ideals, often, though not always, enshrined in stated fundamental rights and other constitutional commitments) in which case there is a lexicographical ordering in which the political ideals are placed first.”

Akeel Bilgrami’s understanding of what constitutes or should constitute secularism and secular ethics is variedly put across to cater to the particularistic demands of the society with differing emphasis on religious freedom, the cultural practice of religion, and the content of religion which allows for certain bounds to its free application in the society by its proponents, practitioners, and followers. Akeel Bilgrami unpacks religion into different spaces and stresses on the import of understanding its essence in different ways depending upon how, when, and where it is used. Citing some of his most important points related to secularism below could help one comprehend the distinct set of arguments, both in form and content, that have been put across by the scholar in relation to the larger question of the religion-state relationship within the modern nationalistic paradigm.

Secular ethics require a certain substantive basis to it which need not necessarily be uprooted from religion, even though in some sense, it is a ‘stance to be taken about religion, a stance regarding religion only as it affects the polity.’¹²² as a primary principle. There is imprecision in not only what constitutes secularism but also how it intends to oppose or become adversarial to religion, as it is popularly believed to serve. This argument presented by Bilgrami does lead us to the possibility of the next, wherein he points out the difference in the meanings and the content of secularism as a political doctrine that is distinct from the larger cultural intellectual societal process of secularization. He urges making a strong distinction between the two, and states the misuse, in general, from critics of secularism on their overlapping understandings of the two. The latter is clearly adversarial to religion and emphasizes on the stance against religion in the sense that religious sensibilities must have a lesser impact on the formation and

construction of society's notions of good and bad. In Bilgrami's words, "It is not dismayed by or concerned with the presence of religiosity in the society at large or in the personal beliefs of the individual citizens as so much of the ideological urge for secularity in the modern period is." The meaning of secularism as conceptualized, therefore, Bilgrami is grounded on the assumption that secularism is fundamentally different from secularization not only in the sense of the latter being a process but also in the sense of justifying the absence of the need to establish separation between religion and state as intrinsic to establishing a secular state.¹²³ The rules of the formation of a secular state and a secular society are different.

The arguments brought out by Bilgrami do have a lot to draw from Peter Van der Veer's arguments on religion and secularity.¹²⁴ These distinctions are not static in the sense, that the meanings and processes of the formation of the secular state and secular society might never coincide. But there needs to be a firm understanding that one has an overbearing over the other. Secularism, therefore, requires one to comprehend the origin of its basis in some set of values. These values should then continue to become goals and simultaneously the entry points into the formation of secular ethics in society. Secularism, therefore, does not get installed or applied to society solely on institutionalized terms, by forming institutions committed to displacing religion from its structural composition and character, by keeping away from religions, or engaging directly in the treatment of religions and carrying out an analysis of behaviours across religions. These characteristics that secularism also has, may be explored and adopted into a society's functioning later. An *apriori* requiem for a secular constitution must have certain 'goals and ideals'¹²⁵ that may take priority over religion or that are constituted independently of religion when needed in guiding the society and its people. These goals and ideals must precede and overpower the religious/cultural elements and their practices in society in times of conflict. This allows for a recontextualization of secularism to cater to the particular demands of society while also catering to certain overarching principles that may necessarily neither dismiss nor support religion explicitly. Such an attribution of values that Bilgrami proposes is slightly different from that of Charles Taylor's line of thought.¹²⁶

The importance of harbouring a redefinition or re-characterization of secularism, in the context of particular practices by every religion within the subcontinent is proposed by both, even though the former does not comply with the latter so far as the content and the purpose of secularism is concerned. To elaborate on the differences in the aforementioned scholars' positions on the manner in which their respective ideal responses to the religion-state

relationships and especially conflicts within it are formed, I shall discuss Akeel Bilgrami's response to Charles Taylor and the impending connections between the two and visible departures in their theories.

Bilgrami questioned Taylor's critique of secularism. Even though Taylor's paradigm was largely based on the supremacy and primacy of secular values, his approach to understanding and institutionalizing secularism was fundamentally different from that of Bilgrami. The latter's critique of the former's stance on secularism makes it a fascinating exchange of ideas and also poses questions on the extent to which it could be implemented in society to analyze real-time instances of conflict between religion and the state. For a convenient interaction between the two, I shall place the arguments presented by Bilgrami and Taylor's arguments in the following order of their reasoning:¹²⁷

- i) Taylor believes in the institutional relationship as defining the nature of the church-state relations. It is an institutional separation that characterises this relation and forms the foundation to any understanding of secularism. However, this is not the case according to Bilgrami as he rejects secularism as needing an institutional foundation of separation as its primary basis. For him, it was not a necessary precondition to the formation of a secular state, and thus, lexicographical ordering was more important than neutral equidistance.
- ii) Secularism with the (S) for Taylor begins with the society trying to build itself on certain values and goals. Taylor approves for such an arrangement which is then followed by, what Bilgrami calls as the lexicographical ordering. However, for Bilgrami, the lexicographical ordering needs to be given more importance in any given instance. Such an ordering cannot be relegated to a later stage while deciding the stance state should be holding on to with respect to religion and the individual in a liberal democratic institutional order. The lexicographical ordering must be followed, according to Bilgrami, in the realization of the religion-state relationship.
- iii) Both Taylor and Bilgrami agree on the point that ideals, values and goals must be emphasized upon, more than fixed institutionalized instrumentalist conceptions of religion and state. However, the disagreement arises on the equation drawn between neutral equidistance on one hand and the lexicographical ordering on the other. Taylor feels religion has its own authentic space and therefore emphasis on religion in the formation of these values is higher, and when he stresses more on equidistant neutrality as something that should be given a little more emphasis than

lexicographical ordering even if the latter favours religion, it is about creating an equidistance from the individuals within the religion. Individuals within the religious community may carry out negotiations on how to implement those values, ideals and goals, which are subject to changes with the decision-makers being these *authentic* individuals located within the religion.¹²⁸ Bilgrami, thus, disagrees with the emphasis on religious authenticity over lexicographical ordering that starts from freedom. However, for Taylor, For Taylor, the underlying assumption lies in equidistance from the individuals who have the *capacity* to be authentic, where individuals are not asocial and are located within the collective.¹²⁹

Elaborating on these societal values/ ideals/ goals that influenced the particular practices in every society, and established norms and institutions around it, an anthropological and a historiographical analysis of religion, state, nation and nation-state explained ways in which these entities functioned the way they did. The following literature raised not only pertinent ontological but also epistemological concerns on how we perceived the nature of these entities as.

Peter Van der Veer on Religiosity and Secularity

Peter Van der Veer's texts titled *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain* and *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* provided a comprehensive insight into the ways in which societies, over the years understood religiosity and secularity and equipped instrumental and institutional apparatuses to ensure its formations in society.

As opposed to the notion of religion in the West, the practices of which are seen as a transgression of what religion is supposed to be, the notion that 'real' religion is for tolerance and produces harmony and thus can be considered different from the 'politicized religion', takes a rather interesting turn in Van der Veer's text. But these accounts cannot bypass the central role of power and violence as the deciding tropes that essentially flavor religious discourses, especially in the light of widespread deaths, conversions (forceful), and violation of identity and rights in the name of religion.

Starting with the disintegration of the binary logic of modernity v/s traditionalism and the secular v/s religious, Peter Van der Veer's *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain* provides an account of the structural similarities that overruled the binary differences between the development of religion and nationalism in Britain and India which charts out how the religious identity (Christianity, in case of Britain) was (mis)used to

politically secure itself and employ it as an important element in the shaping of a robust national identity. This analysis of religion and modernity in Britain and India broadens scope for looking at the public sphere and the fundamental changes it undertook while defining itself. “That the historical experience is a common one among both the colonizers and the colonized”, becomes a central argument in this book.¹³⁰

Veer explores this theme with alacrity and focuses also on the imminent consequences of such a claim that is made. The uniquely secular West and the uniquely religious East make the question of secularity and religiosity a reduced product of stereotypical observation on the part of the majority of scholars, according to Peter Van der Veer. There are divergent genealogies possible for a study of the emergence of secular modernity but it gets subsumed under the secularization thesis which also conveniently mars the possibilities of studying various elements of the secularization process specifically or under a different telos.¹³¹ To further these claims, the author goes on to synchronize these with the questions of understanding particular possibilities in which religious/ non-religious formations in the society take place and how it cannot be bracketed under the umbrella of the secularist stance that the likes of Taylor account for. This claim is bolstered by the appeal to comprehend colonialism as an experience that essentially charted the boundaries of the political and the moral for both the ‘Metropole’ and the ‘Satellites’. These are further explained with emphasis on specific areas such as religion, gender, language, and race.¹³² These explorations are pertinent to the larger question of violence which also forms the underlying narrative of the thesis.

The reason why such an account continues to draw so much significance for the scope of the current thesis is because of its unique contribution to the ongoing political discourse, which sought to destabilize to a large extent, our ways of perceiving the religion-state relationship and the dominant narratives of secularity that is believed to be the defining feature of modern historiography emancipating states from their temporal setbacks and political disorder. An interactional approach is undertaken to draw the reader’s attention to a range of issues underlying the assumed dichotomies that are considered as fixed and given between the religious and the secular, the traditional and the modern, and the western and the indigenous. These cross-cultural interactions are rooted in a fixed assumption that they are mutually exclusive and have fixed definitive principles exclusive to each of them. Such assumptions disallow one from engaging with the nuances that are lost in these fixed conceptions of the secular and the non-secular. Complex historical narratives got conveniently woven into the

secularity versus religiosity debate, the former playing the role of the epitome of liberal democratic tolerance and the latter ensuing intolerance, standing opposed to each other. This claim is substantiated in the following statement by the author, “India stands outside history while Britain becomes the agent of history”.¹³³ He further states that, the Hindu religious nationalism invented a ‘reformed’ version of their religion with the intrusion of modernity, while resisting the colonial project by creating Hinduism that was increasingly becoming Anti-Muslim.

In this work, Peter Van der Veer analyzes the changing trends of Hindu ideologies and its modern scientific nature that was borrowed from the colonial masters, who themselves, weren’t devoid of religious values and evangelical movements governing their public spheres. He has thus, demonstrated the fallacy in the arguments and in the sensibilities that consider western societies as secular and Indian societies as religious. This entirely subscribes with the essence of the following statement which captures the essence of Van der Veer’s arguments: That what is usually presumed to be the opposite, is in fact deeply entangled and that what is seen as unconnected is, in fact, the product of close encounters.¹³⁴ Taking the analysis to the specifics of the relation between religion, nation-state, and violence, in his book, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India*, he presents a comprehensive picture of the gargantuan rise of Hindu nationalism and the political legitimacy it claimed by implantation, mobilization and network-building strategies. The Constitutional, legal interventions and electoral party politics that shape the nature, intensity and frequency of the communal turfs between different political parties, state machinery, and ethno-religious organizations have been explored and analyzed theoretically. This analysis also places importance on ‘communal’ violence, its escalation, the strains it causes and the platform it creates for political parties to mobilize votes and determine their dominance using religion as a political tool.¹³⁵

The formations of nationalist discourses sourcing itself on religion have been extensively discussed in the text. The increasing intellectual and political discourses on nationalism, be it on forms of governance, and political strategies, for instance, made it possible to strengthen the notion of the Hindu nation, on the broader issues of identity, particularly in contemporary urban India.¹³⁶ This allowed us insight into the continuities and discontinuities in the influence of religious nationalism in determining how society could be socially and politically organized. Since the nineteenth century, religion has been a site of dynamic changes, within which the struggle for alternatives to western modernity in many parts of the colonial world took place.

In that very discourse, new religious practices, modifications, concretizations, and formalized systematization of religions emerged. This was interspersed and catalyzed by the ever-increasing ritualized practices, customs, totems, and symbolisms, augmented by ideological constructions.¹³⁷ The scholar sought to intricately look into social complexities through the study of organized cultural and political movements, discourses, and practices whose links to nationalism have not been sufficiently taken into account enough. Since religious nationalism is an unexplainable term or occurrence as it becomes humanely impossible to analyze in its full historical and social complexity.¹³⁸

The following arguments are offered by Veer in his work: “(1) That nationalism grounded in religion is not uncommon. Hindu religious identity is constructed in ritual discourse and practice; (2) that these identities are not primordial attachments, inculcated by unchanging traditions, but specific products of changing forms of religious organization and communication; (3) that religious nationalism articulates discourse on the religious community and discourse on the nation; and (4) that Hindu and Muslim nationalisms develop along similar lines and that the one needs the other.”¹³⁹

The author takes religious discourse and practice as constitutive of changing social identities, rather than treating them as ideological smoke screens that hide the real clash of material interests and social classes. The study here concerns the historical construction of Hindu and Muslim identities in India and, specifically, the transformation of these identities in the colonial and postcolonial periods in the context of the rise of nationalism. For instance, restating Hinduism through Hindutva becomes a formidable and potent force shaping the course of affairs and posing historical, theoretical, and political challenges in contemporary India today. There are various ways in which Hinduism has been perceived, given the plurality of its inherent character. Even amongst its followers, there is, however, little unanimity regarding the exact nature of Hinduism and Hindutva. There are some who would argue against a difference between Hinduism and Hindutva with the latter representing the essence of Hinduism. There are other sections that would want to dissociate Hindutva from a blatant identification with Hinduism. On the other hand, there are opponents of Hindutva who would suggest, Hinduism can never be clubbed with a set of assumptions that appeal to a kind of destructive nationalism based on ethnic, racial and religious antagonism, given the plural character of Hinduism. They identify Hindutva motivation of projecting and magnifying the ‘imagined’ wrongs and the real wrongs of the past done to Hindus as a real threat to the plural

character of Hinduism. Hence, we have some saying: Instances of communal violence, over the years, have come out as an offshoot of this callous disregard of Hindutva proponents for the way it has disrupted democratic institutions, state and civil society. While the others who accuse, are proponents of Hindutva of manipulating democratic institutions to further their agenda. The movements that resulted from such politicization of religion in the public space, not only led to mass mobilizations, but also was faced with the burden of constantly revamping the ideological constructs forming Hindutva.

Central to Hindutva as a mass phenomenon is the development of a powerful and extendable enemy image through appropriating stray elements from past prejudices, combining them with new ones skillfully dressed up as old verities, and broadcasting the resultant compound through the most up-to-date media techniques.¹⁴⁰ A genealogy of Hindu nationalism would have to be thought in terms of two historical transitions. The first is a transition from a relatively inchoate Hindu world, without firmly defined boundaries to the late nineteenth century construction of ideologies of a unified Hinduism in the context of integrative colonial communication, administration and economic structures. The second transition, roughly datable to the mid-1920s is a move in some quarters towards an aggressive Hindutva postulated upon an enemy image of a similarly conceived Islam. This throws open the necessity to look into the ways in which ideological underpinnings mould the way religious institutions function and how they influence the psyche of the masses. Syncretism as a historical phenomenon is often not a natural process of growth, a random combination of heterogeneous elements, but rather an appropriation of religious symbols in the construction of religious regimes.

Historical narratives, thus formed of the state and religion, become the causal factors and a site for an epistemological comprehension of violence today. State, a product of spatial organization, temporal arrangement, functional specification, and supervision and surveillance, makes it also a potential harbinger of violence.¹⁴¹ Further, an exploration of Indian Thought¹⁴² and insights from Indian Constitutional and Electoral Politics, and an extensive study of the State-Society relationship, the author proposes that, in all its ambiguities and dialectical transformations religious nationalism in India has a history of its own, which cannot be reduced to the master narratives of the European modernity that claims to be devoid of religiosity.¹⁴³

In this constant shift between the idealistic urge to allow oneself for moments of escape into the possibilities of the future which lies in a rethought understanding of the present ; and the

deeper engagements with the present that exists in its entirety without necessarily looking forward to that ideal norm that does not exist, the current study aims to locate its contribution in these spaces with a hope to figure out the ways in which religion has contributed to the generation of the nationalist collective imagination. In this light, one should provide credits to the works of Peter Van der Veer, T.N. Madan and Ashis Nandy, for allowing religion to be looked at and into as a site of constantly constitutive of changing social identities. This entails one to see through the ways in which religion has worked its ways out in the domains of the political, while thereby constantly constituting and reconstituting the meanings of the political and politics that holds it.

Thus, on one hand, Rajeev Bhargava's secularism claimed to acknowledge the deep-rooted conception of a looming presence of religion in the public space which then goes on to define the extent to which the private becomes a space distinct from the public in the ways in which religion gets practiced and guided by the plethora of contexts that Indian societies have provided and will continue to provide. But then, for the interaction to happen, an assimilation of these neat public/private divides had to vanish from the vocabulary of pragmatic politics. The beginning of such an endeavour took place with accepting differences between the assimilating entities, and extending means to grow interactions with each other. It's not that Bhargava is resisting that.¹⁴⁴ However, it was not certain if such an idea of Secularism, offered space for religion to settle with the State without getting defined in Christian theological terms in definite organizational forms; nor did it introspect the possibilities of harbouring the nature of a theological basis of secularism in Christian orthodoxy. However, secularism was not even challenged or vehemently opposed for these reasons, because even the counter claims and arguments that were made by Bhargava assumed that the indigenous cannot be consumed by and/or constituted with what is considered as modern. Thus, concerns raised over the intent of authenticity and indigeneity were given more primacy than ever, over the need to investigate on the utility of the idea in a given context. The larger political attack if it is on the secular idea, the focus as a researcher must be to protect not the idea, but the deeper concerns that led to one seeking that idea in the very first place. The penchant for secularism was based on this urge to subscribe to a rather violent positioning of religion and state (nation-state), without feeling the need to investigate the why and the how.

This requires one to be aware of the need to be defensive of not the ideas or narratives and processes that led to the creation of such a narrativization. Because there will be a deep urge to

present every existing resource possible to defend the idea and its possible efficacy. There is nothing wrong in this endeavour at all, however, there are pertinent dangers that are intrinsic to such tasks, one of them being, the shifting of the foci from, understanding the violence in the relations that are produced and created by the strict adherence to narratives, to the consolidation of narratives. This is explicated through the following quote by Neeladri Bhattacharya, “The critique of communal prejudice was seen as necessary for developing a history that was scientific and objective. To be authentic, it was believed, this new history had to be both scientific and secular.”¹⁴⁵ Rajeev Bhargava’s response, thus, to his critics through his seminal piece on the distinctiveness of secularism strongly committed to exposing the dangers of cultural-religious nationalist and fundamentalist narratives also served to substantiate the position of the critics of secularism as being inadequate, for their lack of commitment to understanding the historical background behind the rise and formation of the secular narratives in the Indian context. Such expositions were brought out vehemently in the 80s and the 90s in the works of Ashis Nandy and T.N. Madan.

Ashis Nandy and T.N. Madan: The Anti-Secularists’ Sonder¹⁴⁶

“There is, first, the assumption that secularism as an anti-religious or, at any rate, non-religious ideology has universal applicability, but that it has culturally specific expressions. This is how many intellectuals consider it permissible to speak of Indian secularism. In other words, secularism is not an Indian ideology, but there is an Indian ideology of secularism”¹⁴⁷

T.N Madan’s *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India* is an enriching account of the political histories of religions: Sikhism, Islam and Hinduism and it seeks to chart its religio-political and psychopolitical evolution in the societies. Right from presenting meticulous details on the shifting politics of religiously-informed identities which formed the basis of communalism, to attempting to realize the secularism-fundamentalism quandary; this book traces the roots of violence back to the nature of the colonial state and post-colonial nation-state. To look at different religious identities as not just a threatening factor or the enemy of the dominant religion or feed the orientalist construction of the concept of “communal violence”, but to theologize and scan the politics of religion’s formation in the Indian modern nation-state is what’s attempted by the author. The author explicitly justifies through his detailed surgical observations on the ways in which violence has been manifested in societies like India, where religion, a potent force in public space, shaping public

consciousness remains an ineluctable entity and identity with which people associate themselves.

The way 'secularism' has emerged in India, with its twin principle of tolerance entwined with it as a convention, proves how religion, as a coercive entity, is underscored and upheld in the public space.¹⁴⁸ Madan tries to exploit this relation, in the synchronically diverse and diachronically universal histories that community-embodied masses in India have been experiencing, which dwindle between secularism and pluralism. While uncovering this relationship, which he, towards the end of the book, claims to be a mutually nourishing and symmetrical one, throws open the discourse to developing newer understandings of the resulting fundamentalism which is viewed as leading to subsequent instances of violence. The scope of ideological (religious identity) interpretations interspersing the arena of religion and using that space for discourse which in turn thrives on the narratives of nation and on communities; is quite vast and difficult to track. Some of the many criticisms, strikingly, that have emerged, were in response to the distrust in the practice of religion in public space within the states that politically or institutionally conceived of themselves as secular. The non-secular regimes were not quite targeted that often.¹⁴⁹ This is what makes ideology and ideological constructions form a vital part in their ability to convert an amorphous and vague experience into an ostensibly stable symbolic order that provides a sense of rationality to its practitioners and a way of coping with the banal representations, rituals, customs, and religious practices: the 'objectivations of belief'.¹⁵⁰

The need to, thus, form a syndicated version of religion which is a monolithic, easily-representable and manageable form grew in importance as it sought to replace the confusions and unclear hierarchies offered by plurality of traditions within a religion, thus making it incomprehensible to the modern society, to the extent that the religious movements became dreadfully modern in character, producing the modern variant of Hinduism in the public space.¹⁵¹ However, whether religions like Hinduism, specifically, as the religion of Hindus was a modern phenomenon or not was not a significant concern for Madan anyway, as that would provide fodder to the Western versus the nativist visions of understanding society. This would discredit both the contributions of religions and their inter-religious interactions, their religiosity to the formation of indigenous active social practices within religion; as well as the influence of the modernizing elements in the construction of narratives within and about religion. Such quick generalizations on the character and nature of Hinduism, here, contributes to the syllogistic rubble of a debate

of opposites and take away the focus from the issue at hand.¹⁵² The deliberate transformation of religions like Hinduism and its growing resemblance with the other major organized religions Christianity and Islam, exhibit a crucial picture of the imitative nature of Hinduism that seems to emphasize the validity of its existence in the public space, the understanding of which is again proudly rooted in the practices of its own religion that is unique and distinct to it. The emphasis on the patterns in which religion establishes its dominance, however, is an important part of the task of creating a powerful and diversely-centered public space created and sustained by religion.¹⁵³

Taking the debate ahead from exploring the fallacies in conceptualizing the extent of modernization through modernity and religiousness of traditionalism, the contrasting paths that Nehruvian secular-nationalism and Gandhi's religiosity had to undertake in establishing itself in the postcolonial scenario and understanding concerns related to 'identity' becomes an ineluctable subject in the discourse.¹⁵⁴ Madan, in subsequent chapters on charting the dynamics between secularism and pluralism by analyzing three different organized religions, problematizes the nature of secular- nationalism that India sought to associate its State with, in order to create a 'just' pluri-religious society. But it opened up newer struggles for freedom and different spheres of constraints. From promoting an ideology that was meant to maintaining the statist neutral equidistance towards communities to exhibiting the latent *Hinduness* (religiosity) in its orientations, such ideological constitutions were threatened and challenged by various events in the history of the political and socio-cultural scenario of the postcolonial nation-state. Landmark events like the Vishakha vs State of Rajasthan case judgement (1997), Sabarimala Temple judgement (2018), the Ayodhya verdict (2019), and many events of the kind from the 1980s especially with regard to the state's intervention and partisan leanings to certain communities and sects, changed the character of the structured, modern, unified secular-nationalist ideology that conventionally was forced upon the modern state apparatus in principle. "It has been suggested that the immediate objective of 'political secularism' and the higher, more distant goals of 'ethical secularism' both 'insist upon the separation of religion and politics without undermining either' and both should be 'invoked to justify a secular state'. What the religious justification of the state might imply could be a matter of substance or style."¹⁵⁵ Madan's contributions, thus, seek to delve in the foundational questions on the nature of secular and fundamentalist discourses and their interplay which significantly contributes to the problem of epistemic, structural and culturally violent formations. To summarize his arguments, his works allow for a scope of thinking not only beyond secularism and developing

a vocabulary more rooted in religions, but also of the fallacies present in the formation of certain methods adopted to carry out the task of analyzing relations between religion and state.¹⁵⁶ His works push one to question the intent behind conducting the study and thus allows one to uncover possibilities of fundamentalism in the practice of religions by basing the study within the site of the societies.

Breaking away from the above propositions that either defended or criticized the modular forms of secularism for India, Ashis Nandy, in his seminal articles titled “The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Tolerance”, “The Twilight of Certitudes: Secularism, Hindu Nationalism and Other Masks of Deculturation”, “An Anti- Secularist Manifesto”, present a sharp critique of modernity and secular-nationalism borrowed from the West. It opposes theorists like Rajeev Bhargava who, in his edited work titled *Secularism and its Critics*, proposes a practicable model of secularism for a nation-state like that of India. His works produce a series of indictments against the efficacy of modernity in bringing about a just structure. He explores this idea by presenting the case of a westernized native who aims to ‘modernize and universalize’ his culture across the world. The westernized native may differ politically from the western man and may also be his political antagonist, but culturally and morally has completely been brought under the rubric of the ideal of one world in one form.¹⁵⁷ This is akin to the “unity in diversity” maxim widely prevalent in principle in India, which again seeks to unify the cluster-headed communities within this fold of the modern, as part of the modernization drive, that has led to the fueling of violence and exploitation, implicit in this political arrangement of the self and the other that ceases to behave as per their conventional definitions.

The Self and the Other in Nandy cease to behave as themselves, especially the latter. The latter constitutes the double of the Self, institutionally and politically found opposite to it, but psychologically has been assimilated to the consciousness of the Self. The Selfness of the other overpowers its otherness, and the other finds freedom and solace in this realization that makes it ‘like the self’.¹⁵⁸ Thus modernity has replaced plurality of the society, and many a time has *assimilated in plural forms with a singular intent* within the society, that had led to a threat, overtly or covertly, on the self-other divide and produced new dimensions of freedom, restraints, justice, injustices, and the like. This was also explained by exploring the patterns of humiliation that defined this new self and the other that Nandy exposed through his works.¹⁵⁹ This has redefined the horizons of identity and recognition. The modernization drive also

became a secularization drive due to the recognition of religion and religiosity as being the obvious and visible impediments to the former. This is how religion began to lose respect from the state or was used increasingly by the state to legitimize, while relegating the latter into the realm of the apolitical. Such an exclusionary nature of secularism which clears the way forward for a legitimate process of secularization, thus, presents itself psychopolitically as the agent akin to the colonial agent who thinks of itself as the ‘most advanced and the most civilized’.¹⁶⁰ In these articles, Nandy underscores the concerns mentioned above and doesn’t seek to theoretically place violence within the Indian political tradition, by exploring the notions of tolerance and antagonism as being practiced in the so-called ‘secular’ societies.

Over and above that, Nandy points out to the peculiar forms of imperial language that are used in the formation of responses to existing problems. However, the formations of new vocabulary do reflect the extent to which it has an ability to metamorphose the memory and histories of one’s pasts and the present. Social change turns into progress and development, and development gets equated with modernization.¹⁶¹ He considers secularism to have become a language that acts as a cover for the complicity of modern intellectuals and the modernizing middle class which is exposed to the language of the nation-state and nationalism for building fraternal bonds. Fraternity gets channelized and moulded by narratives of nationhood and nationalism and an imminent consequence of such a vocabulary is its ability to engulf other narratives within its fold.¹⁶²

The narrative production in India against the colonial rule was more than colonialism as such, which thinkers such as Rabindranath Tagore and MK Gandhi had raised suspicions and discontent about. The cultural representations assumed more *vicarious* forms with the adoption of facets of modern forms that became increasingly the more concrete methods of anti-colonial responses. Thinkers such as VD Savarkar, and Mohammed Ali Jinnah adopted the style of modern European-style of a common culture which enabled the sensibilities of what constituted and comprised the Hindu to be bracketed within the notion of a nation. That, coupled with the State, made it possible for them to consolidate their respective religious/cultural ideological positions against the Other/other that is religion. Such narratives are clear examples of cultural and intellectual collaboration with the same disease that one fought against, an entire lifetime for seeking political independence and realization of freedom.¹⁶³ The end result of such a political resistance resulting in the formation of the state only showed the larger collaboration happening between the political, moral, social/cultural, psychological and economic, where the

cultural supremacy of the colonial kind outran all other possible forms of imaginations. The product nation-state getting endorsed by the aforementioned nationalist movement activists and theorists was emblematic of the extent to which this malady had afflicted Indian imaginations. Therein lay the violence of the formation of the narratives and some of them becoming dominant over the other by virtue of being more visibly defined. Such a formation of the narratives also exposed the society drastically to the binaries and categories of moral-political thinking, where the former established a safe space away from the latter with sometimes the latter becoming a predominant factor shaping the former.

Thus, an analysis of various conceptions of the political as elaborated above and referred to, for the current study presents to us, how the nature of the moral, the legal and the institutional have been moulded. Sufficient evidences have been provided above where it has been found how the cultural/religious have mostly been at the receiving end while science kept company of the modern institutions such as the state and modified everything to its norms and conditions. For instance, the convenient fiction that India is the land of ‘eternal religion’ that is placed outside of history and therefore of the political stands testimony to the aforementioned relationship between the moral and the political, which did not cloud the vision of Indians from looking at the liberal democratic state as a moral state with Christian understanding of good life.¹⁶⁴ This is self-explanatory as we witness examples of religion getting packaged in different forms, apart from its practice as a faith, of either collective or personal nature, which thereafter, went on to characterize the public space in India as ‘uniquely religious’. This also suitably fixed meanings of the personal and the collective, which in turn determined the fine line between the freedom to practice religion and the acts of blasphemy within the practice of religion.¹⁶⁵

Such discourses in the Indian subcontinent had not matured enough to engage with the inter-religious conversations until there was an event of a conflict. Until the event(s) of conflicts took place, there were very little parameters in place to ensure the set of ideals that could have been conceived of as ideal and providing a normative vision of the existence of a society practicing its diverse religions less violently, thus prodding us to explore the space of the religion and rethinking the role and potential of religion for us today. The increasing activity of the state seeding a part of its space to the religion in the formation of the national spaces, and the state also intruding into the religious spaces conveniently without any

legal/institutional/political/ moral understanding of the relations between the two sovereigns; continues to mark the relevance of this study.

A glimpse of the ongoing discourses, suggest to us, the absence of the usage of the trope of violence in many of the narrative formations listed above. However, violence has been posed as one of the many concerns, my thesis proffers to employ violence as the major underlying thematic value that connects the religion and the nation-state. The thesis is aimed not only at looking beyond the scope of secularism, as a pre-conceived understanding; but intends to allow for secularism to also partake in the critiques posed against it, in the light of the former's failures and letdowns in allowing for a multi-level interaction between religion and state, namely, the legal, political, moral and psychological levels. There is a need to embrace the extent to which religious practice must be given importance in the usage of religion, as opposed to the beliefs and the content of the same with its nuanced meanings and applications to the formation of policies guiding and centering around people's faiths. This personal versus the public usage and employment of religion makes it a difficult task to construe the extent of the political. This, in turn, makes it imperative to ubiquitously form the idea of the political and continue with the activity of dialoguing within this premise and boundaries of the political.

This endeavor makes it an important task to cater to the ways in which religion is used and the extent to which one could practice the art of secularity.¹⁶⁶ This practice of secularity entails the need to enhance and carve out the space and the temporal elements of the political. In an attempt to carry out that, the political gets compromised and predefined in terms of the ideal of a moral irrespective of whether or not such clear-cut values and rules are laid down for such a construal. Such an engagement does require one to predefine not just the intent but also the content of the political and moral while clearly distinguishing between the two and perhaps hinting at a lack of possible conjunction between the two, without the activity of politics being acknowledged as committed to such very formations in the first place. This exposure to the art of politics without the knowledge or the need of what construes the political becomes then a conveniently silent engagement which might end up making the political static. The current engagements, proposed to be conducted through the thesis, with the usage of religion entails the possibility of moving beyond this immanent positioning of religion and state into possible and convenient brackets of the moral and the political that are determined and formed on the grounds of a fixed conception of what constitutes the self, the inward and the outward.¹⁶⁷

B) Classification of Literature: Location in Indian Thought¹⁶⁸

Another significant aspect of the current study is the location of these relationships within the canon of Indian political tradition, which seeks to theorize, conceptualize, and re-contextualize thinkers from the canon and analyzing their responses to the aforementioned question of violence in the relation between religion and nation-state. The composite nature of religion and state relationship was also dealt with by many thinkers in the modern Indian canonical tradition, who responded to the contextual colonial questions of their times. The responses were multi-fold. While on one hand, there exhibited a strong commitment to national unity, integrity, creative vitality, fraternity, and consensus-building in the accounts of the religious-nationalist proponents, on the other hand, there was also the presence of the composite liberal democratic, and republican conceptions of the same. However, the interesting aspect about the three selected thinkers, Rammohan Roy, Jawaharlal Nehru and M.K. Gandhi lies in the colonial/nationalist contexts/texts that bound them together and the questions they asked in conjunction with the religion-state relationship.¹⁶⁹

The composite nature of such a religion-state relationship which was rooted in secular liberal ethics did bring Gandhi closer to Nehru. However, what is interesting to know is the enigma that lies within such an affiliation irrespective of the political-moral beliefs and values adhered to by both as being poles apart from each other. There is a dependency on Nehru for the political future of the country which is endorsed by Gandhi, however, there is a stark foundational and fundamental distinction between the two in terms of the content of this moral-political. As far as the presence and usage of religion are concerned along with its future in the charting of the historical and futuristic conception of our polity, Gandhi had a vision that, to comment succinctly, required religion to be the course guiding people's lives and events unfolding people's relations with others within and across religions for the sake of leading a better life. However, for Nehru, the secular ethics of religious practice was more important than religion itself, or its larger implications for constructing a society committed to and living by 'better' ideals and ways of existing.

There is no literature available today that carries out a focused thematic reading of the Indian political tradition after the comprehensive categorization of the literature on thinkers that was made by V.R. Mehta and Thomas Pantham.¹⁷⁰ As opposed to a chronological categorization, a systematic thematic reading of the canon of Indian thought has never been undertaken. However, there is an abundance of literature available on the thinkers that seek to place them within the paradigms of ideological positions which do raise an inter-ideological conversation

and bring out the essence of the chaotic contemporaneity in the formation of the Indian tradition. Therein also lies the vibrancy with which the thinkers within the tradition functioned. One cannot make sense of one without reading into or understanding the works, writings, and speeches of others. Such vibrancy of the political tradition makes it even more vital for us to open it up for a thematic engagement, as opposed to a chronological study.

As a path-breaking work in the existing discourse, we have Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan's edited book titled, '*Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*' which explored and claimed the possibility of an alternative arrangement, which they call as the *theologico-political*. This signifies the need to radically change ways of perceiving an institutionalized concrete conception of the political -politics interplay through fixed institutions such as Religion and Nation-State. Instead, they emphasized upon the imperative to explore these institutions through their processes. They claimed that *postsecular* polity offers space for violence to be addressed sufficiently without subscribing to either of the extreme narratives of secular-nationalism or cultural-nationalism. Through a comprehensive and meticulous compilation of many articles by scholars such as Wendy Brown, Chantal Mouffe, Jurgen Habermas, Pope Benedict- XIV, Markha G. Valenta, Yolande Jansen and the like.

The participants in this contemporary theoretical debate on Indian secularism have attempted India-relevant thematizations and problematizations of issues concerning the majority-minority framework of liberal democracy, individual rights vs. community rights, right vs. good, the personal/private sphere vs. the public/political sphere, liberal modernity vs. traditional communitarianism, indigenous relativism vs. Western ethnocentrism, Hindutva vs. *Sarva dharma samabhava*.¹⁷¹ The range of debates mentioned in the passages above indicate the visible absence or dearth of attention paid to any possible alternative to the conception of secularism and their practical possibilities, if any, in the understanding of religion and nation-state, with the knowledge of how the nation as a concept is also put to threats, as the ideal that should unite and integrate, and compensate for the lack of fraternity.

The existing literature has connivingly given to these binary debates that navigate through serious issues of contemporary concerns, undoubtedly, but the violent repercussions of these epistemological formations have converted politics and its actions into a matter of relevance only if it catered to the parameters of the political that is already getting predefined and therefore, closing chances of new epistemological formations to take place. There is a standard

trope that urges one to place the secular perspective as diametrically opposite to the religious narratives and the modern west with that of the Indian, the nature versus nurture, individual versus the community, and most importantly the public versus the private. Such an engagement would create and contribute to the electoral, social, cultural, and economic content with a lot of limitations. There are memories and histories of violence and hurt which allow for inter and intra-religious/ cultural equations to degenerate and rot, with the events of hurt and hatred being invoked. These binaries and the preoccupation with their formations might not help us gather and harbor the dynamics of interpersonal as well as inter-institutional relations. Hence, in order to explore the scope of the political deeper than what is portrayed becomes imperative into getting accustomed to the sensibilities of the moral-political. Such an attempt, therefore, allows for the trope of violence to come to fruition as the central question in this current exploration, rather than just being reduced to a conditional or a suppositional feature in the dynamic interplay between religion and nation-state. In this vein, the scattered works of the following scholars have contributed to a historical contextualization and reconceptualization respectively, of various thinkers who crafted India's Modern age, such as Ramachandra Guha, *Makers of Modern India*, *India After Gandhi*; Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism*; T.N. Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*; Faisal Devji, *The Impossible Indian: Gandhi and the Temptation of Violence*; Sussanne Hoeber Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph, *Postmodern Gandhi and Other Essays: Gandhi in the World and at Home*; Ashis Nandy, *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism: Rabindranath Tagore and the Politics of Self*; Judith M. Brown and Anthony Parel, (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Gandhi*; Bhikhu C. Parekh and Upendra Baxi (eds.), *Crisis and Change in Contemporary India*; Ajay Skaria, *Unconditional Equality: Gandhi's Religion of Resistance*; Ananya Vajpeyi, *Righteous Republic: The Political Foundations of Modern India* and the like.

1.4 Concerns and Relevance of the Study

The present times are increasingly characterized by violence, injustice and intolerance whereby peoples in their relationship with one another lack a degree of friendship, fraternity and freedom. This is interestingly at a time when the promise of modernity particularly in its liberal guise is one of accommodation and coexistence. How do we explain the upsurge of violence in liberal secular democratic regimes? What is the nature of the political in the relationship between religion and nation-state in liberal democratic setups? Since religion and state are

housed in changing contexts and a product of multiple processes, the study is carried out with the intent to offer perspective to understanding the contemporary times.

The architecture of the state and society is impinged on this rather fixated notion of the political where the public and the private spaces get demarked with different set of characteristic features. These features are significant in determining and exploring the constitution of the political and the relationship has been through turmoil for a long period of time in the presence of the dire need to cater to religious and cultural diversities, its acceptance and its legitimate presence in the society. The study, as mentioned above, argues that the understanding of both religion and the nation-state has so far been understood in purely institutionalized forms, which in turn constitutes the basis for the principles of separation and juxtaposition. This process of institutionalization renders the relationship definite and closed and in turn violent. An inquiry into the ways in which such an idea of the political is formed, legitimized and sustained, in the site of the canonical thought (here), shall provide us insight into the rationale behind the existing structural and psychopolitical formations.

How then ought we, from within the Indian context, conceptualize the relationship between religion and the nation-state in a manner which would limit the place of violence? What is an alternative relationship of religion and the nation-state which is based on an open political reading of both these categories as ‘political’ categories? My focus is on exploring the scope of the ‘political’ in the context of the relationship between Religion and Nation-State using Violence as a trope, located within the canon of Indian Political Tradition. The thinkers selected for the current research are Rammohun Roy, Jawaharlal Nehru and M.K. Gandhi.

In the current study, I explore the State-Religion relationship within the Indian political tradition from the trope of violence. There are thinkers outside the Indian context who have contributed immensely to the political theorization of the state and religion. The absence of these thinkers in the current study would render the project ‘impossible’ as it would require one to ignore the context in which this study is being carried out. The contextual reading here is based on looking into the Constitution of India as a political context. The Constitution here is not looked at as the law but as forming a political context that could provide a sufficient contextual paradigm for the proposed analysis of the politics–political-moral relationship.

Towards this end, certain thinkers from the Indian tradition who have contributed to the existing constitutional ethos and sentiments and its political contextual reading, are selected. Since the concern of this thesis is not just on the present political scenario but based in the aforementioned context on contribution to the constitutional ethos, I restrict the current study to only the three thinkers, Roy, Nehru, and Gandhi. A detailed study of the other thinkers who have contributed to this above question is not suggested here, as being any less relevant than this, and to that extent, the study marks just the beginning of all future possibilities of carrying out a theorization on different tropes of contemporary relevance. A constant reconceptualization and recontextualization is welcome and am certain could substantiate the dynamic nature of the Indian political tradition, if carried out meticulously; to help one make sense of our current realities and for garnering an understanding of the future.

My emphasis here, through this thesis, has been to allow for a researcher to explore the scope and the content of the political, through such inquiries where the contemporary and the pasts interact through a certain thematic grid, that then goes on to explain the present times and their potential futures. A conscious attempt has also been made to sufficiently question this increasing preoccupation as a researcher functioning within disciplines, to arrange knowledge and its compositions into tiny packets of analytical models that reinforce disciplines. During the course of the research, an attempt here was made to expose the problems involved in restricting the study of the aforementioned areas of human existence strictly within the political, without attending to the site of what constitutes or should constitute the political. This inquiry was possible and conceivable through the employment of violence as the trope that could assist one understand the dynamics of the interplay between Religion and Nation-State, which already have been epicentres of sovereign authority for a long period in Indian societies. The larger focus of this research however has been to critically assess, enquire into and discern what constituted Religion and Nation-State in particular and the political in general.

“Contrary to what many liberals had predicted, instead of becoming obsolete thanks to the development of ‘post-conventional identities’ and the increasing role of rationality in human behavior, religious forms of identification currently play a growing role in many societies. It seems, therefore, that the old controversy about the relationship between religion and politics, far from being on the wane, is again on the agenda.”¹⁷²

As part of hermeneutic clarity towards the established systems of knowledge, the concept of the state seeks to acquiesce a sizeable portion of the literature in political studies while it also spreads out the understanding of politics to different dimensions concerning nation, society, market.¹⁷³ The attitude of the discipline of political studies is towards the inquiry into the meaning and the importance of the state as the epitome of political consciousness and an apparatus that seeks to culminate the value of politics into its Being, which suggests without any contention that the state carries no singular meaning. It is a nuanced concept laced with multiple interpretive concerns, categorizations, forms of expressions, institutional; representation and value manifestations. However, ‘It is often said that to use concepts like ‘state’ and ‘society’ is not helpful because of their abstractness and excessive generality’.¹⁷⁴

The logic of rationality and reasoning with respect to the State that institutionalizes itself within this ideal, in a way, tries to imitate culture by fulfilling the ideals they have always been able to garner resilience from, namely religion.¹⁷⁵ This understanding of a possible preoccupation of the state with religious overtones cannot be undermined. The moment ideals are shaped into crystallized formations such as the State, the *aporia* it creates is significantly and consciously undermined and suppressed. The suppression of this goes too well with the ‘known’ aspects of the state which are used in the dialogue between state and society, amongst cultures within the society, between the individual and state and also between individual and culture. When I say, *known aspects*, I mean the essential nature of state that it has been able to acknowledge is insufficient in order to affect and shape peoples’ lives, which is why it primarily resorted to nationalism, secularism and/or religion.

“I believe that, here too, we touch on what I have elsewhere tried to analyze as the antinomic character of the development of citizenship as a historic institution: citizenship is intrinsically related to the processes of democratizing politics, yet is irreducible to “pure” democracy, for which liberty is the condition of equality, and vice versa. Citizenship can only represent the unstable, irreducibly conflictual balance between its own emancipatory and conservative—one might even say insurgent and constitutional—tendencies. That is also why the very existence of citizenship hinges, every time it finds itself caught up in a major historical transformation, on its capacity to be filled with new contents. Inevitably, the institution of citizenship as a whole is called into question, and presents itself to us in paradoxical form, because we find it hard to imagine (and thus to invent) the new in old language.....That makes it all the more important to discuss their nature.”¹⁷⁶

In the light of the above quote by Etienne Balibar, it becomes important to understand the relevance of the current study in investigating into the nature of a political order that respects and caters to challenges that religion poses, with the commitment to respond to violence, due to inherent paradoxes they present in varying contexts.

The configurations and composite understandings of violence in phenomenological debates between war and peace by Levinas¹⁷⁷ and others, do offer immense possibilities to explore its dimensions. However, the interests concerned with the limited scope of this study talks about the impossibilities of performing the historicized understanding of these terms/institutions/concepts. Rather, while one seeks to historicize, it is the impossibility of the activity that becomes more vivid than the activity itself, however fruitful it has been in contributing to the meaning of the political. Derrida talks about the subsumed or subconscious absence of meanings before the presence appears to us. The *differance* is intrinsic to the awareness of being limited in connecting the contexts across time and space through the knots¹⁷⁸ that express great significance to the ontology of the now, This shall always help one uncover or create new meanings and alternatives.

The ontological existence of religion and state as sovereign bodies that have established a rather strong place in the psyche, conditioning and even existence of the people and thereby defining the space of the political, lies in its very inadequacy to fulfil the conditions and attributes that they essentially seek to strive for and possess. The essence lies in their inadequacies to fulfil the ‘actuality’ of controlling or governing the experiences of the people, and of the citizens in a democracy. To be able to gauge, therefore, these myriad institutional and non-institutional forms that these two spaces have carved themselves and each other into, on some yardstick or modular form, the very nature of which remains unknown and politically created, may not be the best way to address the concerns associated with exploring and responding to violence. The very formations of yardstick that could radically change our perceptions of the potential roles of religion and state, however limited, can become a significant contributor towards understanding the underlying political dynamics and also uncover alternate possibilities and meanings of violence, if any. Hence, violence has been chosen as the parameter to help us identify with the most desirable version of either or both religion and state.

Thus, as mentioned before, with the advent of modernity, and the rising hegemony and dominance of the state in its different forms, especially that of the nation-state,¹⁷⁹ the age-old

tenacity that religion posed as necessary for the political ordering of society became an important area of attention. When obedience/disobedience to the laws became the citizenry's concept of a renewed understanding of order and authority as having shifted from a person(s) or a religion, which was monopolized by people or institutions; consent emerged as a potent force within the liberal democratic order, as opposed to violence in establishing this chain of legitimacy.¹⁸⁰

This stands as an example and a maxim that could help explain the rationale behind strengthening rise of secularity in liberal democratic societies as being responsible for establishing legitimate order of the day, that also set norms for the society to guide people towards moral and political soundness.¹⁸¹ Legitimacy, thus, has a connection with violence in the sense that what is legitimate or not does not matter as far as your (Self's/ self's) existence is not threatened and to the point where violence can easily be justified. Even though it is claimed to never be legitimate, the concern associated with every century's immobility and stagnation as far as dialogical vibrancy of the discourse on violence is concerned, is the fact that violence is not just attempted to be justified but also legitimized and therefore closed within the theoretical and practical boundaries of sovereignty and the political, that in turn guides politics.¹⁸² This process of appropriating time and space in order to legitimize violence takes place so subtly that it leaves one in this perennial state of confusion, apprehension and insecurity.

Therefore, the question that arises again is, how do we conceptualize the nature of the Self/Selves for India today? For a creative, an aware comprehension of the self; one needs to delve into exploring alternative methods of reframing the existing order. There are various ways in which thinkers from the Indian thought responded to different contexts. The texts generated, accorded import to many competing contexts of the time, as opposed to just a dominant context that construed the modern history for us. To attribute colonialism as the dominant context to the production of nationalistic responses, would not only sideline the overlapping play of different contexts that were present in the colonial period and continue to remain in different forms today; but also whitewash all symptoms of a masquerade that the 'modern' state and political authorities created to sideline religion; during the colonial contact. In response to colonialism, thus, a replica or an imitation of the dominant selves could never define freedom or liberation in the true sense of the term, unless it occupied a space of

innovation and not instinctive reactionary measures which may either be an explicit reproduction of the hegemony of the entities one sought to oppose in the very first place.¹⁸³

The responses one could draw from the canon to the changing contexts of struggle for freedom, struggle against colonization of the mind, against the colonial structure, for independence, and for nationhood, as well as for a distinct moral-political order; must have contributed in some forms towards addressing the questions of violence that were present in the existing political constructs; thereby making this a potent exercise for all times to come.

For instance, an excerpt of the exchange between Bal Gangadhar Tilak and M.K. Gandhi over the question of politicality and ethics shall be discussed here, in the light of their line of reasoning centered around violence. Gandhi comments on Tilak after the Amritsar Congress of December 1919:

“Lokamanya Tilak represents a definite school of thought of which he makes no secret. We consider that political life of the country will become thoroughly corrupt if we import Western tactics and methods”¹⁸⁴

The methods of M.K. Gandhi reflected an overt abstinent form of the language of violence that sought to sacralize politics with his project of creating a moral-political that surpassed what one conventionally thought of as moral as well as the political. His politics reproached bloodshed and intentionally causing physical injury to others for political ends. However, the same reason that abstained Gandhi from relying overtly upon violence influences Lokamanya Tilak to use it as the language of politics. The latter asserts Gandhi’s analysis of him as a wrong interpretation, only in terms of a fixed conception of the political, which would cripple the practice of politics, all the while quoting religion as the source of his inspiration to recommend violence, whenever needed. The essence of violence that Tilak emphasizes upon here, in his response to Gandhi does provide some space to politics and the political to expand, however ‘clear and fixed’ the former’s conceptions looked as compared to Gandhi’s. They both draw in different ways the means and ways to politically engage by giving more primacy to the context over a fixed conception of morality, on account of their intent to respond to violence in different ways. Thus, a thematic reading, using violence, gives us a glimpse of how theorizations within Indian thought led to alternative methods of contributing to an idea of the political and politics. Violence has, however, assumed many legitimate forms over the years, especially in the form of religion and nation-state. This is where and why violence comes into play as taking myriad

forms and shapes that have in different contexts and varied ontological origins which then determines the course of interactions. It is these multi-folded interactions that Indian thinkers tried to carry out.

This site of analysis in the Indian political tradition makes this study a temporal one too, and not just a spatial enquiry, as this enquiry makes the site an eternally contemporary one today and in future, an insight of which we hope to decipher in order to deal with the question of violence. The temporality of this enquiry does therefore contribute to the politics and the defining of the political which shifts and molds in time based on narratives that the dominant discourses have adhered to. To be able to refer to Indian Political tradition/ thought as the reference space for the analysis of the concepts and institutions of our concern, would invariably mean moving back and forth and exploring the multiple pasts that constantly talk to the present and vice versa.¹⁸⁵

1.4.1 Centrality to Violence and Politics: Opening up of the Political

“Politics is too often regarded as a poor relation, inherently dependent and subsidiary; it is rarely praised as something with a life and character of its own.”¹⁸⁶

We have discourses in contemporary political theory that criticizes itself for conquering, subordinating, side-lining, displacing or moralizing politics. Hence, politics-centered understanding of the political after Carl Schmidt was reinstated and explored through the writings of Hannah Arendt, Claude Lefort, Chantal Mouffe and the like. The content that infuses the political with its long-due *politicality* has changed from time to time as it should, rooted in contexts yet suspended in time for its future practitioners and recipients. Such a contextual conception of the political also then opens space for newer forms of conceptualizations, of say, religion and state, to be carried out. However, the concerns for life and living have humiliated politics.¹⁸⁷ Not only did politics distance itself from emotions and feelings, but it would have been humiliated and debased if it had to concern itself with life.¹⁸⁸ This arrogance of the structure in the political which subsumes life and living within the notions of the self and the other and the myriad processes of Othering, allows for minimal engagement with possibilities outside of these experiences. Will talking about these experiences place me far away from the conventional understanding of the political?

The exchange between Gandhi and Tilak mentioned above also sufficiently acknowledged the presence of such emotions that we conveniently placed under ‘moral’ and ‘political’ with strict norms attributed to it, without opening them up for a study giving centrality to violence. Another instance substantiating this point is located in the Global South narratives recently which have come up with these and similar questions to perhaps help one remain open to the possibilities of life.¹⁸⁹ This baseness of human life makes it categorically improper to rethink politics with the fullness of life as ever constituting it.¹⁹⁰ This idea of fullness is rigorously delinked and awarded the aura of being distinct from the routine, being hailed as a sign of victory, of majesty and elegance. This symbolized manhood for centuries, the idea of body and also the *bodypolitic*. The mind that kept the body in captivity to legitimize controls and rights has mostly defined laws and the formation of the State and its governmentality¹⁹¹. For instance, in colonies, being political was *apriori* to everything else. “It was the precondition to achieving not just freedom, equality, and justice, but also community, sociability, intimacy, and indeed the ordinary fruits and pleasures of human life.”¹⁹²

As seen in the case of the ordering of life, above, histories are required to be seen differently every time there is a question of religion and/or nature in place. The aforementioned concerns expressed here are suggestive of an imminent lack in the current imagination of world order which, if not re-imagined or theorized would produce more spaces of absolute despair and sheer brazen misconduct against people as is visible currently in many spaces. This is thus an attempt at such a re-imagination by bringing in the ways in which religion has been dealt with in matters concerning the political, seeking support from referring to the works of Rammohan Roy, Jawaharlal Nehru and M.K. Gandhi, with the commitment of understanding the possibilities of responding to violence.

Violence, thus, becomes the last resort to consolidate and sustain authority against all odds.¹⁹³ When it comes to treating an entity as equal or challenging it in the form of coercion or virtual/real show of strength, you also end up stripping away the entity from the vestige of being an authority and/or in authority. This demands from us an understanding that remains closest to an underestimation of the potential repercussions of resorting to violence.¹⁹⁴ Resorting to violence may even lead nation-state and religion towards its own dismemberment from the existing political relationships. The limits the potential political space could offer in practicing politics and more so, vice versa are not what violence could offer, even though it could vanquish power, power could never emanate out of it.¹⁹⁵ This also explains why violence takes the form of tolerance, antagonism, banality, interest-articulation and manipulation, of the

cultural and epistemic kinds.¹⁹⁶ For instance, State sovereignty gets increasingly equated with the language of political rationality. In order to fill the flaws of a 'rational physical state', either it is routed into discourses on secular nationalism or religious/ cultural identity formations.¹⁹⁷ The divinization of the state and the ambition of a mythic world is then legitimized then by the epicentre of morality, religion, which never quite lost its prominence even in modern times. Therefore, a religious state could provide one with a better vision of this mythic world, which continued to source violence into legitimizing political institutions by de-politicizing them, especially the role of religion in public space.¹⁹⁸

Thus, this entire project related to the thematic of violence, is viciously connected to the unknown. Everything unknown and beyond comprehension gets easily appropriated within the ambit of the dominant institutions easily if it is done using the language of violence. Therefore, the implications or reflections of violence may also be found in such dominant organizational structures in varying intensities, that, they get branded as violent categories at the outset itself. This assumption is not entirely wrong; however, categorizations always create a skewed understanding of their presence and essence. Their functionality may, therefore, also be viewed by providing/ infusing/ creating a space for critical enquiry which also in turn explores the potential of political rationality. This space is what offers essence to the thesis and to all future theses on these concepts, because that scope for a recontextualized reading of the pasts will provide a glimpse of hope and possibility to the readers to create a more conscious present. The intention of the research also bears this fundamental essence, which is that of, recreating a present that one can look at and open up for all future theorizations.

Another fundamental refrain inherent in the very concept of violence lies in the gradual and eventually complete erosion of potentiality to think and act.¹⁹⁹ On the other hand, power is in possession of an apparent solution to problems and answers to what is truth, by mistakenly seeking the answers in realities which are different from truth. This explains why any critical thinking is unwelcomed and is perceived as a threat to power, while it is with the intention of probably making the institutions more powerful perhaps. But in this insecurity, the institutions used violence to justify their positions in society by using history, which intrinsically now was connected to the sustenance and governance of the balance between potentiality and non-potentiality.

Thus, violence assumes a dichotomous nature, which can be further explained by looking at its implementation essentially as a tool to save authority and also as a device that could lead to its extinction in literal sense. An interesting fact which, hence, remains unresolved is, if violence that is universally considered as undesirable may have been used to establish and sustain the respective hegemonies, be it structural, cultural, psychological, epistemic, why would they still continue to remain resilient as centers of power?²⁰⁰ Hence, the proposition that violence requires a certain source of concentrated power or authority to sustain itself as the language most widely applicable to the masses, acquires meaning here. The reason being, any institution or entity that exuded power needed to remain pinned as central to the activity of sustaining itself by resorting to legitimacy and thence, also violence, if necessary. “Phenomenologically, violence is close to strength, since the implements of violence, like all other tools are designed and used for the purpose of multiplying natural strength until, in the last stage of development, they can substitute for it.”²⁰¹ Arendt’s riveting explanation of violence moves way beyond the conventional attributions of violence to power, influence, authority and the like.²⁰²

As an extension to this activity of sustaining power, violence inflicted on humans was legitimized and pitched across as an antidote to the seamless array of superstitious beliefs that religion was capable of creating. The practice of superstitions, present in one of the many societal exhibitions of religion, allayed fears for man. The colonial civilizing mechanism flourishing on the need to displace the presence of superstitions with science was brought to serve the interests of the State when the real life, day to day, routine affairs got increasingly dislocated from the purview of a legitimate life and landed up in the hands of the State that used and continues to use science increasingly, to justify its actions.²⁰³ The property of science in its disinterest in the plurality of cultures in contemporary India, contributes to the case in point suggested above, that is, an unfathomable use of science to forward the ends of the State. It is violence, both as an attribute as well as the foundation that deems possible this creation of politics within the realm of science. Politics induces itself into science and through that, moulds the State into constantly ‘becoming’ the epitome of ‘impartial’ and ‘rational’ antidote to the violence of superstitions allowed by religion in the society. Ashis Nandy writes,

“There is an attempt to relate the critique of modern science to an implicit, almost unwitting, sensitivity to the problems of violence which the ‘common man’, the ‘savage’, the ‘insane’ and the ‘childish’ often show.”²⁰⁴

There have been standardized formats of dissent in the modern world “which we, in the privileged sector of the third world, have internalized as parts of our socialization and acculturation to the modern world”, which needs to be recognized and celebrated.²⁰⁵ This observation made at length by Ashis Nandy in many works, especially the one titled, *Science, Hegemony and Violence: A Requiem of Modernity* gets a refreshing presence in Etienne Balibar’s, *From Violence as Anti-Politics to Politics as Anti-Violence*, where Balibar presents why the violence should no longer remain just one of the many concerns of politics but should be analyzed as the undercurrent that puts politics at its mercy. In line with the above example, science, now becomes the path that the society decides must be kept secure from the realm of politics, while also simultaneously inducing a certain kind of politics into science, that should also serve the national interest. Jawaharlal Nehru’s vision of the new political future for India, for instance, harbours this use of science as the epitome of reason that would guide societies into creating a new present and a future, without revisiting the past again.²⁰⁶

Thus, constructing organizations based on rationality with the intention or say, humane justification of the aforementioned reasons; may end up with the risk of producing people who are governed by the regulations of the organizations, and for many, reduced to ‘bare beings’,²⁰⁷ or mass men²⁰⁸ that cease to comprehend the perils of the upcoming concerns or even the ones from the past that has led to unfathomable and unresolved conflicts/failures today. The presence of violence is treated in discourses as the presence of failure, while, for instance, Immanuel Kant looked at it with the intention of exploring rationality and expanding its potential scope. Such political constructions are based on an assumption of peace that has an incalculable metaphysical *telos*.²⁰⁹ This concept also has its presence in how modern western knowledge systems have been produced and sustained over generations, the supremacy and belief in certain ideas, which legitimized institutions such as the State which could easily be pitched against Religion; which then goes on to assume secular discourses as the ideal set of narratives that should define political order.²¹⁰ To understand that the genealogy of violence is intrinsically connected to the very activity of knowledge-production is what makes the analysis on violence multi-dimensional and layered. The spectra of concerns revolving around the concept needs to be mindful to the researcher while locating it or trying to uncover it in a certain location and explore all questions right from how it can be studied to how it functions or manifests.

Usually, the trope used is that of ‘horror’²¹¹, but with Arendt’s phenomenal contribution to the study that normalized it to banality²¹², it makes the inquiry more about one’s internal quest into understanding the self, other, subject, object, thing, institutions, their ontological significance and interactions. Therefore, an inquiry into any concept also requires *psychopolitical* explanation to make sense of the essence of these terms and the possibilities they could unfold. Probably the rationale behind getting these concepts on the table is self-explanatory to the fact that the task is not going to be that of a less complicated one, while also suggesting the need to include these concepts in a dialogical interactive environment with certain following entry points of looking into the concept of violence, as part of the thesis.

1. What are the potential conceptualizations of the relationship between religion and state carries, in a way that is restrictive to violence?
2. What are the mechanisms employed by the select Indian Political Thinkers in the analysis of developing such a potential?
3. How can this endeavour possibly contribute towards relooking Indian Political Thought using violence as the harbinger that has insurmountably existed and contributed in many forms the shape of the political?
4. That violence can be measured as the basic parameter to rethink an alternative to ‘separation between religion and state’, becomes one of the most important undercurrents of the thesis.

Therefore, violence has never been singled out in the research or in the analysis of concepts, however, the implements of it and its various forms of expressions were sought after especially when the political and economic spaces lacked substantive explanations for helping one comprehend the usage of other concepts such as power, and institutions and socio-political spaces occupied by dominant institutions such as religion and state.²¹³ Here, in the thesis, while I acknowledge the fact that violence needs to merit a study in itself, I humbly try to submit this thesis may not directly address this imperative with immediacy, but during the course of the reading of Indian political thought while contextualizing the thinkers within this spectrum of violence and its applications; one may procure, some understanding simultaneously of violence too.

Along these lines, for politics to be understood in terms of the political and thereby using the former to constantly look into a notion of the latter with all its fallacies, which are in popular modern terminologies called misrepresentations, misrecognition, failure of distribution, and

the like, one needs to unpack religion in the everyday routine consciousness of the people to make sense of its essence and how it works out for people.²¹⁴ This is the site where religion takes one beyond the space of reason and exposes open the other spaces such as that of emotions like fear, contempt, aspirations, beliefs, faith and the like. This site is not the space only of the social or the moral. Such claims have been made by many a thinker in the Indian political tradition.

For instance, B.R. Ambedkar had vehemently argued against caste being relegated into the safe space of the social and the moral, the questions of which had been predominantly dealt with by religion. Religion, for M.K. Gandhi, becomes a potential political source as well as a site of exploration that could help the society towards his vision of the *Swaraj*.²¹⁵ This gave birth to a theologico-political understanding that had the potential to resolve the violent nature of the relation between the ways in which religion and state were perceived in India and for India. Gandhi's insistence on merging the moral question with the political question, at one go, allows for a formidable shift in the way religion had been conventionally utilized in the mainstream political theorizations, especially during the colonial context and post the colonial rule in Indian societies. This infused, in a renewed sense, a new kind of politics into the pre-defined political that had kept caste and religion aside for the longest time as intrinsic to the formation of politics which looked beyond the modernized closed categories that were made of religion and caste. Religion, during the colonial context, because of M.K. Gandhi, became a site that has enormous potential to construe an anti-colonial struggle without adhering to a fixed conception of modernized and categorized religion. The latter version of religion²¹⁶ did transform into a space that could at a macro-level garner mobilization and carry out movements in the society against its own apologetic nature of conduct for the diversities it possessed. Cultural diversities may have thus become a threat to the concrete nature of the 'modern' structural and instrumental entities such as the State and Religion, both of which have been under the heavy influence of their western counterparts and vice versa. Gandhi's spiritual-religious conception did perhaps radicalize the very nature of the political with the onus of transformation it entrusted to the society and its people more than anybody else, which could take place through various religious nonviolent methods of penance, sacrifice, surrender, passive resistance and the relentless unquestionable quest for the Truth. These are named *Tapas*, *Tyaaga*, *Satya* and *Ahimsa* in some of the vernacular Indian languages such as Sanskrit, Hindi and Gujarati.²¹⁷

1.4.2 Some manifestations of Violence: Manufacturing Antagonism

There is an imminent burden of redefining or as Derrida calls it pre-defining of what one would want to conceive of as religion in a certain context.²¹⁸ This is the role that religious tolerance, as a value, plays in contemporary discussions over the relationship among religions, especially in secular narratives. Laicization in the western sense, therefore, could form ample reasons and possibilities for religion to get clustered into identity formations and crystallized within the paradigms of what we witness today popularly as the electorally packaged political religious identities. Copious volumes of literature may be found on secularism, fundamentalism and such ideological formations in the public space that encapsulates the essence of how religion has constituted itself in society through mobilization and electoral establishments.

An engagement into the many contexts that contributed to this formation of religious identities is as important as the need to comprehend the identities and its various formations itself. The criticism against secularism inhabits a space within, that is crucial to the narratives of violence that have been used tremendously in the formation of the identities in their myriad capacities in India. The Hindu-Muslim religious formations have increasingly instead, produced simplified and clear responses that may reek with an unapologetic stance against the other, for the very construal of their respective identities. This unapologetic stance where violence gets enough fodder when associated with the survival of ones identity and presence in the subcontinent in the eyes of the Other, makes it difficult for one to fathom, and thereafter break the depths to which it could go.

There is an indication that narratives of violence completely subscribe to the ardent need to manifest and project collectivities through individualized, ritualized schemes and means whereby, the solidarity gets mistaken for intra-community fraternity. The concept of freedom which is supposed to be fundamental to the realization of fraternity gets sufficiently mulled and conveniently celebrated only when it caters to the larger project sanctioned and supported by violence. This explains why antagonism is kept alive and spaced in the political while on the surface there is an equivalent need combined with the former, to suppress this urge of antagonism and sufficiently engage in some construct of the moral that will allow for different communities to coexist 'peacefully'. This latter trajectory of the construction of the moral alongside the space of the political, and the superiority of the former over the latter became the language of secularism actually in practice, for ages, even though on face value it sought to emphasize on the political as supposed to be defining the very nature of peoples and their civil

society.²¹⁹ This also got extrapolated into the need to separate the religious from the state and therefore increasingly define the former. The secular therefore became either the unreligious or above the religious. The sufficient tension between these spaces then made for a rather consistent need to not address antagonism in its primary formative conditions, but mostly, only after an event ensues. In a way, this convenient separation and merger allows for the antagonism and its rise to remain unaddressed. Antagonism which constitutes the political in its primary conception, then, gets solved only as a post-facto experience which is condemned within what one understands as the framework of the moral.

This moral-political dilemma in effect, ceases to be a dilemma, and rather seem to work together in collusion. The 'innocent' face of the moral that has to appear itself amidst a population that follows religion in many ways, then becomes the unreal aspect of the political that works in collaboration with it to mar any possibilities of allowing one to understand religion. This creation of the moral itself is an intrinsic part of the political that narrativization of secularism, which at one point became the moral tool of sustenance and coexistence of a good society, failed to observe or see through. This explains the significant downfall and abuse of the efficacy of secularism in the country to deal with the question of antagonism. Therein, is sown the seed of violence, which germinates into many forms of conflagrations, which are again simplified either as the dirty game of politics or as masquerading the real issues of survival that the majority people have to deal with in the country.²²⁰

Many forms of religious antagonisms:

- Desecration of the sacred centres of worship, of deities, of the cultural-religious presence and resulting elimination or displacement.
- Riots and pogroms involving people practicing different religions.
- Delegitimation of the cultural experience as being intrinsic to the nationalist conception of the self, which involves constant refurbishing of the past for the creation of the new future, while the present continues in turmoil, the changes of which ensue a future that was once 'ours'. Newer categories of sub-nationalisms get created. While some are encouraged, some are assimilated, some are increasingly placed in the aforementioned matrix of antagonistic identities that are constructed daily through ritual-creations. This becomes a source of struggle for the religious movements.

This gives birth to antagonism and ensures the need to produce ways to alleviate its intensity sufficiently in the eyes of the masses. In an attempt to subside that, the political is manipulated into being blamed as the central space of fear and offense.

- The increase in offense is characteristic of the trends that follow from antagonistic and fear-based sentiments, fear of losing identity, fear of losing purity and sanctity of religion, which is sought after and restated through revivalist or fundamentalist movements.²²¹
- The counter-movement or as we may call it, the majoritarian backlash comes in alternative way by turning the state into majoritarian while emphasizing upon uniform norms for all. This is opposed to religion being studied as amorphous in content and drawing from myths and not necessarily from history.²²²

Religion gets used in the public spaces as a means to disrupt order as far as the status quo of politics remain intact, which involves makeshift alliances across political outfits to keep alive the problems related to religion so, the practice of politics does not get affected by the rising communal tensions.

The discourse that this thesis is interested to modestly contribute to, aims at getting into the meaning of these concepts/entities at work, their ontological understandings and epistemological nuanced meanings, and intends to study analytically, the patterns and forms of the relationships that have been conceptualized by modern Indian Political discourses.²²³ Based on the aforementioned instances, one can decipher the shortcomings of the existing discourses within the study of politics, which, in any which manner even closely refrained from attempting to mention about the human relationship with religion without stripping our concerns from the vestige of a human-centric conception of our existence and for the sake of a just and good community for humans. Knowledge is held hostage by the temporalities that claim their presence in fixed notions of territory and space. If at all, this relationship is explored or may be potentially explored, how do we intend to produce the language to do so, without running into solipsism? The act of comprehending using our senses, sensibilities and sensitivities that we do share a relationship with religion and through religion, state, and with a world elsewhere, needs a significant comprehension in our routine discourses. It is not just our copious instances of discord with religion and state that needs to be lamented about, but the fact that it remained and continues to remain exalted as legitimate to assume humans as central to existence; that needs to be questioned with a mark of concern.

1.5 Organization of the Study

“Words, when they lead lives outside the ordinary, become emptied of experience, lose touch with life, in Wittgenstein, it is the scene of language having gone on a holiday.”²²⁴

The irrationality of reality comes into light in non-linguistic spaces such as that of expressions (not necessarily worded), in the experiences, in the day-to-day events and activities entangled around our perception of good and bad or right and wrong. Words carry the burden of language which in turn limits the existence of the subject in any enquiry. One of the major undercurrents of academic attention in the thesis is that interactions amongst these entities are essentially political in nature. Above all, the paradigms used to study them, modalities employed to comprehend them and methods used to reach to them or create them are known or made known to us, well within the political space itself that also simultaneously becomes an addendum to the shaping of our understandings of the political. As a researcher here, I offer this as an attempt to also help one find out other possible opportunities for shaping the political and providing scope for understanding this politics-political interplay.

For the longest time in the disciplinary framework of the study of politics, the political was pre-defined in order for conflict to be understood. Drawing boundaries formed one of the most significant sources of the narrational and conceptual basis for the rise and establishment of the political. The fallacies that lie inherently in this obsession with spatialization of the political, get exposed when many institutional structures and concepts intertwine and create challenges to the very formation of the political that constituted them in the first place. However, the activity of binding was never non-exhaustive. The designing of the knowledge systems could not have been bereft of politics itself. The politics of knowledge allowed one to comprehend the extent to which the political may be manufactured into existence. This construction of the scope of the discipline is undertaken in order to make sense of the conflict within and beyond the surroundings that people have perceived and sedimented for centuries. People have participated, since times immemorial, in the creation of such sedimented and varied understandings of their surroundings in time and space. Can we then think of these boundaries as transcending to incorporate a fluid nature of the political, or rather, shouldn't we? The study proposes the need to conceive of the political as fluid, the possibilities of which I seek to gather from the way religion has been treated in a specific context of its relation with the State.

In order for a smooth conduct of the study it has been organized into the following chapters:

The first chapter explores the need to carry out the proposed study and manages to elaborate on the conceptual grid of the study that is, opening up the politics-political interplay. The basic concerns of the study are explored and laid out in the subsequent sections explaining the relationship between religion and nation-state. The conceptual trope employed here to carry out the study is Violence. A detailed description of the ongoing discourse and different conceptual positions within it is done as part of this chapter. While doing so, the concerns and relevance of the study are emphasized upon and elucidated, which will open up possibilities for detailed conceptual analysis in the subsequent chapters. The main concern of this study described in this chapter, is to explore the idea of the political underlying relationship between religion and the nation-state by employing violence as a conceptual trope. My focus here is to study the site of Indian Political Tradition in order to delve into the possibilities it has to offer in dealing with these contemporary travails of understanding the relationship between religion and state. The thinkers, Rammohun Roy, Jawaharlal Nehru, and M.K. Gandhi, are part of the study, who have contributed immensely to the existing constitutional context, despite there being many other significant thinkers, who have influenced and characterized various political contexts across ages.

The second chapter titled, “The Imperative of Social Reform: Reading Rammohun Roy” focused on Rammohun Roy, begins with an exploration of Roy’s political thought and his contributions to the definition and conceptualization of the understanding of the political and the nature of the religion-state relationship in particular. Roy’s project of social reforms which is state-imposed but society-determined is emphasized upon. The separation of the society and the state or religion and state or the social and the political is studied keeping in mind the established conceptual grid. Thereafter, the space of violence is explored in this conceptualization and a study of how the above relationship has catered to the need of eliminating violence in society, is studied. Through the study, the position of religion and its contribution to the formation of the political and the moral is also explored. Some of the primary sources referred to here are: *Tuhfat-ul-Muwahiddin: A Gift to Monotheists, English Works of Rammohun Roy, Vol. 2*; along with many other secondary sources produced on Rammohan Roy.

The third chapter titled, “The Imperative of Secular Reform: Reading Jawaharlal Nehru” focused on Jawaharlal Nehru is studied. He had proposed for an essential separation between religion and state with the establishment of the liberal modern western secularity in the practice of religion in public space. This separation is studied in the light of the conceptual grid of the politics-political interplay and analyzed through an exploration of the presence of violence in this definition, implementation, and location of secular principles as guiding the state-religion relationship. This relationship which is state-led and institutionalized in a dominant role assigned to the state is explored within the aforementioned grid. The prospects for the future political and the scope it creates to accommodate questions on violence is studied. Some of the primary sources referred to here are: *The Discovery of India*, *Glimpses of World History*, *Jawaharlal Nehru’s Speeches: Vol 1(1946-49)*; along with many other secondary sources produced on Jawaharlal Nehru.

The fourth chapter focuses on M.K. Gandhi, who proposed for a juxtaposition and synthesis of religion with politics. The looming absence of institutionalized bodies in the narratives Gandhi initiated, will be focused upon. In Gandhi’s thought, the infusion of religion with politics is processed in methods that are distant from any fixed principled understanding of politics, while also simultaneously suggesting the possibility of one, is studied. This study, further, explores the space of violence in the relationship Gandhi intends for religion and state. Gandhi’s emphasis on a processual and not entirely a principled understanding of politics, is critically examined within the scope of the current study. Some of the primary sources referred to here are: *Hind Swaraj*, *An Autobiography: The Story of my Experiments with Truth*, *Speeches and Writings of M.K. Gandhi*, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi: Vol. XV and KS-Vol XIX*; among many secondary sources on M.K. Gandhi.

The study concludes in the fifth chapter with an exploration of the arguments and positions offered. The first section is devoted to a synoptic and summary reading of the main concerns of the study as well as of the different conceptual readings of the relationship between state and religion understood with the trope of violence, in the argument of Roy, Nehru and Gandhi. The section suggests the differences and contending perspectives of the aforementioned three Indian Political thinkers. The last section of the study involves a modest attempt at offering a conceptually alternative reading of the relationship between religion and the state by rendering it political, yet not astutely violent. The section suggests that what is often considered as a

tenuous relationship between two sovereign sources of law, namely religion and state, can be understood to have bound in a moral-political relationship and somewhat, nonviolent relationship by categorizing this relationship as an open and essentially ‘political’ one.

With this study, I intended to make a modest attempt at contributing in a modest meaningful way to the ongoing discourse by offering a re-reading of the relationship between religion and state which is, both lesser violent as well as political, so as to allow for confrontations and conflicts to be understood for the contemporary times, but rooting the source of the study in the canonical tradition. An exploration of the political as contemporary research is somewhat different, although not entirely unrelated, from the notion of politics. And it is perhaps the political which would facilitate a more just inclusive and sustainable relationship between religion and the state, one that is distinct from the dominant understandings of liberal secularism and cultural nationalism; one that is political, yet not exclusive.

Notes

¹ The meanings of the terms secular, secularism, religion, nation-state/state, and violence have changed for different scholars in different contexts. Since, a contextual, as well as a conceptual reading, is intended to be carried out, fixating or defining these terms would be beyond the scope of the study and I submit, goes against the very purpose of the study, which is to locate violence in the epistemic, systemic, political and moral connections. Through the course of such an inquiry, these terms will be looked at as changing in their meaning and content, which shall be explained in the respective context for clarity.

² Ashis Nandy, T.N. Madan, Peter Van der Veer, Bhikhu Parekh, Jonathan Seglow, Andrew Shorten, and the like have sufficiently established critiques questioning the efficacy of secularism and have explored the possibilities of alternatives in cosmopolitan, republican, and multicultural paradigms.

³ The intent, here, is not to fixate only a certain meaning to the ways in which secularism has worked out in Indian societies, but to go with the larger principle of disengagement with religion and the religious and role of the state in looking at secularization as the desirable political for the scholarship that largely contributed to the Constitution of India in its current form. A detailed discussion on the varied meanings of secularism will be carried out later in the chapter.

⁴ T.N. Madan, in this context, writes that Secularism probably never visited India nor touched Indian soil ever and has “failed to make headway in India as a widely shared worldview”. Cited in Peter Van der Veer, “Secularity and Religion”, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*, p. 15

⁵ There is a deep connection between intercommunity engagements and ethnic conflicts in civil society in India, an elaborate reading of which may be found in Ashutosh Varshney’s *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India*. Also see Thomas Blom Hansen, *Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*, p. 3

⁶ See Prathama Banerjee, *Elementary Aspects of the Political: Histories from the Global South*

⁷ Emile Durkheim attributes this quality to religion and its function in society. Martin Riesebrodt, “The Future of Religion”, *The Promise of Salvation: A Theory of Religion*, trans. S. Rendall, p. 171

⁸ Prathama Banerjee, “Introduction”, *Elementary Aspects of the Political: Histories from the Global South*, pp. 1- 13

⁹ Carl Schmidt and Claude Lefort have held onto this distinction between politics and the political. This has been explained in Prathama Banerjee's work titled, *Elementary Aspects of the Political: Histories from the Global South*. The disconnect that is maintained in many ways between the two may need to be rethought to develop future understandings rooted in a more open-ended notion of the political, as a process. The possibilities of these will be explored in the current study.

¹⁰ Talal Asad, "Comments on Conversion", *Conversion to Modernities: The Globalization of Christianity*, p. 263

¹¹ Jurgen Habermas, "The Political: The Rational Meaning of a Questionable Inheritance of Political Theology", *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, p. 17. Cited from Martin Riesebrodt, trans. S. Rendall, *The Promise of Salvation: A Theory of Religion*

¹² I shall be applying the essence of Prathama Banerjee's exploration of the elementary aspects of the political in the understanding of the relations religion has harboured with politics in the formations of the knowledge systems, the political, the *apolitical*, the *nonpolitical*, the *extrapolitical* and the likes.

¹³ See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*

¹⁴ Wendy Brown brings it out in her text, *Manhood and Politics*, where the debasement of life is stated as being crucial to the success and the sustenance of the State. Life falls at the behest of politics commanding over it whenever convenient for it. It is this matter of convenience that is being questionably posed while analyzing religion because of religion being conveniently reduced to the apolitical and pre-defined.

¹⁵ Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan, *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*, p. 3

¹⁶ See Ashis Nandy, *Science, Hegemony and Violence: A Requiem of Modernity*, T.N. Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*, pp. 233 – 264, 274. Ashis Nandy extensively presents a counter-argument by placing science as the epicenter of hegemonic influence within the knowledge systems and as T.N. Madan calls it, contributed to "the institutionalization of suffering and promotion of modern superstitions and authoritarianism".

¹⁷ See Bertrand Russell, *Religion and Science*; T.N. Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*; Peter Van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*; Bhikhu Parekh, "Some Reflections on the Hindu Theory of Tolerance"

¹⁸ See Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*

¹⁹ This argument is akin to the elaborate works by the likes of Ashis Nandy, T.N. Madan, Peter Van der Veer, Wendy Brown, Judith Butler, and the like, on uncovering the violent hegemonic rise of institutional paradigmatic systems such as science, nation, nation-state, and the like under the pretext of them keeping human reason at the centre and therefore countering religion for its blind faiths and beliefs.

²⁰ Upendra Baxi, “Disasters, Catastrophes and Oblivion: A TWAIL Perspective”; Wendy Brown, *Manhood and Politics: A Feminist Reading in Political Theory*; Prathama Banerjee, *Elementary Aspects of the Political: Histories from the Global South*

²¹ Peter Van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India*, pp. 140, 180, 181, 183, 184

²² Ibid, p. 183

²³ See Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*; Bertrand Russell, *Religion and Science*, T.N. Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*

²⁴ Homi Bhabha, ‘Introduction’, *The Location of Culture*, p. 7

²⁵ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, pp. 1 - 18

²⁶ M.K. Gandhi popularly writes in the *Hind Swaraj*, “In no part of the world, and under no civilization, have all men attained perfection.” MK Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, p. 71. The underlying obsession with every theorization to form an understanding of a perfect society gets fundamentally questioned by thinkers such as Gandhi. Gandhi, however, uses religious references to make this point by stating that the only perfected whole that exists is what he understands as God, while everything else is only the imperfectly existing entities, seeking an ‘unnatural’ perfection.

²⁷ There are multiple instances in the *Hind Swaraj*, where, especially in the description of the relationship between the Hindus and Muslims in India, he explains the imperfect nature of the relationship as something that needs to be embraced amidst growing pressures of perfecting it within formulae and rules. He provides the analogy of a clay pot to explain the relationship between the two communities which may be then perfected into existence. However, this perfection is rooted in the deep sense of acceptance of imperfections. M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, p. 57

²⁸ Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan, “Introduction: Before, Around, and Beyond the Theologico-Political”, *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*, pp. 1 - 90

²⁹ See Prathama Banerjee, *Elementary Aspects of the Political: Histories from the Global South*

³⁰ See Bhikhu Parekh, ‘Some Reflections on the Hindu theory of Tolerance’

³¹ T.N. Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*, pp. 233 – 264, 274

³² Prathama Banerjee, “Introduction”, *Elementary Aspects of the Political: Histories from the Global South*, pp. 8, 9

³³ Ashis Nandy, “An Anti-Secularist Manifesto”, *The Romance of the State: And the Fate of the Dissent in the Tropics*, p. 35

³⁴ For a detailed reading of the Hijab issue that erupted in 2022, see Dilip Mondal, <https://dev1.theprint.in/opinion/the-real-issue-in-karnataka-hijab-row-is-how-secularism-is-defined-wrongly-nehru-to-modi/827533/>

³⁵ T.N. Madan, “The Crisis of Indian Secularism”, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*, pp. 233 – 264

³⁶ See Donald E. Smith, *India as a Secular State*, and Rajeev Bhargava, “The Distinctiveness of Indian Secularism”

³⁷ See Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India* and Ashis Nandy, *The Culture of Indian Politics: A Stock Taking*

³⁸ See Shefali Jha, “Secularism in the Constituent Assembly Debates, 1946 – 1950”

³⁹ Ibid, p. 3176. An elaborate account of it and the characteristics reflecting this position may be found in this article.

⁴⁰ Rajeev Bhargava, Distinctiveness of Indian Secularism, p. 24

⁴¹ D.L. Sheth, “Historicizing India’s Nationhood: History as Contemporary Politics”, ed. Peter Ronald DeSouza, *At Home with Democracy: A Theory of Indian Politics*, pp. 23 – 34

⁴² See Etienne Balibar, “From Violence as Anti-Politics to Politics as Anti-Violence” and *Violence and Civility: On the Limits of Political Philosophy*

⁴³ Scholars who have contributed to a detailed exploration of thinkers in the Indian thought by providing centrality to violence are Ashis Nandy, Faisal Devji, Ajay Skaria, and the like.

⁴⁴ This reference immediately may transport the mind of a reader to the arena of political inquiry as abstract, unintelligible, and presenting to us as Myths. Perhaps this explains why Faisal Devji states, why M.K. Gandhi uses myths as an important source of knowledge for an understanding of the past.

⁴⁵ See Etienne Balibar, “From Violence as Anti-Politics to Politics as Anti-Violence”

⁴⁶ Jacques Derrida, “Force of Law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority”. This article explains the concept of *Aporia* and he applies it to the understanding of the nature of the Law. Law, thus, due its internal contradictions cannot impart justice. There is an aporetic relationship

that violence establishes as a concept with other values, thereby largely making it difficult to conceptualize.

⁴⁷ Facts that are not fixed and fossilized but changing through the travails and travesties of and with time and space.

⁴⁸ Peter Van der Veer writes about this while explaining how an inquiry of the pasts is both a spatial and a temporal inquiry, p. 145; See Peter Van der Veer, “Conceptions of Time”, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India*, pp. 138-164

⁴⁹ Ashis Nandy, “Introduction: Science as a Reason of State”, *Science, Hegemony and Violence: A Requiem of Modernity – Volume I*, pp. 2 – 16

⁵⁰ See the works such as the following: Romila Thapar, *The Past as Present: Forging Contemporary Identities through History*; Dipesh Chakraborty, “Postcoloniality and History”, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*; Faisal Devji, “Bastard History”, *The Impossible Indian: Gandhi and the Temptation of Violence*, pp. 9 – 40 and the like.

⁵¹ This argument is elaborated extensively in Neeladri Bhattacharya, “Predicaments of Secular Histories”.

⁵² Romila Thapar’s work titled, ‘The Past as Present’ exemplifies what is being told when the past continues to remain a repository of information that is fluid and accessible, open-ended yet suddenly remains closed by the ones who appropriate events from the past into a narrative that is rooted in drawing itself from legitimate sources. Legitimacy, here, is only sourced in limited ways, such as consensual allegiance by dominant popular forces, in ideological hegemonizing or in a convenient narrative of historicism.

⁵³ Thomas Blom Hansen, “Imagining the Hindu Nation”, *Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*, pp. 61 – 65

⁵⁴ This included demands for either revivalism, fundamentalism, identity formations, eliminating vulnerabilities, defining the purity of religion, and most of the time, using religion as an instrument towards securing one’s position of legitimacy in society. See T.N. Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*.

⁵⁵ For a detailed reading of the genealogy of Hinduism, and the emergence of the terms Hindu, Sindhu, one may refer to Arvind Sharma, “On Hindu, Hinduism, Hindustan, Hindutva” Also see Romila Thapar, *Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and the Modern Search for a Hindu Identity*, and legal- constitutional overview in Ronojoy Sen’s account titled, “Defining Religion: The Supreme Court and Hinduism”, *Articles of Faith: Religion, Secularism and the Indian Supreme Court*, pp. 41 – 71

⁵⁶ T.N. Madan, “from Orthodoxy to Fundamentalism”, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*, pp. 109 -114

⁵⁷ A phrase used by Romila Thapar to talk about the entities in the society, usually the ones belonging to the lower middle class and underprivileged sections, whose engagement with religion was far from the orthodoxies of the elite religious segments. This was delivered as part of a talk titled, “Our Shared Cultural Heritage- History as Heritage” the link to which may be accessed here, https://youtu.be/APNC_rtXqqk.

⁵⁸ This argument shall be elaborated in the upcoming subsection of the thesis with reference to the works of scholars like Neeladri Bhattacharya, Ashis Nandy, and T.N. Madan.

⁵⁹ This could have explained B.R. Ambedkar and Jawaharlal Nehru’s major chunk of criticism and disagreement with Gandhi on the potentially misguided or loose appreciation for religion and its role in creating a robust political order.

⁶⁰ Bertrand Russel, “Grounds of Conflict”, *Religion and Science*, p. 8

⁶¹ This is said in Lesly Hazelton’s *After the Prophet* by the Iranian social reformer Ali Sharyati. This is quoted in Craig Calhoun’s “Religion’s Many Powers”, an afterword present in the text, *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, p. 129

⁶² Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan, “Introduction: Before, Around, and Beyond the Theologico-Political”, *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*, pp. 1 – 90

⁶³ Dipesh Chakraborty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, pp. 30 – 46

⁶⁴ Peter Van der Veer, “The Moral State: Religion, Nation, and Empire”, “Moral Muscle: Masculinity and Its Religious Uses”, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*, pp. 53 – 54, 104 – 105

⁶⁵ Arvind Sharma, *Hermeneutics and Hindu Thought: Towards a Fusion of Horizons*, p. 19. He quotes from Kenneth Cracknel, ed., *Wilfred Cantwell Smith: A Reader* the following statement which paraphrases what is intended here, that is ‘There are Hindus, but there is no Hinduism.’

⁶⁶ TN Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*, pp. 203 - 232

⁶⁷ For a detailed reading of the organized religions, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and the Sikh religious traditions, and exploration of the possibilities of secularity within each religion as well as religiosity in the secular, one may refer to T.N. Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*

⁶⁸ Jurgen Habermas, "On the Relations between Secular, Liberal State and Religion", Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan, (eds.), *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*, pp. 251 – 260; See Charles Taylor, "Modes of Secularism"

⁶⁹ Jurgen Habermas, *Religion and Rationality: Essays on Reason, God and Modernity*, p. 12

⁷⁰ Jurgen Habermas, "The Horizon of Modernity is Shifting", *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays*, p. 15

⁷¹ Jurgen Habermas "On the Relation between the Secular Liberal State and Religion", Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan, (eds.), *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World* p. 251

⁷² Ibid, p. 251

⁷³ See Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity*

⁷⁴ Critics contest this point, which insinuates the suffering Other as being responsible for the condition of being the Other. However, Taylor acknowledges the presence of the dark paths that community-oriented living can cause to the authenticity of an individual. But he trusts the process of this formation of an authentic individual as being able to help realize the othered entities of their otherness and of their sincere authenticity. To add to this, a realization of being the Other also requires one to surpass various psychological hurdles, which Ashis Nandy speaks about and works out as a response to the critics.

⁷⁵ Even Hermeneutics, the interpretive epistemological tool first was used in the space of religion before it was popularized in other spaces. For detailed reading, see Jens Zimmermann, *Hermeneutics: A Very Short Introduction*

⁷⁶ Markha G. Valenta, "How to Recognize a Muslim When you See One: Western Secularism and the Politics of Conversion", Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan, (eds.), *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World* p. 469

⁷⁷ T.N. Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*, pp. 180, 181, 200, 261

⁷⁸ These are loose translations of the English words provided only for the sake of explanation.

⁷⁹ T.N. Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*, p. 261

⁸⁰ There is an account of how Abul Kalam Azad, the face of moderate 'secular' pluralism from the Islamic community, predominantly sought to "influence people into becoming a part of India's history without abandoning their Islamic heritage" and thereby seek historical legitimacy for the religion and its followers in India, despite his political views being thoroughly grounded in the religion. Religion is constantly pitched against historical events, or

in a given context also pitched within the narratives of secularism, to gain legitimacy. I claim in this study, in the concluding chapter, perhaps, with the shift caused from secular to religious narratives very explicitly today, its time one recognizes the need to reshape popular political discourses and the constitution of the State and various institutions, not wholly bracketed and characterized as secular and non-secular, but flexible and choice-based filters that could gauge to what extent should the State become a part of religious order explicitly.

⁸¹ Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (eds.), *The Power of Religion in the Public Space*, p. 1

⁸² Cohen, J. L., “Introduction”, J. L. Cohen & C. Laborde (eds.), *Religion, Secularism, and Constitutional Democracy*, pp. 1–24. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/cohe16870.3>

⁸³ In a study prepared for the European Commission, Harlan Cleveland and Mark Luyckx had made this observation, which was delivered at a seminar in 1998.

⁸⁴ Ashis Nandy’s works carry a sense of futurism which the current study draws immense inspiration from.

⁸⁵ Dhirubhai L. Sheth draws our attention to a triangular arrangement that exists between religion, nation-state and market. He specifically uses this as an example to explain the BJP strategy in 2014 to win elections by pushing market as the central concern while silencing the sovereign importance of either nation-state or religion as their primary electoral agenda. This was delivered as part of a lecture titled, “Revisiting Nationalism” organized by The Department of Political Science, The M.S. University of Baroda in the year 2016.

⁸⁶ T.N. Madan, “The Crisis of Indian Secularism”, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*, p. 243

⁸⁷ Refer to section 1.1 and 1.2 for an elaboration of this point.

⁸⁸ Prathama Banerjee, “Introduction”, *Elementary Aspects of the Political: Histories from the Global South*, pp. 2 – 9

⁸⁹ Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, p. 12

⁹⁰ Jurgen Habermas, “On the Relations between Secular Liberal State and Religion”, (eds.) Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan, *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*, pp. 251 – 260

⁹¹ This attribute of a ‘distance’ between religion and state for establishing a secular ideal has also been challenged by thinkers such as Akeel Bilgrami, and considered not a mandatory requirement anymore, to establish secularism. He states this, while defending secularism. This idea was delivered in a talk on July 5, 2022 titled, “The Past and the Present of Indian Secularism” organized by St. Berchmans College.

⁹² Bertrand Russel, “Grounds of Conflict”, *Religion and Science*, p. 7

⁹³ Peter Van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India*, p. 1. The emphasis is made on the importance of exploring relations between religion and nationalism (here).

⁹⁴ The phrase “Public Religions” is used in the title of the text, *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*, (eds.) Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan.

⁹⁵ See Bhikhu C. Parekh, “Hindu Theory of Tolerance”, *Indian Ethics: Classical Traditions and Contemporary Challenges*, “Reflections on the Hindu Theory of Tolerance”, *Global-e*

⁹⁶ See Arvind Sharma, *Religious Tolerance in the World Religions*. He writes tolerance in history has led to peace and prosperity.

⁹⁷ B.R. Ambedkar, “Annihilation of Caste” and *Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development*, provide a detailed account of this deep-rooted structural presence within the religion in its transposition into religious practices.

⁹⁸ Jurgen Habermas, “On the Relations between Secular Liberal State and Religion”, (eds.) Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan, *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*, p. 251

⁹⁹ Rajeev Bhargava, “The Distinctiveness of Indian Secularism”, pp. 29 – 30

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, pp. 30 – 33

¹⁰¹ See C.A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the making of the British Empire*; Documented in T.N. Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*

¹⁰² Rajeev Bhargava, “The Distinctiveness of Indian Secularism”, p. 31

¹⁰³ Ibid, p. 4

¹⁰⁴ Akeel Bilgrami, *Secularism, Identity and Enchantment*, pp. 3 – 4

¹⁰⁵ This shall be taken up during the course of the thesis while examining the thinkers from the canon of Indian thought through these many narratives and their contemporary significance, if any, in helping one resolve the conflict and identify the extent of violence present in its applications.

¹⁰⁶ Rajeev Bhargava, “The Distinctiveness of Indian Secularism”, p. 6

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 19

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, pp. 7 – 19

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 5

¹¹⁰ See Akeel Bilgrami, *Secularism, Identity and Enchantment*; Bhikhu C. Parekh, “Hindu Theory of Tolerance”, *Indian Ethics: Classical Traditions and Contemporary Challenges*, “Reflections on the Hindu Theory of Tolerance”, *Global-e*

¹¹¹ Rajeev Bhargava, “The Distinctiveness of Indian Secularism”, p. 33

¹¹² Ibid, p. 26

¹¹³ For a legal exploration of such secularism akin to the one explicated by Rajeev Bhargava, See Ronojoy Sen, *Articles of Faith: Religion, Secularism and the Indian Supreme Court*, pp. 175 – 199

¹¹⁴ Thomas Pantham, “Understanding Indian Secularism: Learning from its Recent Critics”, (eds.) R Vora and S. Palshikar, *Indian Democracy: Meanings and Practices*, p. 249

¹¹⁵ This idea of the everyday politics constitutes the major argument raised by Rohit De, even though for reasons different from the ones being discussed here. It also forms the premise and the title of his book, *The People’s Constitution: The Everyday Life of Law in the Indian Republic*.

¹¹⁶ Thomas Pantham, “Understanding Indian Secularism: Learning from its Recent Critics”, (eds.) R Vora and S. Palshikar, *Indian Democracy: Meanings and Practices*, pp. 236 – 255

¹¹⁷ Rajeev Bhargava, “The Distinctiveness of Indian Secularism”, p. 27

¹¹⁸ Tariq Modood, “State-Religion Connections and Multicultural Citizenship”, *Religion, Secularism and Constitutional Democracy*, pp. 184 – 185

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 185

¹²⁰ See Bhikhu C. Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*; Varun Uberoi and Tariq Modood, “Has Multiculturalism in Britain retreated?”

¹²¹ This is quoted from Akeel Bilgrami’s text, *Secularism, Identity and Enchantment*, p. 12

¹²² Ibid, pp. 4, 13

¹²³ Akeel Bilgrami states this while defending secularism. This idea was delivered in a talk on July 5, 2022 titled, “The Past and the Present of Indian Secularism” organized by St. Berchmans College. In this talk, he develops the idea of how secularism was brought in to not necessarily oppose or contain religion as its major agenda, but to contain the damages brought in by the modern nationalist discourses.

¹²⁴ Peter Van der Veer, “Secularity and Religion”, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*, pp. 14 – 29

¹²⁵ Akeel Bilgrami, *Secularism, Identity and Enchantment*, p.13

¹²⁶ See Akeel Bilgrami, *Secularism, Identity and Enchantment* and Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*

¹²⁷ This is elaborated in Akeel Bilgrami, “Secularism”, *Secularism, Identity and Enchantment*, pp. 12 – 17

¹²⁸ Charles Taylor, “The Age of Authenticity”, *A Secular Age*, pp. 473 – 504. By individuals, Charles Taylor means to explain a unique understanding distinctly contributed by him, which

is that of an authentic individual located within some form of common values and ideas or a commune.

¹²⁹ Charles Taylor, “The Age of Authenticity”, *A Secular Age*, pp. 473 – 482. This capacity to be authentic is experienced by the individual who is deeply rooted in the community and is drawn from constant interactions with the community. Also, Charles Taylor applied this logic in societies different from that of societies and cultures present in India, which also may be borne in mind.

¹³⁰ Peter Van der Veer, “Conclusion”, *Imperial Encounters: The Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*, pp. 158 – 160

¹³¹ Akeel Bilgrami, *Secularism, Identity and Enchantment*, pp. 14 – 16

¹³² Peter Van der Veer, “Secularity and Religion”, *Imperial Encounters: The Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*, pp. 20 – 24

¹³³ Ibid, p. 21

¹³⁴ Peter Van der Veer, “Introduction”, *Imperial Encounters: The Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*, p. 3

¹³⁵ Peter Van der Veer, “Religious Nationalism”, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India*, pp. 1 – 24

¹³⁶ Ibid, pp. 93 – 96, 105 – 109, 136, 144, 151 – 168

¹³⁷ Ibid, pp. 25 - 77

¹³⁸ Ibid, pp. 1 – 24

¹³⁹ Peter Van der Veer, “Preface”, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India*, p. x

¹⁴⁰ Thomas Blom Hansen, “Modernity, Nation and Democracy in India”, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*, pp. 57 – 60; and See Sumit Sarkar, *Indian Nationalism and the Politics of Hindutva*

¹⁴¹ Peter Van der Veer, “Writing Violence”, *Contesting the Nation: Religion, Community, and the Politics of Democracy in India*, pp. 250 – 269. Timothy Mitchell’s understanding of the state essentially reifies the state over the society

¹⁴² Peter Van der Veer, “The Moral State: Religion, Nation and Empire”, *Imperial Encounters: The Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*, pp. 41 – 54

¹⁴³ Peter Van der Veer, “The Separation of Church and the State”, *Imperial Encounters: The Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*, pp. 16 – 24

¹⁴⁴ Rajeev Bhargava, “The Distinctiveness of Indian Secularism”, pp. 29 – 30

¹⁴⁵ Neeladri Bhattacharya, “Predicaments of Secular Histories”, p. 57

¹⁴⁶ Sonder means the awareness that everyone has a story. The story which may be hidden deliberately or otherwise, suggests the intense layers of possibilities that underlie a thematic that cannot be juxtaposed into “isms” every time. This word is applied here as a noun to portray the depth of anti-secular narratives to uncover the underlying violent relations that are conveniently not taken care of within conventional secular discourses, which that in-turn legitimizes the state that practices it, above all other institutions. John Koenig, *The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows*, p. 134

¹⁴⁷ T.N. Madan, “The Crisis of Indian Secularism”, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*, p. 233

¹⁴⁸ See T.N. Madan, “The Case of India”, “Religion and Social Change in India: Some Conceptual Issues”. Also see, “The Crisis of Indian Secularism”, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*, pp. 234 – 236

¹⁴⁹ See Ashis Nandy’s talk on “Secularism and Democracy: Ashis Nandy, Harsh Mander, Neera Chandokhe” delivered on July 2, 2015, at the Idea of India Conclave, *One Year of Government: An Assessment*. The talk can be assessed at <https://youtu.be/KaWvIZvK2gw>.

¹⁵⁰ Slavoj Zizek considers this as an inevitable part of the ideological construction and practice. See Thomas Blom Hansen, *Modernity, Nation and Democracy in India. In The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*

¹⁵¹ Peter Van der Veer also talks at length about this phenomenon. See Peter Van der Veer, “Secularity and Religion”, *Imperial Encounters: The Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*, pp. 24 – 28

¹⁵² T.N. Madan, “The Hindu Religious Tradition: Secularism as Pluralism”, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*, pp. 178 – 179

¹⁵³ Ibid, pp. 176 – 200

¹⁵⁴ See Aditya Nigam, *The Insurrection of Little Selves: The Crisis of Secular Nationalism in India*

¹⁵⁵ Madan finds it reassuring that debates on secularism and fundamentalism have been addressed more often than before and this renewed sense of interest in resolving it is appreciable. T.N. Madan, “Epilogue”, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*, p. 277

¹⁵⁶ See T.N. Madan, “Secularism in its Place”

¹⁵⁷ Ashis Nandy, “An Anti-Secularist Manifesto”, *The Romance of the State: And the Fate of Dissent in the Tropics*, p. 45

¹⁵⁸ See Ashis Nandy, *Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of the Self in Colonialism*

¹⁵⁹ See Ashis Nandy, “Humiliation: The Politics of Cultural Psychology and the Limits of Human Degradation”

¹⁶⁰ Ashis Nandy, “An Anti-Secularist Manifesto”, *The Romance of the State: And the Fate of Dissent in the Tropics*, pp. 44 – 46

¹⁶¹ See Faisal Devji, “Speaking of Violence”, Ashis Nandy, *Science, Hegemony and Violence: A Requiem for Modernity – Volume I*, pp. 3 – 15

¹⁶² Ashis Nandy, “The Twilight of Certitudes: Secularism, Hindu Nationalism and Other Masks of Deculturation”, pp. 67 – 82

¹⁶³ See Ashis Nandy, *Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of the Self in Colonialism*

¹⁶⁴ Peter Van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: The Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*, p. 54

¹⁶⁵ The headscarf controversy that took place recently in the school in Karnataka stands as testimony to this dilemma portrayed in Nandy. For a detailed reading of the Hijab issue that erupted in 2022; Also see Dilip Mondal, <https://dev1.theprint.in/opinion/the-real-issue-in-karnataka-hijab-row-is-how-secularism-is-defined-wrongly-nehru-to-modi/827533/>

¹⁶⁶ Peter Van der Veer, “Religion and Secularity”, “The Moral State: Religion, Nation and Empire”, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*, pp. 14 – 53

¹⁶⁷ Such engagements get treated with a great degree of criticism and criticality in the works of scholars like Charles Taylor and Jurgen Habermas, in the ways in which these temporally and spatially fixed notions of the ‘self’ get threatened. See Jurgen Habermas, “On the Relation between the Secular Liberal State and Religion” (eds.) Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan, *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*, Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*

¹⁶⁸ Refer to the two-fold classification explained in Section 1.3 of the current chapter, p. 44

¹⁶⁹ Bidyut Chakrabarty and Rajendra Kumar Pandey, “Introduction”, *Modern Indian Thought: Text and Context*, pp. xxiii – xxxi

¹⁷⁰ See Thomas Pantham and Kenneth L. Deutsch (eds.), *Political Thought in Modern India*, V.R. Mehta, *Foundations of Indian Political Thought*

¹⁷¹ Thomas Pantham, “Understanding Indian Secularism: Learning from its Recent Critics”, (eds.) R. Vora and S. Palshikar, *Indian Democracy: Meanings and Practices*, p. 238

¹⁷² Chantal Mouffe, “Religion, Liberal Democracy and Citizenship”, Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan, (eds.), *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*, pp. 318 – 326

¹⁷³ See Sudipta Kaviraj, *The Imaginary Institution of India: Politics and Ideas*

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, pp. 9 – 38

¹⁷⁵ Ashis Nandy's views on the State in the article titled 'The State: The Fate of a Concept' examines adeptly the checkered trajectory of the modern state and its presence in the society that often had to give way to culture, for the latter being more resilient than the former, increasingly.

¹⁷⁶ Etienne Balibar, *Secularism and Cosmopolitanism: Critical Hypotheses on Religion and Politics*, p. 36

¹⁷⁷ A brief on the discussion between Derrida, Husserl, and Levinas on the metaphysics of violence needs to be mentioned here. This amounts to the limitations of the research as it doesn't seek to engage in a phenomenological exploration of the concept and its implications here. It may have helped the explorations of the political, but I submit the impossibility of such a scholarship here. However, Derrida's arguments on the spatiality involved in the understanding of conceptualizing religion and state within the political are noteworthy as far as how these engagements are carried out.

¹⁷⁸ Dipesh Chakraborty, "Time Knots", *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, p. 114

¹⁷⁹ See Anthony Giddens, *Nation-State and Violence*; Ashis Nandy, "The State: The Fate of a Concept", *The Romance of the State and the Fate of Dissent in the Tropics*, pp. 1 – 14

¹⁸⁰ Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*, pp. 44 – 45

¹⁸¹ T.N. Madan, "The Crisis of Indian Secularism", *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*, pp. 233 – 264; Ashis Nandy, "An Anti-Secularist Manifesto", *The Romance of the State and the Fate of Dissent in the Tropics*, pp. 34 – 60; Neeladri Bhattacharya, "Predicaments of Secular Histories", pp. 57 – 58

¹⁸² Sudipta Kaviraj, "Multiple Modernities", Shmuel Eisenstadt, *Modernity and Politics in India*

¹⁸³ See Ashis Nandy, *At the Edge of Psychology: Essays in Politics and Culture*

¹⁸⁴ Dipesh Chakrabarty and Rochana Majumdar, "Gandhi's Gita and Politics as Such", Shruti Kapila and Faisal Devji, (eds.), *Political Thought in Action: The Bhagavad Gita and Modern India*, p. 66

¹⁸⁵ Dipesh Chakraborty, "Minority Histories and Subaltern Pasts", *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, p. 112

¹⁸⁶ See Bernard Crick, *In Defence of Politics*

¹⁸⁷ See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition: A Study of the Central Dilemmas facing Modern Man*

¹⁸⁸ This is brought out by Wendy Brown in her text, *Manhood and Politics*, where the debasement of life is stated as being crucial to the success and sustenance of the State. Life falls at the behest of politics commanding over it whenever convenient to it. It is this matter of convenience that later, in this paper, stands questioned in the presence of the Global South paradigm, while it merges with Gender narratives and shows the possibility of a way ahead.

¹⁸⁹ See Prathama Banerjee, *Elementary Aspects of the Political: Histories from the Global South*

¹⁹⁰ See Wendy Brown, *Manhood and Politics: A Feminist Reading in Political Philosophy*

¹⁹¹ Governmentality is a concept spoken about at length by the French philosopher Michel Foucault in his series of lectures titled, ‘Security, Territory, Population’ delivered in the year 1977-78. In this context, it is tied with Wendy Brown’s concerns on how the mind-body double occupancy within the idea of the political forces one and teaches one to be governed in certain ways, without much scope for questioning. See Gayatri C. Spivak’s and Judith Butler’s work titled, *Who Sings a Nation-State*, for an elaborate account of this.

¹⁹² Prathama Banerjee, “Introduction”, *Elementary Aspects of the Political: Histories from the Global South*, pp. 2 – 9

¹⁹³ See Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*

¹⁹⁴ Why Hannah Arendt assigns so much importance to violence and its equation with power is to show how violence can either be used as a tool for the sustenance of all forms of the legitimacy of the sovereign. This emanates out of the lack or the fear of loss of the power/sovereign status. It may have serious consequences that have the potential to even dismember the powerful institutions (state and religion, here) forever from the existing equations of political relationships.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 53

¹⁹⁶ A discussion of this is present in section 1.4.1 in this chapter; p. 76

¹⁹⁷ This idea was delivered in a talk on July 5, 2022 titled, "The Past and the Present of Indian Secularism" organized by St. Berchmans College. In this talk, he develops the idea of how secularism was brought in to not necessarily oppose or contain religion as its major agenda but to contain the damages brought in by the modern nationalist discourses.

¹⁹⁸ Ashis Nandy, Talal Asad, T.N. Madan, Peter Van der Veer have elaborated and substantiated these arguments in their works.

¹⁹⁹ Giorgio Agamben, “Potentialities”, *Collected Essays in Philosophy*, p. 3

²⁰⁰ Resilience of Religion over the State is an idea, emphasized by thinkers such as Ashis Nandy, Peter Van der Veer and T.N. Madan.

²⁰¹ Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*, p. 46

²⁰² They may appear contradictory to certain findings on violence that go fundamentally against Jean Paul Sartre and George Sorel's reflections which foreshadows the complementarity between institutions in power and strength, with its potential to be violent.

²⁰³ Ashis Nandy, *Science, Hegemony and Violence: A Requiem of Modernity- Volume I*, pp. 1 – 16

²⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 16

²⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 16

²⁰⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru, "Ahmadnagar Fort Again", 'India's Dynamic Capacity', *The Discovery of India*, p. 556; Ashis Nandy, *Science, Hegemony and Violence: A Requiem of Modernity- Volume I*, pp. 2 – 16

²⁰⁷ Giorgio Agamben, "The State of Exception as a Paradigm of Government", *State of Exception*, pp. 1 – 31

²⁰⁸ See Aditya Nigam, "Introduction", *The Insurrection of Little Selves: The Crisis of Secular Nationalism in India*

²⁰⁹ Immanuel Kant's famous 'Perpetual Peace' doctrine bases itself on the belief in rationality of humans and their potential to behave under coercion within moral frameworks of thought and action. See Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*

²¹⁰ See Neeladri Bhattacharya, "Predicaments of Secular Histories"

²¹¹ Veena Das, "Boundaries, Violence and the Work of Time", *Life and Words*, p. 79

²¹² Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*, pp. 44 – 45

²¹³ See Etienne Balibar, "From Violence as Anti-Politics to Politics as Anti-Violence" and *Violence and Civility: On the Limits of Political Philosophy*

²¹⁴ Hilal Ahmed explained this point in his four-fold classification of religion which may be unpacked into different forms depending upon the context and form in which it is played out. This idea was presented in a national workshop on "Doing Religion in Social Sciences", organized by TISS, 2022.

²¹⁵ M.K. Gandhi's seminal text on his vision for India was written in the Hind Swaraj in 1910, that also successfully managed to raise narratives that were unconventional to his times, such as looking at western modernity with suspicion and questioning the idea of civilization as a disease which had the potential to destroy the ethos of the society. Hence, the binary between the social and the political that caste threatens, which was rightly exposed by Ambedkar, seems to have affected Gandhi's response to the problem of the hegemonic colonial mentality.

²¹⁶ See Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India*

²¹⁷ Interestingly, even B.R. Ambedkar, the maker of the Indian Constitution, who has predominantly contributed to its formation and eventual enactment in the year 1950, which made India a republic, in one of his speeches did emphasize on the responsibility a society has, in order to continue substantiating the meaningfulness of the Constitution within a Republic. Despite Constitution being the highest sovereign legitimate body and the face of the modern Indian State, and Ambedkar relying upon the State, did nonetheless, make it a point to show the power of the masses amidst the existing legitimate structures, even though he was of the strong opinion that religion in the existing form, could not help solve the question of caste, instead Hindu practices were hinged upon it. See B.R. Ambedkar, *Annihilation of Caste* and *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables*, in Babasaheb Ambedkar, *Writings and Speeches*. See <http://drambedkarwritings.gov.in/content/> and M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*

²¹⁸ See Ajay Skaria, “The Religion of Gandhi: A Conversation About Satyagraha with Ajay Skaria”, *The Wire*. Also see Ajay Skaria, *Unconditional Equality: Gandhi’s Religion of Resistance*

²¹⁹ Ashis Nandy and T.N. Madan have sufficiently contributed to the alternative conceptions of secularism by bringing out the sham of tolerance that secularism uses to implement secularity.

²²⁰ Peter Van der Veer, “Preface”, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India*, pp. ix – x

²²¹ For a detailed reading of this, please refer to T.N. Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*. For a reading of different organized religions and their trajectory of existence in the Indian subcontinent may be explored from the same book.

²²² Faisal Devji’s emphasis on myths in his interpretation of Gandhi’s thought is significant to this point. Faisal Devji, “Speaking of Violence”, pp. 18 – 20

²²³ Indian carries both political and cultural meanings. Hence, there is the Indian that is political and cultural in nature. Most often they coalesce. But they may separate, antagonize or differ too. This idea is taken from Sudipta Kaviraj’s description of the narrativization of the State that is fraught with so many epistemic, linguistic, cognitive, and experiential difficulties. Sudipta Kaviraj, “On State, Society and Discourse in India”, *The Imaginary Institution of India: Politics and Ideas*, pp. 9 – 38

²²⁴ See Veena Das, *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*