

Transnational Religion; Hindu and Muslim Movements

This paper deals with transnational Hindu and Muslim movements. It rejects the common assertion that migrant communities are conservative in religious and social matters by arguing that 'traditionalism' requires considerable ideological creativity that transforms previous practices and discourses considerably. It suggests instead that religious movements, active among migrants, develop cosmopolitan projects that can be viewed as alternatives to the cosmopolitanism of the European Enlightenment. This raises a number of challenges concerning citizenship, integration and political loyalty for governmentality in the nation-states in which these cosmopolitan projects are carried out. The paper suggests that instead of looking at religious migrants as at best conservative and at worst terrorist one should perhaps pay some attention to the creative moments in human responses to new challenges and new environments.

1. Introduction

Religion is a conceptual category that, like similar categories such as 'culture' and 'ritual' and 'society', organizes understandings of social practices in a novel way from the beginning of the 19th century (Asad 1993, van der Veer 2001). As a modern category it emerges together with nationalism as an ideology in discourses that oppose the 'modern' to the 'traditional'. Theories that emphasize the trans-historical universality of 'religion' and the particular historicity of the nation underestimate the extent to which the nation form is universalised in modern history and determines the location of religion. Societies assume the nation-form in the historical transformation that we refer to as 'modernity' and it is this form that determines what is understood as the religious or the secular. This assertion is

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not a re-phrasing of the secularisation-thesis since there is not much evidence for the disappearance of religion or its marginality in public life in most societies. Rather, it emphasises the importance of the nation-state for the location and nature of religion. Again, theories, such as those of Durkheim or of recent authors like Gellner and Anderson, that argue that religion is replaced by nationalism neglect the continuing importance of nationalized religion in modern identity. (Anderson 1991, Bellah 1973, Gellner 1983). In Western Europe, at least, denominational differences are not completely obliterated in the process of national unification, but they are often hierarchically 'encompassed' (to use Louis Dumont's term) as forms of national identity (Dumont 1980). This encompassment is in many plural societies expressed in well-worn slogans, such as 'unity in diversity'. In the modern nation-state religious difference does not immediately have to lead to questions of loyalty to the nation, although, as we shall see, this continues to be a delicate issue in relation to immigrant minorities that practice religions that seem difficult to assimilate.

Nation and trans-nation belong together in a more intimate way than is often realized. (van der Veer 1995) Processes of globalisation have been intrinsic to processes of state-formation both in colonizing and colonized societies. This is not taken sufficiently into account in theories of globalisation that posit the dissolution of the nation-state today as a consequence of the development of trans-national governance and the global economy. In fact, from the 19th century nations have been formed as a consequence of transfor-

mations in the world-system. The fundamental changes that we see over the past few decades, undeniably, do have important consequences for the political and economic capacities of nation-states, but they do certainly not imply the dissolving of this societal form. It is important to remain aware of the great variation of state formation in the world and the variable effects of global capitalist transformations on the nation-state system. At the same time there can be little doubt that human interaction networks increasingly operate on a global scale (Mann 1999) One of the most important transformations we can point at is that of what is called 'the death of distance', the idea being that communications in the broad sense (including telecommunications and transport) have brought everyone closer to everyone. Migrant communities at the end of the 20th century are thus different from those at the end of the 19th century, because telephone, inter-net, television and airplane bring them not only closer to home, but also to members of the community in other places. Instead of forming singular migrant communities that try to keep in touch with home they become diasporic networks with a multiplicity of nodes. Moreover, there is a global production of the imagination of 'home' in media like television and cinema which affects both migrants and those who stay behind. The cultural distance with the traditions of 'home' can therefore not be conceptualised in the same ways as before. The notion of 'culture' itself has become increasingly problematic since it is hard to localize in discrete communities within bounded territories (van der Veer 1997)

The general observations that I have made here are meant to be introductory to the issues I want to address in this paper. The first issue is that of the relation between nation-states, nationalism and migrant religious communities. The second is that of the so-called religious conservatism of migrant communities. The final is that of alternative cosmopolitanisms. These issues are related in the perspective presented here, but can be disentangled for analytical purposes. My examples concern mainly transnational Muslim and Hindu communities.

2. Nation, Migration and Religion

An important issue often raised in relation to migrant religious communities is that of political loyalty to either the nation-state of immigration or the nation-state of origin. Before the rise of the nation-state in Europe this was an issue that was raised not in relation to migration, but to religious minorities. The European wars of religion of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were fought around the question of political loyalty: Can one be loyal to the state when one is not following the religion of the state? As Hobbes and other political thinkers realized, it was the nature of the state that was at issue here. One outcome of the political revolutions in America and France of the late eighteenth century was that political loyalty could rest on citizenship instead of membership in the state church. This development led ultimately, for example in nineteenth-century Britain, to the 'secular' idea of the enfranchisement of

the Roman Catholics and of dissenting minorities. Therefore the definition of citizenship and its connection not only to rights and obligations but also to cultural notions and practices of belonging and community become crucial.¹

One of the central elements in the debate in Europe about the integration of migrant communities, and especially Muslims, in society is the question of political loyalty. Were in the nineteenth century Roman Catholics in Protestant countries like Britain or Holland often accused of being loyal to 'the pope in Rome', Muslims today are either accused of being loyal to Mecca (and receive money from the Saudis) or to their nation-states of origin. In the Netherlands, where around 700.000 Muslims (less than 3 percent of the population) live, a recent report of the Internal Security Agency (BVD) argues that mosques which are supported from 'outside' are forces which work against the integration of Muslims in Dutch society. Suspicions that Muslim migrants have their loyalties elsewhere has, obviously, been strongly reinforced by the terrorist assault on the USA of September 11, 2001. The fact that there are terrorist networks of radical Muslims operating in many Western societies is justifiably seen as a threat to the security of these nation-states. Moreover, the enthusiasm shown by some Muslim youngsters for the actions of Bin Laden has been highly publicised and discussed as an unacceptable provocation to the nation-state and thrown doubts on their loyalty. In the Netherlands the decision of some Moroccan newspaper-sellers in November 2001 to stop distributing a newspaper that had

a Quranic quotation in Arabic on its cover threw further doubt on Muslim participation in what the Dutch themselves perceive to be an open society. In debates about religious points of view Muslim citizens are regularly requested to show their allegiance to Dutch norms and values, and to the laws of the land. Some of this is simply a juridical demand connected to citizenship, but it does single Muslims out. There is discernible moral panic that transcends the language of rights and obligations. The general idea behind this anxiety is expressed by the political philosopher Charles Taylor, who argues that “secularism in some form is necessary for the democratic life of religiously diverse societies”.² Starting with John Stuart Mill liberal thinkers have felt that religion is likely to be a threat to freedom and democracy.³ Muslims in particular have often been portrayed as fanatically pursuing the imposition of Islamic values on non-Muslims. In Western Europe it was the burning of copies of Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses* that has done more than anything else to reinforce the image of intolerant Islam and to highlight the conflict between liberal conceptions of citizenship and religious conceptions of collective action in the public sphere.⁴

Besides this general, secularist unease with the role of public religion in the nation-state there is the problem of dual citizenship and the role of religion in transnational linkages. Turks and Moroccans in the Netherlands are often still citizens in their nation-states of origin. For both Turkey and Morocco the loyalty of their transnational communities continues to be of crucial economic and political importance. These states

make concerted efforts to control the appointment of religious officials, such as imams, in the migrant communities, because it is religion that ties these migrants to the nation.⁵ Moreover, these states have a vested interest in controlling the education of such officials. One could speak of transnational state policies not only in economic and political matters, but also in religious ones. Migrant communities, therefore, have to negotiate the religious policies of both the nation of immigration and the nation of origin.

Questions of multiple citizenship and religion have gained priority on the European political agenda. Hyphenated identities, which have become of great importance in identity politics in the US, are now also increasingly important in Europe and Asia. To illustrate this development and to demonstrate that transnational religious movements are crucial in it I want to examine the case of India.

India has seen the emergence of a special kind of hyphenated identity: the non-resident Indian (NRI). The Foreign Exchange Regulations Act of 1973 includes in this category: 1. citizens of India living abroad for the purpose of carrying on a business or career, but declaring their intention to stay in India for an indefinite period. 2. Persons of Indian origin holding a passport of another country. One is of Indian origin if one has held an Indian passport, or if either of the parents or grandparents was Indian. The wife of a person of Indian origin is held to be of Indian origin too. Citizenship nor residence are thus the criteria for deciding who belongs to this category, but ‘origin’ is and in that sense it has

much in common with the German genealogical definition according to which migrant communities in Eastern Europe belong to the German nation and have the right to return to Germany. One reason for the Indian state to create this category is to raise foreign exchange, since NRIs are allowed to deposit money in Indian banks with competitive, guaranteed rates of interest. However, I would suggest that the main reason is not economic, but political. It is striking that it is not the lower-class migrant labourers in the Gulf region who are the primary targets of this policy, although they are among the migrants by far the most important economic actors in terms of remittances and other effects on the Indian economy. It is also not the older migrant communities of indentured labourers and their descendants or even the older merchant communities that form the target of this policy. Rather it is the new Hindu middle-class professional and entrepreneurial migrant in especially the USA that forms an important focus for Indian politics. In 1998 the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) proposed further changes, such as the introduction of a PIO card (Person of Indian origin) with a number of benefits attached to it. In 2001 the Indian Government, led by the BJP, announced the appointment of an ambassador at large for NRIs and PIOs in the embassy in Washington. It is ironic that a party that derives so much of its political gains from a campaign which stigmatises the indigenous Muslim community as 'foreign' is so interested in Indians who actually live in foreign lands. Such Indians are primarily perceived as Hindus and Hindu nationalism

mobilizes large groups of Hindu migrants all over the world. "Achievements" like the nuclear explosions of 1998, for example, enhanced enthusiasm under the non-resident Indians (NRIs) in the USA. The announcement of international sanctions against India led to successful fundraising by the Indian government under NRIs in the USA. Transnational investment, global politics and the cultural capital of 'belonging' go hand in hand here.⁶

In his impressive work on the network society Manuel Castells argues that while the legitimizing identities of the state are declining in the information age, resistance identities and project identities (aiming at total societal transformation) are on the rise. In his view, these identities are produced by social movements which react against three fundamental threats: "globalization, which dissolves the autonomy of institutions, organizations and communication systems where people live. Reaction against networking and flexibility, which blur the boundaries of membership and involvement, individualize social relationships of production, and induce the structural instability of work, space, and time. And reaction against the crisis of the patriarchal family, at the roots of the transformation of mechanisms of security building, socialization, sexuality, and therefore of personality systems. When the world becomes too large to be controlled, social actors aim at shrinking it back to their size and reach."⁷ Castells' observations are useful, but, at the same time, things look somewhat different when one examines Indian social movements with a global reach. I want to look at two of

them, one Hindu, the other Muslim, but both originating in India.

The Vishva Hindu Parishad, founded in 1964 by leaders of the militant Hindu nationalist organization Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Hindu guru Swami Chinmayanand, is a Hindu revivalist movement which simultaneously tries to reach out globally to all Hindus in the world and mobilize Hindus in India for anti-Muslim politics.⁸ The most important action of the VHP has been in the period 1984 to 1992 to mobilize Hindus for the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, a mosque allegedly built on a Hindu site. Not only has this action reached its target of destroying the 16th century mosque it also has made the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a political party allied to both VHP and RSS, the largest party in India. The issue of building a temple for the God Rama on the site of the destroyed temple continues to be raised by the VHP especially during major elections.

What concerns us here are the contradictory faces of the VHP. On the one hand, the VHP is clearly a movement that promotes Hindu nationalism with an anti-secular and anti-Muslim slant and as such it is a movement that continues much of the religious nationalist rhetoric and methods of such movements since the late 19th century. It resists westernization and globalization in so far as they are portrayed as 'foreign' threats to the basic Hindu values of the Indian nation. Muslims as a community signify the 'foreign' as 'the enemy within'. Ideologically, they are portrayed as 'converts', having their allegiance outside of India. The VHP argues that

they do not belong to India, but to Pakistan or to Arabia and have thus to be either religiously purified by re-conversion to Hinduism or ethnically cleansed by forced emigration.

On the other hand, the VHP is a movement that is very active globally and one of the prime agents of the globalization of Hinduism. In the USA it is active since 1974, following sizable immigration from India. The anti-Muslim politics which is central to its activities in India, does not make much sense in the USA. Anti-globalization rhetoric which emphasizes restrictions on foreign capital flowing into Indian companies is conspicuously absent from the VHP propaganda in the USA and rightly so, since its supporters there are strongly in favor of the liberalization and globalization of the economy. As NRIs they have also direct personal advantage in the free flow of capital. The focus of the VHP in the USA is, as with many religious movements globally, on the family. The great fear of Indian migrants to the USA is perhaps not so much the threat to the patriarchal nature of the Hindu family, since many of these migrants are well-educated professionals and both men and women are income-earners. Rather, it is the struggle to reproduce Hindu culture in a foreign environment in order to socialize their children into the hybridity of Indian-Americans. The fear is often that the children will lose all touch with the culture of the parents and thus, in some sense, be lost to them. Both Internet-chatgroups and youth camps are organised by the VHP to keep Hinduism alive among young Indians in the USA. As Arvind Rajagopal rightly observes, the

VHP needs different tactics, different objectives in different places in order to be able to recruit members. In India it is a nationalist movement, but in the US it is a global religious movement.⁹ Arjun Appadurai's work on globalization has reminded us consistently how important it is to keep these disjunctures and differences in global flows in view.¹⁰

The VHP has benefited from the great success of the serialization of the religious epic Ramayana between 1987 and 1988 on Doordarshan, Indian national television. It not only became the most popular program ever seen on Indian television but also turned out to be a social and political event of great significance. The estimated daily viewership was 40 to 60 million, while some 80 to 100 million people watched the most popular episodes. Newspaper reports say that Indian life ground to a standstill at the time of the broadcast. Hindus all over the country watched with a religious attitude, having in fact a darshan, a vision of the sacred. on durdarshan, television. Put on twenty-six videocassettes it became available for worldwide sale. The VHP not only benefited from this, but used itself also actively media, such as video-cassettes, for purposes of propaganda. The Hindu nationalist movement uses a combination of media strategies to promote their views both in India and abroad among the NRIs.¹¹

In the context of current essentialist thinking about Islamic politics it is interesting to contrast the VHP, a highly political Hindu religious movement with a Muslim movement, originating in India, which is explicitly a-political. This is the Tablighi Jama'at, a Muslim revivalist

movement founded in Delhi in the 1920s, but globally spread, especially in areas of Indo-Pakistani migration, such as Britain, USA, Canada, France, Belgium, Germany, South Africa and Morocco.¹² This is now the largest transnational Islamic movement, in scale and scope only comparable to Christian Pentecostalism. Marc Gaborieau describes its *modus operandi* succinctly: "the invitation (tabligh) to Islam is not the affair of religious specialists, but the responsibility of all Muslims who must devote their time and money to it; one should not wait for people to come to hear the preaching, but ether preachers should travel to reach the people; preaching is done by self-financing itinerant groups; the mingling of all social classes is obligatory within these groups; the primary objective is to deepen the faith of those who are already Muslims, proselytism toward non-Muslims being marginal; and the promotion of the unity of Muslims being a primary objective, theological as well as political controversies are prohibited inside the movement".¹³ The tablighis, then, resemble some of the Christian evangelical movements which summon their fellow-believers to wake-up and be faithful.

The tablighis are professedly a-political and this is a very deliberate stance. In that sense they do not resist any particular state or political formation. Instead they have a project in the way Manuel Castells defines it, an objective of total transformation of society not by the state but by social actors without political mediation. For the social scientist it makes no sense to call this a-political, since it clearly has political effects. Rather it is

anti-statist and not involved in democratic politics. In that sense it is, obviously, crucial for the tablighis to state that they are neither interested in the state nor in politics. It enables them to work in a great variety of states, both Islamic and non-Islamic, without coming into open conflict with them. The aim of total transformation, however, does conflict in an indirect way with state-policies of assimilation and multiculturalism, since they promote religious enclaves of correct beliefs and behaviour.

It is fascinating to see that this truly global movement which can only be understood in terms of global labour migration is very much opposed to modern media of communication, like television, cassettes and videos, internet, such as are used almost by any other global movement of this kind. This resistance to globalization and to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) is quite exceptional among transnational Islamic movements. In fact, according to a recent argument by Eickelman and Anderson, a transnational Muslim public sphere is being opened up through the use of Information and Communication Technologies.¹⁴ The tablighis do not conform to this trend. The method of communication is oral and the expansion of the movement works through face-to-face encounters and the movement of groups who preach. Despite the first impression of an extremely loosely organised network of groups, there is in fact a clear hierarchy of command, centering on Delhi, but the apex of it is hardly penetrable for outsiders.

Both these movements, the VHP and the Tablighi Jama'at, operate globally but have different strategies, aims and objectives in different locales simultaneously. The VHP, however, continues to emphasize the intermediate, national level, while this level has an ideologically reduced significance for tablighis who stress the transnational unity of Muslims ('umma). They have interesting and contradictory stances towards globalization, but it is clear that their transnational politics have impact on the projects of a number of states to create civil societies.

3. Religious Conservatism in Migrant Communities

It is often asserted and sometimes demonstrated that migrant communities become conservative in religious and social matters. They would do so to retain their identity under the pressures of assimilation. Moreover, since they are often challenged in a multicultural environment to explain their beliefs and practices they tend to become more aware of them. Such awareness can lead to a receptivity towards ideological reifications that take cultural and religious elements out of the daily flow of life and make them into markers of identity in a plural society. This kind of conservatism or reactionary traditionalism has been observed in a number of migrant groups, such as the Dutch Reformed Church migrants in Michigan (USA), Canada and Australia. In debates about Muslims in Western Europe it is often

remarked that they tend to be more religiously conservative than their kin who have stayed in the countries of origin. The observation that migrant groups have to become more aware of their religion and culture due to their constant interpellation by 'established' communities is undoubtedly correct. It is also valid to assume that an ideological apologetics, based on a conscious awareness of one's 'culture' in order to be able to defend one's practices, may follow from this. However, such observations should not be interpreted as the 'freezing' of an otherwise fluid tradition. In fact, 'traditionalism' requires immense ideological work that transforms previous discursive practices substantially. Work on arguments about Islam in high school discussions in Western Europe describes in detail how Muslim students acquire skills to defend their religion and culture, in ways appropriate to the discursive styles in the nation-states of immigration. ¹⁵ More broadly, migrant groups are often required to translate their discursive traditions into the dominant language of the nation of immigration in order to educate the generations born in these new societies. ¹⁶ This act of translation is crucial in the transformation of religious tradition. When Hindus and Muslims in the Netherlands begin to speak about their religious specialists and their religious services by using Protestant Christian vocabulary they are already in a process of transformation, in which pandits and imams provide guidance in spiritual matters and become not-yet secularised social workers.

In a recent contribution Olivier Roy distinguishes several responses to the migrant situation by Mus-

lims. ¹⁷ The first is the so-called 'salafist' that stresses the return to an original and authentic Islam, but in doing so goes against the ethnicization of Islam. Mosques in Europe tend to be 'Moroccan', 'Turkish', 'Algerian', 'Bangladeshi' or otherwise ethnically specific, but this tendency of ethnic division has been rejected as *fitna* in Islamic thought and the salafists or 'new fundamentalists' make use of this to preach a global Islam transcending ethnic and national divisions. The second is a process of individualization in which individual belief instead of social conformism is the basis of Islamic behaviour. To be a 'true' Muslim is more a personal choice and a matter of internal conversion than the result of social pressure. It is here that we can understand the success of such movements as the Tablighi Jama'at since they produce a kind of 'born-again' Muslims. Thirdly, there is the expansion of web-sites where self-appointed experts on Islamic thought and behaviour teach their version. This creates a new sphere of Muslim communication and debate in which the traditional interpreters of the tradition, the 'ulama, play a diminished role. In this debate, however, it is not 'liberal Islam', promoted by such thinkers as the Algerian Muhammad Arkoun, which is prevalent. Rather it is the more literalist or even fundamentalist arguments that are dominant. Again, these developments do not show conservatism, but quite significant transformations that bring 'born-again' Muslims, so to say, in direct conflict with their own fellow-Muslims who try to continue some of their ethnic-religious practices in a new environment.

Crucial is the shaping of the public sphere and the deployment of Islamic arguments in it. An interesting illustration of what may happen in the liberal public sphere is a recent incident in mid-2001 in the Netherlands. An important news-program on Dutch television had an item on violence against homosexuals by Moroccan youth gangs. A Moroccan imam in Rotterdam was invited to comment in that program and asked what he thought of homosexuality. He stated clearly on television that homosexuality was regarded as a terrible aberration in Islam and that it was a disease that would ultimately threaten Dutch society. He indicated in the interview that violence against homosexuals was forbidden and that homosexuals should be regarded with pity and treated, but this part of the interview was not broadcast. Within a few days the media could not stop reporting on the illiberal and unenlightened nature of Islam and members of parliament started arguing that this imam should be brought to justice and possibly extradited. The Dutch Prime Minister made a very strong statement that Muslim immigrants should conform to the norms and values of Dutch society. In the media a demand for state intervention in education of imams was voiced from different sides, forgetting the secular separation of state and church for a moment. The rapid transition from a concern about violence to a concern about religion was striking in the Dutch debate. It is in this context that imams are appointed as spokesmen for their religious community by the Dutch media and public opinion and in which the understanding of Islam in

both Muslim and non-Muslim public spheres has to be articulated.

Imams who state publicly that Islam is against homosexual practice are portrayed as conservative in the liberal public sphere. Moreover, since Morocco is a country which is known in the partly orientalist imagination as a heaven of homosexual and pederast practice for at least a century there is a further notion that what is accepted in Morocco is suddenly not anymore acceptable in the Netherlands because of the growing conservatism of migrant Muslims.¹⁸ This precisely shows the difference in the understanding of 'the public' in Morocco and the Netherlands. In Holland identity movements, such as the Gay movement, have after the sixties made great progress in gaining public recognition of their sexual identity. A recent culmination of that is the civil marriage for homosexuals. In Morocco there may be substantial gay activity, but no public recognition nor debate about it. Gays should be 'in the closet' in Moroccan society (as in fact in most societies) but in Holland this is not possible anymore; positions have to be publicly stated and are immediately connected to religion. Everything becomes a subject of public debate and the invitation to that debate is given under special conditions and can hardly be refused. In the Netherlands the leaders of Muslim communities were summoned by the Minister of Urban Policy to explain their views on homosexuality in a meeting at his department. The nature of the liberal public sphere is such that religious points of view can be primed and framed by the media as more conservative than in the countries of origin and

deeply offensive to liberal sensibilities. In such an atmosphere religious leaders can be made into ethnic spokesmen.

4. Alternative Cosmopolitanisms

Instead of looking at religious migrants as at best conservatives and at worst terrorists one should perhaps pay some attention to the positive and creative moments in human responses to new challenges and new environments. Transnational religious movements are hardly ever seen as instances of cosmopolitanism, since cosmopolitanism is very positively valued in social thought. Secularity is a characteristic of the nineteenth-century trope of cosmopolitanism and it continues to be so in current discussions. Religious allegiances are understood as condemning the believer to parochialism, absolutism and a lack of tolerance.¹⁹ Given the importance attributed to the notion of cosmopolitanism in current discussions of transnationalism and globalization I want to complicate this perspective.²⁰ As I have argued elsewhere, cosmopolitanism as a concept and an ethical ideal is not a view from nowhere.²¹ It has a clear genealogy in the European Enlightenment and in its development into a liberal, progressive ideal in the nineteenth century it connects nationalism with imperialism.²² In my view, it was in nineteenth-century Europe always complemented by a Christian cosmopolitanism of both the Catholic and the Protestant kind. Missionary movements in nineteenth-century Britain,

for example, created a public awareness of a larger world beyond Britain and of an imperial duty towards the rest of the world. Liberal Cosmopolitanism and Evangelical Cosmopolitanism developed side by side in the colonial era. Their commonality was well expressed in the phrase “the white man’s burden” which is still behind global charitable and developmental activism. If openness and a willingness to engage are characteristic of cosmopolitanism one has to recognize a number of different projects of engagement with the world.²³

In the contemporary phase of globalization non-western kinds of cosmopolitan engagements with very different genealogies have come up. There are new perceptions of ‘home and the world’ at play in a number of migrations. The postcolonial cities of today show a massive deprovincialization of the world or, as I would argue, a new cosmopolitanism. Clifford Geertz expresses this with his usual rhetorical flourish: “As the entanglements of everybody with everybody else have grown in recent times to the point where everyone is tripping over everyone’s feet and everyone is everyone’s face, its disruptive power, its capacity to induce doubts in those who think they have things figured out, taped, under control, rapidly increases. We live in a bazar, not a cathedral; a whirl, not a diagram, and this makes it difficult for anyone anymore to be wholly at ease with his or her own ideas, no matter how official, no matter how cherished, no matter how plated with certainty”.²⁴

There are a variety of responses to this situation. One of them is indeed non-interference or even indifference. Ulf Hannerz argues correctly that this attitude

is not cosmopolitanism, since it is the attitude of sticking to one's own. Genuine cosmopolitanism in his view is a willingness to engage with the Other. The question, however, is what are the conditions and terms of engagement in today's global cities. In an essay on the cultural role of world cities Hannerz uses a quotation from V.S. Naipaul as his motto: "Cities like London were to change. They were to cease being more or less national cities; they were to become cities of the world, modern-day Romes, establishing the pattern of what great cities should be, in the eyes of islanders like myself and people even more remote in language and culture. They were to be cities visited for learning and elegant goods and manners and freedom by all the barbarian peoples of the globe, people of forest and desert, Arabs, Africans, Malays".²⁵ This is in fact a nineteenth-century British view in which the cultural engagement is perceived as an attempt to uplift the "great unwashed", now constituted by groups of very different cultural backgrounds. Naipaul is, of course, one of the great believers in a universal civilization, rooted in the Enlightenment, and not at all sympathetic to the persistence of backward cultures, predominantly of what he perceives as an anti-rational religious kind. He is a representative of liberal cosmopolitanism. But is this the only possibility of engagement in the global city?

We see in global cities predominantly a cultural engagement within the context of a politics of immigration.²⁶ These cities are a product of the increased mobility of capital and labour and they are the sites of new notions of citizenship and solidarity, but also violence.

²⁷ Particularly interesting are the new social movements that mobilize outsiders to gain access to housing, property, sanitation, health services, education, childcare, employment, and protection. The established respond to these claims by developing more and more elaborate security measures, creating walled enclaves in the city. Ghettos, ethnic neighborhoods, enclaves are the conditions of engagement in the global city. Gendered and communal identities are newly constructed in the encounter with the Other which is often anonymous and indifferent, but sometimes violent when spatial markings of identity are violated. Nothing is fixed and settled in the urban space: outsiders today are the established of tomorrow and the demands of the globalized network society prevent a reflexive life-planning for most people except a tiny elite.²⁸

Much of the cultural engagement in the global cities in the world is reactive to the enormous dislocations of modern flexible capital and labour. People do try to build enclaves of communal identity and stake their claims to ownership of the city, sometimes violently. Their engagement with the Other is not necessarily pleasant. Nevertheless, I believe that it is in these urban arenas that new sources of the self, in religious, gender, and political terms, develop. For migrants a vision of a better life is one of the most important elements in their migration. That vision is partly economic, but it is also culturally embedded. The urban space of a mega-city is already invested with a lot of dream-work, to use the Freudian terminology. The imagination of possibility, of dynamism, of mobility is fed by cinematic productions

that imbue the real spaces of migrant labour with an aura of virtuality. It is interesting to see how religious visions try to claim these spaces and are confronted with other imaginative claims, both in the own community, and coming from outside. In the case of South Asians, elements of popular culture, such as cricket and Bollywood, have become as global as religious culture. It is this popular culture of media and sports, of 'fun' and leisure, that religious movements have to come to term with in the urban context. The cosmopolitanism claimed in cricket and in some movies has to be confronted by them. Pnina Werbner cites the famous Indian Muslim actor Dilip Kumar at a fund raising in Britain for a cancer hospital in Lahore, set up by the immensely popular cricketer Imran Khan in 1987: "It is an irony, when the world is growing towards not just internationalism but towards universalness, that we are speaking about nationalities, we are talking about ethnic identities: we, the people and some leaders of human society talk about religion, practising irreligiousness... Yes, we've had too much of this religion. There is but one religion that is preached by all the gospels, by all the sacred books, and that is the decency of man towards fellow human beings. And I stand here with that stamp of Indian nationality to support the cause of my brother [Imran Khan] in this exercise in humanism, universal humanism..."²⁹ Werbner, rightly argues that this is not anti-Islamic, but in fact a plea for a certain kind of cosmopolitan religion. Such a plea runs counter to other cosmopolitan projects that are carried by religious movements.

If we thus are looking for a postmodern cosmopolitanism it is the global city we have to examine. I, for one, do not want to be restricted by Jean Baudrillard's description of postmodern culture as immediate and bland, transparent and fast-moving... a blip on the screen, impelled by commercialism, without depth, without place. In fact, locality is produced by global forces and the global city is a very real domain in which cosmopolitanism as a pattern of inclusion and exclusion in the public sphere emerges. Especially, transnational movements which help migrants to cope with the conditions of migration and labour flexibility as well as the vicissitudes of the world economy, such as the Tablighi Jama'at in Islam and the Visva Hindu Parishad in Hinduism, do, to some extent, build religious enclaves, safe havens of the self, but are, at the same time, creatively developing new religious understandings of their predicament, entailing an encounter with the multiplicity of Others and with global conditions on their own terms. Both the Tablighi Jama'at and the VHP have strong connections with Gujarati communities that have longstanding transnational ties with East Africa, Britain, and the USA. For Gujaratis there is a close affinity between trading and business networks and the networking that is central to these religious movements. That kind of affinity is even stronger in the case of sectarian business communities like the Jains or the Daudi Bohras.³⁰ But it is not only that religious movements link up with globalised social configurations, but also that religious worldviews engage global issues in an innovative manner. To mention only one example: if the

development of the financial markets is one of the main elements of globalisation, affecting patterns of migration substantially, it is illuminating to look at the speculation on Islamic financial alternatives in Muslim circles. Islamic interpretations of interest (riba) in the context of discussions of derivatives cut to the heart of global finance and are, as such, engagements with the world from another discursive tradition.³¹ It is impossible to simply call such arguments and the movements that carry them closed, confined and confining, provincial as against cosmopolitan. They are cosmopolitan projects, but emerge from very different histories than that of the European Enlightenment.

Global cities are located everywhere, from Hongkong to Rio de Janeiro, from Mumbai to Los Angeles; they are not anymore the metropolises of colonial empires. The global imageries which are at play in them are just as multi-centred. I met a Pakistani taxi-driver in New York who was saving money to study Islamic science in Teheran and I am regularly travelling in aeroplanes with Hindu grandmothers who are located both in India and the US and connect their grandchildren with a religion that is constantly negotiated in New York and San Francisco. The 19th century Western bourgeois project of cosmopolitanism is not anymore possible in the global cities of today, since the differences are too substantial, the diasporic communications too frequent. And this does not only concern elites. As Pnina Werbner has recently argued about working-class Pakistani cosmopolitans, labour migration forges global pathways, routes along which Islamic and familial

transnational worlds are constituted.³² One does not know what the postmodern, postcolonial cosmopolitanism will look like, but it will be a beast of a different kind, whether we like it or not.

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¹⁸ This similar to the Dutch understanding of the Turkish demand to wear headscarves in schools. Since this is forbidden in Turkish schools this demand is seen by the Dutch as a sign of growing conservatism. There is a serious neglect of the political context of Turkey in which a radical secularist government tries to get rid of public Islam but seems to be losing that battle.

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