



(Non-)Violence in the Religions of India

Rel 330 – 001 / Skidmore College -- Spring 2008
3:40-5:30 T,Th – Palamtn 304

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Office Hours: T,Th 11:15-12:15 & by appt.

The religions of South Asia are justly famed for the value they place on the concept of non-violence (*ahimsa*). Yet throughout history, there has been an equal emphasis on violence, especially in the form of speculations and stories about sacrificial rituals, the nature of kingship, and the necessity – or even glory – of warfare. This class explores the dialectical relationship between violence and non-violence in the religions of South Asia (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam). We trace the history of the concept of (non-) violence as it emerges from the context of ritual sacrifice through to the non-violence of Gandhi and the nationalist and communal conflicts of the contemporary period. Particular attention will be given to the role of (non-)violence in shaping relations between religious communities (Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains in the pre-modern periods and Hindus and Muslims in the colonial and contemporary periods) as well as the complex relationship between symbolic and real violence.

Required Reading:

1. Hubert, Henri and Marcel Mauss. *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Functions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964; Midway reprint, 1981. (\$23)
2. Nikam, N.A. and Richard McKeon, ed. and trans. *The Edicts of Asoka*. Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, Midway Reprint, 1978; first published, 1959. (\$17)
3. Narayan, R.K. *The Mahabharata*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000. (\$14)
4. Weinberger-Thomas, Catherine. *Ashes of Immortality: Widow-Burning in India*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000. (\$21)
5. Iyer, R., ed. *The Essential Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, Oxford India Paperbacks, 1993; reprint, 2003. (\$17)
6. Kakar, Sudhir. *The Colors of Violence: Cultural Identities, Religion, and Conflict*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
7. Singh, K. *Train to Pakistan* (any edition)

Recommended Reading

Warrier, Shashi. *Hangman's Journal*.

Plus class handouts and materials on electronic reserve.

Methods of Evaluation

- 40% Midterm and Final Examinations
- 40% Research Paper
- 20% Participation & Attendance

1. **Research Paper (at least 4500 words, 40%):** You are required to have an argument; do not (for example) simply summarize the major events of Gandhi's life. This is a research paper, and so while you may use sources that were required reading for class, you must also do additional research: at least three-fourths of your sources must be ones not assigned for this class. With the exception of articles that originally appeared in scholarly journals and have subsequently been uploaded to an online service such as jstor.org, you may not use internet sources without my explicit permission. Failure to turn in the proposals and outlines on time will drop your final paper grade a third of a letter. Late papers drop a third of a letter grade per day; I cannot guarantee that papers more than a day late will be returned in a timely fashion. If you want, you can choose to rewrite your paper; the final grade for the paper will be a weighted average of the original and the rewrite, 30% and 70%. If you want me to grade a rewrite, you **MUST** turn in the original along with my comments.

Deadlines

- 2/14 – Proposal (300 words) & Annotated Bibliography
- 3/20 – Revised Proposal (1000 words) & Annotated Bibliography
- 4/3 – Outline or draft due (your choice; I'll read up to 2000 words)
- 4/17 – Paper due (at least 4500 words)
- 5/4 – Rewritten Papers due **ALONG WITH ORIGINAL & MY COMMENTS**

2. **Midterm and final exam (40% total).** Both will be take-home essay exams; the final exam is cumulative. Helpful hint: the questions listed in the syllabus are likely to resurface on the midterm & final.
3. **Attendance and Participation (20%).** Students are expected to attend class daily save for legitimate, documented excuses (serious illness or death in the immediate family). Frequent tardiness / leaving early will also impact the attendance grade. The scale for participation is as follows: 5 = frequently contributed to discussion (spoke several times during class, every class); 4 = contributed regularly (spoke almost every week); 3 = contributed occasionally (spoke >50% of classes); 2 = rarely contributed (spoke <50% of classes); 1 = never spoke, slept in class or was obviously inattentive or disruptive. These grades will be adjusted upwards or downwards if the quality of your contributions are well above or below average. If you are shy, you can send me an e-mail with thoughts, questions, or comments or come see me during office hours. If it becomes apparent that students are not keeping up with the reading, participation grades will begin to include pop quizzes.

THIS CLASS IS A SEMINAR. THE QUALITY OF A SEMINAR DEPENDS ON YOU. COME TO CLASS PREPARED!

Email policy: (1) I will respond to emails within 24 hours of receiving them; I always check in the morning and the end of the workday, but in between and on weekends do so sporadically or not at all. (2) You may submit papers and exams via email, but they do not count as having been received until I can open them (in Microsoft Word for Windows, Windows XP), print them, and put them into the pile. I will send confirmation emails that I received your paper/exam, usually within an hour of the time due. (If there's a problem in opening the paper, I'll let you know). If you do not receive such an email, it is your responsibility to resend it or submit a hard copy.

Note the following from the Dean of Studies website: "Academic community consists of scholars, professors, students, researchers, and writers who generate and think about ideas and information. Honesty, respect, and integrity are important qualities in this community. At Skidmore, this pledge to honesty is reflected in the following code, which all Skidmore students, in accepting enrollment, agree to uphold: *I hereby accept membership in the Skidmore College community and, with full realization of the responsibilities inherent in membership, do agree to adhere to honesty and integrity in all relationships, to be considerate of the rights of others, and to abide by the College regulations.* The Honor Code covers all aspects of integrity, including written work. The Academic Integrity Board and Appeals Board will not regard claims of ignorance, unintentional error, and academic or personal pressures as an adequate defense for violations of the Honor Code."

This means that plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in penalties ranging from a lowered grade to a 'zero' on the assignment and referral to the Academic Integrity Board. Familiarize yourself with the standards for documentation described in "The Skidmore Guide to Writing" (http://cms.skidmore.edu/writing_guide/documentation.cfm)

Special Needs: Students with special needs (physical challenges, learning disabilities, etc.) are welcome in this class. Please notify the College's ADA coordinator and your instructor in advance if you will need accommodations and/or auxiliary aids.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

* Items marked with an asterisk are on WebCT / handed out in class *

I. (NON-)VIOLENCE IN EARLY, ANCIENT, & CLASSICAL INDIA	
Week 1. Sacrificial Violence	
In class this week: Introductions & review of syllabus. Watch "Altar of Fire". Read Vedic hymn handouts. Discuss Vedic sacrifice, beginning with these questions: <i>What was the Vedic view of violence – positive or negative? What acts are considered violent? Do you see any hint of non-violence in the Vedic hymns? What role do animals play in the human-divine relationship? As you read Hubert and Mauss's classic on sacrifice, think about: how do they define sacrifice? What general claims do they make about sacrifice? What role did sacrifice have in Vedic religion and culture? Wrap-up lecture on Vedic religion.</i>	
1/22 T	*O'Flaherty, <i>Rig Veda</i> , 89-92, 99-103, 160-62 [RV 1.162, "The Sacrifice of the Horse" 2.12, "Who is Indra?" 1.1 "I Pray to Agni" and 1.26 "Agni and the Gods"].

1/24 R	Hubert and Mauss, <i>Sacrifice</i> , pp. 9-57, 95-103 [As you read, skim their descriptions of Hebrew and Greek sacrifices, for example pp. 16-18 and 36-41] (rec for historical background: *Hopkins, <i>Hindu Religious Tradition</i> , 11-35, 52-59)
Week 2. Jain Challenges, Alimentary (Non-)Violence, and Sallekhana In class: Finish discussing Hubert and Mauss; background lecture on second urbanization and rise of heterodoxies, esp. Jainism. Watch “Frontiers of Peace.” Discuss readings & film, starting with these questions: “ <i>What actions do Jains consider violent? Non-violent? And why? How does this compare and contrast with the Vedic period? What values do the Jain stories and practices support or suggest, and how do these compare and contrast with those of the Vedic period?</i> ” Wrap-up lecture on Jainism and, time permitting, background lecture on Buddhism.	
1/29 T	*Jaini, “Ahimsa: A Jaina Way of Spiritual Discipline” *Granoff, trans., <i>Forest of Thieves</i> , “Amarasiha” and “Abhayasiha” (rec for a good overview of Jain monasticism: *Dundas, “The Ascetic” from <i>The Jains</i>)
1/31 R	*Jaini, “Fear of Food?” *Laidlaw, selections from <i>Riches and Renunciation</i> *Shanta, selections from <i>The Unknown Pilgrims</i> (rec: watch http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7hiwtUTbRT8 (fast forward 1:32 minutes, past the speech. WARNING: This is footage of the death fast of a Digambara monk, Subalsagar. You may find it difficult or upsetting to watch))
Week 3. Buddhism and (Non-)Violence In class: Background lecture on Buddhism; discuss readings, starting with these questions: “ <i>How do Buddhists compare and contrast with Jains and followers of Vedic religion (Vaidikas) in terms of their views on (non-)violence? What acts count as (non-) violent for the Buddhists that weren’t for Vaidikas or Jains? What values shape the different Buddhist views towards violence and non-violence? (Review: What values shaped the Jain views? The Vedic views?)</i> ” On Thursday, we’ll talk about <i>which Buddhist values each Jataka represents and what – if any – violent acts are viewed as acceptable, obligatory, or laudable by the edicts’ Asoka? To what extent do you think the edicts’ Asoka’s ‘conversion’ and rhetoric were genuine, and to what extent were they political expediency?</i> ”	
2/5 T	*Harvey, <i>Introduction to Buddhist Ethics</i> , 3-7, 14-17, 66-69, 103-109, 112-18, 156-65, 239-263
2/7 R	*Jataka – Matakabhatta (1.18), Cowell trans., vol. 1, pp. 51-53 & *Jataka – Bhuridatta excerpt (Cowell trans., vol. 6, pp. 109-12) {This & previous in one pdf file} *Jataka – Mahasutasoma excerpt (Ulrich trans. and paraphrase, from <i>Divided Bodies</i>) *Jataka – Sasa (316/3, 51-56), Shaw, trans. “The Story of the Hare,” 114-21 Nikam and McKeon, <i>Edicts of Ashoka</i> , 1-4, 18-22, 25-32, 40, 53-63 (rec: entire book)
Week 4. Asoka in History and Legend in class: Discuss readings, starting with these questions: “ <i>How does the Asoka of the edicts differ from that of the legend in terms of attitudes towards (non-)violence? What – if any – violent acts are viewed as acceptable, obligatory, or laudable by the Asoka of the Legend? the comic book? the Bollywood film?</i> ” On Thursday, we’ll watch the Bollywood version of Ashoka, and I’ll provide a background lecture on Manu.	
2/12 T	*Strong, <i>Legend of King Asoka</i> , selections
2/14 R	*Amar Chitra Katha <i>Ashoka</i> (comic book version of Ashoka’s life) Paper proposal & annotated bibliography due
Week 5. Violence that is not Violence: Defining Violence & Its Place in Religions. Discuss readings, starting with these questions: <i>What acts does Manu consider violent? How does this compare and contrast with the Vaidikas, Jains, Theravadin Buddhists, Mahayana Buddhists, Asoka? Are certain social groups allowed, encouraged, or required to perform certain acts of (non-)violence? For Thursday: How would each of the people or groups we’ve read about so far (Vaidikas, Jains, Theravadin Buddhists, Mahayana Buddhists, Asoka, Manu, Coady) modify the OED definition of violence, and why? (Think about what ‘counts’ as a violent act for each group.) How do the modifications change your answer to the question, “What is X’s [Vaidikas, Jains, etc.] view of violence? Finally, is violence necessary for any/some/all religion(s)?”</i> Time permitting, start watching Peter Brooks’	

<i>Mahabharata.</i>	
2/19 T	*Doniger, <i>The Laws of Manu</i> , xvi-xviii, xxii-xliii and from the translation, 5.27-56, Ch. 7-8, 9.230-49, 9.275-280, 9.313-316, 11.55-56, 11.60-83, 11.88-90, 11.103-46. (note: numbers refer to chapter and verse numbers)
2/21 R	*“Violence”: read the entry in the <i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> (available online) & handout. *Coady, “The Idea of Violence” *Juergensmeyer, <i>Terror in the Mind of God</i> , 3-7, 152-53, 157-74, 188-89 Take-home midterm (covering weeks 1-7) distributed in class.
Week 6. War and Peace in the Mahabharata in class: Discuss readings & film, starting with these questions: “How would the characters in the epic, especially Yudhisthira, Arjuna, & Krishna, have advised Asoka about when and how to use violence? (in other words: how is the ideal king portrayed in the epic, and to what extent does this ideal differ from the Buddhist ones we considered earlier)? Are violence and non-violence associated with any particular social groups, and how & why?” In addition to discussing the Mahabharata, we will continue to watch the film version. I will also begin to lecture on Indian history, focusing on the rise of and basics of temple-based Hinduism and ‘popular’ religion .	
2/26 T	Narayan, <i>The Mahabharata</i>
2/28 R	
Week 7. War and Peace in the Mahabharata (cont) & Historical Interlude	
3/4 T	*Fitzgerald, trans., <i>The Mahabharata</i> , selections
3/6 R	No assigned reading. In class: Finish <i>Mahabharata</i> film & lecture on Indian history, from 0-2006. Take-home midterm due at beginning of class.
SPRING BREAK. Rec: if you aren’t familiar with Gandhi’s life, rent and watch <i>Gandhi</i> .	
II. COLONIAL AND CONTEMPORARY SOUTH ASIA Week 8. Violence and State Power: Capital Punishment & Animal Sacrifice in a Princely State In class: Discuss readings, starting with these questions: “Compare and contrast contemporary Hindu blood sacrifices with Vedic sacrifices. Are they more similar than different, or more different than similar? Why? (Hint: think about each tradition’s views about the divine, human beings, social class, etc.). On Thursday, we’ll start by watching the film “Shadow Kill,” an award-winning feature film based on the life of the last hangman for the Raja of Travancore (The Warrior reading for Thursday is from a novel based on the same life). Then we’ll discuss the film and the readings, beginning with these questions: “What do the readings and film suggest about violence, capital punishment, social status, and religious practices? Do you agree or disagree with Smith’s argument, and why?” The title of the film, “Shadow Kill,” is a reference to an episode from the Mahabharata. In this episode, the Kauravas hire a practitioner of black magic to kill the Pandavas by luring their spirits into images of them. These symbolic shadows are stabbed to kill the Pandavas. Why did Adoor Gopalakrishnan title call his film “Shadow Kill”?	
3/18 T	*Fuller, <i>Camphor Flame</i> , 83-89, 99-105 and reading on royal sacrifices TBA
3/20 R	*Warrier, <i>Hangman’s Journal</i> excerpt (rec: the entire novel, if you can find a copy) *Smith, “Human Sacrifice and Capital Punishment” (rec: Interviews with Warrier http://www.hinduonnet.com/2000/05/07/stories/1307129s.htm and http://www.indianexpress.com/india-news/archive_full_story.php?content_id=81323 and an interview with Adoor Gopalakrishnan (director, Shadow Kill) http://www.rediff.com/movies/2003/may/06adoor.htm) Revised paper proposal due (1000 words, 3-4 pages).
Week 9. Martyrdom & Saints Who Kill in class: Discuss readings: <i>The readings for this week provide examples of ways in which acts of violence are thought to give people spiritual power. Does it give them other types of power? Have we seen this in other weeks, and if so, when?</i> On Thursday, we’ll spend part of class watching “Banaras Muharram and the coals of Karbala” before discussing the film and readings, starting with these questions: “What do the readings and film suggest about the relationship between symbolic violence and real violence? (Hint: they suggest a number of possible relationships). What factors seem to be crucial in transforming symbolic violence into real violence?	

3/25 T	*Ulrich, "Transgressing Saints" draft *Hudson, "Violent and Fanatical Devotion"; excerpts from <i>Periya Purana</i>
3/27 R	*Esposito, <i>Unholy War</i> , jihad chapter. *Pinault, <i>The Shi'ites</i> excerpts and TBA: *Hegland, OR reading on Banaras (Freitag?)
Week 10. Sati: Sacrifice, Martyrdom, Suicide, or Murder? in class: Discuss readings, starting with these questions: <i>How would Weinberger-Thomas respond to the question of whether sati is an act of sacrifice, martyrdom, suicide, or murder? (If more than one of these apply, which and when?) Do you agree or disagree, and why? Given your answer, is sati a violent act? How does it compare and contrast with (for example) the self-starvation of Jain monks and nuns? The violence of Tamil Shaiva saints? The self-flagellation of Muharram participants? On Thursday, Background lecture Gandhi (on colonialism, independence movement, tapas, satya).</i>	
4/1 T	Weinberger-Thomas, Catherine. <i>Ashes of Immortality</i>
4/3 R	Weinberger-Thomas, Catherine. <i>Ashes of Immortality</i> (cont.) Paper outline OR draft due: 2000 words (6-7 pages)
Week 11. Non-Violence & Power: Gandhi in class: Watch film clips of Gandhi. Discuss readings & film, starting with these questions: <i>"Did Gandhi really believe in and practice complete non-violence? How does your answer to that question change, if you include under 'violence' structural violence, sacrificial violence, and/or violence against the self? What is the relationship, according to Gandhi, between ahimsa, truth, tapas, and God?"</i>	
4/8 T	*Gandhi, <i>Satyagraha in South Africa</i> , pp. 65-68, 89-107 http://www.mahatma.org.in/books/showbook.jsp?id=7&book=bg0023&link=bg&lang=en&cat=books Gandhi, <i>Essential Writings</i> , 236-81 (on ahimsa, §148-176), 222-28 (<i>Satya</i> , §135-137), 301-46 (<i>Satyagraha</i> , §186-209), 375-77, 379-83, 404-406 (<i>Sarvodaya</i> , §225, 227-28, 249). [rec: read also Ch. II, III, V, and/or VI]
4/10 R	* <i>Indian Critiques of Gandhi</i> , Ambedkar and Mahasabha chapters.
Week 12. Riots and Collective Violence. <i>Discussion Questions TBA</i>	
4/15	Singh, <i>Train to Pakistan</i> .
4/17	PAPER DUE. We'll watch either <i>Earth</i> or <i>Train to Pakistan</i> .
Week 13. Riots and Collective Violence <i>Discussion Questions TBA</i>	
4/22	Kakar, <i>Colors of Violence</i>
4/24	
Week 14.	
4/29	TBA