

1 **DELHI Workshop**
2 **India International Centre**
3 **New Delhi, India**
4 **September 18, 2010**

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7 **Manoranjan Mohanty:** We wanted to start on time because we need every moment of today to
8 discuss a very important theme of our time: The Role of Religion in Global Civil Society- A
9 South Asian Perspective. A very hearty welcome to all of you. My name is Manoranjan Mohanty–
10 we will have a round of introductions shortly.

11
12 When the proposal for us to link up with the Luce Foundation Project began, about which Mark
13 Juergensmeyer will say more, I was quite interested in this for two reasons: One, during the last
14 20 years in Delhi University and then in the city of Delhi as a whole – thanks to JPS Uberoi and T.
15 N. Madan and Mark Juergensmeyer himself who has been part of that process in Delhi in our
16 Religion in Society Research Group Program and then in the Developing Countries Research
17 Center, this program took some shape. Thanks to Vidyajyoti, and now ISI (Indian Social
18 Institute's) vice president, Dr. John Chathanatt, who is sitting here, this program acquired a very
19 important shape. A key person was Manindra Thakur, who is also here. Manindra and John
20 Chathanatt became the core of this initiative. Whenever Mark was in Delhi he spoke to us and we
21 had half of this group present in those moments. That's one reason we thought we should continue
22 that process that we had initiated in Delhi University 20 odd years ago.

23
24 The other reason is the substantive question of religion, society, and politics in South Asia. We are
25 so delighted that I.A. Rehman from Pakistan and Rounaq Jahan from Bangladesh have joined us.
26 We have been part of several South Asia sub-continental initiatives. I.A. Rehman is a founder of
27 the Pakistan India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy, as well as the non-governmental
28 Pakistan Human Rights Commission of which he is the general secretary and the main force along
29 with Mubashir Hasan. I am the Indian chairman of the Pakistan-India People's Forum, and we
30 have worked together during the last 20 years closely on these issues. There are so many here and
31 some who could not come, Swami Agnivesh and Asghar Ali Engineer, they were busy so they

32 could not come. We have worked together in all the post-communal riot situations, together with
33 John Chathanatt and his colleagues in Vidyajyoti, Father Tika John and many others. These issues
34 will come up again and again, whether it is the Maliana massacre in U.P. Meerut area, the Delhi
35 riots in 1984, the Ayodhya related riots, the Mumbai riots and – you must be reading about all of
36 the judgment coming in the next few days – and the Jammu-Kashmir situation during the last 20
37 years, the Punjab situation particularly in the 1980's, the Gujarat riots, the Orissa Kandhamal anti-
38 Christian riots and so many more. In all these things several of us have been involved in trying to
39 probe the nature of these conflicts. I am a part of PUDR, People's Union for Democratic Rights,
40 which has participated together with PUCL and many other peace groups in investigating and
41 producing civil liberty reports, the latest being the Kandhamal Report on the anti-Christian riots.
42 So friends you can understand, I think the very small group which has met here, has come for a
43 very involved, intimate, frank discussion on these issues, and also for finding out how we can
44 continue this conversation so that religion is brought to the core of academic disciplines and is
45 placed at the core of civil society initiatives and political discourse and political action so that we
46 build a society that is democratic, harmonious and fulfilling of the aspirations of individuals,
47 groups and regions. So with these words I welcome you all.

48

49 **Mark Juergensmeyer** Thank you Mano for that very helpful introduction and thanks to each one
50 of you for taking the time and energy to come and join us on what I suspect might seem a kind of
51 peculiar event. Yesterday, someone who was planning to come today asked where the papers were
52 so they could be read in advance, and I had to disappoint her and tell her we have an interesting
53 format for the meetings of this project, and that is to gather together a group of interesting people
54 who come from disparate backgrounds, in terms of religious community, ethnicity, and nationality.
55 We try to keep a balance between academics and practitioners, people who are involved in social
56 movements and INGOs to come together to have an honest discussion and encounter.

57

58 Our experience has been that in occasions such as this some of the most fruitful and interesting
59 interaction comes in the discussion after the papers. What we've learned is that if we have only a
60 brief time such as this, if we have only one day for our engagement, we're better off without the
61 papers. An exciting aspect of this meeting today is going to be its spontaneity, its creativity and
62 your engagement with the issues as they surface without any preconception about what we are

63 going to talk about, how you are going to respond, and how the issues should be framed. I know
64 that may seem like a daring proposition, but take it from me, we have done this now on several
65 other occasions and we have been extremely pleased with the quality of the interaction and of the
66 outcome of the discussion.

67

68 One of the things this means is that in order to get a product that is a written product, a report,
69 insights that are permanently recorded from our activities today, it'll be essential for us to record
70 our comments, and we are doing this not just with audio recording but also with a video camera.
71 We will use this primarily for the purpose of creating some sort of working document, a report
72 similar to the one you see in the folder that's been given to you. In the folder you will find several
73 of these reports on "Religion and International Affairs: Challenges for Non-Governmental
74 Organizations", which is a seminar, an overview, on the kind of topic that we're going to discuss
75 today and which I'll be talking about more in just a second. I think there are two particularly on
76 Latin America, one from a seminar we had similar to this in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and one that
77 we had in Santa Barbara, again focusing on the Latin America situation. We will produce a little
78 booklet something like this and as you'll see, they're based on comments and insights from the
79 discussion that we are recording with the video camera. We may also have for our own website
80 short clips from the discussion, so we may use them for that public purpose. For this reason we
81 would like to ask you each to, before you forget about it, to take out these release forms that have
82 been given to you in the folder and fill in your name and sign them, which will give us permission
83 to use this video for the purposes of creating a report and also for short clips that we might use on
84 our website. I promise you this is the only purpose that we have for these videos. They don't go to
85 the C.I.A. or the I.S.I. or any other nefarious organization, not that they would care about our topic
86 anyway.

87

88 Now let me say just a word about the topic; I will introduce that before I ask each of you to
89 introduce yourselves. As Mano said, I'm Mark Jurgensmeyer, my background is in political
90 science but also in the study of religion. I taught for many years in Berkeley and then for the last
91 15 years or so at the University of California at Santa Barbara, another campus of the University of
92 California. My own research work has been on the interaction of religion and politics, globally.
93 I've done quite a bit of work in India, a part of the world which I love and where I've lived for a

94 number of years, primarily at Punjab University but also here in Bihar. I don't know whether you
95 knew this, but I was working with Jayaprakash Narayan in family relief work in Bihar. I had a
96 longstanding intellectual interest in the relation of religion and politics, but this project is not mine
97 in a narrow sense, it belongs to the Orfalea Center for Global and International Studies with which
98 my colleagues, such as Victor Fassel and Dinah Griego who are associated, and we collectively
99 came up with the idea for a project that would look at the way in which issues of religion are
100 conceived by academic programs teaching international politics and international affairs and
101 training people to go into careers in foreign service and journalism and also, increasingly in the
102 United States, training people for careers in INGOs and leadership in social movements.

103

104 It is this last category which has been under-studied, and little attention has often been paid in the
105 United States, so we decided to focus this series of conferences and projects and publications and
106 develop teaching resources that would be useful for academic programs in trying to understand the
107 role of religion in civil society within different parts of the world and within an emerging global
108 society as people try to reach out from one part of the world to help people in other parts of the
109 world and, of course, religion is part of the cultural mix. When a group of people traipse from
110 Europe or the United States to Pakistan to try and help with the flood relief situation – which is of
111 course a situation of enormous urgency and a crisis of unbelievable proportions, no doubt their aid
112 is welcome and their relief is also welcome – it is a process not only of an engagement of agencies,
113 but it is also a human engagement, an encounter between people of different cultural backgrounds.
114 Often perceptions about the needs of people, perceptions about how to help and how to provide
115 support, are complicated and sometimes assisted by religious concepts that are maybe different
116 from those that the people came with from other parts of the world. But it is a part of this
117 engagement, as I said, for either good or for ill. What we want to explore in this session is what we
118 have been exploring in these other contexts, of other parts of the world in the other seminars in
119 which we've been engaged, and that is the way in which religion plays a role in social movements,
120 movements of social change, and of international NGOs that are intended to support human rights
121 or relief or social service. How religion can be an obstacle in some cases, how religion may create
122 difficulties as this aid and this assistance and issues of human rights are promoted, or how in some
123 cases it might be a positive thing, maybe help to provide this service or to promote these human
124 rights; how religious organizations themselves have taken the lead in movements of social service

125 and how they interact and engage with movements that are not defined as religious.

126

127 These are the general topics that we have, that are of interest to us, and which have been a part of
128 previous projects. I should say that all of these seminars including the one today are supported by
129 funding and support from the Henry Luce foundation in New York City. This is a humanitarian
130 and philanthropic organization that, in the last several years, has been concerned with this larger
131 issue of the way in which religion is taught in the field of international affairs and international
132 politics and has tried to promote, in different centers of excellence in different parts of the United
133 States, a re-thinking of the role of religion in the academic subject of international affairs. They
134 have supported, for example, the work of the Berkeley Center at Georgetown with which
135 Katherine Marshall, one of our colleagues, is associated. We were very grateful that they decided
136 that our project was worthy of support as well. We're grateful to the Luce Foundation and very
137 pleased to be a part of this larger circle of interaction with other universities and academics centers in
138 the United States who are looking at other aspects, other facets, of the role of religion in
139 international affairs. However, ours is the one project that *distinctly* looks at the training of
140 leadership in NGO's and social movements and the role of religion in international affairs in the
141 training for these kinds of international positions.

142

143 I hope this explains a little bit about who we are, and why you are here and what we want to do.
144 We have a series of questions that are going to frame our discussions, but they all depend upon
145 your own insights, your own comments, and your own response to other people who are here,
146 which means that the next few minutes are not just a nice little gesture to make you feel like we
147 recognize who you are by introducing yourselves, rather, they're very important parts of our
148 conversation. We want you to take a minute or two to tell a little bit about yourself, your
149 organization, and we would like you to say just a word about what you do. But then we would
150 also ask each of you to say a word or so about the main theme of the topic today, the role of
151 religion to civil society in South Asia and global civil society throughout the world. Just a word
152 about your own position on the table, on whether you feel that religion plays a positive or negative
153 role; whether the situation between religion and movements of human rights and social change is
154 changing; whether the political and cultural trends within the country are in fact making things
155 worse. Take an opportunity not only to introduce yourself, in terms of your organization and your

156 background but also a thought that you might have to put on the table for the larger topics that we
157 are going to address this morning.

158

159 In India, whenever we circumambulate a temple we have to imagine a *murti* in our midst. We are
160 all always careful to keep our right shoulder towards the *murti*_so for that reason we always move
161 around to the left. I am very conscious, you know, and I am in the habit of doing that now in the
162 United States and I have to explain to people why it is important to do so, but I think that here it
163 will come without any problem. For that reason, Professor Mohanty, just because you are one of
164 the organizers, just because you are one of the hosts, it does not mean that you are off the hook in
165 introducing yourself and placing an idea or two on the table for all of us to consider.

166

167 **Manoranjan Mohanty:** Well, I am Manoranjan Mohanty, I retired from Delhi University in 2004,
168 where I taught for 40 years. I started as a College lecturer in Zakir Husain College, which at that
169 time was called Delhi College. Then I spent about a decade in the Chinese-Japanese studies
170 department, because my specialization is in Chinese and Indian comparative developments. So I
171 am kind of a China Scholar, and then, in the political science department for the rest of the period.
172 I have been part of a China study group, which is now the Institute of Chinese studies, and I am the
173 Chairman of that. In Delhi University we started a Developing Countries Research Center, and
174 some people here are part of that process, where I mentioned we had started the Research Group
175 on Religion and Society. Currently I am attached to the Council for Social Development after my
176 retirement, where my principle concern is to do practically what I was doing, which was
177 Comparative Development studies. I just completed editing the India Social Development report
178 for 2010.

179

180 Now I said I am a member of PUDR from its foundation, in 1980, until today. PUDR constantly
181 makes my intellectual activity put to the test. My civil liberty activity is also put to test, in terms of
182 my ideas that I have, from my books and teachings and from my students, who are my greatest
183 teachers. There is one other organization I must introduce besides PIPFPD Pakistan-India Peoples'
184 Forum for Peace and Democracy, about which I am sure Rehman *sahib* will say more, but one of
185 the organizations, which is very meaningful to my life, is the Orissa Gaveshana Chakra. It's a
186 development resource institute in Orissa, which we founded more than 20 years ago, and which

187 keeps me tied to working in Orissa together with working in China - almost equal involvement
188 academically and research time wise, which has seen the study of poverty and communal conflicts,
189 the study of natural calamities like the Orissa super cyclone in 99, and also a study of the
190 increasing communalization of Orissa. When Graham Stein was burnt to death together with his
191 two kids in January 1999, we studied that whole process and we have been following that case.
192 One of the principal's accused has been convicted and given a death sentence, and he has
193 appealed. That was one sort of incident which symbolized what was happening to Orissa.
194 Another high point was the Kandhamal riots in August 2008, about which I will talk later. The
195 Orissa Research has given me this dimension, which is extremely significant.

196

197 Since after my retirement, I go and spend every spring with the Santa Barbara Group, which really
198 connects me with the Global and International studies program. I teach research methodology in
199 Global and International studies before the groups of students are sent for internships for six
200 months in different parts of the world. I teach them how to do research in the third world. Now,
201 one other point I want to make about what I expect this conversation to help me in - I think Mark
202 has been engaged in the study of global religious violence, particularly terrorism, which has
203 interested me in a very special way because I have been interested in the study of violence, per se,
204 of all forms, beginning with my first work in 1977 on revolutionary violence in the book, "A Study
205 of the Naxalites" He, for the first time, told several of us through his works, that "religious
206 violence" is about an alternative vision of the world. Just as religion is about a vision of the world,
207 "religious violence" also is about this - what drives them to locating and transmitting the existence
208 of the practitioners of the violence to that world of the religious visionary, the alternative vision,
209 and why? What are the pressing events which propel people? What kind of vision drives the
210 violence perpetrator, the suicide bomber or whomever, to commit that violence? So this
211 connection with an alternative vision of the world, I took seriously for the first time after reading
212 Mark's *Terror in the Mind of God*, or even his earlier book, *The New Cold War*, which is about the
213 secular state versus the challenge to secularism from religious violence. So, I have been following
214 that argument of his. When I put that in the Indian context, the South Asian context, or even into
215 the study of so-called "global terrorism" - because of my interest in China, India, Russia, - being
216 involved in coping with this problem of terrorism, and we are trying to find what different ways
217 they can have other than the Western, the Bush era, approach. So we are all engaged in alternative

218 approaches to the understanding of terror. I hope that I will get some more help in understanding
219 religious violence from these conversations.

220

221 **Rounaq Jahan:** I am Rounaq Jahan from Bangladesh, and at present the distinguished fellow at
222 the Center for Holistic Dialogue in Bangladesh. I suppose that if you live long enough then it is
223 very difficult to very briefly tell people what you are engaged in. I started my academic career as a
224 Professor of Political Science in Dhaka University in Bangladesh, from 1970 to 1981, where I was
225 mainly teaching political science and I also had an interest in Comparative Politics. Because
226 Bangladesh was a newborn country at that point, I also got quite involved in the women's
227 movement, because in the early 70's they were becoming an international movement. So both
228 nationally and internationally I got engaged in that. Also in Bangladesh, right after independence,
229 there were a lot of new civil society NGO initiatives in a whole variety of areas, and there were not
230 that many women in those days who were willing to get involved and go to villages and play some
231 role in mobilizing or bridging the rural-urban gaps. I got also quite involved with a number of
232 these old civil society organizations as well as the new civil society organizations, mainly
233 developmental organizations that were working with health, education, and microcredit. I, myself,
234 set up the first women's research center in Bangladesh, in 1973 called *Women for Women*, which
235 still exists. My interest in women's and gender issues gradually led me to more regional and
236 international work. I worked for the United Nations between 1982 to 1990. I headed a woman's
237 program at UN Asia Pacific Development Center, based in Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia and which
238 was mainly for the Asia-Pacific region. After that I was heading the women's program at the
239 International Labor Organization based in Geneva. That work also involved part research and part
240 management.

241

242 Anyway, after a number of years as an international bureaucrat I realized that I am not cut out for
243 that life and I was debating whether to go back to Bangladesh or to the United States. I met one of
244 my old friends, who was then the Dean at Columbia University, and he asked me to take an
245 affiliation at Columbia. I was there since 1990 up to last year. That was Ainslee Embree at the
246 South Asia Institute at the School of International and Public Affairs, and there I was doing part
247 research, continuing my interest in research on politics as well as gender issues, and also keeping
248 quite involved with civil society organizations in Bangladesh as well as internationally. I also got

249 quite interested in a number of developmental issues, health being one of these, and I worked quite
250 hard to set up a health oriented advocacy network in Bangladesh called *Bangladesh Health Watch*.
251 The main idea was that all these policies are really framed by negotiating between government and
252 donor agencies, and citizens really have absolutely no role in that. The idea was to really give
253 some voice to citizen's voice in policy making, as well as to bring a gender perspective, because,
254 again, women's priorities really don't get reflected in budgetary allocations. Every year we
255 publish an annual report on the state of health in Bangladesh. And to do a little bit more focused
256 work on Bangladesh, which I had always wanted to do, but somehow got by-laid and started living
257 in New York, I decided that now I will spend more time in Bangladesh. I've taken up affiliation as
258 a distinguished fellow at the Center for Policy Dialogue, and I will be working now more on
259 governance related issues. Since we were all asked to make one or two statements about that topic
260 and where we stand, I must admit that I kept asking Manoranjan why am I in this meeting on
261 *Religion in Civil Society*, because I have not really done any academic work on religion. I am also
262 a little bit wary about religion in civil society, being in Bangladesh, on two counts. First of all, I
263 think that many of us have been involved in civil society activities in Bangladesh, but not faith-
264 based. We've worked since the 1970's on a number of issues and we thought that religious
265 organizations really have not played a very positive role, particularly in terms of women's
266 empowerment, for instance. And then, of course, in recent years, the religious institutions are also
267 getting more and more involved in civil society. They *are* a part of civil society, so on a
268 democratic principle you cannot negate their role, but what role really are they playing? So I keep
269 a watch on this. I remember, that, many years ago, when one of Bangladesh's very well known
270 writers, Taslima Nasreem had to leave Bangladesh because of all these conflicts. I was giving a
271 talk at Columbia and Dick Bullet stood up and said, "You are talking like a secular
272 fundamentalist!" I see that that term also is coined here in one of your reports, so I got even a little
273 bit more worried as to how I am already now positioned in terms of this debate.

274

275 I think for many of us after 9/11, particularly people who live in America and as a Muslim by
276 birth, this has become a personally very disturbing sort of issue. I was born a Muslim. Islam is part
277 of something which is extremely personal to me in terms of the religion and practices, but in terms
278 of any public manifestation I had always been, as I said, very wary about this. First of all because
279 I was also a part of this role in women's empowerment. Many of us were involved with the

280 liberation movement for Bangladesh. In Bangladesh that was one of the cases where we rejected a
281 definition of nationalism based on religion and that was our main contention with Pakistan. We
282 didn't want a political use of religion. But I remember that, and this is very disturbing for many of
283 us, that right after 9/11 one of the civil society organizations in New York, who's president is a
284 very good friend of mine and who I have known for 30 years, suddenly asked me to speak at a
285 breakfast meeting with a lot of these rich ladies, and other donors, as a Muslim. So after 30 years,
286 where she has known all along that I am a Muslim, she discovers that I am a Muslim. I think, and I
287 have to say that I am borrowing this from Professor Amartya Sen, I have multiple identities. Yes,
288 first and foremost, I am a Bengali, and as a Bengali I share certain things with millions of other
289 Bengalis. Secondly, yes, I am a Muslim and as a Muslim I also share many things with an even
290 larger group. But third, and most importantly, I am a woman and as a woman I share, again, many
291 things with more than half of the world's population. But I think that this "War on Terror", and
292 the way it is being handled has implications globally, and also nationally, and has made many of us
293 really pay much more of an interest in the role of religion. That is why I thought that it would be
294 interesting for me to come to this meeting and to see what it is all about. I thought that the theme
295 is so big, and it will answer many questions. I will come back to what role - yes, it depends, it
296 could be positive, it could be negative, it depends on the place and time. Thank you.

297

298 **I. A. Rehman:** I am I. A. Rehman from Pakistan. I spent 40 years in active journalism, but retired
299 as the chief editor of Pakistan Times, in 1990. Since then I have been working as a human rights
300 activist with Human Aids Commission of Pakistan, a non-governmental organization. As
301 Professor Mohanty kindly referred, I have also been active with the Pakistan-Indian People's
302 Forum and have been involved with the South Asia Forum for Human Rights which is based in
303 Kathmandu. I am also associated with South Asians for Human Rights in Colombo and I was also
304 one of the founding members of Asian Forum for Peace and Democracy, functioning out of
305 Bangkok.

306

307 We have had a long history of use and abuse of religion in this part of the world. About a hundred
308 years ago religion was used for positive purposes, for tolerance, for mutual and good co-existence.
309 But, for the last 70 years or so, religion has been used to divide people, and in the last couple of
310 decades religion has been abused to commit violence against people. In Pakistan, I can say,

311 religion has been abused by the state to discriminate against minorities and any political dissent,
312 including our Bengali compatriots who were with us until 1971. Religion was also used to justify
313 military action in, what was then, East Pakistan.

314

315 At the moment we have serious problems of violence within religion, which is sectarianism, and
316 between religions, which is again Muslims and non-Muslims. We think that religion is the freedom
317 of everybody, and all freedom should have religion, and all people following their faith should
318 have freedom, but nobody should have the right to force one's views through violence. It is a
319 matter of great concern and we are addressing it to the best of our ability. We are trying to reverse
320 the current trend because, at the moment, religion is being abused to commit violence against
321 different sects, to justify suicide bombing, to justify extreme and barbaric acts against civilians,
322 women and children, and for us it is a matter of crucial concern because we believe that a society
323 which is involved in this kind of religious violence, is shortening its life as a nation.

324

325 **Richard Falk:** My name is Richard Falk and I am part of the Santa Barbara group. I am here
326 really as an observer rather than a participant, so I will spare you a full response to Mark's
327 introductory statement. But, just let me mention three aspects of my own interest in this theme.
328 One, I wrote a book a few years ago, called *Religion and Humane Global Governance*, which
329 makes an attempt to relate the importance of religion as a source of global influence. The main
330 thesis of the book could be described as a Hindu response, in the sense that I tried to argue that
331 religion was both positive and negative, not one or the other in relation to global issues. Second,
332 after 9/11 I also wrote a book called *The Great Terror War*, which was my attempt to deal with the
333 encounter between explicitly religious extremism, what might be called fundamentalism, and what
334 has already been described as *secular fundamentalism* – the one had this unfortunate post 9/11
335 response that went in that direction. The third aspect of my background that is potentially relevant,
336 is that I was in Iran during the Iranian revolution and had the opportunity to meet Ayatollah
337 Khomeini, and other religious leaders, during that moment when one had the experience of
338 touching the live tissue of revolution. It was an extraordinary personal experience for me. It was
339 prior to the shaping of the Iranian experience in such a repressive and oppressive direction, and it
340 was at a moment where the atmosphere was one of a religiously generated emancipation from the
341 oppression of the Shah. It was a very short interval between that moment of emancipation from

342 secular oppression to the transition toward the tragedy of religiously-oriented oppression.

343

344 **Lingam Raja:** Good morning to all of you, my name is L. Raja. I come from Gandhigram Rural
345 University in the southern part of Tamil Nadu. In the introduction I would just like to say a few
346 words about what I am doing now. I was born to an illiterate family in a tiny village in Tamil
347 Nadu. I educated myself, trying to understand my own religion - I belong to the Hindu religion.
348 After my graduation I joined the Tamil Nadu Sarvodaya Mandal, it is a Gandhian organization,
349 where I was trying to understand Gandhi in action. I went around several villages trying to
350 understand the people. To me, poverty is more important than religion, because religious
351 institutions and religion is there always, right from the beginning. But poverty, it kills the people
352 more than religion disturbs. So I started working with people, trying to help them in our own way
353 through the Tamil Nadu Sarvodaya Mandal, working with great Gandhians like Jagannathanji and
354 others. Then I joined with the Institute of Gandhian Studies, Wardha, in Sewagram Ashram,
355 which was later instituted by Shri Ravindra Varma. He was the man who was holding the boat. I
356 was working with him. Then I joined with the Dr. Aram, who was the Vice Chancellor of
357 Gandhigram University, and later became a member of Parliament. He restarted an Ashram, a
358 Shanti Ashram, and I was working with him for a few years, basically on inter-religious dialogue
359 and inter-religious work.

360

361 While I was with Sarvodaya Mandal, we started a Gandhian youth movement, for the first time in
362 Tamil Nadu, for the youth to come in and work for peace, and try to understand the participation of
363 youth in action. We had a long peace walk from Kanyakumari to New Delhi for six and a half
364 months, every day walking 40 kilometers. The aim of the walk was to have communal harmony
365 and world peace, with forty inter-religious and international people. That was a wonderful walk
366 that we did. Also I participated in another peace walk in Sri Lanka - Sri Pada to Colombo, for
367 about seventeen days, there again, for interreligious communal harmony and peace. And I have
368 conducted many cycle *yatras*. The first one was with forty youth for forty days, and again it was
369 for communal harmony and was held in Tamil Nadu only.

370

371 I have been having close access and relationship with all kinds of religious people, particularly
372 Buddhist people, Bahai, Christians, Muslims, Jain, and Sikh people. We have been having close

373 understanding and are working together for common problems. I believe in action and, as I said
374 earlier, I have conducted a lot of action research while I was at Gandhigram Rural University. I
375 was the chief organizer of Shanti Sena. It is the only university that has a Shanti Sena unit wherein
376 we give training for the youth on non-violence. In other universities and colleges they have NCC's,
377 Nations Cadet Corps, but this is the only university that doesn't have the National Cadet Corps.
378 Instead of that, Shanti Sena was introduced by the founder Dr. G Ramachandran and Dr.
379 Soundram Ramachandhran. Through that we did a lot of activities, because the Dindigul District,
380 where I come from in Tamil Nadu, is a religious tension prone area where the Hindu, Muslims,
381 and Christians fight each other. In one of the villages, by the name of Perumal Pattu, it is one
382 community but with different religions. For about ten to twenty years Christians and Hindus were
383 having enmities, killing and massacring each other in the same village. When we took up Shanti
384 Sena, and when I was the chief organizer of Shanti Sena, we initiated this small initiative with the
385 district collector and district judge. For three days we created a campsite to bring them together, to
386 express their ideas and their agonies, mental agonies and all. After three days, a good thing that
387 happened - for twenty years they could not celebrate their religious ceremonies, and then they
388 came together and said yes, we will celebrate from now onwards, and for three years they have
389 celebrated very well without having any conflicts. However, later on violence erupted. That is
390 how we have been trying to solve this problem. We also participated in a peace walk in
391 Srivilliputhur, it is one of the very interior areas in Virudhunagar district in Tamil Nadu, where
392 communal tension takes place. Coimbatore, which some of you might have heard about, is also a
393 prone area between Hindu and Muslims, and on many occasions the people are involved in
394 violence and kill each other. Through the Shanti Ashram and through the Gandhigram activities,
395 we conducted a lot of work towards that and we were able to bring a kind of peace. Finally, I am
396 involved in projects like the Child Care and Child Rights project, which I am getting help from the
397 Italian Focolare Movement, which is one of Christian movements which helps, supports, and gives
398 assistance for about a hundred and twenty children. So to me, more than the religion, humanity,
399 human relationships, and trying to eliminate poverty, this is the area in which I have been working,
400 thank you very much for your patient listening.

401

402 **Anindita Chakrabarti:** I am Anindita Chakrabarti, I teach at the Indian Institute of Technology at
403 Kanpur, in the department of Humanities and Social Sciences. My doctoral work was on a

404 religious movement. I have studied since my MA at the Department of Sociology at Delhi
405 University. I would just like to say a few words about my research, not taking too much time.
406 How I came upon studying a religious movement, and my doctorate work was on Swadhyay in
407 Western India, was through an engagement with the voluntary sector in Delhi. One of the puzzles
408 that was discussed at that point of time, was that when we are working for a voluntary
409 organization, trying to promote a certain kind of voluntary work, it was very difficult to get
410 volunteers - the mystery of voluntarism, what makes people work. I was told that in Swadhyay
411 when the leader, Pandurang Shastri Athavale, asked for volunteers to come forward, they are there
412 overnight. This was the kind of discussion that got me curious about the movement, and so I went
413 to find out. I thought that this was not an easy answer, you need to understand the soteriology of
414 what is going on, and any humanitarian activity is not without a soteriology. There is a theory of
415 salvation and they would say that when we are going to do that voluntary work, we are not there to
416 help others, we are there to help ourselves - as though saving the self depended on taking care of
417 the other. I found this soteriology to be so crucial, and that propelled me to study more about this
418 movement.

419

420 When I was in Gujarat I found another very interesting movement within Islam called the Tablighi
421 Jamaat, which went door to door and had the same motto, that we have come to save ourselves,
422 and not doing anything for others; very interesting parallels I found. That led me to study the
423 Tablighi Jamaat in Gujarat and I have some of my observations for later that I would like to say -
424 what kind of role it played, especially in the context of the violence in 2002. I would just briefly
425 like to say a few points about the problems of doing sociology of religion in contemporary times.
426 I am developing a course to teach in my institute on the sociology of religion. The first thing is to
427 convince people that religion in itself, sociologically, is an interesting thing to study. When you
428 tell your friends that you are studying religion seriously you lose half your secular liberal friends
429 and they say, "Couldn't you do something better"? And if you are doing it to say it is
430 unequivocally bad, then its fine, there is a kind of agenda. But for it's own sake, you have to be
431 somewhere closer to Indology, where there is lot of serious work. But if you say I am doing
432 sociology, half your friends are gone. If you say you are studying Hinduism, you know that there is
433 an interest in Hindu sectarian traditions, you will still retain those friends. If you say that you are
434 also studying Islam seriously, that is also pretty much an intellectually tight position. The tools of

435 the sociology of movement are so much at logger heads with the conceptual tools which we have
436 in sociology of religion, and it's a terrible marriage when you try to bring them together. But it is
437 everywhere in our civil society. Religion is so important and so crucial and we really need our
438 intellectual conceptual tools to be sharpened, so that we appreciate them and recognize their work.
439 The purpose of this meeting, to come out in the open about what they're doing, is, in my opinion,
440 not so much about good or bad. Only time can tell and as we know in sociology things are full of
441 unintended consequences. But can we take it seriously and delve in it seriously and keep our minds
442 open? That would be the question for me. Thank you.

443

444 **Bidyut Mohanty** I am Bidyut Mohanty and I work in a research institute of Social Sciences, in
445 New Delhi. My interests are the visibility of women in local government institutions. I also go for
446 a semester to the University of California at Santa Barbara, like Professor Mohanty, to teach a
447 course on Women, Culture and Development. Now my interest in religion is purely indirect, as a
448 practitioner of a living tradition in rural Orissa. Professor Mohanty has talked about the
449 fundamentalist side of Orissa, taking Kandhamal as an example, but there are other traditions,
450 which are quite tolerant to inter-religious groups, both Muslim and Hinduism. In fact, Mark has
451 written an article highlighting these living traditions in the honor of Professor T. N. Madan. I am
452 also interested in looking at the female feticide issues, why this female feticide is taking place in
453 certain states and not taking place in certain other places, such as the cultivated areas like Orissa
454 and Bengal, where you find areas quite favorable to women compared to cultivated areas. I noticed
455 that these living traditions, namely worshipping Lakshmi, the goddess of corn, and particularly in
456 the context of Orissa, there are *vrata kathas*, tales which are recited by women while worshipping
457 the goddess of corn, or Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. It not only highlights the honor and
458 recognition household work, but also highlights overcoming caste barriers. Unlike the other *vrata*
459 *kathas*, which talks about... "Ok, if you do not worship me, I am going to curse you", and "If you
460 worship me, then I will give you boons", like that. This story tells, "Ok, if you don't respect my
461 role as a preserver of grains, or my role in household activities, then you are going to suffer", and
462 that acts as a challenge to her husband. Lakshmi is described as the wife of Lord Jagannath, and
463 she rarely visits different places in Puri. Each and every woman in rural Orissa, particularly in the
464 peasant cast, recites that and it goes on and on from generation to generation. This story was
465 written in the 16th century when the second wave of the Bhakti movement was at its peak, as well

466 as the Buddhist movements. In other words, I have done some work looking at the associations
467 between work participation rate and rice cultivation, and I noticed that it is, indeed, very high
468 female work participation. The substance of it is the ritual and economical visibility of women in
469 rice based culture. By the way, there *are* certain ritual practices which are observed by both
470 Muslims and Hindus. One such ritual is just before the farmer takes their plow to cultivate their
471 land, there's a belief that the earth becomes fertile, and that ritual is being observed by both
472 Muslim and Hindu communities together. Thank you.

473

474 **Rowena Robinson:** My name is Rowena Robinson and I teach at the Center for the Study of
475 Social Systems at JNU. I have worked as a social anthropologist both among Christians and, later
476 on, in the context of ethnic violence, among Muslims in western India. It is out of both of these
477 field works that my interest in questions of Christianity, with regards to social justice and
478 development, arose and also, with regards to Muslims, the question of the role that faith-based
479 organizations, Islamic organizations, have played in the giving of aid or the provision of relief in
480 the aftermath of ethnic violence. This second work actually linked up with another Luce project
481 which came out of the University of Washington in Seattle, where they were looking at religion
482 and human security issues. It is very clear from my own work, as well as the work that other
483 members of this project bring up, that the role religion plays with civil society organizations in the
484 provision of aid, or provision of human welfare, or any such activity, is very complex and the
485 outcomes are sometimes quite unexpected, both in terms of what happens with regard to sub-
486 groups within a religious community, for instance, with regard to women among Muslims, and
487 also with regards to their engagement with other secular organizations in the provision of this kind
488 of aid. So my interest in this workshop, is with the key theme of this workshop, because I think
489 that religions are not similarly socially based; their social base or their social location is different,
490 and the kind of engagement that they can have with civil society is therefore structured by their
491 different social locations. I am interested in the comparative study of religious structures and
492 religious organizations within India, as well as among different countries, in the context of their
493 role in civil activities also. Thank you.

494

495 **Ravi Bhatia:** My name is Ravi Bhatia and I was trained as a scientist both in Delhi University and
496 in the USA. Manoranjan Mohanty and I were together in a hostel, together in college. He

497 mentioned that he retired in 2004, as did I retire from Delhi University in 2004. As a scientist I
498 taught physics and mathematics, and occasionally I still am asked to take quantitative aspects of
499 research methodology in the Department of Political Science in Delhi University or sometimes in
500 the Department of Sociology. Incidentally, I also worked for several years in NCERT, which is
501 devoted to school education. These days I don't work in the area of science, I work in the areas of
502 education and social sciences, a little bit of work in political science also, and religion. One of the
503 persons I feel very much inspired by is Gandhi, his book *Hind Swaraj*, which was written a
504 hundred and one years back, is still, I feel, highly relevant on so many different issues, whether it's
505 the issue of education or development or the type of development that is required, or whether it is
506 the issue of religion. On all these aspects, and other aspects, which I need not mention here, I feel
507 that the study of Gandhi is an important aspect and that is what I try to work on, in my own simple
508 way and without much institutional support.

509

510 One of the things that amazes me is the role of religion in South Asia, in India in particular,
511 whether it is a marriage, whether it is a death, whether it is a birth, or whether there are some
512 special occasions, like we had Ganesh Utsav a few days back and also Eid ul-Fitr on the same day.
513 The number of people who participate in these gathering is enormous - it's extraordinary the
514 number of people. What is it that pulls people towards these religious gatherings? There are not
515 only thousands, or hundreds of thousands, but even tens of millions of people on some special
516 occasions like the Kumbha Mela or on Eid. What is it that pulls people towards these religious
517 gatherings? One of the things which I feel, maybe I am over simplifying, is that the social fabric is
518 breaking up and that you can see in Western countries, European countries, but also in India. The
519 type of social structures we had are, if not breaking up, at least much less effective in maintaining
520 peace and harmony among social groups, among families and among neighborhoods. So perhaps it
521 is religion that is proving to be an alternative. That is one of the questions which I would like to
522 have this gathering address. The other question that I think of is when all religions, or most
523 religions, talk of common values like peace, like harmony, like love, like forgiveness, why is it that
524 there is such much conflict between one religion and the another? These are some of the questions
525 that I would like to seek answers to. Thank you.

526

527 **Prashant Trivedi** My name is Prashant Trivedi. After doing my Ph.D in Sociology, I have been

528 working here at The Council for Social Development with Professor Mohanty. I think this meeting
529 will help me understand the phenomena of resurgence, or the increasing role of religion in civil
530 society, and that too, in the era of neo-liberal globalization. We have been experiencing, at least in
531 this part of the world, the role of religion in politics, which has been increasing like never before.
532 It is often becoming violent and targeting minorities. This whole process of the increasing role of
533 religion in politics almost coincides with the neo-liberal policies of globalization adopted by the
534 government of India. I hope this meeting will help me understand this phenomena. Thank you.

535

536 **Dinah Griego** My name is Dinah Griego and I am the project coordinator for the LUCE
537 Foundation sponsored initiative at the Orfalea Center, and my role as project coordinator is to
538 organize and produce the workshops where we will gather the content to produce the publications
539 and the final tools that professor Juergensmeyer talked about earlier. It is my job to carry out the
540 logistics of gathering scholars and practitioners.

541

542 Just as a word of how I came to be involved with the Orfalea Center: I found out about the Orfalea
543 Center, and also the new Masters program on Global and International studies, in my capacity as a
544 trustee at the Orfalea Foundations, and as such, I was privy to the grants that were being made out
545 of the different funding pots. I was the trustee of one of the funds and we were allowed to see how
546 the family was distributing funds over all. I happened to notice that they had given a rather large
547 grant to the University for a Masters Program, and so I inquired about the program, found it very
548 interesting and I ended up being part of the first class of the Masters Program. It was just what I
549 needed at the time. Then fortuitously, just as I graduated from that program, I was approached by
550 Victor and Mark asking if I wanted to take a role at the Orfalea Center. I am very grateful that they
551 have given me something very interesting and engaging to continue working on. That is how I
552 came to be involved here, thank you.

553

554 **Ranjana Mukhopadhyaya** I am Ranjana Mukhopadhyaya, I am from the department of East
555 Asian Studies in Delhi University, which Professor Mohanty referred to as the Department of
556 Chinese and Japanese studies. Now it has a new name and is called East Asian Studies. Basically
557 I am trained in Religious Studies, I got my Ph.D from the Department of Religious Studies in
558 Tokyo University. I worked in Japan where I was teaching for 5 years, and I just joined this

559 department last year. My work has been basically in East Asia and Southeast Asia, and now I am
560 looking at India also. One of the traditions if you are in East Asia, which you cannot miss out, is
561 obviously Buddhism. My work has been on Buddhist movements in East Asia, and as I was
562 looking at East Asian Buddhist movements, and now gradually my interest has shifted to the
563 refugee problem. Because if you look at all these Buddhist countries, right from the Tibetan
564 problem, to the Cambodian issue, to Laos and Vietnam, they all have fallen to communism one
565 after the other. One of the things has been that many of the people, particularly Buddhist, had to
566 flee from their country and go and live outside. Of course, this gives rise to a diaspora of East
567 Asian and Southeast Asian Buddhist communities and when denied a territorial place, what
568 remains is actually the religion and the culture. My work now examines how religion then
569 becomes one of many sources of identity and also how religious symbols and religious
570 associations actually take on new meanings. I mean a temple in a refugee camp is not just a
571 temple, it is also a center for the giving of food, of donations – in order to get a visa you have to
572 get a certification from these monks. So I look also at all the new roles that Buddhist monks take
573 up in these refugee camps. Now I am looking at how some of the very successful refugees have
574 been doing - the Tibetan refugees and how they actually prop up various Buddhist movements in
575 the countries where they have gone, and one of them is obviously India. One of the works that I
576 am doing now is to look at the linkages between various Buddhist communities within India,
577 between the Ambedkarites and the Tibetan Buddhists. Actually, I am very thankful to Professor
578 Mohanty for inviting me to this program today. My interest is looking at global society and how
579 this transnational networking between different religious communities and what is their
580 significance, particularly in reviving the civil society movements and particularly with faith-based
581 civil society movements. Thank you very much.

582

583 **Hilal Elver** Thank you very much, my name is Hilal Elver, I am also from the University of
584 California, Santa Barbara. We came here for a series of meetings and this is the third one. I teach
585 international environmental law, international human rights law, and I am originally from Turkey.
586 Recently, I finished a book on the head scarf controversy in Turkey, comparing it to the United
587 States and Europe. Being from Turkey, I had a strong interest about secularism and modernity and
588 how it has shaped in Turkey, from the comparative perspective, focusing on recent and earlier,
589 women's positions in this secular environment, in a very strong Muslim country. I am happy to be

590 here, thank you.

591

592 **Victor Faessel** My name is Victor Faessel and I am the Program Director at the Orfalea Center,
593 part of the organizational infrastructure of both this project and several other projects at this center.
594 I have research interest in mythologies, old and new, but I am here mainly as organizational
595 support for the project. I am very glad, along with Mark, Mano and Dinah, and everyone else, to
596 see you all here today. Thank you.

597

598 **Acharya Shrivatsa Goswami** I am Shrivatsa Goswami and I bring greetings to you from
599 Vrindavan, which is a gift of Islam to Hinduism, not only the most popular Hindu pilgrimage
600 destination today, but a Muslim gift to the Hindu, a gift of political power to the religious
601 institutions. From today's historical point of view, it is a gift of Pakistan to India. In 1598, Akbar
602 was sitting in Lahore, and he sent Abul Fazl to my ancestors, Jiva Goswami. He said: "Take these
603 100 *bighas* of land and create a revenue entity called Vrindavan. There was no Vrindavan on the
604 map, it was always on the religious and literary canvas, but there was no geographical, civil,
605 correlate to that. In 1598 it came about.

606

607 What do I do? I serve at Shri Radha Raman Temple, which is the seat of power for the
608 Chaitanyites of which the Hare Krishnas are the Western kids of the movement. In that temple my
609 duties allow me to play with Krishna, I know you all know him, who is an amazing player and who
610 can play equally well in politics and religion. He can play at ease in economy and aesthetics,
611 seamlessly. He doesn't mind any boundaries. Why am I here? I agree with Krishna who agrees in
612 turn, with Mahatma Gandhi, and both of them wonder, together with me, that religion is
613 inseparable from civil society, they are together. So Krishna tells me at times, go and find out in
614 these learned talks and seminars and conferences and discussions like this, why religion is
615 unilaterally thrown out of civil society and all the processes of civil society. This break of alliance,
616 what you said about the marriage, this break of alliance in Krishna's and Gandhi's understanding,
617 brings suffering of all kinds and also makes development suffer. So, how can we restore the
618 dalliance, *the alliance*, between the two processes so that the dalliance can bring about a positive
619 note on the side of development? Interestingly enough, I, being a Chaitanyite, aesthetically, we do
620 not subscribe too much to the highest value of the marriage. We believe in polity of power -

621 relationship outside marriages, because marriage somehow gets bogged down in the vested
622 interests. So if religion and civil society processes are based on vested interest, it will bring havoc.
623 But if it is an alliance, out of love for each other, I am using a figurative language, then there is a
624 complete dedication, and complete commitment, and the question of breakdown doesn't come
625 about. But the golden question is to me, for this octagonal, or hexagonal, table, is that how can
626 that dalliance be sustained? How can dalliance work? Thank you very much.

627

628 **John Chathanatt** My name is John Chathanatt. For about eighteen years I was teaching Religion
629 and Social Ethics at the Vidyajyoti College of Theology, very close to Delhi University. For the
630 last one year I have moved to the Indian Social Institute, a little different pattern of work. It is a
631 research institute basically, and I am directing research specifically oriented on marginal people.
632 So we have five departments there, five units, looking at the tribal, the Dalit, the women, and
633 unorganized labor, looking at the research specifically from the marginal and rejected section of
634 the people. I am coordinating and directing the research there at present. My interest in religion
635 goes back right from the beginning, from my own formation as such. I did my PhD doctorate from
636 the University of Chicago, from the Divinity school, in Social Ethics. Gandhi had been a
637 fascination for me right from the beginning of my school days. My thesis was on a comparative
638 study of Gandhi and Gutierrez - we can say two fathers. One is the father of our nation, the other,
639 Gutierrez from Lima, Peru, is known as the father of Liberation Theology. I looked at how these
640 two figures, one from the East, the other from the West, looked at social transformation.

641

642 We have been very much interested in the whole aspect of religion, and Professor Mohanty
643 mentioned we had two conferences already that looked especially at the social healing part of
644 religion. A book has been edited on that, both by Dr. Manindra Thakur and myself. When I look
645 at it, there are three things I would like to mention and that I would like to learn from this dialogue.
646 Number one, why is religion amenable to manipulation? Politics can use religion? Why is this
647 phenomenon? It is amenable to political manipulation, for any type of manipulation. Can we use
648 that in a positive sense, for example, removing poverty and integrated development?

649

650 The second aspect would be, what is the role of religion in bringing social healing in a wounded
651 history? When we look at history itself, right from the beginning, whether we like it or not, we

652 fight. There is conflict, so how can a religious phenomena bring healing and bring people together,
653 and finally bring peace.

654

655 Then the third aspect would be, the power of religion. Whether we like it or not, even if we throw
656 religion out, religion will not throw us out. It's as somebody jokingly mentioned, that religion is
657 even in our curry. It is there and even if we threw it out, it will not throw us out, it's part of us. So
658 there is a power in religion. There is a lot of wisdom and insights coming from religion. Can we
659 use this power, this insight, say for example, to remove poverty in the economic aspect and to
660 remove racial oppression, like the caste system? Also, can religion purify politics? We may have
661 to go back to Gandhi there - how religion can purify, bring back an authentic political
662 development, a ruling. So these are my three various interests, specifically for our discussion
663 today. Thank you.

664

665 **Manindra Thakur** I am Manindra Thakur. I teach at the CPS JNU, as Professor Mohanty
666 mentioned. We have been working on this theme for many years and we have organized civil
667 conferences and programs around this, and we are planning to pursue it farther. I was teaching in
668 Delhi University and now I am in JNU and it is hard to relocate this project in a center, which has
669 generally not been philosophically oriented. Fortunately, we have agreed and I got some funding to
670 organize a round table on religion in the near future, and we will launch a program on religion and
671 politics at the center.

672

673 I will just briefly mention my interest, and at some stage I can come back to it. One of the major
674 problems that I am facing at the moment is the whole idea of conceptualizing religion itself, and I
675 do not want to get into the East-West debate, but, is it that what we are treating as religion, is it
676 very difficult to fix up a boundary for that? There is no need to fix up a boundary, the more we try
677 to fix up a boundary, the more we lose the content of that, and probably that is where I want to
678 engage with the earlier generation of professors who have worked on religion, including Professor
679 Madan and Mark. I think that there is a common ground between religion, philosophy, and
680 knowledge systems, and when we talk of religion we mainly talk of the religious communities, and
681 with that we miss a lot of what is called "knowledge system." So I want to reclaim religion as a
682 knowledge system, and then we have the autonomy to really engage with that in different ways.

683

684 Why I am saying this? Well I think that the Asian societies have a particular kind of vantage point,
685 because most of the major religions have emerged in Asian societies. Why have they emerged in
686 Asian societies? I am trying to probe that. What is a consequence of that? Is it that that really
687 shapes our thinking differently about religion itself? That has taken me to a whole lot of questions
688 of religion and Marxism, and I have tried to explore the philosophy of science debates and its
689 relations with Marxism and religion. I've discovered that probably now, the new philosophy of
690 science emerging out of the new developmental science is allowing us to engage with religion as a
691 knowledge system much more than it was earlier. I have two major interests at the moment, one is
692 History and Social Healing, and we are trying to find out what have been the experiments in Asia
693 about the healing processes. I would take a look at traditions like Baul and Nyaya philosophy in
694 Mithila. For instance, Mithila had, what Amartya Sen calls, an argumentative tradition.
695 Surprisingly when we look at the crime data of India we found that in Bihar and in other parts the
696 rate it is very high, and in Mithila the crime rate is very low. One of the reasons we think this is, is
697 due to Nyaya philosophies dominance, it is still prevalent in that area and in the collective
698 consciousness.

699

700 The other is the new religious movements, where I am trying to engage with Ainslee Embree's
701 categories that he has developed to discuss these movements. I think, they are really old and I am
702 trying to develop new categories, particularly from the point of view of these new religious
703 movements engagement with social reality. And, one of the major things that one can think as
704 common in these religious movements is the philosophical discourse that they are creating. I think
705 that one of the problems that the West is facing at the moment is due to this Cartesian duality,
706 which Zizek brings into focus so heavily. These movements are basing their arguments on this
707 whole idea of unity of mind and the body, and that is what is making it very popular. So I will
708 come back to that.

709

710 **J.P.S. Uberoi** I am Jit Uberoi, I'm a pensioner at Delhi School of Economics. When I was
711 teaching there, for many years, we were trying to establish a course in the "Sociology of Science",
712 that was my first interest, and then, secondly, the "Sociology of Religion", which has not been
713 taught in Indian universities, especially the progressive ones like Jawaharlal Nehru University,

714 where the attitude is that there is no point in teaching something which has no future. Of course,
715 they also don't teach science, they only talk about it - they have a sort of dual standard. Now the
716 rumors about the death of religion are greatly exaggerated, especially since the Second World War,
717 when everybody expected that religion would decline in public affairs. Some people, during the
718 Pope's visit in the United Kingdom right now, still think that the Pope is still addressing what he
719 calls "aggressive secularism" and there is a lot of that. My third topic was Political Anthropology.
720 I say anthropology rather than sociology in this case because it was focused on the problems of
721 societies where the institutions of the State were not well developed.

722

723 Mohanty's view is that if you want to study something, then you go and study it. But that is not my
724 view, my view is that if you want to study something, you should study it in absentia - that is the
725 most important thing. So if you want to know what the State does, you should look for a society
726 which does not have a State. If you want to know what religion does, you should look for a society
727 which does not have religion, because, if you keep on looking only at the presences, you never get
728 to the basics. That, of course, is what was in common between the sociology of science and the
729 sociology of religion and political anthropology, namely, to look at the basics. Not in terms of
730 religion, I am agreeing with you, but in terms of modes of thought, codes of conduct, and
731 principles of social organization. That was the common framework, and it doesn't matter whether
732 it was economics that we were studying or religion or the relationship between those two. The fact
733 that I was interested in basics, and not in current affairs or practical things, does not mean that we
734 are not interested in politics. That is not the case. I was associated for many years with the
735 People's Union for Civil Liberties, which is a rival organization to the People's Union for
736 Democratic Rights, and we did try for many years to bring the two together, but we did not
737 succeed. So we settled for not bringing them together as organizations, but coming together on
738 issues, and I frequently found myself on the platform on the same side as Mano Mohanty in those
739 thirty years.

740

741 What we can hope today is to use whatever experiences people have, whether from South Asia or
742 from the United States, to ask questions about what religion is; not to get a definition the way the
743 United Nations might want, a sort of legal kind of definition, or the way it is important under the
744 Indian Constitution, to know what is a religion and what is not. Are Free Masons a religion in the

745 United States? Some people think that they are not, they are a social movement and I can believe
746 whatever I like, because it is a secret social movement. Whatever I say about it you cannot
747 contradict me. You cannot say that this is what the boss of the Free Masons says, because they do
748 not have anyone, and if they have one they don't tell us. There is another organization which has a
749 rival Pope also, so it is rumored. There I am careful not to say anything because I have been a
750 student in Vidyajyoti, and I still look up to my teachers there so I'm not going to say anything
751 about the Jesuits.

752

753 Similarly, what is an institution? What is society? Some people think that we have religion and we
754 have society, and then you can connect them, like thinking we have religion and we have politics. I
755 mean Mark is like that, he thinks he knows what *is* politics and what *is* religion and now he wants
756 to discuss what is the relationship. Well, that is not how I see it; how I see it is that society itself is
757 a religious idea, it's quite the other way around. In fact, secularism has been invented by religion, it
758 is not that secularism is opposed to it - the Pope has got it all wrong, people who are practical they
759 get these things wrong. It might be that the question of violence also requires some discussion of
760 the basics. I mean, if a person, starves themselves to death for a particular cause is this an action
761 of violence or an action of non-violence? Just as there are suicide bombers, there are...you know,
762 the world record for starving oneself to death is held not by a Gandhian, I wish it were, but it is
763 actually held by an Irishman. He starved himself for so many days. This is a political issue; now
764 are we going to say that this man is committing suicide, and therefore, should be tried for a crime
765 because in Ireland suicide is a crime. Or, are we going to say that he is like Jesus? I mean if
766 Socrates provoked his death, are we going to say that this is an act of violence? I mean, was he a
767 suicide bomber or are we going to say that he was a prototype for self-sacrifice? So the world has
768 need still of self-sacrifice. So what is missing there, when I say basics, is a principle of
769 vicariousness. I had a lot of difficulty, on discussing this principle of vicariousness, in the Delhi
770 School of Economics, because in the Delhi School of Economics every man and woman is for him
771 or herself and there is no taking on oneself the sins of others. Where as in Vidyajyoti, of course, if
772 there was no principle of vicariousness, there would be no Christianity. That's the sort of thing I
773 think that we should find time to discuss.

774

775 **Katherine Marshall** Good morning, I am Katherine Marshall. I am very honored to be here in this

776 group. I am currently at Georgetown University and I also head the World Faiths Development
777 Dialogue. For those of us who have been around for a long time, as someone pointed out, it takes a
778 while to tell the story, but my basic story is that I have worked for most of my career on
779 development with the World Bank, mostly on Africa, Latin America and East Asia; too little in
780 South Asia. I was drafted involuntarily, about 11-12 years ago by the President of the World
781 Bank, Jim Wolfensohn, who had started an initiative with the archbishop of Canterbury at the time,
782 George Carey, to try to bridge what they saw as an enormous and damaging gulf between the
783 worlds of religion and development. They brought together a relatively small group, first at
784 Lambeth Palace and then in Washington, and agreed that it was important and wise to have a small
785 institution that would try to do this work. I was asked to help create the World Faiths Development
786 Dialogue in late 1999, before 9/11. I don't want to tell the whole story, but what was interesting is
787 that this exploded into an enormous international controversy. Jim Wolfensohn was proud of
788 saying that out of 185 member countries, members of the World Bank, 185 opposed this initiative.
789 We spent a great deal of time trying to explore why - why something that seemed so logical, the
790 complete exclusion from development thinking and activity, at least as it was perceived from the
791 United Nations and the international organizations, why was this so controversial?

792

793 Very briefly I put it in four, three D's and an E - religion was seen as divisive, self serving,
794 political, dangerous for development and contrary to development purposes, particularly on gender
795 and reproductive health rights, and third, the basic notion that it was basically defunct. In other
796 words, that religion would become less important. I add an E which interestingly parallels the fact
797 that I have also been on the cusp of thinking about gender issues over the years, that people used
798 to, to my mind actually still do, often approach issues of gender not with their brains, but with
799 other parts of their systems, very emotionally. It is very difficult to have a rational discussion
800 about gender issues, and I was interested to find that with religion it was very much the same
801 phenomenon. Having a thoughtful discussion about what religions roles are, what it is, proved to
802 be extraordinarily difficult. People are very influenced by what they believe, not what others
803 believe, by their own prejudices, positive and negative, which has colored the discussion. So that
804 is, in a sense, why for the past twelve years my focus has been development and religion. I moved
805 about four years ago from the World Bank. I am still an advisor to the World Bank, but sadly the
806 current leadership is singularly uninterested in these issues. There is less controversy now, but

807 much less engagement at any practical level. I am now based in Georgetown in a Center called the
808 Berkeley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs and also run the World Faiths
809 Development Dialogue, which is now an NGO based in the United States.

810

811 So what am I doing here? Briefly, Mark and I discovered the Orfalea Center and we were doing
812 very similar work, or parallel work, also supported by the Luce Foundation. At the Berkeley
813 Center, where we also have a grant, we essentially have two major projects: one, is what we call a
814 mapping of faith-inspired organizations, and faith-inspired work which has covered most regions
815 of the world and we are currently actively engaged in looking at South Asia. We are hoping to
816 have a workshop not too dissimilar from this one in December, probably in Bangladesh. I came
817 here to learn and also to try to have as much synergy as we can. Our most recent meeting was in
818 Phnom Penh last December on Southeast Asia. We have reports, all of them on the web site, but I
819 brought at least the report of the meeting that we had which is available for anyone who is
820 interested. We also have taken an issues-based focus, we started really with health, like HIV-aids,
821 malaria, and we have just finished a report on tuberculosis. We also looked at gender issues,
822 shelter, and corruption, which we see as a major issue. We're working now, and it gets a little hazy
823 as to relationships, but we're working at the request of the Gates Foundation on Agriculture and
824 Religion. Just to give you an illustration, a couple of you mentioned issues on agriculture, but one
825 that we are delving into a bit is the issue of GMO's and the role that religious organizations have
826 and might play in that. Our approach is similar - we've also concluded that having people write
827 papers is not necessarily the best way to get a thoughtful discussion going. What we do though,
828 and I have an ulterior motive in mentioning this, is intensive interviews with people and most of
829 them, about a 150 of them I think, are on the Berkley Center web site, and they include Ela Bhatt,
830 Swami Agnivesh, and some others who might be relevant here. In other words, we talk for an hour
831 or two to people, write it up, agree with them on a text, and then have those as a basis for hopefully
832 going beyond speeches into an immediate conversation, into practicalities. We haven't worked out
833 exactly where we are going to have our meeting, but we have the potential of working with the
834 Aga Khan network or the Bangladesh Rural Academy.

835

836 Just to mention a few issues: these are an extraordinary and wonderful set of issues and I share
837 many of the questions and concerns about why there is this gulf between civil society and faith-

838 inspired organizations. We call them faith-inspired organizations to try to bring in some of the
839 movements and some of the organizations that don't consider themselves FBO's in the rather rigid
840 definition. Just to add one other illustration, I went to a meeting last week by Sir Abbott of BRAC.
841 I have talked to him before and it was quite interesting. Bangladesh is an extraordinary laboratory
842 for organizations, but when I asked him a couple of years ago how he dealt with religion, his
843 answer was, "As little as possible". There's a relatively new book on social entrepreneurship,
844 which is a big thing, but it is quite fascinating that social entrepreneurship is sort of a civil society
845 area; there is almost no religion in it, even though the word "faith" appears often. There is really a
846 tension, a perceived tension, between the sort of social entrepreneurship and some of the new
847 social movements and religion, which I think that we might be able to play a role in bridging.

848

849 Very briefly, here are some of the issues that we are specifically concerned with when looking at
850 South Asia. We are doing a background review and the issue of gender is a natural. It is, to my
851 mind, the major reason for the gulf between religion and secular development, the lack of an
852 engagement and of a thoughtful discussion. Women's roles are so important and they are very
853 difficult to deal with. That brings me to two projects we are working on: one is on Women,
854 Religion and Peace, which we are doing with the United States Institute of Peace on Women's
855 roles; because often when you have peace, religion isn't there, and even if you bring religion there,
856 the women are not there, it is all men's faces. So, what is happening? We had a fascinating
857 meeting on that in July. There is a new initiative, which is quite interesting, on child marriage,
858 where I am seeking ideas. The Elders, the group that was started by Nelson Mandela, with others,
859 is interested in that, and I am an advisor on that, so I am very interested in that issue. We are
860 interested in conflict and we are very interested in education. We are very conscious of the huge
861 amount of work that has been done in this area and would like to tap into it. Someone that I know,
862 and that many of you might have been associated with, is one of the early founders of the World
863 Faith Development Dialogue, Kamala Chowdhry, and one of her keen interests was to understand
864 better what she called "the movements." She did some research with Ford Foundation Fund on
865 some of the particularly South Asian movements, which she saw as an understudied, under-
866 understood, and under-appreciated phenomenon, something that touches very much on what you
867 all are talking about. Swami Agnivesh has also been an important part of our thinking as has
868 Rajmohan Gandhi, and some of the work of the initiatives of change. T P Radhakrishnan has been

869 very much involved in both efforts to deal with HIV Aids and with corruption issues. Finally, I
870 had the privilege of working quite a bit - because I am on the Niwano Peace Foundation, which is
871 an award, and Ela Bhatt was awarded this year – and so we had quite a bit of exchange with Ela
872 Bhatt, interestingly on these questions on what is peace, and where does religion figure in
873 something that is a profoundly political movement.

874

875 **T. N. Madan** Well, thank you! I am T. N. Madan, student of Sociology and Cultural
876 Anthropology. For the last 40 years I have been associated with the Institute of Economic Growth
877 as a Professor of Sociology. I also had intimate connections with the Center for the Study of
878 Developing Societies, where they call me a Distinguished Fellow, although I do not know what
879 that means. For about the last 20 years, I have been cultivating the field of Sociology of Religion,
880 which in the original sociological tradition, which is European of course, means secularization. It
881 means the end of religion in the Marxian reading of European History. It means *agonizing* or the
882 end of religion in the Weberian reading of European History, and it means the last ditch hope of
883 Durkheimian - something *will* take over the role of religion. The point is that in the Western
884 sociological tradition, the term “Sociology of Religion” is really about secularization, as Jit
885 mentioned a little while ago. Jit might remember I was taken to task, I have been for twenty years,
886 for saying that secularism is a gift of Christianity. The Secularists in my country consider that an
887 abusive statement. All the founders of the sociology tradition spoke about religion in the past
888 tense; the role *played* by religion, of course, the role played by religion in pre-modern societies,
889 where there is nothing but religion. Jit, you said something about societies, which don’t have
890 religion...that is a bit problematic, societies that don’t have a state, yes. Anyway, today there is a
891 paradigm shift in the Sociology of Religion, and people in the West, people in England, people in
892 Western Europe, are talking about the "exceptionalism of Western Europe." The paradigm shift
893 today is not to explain the presence of religion in societies around the world, but the absence of
894 religion. That is a paradigm shift. Peter Berger, who trained to work for the church, and then later
895 wrote those absolutely stunning pieces on secularization, now says the world is as furiously
896 religious as it ever was. That's a kind of background to my work on secularization.

897

898 The second point I would like to make is - I was taking down some notes while you all were
899 speaking - the second point I would like to make is, I think with the exception of Rowena

900 Robinson, nobody used the expression "comparative religion". I think that is crucial; we don't
901 understand any religious tradition if we study it by itself or if we study religious traditions
902 piecemeal. I think the whole idea of understanding the role of religion is to study it comparatively,
903 through the comparative method. I was very interested, as a sign of the times, in what our
904 colleague from IIT Kanpur said when her friends found she was studying Islam as well as
905 Hinduism - they thought it was an intellectually tight position. It is rather an opening, not a
906 tightening, of the intellectual position on religions.

907

908 The next point I would briefly like to comment on, and I do not want to re-write your agenda, but
909 "South Asian perspective"? Why are you stuck with institutions, why don't you broaden it? Of
910 course, going back to the Rama Krishna mission, going back to Arya Samaj, going back to
911 Christian missionary activities in India, yes, institutions have played a very significant role in the
912 last hundred and more years. But I think the South Asian perspective might lie, *the riches* of the
913 South Asian perspective may be discovered in the religious attitudes and values which are not
914 institutionalized. Take, for instance, the Chipko movement, an environmental protection
915 movement. I can give many examples. Of course, religious institutions take on new functions.
916 Shrivatsa Goswami, Sri Chaityana Prema Samsthana in Vrindivan, had talked about Akbar,
917 although I wished he had talked more about himself and what they do for the protection of the
918 river Yamuna, the cleaning up of the river bed and river bank. Religious institutions are taking an
919 enormous interest, but at the same time, talking about the religious values. The great contrast I
920 find, with regards to the environment, is that all traditional religious traditions look upon nature as
921 sacred. It's a modern tradition, whether in its original location or in its transplantation around the
922 world, which looks upon the environment as a resource – the de-sanctification of nature.

923

924 One more point, Mark spoke about positive or negative, and this point has already been taken up,
925 but, *it is* positive and negative, our colleague from Pakistan talked of use *and* abuse, it's not a
926 question of this or that. I have always been struck by the interesting coincidence in 1979 you had
927 the Iranian Revolution, as was pointed out, with its spirit of revenge; you had the solidarity
928 movement in Poland, the Catholic Church in association with the solidarity movement bringing
929 down the communist state; you had the Liberation Theology, as it was mentioned, all happening
930 around 1970-1979. So, I have a feeling that it is both, it's this way *and* that way, not this way *or*

931 that way, which takes me to the last point I want to make, on religious violence. We have to
932 acknowledge that within religious traditions there is place for violence in the name of religion.
933 What is *dharma-yuddha* in the Hindu tradition and the Sikh tradition? In the Brahmanical tradition,
934 the idea is the destruction of the evil-doer. *Vinashaya cha dushkritam*, those who do evil - its
935 exactly the same idea in the Qur'an - God will punish the evil-doers, and God enjoins upon the
936 believer to go to war. It will not do to say that within the Qur'an there is not such an idea, whether
937 there is the greater *jihad*, of self-improvement. But there is religious obligation in all religious
938 traditions. It may manifest itself through conversions. I would like to make a distinction between
939 violence sanctioned by religion, which I guess is one kettle of fish, and political violence, which
940 *invokes* the sanction of religion and other things. What al-Qaeda and Taliban is doing, for
941 instance, or what, Hindu, Christians, and other groups are doing, is a different thing from the idea
942 of removing the evil doers. I think we need to look at this more closely, I think there is a
943 distinction. This reminds me of a distinction which the French anthropologist Louis Dumont once
944 made. He said that religion was a means of self-understanding, "who I am", and religion was a
945 means of distinguishing ones identity - "who I am not" and who the "other fellow" is. He said,
946 when religion becomes a sign of distinction between political groups, it becomes a shadow of
947 itself. I have this feeling that if we have to confront the idea of religious violence, we have to look
948 at it in both respects, in both aspects, that they are within religious traditions. It will not do to say
949 that all religions are peace loving. There are both elements in every religion. Somebody talked
950 about what makes religions available for manipulation, that should also be looked into. A final
951 footnote - Dharmananda Kosambi was a Gandhian and he starved himself to death, because he said
952 India has become free and I have nothing more to do. Gandhi tried to persuade him not to do so,
953 but he successfully starved himself to death. Thank you.

954

955 **Mark Juergensmeyer** Let me just say one or two words before we take the break, because I
956 didn't really introduce myself in terms of interest in this topic. It's true, I have written on religious
957 violence and the rise of religious nationalism, and I am happy to talk about that today if you like,
958 but, I would like to do so in context, because the focus of this project is somewhat different. The
959 people who are involved in religious violence and who are leaders of movements of religious
960 politics that we hear so much about in the contemporary time – just take a look at the headlines -
961 but I want to look beyond the headlines to the timelines, to see what larger changes and

962 transformations are occurring within society. There I think the story might be somewhat different.
963

964 Just a couple years ago there was this animated concern in the West over the rise of the BJP. We
965 were convinced that India was going in the way of Ayatollahs and Iran, and now, of course, that
966 the BJP has been voted out office, things look quite different. Now we're convinced that Pakistan
967 is about to fall to an Islamic Revolution, and yet, in the last election the Islamic parties like the
968 Jamaat-e-Islami, I think, received only about 4% of the vote. So, I do not want to fixate on the
969 headlines and miss the timelines. When we come back after the break, maybe we can focus on
970 what is one of the first questions of our conversation: what is going on within the religious politics,
971 the religious societies of the countries of South Asia? Are there some dramatic and substantial
972 changes? Is there a kind of politicization of religion or is this simply a matter of headlines and not
973 of the timelines?

974

975 **Hilal Elver** The first question we are starting with: **What transformative role have religious**
976 **institutions played in civil society?**

977

978 **T. N. Madan** Very briefly, I thought that there's a long history in this country, by long I mean in
979 the modern period, more than a hundred years, about religious based institutions having played a
980 very significant role in modern education. Apart from the Christian missions there are movements
981 which have become institutionalized like the Arya Samaj, but I want to draw particular attention to
982 sectarian movements. There is for instance, a sectarian movement which has blossomed into a
983 full-fledged religion in South India: Virasaivism, the community called the Lingayats. Now, what
984 I want to point out is not specific, it must be a general problem, that whereas these are strictly
985 faith-based institutions, the monasteries, the *maths* as we call them, of the Lingayats have
986 definitive discriminatory policies with regard to accommodation of students, with regard to
987 financial aid to students, and with regards to the recruitment of faculty. They favor their own
988 community, but the interesting thing is, what is the kind of education they provide? The
989 educational institutions that they run are medical colleges, providing modern medical education
990 programs, providing modern education in technology, and engineering. The question that arises
991 here to me seems worth considering, because a faith-based organization has certain preferences,
992 certain patterns of preferential treatment of its own community in certain respects; how do you fit

993 this into the larger picture, where the people that they turn out of this education institution are
994 neurosurgeons or nuclear-scientists? What does it deliver? What is the puzzle? Is there any puzzle
995 at all? Are we too trapped in a dichotomous way of thinking, that a faith-based organization
996 cannot be modern? That's a question I am posing.

997

998 **Rounaq Jahan** I have been debating about this question which talks about transformative role, but
999 what is the meaning of *transformation*? Also then we talk about religious institutions, but what
1000 would fall under *institutions* here? Again, as I said, I have not really looked at or have done much
1001 research on religious institutions, so I feel that I am a little bit at a disadvantage. But just as
1002 somebody who is a general observer of social transformation, for instance in Bangladesh over the
1003 last thirty years or thirty-six years, certain things one does notice in terms of social change or
1004 social transformations and the role of women, for instance, would be one major indicator of
1005 transformation. I really cannot think of much of a role of religious institutions in terms of bringing
1006 about social transformation, in terms of women's empowerment in Bangladesh. Most of the work
1007 in the 1970's and 80's has been done by non-religious civil societies groups, and in fact, in certain
1008 periods, some of the mosques or *madrasahs* have been regarded as obstacles to women's
1009 empowerment. In recent years, of course - and they were not really playing that much of a role, the
1010 *madrasahs* and mosques have always been there in our country. But I don't know, I have not
1011 studied it. What positive role *have* they played over the years, even before the non-religious NGOs
1012 came, in terms of women's empowerment? The non-religious institutions did come and played a
1013 major role in terms of transformation of women's empowerment. Over the last ten to fifteen years,
1014 what is happening is that there has been a tremendous spread of *madrasah* education, for instance,
1015 there has been funding that has come from the Middle East. Also, there have been all these
1016 remittances that are coming - well, I do not want to get too much into this debate - but there were
1017 the traditional *madrasahs*, the *aliyah madrasahs*, and there have been these *qawmi madrasahs*, the
1018 non-formal *madrasahs* which are not under any control. This role of the *madrasahs* has become
1019 very contested as well as some of the new set of philanthropic Islamic organizations that have
1020 popped up only over the last fifteen years or so with outside money. So, if we were to just talk
1021 about the transformative role in civil society, then there have been examples that I can cite over the
1022 last three or four decades, which are from non-religious groups, particularly from Bangladesh. I
1023 think that some of the religious organizations roles are looked upon and regarded as a suspicious

1024 thing.

1025

1026 **Lingam Raja** With regards to this role of the religious institutions in playing or serving civil
1027 society, I would say it is a big "Yes." I have just listed some of the religious institutions, only a
1028 few, but there are many, the list goes on and on. When the tsunami took place, at that time the
1029 Mata Amritanandamayi, a religious institution, had come forward and they had done wonderful
1030 work in tsunami affected areas, in Kanyakumari, in Nagapattinam, and wherever it was. This was
1031 the place where they had done wonderful service to the civil society. They brought money, they
1032 constructed houses for them, and gave them livelihoods - these are the things that they have done.

1033

1034 Number two, do you know the Bajrang Dal? It is a movement that goes on now in Tamil Nadu
1035 particularly, but it goes on all over the world in a major and massive way. They have established
1036 *maths and* prayer centers in almost all the villages. And they come, they keep on coming, and
1037 even the government of India has provided a train for them to come to celebrate and to worship
1038 there in their place, that is near to Chennai, Chengalpattu. Bajrang Dal has established this
1039 institutions twenty years ago, they have been on the ground and they are doing wonderful service,
1040 like the Ramakrishna mission, who we all know have been rendering service right from the
1041 beginning to society. Then the Aurobindo Society and the All India Ayyappa Seva Sangam, they
1042 too are doing service to the society by establishing spiritual transformation. Also the Hare Krishna
1043 movement, as you know, and the Arya Samaj, as our friend has already pointed out. The Brahma
1044 Kumaris have also established institutions and centers in all parts of the world as well as the rural
1045 areas, and now they have started a people's movement. They have been changing the minds of the
1046 people, in regards to violent behavior and belief in God, in order to be in tune with nature. I think I
1047 will stop for now and later on I'll explain more, if there is anything to explain. Thank you very
1048 much for the time being.

1049

1050 **T. N. Madan** Is Rounaq suggesting some kind of essentialist position? That by their very nature,
1051 faith-based organizations must be exclusive and conservative and whatever, and that they cannot
1052 be agents of social transformation? Is something essentialist being suggested there? I would point
1053 out, in my earlier point, I tried to make a distinction in the South Asian context between the
1054 narrowly focused institutions and broad movements, after all a tremendous social transformation

1055 occurred in medieval India, the inspiration of which was devotional religion. Do we turn our back
1056 on that? Regarding the intervention just made, I think we need to make a distinction between
1057 service and transformation. There are lots of religious organizations, which may be engaged in...
1058 like with the tsunami, they went and they helped. But the larger purpose of transforming society,
1059 is it intentional or unintentional? The medical colleges in Karnataka which are turning out
1060 Lingayat neurosurgeons, is it intentional? I do not know.

1061

1062 **Rounaq Jahan** I was not suggesting an essentialist position, that by nature religious institutions
1063 cannot perform a transformative role. I also mentioned I am not a student of religion, but from my
1064 life experience of observing social transformation in Bangladesh, particularly in terms of women's
1065 empowerment, unfortunately I cannot think of an example where the religious institutions have
1066 played a positive role. I wish they did.

1067

1068 **I. A. Rehman** Thank you very much. In terms of the Pakistan experience, it is very difficult to
1069 define which are the religious institutions. First of all, the State itself is a religious institution,
1070 because Islam is the State Religion in Pakistan. As a result of that, it has introduced religious
1071 teachings in schools and colleges and universities, to the extent that if a student candidate for
1072 admission to a medical College secures 95% marks in medical related subjects, but fails in
1073 *islamiat*, he cannot get admission into medical college. So, the State as a religious institution has
1074 increased polarization in civil society also. The second religious institution is the Judiciary, which
1075 are the Sharia courts. Then we have the Sharia highest courts, the appellate court which declares
1076 land reform in Islamic, and there is a long twenty year old case pending because it banned all
1077 interest based laws, so insurance and banking are all under attack. This again has divided civil
1078 society. The third religious institutions are political parties, and now we have religion-based
1079 political parties like the Jamaat-e-Islami and the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam. Now Jamiat Ulema-e-
1080 Islam is an offshoot of Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind, but Jamaat-e-Islami in Pakistan is entirely different,
1081 from Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind. Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam takes the credit for producing the Taliban,
1082 which occupied Afghanistan. They were trained in their *madrassahs*.

1083

1084 Apart from political parties, the main vestige of religious institutions is in the education sector.
1085 Before independence we had religious institutions that established colleges and schools like Jamiat

1086 Ulema-e-Islam and Jamaat-e-Islami of Amritsar who gave us very prestigious colleges. But after
1087 independence, this education sector has been taken over by *madrasahs*. The *madrasahs* have a
1088 structure which is different from the pre-partition *madrasahs*. Under General Zia-ul-Haq the State
1089 stopped building universities, and only built religious seminaries. So now we have religious
1090 seminaries, which have more students than the universities. Now in this there is a strange fact, that
1091 the Deobandis, who are a minority sect, have more *madrasahs* than the Barelvis, who are the
1092 majority sect. So there is the problem. And these *madrasahs* do not teach modern subjects, some
1093 of them are trying to teach mathematics and science, but 95% teach only theological subjects.
1094 There is one religious institution, which our friend from IIT mentioned, and this is Tablighi
1095 Jamaat. It is a non-political, non-violent, non-militant organization which has influenced civil
1096 society, in terms of motivating them to do humanitarian work, social service, and coming to the aid
1097 of people in distress, but at the same time we have another version which is militant, which is the
1098 Jamaat-ud-Dawa, which also has a militant wing and they also do excellent relief work. In fact,
1099 they are ahead of government and other agencies when coming to the rescue of the people, but
1100 they have a political and military angle. I think that the whole cumulative effect of these religious-
1101 based institutions has been somewhat negative although there are some positive stands also.

1102

1103 **Anindita Chakrabarti** I just want to make two or three interconnected points. The appeal is that
1104 we have to go beyond empirical cases and put all this data into some framework, and the
1105 framework necessarily has to be comparative, not only across religion, but to see the role of
1106 religion across time and place. In the nineteenth century, when social reform, religious reform and
1107 political reform was being carried on by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the father of modern India, and
1108 Gandhiji, the father of the Nation, that would not have raised an eyebrow. But, later on the local
1109 standing of religion has been lost, whatever might be the reason, maybe we were sold out to the
1110 death of religion theory, we got overcommitted to it. We should look at it from a comparative
1111 perspective and also look at the relation of religion with the state, which in the last presentation
1112 you had brought out, that religion is not in a vacuum, it is in relationship, often as the pre-cursor of
1113 civil society movements. There is work on the dissenting sects in England who were against the
1114 church of England, and they said that we have *our own* interpretation of Christianity, of the
1115 Church, and they were eventually persecuted. It is in those movements that the plurality of
1116 conscience, that theory, was put forward, and it played a major role in civil society movements.

1117 We should not forget these interlinks and histories and get tangled in very specific cases. The
1118 question is therefore the transformative role of religion, as E. P. Thompson says, the
1119 transformative role of the Cross. But what transforms the Cross? I think this is a very interesting
1120 and relevant question, what is it that transforms the Cross itself? This clue we get when we open
1121 the can of religion, we see it as a box of religious movements and sects, and there is a lot of
1122 turmoil and churning that is taking place there. We need to take those seriously. The term
1123 sectarian itself is a negative term, because the sectarians are given that negative term by the
1124 Church. Whenever you protest against the Church, you are a sectarian, and therefore sectarian is
1125 bad and the contemporary media talks about sectarianism as a negative term. But in the sociology
1126 of religion we take it far more seriously and we really need to engage that.

1127

1128 **Manindra Thakur** I think it would be helpful if we look at these religious movements in different
1129 categories. Broadly speaking there are three kinds of movements, the fundamentalist religious
1130 movements, of which RSS could be one kind of organization. Then you have new religious
1131 movements and you have radical religious movements. I'll just take the new religious movements
1132 at the moment, and I think there are five kinds of movements going on in India, and they have
1133 different kinds of roles to play. One is the philosophy based new religious movement; I see
1134 Rajneesh ashrams in this and also Krishnamurti Foundations in this, where the major intervention
1135 is at the level of philosophy. I have empirically found that Rajneesh's books are still best sellers in
1136 the small cities, the railway stations. A number of new ashrams are being built up...

1137

1138 **T.N. Madan:** Is it because of the freedom he views in the area of sex?

1139

1140 **Manindra Thakur:** I think that was the initial thing that resonated, but now they have really
1141 transcended that, and I can see in JNU not less than fifty students hearing him almost everyday and
1142 around 8GB of Rajneesh's lectures are being circulated on the computer. What he does, is
1143 actually to try and deliver a series of lectures on various kinds of Indian texts. I would become
1144 aware of many of the texts only through Rajneesh, like the *Ashtavakra Gita*, which is a fantastic
1145 text and philosophy, which most don't even know. Then I discovered that the *Ashtavakra Gita* is
1146 one of the best sellers in the railway stations in the heartland areas! So, possibly, this is one kind of
1147 movement. There are also a number of organizations coming up in the Punjab regions where I

1148 visited, where people are coming and staying in those organizations and hearing lectures on, and
1149 by, Rajneesh. Krishnamurti is, of course, among more sophisticated people, but Rajneesh is much
1150 more popular among the common masses it seems.

1151

1152 The second kind is a *bhakti* movement, the ISKCON kind of movement. I did some field work on
1153 this ISKCON temple here and I discovered that it has transformed into a transnational management
1154 oriented religious organization. You have IIT graduates appointed there, you have IM graduates
1155 appointed there, and they are actually working on corporate socially responsibility funds. In fact,
1156 they are eating up a lot of corporate social responsibility funds. I do not know whether I should say
1157 “eating up” or not, but they are claiming that everyday they are feeding around three million
1158 children all over the world. To mobilize the money, they have appointed highly paid professionals
1159 for themselves. So this is another kind of movement.

1160

1161 The third is Yoga and the knowledge-based movements, such as Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and
1162 Ramdev, where they are using the traditional knowledge system to help the people at large. But
1163 what is interesting is that if you look at the BBC website Mahesh Yogi, when he was alive, he
1164 threatened Britain that he would withdraw all his Transcendental Meditation centers from London.
1165 There was a big debate on BBC website, and he was requested by the Prime Minister that he
1166 should not do that! Also there is our Shri Shri Ravi Shankar. Another interesting dimension on
1167 that is, both Ravi Shankar and Maheshi Yogi were students of quantum physics. There is some
1168 relationship between that, and there are organizations of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi which suggest
1169 that it is basically a science-based movement. So this is a knowledge-based movement, and there
1170 was one candidate who was a scientist of quantum physics who filed a nomination for presidential
1171 candidature in the US who belongs to this organization.

1172

1173 The fourth kind of movement is the *interpersonal relational* movement, which is Asaram Bapu
1174 and Morari Bapu who talk about the crisis that Indian society is facing at the moment with
1175 relations between families and all. And the fifth kind of movement, which is a very interesting
1176 kind of movement though not widely known, is a "social relational" movement. I just mentioned
1177 Dera movement in Punjab as one kind, but one of the movements which I find very fascinating -
1178 and is which there is no news in the newspaper, because I met the guru of that movement and he

1179 said that they deliberately have avoided all kind of exposures in the media – and that is called the
1180 Shiv Guru movement. The Shiv Guru movement claims, and probably it is right because I have
1181 done some work with them, that everyday around three to four Lakh people meet for two hours in
1182 different parts of the country. Every day. So, it is like Tablighi Jamaat, you have a series of
1183 meetings and circles and all. So, these are different kinds of movements. If we look at them
1184 differently, the way they are trying to influence civil society, probably that would make more
1185 sense.

1186

1187 **Bidyut Mohanty** In regards to Dr. Ramdev, there may be some politics in that, but one good thing
1188 he has done is to bring women to a public place in terms of traditional knowledge. I remember
1189 when I tried to do yoga in the park before and I was banned. Everybody looked at me and said,
1190 “this lady, this woman, is trying to do yoga in the park!” But now nobody cares, they just go to a
1191 public place and do it. That much he has done. Secondly, these living traditions I have been
1192 talking about - I have talked about Lakshmi, and caste barriers. The other one is the selling of
1193 infants to Muslim gurus, when there is a threat that the infant won’t live. I mean, that is really
1194 communal harmony, and they always sell the infant and buy him or her back. And generally the
1195 name for him is *fakir*, and you know *fakir* is the name of a Muslim guru. So these living traditions
1196 are still prevalent in rural India and we must capture those before they die. Thank you.

1197

1198 **Rowena Robinson** I just had a small point to make also about differentiating different kinds of
1199 movements, and possible relationships between religious structures or groups, and civil society and
1200 what is not civil society, that is, perhaps, the State. I was wondering if we could think about
1201 movements and religious organizations or associations that are explicitly political and radical and
1202 want to engage directly with the State, or perhaps even take over some of the functions of the
1203 State. Some religious institutions or groups want to engage with civil society, in the sense that they
1204 don’t see a divide between themselves and civil society. Perhaps the Tablighi is a little bit like
1205 that in that it seeks to spread religious values throughout society and create a way of life. A third
1206 distinction, a third type, would be religious institutions that do see a divide between themselves, or
1207 religion per-se, and civil society or anything outside of religion. They do take upon this attitude
1208 that religion is private, but they also have a transformative role to play in that they change
1209 individual lives, and maybe group lives, and that becomes a slow gradual process of social

1210 transformation. So, I was wondering if, when we think about these different categories, we then
1211 think both about religious ideas and modes of thought and the different social context within which
1212 these different religious ideas concretize themselves in these different modes that I have talked
1213 about. Thank you.

1214

1215 **Anindita Chakrabarti** I have a very small point, because RSS was mentioned and also she
1216 elaborated on some of these distinctions that need to be made. When I interviewed RSS activists
1217 and leaders in Gujarat, this was in Kathiawar, they got very upset when I said it's a religious
1218 movement. They said: "Who told you so? You can be an Atheist and you can still be an RSS, you
1219 can be a Muslim. You have to believe in *Hindutva* and *Hindutva* is not Hinduism." So we should
1220 ask how the movement defines their agenda, what are the kind of charters of reform they have?
1221 So, RSS really doesn't believe that it has a kind of charter to mend things for Hindus, it has a
1222 mission to fix, something which is outside, you know, be it politics, be it Muslims or whatever
1223 they think needs to be fixed. So, I think it requires that kind of an understanding, how they
1224 themselves define, and how others are also defining them.

1225

1226 **Hilal Elver** I wanted to take a little time to talk about this issue a little bit from the Muslim
1227 perspective. It is also important to look at the religious institutions as a diaspora religion, and also
1228 religions in the country. For instance, my country is very secular, and we do not have any kind of
1229 right given to religious institutions to work as a social provider. They can't do education, they
1230 can't do any kind of public work, these all belong to the State. But if you look at the religious
1231 institutions outside of the countries like Turkey, for instance, theirs is a very important institution.
1232 They are very active outside of Turkey and they are openly promoting education and they have
1233 established a kind of networking around the world. In Turkey, this institution is looked very
1234 suspiciously, because they think that this institution has a political interest. They can't work in
1235 Turkey, but they can work outside. The Gülen movement, that's a very problematic part of the
1236 transnational religious institution in that they do very strong social kind of work, in public work,
1237 but at the same time, in their own country, it is illegal. Another thing I totally agree with you is that
1238 religious institutions in Muslim countries are rather reluctant to give more voice to women. That's
1239 very definite. It is not essentialism, it's a true thing. But if you look at the United States, the role
1240 of the mosques are extremely interesting, because the role of the mosques are very positive in

1241 terms of women's rights, and women's empowerment. In a recent book by Yvonne Haddad,
1242 *Muslims of America*, she basically looked at gender issues in the United States. What she found is
1243 that gender identity, Muslim woman identity, in the United States was very much empowered by
1244 the mosques. In no other Muslim country can the mosque play this role. This is a very
1245 important kind of distinction, how diasporic institutions could play a different role outside of their
1246 own countries. Maybe Hinduism has the same thing happen in the United States, in that they have
1247 a different role than in India.

1248

1249 **John Chathanatt** My interest is to give a little theoretical clarity. When we say transformation,
1250 and it's been already pointed out, that means transformation of the individual, the self, and also
1251 transformation of the society. Usually, how does a social movement start or a religious institution
1252 start? Looking at the positive side of it, it is the foundational experience of individuals that creates
1253 a movement. You look at examples like Mother Teresa, who is one person that comes to mind
1254 immediately. There are the foundational experiences of the person, looking at, interacting with,
1255 the society, and this starts the movement. That means instead of looking at the social movement as
1256 the product, first we have to look at the transformation of the individual. This was the strength of
1257 Gandhi. I don't think Gandhi was understood in this regard, he is probably the most misunderstood
1258 person. There has to be a transformation of the self, and when we talk of transformation we have to
1259 look at the transformation at three different levels: The attitudinal transformation, the behavioral
1260 transformation and the cognitional transformation. That means in my understanding, how do I
1261 understand the other? How do I understand myself? For example, when we look at religion, I see
1262 the influence here. Religion answers foundational questions and goes back to the foundations of
1263 reality, which even philosophy cannot answer. For example, why should I love someone? Who am
1264 I? Who is the other in relation to me? All these answers philosophy will not give us. Where do we
1265 go to get the foundational answers to the question such as, why should I be just? Why should I
1266 serve somebody? Why should I redeem somebody? Probably there is the strength of religion
1267 there, which the other sciences need not. So, it is here that the transformative element of the
1268 religion will come and work on the individual; the individual working in the society in interaction,
1269 experiencing this foundational deeper experience, and then they start a movement. Probably that is
1270 the same logic of the actions if we look at the Christian traditions, the religious congregations
1271 starting with the founders so on, you can see examples of that. The same thing we can see with the

1272 Arya Samaj, Vivekananda, and so on. It is somehow an individual having this different
1273 cognitional understanding that changes the attitude, and that changes the behavior, and then that is
1274 translated into the society, and then a movement starts around the person. Usually I think that is the
1275 way the dynamics change. And then, I think this kind of foundational questions need to be looked
1276 at before we look at the religious institutions, and to the transformative element of the institutions.
1277 Something comes before that.

1278

1279 **Lingam Raja:** I am very grateful to our friend from JNU who was able to categorize the religious
1280 movement into five categories. Our friend also stated the Mother Teresa Society and how they are
1281 doing wonderful service. When we look at religious institutions when they do service for society,
1282 they don't have a hidden agenda. Some of them they do, as he rightly pointed out, fundamental
1283 religious people often do. But nowadays religious institutions, like the Puttaparthi Sathya Sai
1284 Baba, talks about only religion. But the service that they do, the social aspect, the economic
1285 aspect, the educational aspect, the health aspect, in all aspects that they do there is dynamism. The
1286 social dynamism comes out of the service motive. It is not on the base of anything in their mind.
1287 The social transformation takes place. For example, the Bajrang Dal, a religious institution based
1288 on Hinduism. They brought women into the fold, the women conduct the *pooja* and all. You'll see
1289 that 99% of the women go to his place. When I talk about Ayyappa religion, they are mostly for
1290 men, but *here* the womenfolk come and take part and there is a great deal of change in society
1291 from that aspect, socially, psychologically, not politically, but in that aspect.

1292

1293 **Richard Falk:** Two very brief and inter-related points, I think we observed in the experience of
1294 the last century or so, a very regressive political atmosphere with regards to human rights. Either if
1295 the State seeks to exclude religion, as was the case in the Soviet Union, or seeks to impose
1296 religion, as is the case of contemporary Iran. In either of those extreme circumstances, one finds
1297 the role of religion to be very suppressive toward the potential creativity of civil society. From that
1298 I derive the understanding that each society, each political community, needs to discover the
1299 creative tension between religion and political order. There needs to be a creative tension that
1300 gives space both to religious pluralism and to political pluralism, and only in that kind of
1301 atmosphere can the transformative role of religion perform constructively.

1302

1303 **Ravi Bhatia:** I just want to point out one aspect of religion, and that is the feeding of the poor,
1304 feeding the hungry people. Most religions in India, whether it is the Christian faith, or Islam, or
1305 Sikhism, or Hindu, they feed and alleviate hunger in the country. To a substantial extent, they feed
1306 not only the poor but anyone who goes there. But generally it is the poor who come, those who
1307 may not have access to regular two meals, they can come. I think this is a very positive role that
1308 religion is playing to alleviate hunger. Thank you.

1309

1310 **Ranjana Mukhopadhyaya:** Just an observation from what I heard when we were talking about
1311 transformation. The agendas are definitely very important, like women's empowerment or feeding
1312 the hungry, but what even becomes more important is the kind of ideology that is being generated,
1313 what the institutions are come out of these kinds of transformative movements, and what the
1314 ideology is when they are feeding the hungry or empowering women. Do they see it as a social
1315 transformation? What is the new thing they are saying? I mean, is there something that is not there
1316 in the civil society? Or are these religious institutions trying to take up what is there in civil society
1317 and make it part of their own agenda? I think what you talked about, these mosques in America
1318 being more into women's empowerment than in the Middle East, that is because being in America
1319 they cannot actually overlook the whole factor about women's empowerment or the liberal society
1320 where they are operating. Of course, now the veil problem has come in, but they have to operate
1321 in and take up those agendas which are there in the civil society and put them in much more
1322 religious terms. I've also seen this in Buddhist institutions, you have this whole *engaged Buddhist*
1323 movements all over Asia, and they take up things like peace movements, war, anti-war, anti-
1324 nuclear, but this is also in the agenda which exists, even if you are religious or non-religious, you
1325 have these basic problems which are facing humanity. So, are they generating a kind of alternative
1326 ideology? Or are they just becoming important because they support the ideology that already
1327 exists in civil society?

1328

1329 The other thing I would like to ask is in terms of the institutions that come. What are the
1330 alternatives? Most of the time if I am creating homes for the children, orphanages, or educational
1331 institutes or universities, they want to go for approval for the UGC, and become a deemed
1332 university, become a part of a bigger university curriculum. When I say university, I mean
1333 recognition, but this comes from the government. So, are they actually generating any form of

1334 alternate institutions, which we can actually say *yes* this is what a faith-based institution is, but is it
1335 very different from the secular institutions that we have? So, these are the two points actually,
1336 when we talk of transformation, faith-based transformation is something that we need to actually
1337 look at.

1338

1339 **J.P.S. Uberoi** Instead of institutions, I am reading here, "movements", that is the point. I want to
1340 say in response to T. Loki Madan, and also to Anindita, that religion has its own definition of
1341 society, and it starts with the definition of a congregation. This concept is being developed in
1342 India, more by Buddhism and Islam, and not so much by Hinduism, that's my reading. But if you
1343 look at the religious reform movements of the last hundred and fifty or two hundred years in India,
1344 every one of these movements, whether it is Hindu or Muslim, they have the word "society" in
1345 their self-understanding. For example, the RSS, *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*, the term *sangh* is
1346 part of their name. And then, of course, the Brahmo Samaj and the Prarthana Samaj, and then in
1347 Sikhism the chief Khalsa Diwan, where *diwan* is also a notion of society in India. This has infected
1348 even the Theosophical Society, it calls itself Theosophical *Society*. I mean why is it such? They
1349 all have this. And of course, in Islam, *ja-ma-'a* is there in all these terms. *Jum'a* is for Friday for
1350 congregation, *jameh* for the mosque where you congregate, and then Tablighi Jamaat, all these,
1351 have this word "society" there. That tells us something, that it's not that they are contributing to
1352 society but they have their own idea of society. Now sometimes this idea is quite ridiculous, any
1353 idea can be made ridiculous, or pathological, depending on the circumstances. But the idea itself is
1354 there in all these movements, and it is to be taken seriously in my opinion. What they do is actually
1355 opposed to tradition. The largest Muslim reformist movement in India is not Tablighi Jamaat, of
1356 course, Anindita knows that, but it is rather in Uttar Pradesh, the Ahl-e-Sunnat Wal Jamaat. *Sunnat*
1357 is tradition, and *jamaat* is society, so they call themselves the society of tradition, and they are
1358 opposing society and tradition. They actually are asking, which one is the real instrument of self-
1359 realization? Is it tradition, which is the orthodox position, or is it the congregation, which is the
1360 reform position? I look upon the Sufi movement like that. In Hinduism, there is a contrast, of
1361 course, between caste and sect. If we look not at church and sect, like European sociology has, but
1362 at caste versus sect, then you can see that caste upholds tradition, not society. It upholds birth, it
1363 upholds what is passed down, it upholds the authority of tradition, and it upholds also hierarchy, of
1364 course, and exclusiveness. But, in the same Hinduism, we have sects, and for all the sects birth is

1365 not important, what is important is *dikṣā*. What is important in this? Re-birth, to be born again. In
1366 America, there are also lots of Christian sects who call themselves born-again Christians. That is
1367 really what is important; *religion is not dependent by birth, but by rebirth*, and for re-birth, you are
1368 not determined by birth, you can have husband and wife with different sects, just like in India
1369 husbands and wives vote for different political parties, brothers and sisters can vote for different
1370 political parties and can have different gurus, and similarly, with two brothers or whatever it is. In
1371 the beginning, these sects promise individual self-realization. That is what you are calling
1372 knowledge and philosophy. There are various stages, and some of the classifications that you
1373 mentioned, actually makes a cycle.

1374

1375 **Acharya Shrivatsa Goswami:** I would just like to echo that the religious institutions, and the
1376 religious groups running different kinds of institutions, and what I mean by that is that religious
1377 institutions are doing business. Education is a big business, health care is a big business, and
1378 different [indistinct], like the ISCKON movement. They are in a huge business and people do not
1379 realize, they think it's a charity, it's not a charity! What they have smartly done, is that the
1380 government of India had a mid-day meal program and the district administration had totally
1381 collapsed in providing that. So they experimented, we take the money of the exchequer and we
1382 provide the service, and get a good cut of it. So this *Akshaya Patra* has become a billion rupees
1383 and more enterprise, and is a profit running organization. So it's a business, although you might
1384 say that it is alleviating hunger and things like that, but it is essentially a business organization. But
1385 religious institutions, like exclusive seminaries, *madrasahs*, temples, *gurdwaras*, if we focus on
1386 them and then see what is the transformational role they are playing in society, then I think that, as
1387 many of us have already said, we have to look at the person which constitutes the society.

1388

1389 **Afternoon Session**

1390

1391 **Hilal Elver:** Good afternoon! We would like to start our afternoon session which will be a short
1392 one. But what we will do is put together two questions: *Do religious institutions play a positive*
1393 *role in supporting humanitarian activities?* The other one is: *How does the changing political*
1394 *climate influence the work of faith-based organizations?* Speakers are free to take any of the two
1395 questions, or two of them together, which might be more effective in organizing our time.

1396

1397 **Rowena Robinson:** I think we can actually take the two questions together. At least I will do so
1398 through the example I want to talk about, which is the provision of welfare and human security in
1399 the aftermath of ethnic violence. This is something that a lot of people have been concerned with
1400 and the issue had been raised in the morning itself. In the aftermath, for instance, of the violence in
1401 Gujarat there was a great deal of interactions between Muslim non-state actors, religious actors,
1402 and the Indian State and non-governmental organizations, in the context of not only protecting
1403 property and lives, but also in increasing the sense of confidence and trust of Muslims in both civil
1404 society as well as in the State. But what we find under such conditions is that, one, there are also
1405 subcultures, for instance, of women or of individuals or groups who do not want to define
1406 themselves in religious terms, within the targeted community, for instance, among Muslims. When
1407 it comes to the question of the protection of their rights or their welfare, you have conflict, both
1408 between them and the community leaders, and those who are engaged in providing this welfare.
1409 You find that this conflict may also include conflict with non-governmental organizations and the
1410 State because the interests actually go against each other. This is affected also in a changing
1411 political climate. It is precisely because of the political climate in Gujarat and other parts of India,
1412 before and after the violence in 2002, that the Muslims had to depend, to a very large extent, on
1413 their own Muslims organizations to provide relief and humanitarian aid. The provision of this aid
1414 from secular, so to speak, organizations within civil society was more limited, and the State
1415 interventions were also far more limited and were not trusted - more importantly, this intervention
1416 was not trusted by members of the Muslim community. So I think that rather than putting the
1417 question in terms of whether Muslim organizations play only a positive role or only a negative
1418 role, we should try to engage the issue like that - we should try to understand that a changing
1419 political climate as well as the fact that we have different sub-groups that are involved under such
1420 conditions. There will always be complicated outcomes of such interventions.

1421

1422 **Katherine Marshall** I have simply two questions. The first question - it's quite striking in reading
1423 about the response to the floods in Pakistan that the narrative in the European and the US press is
1424 that the speed of response of Muslim organizations presents a danger. Of course, it reflects in part
1425 the complete failure of the State, but it is Muslim organizations that are seen as having affiliations
1426 with terrorists, etc. I would love to have a richer sense of what the story is and how far it is

1427 particularly *politically* motivated groups that are responding or if it is a Muslim charity. And, is it
1428 seen as that when you are sitting closer as a more nuanced situation? The second question is
1429 something I don't think we've mentioned very much, but it is the importance and significance of
1430 inter-faith responses, in other words, groups actually working together for common purposes. The
1431 reason I'm asking the question is that in our workshop on Southeast Asia one of the themes that
1432 came out was what was seen as one of the remarkable successes of inter-faith in Aceh following
1433 the tsunami. It's a nuanced story. We're actually trying to write a little case study about it. It's a
1434 nuanced story because it's not necessarily the effectiveness of groups from outside working with
1435 the local religious leaders as much as the very diverse groups who managed somehow to find
1436 common ground, whether it is Muhammadiyah, Salvation army, Catholic Relief Services, etc. -
1437 groups that were very different. Part of it seems to have been that it started in an atmosphere of
1438 crisis, where you had the issue of the orphans and there was the evangelical group that actually
1439 took a group of orphans to raise them as good little Christians, and that raised a storm of protest.
1440 So, my understanding is that the groups came up with a code of conduct that goes beyond some of
1441 the standard United Nations codes of conduct. I would be interested if there is a parallel in South
1442 Asia, whether in Sri Lanka or India, whether the tsunami or other catastrophes like this brought
1443 new kind of groups working new kinds of partnerships.

1444

1445 **Anindita Chakrabarti** Some of the points that I will be talking about will be taking over from
1446 Dr. Robinson's earlier points. One is that when I looked at Tablighi Jamaat in Gujarat, I had found
1447 evidence that it was the local networks that were available through the Tablighi Jamaat that
1448 worked for restraining violence. This is a report I am getting not only from them, but also from
1449 independent journalists such as Aisha Khan who works with the Indian Express and who otherwise
1450 has very little sympathy with these kind of conservative movements. But they said this was the
1451 only network that was available. They went out, they got the young people who would charge to
1452 retaliate, to bring them back into the mosque, and a lot of the narratives are about being in the
1453 masjid asking for *duua*, in all those troubled days. I have seen this in other contexts as well, like in
1454 the earthquake which took place a year ago. The first people who could provide support there were
1455 also the Swaminarayans, which also has a very good network. So, it is the kind of work that is
1456 being done by religion during peacetime that makes it possible for them to reach out first. There
1457 are different kinds of situations at the local level. What is most interesting that emerged from the

1458 Tablighi Jamaat's work, which she has described, and the Gujarat Sarvajanik Relief Committee's
1459 work, which was one of the groups I have been to and was the face of the Tablighi Jamaat network
1460 -which was to provide support, to provide all kinds of things for those who were worst affected -
1461 was how they were hunted out, their office was ransacked, and how those people have suffered
1462 because of doing something for Muslims in that particular context. What was very interesting, was
1463 that in interview after interview they said how they take meticulous care that their project does not
1464 become political. "There are a lot of political things happening, but we take care. We don't go to
1465 Jama Masjid to hold a meeting because Wahhabi politics *ki baat hoti hai*" (*Hindi translates to*
1466 *"they talk about Wahhabi politics"*). So even a local level activist Tablighi Jamaati knows about it,
1467 is aware about it. But their work at the time of the Gujarat riots, the rehabilitation work, overnight
1468 changed them into a political actor. So the point is how the State, how the others are looking at
1469 you defines whether you are political or not. This complexity we should take heed of, and a better
1470 kind of nuanced view will come out, I am sure.

1471

1472 **Rounaq Jahan** I wanted to raise first two questions and then briefly talk a little bit about
1473 Bangladesh. I feel that since it says the whole meeting is focused on South Asia, and I am from
1474 Bangladesh, I have to also give some information. But the two questions first: I. A. Rehman and I,
1475 were in an earlier meeting on Human Rights and there one of the points that was made by an
1476 Indian participant was that after the Gujarat riots somehow the fate of the Muslims were left to this
1477 Islamic group, somehow space was created for them to operate; whereas some of the other non-
1478 religious, but nevertheless Muslim, women were prominent in those organizations, yet somehow
1479 there was not a space for them. The second related question is about these interfaith dialogues that
1480 are going on now all over the world post 9/11. Professor Amartya Sen, in his book on secularism
1481 and violence, makes this point and this is something that many of us also feel - that somehow
1482 suddenly the whole world woke up to these various religious groups and there was now a need for
1483 inter-faith dialogue. This question of who represents the community becomes important. Is it
1484 these religious or Islamic groups that should speak as a Muslim voice? Or should it be other non-
1485 secular organizations, who have been also functioning in civil society and have been very active,
1486 who should speak on their behalf and represent Muslims. I am Muslim and I have been also
1487 operating in civil society. Do I have to belong to some kind of religious group to represent these
1488 interests? I cannot be as eloquent as Professor Sen, but he elaborates this point in his book how

1489 suddenly again legitimacy and space is suddenly given to some groups to represent while others
1490 that have been active are not. So this is quite contested.

1491

1492 Now speaking about my own country, Bangladesh - yes there are positive examples of religious
1493 groups in humanitarian activities, such as some of the larger organizations like Ahsania Mission, in
1494 terms of providing health services or other services. But one interesting point I want to make is
1495 that we have in Bangladesh, for many years, a lot of floods for instance. As soon as floods have
1496 taken place, it is the students from universities, local schools, and colleges, who are mobilized
1497 often by their cultural groups to go and prepare food and to work in flood or disease affected areas.
1498 There are *madrasahs* and other religious organizations, but unlike in other countries where the
1499 religious based organizations, the *madrasahs* or these Islamic organizations have moved forward
1500 first, in Bangladesh they really have not been active. They are organized for certain kinds of
1501 protests, for instance, but they are not in the forefront of these types of humanitarian activities,
1502 community based activities. Taking the second question, how the changing political climate
1503 influenced the work of faith-based organizations, one point I want to make is that traditionally
1504 these organizations that are in the community depend on local sources of funding. They are
1505 relatively small and their base was in the community. But now after they saw the rise of the big
1506 NGOs, international donor agencies and government funding, many of these faith-based
1507 organizations also want to get funding from the government and from international sources. They
1508 are sort of late comers to this. This is one new thing that I have noticed.

1509

1510 **I. A. Rehman** Thank you very much. First of all I would like to make it clear that in Pakistan 90%
1511 of the public charity or philanthropy, or whatever you want to call it, goes to faith-based
1512 institutions, mosques, organizations and parties. Some years ago Aga Khan Press Centre
1513 calculated that this amount comes to about 8 to 10 billion rupees a year. That is a huge amount. It
1514 is being given for two purposes: A. for education and B. for humanitarian work. There is no doubt
1515 that whenever we had a crisis, like the national disaster in 2005 when we had a big earthquake,
1516 these religious based organizations were the first to come to the aid of the stricken community
1517 because class-wise they mixed with the ordinary people more easily than government functionaries
1518 and elite organizations. The government functionaries were waiting for Jeeps to come and take
1519 them to the mountains, whereas these *mullahs* were prepared, they just tuck up their *shalwars* and

1520 climbed the mountains. It so happened that some of the most active organizations were also the
1521 most militant. Again this is happening in the wake of the recent floods. As Professor Marshall
1522 pointed out, there is a great deal of concern, that the same religious-based militant organizations, I
1523 don't have to name them since they are well known all over the world, are stealing amounts of
1524 money from governmental and other non-governmental organizations. I will not concede that the
1525 religious-based organizations are the only parties in the field. A large number of non-government
1526 organizations are also active. Now, it is the policy of the donor countries, in relation to Pakistan,
1527 that every percent of the relief is being channeled through non-government organizations. So there
1528 is a concern not only outside Pakistan, but in Pakistan also, that under this garb of humanitarian
1529 work, in which they do excel compared to the other sections of society, they will strengthen the
1530 militants hold on Pakistan society.

1531

1532 In regards to the second question - the political climate has to be divided into two. One is the
1533 national political climate and the other is the international political climate. When we had a
1534 military dictatorship, whether it was General Zia-ul-Haq or General Musharraf, they had a natural
1535 alliance with feudals and extreme religious militants, because all three are opposed to democracy.
1536 The military, the mullahs, and the feudals, all three are opposed to democracy and they had a
1537 common cause. All three opposed women's education, all three opposed gender equality. That
1538 political climate gave a lot of space to the faith-based organizations. In spite of the efforts made by
1539 many organizations to have interfaith dialogue - and we have had excellent examples of interfaith
1540 dialogue between Muslims and Christians in particular, and they became active and there were the
1541 communal riots in Punjab and – so in spite of their efforts, we had the interesting experience that
1542 the internal political climate of authoritarianism gave a direction to these faith-based organizations,
1543 which is not in the interests of the people. But when these military dictatorships recede, or as they
1544 seem to have receded or are presumed to have receded, in the case of Pakistan, they feel
1545 constrained. The second question is in regards to the international political climate. Ever since
1546 Pakistan moved out of South Asia and aligned itself with the Middle East, we have had an influx
1547 of petrol dollars, so that most of the Muslim village seminaries which have students exceeding six
1548 thousand, eight thousand, are financed by money from outside. And since Pakistan is the
1549 battlefield between the traditional Saudi philosophy and the Iranian philosophy, there is a lot of
1550 money coming in to these seminaries. At the same time, this war against terror and the mistake

1551 made by some politicians to describe it as a “clash of religions” and a “clash of civilizations,” has
1552 also affected the faith-based organizations and made them more militant and less tolerant of other
1553 peoples point of view.

1554

1555 **Acharya Shrivatsa Goswami** I think in the mere existence of religious institutions, the political
1556 process makes a tremendous impact, a *tremendous* impact. For example, any religious sectarian
1557 institution in India, if you read their memorandum, it will say "without regard to caste and creed,
1558 without differentiation of any faith". This is how every single institution document begins. So it is
1559 a political necessity because the political process then determines the tax process. The obligations
1560 of income tax, and other things makes them declare something which they may not even believe.
1561 But they have to do that, that is the farcical thing.

1562

1563 I am very happy that Marshall is here and my journey with the WFDD started in 95 in Awashima
1564 Island with a couple of meetings in Lambeth Palace and sitting with Jim in his penthouse in
1565 Washington DC. That ended around 2000 or so and then Marshall joined. An interesting thing: in
1566 the last meeting when WFDD (World Faiths Development Dialogue) was being formalized, 16
1567 countries were identified whose usage of the money funded by the World Bank was very low. So
1568 how to raise that, how to improve? Sixteen countries were identified, and I did not follow it up, but
1569 I hope what happened was that when these funds were monitored by some religious NGOs, faith-
1570 based organizations, it shot up. Marshall will say more about that, I cannot say much more about
1571 that.

1572

1573 But locally I have a small story to share, which comes from the Western part of Orissa, which is
1574 probably the richest part, but only in minerals. I myself could purchase one girl and a boy for just
1575 70 rupees. 70 rupees! In 2005. That is the kind of poverty I am talking about. There, one religious
1576 leader went to inaugurate a temple. When he saw the situation, he could not come back. He just
1577 stayed on. He saw the people and their lifestyle. The men are drunk or gambling and they are
1578 having a nice time. The women are working and are underpaid, obviously. When they bring the
1579 money, the men snatch the money, and gamble, eat and drink. And what do they feed? *Isko kahate*
1580 *hai, maar khaa, bacho ko maar khao* - they beat the kids, a completely catastrophic situation. So
1581 he stayed on and he started gathering people around his *kirtan* and his chanting and his prayers and

1582 preaching and all, and he started initiating them. When they took initiation from this charismatic
1583 man, they said, “What do we have to do”? He said, now I have engaged you with Narsinghnath,
1584 which is the presiding deity of the Western Orissa, like Jagganath in the Eastern part. What do we
1585 have to do? He said, “Whatever you do, share it with your deity”. So they came back to him and
1586 said, “Shall we drink”? He said, “If your Lord drinks, you drink.” “Shall we gamble”? “If he
1587 gambles, you gamble” and so on and so forth. His *guru dakshina* was, whatever you earn with
1588 your own hands and whatever you grow in your own land, I will accept only that. And with that
1589 process, in fifteen years, nearly ten thousand families are now economically, socially, and
1590 emotionally on a very raised platform. What a role religion can play! But this man has singularly
1591 taken care not to let even God know about this work. And that is probably one of the successes of
1592 this whole enterprise.

1593

1594 On the other question, how politics can determine the role of religious institutions, a glaring
1595 example is the Ramakrishna Mission. My old mentor and elder friend, Swami Ranganathan,
1596 finally petitioned in the Calcutta high court asking that we are not Hindu and that we should be
1597 granted a non-Hindu status, legally. His petition was rejected.

1598

1599 **Ranjana Mukhopadhyaya:** I think minority status...

1600

1601 **Acharya Shrivatsa Goswami:** Sorry, minority status, yes. He told them, “We are not Hindus, we
1602 are a minority. We are Ramakrishnites, we are not part of the majority Hindu group.” The court
1603 rejected it. He moved to the Supreme Court and jokingly the bench said, “If we declare you non-
1604 Hindu, then your founder Vivekananda will turn in his grave!” So you see the necessity - because
1605 of the political-economical climate and the rules of the game, even the followers of Vivekananda,
1606 who became like the flag bearers of Hindu whatever, his followers are consciously making an
1607 effort. He again made a revised petition in the Supreme Court, which was again defeated. They
1608 were so helpless that they could not get the minority status. They thought that if you are on the
1609 minority side you can get benefits and so on and so forth. And if my friend Gurinder Singh Maan
1610 is correct in his research and his studies, which he does very thoroughly, then even Guru Nanak
1611 said, “If my people are *ahli kitab*, if they are followers of the book, they will be exempted from the
1612 tax. So let me start a movement, a religion, a faith, which is centered around a book.” He has very

1613 solid arguments and that is how the sect tradition came about. It was an economic-political
1614 situation, which prompted Guru Nanak. I am not denying his spiritual and other dimensions, but
1615 that is how it happened. Mixing the two, I believe that it is all due to the religious leadership. It
1616 was the leadership of the Ramakrishna mission. It was not the common members of the
1617 Ramakrishna Mission who wanted that, rather, they were all laughing at their leader. So that is
1618 one side. Again, if you see what Marshall was saying that the WFDD is now a little bit different,
1619 why? Because of the leadership. We had our bishop, we had Jim, and it was a different flavor
1620 altogether. Now the leadership is changing, the institutions are the same, but the leadership is
1621 different, so the activity is different. It was in Vrindavan, which in fact was a gift of Chaitanya
1622 Mahaprabhu in 1515 when, without the colonial meanings, Chaitanya did his Colombian act of re-
1623 identifying that little arid piece of land to be Vrindavan. But Vrindavan did not come about until
1624 there was a dialogue with the political powers that be. So in 1598 the Goswami's had to wait for
1625 Vrindavan to come in to existence. But when that dalliance and that dialogue, of which I am
1626 talking about, became successful, became fruitful, it was a powerful dialogue because both sides
1627 people were powerful people, people hungry for power, whether it was religious power or political
1628 power; Akbar for political power and the Goswami's for religious power. When this happened,
1629 then you see that this whole area between Delhi and Agra becomes a hub for development. Not
1630 just economic development, but development of art, architecture, paintings, music, dance, you
1631 name it. And that is what a total development is all about. Thank you very much.

1632

1633 **Pralay Kanungo** I will have a slightly different take. My name is Pralay Kanungo, and I teach at
1634 JNU. I have done some work on the RSS, and my interest is also in religion, conflict,
1635 communalism and so on. When we talk of the religious institutions, we in a way admit that there
1636 is a sectarian angle to the whole question. Because when we are talking of humanitarian activities
1637 taken up by the religious institutions, I think they are becoming increasingly sectarian as well as
1638 political. I don't think that after the Gujarat riots, Swaminarayan did something which would be
1639 called religious. They didn't really come out in the beginning. They didn't really open up the
1640 doors for the refugees. They had a huge network and there is debate about how much they could
1641 do. So they played a very different role. Like the Gandhi Ashram, which shut its doors to the
1642 helpless Muslims after the Gujarat riots, Swaminarayan really did not come forward with the kind
1643 of presence they have in Gujarat. I have seen also, very surprisingly, after the Kandhamal riots

1644 that different religious sects also behaved in a similar fashion. In fact, the Church also distributed
1645 relief material according to denominations. This is one of the things I also encountered. Whether
1646 Hindu or Muslim or Christian, cutting across religions you find the priority to be a kind of
1647 sectarian humanitarianism; it is not actual humanitarianism in the concept we usually understand
1648 associated with religion. The second part is, and Shrivatsaji said it very clearly, there is a kind of
1649 alliance with state power and these Goswami's. So, it is all brought out. It has always been there,
1650 a connection, a linkage, between the state power and the religious leaders, but increasingly it is
1651 taking a very devious turn. I think it is no longer confined to the tax concession, it is much more.
1652 It is to get land for the university, it is to get land for the huge Ashram, 500 crore acres of land in
1653 Delhi. So, there are a lot of stakes involved. Who is using whom, in fact? Earlier perhaps the
1654 political leaders thought that they were using religious sects, going there, praying, *namaste* and so
1655 on, so that they could garner votes. But today, the situation has been reversed. All these religious
1656 sect leaders know very well that they have a strong presence, that the state power has to negotiate
1657 with them and that there is a much larger stake involved.

1658

1659 In my idea of religion, of being a Hindu, I understand that there is the concept of *nishkam seva*.
1660 But the *seva* is no more a *seva*, and *seva* has nothing to do with the *nishkam*. *Nishkam* means
1661 selfless. So when there is a drought or famine or flood or earthquake you immediately jump in,
1662 you don't really see who is the victim. I think no religion in India today, barring a few like the
1663 Ramakrishna Mission, are doing this; I have seen, surprisingly, very small sects and very localized
1664 sects, who do not have a huge presence - *they* who are showing a non-sectarian approach. For
1665 instance, after the super cyclone in Orissa, it was the *Ananda Margis*, a group who are always seen
1666 as kind of deviant, or in the periphery, who came out very openly and actually did all the
1667 cremations activities. No religious leaders or others came out, they were scared because how
1668 would they touch the dead bodies? The *Ananda Margis* actually proved to be a different kind of
1669 sect, whether you call it religious, or some kind of cult or whatever, but they came out. I think that
1670 in this climate there is a collapse of the religious and the public, political or state sphere; you find
1671 that increasingly, particularly in the Indian context, this is happening. I am not talking about other
1672 institutions who are using *seva*, like you have one organization called Seva International, who has
1673 raised three million GBP. This money is being used for communal activities and other things in
1674 India and other places. So forget those organizations, they are not religious organizations, or faith

1675 -based organizations. But, in all these faith-based organizations, I see that they have a clear cut
1676 political motive or some other kind of motive. For example, you can take Asaram Bapu, it's a kind
1677 of huge industry; they want land for the industry. Every big religious sect now wants to set up an
1678 Ayurvedic hospital, or an Ayurvedic industry, which has so much market both in India and
1679 abroad. So, increasingly, these humanitarian activities are getting collapsed with this political
1680 sphere. Thank you.

1681

1682 **Manindra Thakur** I think I would mostly agree with what Pralay has just said. I would like to,
1683 however, take up this argument from Professor Uberoi, about the cycle. It seems that it is not
1684 either humanitarian work or political work, but rather a cycle of these interconnected things. I'm
1685 trying to think, what does it mean when we talk about the *positive* role of religion? One can also
1686 take this idea of a *positive* role in terms of a social transformation, which would be quite radical.
1687 What is the political climate? Is the climate of globalization and international capital entering into
1688 the Indian area and trying to control different resources? Are these religious organizations playing
1689 any role in the favor of the people as far as losing out on the natural resources? I think they are
1690 not. They may be cyclically emerging as organizations, which will play a very important role
1691 politically. I can see in the 19th century when religious organizations emerged to bring religious
1692 reform movements, which finally led to political movements. So, maybe this kind of thing will be
1693 exposed and we will have the whole history of Liberation Theology, but these kind of things have
1694 happened. The tax element, I think is something interesting to be seen. There are works in
1695 Haridwar which suggests that during the period of globalization huge funds have been transferred
1696 from Delhi to Haridwar. These have almost become five star hotels now. Or Ramdev having
1697 particular sums of money, I don't know from where it is coming, or Ravi Shankar is having a lot of
1698 money, I don't know from where it is coming. All of them are also working in the Naxal belt, the
1699 Naxal areas. Probably the state is allowing them to enter there, perhaps the state has no problem
1700 with them. Somewhere there is some problem which I am unable to figure out at the moment, but
1701 there is a relation between political economy, these organizations, the contemporary state and the
1702 global capital. That interconnection has to be worked out.

1703

1704 **Manoranjan Mohanty** I think the political economy of religion came pretty late in the discussion
1705 today, even though we raised some very basic issues right in the beginning. In the universities, we

1706 had paid so much attention to political economy of religion, particularly those Marxists who had
1707 this dismissive view of religion. They then put religion in the political economy of feudalism, and
1708 then in capitalism as part of the legitimization process. They did not take religion both as a part of
1709 the base and super-structure, and as something beyond the base/super-structure dichotomy. In the
1710 90's and 2000's, we are finally beginning to see a balancing of the study of religion.

1711

1712 My first point is that, once again, lets not go to one extreme or the other. In other words, *look* at
1713 the linkage between state, capital and religion - organized religion, as well as religion as a
1714 phenomenon, as a social process, as a symbolic system, and why they are amenable to
1715 manipulation by state and capital. Look at this Ramdev phenomenon we had in the 70s and 80s,
1716 this Satya Sai Baba phenomenon. Ramdev has gone in one direction, taking yoga in a big way.
1717 The Art of Living is a truly global intervention in the art of living, turning it into almost a science
1718 of living. Now they have a big outlet in California and in Europe and so on. In other words, when
1719 there is a socio-political and, I would say, spiritual crisis of humanity, I think some of the response
1720 to this crisis is directed to this global capital formation like religious trends. "Capital formation-
1721 like religious trends" - I think the Art Of Living, Ramdev, and these are of that kind. But again,
1722 there is a danger of looking at it only as a form of capital, with power, with manipulation, with
1723 huge resources, with the ability to mobilize resources to such an extent that they can defeat any
1724 challenger. And they did, like Ramdev, who was accused by a communist group in India of using
1725 bones in their Ayurvedic medicine. The CPM, the most powerful Parliamentary group among the
1726 communists, lost out. Finally, Ramdev won the battle in the media, as well as in the public
1727 consciousness, and those who had accused Ramdev had to bite the dust. Now this is one
1728 phenomenon.

1729

1730 But I accuse those friends of mine and myself, to a very large extent, of ignoring the symbolic
1731 power that religion has and its social basis, the social basis of that symbolic power. This
1732 discussion is trying to make up for that, but in trying to make up for that, lets not go from one
1733 extreme to another. We are so much in to the symbolic construction of religion, and the political
1734 imagination represented in religion, that we forget the political economy. Or, we are so
1735 preoccupied with the political economy of religion that we forget the political imagination of
1736 religion and its positive and negative dimensions.

1737

1738 **Raja Lingam** It's quite interesting to know that we should have a difference of opinion, nothing
1739 wrong in it. The reception is always the difference. Acharya Vinoba Bhave once said that, just to
1740 take us back to the history of this, the era science and technology started, the era of politics and
1741 religion would wither away. Sri Acharya Vinoba Bhave, many of you know him well, he did not
1742 belong to any political party, rather, he belonged to religious institutions. He was a common man
1743 and he was fighting for rights. He was a person who walked around to collect lands for the landless
1744 people. There is the history of how land was still not distributed to the landless people,
1745 particularly the *harijan* and *dalit* community and all, but that is another history. But with regards to
1746 the religious institutions, they do have hidden agenda now in order to exist, because the
1747 competition is going on. Just as multinational companies have competition, so too religious
1748 institutions also have competition. In terms of money, in terms of people, in terms of activity, they
1749 have to show the world that, "Yes! I have this many people, I have covered this many people, I
1750 have a community with this much money." So the dynamism that is growing and ever growing is
1751 there, you and me, we, cannot stop it. That fire has already started. But at the same time, how
1752 should we look at this in terms of the issues? When there is an issue, a crisis, how are these
1753 institutions reacting to that? That is more important. Can you stop Ravi Shankar, when there are
1754 political people that approach him, will he say no? He will never say no! He cannot survive if he
1755 says no. That is the condition which they have in order *to* survive. In order to increase and spread
1756 their wings, they need to have political affinity or affiliations, and conversely the politicians need
1757 to have the religious institutions help. That is ok, that is understood, we cannot avoid it and we
1758 cannot stop it. But how these religious institutions are taking part when there is a crisis, that is
1759 more important. As long as science and spirituality takes care of it, the politics and religions will
1760 go on, dominate, and try to establish their own roots.

1761

1762 **Anindita Chakrabarti:** I would just like to add that a dialogue such as this should let us look into
1763 our own hearts. When a disaster, something which is so terrifying as the Gujarat riots of 2002
1764 happened, instead of saying that the religious groups didn't do much, Swaminarayan and all that, it
1765 is also the secular civil society organizations that did not do much, which could not reach out. It is
1766 not a blame game, but I would like to emphasize that at that time Tablighi Jamaat did not want to
1767 take up the space. It was something that was imposed, that was thrown up, they had to rise to the

1768 occasion, and use the local level networks that I have talked about earlier. It was so difficult for a
1769 researcher, for me, to write about them, because everybody you write about you make vulnerable.
1770 You have to use pseudonyms. I know people whose sons are still in prison. How the people have
1771 suffered! We should think through whether its politics of space and who is not giving each other
1772 space and who could reach out at that point of time. It is according to denomination, but
1773 somebody had gone there risking their own lives. I think we should be more humble.

1774

1775 **Manoranjan Mohanty** I think it would be fair to recognize the work that civil liberty groups did
1776 in Gujarat. I think India can still raise its head high, both within its own society and globally.
1777 Despite the massacres in Gujarat, there is still faith in India's intercommunity coexistence, India's
1778 secularism, and that a democratic civil society *can* work in India. There is faith that the
1779 perpetrators of the Gujarat massacre are still subjected to the judicial process, and some cases have
1780 been reopened and so on. I think the elaborate documentation based on field visits, several of us
1781 were in that area in the few days...

1782

1783 **Anindita Chakrabarti:** No, no I completely agree. I was just talking about that moment of
1784 tension...

1785

1786 **Manoranjan Mohanty:** What I am saying is that I think Indian civil society *did* respond, I think
1787 you have to add that. Nobody arrived there to save the situation immediately, you are right.
1788 People took some days to reach there. There were still curfews when we arrived there. I think
1789 Gujarat was one case, as well as Punjab or the Delhi riots, I think certain Indian civil society
1790 groups, who were singularly responsible to start a process of re-building the trust. Sometimes the
1791 judiciary had intervened, sometimes not. Even today in Kashmir, I think there are voices all over
1792 the country who have a whole spectrum of voices, but that it is not an exclusivist voice on either
1793 side. So I think the Indian civil society, democratic dialogues, despite many extremist forces in
1794 operation on all sides, have created a space of intervention, which has had some *healing effects* to
1795 use your term.

1796

1797 **Ravi Bhatia:** Some of the people here have been decrying the role of religious institutions in terms
1798 of acquiring huge amounts of land, in acquiring other resources, in being able to save money by

1799 saving on income taxes, etc. I am not denying that; it is being done by several religious
1800 institutions. But I would like to ask a question: As an ordinary citizen, whom does one approach?
1801 There is the state with its various institutions, the judiciary, the executive, etc....

1802

1803 **[recording cuts off]**

1804

1805 **Ranjana Mukhopadhyaya:** There's a lot of talk here about the Gujarat incident, which is-was-
1806 very important. It was quite a shaking event for an independent and progressive country like India.
1807 But I think we should take our interfaith traditions seriously. That is something that merits
1808 academic consideration and also consideration from civil society in general. I will just give you a
1809 small incident: It was in the end of June and we were in Ladakh. We had a Buddhist-Muslim
1810 dialogue, which was very interesting because we usually only talk about Hindu-Muslims, Hindu-
1811 Christians, Hindu-whatever, so here we wanted to take up two different communities. We did it in
1812 a place like Ladakh, which traditionally has this interaction between Buddhist and Muslim
1813 communities to the extent that, until the 1980's you wouldn't even find typically Muslim names
1814 among most Ladhakis. They would have names like Namgyal or Dorje, which are also Buddhist
1815 names. Both sides would take up names which were quite similar, you couldn't actually identify
1816 whether they were Muslims or Buddhists. Since the 80's, some of them have started taking typical
1817 Muslim names. What was interesting is why this interfaith happened, how it actually drew
1818 attention to those issues today. Just a month after the dialogue, there was this huge natural calamity
1819 in Ladakh. There was this cloudburst, and Ladakh, environmentally, is one of the worst places to
1820 live in the world. It is a high mountainous range and desert that never had rain, but because of
1821 climate change, now it is having showers. These showers become floods and they have mudslides
1822 and the people are not accustomed to it. What is important here is that because we had this
1823 conference just a month before – and I am not saying we were the only reason - but a large amount
1824 of relief material actually went through a lot of these Muslim groups, some who were from outside
1825 India, and who typically would not have cared much for Ladakh had this kind of interfaith activity
1826 not taken place at that time.

1827 Also this whole question of political economy that you drew up - we must also see how most of
1828 these groups are not only operating within India, they are also operating globally. So we should
1829 look at how the major operators are getting linked with the global economy. Most of these groups

1830 are all transnational, like the Swaminarayans - they are *all* transnational. They are successful
1831 business people outside India, which makes them very strong within India. These links with the
1832 global economy and with global faith-based organizations is something we should look at, which
1833 comes very much to the fore during these moments of humanitarian aid.

1834

1835 **Richard Falk:** I wanted to make a point that I think follows, and is complimentary to, Professor
1836 Mohanty's emphasis on political economy. That is the relevance of the ideological dimension of
1837 the political climate. It seems to me that when faith-based organizations were used as instruments
1838 of geo-politics, during the latter stages of the Cold War, it was in an atmosphere in which any
1839 social force that was viewed as anti-Marxist or anti-Communist was seen as a benevolent recipient
1840 of Western aid. It also led to an atmosphere, I think, where the huge financing of *madrasahs* in the
1841 region by *salafti* and *wahhabi* elements of Islam, particularly based in Saudi Arabia, were viewed
1842 with a kind of favor because of the sense that anti-Communism was more important than anything
1843 else. This played into the way in which the deterioration of Afghanistan into a horrible civil war
1844 took place. I mean, the use of the Mujahideen as resistance forces against the Soviet presence
1845 there, the legacy of that kind of ideologically driven use of religion as a political force, seems to
1846 me, to have greatly strengthened extremist elements in religion throughout the region. Less in
1847 India, because it's a much more resilient and stronger society, but in countries like Malaysia, to
1848 some extent I think Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan this seems to be the case. That whole
1849 freedom given to the Saudi role in the region, which I think would not be given today, is a new
1850 atmosphere. I think it is an important part of the political climate that's often overlooked.

1851

1852 **J.P.S. Uberoi** Well, it's not actually covered by these two questions, so it is probably out of order,
1853 but I think we should not forget the role of everyday life. There is a political economy of everyday
1854 life. I would like to see religious institutions challenged, not only to provide help when it is
1855 required in that kind of humanitarian thing but, for instance, why can't religious institutions
1856 participate more in development by making investments? We haven't had an audit in Tirupati
1857 Temple for a long time, maybe for a thousand or two thousand years, whatever it is. Isn't it a
1858 shame that in a country which is so poor, there is a whole treasure which is not in the economy.
1859 According to our estimate, Tirupati Temple could buy and sell the government of India, and they
1860 could buy and sell Microsoft as well. Well, why don't they? As far as the Sikh *gurudwaras* that I

1861 see, as a member of my community, they have a lot of smuggled gold and I think it is a disgrace
1862 that gold sells in India at a higher price than it does in the United States or in Sweden. Why does
1863 India have an insatiable demand for bullion selling at a price and at a quality...I mean you can't
1864 sell 22 carat gold in the United States and here you can! If we have time we can also discuss
1865 questions of Islamic banking and what is an Islamic economy. This is the kind of thing that they
1866 have been talking about. Why is banking not part of civil society? What is the problem? Is there
1867 some problem with Islam? We can come back to that after tea, because I don't think it's really
1868 covered by what you imagine humanitarian activities to be in a crisis. But I think, *where* people
1869 invest their money, and *where* these institutions invest their money is important. Or is it that they
1870 are guardians of something, which is not wealth at all but treasure? It is withdrawn from the
1871 economy and deposited in some manner that we don't know anything about. We cannot compare
1872 mosques and other things, but the Aga Khan Development Network, which was mentioned earlier,
1873 they do actually invest their money. But the majority of Muslims, the Sunni and the Shia, they do
1874 not. It is time that they were asked, what is wrong with it? If you are the leaders of this country, if
1875 you really are the true representatives, then why don't you take more responsibility for the
1876 economy?

1877

1878 **Hilal Elver** I just want to remind you about this recent economic crisis in Europe - Greece was
1879 responsible and the Greek Orthodox Church very much played an important role. Their wealth and
1880 their mismanagement, together with the American investment banking, played a very important
1881 role.

1882

1883 **Manindra Thakur** One line of clarification: I think I have a problem thinking of a religious
1884 community as a faith-based community only. So, I come back to my first point, that I would like to
1885 exist as Hindu and as an epistemic community. I have a problem with institutions and
1886 organizations, because maybe one can talk of this larger theory of organizations and institutions -
1887 what do they do in society and how it develops its own interests, and then it goes against the
1888 interests of the people at large - so, therefore when I say that there's a problem with the political
1889 economy, I am not undermining the importance of religion. I think that's extremely important, and
1890 religion in everyday life is extremely important. But I have serious problems with religious
1891 organizations, of all kinds, including the church.

1892

1893 **Fourth Session**

1894

1895 **Katherine Marshall:** Ok, we are in the final session now and I have been asked to "pinch hit", as
1896 we say in the United States, in trying to moderate the session. **The topic is, how is the work of**
1897 **faith based organizations influencing the political climate?** But I think, as is traditional and
1898 wise in all sessions, a hope for a final round of discussions is to think a bit about what comes next,
1899 what are the unanswered questions, what are the research topics, what are the action proposals and
1900 who can and should do something about them? It is in a sense trying to flip the question of the
1901 previous discussion about politics and religion and turning it the other way. In other words, what
1902 influence, what influence could, what influence should, at the various institutions of thinking that
1903 are associated with religion, do they have on politics?

1904

1905 **Mark Juergensmeyer** What they can and should *and shouldn't* do, because we could argue that
1906 religion is already way too political than it should or need be. And this last session is also an
1907 opportunity for us to think about what we didn't talk about. That is, what issues we may have
1908 missed, how we may have not fully conceived the topic in a way that is useful. Actually the
1909 discussion of political economy was very useful in the last session. I am looking forward to the
1910 conversation.

1911

1912 **Manoranjan Mohanty** I have a feeling that in the sub-continent, the Sufi and other syncretic
1913 traditions are quite strong, at the grass-roots level as well, in practice, in day to day life. But
1914 somehow their visibility at the regional and even state or national level is very limited. Do you
1915 notice this throughout the South Asian sub-continent? If so, why?

1916

1917 **I. A. Rehman** Thank you Professor. I may be wrong, but in my review the communalization of
1918 politics in South Asia has played havoc with us. We have been basing political issues on religion,
1919 or belief, or perception of religion, for the last seventy years, and we are still in the communalized
1920 politics frame of work. As I mentioned to you, Pakistanis do not look on the Indians as Indian
1921 citizens of a neighboring country, they look upon the Indians as Hindus, whom they have had long
1922 fights with throughout the 1920's, 30's and 40's. Similarly, since we have a strong anti-West

1923 feeling in Pakistan, the Christian minorities are always considered to be Western agents. So, the
1924 whole concept of the togetherness, and the syncretic tradition, which used to be the hallmark of the
1925 sub-continent in the 16th, 17th, and the beginning of the 18th centuries, was destroyed by the
1926 communalization of politics. I am afraid the colonial power also played a definite role in this. The
1927 affect of this is, at the moment, that syncretic initiatives are not drawing as much attention as
1928 before. In Pakistan, an attempt was made for the last eighteen months or so, to bring the two
1929 Punjabs together, I will give you a concrete example. A large number of people from Indian-
1930 Punjab visited the Pakistani-Punjab, and a large number of people from Pakistani-Punjab visited
1931 Indian-Punjab. Then there were exchanges of writers, there were exchanges of singers, poets,
1932 artists, theatre companies, and of course, Sufis and *bhaktis*. But then, it so frightened the
1933 government, that they put a stop to it. The governments moved in very very ruthlessly, and
1934 movements of people across the borders, became more and more difficult. I find that today, India
1935 and Pakistan have more restrictions on visas than they had two or three years ago. This is due to
1936 the problem that, in my opinion, both governments are afraid of their own people. They do not
1937 want to give them the opportunities of discovering what they had many, many years ago. Sardar
1938 Swaran Singh, at one time external affairs minister of India in the difficult sixties and fifties,
1939 visited Pakistan in 1989 and he asked me, "What do you think of the younger generation? What do
1940 you think of Persian-Indians?" I was much younger in those days and I said, "You know, *sardar*
1941 *sahib* these young people have no memory of bitterness, these young people have no anger from
1942 what happened in 47, or 46!" But the old *sardar* said, "But then, my dear, they do not even have
1943 any memories of living together." So, it is this lack of opportunities. We feel, that instead of going
1944 back to that syncretic age, because no age can revive what was happening in a previous age, our
1945 best hope lies in allowing the students from South Asia to study together, allowing the youth to
1946 have more exchanges, allowing particularly women more exchanges, because they are going to be
1947 the harbingers of progress in the future. On this point world governments seem to agree, that
1948 women should not be allowed their quota in life. So, I think instead of looking backwards, as to
1949 what kind of traditions we have, we may try to look forward as to what the modern world can offer
1950 us.

1951 **Mark Juergensmeyer** I'd like to put a question on the table, it's not directly towards the issue of
1952 faith-based organizations in politics, but it is in the larger issue of the role of what we think of as
1953 *religion* is in what we think of as *society*. In his opening remarks, Professor Uberoi raised the

1954 problem that we think we know what religion is and we think we know what society is, and I am
1955 not all that convinced that we do. In fact, I think the kind of sense of certainty that there is such a
1956 thing as a secular society which by its very definition creates the illusion that there is a whole
1957 separate world of religion, is indeed part of the problem. Because a notion of secularism, or
1958 aggressive secularism as some people in the room have described it, can then create its opposite. I
1959 don't think that it's coincidence that the phenomenon of fundamentalist religion, of a virulent
1960 strident, politicized, religion is a relatively new thing, a creation of post-modernity that didn't exist
1961 in an earlier period of time, and certainly didn't exist in most parts of the world where people
1962 didn't bother to think about whether they were doing things because they were religious, or
1963 because they were secular - they simply did them. There was a moral, cultural, and spiritual
1964 stratum of society and that was fine, and some people took it more seriously than others, but that
1965 was also fine. It provided a certain kind of intellectual, ideological, and cultural, support to the
1966 institutions of society, but there was no sense that these institutions had to be purged of those
1967 elements. That's all, really, a fairly recent phenomenon. I am sorry to say it's primarily a European
1968 and American phenomena since the Enlightenment of wanting to somehow, understandably, be
1969 free of the control and excesses of religious authority, particularly, during the time of the wars on
1970 religion and after in Europe. But I think as a result, it's created something of a monster. But how
1971 can we go back? Is there a possibility of imagining a kind of secularism that is not so secular, that
1972 would be hospitable to a religion that is not quite so religious, not quite so virulently, stridently,
1973 polarizing in the way in which these two opposite entities have become at this particular moment
1974 in history? Or is it too late to put the genie back in the bottle? Is secularism now so fixed in our
1975 imagination that the only kind of religion we can imagine is something that's alien from secular,
1976 that has no role in public life, that has no role to play other than to be content with no religious
1977 activities being separate from the public sphere. Obviously many people who regard themselves as
1978 religious are not content with this. Are we stuck, or is there a way out?

1979

1980 **Rounaq Jahan** In all the South Asian countries, whether one calls oneself secular as India, or as
1981 in Bangladesh, where we started by saying that we are secular and then we removed it from the
1982 constitution, in terms of State policies, it is not really secular in the very strict sense of what France
1983 or other Western definitions - that State will have nothing to do with religion, that there would not
1984 be any support from the State for religious institutions. In South Asia, secular was really more or

1985 less understood as tolerance of all religions, that all religions would have space in any State
1986 function. For instance, in Bangladesh, we'll have these citations from all major religions. It is
1987 South Asian tradition, in terms of secular not meaning that very strict separation between the so-
1988 called State and Church; all along the State policies has been that you tolerate and you support
1989 everybody in India. I think, even a recent contestations is about whether the State will support even
1990 Hajj! I was coming from Bangladesh, where we don't support Hajj; the State facilitates travel but
1991 I always understood only the rich are supposed to go for Hajj, and the State doesn't have to do that.
1992 I think that how we understand secular is that you would not use religion to fan strife, riots,
1993 conflicts, hatred, and war between one religion or another. I think this is really what the State
1994 policies, and popular perception, is. I think very few South Asians, or at least the State policies
1995 certainly have not been in that way of thinking of secular as completely divorcing State from
1996 Church. So, to that extent, I think the very definition of the way this has been looked at, as
1997 tolerance, plurality, accommodation, will be very much in tune with a democratic society, with
1998 various kinds of religious groups. You tolerate everybody, give equal voice, you do not stifle
1999 anybody or kill somebody and I think that's the way everybody looks at it. The State policies here,
2000 as I said, have certainly not been in the way that Turkish policies have been, which has taken
2001 secularism much more seriously, and controlling, and not giving any support to religious-based
2002 institutions. This has not been the policy in any of the South Asian countries as far as I know.

2003

2004 **I. A. Rehman** We had the great Islamic scholar and poet, Muhammad Iqbal, and he said, "Islam,
2005 in its highest form, is secular." Before independence in India, all the great Islamic scholars were
2006 nationalists, like Abu'l Kalam, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Hasrat Mohani, Mehmud Hasan - nobody can
2007 doubt that they were scholars of the highest order. In fact, this Muslim separatist movement had no
2008 religious scholars to back it, even Maududi, who is now considered as author of all kinds of
2009 secessionist movements, did not support it - he was a nationalist. They all opposed the movements
2010 of Pakistan. The point is that we had in that kind of culture - Motilal Nehru, father of Jawaharlal
2011 Nehru, could declare at a public meeting that "I am a Kashmiri *pandit*, a Hindu, but a Kachari
2012 Muslim." So the point is that we have a tendency to counterpose secularism with all religions.
2013 We can have a religious experience and we can all be secular in politics. And that is what the
2014 problem with Muslims has been. If you study Allama Iqbal's *madrrasah* lectures, *Reconstruction of*
2015 *Religious thought in Islam*, it says that so long as a religious thought remains moribund, and it's

2016 not adjusted to the religions of the world, it will create divisions. But if you reconstruct it,
2017 reinterpret it, or can have a reformation in religion, then you can move forward.

2018

2019 **Katherine Marshall** I think we have a very interesting juxtaposition here, because we have
2020 Mark's comment which I think is a deep worry in much of the world, that the ideals of separation
2021 of Church and State have created a whole new set of problems. What you two are saying is at least
2022 at the level of ideal, there is something that "everyone agrees," in other words, it is widely
2023 accepted.

2024

2025 **Rounaq Jahan** Yes, it is not everyone. But, very few are in *that way* secular, as in *completely*
2026 divorced...maybe Jawaharlal Nehru was.

2027

2028 **Katherine Marshall:** I think it partly comes to the question of the difference between the ideal
2029 and the actual. In other words, the ideal has never shifted to post-modern concepts of secularism. I
2030 think that's a very interesting re-statement or reflection on the problem, if I've understood it
2031 correctly.

2032

2033 **Mark Juergensmeyer** But it is partly also the nature of South Asian secularism, which is quite
2034 different from European secularism. It has been supportive of religion and treats all religious
2035 traditions equally. Yet there's the image of Western culture as being anti-religious, that is, that
2036 there is an image of strident, aggressive, atheist secularism and that it is a threat. And it is usually
2037 presented in Western clothes in part, I suppose, because of the videos and the internet, and the
2038 cultural presentation of western society that appears at least to some people to be anti-religious.
2039 Maybe there then becomes a need to have a strident religiosity to protect or defend or re-shape.
2040 How else do you explain the kind of politicized religion within the South Asian context, if there is
2041 a form of religious-appreciating secularism that presumably would have no need for strong
2042 religious expressions to counteract it?

2043

2044 **Katherine Marshall** There is a difference between the way religion is discussed and perceived in
2045 the United States and Europe and here, at least to a degree. One of the problems is a grotesque
2046 ignorance about religion, that people are so unaware of other traditions. Where as here, as people

2047 say, it's in the curry, it's in the daily life. I don't think that necessarily means that all people have a
2048 deep understanding of Islam, and Sikhism and so forth, but at least you can't quite get away from
2049 the diversity. They have done surveys in the United States asking how many people know what's
2050 Noah's flood and so on is, and it's a remarkably low percentages. Not to speak of the difference
2051 between what a Sunni and a Shia is. And *nobody* even asks what a Sufi is...

2052

2053 **J.P.S. Uberoi** You should ask them what do they think about Christianity! I mean that's the point.
2054 Some people have got the idea that one land, one language, one faith, and one state is the best way
2055 to be strong, this is the way forward, and anything less than that is a sort of weakness. But against
2056 that - and it is not about South Asia, it's not about the United States or the new Europe or whatever
2057 - but against that, as a student of mankind, we are proposing something quite different. We are
2058 proposing that human beings, by nature, are bicultural and bilingual, and I do not know if we are
2059 bi-religious, but there may be something like that. Civil society is that locus of pluralism. It
2060 doesn't have to be more than that. But, it is opposed to those who think that the principles of civil
2061 society, and the state, and Religion, are all one consistent and strong unit. So, the argument for
2062 pluralism, is not that it is good for something, but it is human nature. Against us is all the work
2063 that has been done, especially in European countries, on bilingual children in the inter-war period.
2064 They claim that it shows that bilingualism was a handicap and that the intelligence scores of
2065 bilingual children in the United States and Germany and lots of places were lower than the
2066 monolingual children. So that is the model. Now, if you want to overturn that, we can look at the
2067 same figures again and find that bilingual Jewish children at that time were actually scoring better
2068 than monolingual children were.

2069

2070 My other point is, that as far as Islam and civil society is concerned, I think that we have to ask
2071 whether there is any concept of civil society in Islam. As a student of Islam, I have been told by
2072 writers from different languages and in different persuasions and they all said the same thing –
2073 Sharia, or Islamic law, covers all fields. There are different fields and we can say there are three or
2074 four main fields - there is doctrine, worship and what you will call the rites, the cult proper, then
2075 there is the field of what we call now family and civil society, and then there is the State. If I say,
2076 well, these are the three fronts and Islamic law nowhere applies equally to all of them, even in
2077 Saudi Arabia it doesn't. Maybe it applied in all fields in the first thirty years of Islam, but that was

2078 alright because there was hardly any State. We really find it difficult to find an example of the
2079 Islamic State. Pakistan promised that they are an Islamic State, as Rehman said, and that they
2080 would draft a Constitution for an Islamic State, but they have not been able to do so. Last time Iraq
2081 was drafting a Constitution in Afghanistan 2003-2004, and I tried to take part in the constitutional
2082 law, in the *Jirga*, in all the meetings, and they were not able to produce any Islamic constitution.
2083 All they could say was that no law would be passed, which is against the spirit of Islam, but they
2084 did not specify what *is* the spirit of Islam. I thought that this may be a defect in Afghanistan or
2085 Islam or whatever, but the European Union is having the same problem. Again, the question is of
2086 sovereignty, of territory, of pluralism, of distribution, of separation of power. And so if we look at
2087 those issues, then my colleagues admit that in different fields Islamic law applies in different
2088 degrees. It applies a hundred percent in ritual and cult and doctrine, nobody doubts that there is one
2089 God or that Mohammad is his prophet and so on. But then it doesn't apply to the State at all! All
2090 states are secular states and that is what the fundamentalists are unhappy about. They want to
2091 Islamize the State in Saudi Arabia. I mean, the nastiness they show to Jews and non-Muslims and
2092 Communists, that is secondary - the primary thing is to Islamize the state. This is one of the
2093 demands of Al-Qaeda, one of their four demands, that the nominally Islamic States should really
2094 become Islamic. Now that has proven to be very difficult. Now in between the two is commercial
2095 law and the law of family and inheritance. When my colleagues, who are better scholars than I am
2096 agree, they say, "Well, it doesn't prove that there is a notion of civil society in Islam, it only proves
2097 that there is a lack of unity of theory and practice in Islam." But then again I ask the question, why
2098 is there a unity of theory and practice in Islamic law in relation to ritual and worship, and why is
2099 there no unity in criminal law, in the law of constitution, and administrative law in the Mogul
2100 period or in the Ottoman Period or in the other periods, or even in Iran today? They are not able to
2101 write an Islamic constitution, which will cover constitutional questions, which will cover
2102 administrative questions and which will cover criminal law. They are not able to do that. This
2103 ridiculous application of the law to stone somebody to death is only applicable if you can produce
2104 four eye-witnesses *en flagrante* which I have never heard of. I lived in a village in Afghanistan
2105 between 1959 and 1961, when this law was supposed to be applicable, and I never came across any
2106 such case, because if you accuse somebody, and you do not produce the four eye-witnesses *en*
2107 *flagrante*, then the punishment applies to you! So it depends on how you read this thing.

2108

2109 Now how are we going to read it? I have now made a search, and I will just say what the result is:
2110 those who are writing on this question, or related questions, after 9/11 and after the first flush of
2111 the shock which people got from the 1967 war, between Israel and the two Islamic states which
2112 were its neighbors - I mean they were defeated - and that was the end of the combination of
2113 secularism, nationalism, and socialism, which India and Bangladesh espoused within a national
2114 framework. The only part that survived was the democracy part, but the socialism part, after the
2115 defeat of Nassar, and the national part, just disappeared. So the Islamic community withdrew into
2116 itself, which could have been predicted, after the fall of the caliphate in 1924. In India, that was
2117 considered to be a disaster. Anyway, we don't have to go back, if we come forward to post 9/11
2118 there are now writers who say that *shariat*, when you read it the way that it was read by Muslims
2119 in the period before the impact of the Enlightenment, which persuaded people that one
2120 interpretation was always the best, one country and one religion and one language was always the
2121 best - they had got used to a kind of pluralism. For instance they were willing to give the Persian
2122 language almost the same status that they were willing to give to Arabic. They weren't willing to
2123 give that status to Urdu, but they were for Persian. Similarly in India, people were willing to give
2124 Pali the same kind of status as they gave to Sanskrit. They would not for Punjabi or Kannada, but
2125 they would consider Pali. So there was a recognition that, so far as people's lives relating to
2126 worship and to ritual and in their relationship with divinity is concerned, they are not tolerant.
2127 They are exclusive and the law applies 100% and they just will not tolerate if you put your hand
2128 like this or your thumb down wrong - I mean, it is very important to them and, well, let them go
2129 ahead with it. At the other extreme is the secular state, where they found it very difficult to
2130 produce a criminal law, constitutional law, and an administrative law, out of Islam. They didn't
2131 manage to do that ever, under any dispensation, East or West. In between, is the area of civil
2132 society and the characteristic of Islamic law in relation to civil society. Unlike Hegel and unlike
2133 the Gramsci and Habermas tradition, it doesn't distinguish between family and civil society. It
2134 puts family and civil society together. Unlike Hinduism and unlike Judaism, the family law in
2135 Islam is actually a contract law. It's not a sacred law. Marriage is not a sacrament. It is a just like
2136 other things that happen in civil society. So actually this fear of civil society in Islam, in *this*
2137 understanding, we are arguing is native to Islam. You have three: the exclusive and intolerant part
2138 is relating to worship; and the purely secular part, which has lost its ethics, is the state; but in
2139 between is civil society and the marker of civil society is congregation, conscience, and a law

2140 which is based on ethics. Therefore, it includes family and civil society, but this is a very
2141 Confucian kind of notion of civil society in which the important part is not the law but ethics.
2142 When we come to law it is reduced to just the fiat of the state and that is the least Islamic.
2143
2144 I'm now retired from the service of the University and I have time to think about how many people
2145 I have persuaded in my 40 years of service. Well, I didn't persuade anyone. And sometimes I
2146 think that I was hired for the wrong reasons! Let me conclude with a story about what my
2147 selection committee asked me. There were three sociologists, but there were not so many
2148 sociologists at that time in 1968. There was also one philosopher, A. R. Wadia, a Bombay Parsi
2149 philosopher. He asked me, "Why are you interested in Islam?" And I said, "Well I was born in
2150 Lahore and grew up there and I went to school there. Why does it need an explanation?" But he
2151 was not satisfied and so at the end of the interview, a half hour later or whatever, he came back and
2152 said, "What do you think of the impact of Islam on India?" I said, "Well that is something I
2153 thought about a lot when I lived in Afghanistan doing my fieldwork" - and I can tell you that I
2154 summarize it in my mind that this impact took place on three fronts. Firstly, it took place on the
2155 front of the State and there the impact was totally bad. Secondly, there is the front of the *mullahs*,
2156 of the clerics, of the so-called orthodox, and the people who run the madrasahs and the mosques.
2157 In my opinion, they had no impact at all, it was zero, because they have no interest in non-Muslim
2158 institutions or philosophy or history anything. You read their books and they just ignore non-
2159 Muslim events, whether they are in Europe or in India or in Central Asia, they just take no notice.
2160 So what is their job? Their job is to make good Muslims out of nominal Muslims. And thirdly the
2161 impact was on the Sufi front, we can call it whatever you like, heterodox. It is an interior Islam
2162 which puts the individual first and not the collectivity, and that front has been entirely positive. So
2163 I said, "Now, Professor Wadia, you are a philosopher, can I ask you how will you add up 100%
2164 negative, 0%, and 100% positive?" So, the net result would be that it had no impact on India! That
2165 is the sort of ridiculous conclusion we get to when we say it should all be added up. But,
2166 obviously, the impact on the state level, on the clerical level, and on the Sufi heterodox level, they
2167 cannot be added. I mean that is the whole point! And those are the three languages that we are
2168 saying are natural to human beings. There is the language where you put the individual first, there
2169 is the language where you put the collective first, and there is the language where you put good
2170 order and neighborliness first. Humanity needs more than one language. If we had more time we

2171 could even try to prove that Indian dogs are also bi-lingual, but I don't have time to prove that.

2172

2173 **Anindita Chakrabarti** First and foremost I would like to say that the title you have for this
2174 meeting *the Role of Religion in Global Civil Society*, I think is an achievement in itself, because I
2175 started doing my doctoral thesis before 9/11 before the interest became quite dominant and
2176 mainstream. People asked then why religion and civil society, and I am happy to see that they are
2177 together in this workshop. We would like to have one in JNU as well - lets see how it goes. The
2178 thing is that there is so little interest and academic space for religion in our academia that needs to
2179 be taken heed of. So I think this is a step forward in that direction. One person came to my mind
2180 when we were talking about civil society and religion, because you have spoken about the
2181 experience in the West with Europe and America, but their experiences are so different. Whenever
2182 I read Alexis de Toqueville I am kind of amazed. When he explains the rise of a secular
2183 democracy in America and that it was in the name of God that the civil body politic was created
2184 and how it had to be plural because these are the dissenting sects who had to flee. Because of this
2185 they put religious tolerance and pluralism first. So it is a large scale of events, and it is a tall order,
2186 but I think this is a very good direction for us.

2187

2188 **John Chathanatt:** Somebody defined politics as the art of the possible - whatever is possible and
2189 the art of that. If communalizing societies brings success to politics, why not communalize? If
2190 foul play is the winning card, why don't you use that? So, the art of the possible will do anything to
2191 get to the power. Gujarat could be an example, if communalization and even denial of life to a
2192 particular section of the people will bring them to power, why not use it? So the art of the possible
2193 is there. If the use of religion will bring them to power, they will use it, and that is also happening
2194 in our society. That means religious sanction is sought even by politicians and by the state. This,
2195 of course, means that religion has some power. Religion can bring power to them, there is a *power*
2196 *of religion*. Here is where we need to look at the phenomenon of religion itself. When we say that
2197 faith is beyond reason but not irrational, here is where your point of bringing in rationality and
2198 university academic critique of religion comes in, something which Indian society can probably do
2199 a little more. Religion and religious phenomenon needs good rational critical analysis in the
2200 Indian context. I can look back into the Christian background, 12th, 13th and 14th centuries, where
2201 Aquinas and then his followers brought philosophy and rationality into a fundamentalistic notion

2202 of Christianity, and it succeeded to a certain extent. That means philosophy was brought into
2203 spirituality and theology, which means a critical approach to religion, and that brought some
2204 control over this power of religion. And that is where we have to go one more step - bringing
2205 reason and a critical approach to religion and religious phenomenon is only an interim step, and
2206 then, of course, you have to understand what is happening in society and in the state and so on.
2207 But I think you have to go beyond this rationality, and should probably redefine *who* a human
2208 being is. That means in our own understanding of rationality we have to go beyond this reason
2209 even to redefine the human being. And here is where the living [indistinct] that experience that
2210 Professor Rehman was mentioning, unless you live together, how will you know if you can live
2211 together? I will attempt to define it - a human being is a rational relational being with, not some
2212 irrational animal. It is a rational being and a relational being with the other. Nelson Mandela,
2213 when he was talking about the South African problem, once said, "We were living side by side, but
2214 we were not living with each other." This is a problem, we were living side by side, but we did not
2215 know the other, we were not living with each other. That means that a human being is a relational
2216 being, it depends how we look at it. A person, a man becomes a father only when that man has a
2217 child, a boy or girl. It is that boy or that girl that makes that person a father. The same is true with
2218 a mother, or brother, or a sister. That means my identity is always relational. My language gives
2219 me an identity, my religion gives me an identity, my country gives me an identity; we are multiple
2220 identified or identifiable persons. That is why being *with* the other is in the very nature of the
2221 human being. That means we have to go beyond even this rationality into a relational experience
2222 of the other - the living-together-with. That is why the example of the youth coming together and
2223 experiencing each other, goes beyond the bodies, it is a process of living *with*.

2224

2225 And why does religion have this much power? This point came to soteriology, that somehow there
2226 is a memory of a future, which is controlling us, even unconsciously. I say it is a memory of a
2227 future, that is a soteriology, which we know that somehow we have an idea of what life after death
2228 is, and to a certain extent we try to imbibe that. So we bring that into our memory, the future
2229 becomes a memory for us, and that comes to us through religion not through politics. So, again,
2230 religion has power. That soteriology needs to be looked at rationally. That is why the universities
2231 and the elites should enter into a critical phenomenological analysis of religion; religion should not
2232 be separated. Religion should be brought under hard critical scrutiny, something that is happening

2233 at the University of Chicago. They have even have a center for that at the University of Chicago,
2234 the “Rational Approach to Religion.” If university people can attempt to do that and then look at
2235 the human being in the relational aspect - so somehow looking at the future and also looking at that
2236 in a rational manner and looking at the very idea of the human in a relational manner and
2237 redefining the human being - I think probably there would be hope in the future. Which means
2238 more critical understanding and education is needed. Education into religion and education of the
2239 other’s religion, and that means the comparative study of religion.

2240

2241 **Mark Juergensmeyer** Precisely! But it does not exist in India, why is that the case? There is no
2242 program in comparative study of religion anywhere in the country, with the one exception I can
2243 think of at the Punjabi University of Patiala. Now in Dakha in Bangladesh, there is the new
2244 program in comparative religion but people like Professor Uberoi, who take seriously another
2245 tradition and try to get inside the skin of other people, are just extraordinarily rare. There is no
2246 intellectual or academic demand for it, there is no academic reward for doing so. As you said in an
2247 earlier comment, it is one thing to be with somebody and another to really know somebody, and
2248 simply because there are so many different people of so many different backgrounds running
2249 around in India, you think that you know them. But toleration is not understanding, and it seems to
2250 me that the study of religion in this part of the world, of all places, would be extremely important.
2251 But why doesn’t it exist? Why has there been such an extraordinary resistance to the academic
2252 study of religion in this one part of the world that has been the fount of so many religious
2253 traditions.

2254

2255 **John Chathanatt** It is probably because religion has been sidelined into a private act. It is my
2256 individual experience, my feeling that it is not looked at as a collective entity. Even about the
2257 studying religion critically - only Punjabi university has that. It means it's not popularized, it has
2258 not entered into the common human consciousness, and it is not even enough to remain at an
2259 academic level. It has to enter much more into the general public realm, this understanding of
2260 rationality. You look at the popular spirituality of the people - why is it that the politicians are
2261 succeeding in using religion? Because they are appealing to what is called the emotional side of
2262 the religion. Religion can be divided into four aspects:

2263 1. the religion that is a cultic element

2264 2. there is a creedal element
2265 3. there is a normative element, and
2266 4. there is a community element.

2267 Now it depends where the community is attaching itself to. If the community is attaching to cult,
2268 then the cult is the most emotional entity in religion. The cult means your pattern of worship, the
2269 various ways it is symbolic structure of religion. That is very powerful, the symbols are very
2270 powerful. The cult is very powerful in the human being. How does fundamentalism come up?
2271 When the community attaches itself only to the cult, fundamentalism comes. Every religion is
2272 fundamentalistic in that sense. What is controlling that cult is the creed and, all the more, the
2273 norm. That is why when we look at Gandhi's use of religion...I think once Dhvani made the
2274 statement, "Gandhiji used religion, why can't I use religion?" They are using two languages -
2275 Gandhi's use of religion was he was attaching the norm, the value system, to the community. He
2276 was not much worried about the cult, Gandhi was not even a temple goer. He even once denounced
2277 going to the temple. It was the value system of the religion Gandhi was highlighting. And what
2278 do the politicians highlight? Not the value system. They want even to remove the Indian
2279 Constitution, why? The norm should not be there. The cult is blind and the blind cult is controlled
2280 by the value system of the religion. So if norms are removed, that's where rationality has to enter.
2281 Rationality will bring the normative element and will control the cult and then creed will develop.
2282 When we look at every religious phenomenon, we can see it is fundamentalistic. You can look at
2283 any religion – Christianity was in the worst form, just look at the Crusades, we have the history.
2284 Because the cult was very paramount at that time, the norm was not there. The worst part of
2285 Christian history was from the 11th century to around the 18th century. If you look at their Natural
2286 Law approach, where a reason was not given, it was the rite, the cult... and that's why only one
2287 religion and one way of thinking will save the world. That will not happen. That means it is not
2288 only tolerance, but I would go beyond tolerance - to acceptance. Accepting the other as the other,
2289 including the variety of the other. The variety could be the religion, language, the state, the
2290 country whatever it is. This is one of the modern problems - how we can go beyond even
2291 tolerance to accept the other as the other, with the difference? It is not easy. The powers that be
2292 would want to see uniformity and this is where the latest phenomenon of globalization is very
2293 dangerous. What is globalization telling? One food, one culture, one religion - again it is a
2294 uniformity, not diversity. It is very dangerous. It is mass production, not production by the

2295 masses, the economic category – and this is very dangerous. That means we can see a nexus
2296 between globalization and religious fundamentalism, something to look at even in our Indian case.
2297

2298 **Lingam Raja** We cannot now live in our independent way - as in religion, we are looking for
2299 pluralism. In the year 1968, under the leadership of Homer A. Jack, the famous American writer
2300 who wrote *Gandhi: the Reader*, and many Gandhian institutions established the WCRP, World
2301 Conference on Religion and Peace. They are really looking in terms of the religion in the world
2302 and how one can try to understand others and learn to live together. So this is one aspect, which we
2303 can learn from the religion and the religious institutions. Mahatma Gandhi was a great exponent
2304 and writer and revolutionary person, but when it comes to the question of institutions he was also
2305 not for the institutions. He established and destroyed. When he needs to do something he
2306 establishes and he also destroys. Creating an institution is not the ultimate aim, to establish any
2307 “isms” or any activities or any revolutions, that is not a point. Pluralism has to emerge and has
2308 come through and we cannot avoid that. That is number one.

2309

2310 Number two, secularism is there all along and it is now caste-ism, more than religion, that is
2311 playing a very vital role. We have to look into that and try to understand and come together to live
2312 together. Even politics in Australia, they have now come to the coalition. We have to because no
2313 single politics or single majority would be able to succeed in these coming years. Apart from all
2314 this is, what is more important in this "religion, society and politics", is that you have to work
2315 towards some of the very important elements like the elimination of poverty and the elimination of
2316 corruption that is happening in a very very big way in politics, which has ruined and has even
2317 come to the local level and *panchayat* level. Any religious institution should think in terms of
2318 trying to make the people aware and fight against that. Illiteracy still prevails, that has to be
2319 properly looked into. As I said earlier, caste-ism, but there are three dangerous people that we have
2320 to keep in mind: the academics, the politicians and the religious leaders. These are the people that
2321 try to make the country more unique, yet at the same time they know how to destroy it very
2322 carefully also. So these people have to be properly made to understand what the life is, what the
2323 universe is, how to live for others and not for yourself alone. That, we have to make very clear.

2324

2325 **Manindra Thakur** Brief response to two-three things - one is in regards to why the universities

2326 don't have comparative religion. I am quite surprised and I have been writing for the last one year
2327 in a popular Hindi newspaper, which raises several questions to the university system itself. I
2328 think Indian university system is a product of the colonial regime and it is still suffering from that
2329 extremely positivist colonial epistemological framework. Therefore to talk of religion, and even of
2330 philosophy - forget about religion - Indian philosophy is not being taught anywhere in the
2331 universities in India, properly. Nowhere. So there is a big problem with that. Despite the fact that
2332 I have argued that popular books on Indian philosophy are still bestsellers on bookstalls at railway
2333 stations. I don't think I would agree with Professor John Chathanatt on many of the issues but I'll
2334 not take that up at the moment. But ,this "cult" and "church" has a serious problem. I think church
2335 is a higher organization which is much more dangerous than the cult itself, but we'll talk about that
2336 some other time. The main point that I want to make is that, Professor Mark, I would like you to
2337 consider this point and that is I have a feeling that the language with which you are talking of
2338 secularism and religion is a language of either/or. And this is a language within which we can't
2339 understand this, and this is a peculiar problem of the English language. It's not a problem of the
2340 German language. Heidegger could always keep arguing that we talk of thinking as a process but
2341 the English language has this problem of talking of everything in either/or terms, and therefore it
2342 fails to capture that we are secular and religious simultaneously. Look at the Indian tradition,
2343 where I think there is a huge history of comparative religion and there is a huge history of
2344 secularism. For instance, Dara Shikoh was a greatest scholar of comparative religion and also of
2345 secularism. If we think of secularism as three different processes:

- 2346 1. a process of continuous growth of knowledge about the world, the relation between reason and
2347 religion.
- 2348 2. as intercommunity relationship
- 2349 3. as religion versus state

2350 In all three respects, there are interesting experiments that have taken place in India and if we look
2351 at these experiments in terms of either/or, we will probably miss out on the major charitable
2352 contributions that one can make.

2353

2354 **Rounaq Jahan** I was just thinking about a question that Mark raised earlier, about if South Asian
2355 states, in terms of their policies, had been tolerant of various religions, then how come we are
2356 witnessing in recent years this rise of extremism? It is true, many of us also living in these

2357 countries are very worried in terms of what looks like a resurgence of religious extremism. We
2358 often talk about external influences and things of that sort, or crass manipulation by politicians of
2359 religion. But we still have to address this issue that how come, particularly taking Bangladesh as
2360 an example, in the 60's there were politicians who were trying to use religion but still there were
2361 other politicians who could stand up and say, "No, religion has another space, but in terms of
2362 politics we would not use this kinds of crass communalism." And then they would be in the
2363 forefront of the discourse. Unfortunately, I find more and more the mainstream political parties
2364 really are very reluctant to defend this kind of secular in the sense of non-communal or very crass
2365 use of religion for vote purposes, because people are so concerned they may lose votes and certain
2366 voting blocks. They just dissect the population by so many voting blocks and they are so afraid to
2367 take a particular stand for fear that you'd lose this block or that block. Whereas in the 60's –as I
2368 think in Bangladesh, it may not be applicable everywhere – the politicians were more involved in
2369 mobilizing populations across various divides, around certain ideologies, and certain issues, for
2370 instance, a certain set of purposes. Of course, after the collapse of the Soviet Union we were all
2371 fumbling, because there was no socialist ideology. Many of us were getting concerned that the
2372 only people, whether I like it or not, who believe in some ideology and some normative value, are
2373 the religion based parties because they believe in *something*. The rest of the political people, they
2374 are out there just to make money and they don't have any principles. This really is a very serious
2375 set of concerns for many of us, that now it had come to this - that they were the only defenders of
2376 certain religions, certain values. We thought that given the neoliberal economic policies that we
2377 are pursuing, there will be such great social divides and nobody, no secular politicians are going to
2378 do anything about it, so that only people talking about equality or doing some social justice, will be
2379 those Islamists. So I think this is something that concerns many of us as to what is happening
2380 today.

2381

2382 Again, just to give another example, which political party is not suffering from dynastic
2383 syndrome? In all of our countries it is only religion-based parties where the leadership is not
2384 passed on from father to daughter or husband to wife and things of that sort. So again this is quite
2385 interesting that when you think of some democracy, some ideology, they are the only ones who are
2386 left with this. I think that many of us who believe in non-communal and secular politics and other
2387 kinds of ideas, we have to really think in terms of what kinds of values we are projecting in politics

2388 and in our work. Even in Bangladesh, where civil society actors have played a very important role
2389 in the 70's and 80's, and it is now again regarded as a job and not, as in the early days when they
2390 went into the villages, as some kind of a service that they had certain ideology - they were
2391 organizing people around some consciousness. I have no answer but this is something that has
2392 been bothering me. I really do not want to see this spread of religious extremists, but on the other
2393 hand, I have to also recognize that they are doing certain things which others are not doing. And
2394 globally when we look at this, in terms of resisting certain kinds of hegemonies, who is really
2395 standing up? So people have to also recognize that they are playing a unique role, which others are
2396 not playing.

2397

2398 **Ranjana Mukhopadhyaya** There's this whole issue of language which he raised which I think is
2399 quite important. I don't know whether it was intentional or unintentional that you had phrased
2400 these question like this. For instance, for "humanitarian services" you are using the word
2401 "religion", but when you're talking about political climate, or the influence of politics, the word
2402 "faith-based organization" is used. So if it is unintentional or whatever the intention is, these
2403 words are actually very important and that is where the whole issue of language also comes in. I'll
2404 just tell you an incident: we were at the Parliament of World Religions, when Katherine was there,
2405 and there was one whole session which was by some United Nation based groups that was
2406 planning to propose a decade of inter-religious dialogue from next year, from 2011 or 2012. They
2407 want to make it a decade of civilizational dialogue, but then it actually became a major area of
2408 controversy, because many of them were using the words "value based", "faith based", "spiritual
2409 based" or "spiritually inspired." So some of these people got up and said, "Why don't we make it
2410 *inter-religious dialogue*, straight and simple?" They had the words "civilization", "dialogue",
2411 "culture" and all these words - anything other than the word "religion." But these words are
2412 actually important because they are not just simply words, they also make up our world view.
2413 When you say faith-based organization, many of them are actually NGOs and they are formally
2414 registered as non-governmental organizations. Like, the case study that he raised about the
2415 Ramkrishnan Mission trying to get registered as a minority group. That's very important, how
2416 people actually try to negotiate themselves within the political set up which is now in India. The
2417 issue that I'm trying to raise is that the whole idea of secularism or the state-religion separation has
2418 actually created a space for faith-based organizations because faith-based organizations by law are

2419 not legally religions - they are actually NGOs or voluntary organizations or even schools and
2420 institutions run by religious groups. But how they are registered is not as religious groups but as
2421 whatever institutions. So you have a space that is being created because of this separation of state
2422 and religion because of this whole idea of secularism. That was very interesting how you framed
2423 the questions, because somewhere down when you are raising these issues there are certain
2424 presumptions already involved. If you had raised the question, “How is religion influencing
2425 political climate?” that would have been a very different connotation than saying how faith-based
2426 organizations influence the political climate. So that is a question that we need to ask ourselves
2427 about these questions that we raise.

2428

2429 **Pralay Kanungo** I'll be very quick, I'll just summarize my understanding of the secular state in
2430 India. We have a secular state or nation of *religious* people, and we have actually perpetuated this
2431 myth of secularism and actually from this comes this religion-secular toleration and understanding.
2432 Secularism is very limited - it talks of tolerance. But religion gives you the understanding. I think
2433 this is very important. Ranjana very rightly pointed out that actually we deliberately created space.
2434 This neglect of studying religion as a subject at the university was deliberately part of this
2435 ideological understanding. Maybe we should have our constraints, maybe the study of religion
2436 related to kind of communal politics and non-communal politics, perhaps that is the Nehruvian fear
2437 which continues in this period. Second, I think at the same time, as you mentioned, there is also a
2438 private channel that was allowed to be carried out. Say, for instance, our former president
2439 Radhakrishnan who was writing about religion so profoundly. I mean there is research, there is the
2440 Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan going on, for example. So in that sense it was all actually being carried
2441 out, and it was also left to the private domain and at the same time, the state wasn't getting
2442 engaged. It was a very kind of deliberative policy.

2443

2444 There were two or three things that Mark raised which is very important. Over the years, over the
2445 decades actually, there are two very alarming things that are happening. I'm not defending that
2446 system or this system, but I see that there is a decline of what you call *assertive* or *aggressive*
2447 secularism. There has been a steady decline. I can give you many examples, for instance, the
2448 Communists. Though they were actually the flag bearers of aggressive secularism, today you find
2449 there is a kind of dilution. I can give the example of Naxalite politics, right? You find they are

2450 partners today, you will find also many interesting phenomenon, both working with popular
2451 religion and also with missionaries and other constituencies and other radical forces who have
2452 some kind of religious understanding. Also, another thing is that there is a serious decline of
2453 atheism. You find the atheist community, for instance, giving 400 crores of money to renovation of
2454 temples in Tamil Nadu, in fact beating the record of Jayalalitha who has spent about 300 crores.
2455 So if you look at the Dravidian kind of atheism, or rationality and all that, they has also given in
2456 because of various kinds of politics, because of various kinds of political compulsion, maybe their
2457 understanding is changing. These are a couple of things that are happening.

2458

2459 Professor Mohanty raised a very important question regarding Sufism. Again, as Professor Uberoi
2460 has mentioned, Orissa, where I have investigated Islam partly, was predominately a Sufi culture,
2461 yet today you do not find. And now there is the rise of the Deobandis, and Professor Rehman is
2462 not here now, but actually the Deobandis once were nationalist. However, if you look at the
2463 Deobandi culture today, you find that there is a shift from nationalism to a kind of aggressive
2464 Islam. So in Orissa particularly, you find a decline of Barelvīs who are actually very close to
2465 Sufism, and you find the decline of Sufi culture in a big way. I don't know, however, about other
2466 parts of the country. There is also the rise of new religious movements and sects and so on. So we
2467 actually see that this question that you are raising, is something we have also been raising. People
2468 are working on religion. I think whether it is under the discipline of political science, or
2469 philosophy, people are doing their individual work. But I think that the time is coming where now
2470 the government or the state has to give in, because there is also a kind of resurgence of research
2471 interest in this area.

2472

2473 CLOSING STATEMENTS

2474

2475 **Mark Juergensmeyer** Well we, Professor Mohanty and myself as organizers, thought that we
2476 would take a couple minutes at the end to make some sort of summary comments.

2477

2478 **Manoranjan Mohanty** Okay, well I wouldn't attempt to summarize, but I'll make some
2479 reflective comments. I think the case for understanding the complexity of religion is very strong,
2480 and that came out again and again, and that really makes the case for having a discipline of

2481 religious studies. You are right Pralay, I think the Nehruvian fear had many generations of fear
2482 reinforcing itself- the fear that if you studied religion, than you become sectarian and religious, a
2483 religious sectarian. I think that persists even now, but the reality has indeed pushed us to
2484 understanding religion in all the disciplines of social sciences and humanities now more directly.
2485 Therefore the days are not too far when we will have departments of religious studies. Same with
2486 secularism, I think that came up again and again. In South Asia, all the big religions are present,
2487 and they all had roots independent of colonialism. Therefore, in a multi-religious situation, the
2488 kind of methodological issues which were raised by the whole group, the plurality, the traditions of
2489 understanding - not only tolerance – but the traditions of understanding which got ruptured in
2490 different moments: first by colonialism in modern history, and then by the kind of secular practice
2491 which was tinged with fear on the one hand, and the incapacitating experience after partition on the
2492 other. This then led to mutually generating a sort of triggered process of communal polarizations
2493 of the other, leading to the BJP's rise and the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, the Ayodhya episode,
2494 and now various forms of terrorism. That is the context, which really gives us a lot of resources. I
2495 think global civil society should inherit the resources of South Asia in terms of how these various
2496 syncretic traditions were present, and yet got diluted. I think the reference to all the great Islamic
2497 scholars who didn't want the partitioning of India was fantastic. There have been similar periods
2498 from Akbar, and even before from Ashoka times downwards. So, in the South Asian region we
2499 have had rich resources of religious understanding and epistemological communication, not across
2500 fixed religious communities.

2501

2502 I think that the discussions on religion and religious community, religious organizations and
2503 religious institutions, religious network, and religion identified with those four forms of creed,
2504 norm, cult etc., I think that was a fantastic discussion. So, my first point is that the resources which
2505 South Asia provides, not only now but throughout history, for studying religion and secularism and
2506 various forms, are rich. I have no time to say more, but just last week Richard Falk, Hilal Elver,
2507 Bidyut and I were in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, attending Santhigiri's International Conference
2508 on Sustainable Development and Secular Spirituality. Santhigiri is set up by Karunakara Guru who
2509 died in '72 or 79, and his guru was a Sufi saint, Khureshia Fakir. On the 12th of September, when
2510 the monument to the guru was inaugurated at a big Bahai temple-like structure, it was inaugurated
2511 by the President, and then later by the Defense Minister who happened to be in that area. I saw

2512 Muslim men and women, Christians of Kerala, and of course many Hindus and many atheists, like
2513 me, all thronging to that place. So, it was a kind of “secular spirituality” and we had this fantastic
2514 one day devoted just to understanding “secular spirituality.” There were saffron-robed people,
2515 there were pure philosophers, atheists, social scientists, and so on understanding that. So it is
2516 possible, and it is possible globally!

2517

2518 My second point is the need for interconnection. I’m glad Raja raised the caste question finally,
2519 though very late. I’m glad political economy came in, again late in the day. You know we have a
2520 strong view in India that OBC mobilization and Dalit politics have actually cracked the
2521 sectarianism of religious groups. It has cut into that and has built inter-religious communities,
2522 political communities, and social solidarities. So I would urge that when we use the term global
2523 civil society and the interconnections on various religion, race, caste, class, language, region, sex,
2524 sexual preference – the *intersectionality* should inform the study of religion and religious
2525 communities as well as religious traditions. I’m afraid that didn’t come up as much as it should
2526 have. Again, had we paid adequate attention to syncretic traditions it would have come up.

2527

2528 My third and last point is about the global dimension of this discourse. I think religious studies has
2529 developed very much, first in Europe, although not in England so much, then in the US, and now
2530 also in England. But there are very few religious studies departments in the third world. I think
2531 colonialism had something to do with this fear complex. And now cultural confidence is visible in
2532 the third world, civilizational confidence. I mean the Christians of India, who were derided as sort
2533 of linked to colonialism at the time, are today very very proud and independent missionaries as
2534 well as ordinary citizens. Like Gujarat, the Orissa episode of anti-Christian riots proved and
2535 vindicated, some of the propositions that we are suggesting - that it’s a society which *has*
2536 institutionalized certain tolerance and a politics of human rights; and what connects the local,
2537 regional, national with global *is* human rights. I think the entry point to religious studies has to be
2538 the people’s rights studies. The right to faith! And that’s where the dichotomy between, or the kind
2539 of discomfort Ranjana was noticing in the two things. We can take care of that if we have the right
2540 to faith, and right to faith goes with other human rights, which makes it mutual, tolerant, a mutual
2541 respect - the *Ubuntu!* “I am, because you are” that mutual dependence, mutual development
2542 concept of South Africa spoken by Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela. So, I think global civil

2543 society, once it is grounded in a Human Rights agenda - we have been saying in India “People’s
2544 Rights” agenda because human rights has been so much identified with the liberal agenda and the
2545 globalization agenda of the World Bank and capitalist forces. We are using “People’s Rights” as a
2546 term to emphasize the rights from below, the People’s Movement agenda. And that’s why the
2547 social movements perspective on religious studies and religion and global civil society will give us
2548 some clues to handling some of the problems which arose in this very rich and very fruitful
2549 discussion today.

2550

2551 **Mark Juergensmeyer** The study of religion in American universities has taken a very interesting
2552 historical turn, and its not without its political context. Of course, universities in America were
2553 originally founded for the training of clergy at Harvard and Yale. But then with the secular
2554 revolution and America’s independence, and the strong emphasis on separation of religion from
2555 the state, it was as much to protect the state from religion, as religion from the state. Seminaries
2556 were driven out of the institutions that they themselves had created. So you have a separate
2557 Divinity School outside of Harvard, and Yale has a separate Divinity School. The University of
2558 Chicago also has a Divinity School at the edge of the university, although Chicago is more
2559 integrated within it than others. State Universities did not have any kind of theological presence,
2560 but they would often cluster at the edge of the universities. It wasn’t really until the advent of the
2561 Cold War and the political project for a need to understand the third world, to understand the non-
2562 Christian world, that Religious Studies, as the study of comparative religion, received massive
2563 support and encouragement and developed in a remarkable way. So it really has very little to do
2564 with theology. It didn’t come out of religion, it came out of more of a political project, although
2565 the people in the field were really unaware of that and had no idea that there was an agenda behind
2566 the creation of their field. So, scholars in the study of religion are not particularly religious. In
2567 fact, the Pew Foundation did a survey of the religiosity of faculty within universities in terms of
2568 belief and church attendance, and so forth, and what they discovered was that by far the most
2569 religious of any faculty were in the sciences - engineering and the sciences. If you want to find
2570 religious people, you go there. Within the Social Sciences and Humanities there was considerably
2571 less and by far the least religious of any departments was Religious Studies. It is an interesting
2572 study but it says something about the field.

2573

2574 **[Question from unknown person:]** This included Divinity Schools as well?

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2576 **Mark Juergensmeyer** No, the Divinity Schools were not included in this survey because they
2577 are outside of the university. Religious Studies was set up to be the study of comparative religion
2578 and religious traditions, and we were lamenting the absence of that. Yet, increasingly, what is
2579 taught in religious studies is not so much the different religious traditions. In fact, “World
2580 Religions,” which used to be the staple of religious studies courses, has been abolished in some
2581 universities – University of Chicago has abolished it, our Religious Studies Department at
2582 University of California, Santa Barbara has abolished it. Why? Because it reinforces the idea that
2583 religion is a group of competing organizations, kind of like corporations that compete with one
2584 another. Rather, the increasing interest is the trans-religiosity within all societies, the way in
2585 which religious traditions interpenetrate each other, the way in which there is a kind of mutuality
2586 of spiritual and moral concern within all people that are expressed in varying ways and not easily
2587 always within these compact notions of religion. It seems to me that *this* is the kind of study of
2588 religion that is particularly appropriate to India. I say that because having lived in India for several
2589 years, in the Punjab, where there is a great deal of religious diversity and yet a great deal of
2590 religious interaction and mutual respect. Of course, I came to the Punjab long after partition, so
2591 there were virtually no Muslims on the Indian side of the Punjab. But I found a couple of
2592 locations, one in Hoshiarpur for example, where there were Muslims *pirs* who had been protected
2593 during the partition by their Hindu and Sikh followers. Now they live there by themselves, but
2594 with all of their followers and they have continued their teachings. Now, what was this? A Muslim
2595 thing? Was it Hindu? What was it? Obviously he was a Muslim, he was preaching out of a
2596 largely Sufi tradition. When I went to the Pakistani-Punjab, and I went to the birthplace of Guru
2597 Nanak, there were, of course, no Sikhs at the shrine, except for one or two helping in the role of
2598 caretakers, but it was crowded with Muslim pilgrims who had come to do *namaz* at the shrine of a
2599 saint. From their point of view he was a holy person and he deserved respect and there was some
2600 spiritual quality to this.

2601 So it seems to me that the religious dimensions of society in India has *always* been a complicated
2602 thing. It has been the way in which the world is increasingly going, and against a lot of the
2603 fundamentalism, which is a very self-conscious reaction because of the fear that there is such a

2604 kind of amalgam of religious sentiments that is developing within global culture and global civil
2605 society. So that brings us back to the assignment of this day, which I thought was particularly
2606 fruitful and interesting and I'm very much looking forward to hearing all of the comment when I
2607 go back through all the video tapes. It seems to me that what has been expressed, in many different
2608 ways, has been a real understanding of the complexity of the social and religious fabric of South
2609 Asian society, and how any kind of simple characterization of it simply won't do. It was
2610 something that I discovered when I first came to the Punjab as a graduate student in 1971. I came
2611 as a good social scientist armed with questionnaires. I was doing a study of schedule caste
2612 religious and social movements, which became my first book and which I'm pleased to say was
2613 recently re-issued in India this last year, under the title *Religious Rebels in the Punjab* – that is a
2614 kind of immodest promotion of that book, in case you're wondering! It was a long questionnaire
2615 and I was going to find out all of the things that I wanted to know about the way in which religion
2616 functioned within the Punjab villages. There were sixty questions, and I had two graduate
2617 assistants who were going to help me with this. I immediately had trouble with the first question,
2618 and then the survey stopped dead in its tracks with the second question and I couldn't proceed any
2619 further. The first question was "What is your name?" You would think that would be simple and
2620 straightforward, but we're talking about scheduled caste people who would sometimes have
2621 different names for different purposes! Sometimes they adopt their village names, sometimes their
2622 employment names, sometimes they would have a religious name - but what religious name
2623 depended on who you were. They were trying to figure out what I wanted to know so they could
2624 give the right answer. Including this very simple, and it seemed to me, obvious question, "What is
2625 your name?" The second question was the one where we totally floundered. I wanted to know
2626 "What is your religion?" "What do you mean?" they responded. My graduate students said, "What
2627 do you mean, what word do you want us to use?" I said, "Religion!" They said, "*Sahib*, there is no
2628 one word for religion in Punjabi or Hindi or any Indian language. Are you talking about *dharma*, a
2629 kind of religious law or religious ethics? Are you talking about Islam, a particular belief? Are you
2630 talking about *quaam*, a great religious nation of identity? Are you talking about *panth*, a particular
2631 religious association or community? What are you talking about?" I realized that what I thought of
2632 as religion did not exist in any simple way within the Indian religious context. It seems to me that
2633 is increasingly a global problem. It's not simply a characteristic of India. It means that what we
2634 learn about the role of religion and society, what we learn about the way in which strata and

2635 religiosity - whatever we call the various faith communities and traditions with which we are
2636 associated - interact and intertwine within the Indian and South Asian context, are increasingly a
2637 part of the pattern of global religiosity and global society as well. So I have learned a lot today. I
2638 appreciate it enormously, you all taking the time and energy to come together for what I think is
2639 going to be a really exciting and useful report. When you see the thing you will be amazed at how
2640 brilliant you all sound and how relevant all your comments seem to each other! Even though I
2641 know it seemed to you as something disparate, just sitting around and talking, but that is exactly
2642 the way good ideas emerge. I thank you for your tolerance and being a part of this experience of
2643 today. Thanks for coming!
2644