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Representation of the Muslim Community in *Chacha Chaudhary* Comic Book Series

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In the comic book series, Muslim characters appear as marked characters. The Muslim is seen as either as a convenient demonic other, often vilified as a fundamentalist, anti-modern enemy of the nation or he is explained in patriotic terms, projecting him as Indianised Muslim who transcends his community-identity and actively participates in the process of nation-building. The Muslim characters are depicted in harsh caricatures, fatty, rough bearded, often appearing as either stupidly ignorant, cruel villains or terrorists. Even unusual and exotic names like Rabaak, Halim, Kazaan are given to them. These stereotyped traits and unusual names are invested with social significance and are attributed to the Muslim community. In the paper, I intend to trace articulation of the stereotypes of the Muslim community which have been constructed and circulated in the process of reframing 'national culture' right from the colonial period and analyze how these historically created stereotypes still find considerable manifestation in the popular literature like comics in the post colonial period, affecting the Hindu community's perceptions about the Muslim community.

In the comic book, urban Hindu middle class values are predominately articulated. The articulation of specific cultural values and norms in the comic book is shaped by the Indian public sphere which is dominated by the Hindu values and norms. Amir Ali has pointed out that the present Indian public sphere is a mere extension of the public sphere in the colonial India which was constructed, defined and dominated by the Hindu values and norms. This tendency has been further accentuated by the rise of Hindutva politics which has sought to "entrench and institutionalize the symbols, cultural norms, values and beliefs cherished by it as the only legitimate ones capable of defining the Indian state" (2001:2419). In the colonial period the nationalist discourse was created and propagated to mobilize the Indian masses and oppose both political and cultural hegemony of the West. In the nationalist discourse, the nationalist elites projected Hindu values and norms as 'Indian' which were compared and differentiated from non-Hindu cultural systems. In this projection of 'Indian culture', while the west is seen as a explicit 'cultural invasion', the Muslim community shaped by the hundred years of forcible cultural contact and acculturation, was exploited as an example of contamination of 'Indian culture', as a lesson 'for Indians to be learnt'. In such account of the history of 'Indian culture', the Muslim came to be seen as intruder and incompatible with 'Indian culture'. The nationalists exploited the already available stereotypes of Muslim invaders in the oral traditions and other narrative forms to remind the 'Indians' of their weaknesses and their passive submission to the foreigners who perpetuated victimization and imposed foreign values on the Indian masses.¹ In the portrayal of Muslims as invaders and Indian as victim, their purpose was to exploit the fear of erosion of 'Indian identity' to mobilize the Indian masses to fight against the British imperialism. In the postcolonial India, the historically constructed stereotypes of the Muslim community have been exploited by both media and the Hindu nationalists. As a result, these stereotypes of the Muslim community have found considerable articulation in the popular forms of literature.

The significant connections have been made between the emergence of Indian comics in the 1970s and the rise of Hindu nationalism.ⁱⁱ Several scholars like Pinney (2004), and Brosius (2005) have argued that Hindu nationalism has been invoked through different mass-mediated visual materials such as decorated match boxes, fabric labels and calendar arts, mill goods, stamps and coins. Freitag (1996) argued that the visual realm is a powerful arena in which conceptions of a community are constructed, contested and consolidated. Pinney also suggests “to rearrange Indian history so that central place can be found for the visual” and recommends the centrality of visual image in analyzing contemporary Indian politics as “physiognomic reading of artistic documents, that is reading into them what is already known through other means.”(2004:8-9)

In the post independent India, comics is deployed as visual site for Hindu culture to be mediated as popular culture, to form what Nandini Chandra(2008) has called ‘national-popular’ consensus. Scholars have analyzed the centrality of image and visual practices in the political imagination to construct national imagination in which India is to be experienced as a picture. The panels in the comic book operate within what Pinney termed “Indian Hindu scopic regime”.ⁱⁱⁱ Reading these comic panels is *Darshana* of *Bharata Mata* in which the viewer and what is viewed are bounded in a relationship rested on the notion of worship-serving the *Bharata Mata*. Unlike Benedict Anderson(2006) who argues that ‘print capitalism’ has marked the decline of religious affiliations and enabled the far-fetched settled populations to imagine themselves as citizens of a modern nation, scholars like Pinney(2004) have pointed out that religion has been consolidated by proliferation of the image. It is ‘print capitalism’ that has blurred the boundaries between religion and politics. With the help of visual iconography, the Hindu perceptions, memories and values have been documented and disseminated to the next generation.

The consistent investment in political representation of the Muslim community has allowed the Hindu nationalists to exploit the Muslim as symbol of contamination of culture, suppression and erosion of ‘Indian values’, invoking fear of being overpowered by the Muslim community. The repeatedly invocation and projection of the conflict between the Muslim and Hindu community through media representations have affected the collective consciousness of the Hindu community. Although Muslims have been in India almost for seven hundred years and have undoubtedly enriched Indian culture still the Hindu majority has failed to accommodate the Muslim community in the political culture. They are still projected as outsider, traitor, barbarian and an existential threat to the majority. In the colonial India, in a search of a powerful and substantial culture as resistant culture to colonization, social reformism was initiated, aiming at purifying the Hindu religion to define national culture. In this purifying process, the Muslim community was deployed as scapegoat to define what is pure and impure and all that signified impurity and violence was transferred to the Muslim community. Misra (2004: 57) has argued that the nationalists used ‘Islam as a tool for the preservation, promotion and consolidation of Hindus and Hinduism’. The Hindu reaction to the partition also needs to be understood in the context of symbolic insertion of Hinduism into nationalism. For Hindus, the native land is not simply a land rather worshipped as Bharat Mata, as sacred deity. The partition is not treated as just a division of territory dominated by the Muslim from the subcontinent rather as a ‘vivisection of the limbs of Mother India’. The partition came to be seen as an unforgivable crime committed by the Muslim community who demanded a separate nation. The Hindus came to believe that Islam came to India through the sword and afflicted suffering, perpetuated barbarianism, persecution and degenerated Indian culture.

Comics is a reductive art, the hegemonic representation of the Muslim is reduced to a set of signifiers such as postures, poses, appearance and beard. Will Eisner also argued that that Comics being a reductive art, it heavily relies on stereotypes. In his words “comics employ a series of repetitive images and recognizable symbols, when they are used again and again to convey similar ideas they become a language”. (1985, p.8) The existence of each sign depends on its recognition and repetition and in each sign exists what Roland Barthes calls “Monster a stereotype”.^{iv} It is through reduction of reality that we try to understand the depth of reality. But this reduction of reality is a political process shaped by a range of both political and cultural factors. A sense of social reality is coded through stereotyping process. Through stereotyping different social groups are defined and compared and explained. Brosius also suggested the role of stereotyping in shaping the politics of Hindutva as it is reflected in visual media representations. She argued that “As we look at objects or situations, we are at once selecting, categorizing and constituting order, projecting as well as enhancing or diverting fears and desires, claiming ownership over and attachment to something, and thus attributing elaborate meaning and value to the world around us.”(2005:4) Stereotyping, as an ideological practice, is central to the representation of Muslim community. Myths constitute the core of stereotypes, which once internalized, become potent social mechanism to install a set of constructed social behavior. The ideological construction of the Muslim as ‘threatening other’ has been externalized using ‘explicit codes’. The stereotypes of the Muslim community have been so much entrenched in the Hindu psyche by homogeneous representational codes operating in all media forms, that they do not require to be explained; rather they have been reduced to a set of connotations.

As comics are meant for infant minds, they are simplified and encoded in easily intelligible cultural codes so that the infant mind could decipher the characters and cultural background and identify the cultural background of the narrative and relocate/dislocate their own cultural identity. The Infant minds’ fascination with comics has been interpreted as the process of organizing and interpreting their own relationship with reality. As the infant mind is struggling to deal with reality, stereotyping in comics helps the child to simplify the complex and dynamic reality. The infant mind makes judgment about different social identities on the basis of their encounter with stereotyped identities. Lauretta Bender also emphasized the role of comics in understanding reality:

The absorption of children in the comics is easily understood when we regard it as a part of their constructive experimentation with reality and its problems: problems of the body-its image, its functions, its motility, its boundaries, its similarities and differences to other bodies human and animal; problems of relationships-to the physical world and its forces (with the need for understanding and mastery) and to the social environment (with the need to deal with its problems of aggression and submission, right and wrong, and with the need to believe that the total pattern of the world of reality is one in which the ultimate goal is good).(1944:223)

Fredric Wertham also warned the portentous effects of comics on the infant mind. He argued that comics inculcate false realities of people in infant minds and create prejudices and “affect society as a whole by normalizing racist standards through repetition.”(1954:8)

The Muslim identity is simplified and encoded in terms of his beard and Muslim names in the comic book. In most cases, the Muslim is depicted either as bearded man with

exotic name or as exotic appearance with Muslim names. Rustum Bharucha argued that the beard has become a multidimensional signifier that carries connotations of all what the Muslim community stands for:

“This sign is not about marking an individual identity per se, but of annexing this identity to that of an entire community, if not a species. Once marked, 'the Muslim assumes hyper-real significance, regardless of whether or not it is linked to a mistaken or real identity. A transcendental signifier, it assumes omnipresence, ruthlessly indifferent to the multitudinous realities of the signified.” (2003:4239)

The Muslim has been turned into his beard, unclean body and lasciviousness. He becomes an 'alibi' for 'barbarian behavior'. Thus by linking the marking of beard to the process of demonization, the ideological construction of the Muslim community is naturalized. The identity of the Muslim is reduced to the marking of beard. The Muslim as a human being ceases to exist; instead he has been turned into his beard. He is his beard. This is the way a myth functions, as Barthes argues, by creating stereotypes. First a stereotype is created, consolidated, filled with selective meanings, then turned into a central metaphor and finally circulated in the society through representation. Through the process of stereotyping, a myth is legitimized, naturalized and hence its political efficacy is concealed. The Muslim characters seem to be innocent and simply creative characters to invoke laughter and entertain the reader. But in their consummation in the reading process, they mark a particular community as a threat to the unity of the nation and specifically to the Hindu community. Narratives are carefully created so that political meanings can go unnoticed. The representation of the Muslim is created in such a symbolic way that denies its connection with reality and at the same time, functions as a reference to the real. The ambiguous representation denies any interrogation of the representation as political and hence political meanings are consumed by the reader as mere narrative technique and at the same time communal identity are constructed.

The representation of Muslim community is marked by what Akeel Bilgrami (1993) termed 'surplus phenomenology of identity'. The specific moments are designed and selected to present them as marked characters. Almost all Muslim characters are depicted as reactionary, dull and criminal such as burglar, thief, kidnaper, terrorist, mischievous, greedy, spendthrift, wicked magician and attributed with inhuman qualities. All Muslim criminals belong to 'somewhere else' projecting them outsider and hence illegitimate citizens. The representation of the Muslim community has been so consistent that the representation is rendered as absolute reflection of the Muslim community. Even the non Indian Muslims are also depicted as criminal, making the representation of the Indian Muslim consistent and universal. In the story 'Clever Gosha' *Chacha Chaudhary and Clever Ghosa* (Diamond Comics-1461), the magician Gosha whose native place is 'somewhere else' is depicted as clever magician who uses his performances as pretext to smuggle diamonds from one country to another. Travelling across the world as magician, he smuggles diamonds by swallowing them and hence remains undetected. Their art is depicted as mere a masquerade to hide their criminal activities. After his successful smuggling in America, Gosha is sent to India by his boss to smuggle diamonds in the market. At airport, he manages to deceive the airport securities but is caught by the clever Chacha Chaudhary.

The funny panel in which he is harassed as criminal is something more than just humorous. The Muslim community has been marked as a community engaged in criminal activities. Not only are they represented as criminal through their action but their appearance

is also distorted to differentiate them from sophisticated Hindus, even in some stories they appear like animals. Their faces are disfigured and even their eyes, ears arms and legs are distorted. In the story entitled as 'In the Country of Mermaid' *Chacha Chaudhary and Blue Diamond* (Diamond Comics-1284), the creature in the shape of half-human and half-crocodile is seen as a member of Muslim community, linked symbolically by bearded face. The story is a fantasy about an unknown wonderland inhabited by a strange community of mermaids. Ozan the colonizer invades their society in order to eliminate the inhabitants of mermaid country. The coincidental presence of the powerful Sabu ensures their community remains unharmed. After a series of combats, Sabu eventually succeeds to eliminate the colonizer Ozan. The fantastical mode of narration easily overwhelms the infant mind and leaves an everlasting impression. In the fantasy-narrative, the real is not omitted. Rather it is symbolically retained.

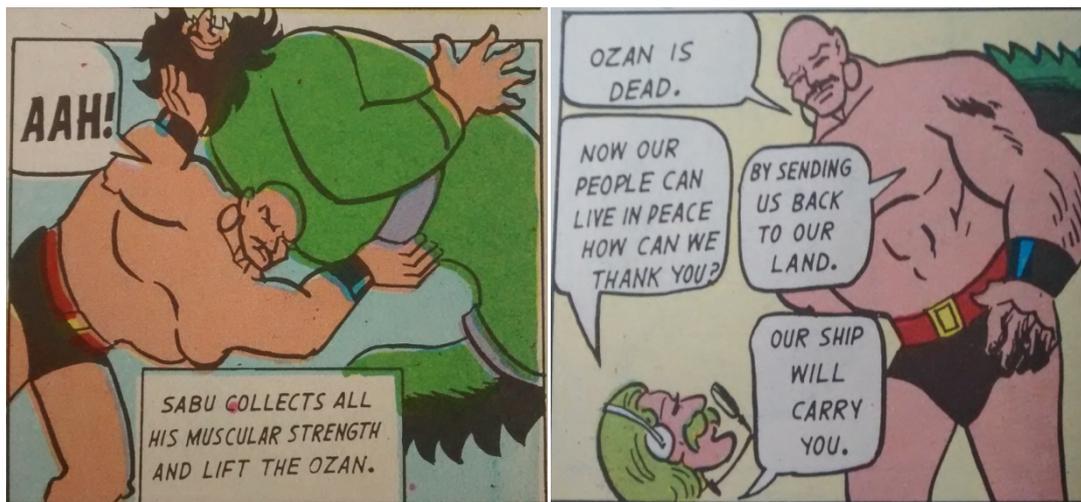


Fig.?? 'In the Country of Mermaid' *Chacha Chaudhary and Blue Diamond* (Diamond Comics-1284).

The realistic codes are intact in the narrative that noticeably confirms the overall operation of the realistic codes in the comic book series. The reader of the comic book can easily decipher the encoded identity of Ozan in the narrative. The Muslim is not integrated into daily routines of life. Rather they are seen as appearing on specific moments only to disrupt everyday life, marking them as incompatible with the Indian way of life. However, positive stereotypes that depict them as Indian citizens can be found in the comic book here and there but their presence is markedly surpassed by the criminal stereotypes of the Muslim community.

The Muslim is represented as antithetical to any heterogeneous existence and seems to aim at eliminating heterogeneity and establishing their cultural hegemony in the society. In opposite to it, the Hindu is seen as a proponent of diversity and multiculturalism. The Hindu nationalism has romanticized the Indian culture's inbuilt-mechanism that has accommodated several foreign cultures and at the same time retained its core essence. In the context of its encounter with different communities, they highlight its inbuilt adaptability and the process of indianisation.^v They narrate the stories how the foreign came to Indian and become part of it by adapting its culture and way of life. The Hindu nationalists advocate indianisation of the Muslim community, cleansing their disloyal tendencies. They argue that the Muslim should adopt the 'Indian' values and norms and display their filial relationship with the mother land. If they adopt the 'Indian' culture, they will be accepted and protected as citizens of the Indian nation. The character of Sabu is deployed as symbolic enactment of the process of

indianisation in which a non Hindu has accepted the cultural authority of the Hindu society and in return, he is incorporated and accepted as member of the Hindu society. Sabu originally belongs to the Jupiter and hence outsider who came on the earth and observing the peaceful and beautiful Hindu society, he decides to become part of this society. He offers himself to the eponymous hero as assistance to serve the Hindu society. Like Bhishma the heroic character of the Mahabharata, he declares himself to remain celibate through his life and use his physical power for welfare of the Hindu society. In the story entitled 'Mrs Khan's security' *Chacha Chaudhary and the Wonderful Perfume* (Diamond Comics-916), the discourse of indianisation is articulated. According to the discourse of indianisation, the Muslim community being 'outsider' should accept the supremacy of the Hindu community and instead of staking claim to the nation, they should adopt 'Indian culture' and inhabit the Indian nation as secondary citizen without any rights and claims. As a secondary citizens of the Indian nation they will be protected by the nation.



Fig.1 'Mrs Khan's Security' *Chacha Chaudhary and the Wondreful Perfume* (Diamond Comics-916).

The narrative represents the nationalist discourse as propounded by the Hindu nationalists. The first large panel depicts the Muslim woman Mrs Khan whose life in danger as the Hindu criminal Dhamaka Singh has asked her to send ten lakh rupees to his place. Being powerless in the Nation dominated by the Hindu majority, she has no other option than to approach Chacha Chaudhary to help her get rid of the existential crisis. Chacha Chaudhary ensures her that nobody can harm her under his protection. The narrative embodies the Hindu middle class's political fantasy of being superior to the Muslim community both politically and socially, relegating the Muslim community to an inferior status. The emotion of 'fear' is invoked to underpin the discourse of Indianisation. The Muslim community is seen as 'threatened other' without protection and guidance of the majority in the Indian nation.

The Muslim characters are represented not only as criminals violent, aggressive, sort of animals as Sabu calls them as 'rats', but also as stupid, mindless creatures, further linking them to the body denying any possession of mental capability. This projection of Muslim characters as body confirms historically constructed stereotype of Muslim community as barbarian devoid of any intellect. The violence characteristics like physical ferocity, rampant sexuality, lust, gluttony and dirtiness are attributed to the Muslim which reflects their inner pollution. To the Hindu mind, the Muslim community conquered India with sword and with their arrival the degeneration of Indian culture began. They not only robbed Hindus of their freedom, land but also harassed them and raped and forced their sisters and daughters to

become their mistresses. In the eyes of the Hindu, the Muslim male is lecherous, greedy, lustful and insensitive.

In the comic book, all Muslim characters fail in their criminal activities because they don't possess intellect and easily get deceived by the eponymous hero. In the political imagination, the Muslim has been stereotyped as barbarian who has no thinking power and acts on impulses. In the story entitled as 'Akalmmand Banane ka Nuskha' *Chacha Chaudhary* (Diamond Comics Digest -22), Chacha Chaudhary is depicted as possessing art of wisdom which is highly envied by the Muslim character Babuka. The power of intellect is not only depicted as superior to physical power but also seen as exclusively gifted to the Hindu mind. The leader of the Muslim group orders his men to capture Chacha Chaudhary in order to learn the art of wisdom but intellectually superior hero easily outwits each of them and imprisons the leader in his own house. The necessity of possessing intellect is articulated and possessor of intellect is simultaneously pointed out, marking the Muslim community as bereft of intellectual power.



Fig.4 'Akalmmand Banane ka Nuskha' *Chacha Chaudhary* (Diamond Comics Digest -22)

The Hindu mind is pitted against the Muslim mind. While the Hindu mind is portrayed as peace-loving and intelligent; the Muslim mind is projected as barbarian, stupid and devilish. The Muslim mind cannot execute any plan without engaging in criminal activities. Chacha Chaudhary, who is known for his social work, refuses to teach them the art of wisdom. They want to sharpen their intellect so that they could execute their conspiracies successfully but the wise hero refuses to share the secrets of wisdom with them because intellect must be used for social welfare not for criminal activities. Both the Hindu and Muslim community are defined in dichotomic categories in which the Hindu community stands intellectually superior to the Muslim community. In another story entitled as 'Brain or Brawn?' *Chacha Chaudhary and the wonderful Perfume* (Diamond Comics-1753), brain and body are compared and brain is established through the narrative logic as more powerful than body. The title itself is a rhetorical question requiring an explanation, constituting the central thread of the story. The conflict between brain and body is exemplified by respectively Chacha Chaudhary and Gallo. Gallo, symbol of physical power in the story is encoded as Muslim character.

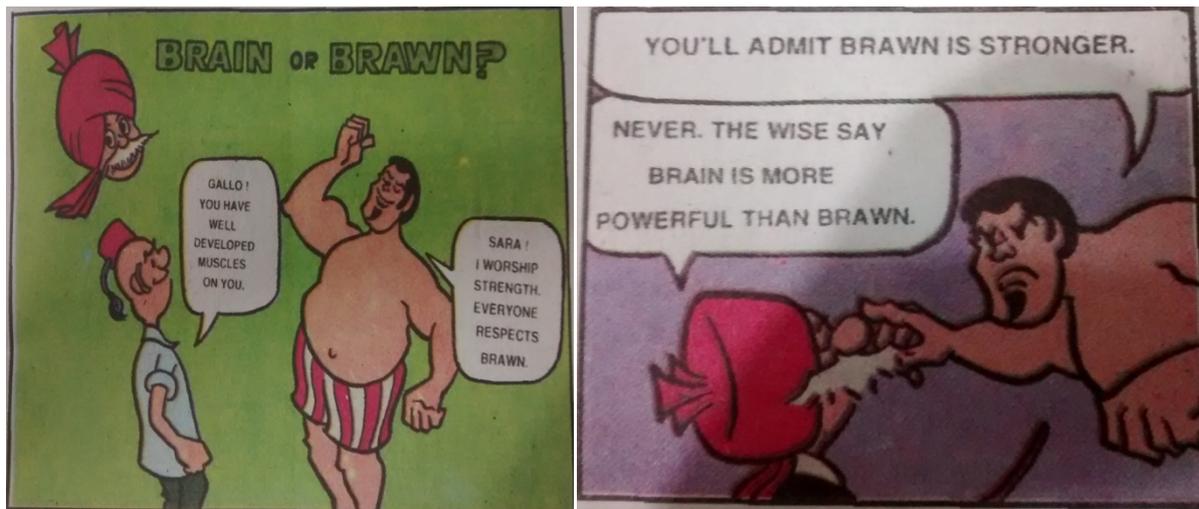


Fig. 'Brain and Brawn?' 'Chacha Chaudhary and the wonderful Perfume (Diamond Comics-1753)

The first panel introduces two Muslim characters who are discussing the comparative strength of brain and body. The muscular Gallo challenges anyone who can prove that brain is stronger than body. Chacha Chaudhary rejects Gallo's presumption that body is superior to brain and indirectly refers to the Indian tradition in which brain is depicted as more powerful than body. Gallo arrogantly challenges Chacha Chaudhary to prove that brain is mightier than body. In the next panel another Muslim character Sultan is introduced who also upholds Gallo's view, suggesting the Muslim community's perception of the body/mind conflict. The way the Muslim characters are seen advocating the superiority of the body over mind reflects how the Muslim community is perceived by the Hindu community. Through his tricks Chacha Chaudhary succeeds to prove that brain is mightier than body. In the story not only is brain projected as superior to body but also body is linked with the Muslim projecting them as barbarian who has tendency to conquer the world with sword.

For the Hindu mind, the minority suggests, 'the spectre of conspiracy, of the cell, the spy, the traitor, the dissident, or the revolutionary' and "the intrusion of the private into the public sphere, and with it the associated dangers of nepotism, collusion, subversion and deception". (Appadurai, 2009: 240) The majority mobilizes itself by creating perception of itself as threatened majority. What makes the discourse of Hindu nationalism efficacious is the projection of the majority as 'threatened community' which is marked by what Appadurai call "the anxiety of incompleteness", and 'fantasy of national purity and wholeness'. (49) The presence of the Muslim is seen as 'an intolerable deficit in the purity of the national whole, and 'a tiny obstacle between minority and totality or total purity'. (49) Appadurai has argued that the Hindu majority is not a fact instead it is a project which survives on the discourse of crisis and practices of violence. The perception created through representation is that the Muslim community is inimical to the existence of Hindu community and poses an existential threat to the Hindu ideals on national consolidation. For the Hindu nationalists, the real enemies of the Hindu are not the Muslims but the Hindus themselves. They advocate that the Hindus should strengthen themselves and mobilize their community. Chacha Chaudhary provides them the much required inspiration to unify themselves against the predatory community. In the narrative, through his adventures he seems to suggest how the 'other' must be dealt with whenever the 'other' poses any threat to the unity of the nation.

The representation of the Muslim in the comic book intersects with other media representations, circulating intertextual knowledge. As Jenkins emphasizes the role of 'transmedia storytelling' in creating 'convergence culture' in which the narrative manifests itself across films, animation, video games, novels as well as comic books and web sites. "Each of us constructs our own personal mythology from bits and fragments of information extracted from the media flow and transformed into resources through which we make sense of our everyday lives." (2006: 4) Through multiple codes operating across different media, a monolithic figure of the Muslim is constructed and circulated or what Anderson would say imagined through 'print capitalism'. The negative image of the Muslim has been installed in the Hindu consciousness through media representations, leading to the process of 'othering' of the Muslim community.

In the story entitled 'Actress Neil' *Chacha Chaudhary and the Wonderful Perfume* (Diamond Comics -912), the story draws its plot from the Indian cinema in which all characters echo the appearance and characterization of Indian cinema and the criminal appear like a villain from a film. The Muslim characters are depicted as members of a famous Bollywood mafia. The references to the underworld aid in the convincing representation of the Muslim characters. Several stories have been reported in the media about mafia dons who have been operating from Muslim countries especially Dubai. They demand money from Bollywood celebrities by threatening them. The double coding in the narrative persuades the reader to identify the real criminals. Through double coding, Muslim characters are contrasted with Hindu criminals; a distinction is made between false representation and true representation. While the Hindu criminals are depicted as harmless tricksters who indulge in insignificant criminal activities that could be condoned but the Muslim criminals are represented as inhuman criminals who can go to any extent to get even small amount. In the story, Sabu is very popular as savior and is desired by every Indian girl as husband. A Bollywood heroine wishes to marry Sabu. Sabu is also known for his soft corner for women and is said to be concerned with their safety.

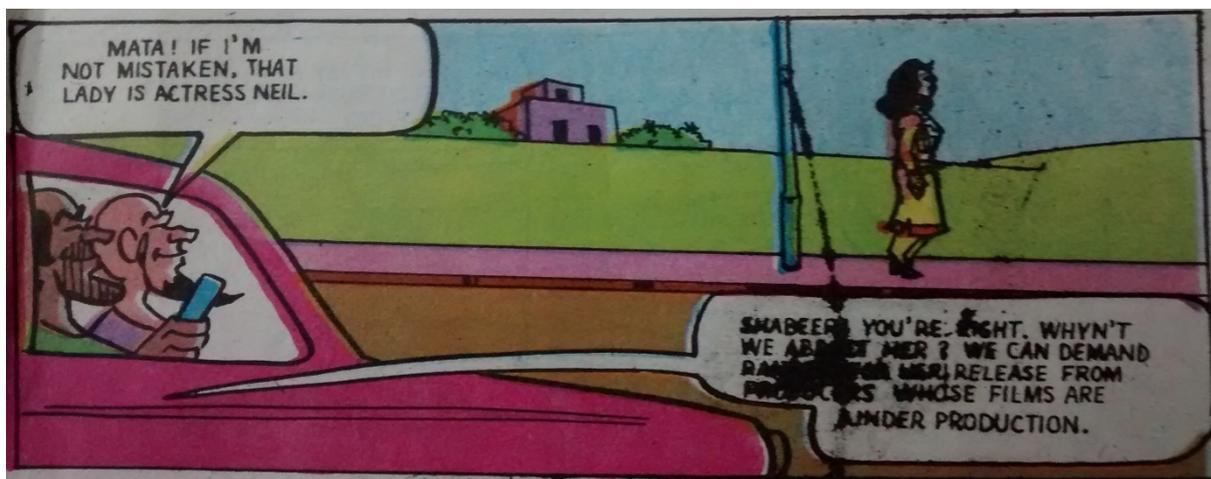


Fig.7 'Actress Neil' *Chacha Chaudhary and the Wonderful Perfume* (Diamond Comics -912)

The heroine employs a theater actor to enact as criminal so that she could meet Sabu. When the heroine is waiting for the actor outside her house, she is intimidated by two real criminals who ask her to go with them. Sabu arrives on the scene on right time to rescue her and thrash the criminals. Through this dichotomy between the real criminals and false criminals, the Muslim characters are projected as real criminal who embody anti-society forces. The Muslim is also depicted as anti modern, orthodox impeding the economic and

social progress of the nation. As a result the nation fails to pace up with the global powers, blogging the improvement in the living standards of the Indian society. In comic narratives, the well-built houses with cemented streets, financial facilities and theme parks that mark the modern Hindu society are in danger to be plundered by the reactionary forces. The urbanized metropolitan city is always under attack. In several stories the Muslim seems to react to urbanization and consumerism as he is never seen as accommodative and confirming the emergence of new patterns of social life. Rather he is depicted as exploiting new technology as increasing possibility to acquire wealth and achieve social power by using coercive power. The Muslim community is seen as retrogressive force in the nation which conspires to ruin its economic system and traffic system, blow the electricity and indulge in bank robberies. Historically the Muslim is seen as conservative and inflexible to adopt the contemporary social and economic advancement. In contrast to the stereotype of the Muslim as anti-modern and orthodox, the Hindu is applauded for his inbuilt adopt-mechanism, citing examples from the Indian history to demonstrate how the Hindus have adopted different cultures and social milieu at different historical junctures and have paved way for economic progress and advancement without resisting them on the basis of culture and religion. The conflict between liberal Hindu and conservative Muslim is understood in terms of the Muslim community's failure to come terms with their present socio-economic situation. They could not evolve a dynamic culture that could coexist with changing cultural and economic trends. In the globally changing world, the Muslim community exhibits their resistance to any dynamic force and feel threatened by the globally changing cultural patterns.

If the Muslim is seen as engaged in advanced technological world he tends to represent portentous potential of technology. In the story 'Bakhiz the scientist' *Chacha Chaudhary and Champat Sampat* (Diamond Comics- 259) the Muslim scientist Bakhiz who is well-known scientist and is capable of inventing new things that could be useful for the society, prefers to invent machine that could help earn money without doing any manual work. He invents a machine that releases a poisonous gas automatically as programmed by him. He uses his invented machine to rob people of their money and other valuable assets. Before he emerges as dangerous criminal for the society, he is subdued by the socially responsible hero Chacha Chaudhary. In the story entitled 'Missing Wife' *Chacha Chaudhary on Jupiter* (Diamond Comics-503), the Muslim culture is differentiated from Hindu culture, highlighting cultural differences and projecting the Muslim culture as conservative and incapable of evolving its culture to accommodate modern cultural patterns. An unidentified Muslim in traditional Muslim attire is introduced as a stranger in the city who is looking for his lost wife in the market crowd. Chacha Chaudhary promises him to find out his wife and asks Sabu to search his wife in the market. In the next short panel, in a close up shot, Sabu is seen as surprised at unexpected scene. His eyes are wide-open with gaping mouth. What has surprised him is visualized in the next panel. The next panel depicts a crowd of Muslim women who all are wearing sartorial *burqa*, a traditional dress code for women. The story draws on the Muslim dress code *burqa* for its central conflict to be resolved, turning *burqa* into a metaphor for community. The *burqa* becomes a language to define and explain the Muslim community. Muslim women have been stereotyped by encoding them with a single cultural code, *marking* them as an orthodox community with rigid notions of culture. The *burqa* is projected as identity-crisis in the contemporary world leading to confusion of identity within community and between communities.

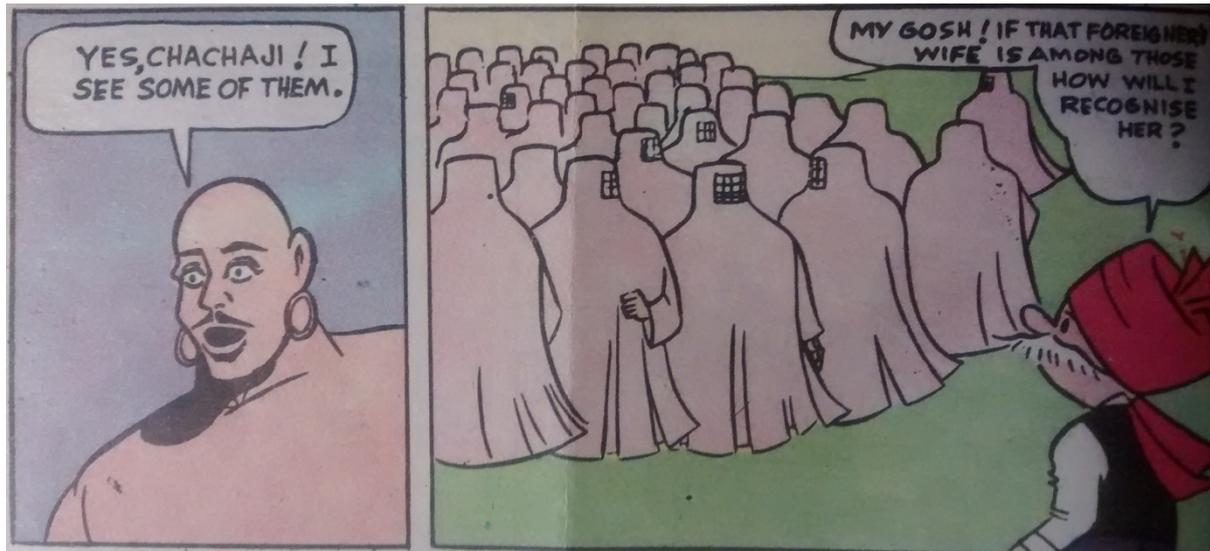


Fig. 'Missing Wife' *Chacha Chaudhary on Jupiter* (Diamond Comics-503)

Both Chacha Chaudhary and Sabu seem to be amused at their *burqas*, suggesting their incompatibility with the modern world. In the story, *burqa* is humorously exploited as weapon to stigmatize the Muslim community as conservative and unable to adopt the modern globalized culture. The projection of the Muslim as traditional and orthodox in the story is in line with representation of the Muslim community in the comic book series, homogenizing the stereotyping depiction of the Muslim community.

In the comic book, the Muslim does not figure as professionally well qualified or successful businessman as the Hindus are portrayed. Rather the Muslim is portrayed as engaged in traditional economic activities or exploiting technologies unethically for earning money or gaining power in the society. Through representation of their engagement with traditional economic and social activities, they are framed as unprogressive in comparison to the emerging Hindu middle class. In the story entitled 'Baakhu and Minister' *Chacha Chaudhary and Aflatoon* (Diamond Comics-1453), the Muslim character Baakhu is dependent on his pet bird 'minister' for his survival. The pet bird steals food and other valuable assets for his master. The bird rearing is a game that has been associated with the Muslim culture since the Mughal period. During the Mughal period, the bird-rearing was patronized and was part of everyday sport activities. Since then, the bird-rearing is linked with the Muslim identity. For instance, in the story entitled 'Ali's Pigeons' *Chacha Chaudhary and Film Star* (Diamond Comics-618), two Muslims are depicted as participating in pigeon-flying competition. Driven by jealousy, Mirza Dafli plans to hire a shooter to kill Ali's pigeons so that he could easily win the competition. Disappointed by Mirza's immoral behavior, Ali approaches Chacha to protect his pigeons from the shooter.



Fig.7. 'Ali's Pigeons' *Chacha Chaudhary and Film Star* (Diamond Comics-618)

The game of pigeon-flying, a popular game in the Mughal period, came to be perceived as wastage of time and marker of 'lost generation' in the post-independence India. After independence, so many cultural practices of both Mughal and British period were targeted as inappropriate for the newly emerging nation as human potential should be utilized for the project of nation-building. The Muslim culture has been depicted as '*nawabi culture*' marked by libidinal indulgence in pleasure of the senses. The presence of flying pigeons in media representations serves to function as marker of typical Muslim culture.

In several stories threat from the Pakistan is a central theme and complicity of the Indian Muslims is a subplot, playing on suspicious loyalty of the Muslim community to the Indian nation. Some stories are drawn from real historical events specially terrorists activities that are said to be operating from the border. In one story entitled 'Chacha Chaudhary and the Great Kidnapping' *Chacha Chaudhary and the Great Kidnapping* (Diamond Comics -1598), a minister is kidnapped by the terrorists who demand that the terrorist Gogan must be released. The government approaches the hero to help the police to rescue the minister without submitting to the demands of the terrorists. In a bollywood style, an isolated place is fixed to exchange the criminal with minister. The government initially opposes Chacha Chaudhary's conspiracy to deceive the terrorists at the right moment but keeping in mind the hero's skilled mind and his ardent patriotic feelings, the government decides to follow his plan to get rid of the terrorist group



Fig.8. 'The Great Kidnapping' *Chacha Chaudhary and the Great Kidnapping* (Diamond Comics -1598)

They meet the terrorists on already decided place and according to terrorists' condition; the criminal is set free in exchange of the Indian minister. However, the moment the minister is seen as out of danger, according to the plan, Sabu attacks them suddenly from the hidden place and captures them. The national crisis is resolved but the enemy is identified who threatens the peace-loving citizens of the Indian nation.

In the Indian public sphere, terrorism has been so much discussed, explained in the context of assertion of fundamentalist Muslim groups that the term terrorism has become a functional signifier to define the Muslim community. The consistent repetition of the term terrorism for militant Muslims both insider and outsider in the media representation, has produced a set connotations of terrorism as something integral part of Muslim culture. The discourse of terrorism has stereotyped the Muslim as synonymous with terrorism. Pakistan is mentioned implicitly as a neighbor engaged in anti-India activities, disrupting the working of Indian democracy by producing terror among citizens. In the story entitled 'Landmine' *Chacha Chaudhary and Cyber Crime* (Diamond Comics-1281), two Muslims are shown as lying landmine to blow a minister's car. Through their conversation, we come to know that a secret mission has been assigned to them by a neighbor country. They lay landmine in front of minister's house but their mission is exposed by none other the eponymous hero. The story ends with a proverb inserted in speech balloon. The speech balloon which states "those who dig a grave for others are themselves buried in" is addressed directly to the reader. Pakistan and those who are complicit with its conspiracy are projected as evil doers and hence require to be punished. To the Hindu mind, Pakistan is eternal enemy who is determined to destroy the Indian nation and the Indian Muslim is doubted as complicit with the conspiracy. It is the servant of the minister who shares the minister's daily routine with the terrorists and informs his next scheduled visit so that he could be entrapped. The servant in the story is an Indian pathan who has betrayed his master and country as well. The servant betrays his country in order to help the criminals who are also from his community.



Fig.8 'Landmine' *Chacha chaudhary and Cyber Crime* (Diamond Comics-1281)

What is conveyed carefully is that the Muslim has more powerful bonding with his community than with his country, reinforcing stereotype of the Muslim as disloyal as propagated by the Hindu nationalists throughout the Indian history.

In addition to the Muslim rule and partition trauma, the Kashmir issue has provided an 'alibi' to the construction of discourse of Muslim as other. In almost all media narratives, the Kashmir has been deployed as site to construct the Muslim community as 'other' whose loyalties lies not in India but in Pakistan which is projected as heaven for the Muslim community. The opening panel in the story entitled as 'Operation Capital' *Chacha Chaudhary and Blue Diamond* (Diamond Comics-1284), depicts a dilapidated house on the Pakistan border and the Himalayan hills provided the background. In the second panel, four Muslims are depicted holding weapons and discussing their loss in fight with the Indian armed forces. The terrorists are suggested to be Kashmir Muslims who have been fighting for their freedom against the Indian state.

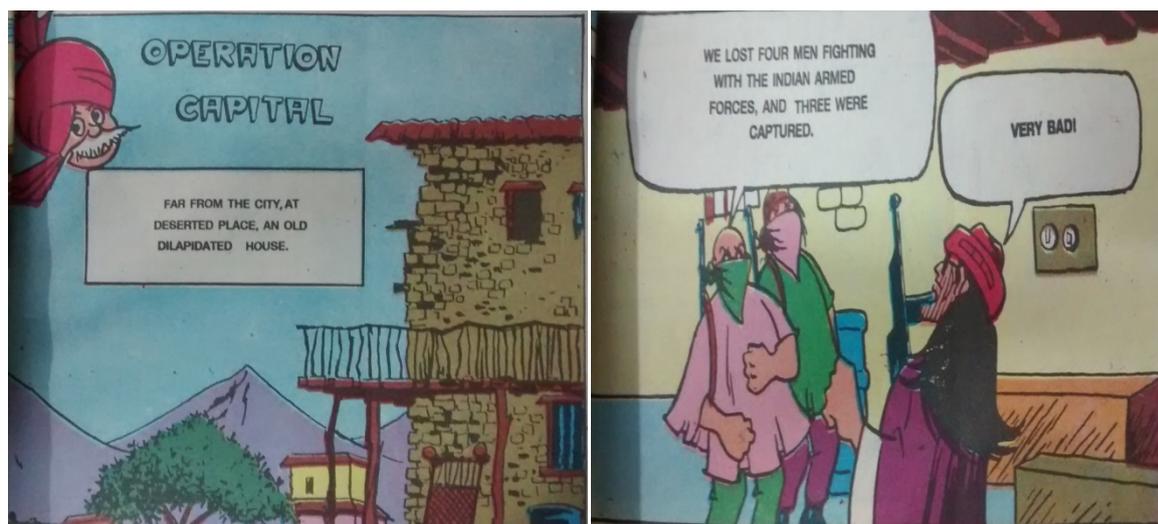


Fig.9. 'Operation Capital' *Chacha Chaudhary and Blue Diamond* (Diamond Comics-1284)

There is a reference to a foreign country that has been looking after their families and provided them training and weapons to free the state from the Indian nation. Without any direct reference, it is suggested that this foreign country is Pakistan which has been helping the Kashmiri Muslims in their freedom struggle. The terrorists lay out a plan to blow the railway track by using RDX. A Hindu overhears their conversation and immediately conveys the message to the eponymous hero. The title of the story suggests that terrorist activity would be carried out in the capital of India and the Rajdhani Express is the target. In the fourth panel the space is shifted from the Kashmir to the city Delhi. On hearing the conspiracy, the hero takes an immediate action and asks the inspector to take quick action. Realizing that the inspector is not paying attention to this current threat, he rebukes him and suggests him that these Kashmiri terrorists should not be encouraged. Through a speech balloon, he suggests to expose the disloyalty of the Kashmiri Muslims. He tells the inspector that "Inspector, sometimes appearances are deceptive .It s pointless; going to a doctor after the patient is dead". Sabu like Hanumana takes him on his shoulder to the spot where RDX has been fixed. They not only abort their plan but also capture the terrorists. In the story, the Kashmir Muslims are represented as traitors who have more affinities with Pakistan rather than with their homeland. The Indian Muslims are accused of being traitor and having more concerned with Pakistan than India.

Through cricketing culture, the Muslim character is compared and differentiated from the Hindu character. Sharda (2005) has argued that the Indian cricket has been transformed from a popular sport to a site of national imaginary. Cricket has acquired symbolic significance in the political imagination. As part of the national imagination, cricketing

culture is implicated into Hindutva politics. Bal Thackeray, the leader of the right –wing Shiv Sena asked the Indian Muslims to pass his own loyalty test. -‘I want them [Muslims] with tears in their eyes every time India loses to Pakistan,’ (qtd Sharda ,86). Ramachandra Guha argues in his book that ‘Cricket has always been a microcosm of the fissures and tensions within Indian society; fissures that it has both reflected and played upon, mitigated as well as intensified’ (2002: xv). In Indian context, the popularity of cricket has encouraged jingoism which has been termed as ‘hypernationalism’. In this cricketing culture when connected with national culture, the Muslim identity as ‘Indian’ is often doubted, illegitimated. Cricket series with Pakistan is often pronounced as Badla(revenge) and an opportunity to prove one’s deshbhakati. Cricket has been an agent of mobilization of Hindu masses. In the story entitled ‘Pitch and Paisa’ *Chacha Chaudhary and SABu and Football* (Diamond Comics-1369), the Muslim character who is a match fixer and to whom cricket is not a matter of national pride but a money making business, is suggested as disloyal to the Indian nation. He hatches a conspiracy to change the course of the cricket match. According to his planning, he tries to bribe the patriotic curator Raghu who refuses to betray his nation.



Fig. 9 ‘Pitch and Paisa’ *Chacha Chaudhary and SABu and Football* (Diamond Comics-1369)

Frustrated by Raghu’s patriotism, he kidnaps him and sends his men to prepare a pitch so that the match can be turned into his favor. But on the right time, the traitor is exposed and the patriotic Raghu is rescued by Chacha Choudhary. Through cricketing culture , the muslim is stereotyped as antinational who has betrayed his nation to pursue his personal ambition.

In spite of dominance presence of the stereotypes of the Muslim community as criminal, thief, robber, disloyal and swindler, there are certain Muslim characters which have been depicted as good citizens who transcend their individual interests and community to serve the nation. But such representation of the Muslim community seems to depict the Indian nation as a secular nation in which all citizens, irrespective of their religion, caste and ethnicity, are looked after, and equal rights and opportunities are given to them. It is important to investigate whether such patriotic characters in the comic book are simply marked characters who serves merely as functional signifier to project the Indian nation as secular nation in which all citizens are equal or they depict the Muslim community’s belongingness in the nation dominated by the Hindu values and norms. An in-depth analysis

of the stereotypes of the Muslim community in the comic book gives the impression that such few examples among the prominent presence of criminal characters seem to specify only individuals who rise above their emotional ties with their community to serve the nation. The excessively repetition of the stereotype of the Muslim as 'criminal' leaves no scope for the few 'good' Muslim characters in the comic book to influence the construction of perception about the Muslim community in the representation as it is repetition through which stereotypes function to generate ideological meanings.

In the story entitled Scientist 'Dr Kalam' *Chacha Chaudhary and Raka's Story* (Diamond Comics-1786) the character of the scientist is directly inspired by the Indian scientist Dr A.P.J. Kalam who is also known as the *Missile Man of India*. His personality has been used in the story in order to represent India as secular nation in which Muslims like Dr Kalam sacrifice their personal comforts to serve the nation. The charismatic personality of Dr Kalam is compared with Pakistani Muslims who conspire to assassinate the Indian scientist because his scientific inventions pose threat to their country's security.



Fig. 'Dr Kalam' *Chacha Chaudhary and Raka's Story* (Diamond Comics-1786)

There is a direct reference to nuclear arm race between India and Pakistan. The Pakistani Muslims hatch a conspiracy to kidnap Dr. Kalam in order to check India's nuclear power. In the beginning of the story, Dr Kalam is seen as India's greatest scientist who is respected and loved by every citizen of India. Impressed by his national service, the hero Chacha Chaudhary decides to visit him to discuss some national issues. Chacha Chaudhary's coincidental encounter with the kidnappers in Dr Kalam's house makes sure that Dr Kalam, the true nationalist, remains protected. Enraged by failure of the plot, the leader of the neighbor country orders his men to kill Dr Kalam. A conspiracy is concocted to blow Dr Kalam's car. The climax is followed by anticlimax in which intensity of seriousness of action is turned into farcical action. Dr. Kalam is protected by Sabu and the terrorists from the neighbor country are stripped of their power, standing there powerless like a bunch of tricksters.

In the paper I have investigated how the comic book *Chacha Chaudhary* draws on already circulated stereotypes of the Muslim community in representation of the Indian nation. The comic book has exploited the historically created stereotypes of the Muslim community to make the narrative intelligible for the reader. But, as stereotyping is an ideological practice which influences the way in which communal identity is constructed and

disseminated in the public sphere, the Muslim community is depicted as representing dark forces, posing a serious threat to the 'Indian' culture.

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i) For further study of the conflict between the Hindu community and Muslim community, see Amalendu Misra: *Identity and religion: Foundations of anti-Islamism in India*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2004, Kakar, Sudhir. *The Colors of Violence: Cultural Identities, Religion, and Conflict*. Chicago:University of Chicago Press, 1996., Freitag, Sandria B., *Collective Action and Community: Public Arenas and the Emergence of Communalism in North India* (Oxford, 1989), Pandey, Gyanendra, ed., 1993, *Hindus and Others: The Question of Identity in India Today*, Delhi, Viking., Hasan, Mushirul. *Legacy of a Divided Nation: India's Muslims since Independence*. Boulder:Westview, 1997; Christiane Brosius and Melissa Butcher (eds.), *Image journeys: Audio-visual media and cultural change in India* (New Delhi, Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, 1999); Arvind Rajagopal, *Politics after Television: Hindu Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Indian Public* (Cambridge, U.K.,

ii) The role of Hindu nationalism in the emergence of Indian comics has been analyzed by scholars like Karline and Chandra. see Karline McLain *India's Immortal Comic Books: Gods, Kings, and Other Heroes* Bloomington: [Indiana University Press](#), 2010; Chandra, Nandini. *The Classic Popular: Amar Chitra Katha*. New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2008.; Babb, L. and Susan Wadley, eds. 1995. *Media and the Transformation of Religion in South Asia*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

i) Balraj Madhok, *Indianisation? What, Why and How*. New Delhi: S. Chand, 1970. also see Jaffrelot, Christopher. *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.

iii) This idea is based on the Hindu concept of Darshan which describes a worshipper's relationship of "seeing and being seen by deity" Christopher Pinney, 'Photos of Gods': *The Printed Image and the Political Struggle in India*, London, Reaktion Books, 2004, p 8-9

iv) Roland Barthes describes stereotype in terms of myth : Myth does not deny things , on the contrary , its function is to talk about them; simply , it purifies them, it makes them innocent

, it gives them a clarity which is not that of explanation but that of a statement of fact.see Barthes,R. *Mythologies* (tr.A. Lavers),London, Paladin,1989,p.156

v) Balraj Madhok, *Indianisation? What, Why and How* .New Delhi: S. Chand, 1970. also see Jaffrelot,Christophe.*The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*.New York: Columbia University Press,1996.

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