The Hindu Religion and War*

PREAMBLE

Although, since Mahatma Gandhi, India is known by many as the country where the principle of *ahimsā*, ‘not killing’, has being invented and implemented, this ancient principle had originally little or nothing to do with how warfare was conducted and conceived in Hindu society. War was endemic in South Asia and seen as the right and duty of the Hindu king. This warfare, however, was regulated by some rules, which were humane in some respects. Battle was sometimes conceived of as a form of ritual, in which the soldiers were the sacrificial victims, but this does not entail that Hindu kings went to war for the sake of religion.

By the 11th century the traditional Hindu view of war was seriously challenged by Islamic invaders. This essay investigates the impact of this confrontation. The conflict between both communities, Hindu and Muslim, has flared up again in recent years. It is argued that the communal unrest in India since its independence tends to alter the Hindu self-perception and its values.

AŚOKA AND ANCIENT WARFARE IN INDIA

What warfare could mean in India in the 3rd century BC we learn from Aśoka’s Thirteenth Rock-Edict.

When king Devānāìnpriya Priyadarśin (i.e. Aśoka) had been anointed eight years, (the country of) the Kaliṅgas was conquered by (him). One hundred and fifty thousand in number were the men who were deported thence, one hundred thousand in number were those who were slain there, and many times as many were those who died. (CII I, 68)

The same Edict, however, shows that ethical principles were considered to have a relevance with respect to wartime conditions, when Aśoka continues,

After that, now that (the country of) the Kaliṅgas has been taken, Devānāìnpriya (is devoted) to a zealous study of morality (*dhramaśilana = dharmaśilana*), to

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the love of morality, and to the instruction (of people) in morality. [...] For, this is considered very painful and deplorable by Devānāṃpriya, that, while one is conquering an unconquered (country), slaughter (vadhā), death (maraṇa) and deportation of people (are taken place) there. [...] For Devānāṃpriya desires towards all beings abstention from hurting (akṣati), self-control, (and) impartiality in (case of) violence. (CII I, 68 f.)

The Arthaśāstra

The campaigns of Aśoka and his military objectives appear, generally speaking, not out of tune with what is recommended to the ‘ruler who wishes to conquer’, the vijigīṣu, in the ancient ‘Treatise on Polity’, the Arthaśāstra, which has the following to say on warfare.

Fighting (yuddha) is said to be of three kinds—prakāśa-yuddha ‘open fight’ in the place and at the time indicated, kūta-yuddha ‘concealed fighting’, involving the use of tactics on the battlefield, and tūṣṇīn-yuddha ‘silent fight’, implying the use of secret agents for enticing enemy officers or killing them (AŚ 7.6.40–41).

It is stated that when the vijigīṣu is superior in strength and the season and terrain are favourable to him, he should resort to open warfare (AŚ 10.3.1). In fact, a fight, about the place and time of which notice has been given, is considered righteous, dharmiṣṭha (AŚ 10.3.26).

If the vijigīṣu is not superior to the enemy and the terrain and the season are unfavourable to him, he may resort to kūta-yuddha [...].¹

The same Arthaśāstra that defines the ruler as the ‘one desirous of conquering’ and defines the specific duty (svadharma) of the kṣatriya as ‘living by the profession of arms (śastrājīva) and protecting the beings’ (AŚ 1.3.6) enumerates among the duties common to all classes of society, including the kṣatriyas, the ‘abstaining from injury’, ahiṃsā (AŚ 1.3.13). From this it follows that the duty of ahiṃsā is a duty that concerns the individual, but does not relate to the state, nor to the ruler of the state, the vijigīṣu, nor to those, the warriors and soldiers, who are engaged by the state to realize its aims, defence and conquest.

Although Aśoka’s morality seems to break with this conception in that it apparently advocates bringing ethical principles to bear on the apparatus of government, he formulates this new policy of ‘conquest by morality’ (dharma-vijaya) and the purpose of his proclamations—viz. ‘in order that the sons (and) great-grandsons (who) may be (born) to me, he may be (born) to me, should not think that a fresh conquest ought to be made’ (CII I, 70)—only after he himself had conquered all there was to conquer. And he is not slow to add that those subjugated by him ‘should be told of the power (to punish them) which Devānāṃpriya (possesses) in spite of (his) repentance, in order that they may be ashamed (of their crimes) and may not be killed’ (CII I, 69).

In other words, the policies envisaged in Kaṇṭiliya Arthaśāstra and Aśoka’s Edicts are not as different as they may appear at first sight: both aspire to

¹ Kangle 1963–65 III, 258.
bring violence (*hiṃsā*) firmly under government control, reserving the right to kill to the state.

**The Principle of *Ahimsā* and the Rules of War**

*Ahimsā*

All this is not to say that Asoka’s conception of ‘abstention from killing animals and from hurting living beings’ (*avīhīsā*) and Kautilya’s maxim of *ahimsā* cover exactly the same ground. It is clear that the former is inspired by a Buddhist ethos,² while the second relates to a discourse of Brahmanical jurists. Hanns-Peter Schmidt’s article on *The Origin of Ahimsā*, Heesterman’s *Non-Violence and Sacrifice*, and Bodewitz’s *Hindu Ahimsā and its Roots*, to mention some of the main discussants, have shown that the development of this concept is an intricate one,³ one which we shall leave aside here however, since from these studies it emerges that, whatever the origin of the concept and whatever a Dharmaśāstra author may have understood by *ahimsā*, it had no bearing on the policies of the state and the right, nay the duty of the king to wage war.⁴ This right, and hence the right to stage organized killing in the interest of the state, has, to the best of my knowledge, never been questioned in the brahmanical tradition, before Mahatma Gandhi—and foreign influences play a role here—gave a new meaning to this old concept.⁵ Before him, and sadly also after him, war was rather considered to be part and parcel of organized society, sanctified by those who had probably most to win and least to lose by it, the brahmanical elite.

*The Bhagavadgītā*

One example, a very early one that has however retained its unquestioned authority until today, may suffice to illustrate the point. After Arjuna had

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² For this ethos and its implementation see Schmithausen 1999; on Asoka *op. cit.* 55.
³ Schmidt 1968, 1997; Heesterman 1984; Bodewitz 1999. For a survey and bibliography of this discussion see Bodewitz 1999. Bodewitz concludes (*ibid.* 41):

One may rather assume that *ahīṃsā* originally belonged to the ascetic antiritualism, which was especially represented by the heretics (Buddhist and Jains) and only hesitantly obtained a foothold in the older Vedic Upaniṣads, where, however, it [scil. antiritualism] was never associated with *ahīṃsā*.

⁴ Bodewitz 1999, 20:

Killing in war was a prescript for the relevant social class and therefore pacifism can be ruled out as a decisive factor in the development of at least the Hindu concept of *ahimsā*.

⁵ Schwab 1950, 474:

Après quoi c’est le façonnement slave de l’*ahīṃsā* qui va frapper en retour les détenteurs de la croyance: Gandhi demande à Tolstoï sa propre inspiration, et par lui retrouve sa voie vers la loi d’amour et de passivité; lui écrivant de Londres en 1909, il signe ‘votre humble disciple’, en reçoit le conseil de lire la *Lettre à un Hindou*, où la filiation était le plus explicite, et dont il avouera l’action décisive sur sa méditation.
expressed his reservations with respect to killing his kinsmen, the Lord himself has this to say in the Bhagavadgītā.

This embodied (soul) is eternally unslayable in the body of every one, son of Bharata; therefore all beings thou shouldst not mourn. Likewise having regard for thine own (caste) duty (svadharma) thou shouldst not tremble; for another, better thing than a fight required of duty exists not for a warrior. Presented by mere luck, an open door of heaven—happy the warriors, son of Pṛthā, that get such a fight! Now, if thou this duty-required conflict wilt not perform, then thine own duty and glory abandoning, thou shalt get thee evil.  

The continuity of the Indian tradition in this respect could not be better illustrated than by a speech given by Bal Gangadhar Tilak at the occasion of the Shivaji Festival in 1896, organized by him to strengthen Hindu solidarity against British Rule, but simultaneously directed against the Muslim community. In the Festival Shivaji’s murder of the Mogul general Afzal Khan was particularly celebrated. Tilak addresses his audience as follows.

Let us even assume that Shivaji first planned and then executed the murder of Afzal Khan. Was this act of the Maharaja good or bad? This question which has to be considered should not be viewed from the standpoint of the Penal Code or even of the Smritis of Manu. […] The laws which bind society are for common men like you and me. […] Great men are above the common principles of morality. These principles do not reach the place on which great men stand. Did Shivaji commit a sin in killing Afzal Khan? The answer to this question can be found in the Mahābhārata itself. Shrimat Krishna preached in the Gītā that we have a right even to kill our own guru and our kinsmen. No blame attaches to any person if he is doing deeds without being actuated by a desire to reap the fruit of his deeds. […] If thieves enter our house and we have not strength enough in our fists to drive them out, we should without hesitation lock them up and burn them alive. God has not conferred upon the foreigners the grant inscribed on a copperplate to the Kingdom of Hindustan.

Tilak’s words eerily resound in the reports of what happened during the communal riots that were sparked off by the dispute over the Babri Masjid in Ayodhyā one century later, when hundreds of Indians, mostly Muslims, were burnt alive when their houses were set ablaze by their fellow-villagers.

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6 BhG 2.30–33 (translation by Franklin Edgerton). Elsewhere in the Mahābhārata (MBh 12.15.20) the principle of non-injury is downright declared to be impossible in the world. Cf. Basham 1967, 123:

In several passages of the Mahābhārata, notably in the famous Bhagavad Gītā, the evil and cruelty of war are referred to, and it is suggested that the life of the soldier is a sinful one. But such arguments are only put forward to be demolished by counterarguments, most of which are based on the necessities of this dark age of the world and on the dangers of anarchy. Positive condemnations of war are rare in Indian literature.

7 Quoted from Wolpert 1962, 86 f.

8 Bakker 1991a, 99 f.; above, p. 75
The rules of war

All this looks pretty grim, and no doubt India has had its share of carnage and distress caused by never ending wars between states and various communities, but the picture should not be made more gruesome than necessary. There were rules that regulated warfare and that limited its destructive potential.

The *Arthaśāstra* lays down that, ‘when attacking the enemy in the open battlefield or when storming a fort, care should be taken to see that the following categories of persons are not attacked: (1) *patita*, those who have fallen down, (2) *parāṁmukha*, those who have turned their back on the fight, (3) *abhipanna*, those who surrender, (4) *muktakesa*, those whose hair are loose (as a mark of submission), (5) *muktasāstra*, those who have abandoned their weapons, (6) *bhayavirūpa*, those whose appearance is changed through fear, and (7) *ayuddhyamāna*, those who are taking no part in the fight.’

These restrictions agree with the view expressed in the *Moksadharmaparvan* which ordains that, A king should not hurt (*himasyād*) children or elderly people, nor him who is exhausted, who is frightened, who has lost his weapons, who cries, who flees, who is without means, inactive, ill or begs for mercy.

These rules sound particularly humane and in some respects even seem to anticipate the Geneva Convention, though one may be sceptical about their implementation in actual battle as one may be of the Geneva Convention today. Even without a statistical investigation one senses that the avowed chivalry was renounced, more often than not, also in the *Mahābhārata* itself.

The reports of Megasthenes and Ibn Battūta

However, unexpected though it may seem, this ‘civilized’, or one should rather say ‘ritualized’ form of warfare is confirmed by a foreign observer who lived in India in about the same period in which the *Arthaśāstra* was beginning to take form and Aśoka reported his conquests, namely by the Greek Megasthenes, ambassador of Seleucus to the court of Candragupta Maurya, Aśoka’s grandfather. As is well known, Megasthenes’ own book on India is lost, but much of it is preserved in Arrian’s *Indika* which has the following to say on the issue.

The fifth caste among the Indians consists of the warriors, who are second in point of numbers to the husbandmen, but lead a life of supreme freedom and enjoyment. They have only military duties to perform. Others make their arms, and others supply them with horses, and they have others to attend on them in the camp, who take care of their horses, clean their arms, drive their elephants, prepare their chariots, and act as their charioteers. As long as they are required to fight they fight, and when peace returns they abandon themselves to enjoyment—the pay which they receive from the state being so liberal that they can with ease maintain themselves and others besides.

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9 Kangle 1963–65 III, 259 f. (AŚ 13.4.52).
10 MBh 12.286.3–4. Cf. MBh 3.19.13–14.
The second caste consists of the tillers of the soil, who form the most numerous
class of the population. They are neither furnished with arms, nor have any
military duties to perform, but they cultivate the soil and pay tribute to the kings
and the independent cities. In times of civil war the soldiers are not allowed to
moisten the husbandmen or ravage their lands: hence, while the former are fighting
and killing each other as they can, the latter may seem close at hand tranquilly
pursuing their work,—perhaps ploughing, or gathering in their crops, pruning the
trees, or reaping the harvest.\textsuperscript{11}

The picture is too good to be true, since, for instance, the destruction of crops
in the country of the enemy seems to have been common practice; but even if
Indian historic reality was less idyllic than Megasthenes wanted us to believe,
the essence of his observations seems to be that within the traditional Indian
constellation war was primarily conceived as a gallant pastime of kings, a kind
of sport that was directed towards eliminating rival kings and acquisition of
glory, land and riches, not towards the destruction of neighbouring countries
that were hated. An unexpected confirmation of this chivalrous ethos is found
in the Travelogue of Ibn Baṭṭūta, who stayed in India for 15 years (c. AD
1335–1349) and who tells us, when once he was in dire straits:

\begin{quote}
I was afraid that they would all shoot at me at once if I fled from them, and I was
wearing no armour so I threw myself to the ground and surrendered, as they do
not kill those who do that.\textsuperscript{12}
\end{quote}

Hence war could be viewed as perfectly within the precincts of the \textit{dharma} and
was generally not associated with evil (\textit{pāpa}), though, admittedly, there were
grades of righteousness. The historic reality is reflected in Indian mythology,
in which heroes and gods, if they are not practising self-mortification (\textit{tapas}),
are continuously concerned with fighting each other, and in which monstrous
atrocities are described with great gusto and approval. The epic by the mouth
of Kṛṣṇa even openly defends the use of foul means in battle by holding up the
gods as an example,

\begin{quote}
Enemies of superior number are to be killed falsely and by (foul) means. This path
has formerly been followed by the gods when they slew the Asuras; and a path
followed by the good ones may be followed by all.\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

This opportunistic and rather naive view of a privileged elite must have suffered
serious blows when the kingdoms of northern India were confronted with foreign
invaders. It may partly account for the fact that in these confrontations the
Indian armies were often the losing party. The adversaries did not play the
game by the same rules, while the Indian kings and generals appear to have
been very reluctant to change them. On the other hand, when invaders came
to stay they were accommodated to the Indian system and gradually dissolved

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{11} Arrianus, \textit{Indika} 12.2–4, 11.9–10. Translation quoted from McCrindle 1877, 210f.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibn Baṭṭūta Vol. IV, 777.
\textsuperscript{13} MBh 9.60.61–62.
\end{footnotes}
therein. I am thinking, for instance, of the Śakas (the Scyths), the Kuśānas, and the Hūṇas.

The idea of a ‘just war’

War thus seemed to some extent to be a natural phenomenon and needed no justification; consequently the concept of a ‘just war’ did not arise. And the multifarious and sponge-like character of the Indian religions, lacking a central authoritative agency, simply did not give rise to the idea of religious wars.\textsuperscript{14} The Arthaśāstra, on the contrary, recommends that a king adapts himself to the religious customs of the countries he has brought under his control.

After gaining new territory, he should cover the enemy’s faults with his own virtues, his virtues with double virtues. He should carry out what is agreeable and beneficial to the subjects by doing his own duty as laid down, granting favours, giving exemptions, making gifts and showing honour. […] Hence he should adopt a similar character, dress, language and behaviour (as the subjects). And he should show the same devotion in festivals in honour of deities of the country (deśadaivata), festive gatherings and sportive amusements. […] And he should cause the honouring of all deities and hermitages, and make grants of land, money and exemptions to men distinguished in learning, speech and piety, order the release of all prisoners and render help to the distressed, the helpless and the diseased. […] And discontinuing whatever custom he might regard harmful to the treasury and the army, or as unrighteous (adharmaśtha), he should establish a righteous course of conduct (dharmaeyavahāra).\textsuperscript{15}

Though this policy seems to have been practised by many Indian kings, it did not preclude that the possession of a holy place, temple or idol could be the target of a military campaign. Yet, we should be reluctant to designate such a campaign or war a ‘religious’ or ‘holy war’, since its objective was to divert a religious asset to the use of the state rather than to enhance or defend the cause of religion itself.

The battle and the sacrifice

However, it will cause no surprise that in a culture that was entirely permeated by religion and that to some extent ritualized warfare, war was considered to be sanctified in another sense. The Sanskrit literature abounds in comparisons of the (ritual) battle and the sacrifice. Battlefields are seen as sacrificial grounds and the warriors killed are the sacrificial animals (paśus). Like the latter they are believed to go straight to heaven. Thus Kṛṣṇa speaks to Arjuna: ‘Either slain thou shalt gain heaven, Or conquering thou shalt enjoy the earth.’\textsuperscript{16} And like the instruments of sacrifice, the implements of war needed consecration. To this end a lustration (nirājanā) ceremony was traditionally performed at

\textsuperscript{14} Cf. above, pp. 56 ff.
\textsuperscript{15} AŚ 13.5.3-4, 7-8, 11, 14. Translation Kangle 1963–65 II, 491 f.
\textsuperscript{16} BhG 2.37 (translation Edgerton).
the end of the autumnal Navarātra festival, on the ‘Tenth of Victory’ (vijayā-
daśamī, Dasarā), in which the ‘Invincible Goddess’ (Aparājita) was worshipped and the king’s arms, his soldiers, horses and elephants were purified before they took to the field. The festival preceding this lustration of arms, the Navarātra, is dedicated to Durgā, who became also the Hindu goddess of war. When Vākpatirāja (first half of eighth century AD) in his Gaūḍavaḥa (vv. 285–338) describes the worship of Durgā by his hero, Yaśovarman of Kanauj, before this king set out on his conquest, this may refer to actual practice. All this, however, does not imply that the kings went to war because of this Goddess, or for the sake of religion. In this respect Hinduism differed fundamentally from the Abrahamic religions. I will conclude this essay with some observations on what actually happened, when these two types of religions came into conflict.

HINDUISM AND ISLAM

The conquest of northern India

From the eleventh century onwards North India was regularly confronted, perhaps for the first time, with an enemy that did not adapt itself to Indian customs and did not ‘show the same devotion in festivals in honour of the deities of the country’. Instead that country was infested with marauding bands of Turuška warriors, after Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghazni had pointed the way in his raid on Somnath (Gujarat) in AD 1024–1025. The reports in the Kāmilu-t Tawārīkh by Ibn Asir and the Tārīkh-i Affi inform us that in the defence of the temple of Somanātha fifty thousand Hindus were killed. One would have expected that in the face of such catastrophe Hindu kings would have joined hands and made common cause to defend their country and their holy places. However, ‘India’ was not conceived as an entity to be defended and Hinduism was not organized in such a way that it could offer a framework for its own defence. Hindu kings kept fighting amongst themselves and when at the end of the 12th century the Cāhamānas, who had borne the brunt of the attacks of the Muslim armies,

17 Kālidāsa, Raghuvanśa 4.25–26:

The sacrificial fire, properly fed in the ceremony of the lustration of the cavalry (vājinirājanā), destined him (i.e. king Raghu) for victory, when, by resembling a hand as it were, its flames made the auspicious right turn (pradaksīnā). Leaving the centre and frontiers (of his realm) well-protected and his rear safeguarded (against imminent attacks), he marched at the head of the six units of his army, joined by fortune, impelled by desire to conquer the earth.

Cf. AŚ 2.30.51 and Varāhamihira’s Brhat samhitā 44.1–2, where this ceremony is prescribed for the 8th, 12th or 15th day of the bright half of the lunar month of Kārttika orĀsvina. See Kane 1930-62 III, 230 f., V, 188–194; Einoo 1999, 51 ff.

18 Einoo 1999, 40 ff. Yokochi 1999a, 87 ff.

19 Yokochi 1999a, 89. Stein 1983, 77 ff. summarizes the eye-witness accounts that we possess of this festival as celebrated at the late-medieval South-Indian capital of Vijayanagara.

20 Elliot & Dowson 1867-77 II, 468 ff. and 471 ff.
were on the brink of collapse, their eastern neighbours, the Gāhaḍavālas did not come to their rescue. The army of the Cāhamānas under king Pṛthvirāja was destroyed in the second battle of Tarain (AD 1192). The Gangetic Plain lay open for conquest.

*The case of Vārāṇasī*

It would be unfair to deny the Indian kings any foresight of the events to come. It would seem that the Gāhaḍavāla kings, who had seized power in Kanauj, until then the political centre of Northern India, made an effort to employ all available means to counter the Mlecchas, the Barbarians. Apparently in response to the ‘Turuṣka’, i.e. Muslim threat from the west, they moved their capital to Vārāṇasī.

Vārāṇasī had evolved into the most holy place of the country without being or developing into a political capital, and this appears to have been in conformity with the normal situation in South Asia, where sacred and political space customarily have different centres. Hermann Kulke’s explanation of this phenomenon is that, if both were to coincide, rulers over the holy town would have to admit their enemies into their own political centre of power, due to considerations of *dharma*. If territory coincides or is identified with sacred space, wars in defence or conquest of this territory could be defined as holy wars. Yet, as we have seen, the concept of religious, or holy war for that matter, was conspicuously absent in traditional Indian political thought and so was the idea of solidarity based on a common faith and the practice of propagating war by appealing to religious sentiments more general than those conforming to the sanctified principles of *dharma*.

Hence the question may be raised why the Gāhaḍavālas moved their actual seat of power towards the sacred Vārāṇasī rather than staying within the prestigious imperial capital Kanauj. This might have been caused by the fact that Kanauj lay in ruins after having been sacked twice by the Ghaznavite invaders (AD 1018 by Sultan Mahmūd, AD 1086-90 by Prince Mahmūd, governor of the Panjab). But it could have been rebuilt, just as Vārāṇasī itself had recovered from its first contact with Muslim forces. A more plausible explanation for the Gāhaḍavālas’ deviation from customary practice in choosing Vārāṇasī as their power base may be sought in the circumstance that the nature of the enemy had changed, an enemy which held completely different views on territorial warfare as well as on religion. That the Gāhaḍavālas were well aware of this from the beginning is shown by their levying of the ‘Turks tax’ (*turuṣkadaṇḍa*), a war

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21 Bakker 1993a and 1996a.
22 Kulke 1982, 15.
23 In this respect Hinduism does not differ from the other great Indian religion, Buddhism. Cf. Schmitthausen 1999, 63: ‘Finally, it should be pointed out that religious wars for the sake of spreading the Buddhist religion by force to non-Buddhist regions seem to have occurred very rarely, if at all.’
24 EI IX, 304; SI II, 280f.
tax that is without parallel in India.\textsuperscript{25} In other words, the move to Vārānasi may be viewed as part of the Gāhādavālas’ reaction to the challenge of Islam, a novel strategy to enhance prestige, boost morale and rally support. In all their inscriptions the Gāhādavāla kings proclaimed themselves ‘protectors of the (North) Indian holy places’ (tīrthas), to begin with those in Kāśi, and in all of them they boast of their own piety.\textsuperscript{26}

However, if the Gāhādavālas had chosen Vārānasi as their capital in order to profit from the (religious) prestige that was connected with it, this strategy failed. It did not bring them the support of their neighbouring (Hindu) kings. On the contrary, at the eastern border they were confronted with a new powerful enemy, the dynasty of the Senas, whose king Laksmanaśena (AD 1179–1206) claimed a victory over the king of Kāśi, a success that in all likelihood refers to his conquest of Magadhā.\textsuperscript{27} Just as the Gāhādavālas for their part did not come to the rescue of the Cāhamānas, they themselves were not supported by their eastern neighbours in their war against the Muslim invaders. Consequently they were defeated by the Ghūrū army at Chandawar, and Jayaçandra, ‘Rāja of Benares, the chief of idolatry and perdition’ was killed on the battlefield.\textsuperscript{28} According to the Chronicle of Hasan Nizāmī the victorious troops of Quṭb al-Dīn Aybak plundered the state treasury at Āsnī and,

Proceeded towards Benares, which is the centre of the country of Hind, and here they destroyed nearly one thousand temples, and raised mosques on their foundations; and the knowledge of the law became promulgated, and the foundations of religion were established.\textsuperscript{29}

It is perhaps one of the most remarkable, if not tragic qualities of holy ground that it holds a special attraction for believers of other religions. From the 13th century the Hindus had to share it with the Muslims, who selected the Hindus’ most holy spots to build their mosques, and this has been a source of

\textsuperscript{25} Niyogi 1959, 180f.
\textsuperscript{26} EI XIV, 197; Niyogi 1949, 36. The Vasantatilaka verse eulogizing Candradeva’s pious and generous conduct is included in the standard text of all land grants (Sircar in EI XXXV, 202).
\textsuperscript{27} Mādhāinagar Copper-plate Inscription of Lakṣmaṇasena (date illegible) in SI II, 127 v. 11. See also the Bowal (i.e. India Office) plate dating from the 27th regnal year (EI XXVI, 6; cf. R.C. Majumdar 1971, 233).
\textsuperscript{28} Elliot & Dowson 1867–77 II, 223.
\textsuperscript{29} Elliot and Dowson 1867–1877 II, 223 (translation from the Turkish by H.M. Elliot). For a critical assessment of the testimony of Hasan Nizāmī, the first part of which was composed between AD 1205 and 1217, it is good to keep the following words of Dowson in mind (op. cit. 210):

> Beyond the praise which the author bestows upon his heroes, there is nothing to indicate that he was contemporary with the events which he describes, and the absence of all particulars, as well as a certain confusion and indistinctness about some of the dates, show that he was no active participator in any of his patrons’ campaigns. It is singularly strange that he says nothing of the transactions of Quṭb al-Dīn’s actual reign, for the same short chapter records his accession and his death.
endless conflict until today. The mosque erected in the time of the first Mogul emperor Babur in 1528, the so-called Babri Masjid on the site in Ayodhya that was believed to be the Birthplace of Rāma, the Rāmājanmabhūmi, is a case in point.30

EPILOGUE

We have seen that the notion of ‘holy war’ had not emerged within ancient India. And despite an uncompromising regime in northern India since AD 1200, which was hostile towards the quintessence of Hinduism, the temple cult, this idea was only very slow to develop, if at all. However, a constant infringement on central Hindu religious institutions must sooner or later have given rise to resistance that was inspired by religion and for which religion offered a justification; and, probably more important, it almost inevitably created a cause that could unify Hindus beyond caste, language and regional barriers. Strangely enough though, such a cause took a rather long time to develop and gathered social momentum only after Muslim authority had considerably weakened.

Elsewhere I have discussed the outcome of this development—the transformation of the utopian ideal of Rāma’s Rule (rāma rājya) into a political programme of the extreme right and the movement to liberate Rāma’s Birthplace in Ayodhya, which finally led to the destruction of Babur’s Mosque on December 6 1992.31

Yet, although the Babri Masjid/Rāmājanmabhūmi case has made it clear that a number of elements have crept into the Hindu religion which were not there before, a downright civil war in which Hindu and Muslim were taking up arms for the sake of their faiths failed to materialize. As such new elements in Hinduism one may distinguish:

1 The formation of an exclusive community of Hindus who share the desire for a common good.
2 The view that history has an ultimate, religiously defined goal, the Rule of Rāma or rāma rājya.
3 A tendency to see Islam and its adherents as agents of evil, implying a demonization of the enemy.
4 Regarding Hindus who perish during the conflicts as martyrs for the common weal.32

To conclude, a religion that is alive—and Hinduism certainly is such a religion—changes continuously under the influence of shifting socio-economic conditions.

30 Bakker 1986 I, 134. Above, p. 65.
31 Bakker 1991a; above, pp. 64 ff. For a survey and analysis of the Ayodhya issue (with an extensive bibliography) the reader is referred to the Internationales Asienforum 3-4/94.
32 Bakker 1991a, 102; cf. above, p. 77.
and the challenges posed to it by rival world-views. The impact of a secularized culture on the one hand and a world-wide tendency towards fundamentalism on the other are two factors that do not fail to alter the way in which Hindus conceive themselves and the way they experience their own religion vis-à-vis that of their Muslim countrymen. It makes the study of Hinduism such an engaging activity. For the inhabitants of India it is much more than that: the development of Hinduism shapes their lives and their future. We can only hope that the Hindus will not take example from the bloody history that joins the three great Abrahamic religions.