

From *Punch* to *Mat'vālā*: Transcultural Lives of a Literary Format

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Punch, or the London Charivari was a popular nineteenth-century English satirical periodical not only in Britain but also outside its national territory. While much has been written about the history of the periodical in Britain, *Punch*'s transcultural lives as a literary format beyond Britain are yet to be documented.¹ This chapter attempts to map its transcultural journey in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Hindi literary sphere.² I will begin by delineating the characteristic features of *Punch*. At the risk of simplification it can be summarised as follows:³

1. It publicised the carefully cultivated personalised self of Mr Punch in the role of an irreverent iconoclast and a slayer of privileges, corruption and deceit.
2. It also constituted a parody of newspapers in its own right. It had all the features of a typical periodical and consisted of editorials and other news columns and

¹ I use the plural form 'lives' because *Punch* inspired any number of periodicals in the nineteenth century, cutting across literary cultures in South Asia, China, Japan, Egypt, and Turkey, not to mention Europe. In South Asia its reverberations were felt not only in English-language periodicals owned by Europeans, as well as Indians, but in Marathi, Bengali, Gujarati, Urdu, Hindi, etc., as well. For an elementary survey in South Asia see Partha Mitter, "Cartoon and the Raj," *History Today*, 47, no. 9 (1997). For a general survey see Bellary Shamanna Kesavan, *History of Indian Journalism* (Delhi: Publication Division, 1955).

² For the general understanding of Hindi literary sphere see Francesca Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere: Language and Literature in the Age of nationalism 1920–1940* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002) and also Vasudha Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions: Bhāratendu Hariśchandra and Nineteenth-Century Banaras* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997).

³ Richard D. Altick, *Punch: The Lively Youth of a British Institution 1841–1851* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1997).

I am grateful to Benjamin Zachariah, Barbara Mittler, Hans Harder, and Gita Dharampal-Frick, for their helpful comments.

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reports on subjects such as politics, society, art and literature. But unlike typical newspapers, it expected its readers to have an active sense of participation in public life and an a priori knowledge of news and events, which were selected and commented upon using the tool of satiric deformation and presented in the familiar forms of lampoon, joke, hoax, gossip, etc.

3. It exploited the flexibility of language by employing puns, conundrums, and by playing with the multiple meanings of individual words.
4. Its verbal and comic art had a remarkable penchant for uncovering connections—not only in figurative/metaphoric forms but also through parallels, analogies and echoes, wherever likeness or contrast could be used for what amounted to a kind of continuous performance on the printed page, either for its own sake or to convey a message. Where resemblances did not exist they were manufactured in the form of parodies of literary texts and graphic burlesques of high and popular art.
5. It combined two representational registers of comic distortion: literary parody and visual caricature in the form of cartoons.
6. It dipped into streams of popular and elite culture and indulged in street slang, as well as sophisticated canonical vocabulary.
7. Politically, it remained bourgeois and patriarchal. It poked fun at the culture of the English middle class, but its humour ultimately reasserted bourgeois patriarchal ethos.

After delineating *Punch*'s salient literary features to map its transcultural life in the Hindi literary sphere, it is important to introduce a note of caution here. Writing a history of the transcultural flow of an idea or a cultural commodity—in this case a literary form—involves serious risks: there is, on the one hand, the chance of falling prey to the simplistic 'derivative discourse',⁴ thereby pre-judging *Punch*'s colonial avatar as originating from, but falling short of, or deviating from the original;⁵ on the other hand, there is the danger of succumbing to the telos of nationalist 'indigenism', which holds that all such ideas had pre-colonial indigenous, and more often 'classical', roots.⁶ To avoid both of these traps we need to ask a few

⁴ See Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (London: Zed Books, 1986).

⁵ For a critique of this approach in the context of early novels in India see Meenakshi Mukherjee, "Epic and Novel in India," in *The Novel*, vol. 1, *History, Geography and Culture*, ed. Franco Moretti (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006) 596–631.

⁶ This has been the problem of nationalist literary historiography, as well as of left historiography informed by anti-imperialist position. See Vasudha Dalmia, *Poetics, Plays, and Performance: The Politics of Modern Indian Theatre* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004) and also Chap. 5 of Dalmia, *Nationalization of Hindu Traditions*, 222–324. For a general overview of the politics of entanglement between nationalist ideology and literary historiography in South Asian literary cultures see Hans Harder, ed., *Literature and Nationalist Ideology: Writing Histories of Modern Indian Languages* (Delhi: Social Science Press, 2010). For a critique of residual nationalist frame in modern Indian historiography see the Introduction of Benjamin Zachariah, *Nation Game* (Delhi: Yoda Press, 2012).

questions, such as: How popular was *Punch* or satirical journalism within the Hindi literary sphere? How did the contemporary Hindi litterateurs receive *Punch* and/or its literary format? What kind of deflections did it undergo as a result of its interaction with the local literary repertoire? Was it informed by and re-inscribed with new social meaning in the Hindi literary sphere? And if so, how? What kind of political and cultural mediation did it perform to be relevant in the new context?⁷

The existing scholarship on the history of Hindi journalism⁸ suggests that a full-fledged satirical periodical with some significance was *Mat'vālā* (the intoxicated), which was published in Calcutta in 1923. *Mat'vālā*, indeed, had most of the aforementioned characteristics of *Punch*. Its circulation figures were fairly high.⁹ In order to assign novelty to *Mat'vālā*, however, scholars underplay the richness of the early satirical œuvre of nineteenth century Hindi literary culture. So as to understand the broader currents and to contextualise our prime concern, then, this chapter is divided into two parts. In the first section the circulation and popularity of *Punch* in the late nineteenth century is gauged by foregrounding the reproduction of its content, as well as internal literary references and acknowledgements. The contemporary reception and adaptation of Mr Punch as a satiric narrator is elucidated by unravelling the rich semantics of the word *punch*. The communicative mechanisms and political function of the satirical mode, which appeared in a number of periodicals as *Punch* or *Punch*-like columns, and in a variety of other literary forms, is examined in the wider context of the nascent but vibrant Hindi public sphere before 1920. In the second section the distinction of *Mat'vālā* is made salient and is contextualised in the changed historical circumstances of the post-1920 Hindi public sphere. The literary format of *Mat'vālā* is mapped in relation to the characteristic features of *Punch* as outlined at the beginning. An analysis of the magazine's cultivated self persona and consolidated public identity is followed by the examination of the structure, communicative mechanisms and political functions of literary and visual satire. It ends with a note on mutations of *Punch* and the indiscernible trajectory of its transcultural genealogy in the twentieth century.

⁷ Borrowing from Michael McKeon's idea of 'generic instability' from his work *The Origins of the English Novel: 1600–1740* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1987), Francesca Orsini makes a very important point in the context of the analysis of early Hindi-Urdu novels. She argues that the idea of some pure or authentic model of a genre (such as the novel), which was available in Europe and then imported into the colony, is deeply flawed and redundant. A genre should be examined so as to explain the particular social and cultural functions it performs and the dialectical relationship it has with other genres at any given point in history. Francesca Orsini, *Print and Pleasure: Popular Literature and Entertaining Fictions in Colonial North India* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2009), 164.

⁸ Ram Ratan Bhatnagar, *The Rise and Growth of Hindi Journalism* (Varanasi: Vishwavidyalay Prakashan, 2003); Kṛṣṇa Bihārī Miśra, *Hindī patrakāritā*. (Dillī: Bhār'tiya Jñān'pīṭh, 1985).

⁹ This is discussed in the next section.

Circulation of *Punch*

Punch, or *The London Charivari* not only struck the imagination of the English-reading public in Europe and North America,¹⁰ but also the Indian.¹¹ It was accessible to the Indian intelligentsia, which was always eager to know about metropolitan culture and politics, and was also in search of new idioms and forms of self-articulation and assertion within the emerging colonial public sphere.¹² *Punch* acquired a legendary status as a periodical amongst the contemporary editor-journalists.

One of the earliest references to its popularity can be found in Bharatendu Harishchandra's satirical composition *Muśāy'rā*¹³ (Assembly of Poets). In one of the paragraphs of the *Muśāy'rā* a nouveau-riche merchant, who pretends to be a poet, mentions the superiority and popularity of the *Punch* in India:¹⁴

No paper so far could supersede the *Pañc*
That it has established its dominance is a matter of fact.¹⁵

In another paragraph the socially-aspiring wife of this rich merchant, who is educated by a white tutor-governess, wishes to get her poem published in *Punch*.

I pray to you my mischievous husband
Why don't you get it published in the *Pañc*?¹⁶

Interestingly, we find mutual acknowledgement of their individual existences within the pages of the British *Punch* and one of the Indian versions of *Punch*,

¹⁰ Altick, *Punch*.

¹¹ *Punch* had individual subscribers in India. An Indian cartoonist, born in 1924, when recalling his young days, mentions that his father had a collection of old volumes of *Punch*. Rasipuram K.I. Laxman, *The Tunnel of Time: An Autobiography* (Delhi: Penguin India, 1998), 8–9. Ritu Khanduri has highlighted not only the availability and popularity of British *Punch* in India, but also noted that its commercial potential was clear to its owners as well, who were seriously considering bringing out overseas editions of the periodical, including an edition from India. See chapter *Punch in India: Another History of Colonial Politics?* in this volume, as well as Ritu Khanduri, "Vernacular Punches: Cartoon and Politics in Colonial India," *History and Anthropology*, 20, no. 4 (2009): 459–486.

¹² For the best conceptualisation of the nature of colonial public sphere in India see Neeladri Bhattacharya, "Notes Towards a Conception of the Colonial Public," in *Civil society, Public Sphere, and Citizenship: Dialogues and Perceptions*, ed. Rajeev Bhargava (Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005), 130–156.

¹³ Bharatendu Harishchandra is popularly known as the 'Father of Modern Hindi'. He wrote *Muśāy'rā* in the early 1870s. All translations are mine. See Bābū Rām'dīn Siṃh, ed., *Śrīhariścandrakalā ath'vā golok'vāsī bhārat'bhūṣaṇ bhār'tendu hariścandra kā jīvan sarvasva*, vol. 6, part 1 (Baṅkīpur: Khaḍgavilās Press, 1889), 62.

¹⁴ In all probability, according to the compilers of Harishchandra's work, this poem was published in the early years of the 1870s, which means before the beginning of *Avadh Punch*, an Urdu satirical periodical published from Lucknow, in January 1877. Even if this speculation is untrue, it nevertheless makes the point of the popularity of *Punch*, albeit via *Avadh Punch*.

¹⁵ All translations unless otherwise cited are mine. I use the spelling *Pañc* rather than *Punch* when it is used in Hindi. Siṃh, *Śrīhariścandrakalā*, 62.

¹⁶ *Ibid*.

namely the *Hindi Punch* (1878), which was published in Bombay. A selection of cartoons from the year 1903 was, for example, published in the form of a handbook with Gujarati and English subtitles by the owner of the *Hindi Punch*. In its fourth edition the handbook carried a reprint of press reviews of its previous edition. One of the reviews in this handbook, dated 2 March 1903, was from the British *Punch*, and contained *Punch*'s wishes to the *Hindi Punch* in a somewhat patronising tone.¹⁷

The 15 November 1873 issue of *Harischandra's Magazine*, which started as a bilingual literary supplement to *Kavivacan'sudhā* (1868),¹⁸ reprinted an article from the British *Punch*. The title of the article was 'From "Punch"—The Mussulman Platform'.¹⁹ This was an article that made a nuanced satirical attack on the Permissive Prohibitory Bill (PPB). *Punch*, in consonance with the Victorian middle-class mores,²⁰ appeared to be in no disagreement with the prohibition of the sale of liquor, which apparently caused social crime and loss of economic and moral wealth. However, it strongly opposed the indiscriminate ban on the sale of 'infernal drug[s]' including wine 'which intoxicates those who abuse it, and does those who use it good [*sic*]'. It made caustic comments on the members of the British House of Commons representing an organisation for the temperance movement called United Kingdom Alliance.²¹ For, according to *Punch*, they spoke in evangelical language in favour of the PPB, as if they were in a religious council. *Punch* argued that the orthodox idea of a blanket prohibition, which calls wine an infernal drug, fell short of the liberal British ideal and could not be but inspired by an ideal of its *other*, i.e., the 'Turk/Muslim'.²² For, according to the tacit premise of this argument, which played upon the stereotype of authoritarian Islam, it was only a state governed by Islamic ideology that could go for such a law. The platform hosting such discussion was, thus, of 'Mussulman'.

This example adds to the evidence of *Punch*'s familiarity and popularity amongst the avant-garde of Hindi intelligentsia, like Bharatendu Harishchandra who was experimenting with the format of a literary periodical for a projected national language and its community of readers.²³ It would be pertinent to examine the contemporary relevance of the reproduction of this particular piece. Considering *Harischandra's Magazine*'s format along with a larger intellectual, political engagement of contemporary intelligentsia as reflected within its pages, some plausible explanation can be offered. Firstly, it was part of a larger editorial agenda

¹⁷ For a full quote of this review, see Swarali Paranjape, chapter [Crossing Boundaries: Punch and the Marathi Weekly Hindu Pañca \(1870–1909\)](#) in this volume.

¹⁸ It was Harishchandra's first journal.

¹⁹ See the Facsimile edition *Harischandra's Magazine*, ed. Satyaprakash Misra (Allahabad: Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, 2002), 70–71.

²⁰ Brian Maidment's chapter, The presence of *Punch* in the Nineteenth Century, on *Punch* in this volume deals with the periodical's class character.

²¹ Brian Harrison, "The British Prohibitionists 1853–1872: A Biographical Study," *International Review of Social History* 15, no. 3 (1970): 375–467.

²² The denomination Turk and Muslim is used interchangeably.

²³ Dalmia, *Nationalization of Hindu Traditions*, 222–324.

of attracting and making its bilingual readers—emerging middle classes who were still a primarily English and Urdu reading public—familiar with the topical issues of Britain and engagements of the empire along with the issues in British India. The humorous political items added to its catholicity. Secondly, this piece highlighted the problem of alcoholism and differing opinions on how to deal with it. This was synchronous with the literary engagement with this issue, especially within contemporary Hindi satirical literature.²⁴ The alcohol-drinking practice was perceived as a menacing social vice brought about by colonial culture. The very next issue of *Harischandra's Magazine*, for instance, carried the satirical piece 'Pāc'veṃ paigambar' (the fifth prophet).²⁵ The subject matter of this satire was very complex. Suffice it to say that alcohol was identified as the favourite drink of the first person satiric narrator, namely, the Fifth, or Sucking Prophet, who was the embodiment of colonialism in its various political and cultural forms.²⁶ Finally, this stereotype of Muslims/Islam was in consonance with the dominant attitude of the contemporary Hindu intelligentsia.²⁷

***Punch* as Pañc: Problematising the Transculturality of *Punch* in the Hindi Literary Sphere**

Punch as *Pañc*, by which I mean its transmuted life in the Hindi literary sphere, subsumed all connotations available in the existing linguistic register. Yet within the formats of Hindi periodicals the presence of the British weekly *Punch* remains

²⁴ Although the temperance movement in India is said to have begun in the late 1880s and acquired some prominence in the 1890s, its expression in Hindi literature preceded it by at least a decade. For a general overview of the temperance movement in colonial India and its British linkages see Lucy Carroll, "The Temperance Movement in India: Politics and Social Reform," *Modern Asian Studies* 10, no. 3 (1976): 417–447, and Lucy Carroll, "Origins of the Kayastha Temperance Movement," *Indian Economic Social History Review* 11 (1974): 432–447.

²⁵ Bhār'tendu Hariścandra, "Pāc'veṃ paigambar," *Harischandra's Magazine*, 15 December 1873. *Facsimile Edition*, ed. Satyaprakash Misra (Allahabad: Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, 2002), 84–86. Examples can be multiplied. *Kalirāj kī sabhā* (assembly of the Lord of Fallen Times) was serialised between 15 October (one issue before the publication of *Mussulman Platform*) and February, 1874. *Ibid.*, 38–39 and 138–142.

²⁶ In the farce and skits we also find negative depictions of characters, for instance, English-educated, westernised and zealous 'anti-Hindu' social reformers, often Bengalis, who are fond of alcohol. In some cases the corrupt king, an allegorical representation of the colonial ruling elite, and his collaborators, like debauched priests, are represented as eating meat and being intoxicated with alcohol. See, for example, "Vaidikī hiṃsā hiṃsā na bhavati" (Vedic violence is no violence), first published in *Kavivacan'sudhā*, June 21, 1872. It was also published as an independent booklet from Medical Hall Press in 1873. Hemant Śarmā, ed. *Bhār'tendu samagra* (Vārāṇasī: Hindī Pracārak Samsthān, 1989), 309–318.

²⁷ For instance, "Pāc'veṃ paigambar", mentioned above, can also be cited as one of the many examples. For greater detail see Sudhir Chandra, *The Oppressive Present: Literature and Social Consciousness in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992).

discernible in the overarching literary usage of the term. From *Kavivacan'sudhā* onwards the term *Pañc* within the format of literary periodicals stood for satire.

In its early years *Kavivacan'sudhā* carried a column entitled *Pañc kā prapañc* (the tangles [or gossip-mongering] of *Pañc*). In its usual form the column consisted of a dialogue, which was prompted by contemporary discussions on modes of gossip between *Pañc* and one or two other characters about town.²⁸ Following the example of *Kavivacan'sudhā*, we can find similar characters and columns in periodicals like *Hindī pradīp* (light of Hindi, [Allahabad, 1877]), *Brāhmaṇ* (Brahmin [Kanpur, 1883]) and *Bhārat jīvan* (life of India [Benares, 1888]). Interestingly, periodicals with an avowedly Brahmanic agenda like *Dvija patrikā* (twice-born's magazine [Patna, 1890]) also had a section for humour and satire titled *Pañc prapañc*. Its cover page advertised that it aims at reforming Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas,²⁹ and would be publishing

[...]on Knowledge, Religion [*dharma*], Morality, Manners, Duty, History, Ancient System, Translation, Poetry, Drama, Satire, Literature, Philosophy, Women's Education, *Pañc prapañc* [my italics], Letters to the Editor and miscellanea.³⁰

The literary periodical *Sarasvatī* (goddess of learning [Allahabad, 1900]) started under the aegis of the *Nāgarī Pracārīṇī Sabhā* (society for the propagation of Hindi) advertised in its first issue:

And what topics will this journal cover—one should guess this from the very fact that its title is *Sarasvatī*. It will include prose, verse, poetry, plays, novels, [...] history, biographies, *pañc*, *hāsyā*, *parihās* [my italics], jest, ancient history, science, handicrafts, arts, and as many other topics of literature as space permits, and it will review, as appropriate, forthcoming books.³¹

The usage of the term *hāsyā* and *parihās*, which can be translated as humour and satire, alongside *Pañc* is suggestive of the popularity and establishment of satirical skits as a distinct literary style which had been initiated by Bharatendu Harishchandra with overt inspiration from the British *Punch*.

How did *Punch* mutate into *Pañc*? What did the term mean? Tracing the literary genealogy of *Pañc* columns in *Kavivacan'sudhā*, Vasudha Dalmia points out that the British *Punch* has a lineage that goes far back to the European tradition of *commedia dell'arte*'s Pulcinella, which was to be reproduced in England in the

²⁸ In some cases it could be gossip between characters with different names but still carried out in the same style. For instance, see “Do mitrom kā vārtālāp: kul' pālāk aur viśvabandhu kā samāgam” (Dialogue between two Friends: Rendezvous of a Noble Patron and a Universal Brother), *Harishchandra Magazine*, October 1873. *Facsimile Edition* ed. Satyaprakash Misra (Allahabad: Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, 2002), 19–22.

²⁹ According to the classical, textual Hindu social stratification system, these three classes of priests, warriors and merchants are twice-born, while the fourth class of Shudras, or labouring class, is not twice-born and hence impure. This is a very simplified explanation of a terribly complex concept of the Hindu social system.

³⁰ See the cover page of *Dvija patrikā* 1, no. 1, Phālgun (February–March) 1890.

³¹ *Sarasvatī* would become the most influential literary periodical in Hindi.

form of the rowdy Mr Punch in the Punch-and-Judy puppet show.³² In the Indian context, *Punch* was fused yet again with the *vidūṣaka* (clown) tradition of Sanskrit drama and, by virtue of the similarity of names in many Indian languages, with *pañc*—the arbiter of the village judiciary, whose authority is legitimised by his folkloric juxtaposition with God as Pañc Parameśvar.³³ This *pañc*, then, had both the irreverence of the clown and the sacred authority of the village judge.³⁴

According to Syamsundar Das, a leading Hindi activist, intellectual, linguist and lexicographer, *pañc* stood for a collective of people, common folk and a pioneer simultaneously.³⁵ The best exposition of contemporary elaborations of the contextual meaning of *pañc* can be gleaned from the essay *Pañc parameśvar* by Pratap Narayan Misra.³⁶ The essay was written to establish the moral legitimacy of the educated middle class as the cultural vanguard of the Indian nation. What is useful to us is that Misra develops his point by using the concept of *pañc* in north India. He plays with the semantics of this word, underlines its polysemy, delves deeper into its etymology and then assigns a contemporary relevance to it. This essay illuminates the semantic richness of the term.

With *pañc'tattva* [five elements] the Parameśvar [Highest God] creates the cosmos; [...] Control over the lord of *pañcendriya* [five senses] facilitates proximity with Parameśvar; given the centrality of *pañc'saṃskār* [five moral-religious rituals] in *dharma*, of *pañc'gaṅgā* [another name for river Ganges at the holy city of Benaras] amongst pilgrimage sites, of *pañc'pavitrātmā* [five holy spirits] in Islam, one has reasons to believe that *pañc* is intimately associated with Parameśvar.

On this basis our learned forefathers made those proverbs popular in which ordinary, humble, this-worldly folks (if they have faith in Parameśvar) accept Pañc, meaning a collective of people, a representative of Parameśvar. He is shapeless and spotless, hence not visible to anyone with external eyes, nor has anyone ever seen him doing any work; therefore it is the proposition of many thinking men that whatever Pañc [a collective of people] decides or does is in many ways the truth.

³² Dalmia, *Nationalization of Hindu Traditions*, 252–53.

³³ *Parameśvar*: the highest god.

³⁴ Besides the satirical columns containing the figure of Pañc and other homologous narrators, there are many satirical pieces like “Pāc'veṃ paigambar” by Bharatendu, *Yam'lok kī yātrā* by Radhacharan Goswami, etc., where the satirical narrator is created by the author as a literary strategy. This fictional narrator and his narrative style are invested with the attributes of a quasi-divine, liminal outsider who could state the unstated, visualise the concealed and potentially break what Sudipta Kaviraj calls, the ‘grammar of reality’. Sudipta Kaviraj, *The Unhappy Consciousness: Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and the Formation of Nationalist Discourse in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), 29. In the case of satirical journalism, this is quite clear also from at least two examples of the twentieth century. For instance, a column titled *Śiv'śambhu ke ciṭṭhe* (Letters from Lord Shiva) the narrator of which has the name and attributes of Lord Shiva, and also in the character of Mat'vālā who saw himself as god personified, or at least as an emissary and reporter of Lord Shiva on earth.

³⁵ Śyām'sundar Dās, *Hindī śabd'sāgar* (Kāśī: Nāgarī Pracārīnī Sabhā, 1929, 2729).

³⁶ Pratap Narayan Misra was one of the leading Hindi intellectuals of the late nineteenth century and a member of the Hindi literary circle named *Bhāratendu maṇḍal*. He was the editor of *Brāhmaṇ* (Kanpur) and coined the emblematic slogan ‘Hindi-Hindu-Hindustan’, which summarised the dominant political agenda of Hindi nationalism.

That is why ‘5 *pañc mil kije kāj hare jite hoe na lāj*’ [action taken in unison by people is beyond victory and defeat], [...] and other similar proverbs are expounded by the learned and it is often noted by commoners that ‘5 *pañc ki bhāṣā amit hotī hai*’ [statement of a collective is incontestable]. No matter how powerful, rich, or learned you are, if you go against Pañc’s opinion, [...] it would be very difficult, if not impossible, for you to survive in this world [...].

Going against the majority practice [even for a very noble cause] is tantamount to making your life hell. Those who are determined to sacrifice everything to redeem others are hailed, but when? Only if they are accepted by the Pañc! However, as long as they live, they are unable to even breathe conveniently, because going against the *pañc* is like going against the Parameśvar, for which there is no escape from penalisation. Greatness hardly comes to your defence [...].

O readers! By the grace of Parameśvar and your forefathers you do not lack knowledge. Therefore open your eyes wide and look at the direction in which the educated Pañc are moving and see how bravely, firmly and naturally they are marching without being discouraged from fear of abuse, threat and the might of small but strong opposition; they are ready to be an example by forsaking not only their wives, sons, wealth and family but by sacrificing themselves.³⁷

In the first paragraph, Pañc’s semantic identity with the sacred numerology of Hinduism and Islam is established by emphasising its centrality in the overall relationship with God so that its quasi-divine status is underlined. In the second paragraph, through mobilisation of the semantic resources of popular idiomatic expressions and by extension popular opinion, Pañc is explicated as the collective of people. The acts of Pañc then are legitimised and made unassailable as the will of the divine by a virtual negation of God’s interventionist presence in the everyday life of the society. In the next paragraphs, the Pañc, as a collective of people, is described as the representative of majority opinion, and consequently as the embodiment of the public at large. Once Pañc is designated as the embodiment of a public with quasi-divine status, his authority is made unassailable. Finally, in the concluding paragraph, Pañc is equated with the contemporary, educated middle class that is dedicated to social and moral reform. In other words, Pañc is the metaphor of the educated urban middle class speaking in the register of reform on behalf of the Indian nation, and hence, to be followed by the people.

***Pañc*: Literary Forms and Political Contents**

Skits

Let us examine the literary form and political content of skits with some examples. They were light, lively, biting and sparkling. The Pañc of these columns is a fascinating mixture of characters who are raucous, impious and clowning

³⁷ It needs to be emphasised here that the *pañc* and/or Parameśvar are quintessentially male. This essay was first published in *Brāhmaṇ* vol. 6, no. 12, 15 July, 1888. The citation is from Candrikā Prasād Śarmā, ed., *Pratāp'nārāyaṇ miśra rac'nāvalī*, vol. 2 (Dillī: Bhār'tiya Prakāśan Samsthān, 2001), 114–116.

men-about-town usually at odds with authority. On the one hand, he stands outside events; on the other hand, he, as a judge, is involved in events. Pañc, time and again, goes into the messy world, becomes a participant observer, and then retreats. For example, a skit appeared in the June 1873 issue of *Kavivacan'sudhā*,³⁸ wherein Pañc turns his sharp wit on much more personal, and for all their apparent slightness, heavily symbolic topics, such as the controversy over British judges stopping Indians from entering law courts with their shoes on. This was contrary to a law which had been passed in the previous decade legalising wearing shoes while attending court proceedings.³⁹ The setting of the skit is the city of Benaras. The periodical noted that:

We are in the year 1872, and Pañc is listening to the conversation of two friends, Munshi Bhairoprasad, a *kāyastha*, and a *mahājan*, Babu Ramnath, who makes gentle fun of his bookish friend, the Munshi. The Munshi has been perusing the papers earnestly as usual and has come across a significant piece of news. The news has to do with an object whose identity he does not disclose, apart from the fact that it goes in pairs, has to do with leather and is expensive, for millions have been affected by ventures connected with it. Babu Ramnath is unable to guess what this is.

Babu: What does it look like?

Munshi: It's rather long in appearance. In effect it looks like the country it comes from.

Babu: Hmm, the *vilāyat*⁴⁰ of the English. What does the thing look like there?

Munshi: In the *vilāyat* of the English the thing is smooth and greasy and often of black colour and it is considered most pure amongst them. They carry it with them wherever they go.

Babu: Brother mine, I haven't really understood what it is. What does it look like in Hindustan?

Munshi: Here it has a sort of beak.

Babu: Is it some fantastic pair of birds?

Munshi: Oh no, it is a very useful thing, it protects from the sun, from dirt and slime, from heat and cold, from all these things.

Babu: Quick tell me its name, I'm getting quite agitated.

Munshi: It is called the shoe.

Babu: Come, what weighty matter have you touched on there. What on earth does the shoe have to do with the newspaper?

Munshi: No, really, of late the Honourable Shoe has been hot news.

Babu: Well, what new news of it?

Munshi: There is an order saying you have to take off your shoes before you enter court.

Babu: And why this?

Munshi: How do I know?

Babu: And who could bear to part with his shoes?

Pañc (coming forward): This isn't true. It's years ago, since Lord Lawrence's day, that it was decided that anyone could enter government offices and courts or other public places in English shoes (though they had to be polished to shine like a mirror). Then why all this ado?

³⁸ *Kavivacan'sudhā*, June 1873. Cited from Dalmia, *Nationalization of Hindu Traditions*, 254–255.

³⁹ For an interesting insight into cultural politics behind the shoe controversy see Kandiyur N. Panikkar, "The Great Shoe Question: Legitimacy and Power in Colonial India," *Studies in History* 14, no. 1 (1998): 21–36.

⁴⁰ *vilāyat* (Urdu/Hindi): lit. 'province', 'foreign country'; common appellation of England in colonial times.

Munshi: Well sirs, your thinking is simple-minded. I agree that there was an order once, but there are so many who pay no heed to it. Didn't you go to Mughal Sarai to see the new Governor General? Even if the world obeys the order, in Benaras it was never heeded to nor will it ever be.

Pañc: What, you mean that even the Government Gazette won't be obeyed?

Munshi: Yes, it won't be obeyed. What do you think you can do about it?

Pañc responds by making the most impotent of gestures. He runs to the concerned authorities and asks them what they mean by all this. Yet Pañc's insistence on the letter of the law is double-edged. If, on the one hand, it makes mockery of the bureaucracy that thinks that such matters can be dealt with by passing laws and regulations, it also seeks to make these very authorities abide by their own laws. After all, it was humiliating forms of social interaction with the 'ruling race' that injured the ego of the Indian middle classes the most. This skit, like many others, was based on widely-circulated news items already known to potential readers. There is an interesting historical background to the plot of this skit: After the sensational case of defiance of this racist custom in 1862 by a certain Manockjee Cowasjee Entee in a criminal court in Surat, the colonial government passed a law that Indians could enter the court room with their shoes on. But British judges continued to insist on the custom in lower courts, thereby causing uproar in the newspapers.⁴¹

The Pañc skits are also consistently directed against the debauched practices of the rich, who include the native chiefs, the rich *mahajans* (merchants), the priestly class,⁴² in short, the socially privileged. In one of the columns titled '*Melā-thelā*' (marketplace), Pañc watches the activities of these social types in a marketplace and assumes the role of a judge in disguise.⁴³ In another column entitled '*Pañc kā nyāy*' (the justice of Pañc), he is actually a judge and makes a mockery of himself; while acting as the presiding officer of a meeting of an association of lower castes called *kurmi*, he mocks the entire state of affairs. This association of newly educated, lower caste youths is apparently trying to resist their traditional place in the Hindu social hierarchy by claiming higher social status. They bolster their claim by tracing a pseudo-historical lineage to a mythical Hindu god called *Kurmāvatāra*, the turtle incarnation among Lord Vishnu's ten *avatāras*, building on the phonetic similarity with their caste name.⁴⁴

'*Pañc kā nyāy*' is a satire on the growing process of Sanskritisation amongst lower castes⁴⁵ in the colonial context. As a result of the economic and social change

⁴¹ This incidence was first reported in the *Pioneer*. For a detailed report of this incident, see the appendix of Panikkar, "The Great Shoe Question".

⁴² *Hindī pradīp*, February–March 1892.

⁴³ *Hindī pradīp*, April 1906.

⁴⁴ *Hindī pradīp*, June–July 1899. Also see "Pañc kā ek prapañc," *Hindī pradīp*, July–August 1903.

⁴⁵ Mysore N. Shrinivas, *Social Change in Modern India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966).

under the new colonial dispensation, the social groups that earned upward economic mobility, but had a lower status in the Hindu social hierarchy, started redefining their social positions in the wake of the colonial census operation and the consequent objectification of caste. The census department, under the influence of H. H. Risley's theory of social precedence, had started classifying all social and occupational groups under the broader textual Hindu Brahmanic schema of the *varṇa* system.⁴⁶ By adopting and consequently subverting social rituals and customs of the upper caste Hindus these social groups began to rewrite their mytho-historical origin.⁴⁷ On these bases they put forth their claims to the high ritual and social status in a new forum—the census department of the colonial government. They argued that they should be accorded a higher place in the Hindu social hierarchy. The satire mocks not only the assertion of a lower caste from a Brahmanic perspective, but also the absurdity of the modern institution of caste associations.

Pañc did not always play the judge; he could be raucous and turbulent, could chase after young and comely women with a thirst for education, and make a thorough nuisance of himself. His opinions, however, for all the tomfoolery, carried the weight of public opinion. One of the *Punch* columns dealt precisely with this theme. When a young and beautiful *meh'tarānī* (sweeper-woman), set out to reach for the sky through education, Pañc not only sought to make indecent advances towards her, thus demeaning her moral standing and subverting her claims to a higher status, but also reprimanded her severely for entertaining false ambitions.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Bernard Cohn, "The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia," in *The Bernard Cohn Omnibus* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008), 224–254.

⁴⁷ In this process of sanskritisation, the role of Arya Samaj, a Hindu reformist organisation which questioned the prevalent notion of birth based social status and advocated its determination on the basis of one's present vocation and moral standing, was very crucial. M.S.A. Rao's study of the Shri Narayan Dharmapala movement in Kerala and the Yadava movement in north India is a good early work of historical sociology on the social and political transformation with a focus on lower caste associations, See Madhugiri S.A. Rao, *Social Movements and Social Transformation: A Study of two Backward Classes Movements in India* (Delhi: MacMillan, 1979). For an overview of the role of caste associations amongst the Kayasthas of Bihar Bengal and the United Province and their claim to a higher social status, see Lucy Carroll, "Colonial Perceptions of Indian Society and the Emergence of Caste(s) Associations," *Journal of Asian Studies* 37, no. 2 (1978): 233–250. For an overview of Indian nationalists taking on the question of caste, see also Susan Bayly, "Hindu Modernisers and the Public Arena: Indigenous Critiques of Caste in Colonial India," in *Swami Vivekananda and the Modernisation of Hinduism*, ed. William Radice (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 93–137. For an overview of the role of lower caste associations in accumulating political power in Bihar and north India from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth century see Prasanna Kumār Caudharī and Śrīkānt, *Bihār meṃ sāmājīk parivartan ke kuch āyam* (Dillī: Vāṇī Prakāśan, 2001).

⁴⁸ *Kavivacan'sudhā*, 17 August 1872. Cited from Dalmia, *Nationalization of Hindu Traditions*, 259–260.

Jokes and Conundrums

In some of the issues of *Kavivacan'sudhā*, under the title *Pañc kā prapañc*, we find a poem written with light but piercing satire in the pre-modern *lavanī* or *dohā* form. Occasionally this space was filled with jokes and conundrums which had a politico-ethnic subtext. For example, there was a joke titled 'Very Well', targeting the foolishness of the cuckolded English official who is unaware of the adulterous relationship between his wife and the domestic:

A domestic became very intimate with the wife of a British Officer. Once it so happened that when he was smooching the Memsahib, the Sahib⁴⁹ saw him. Memsahib also saw the Sahib coming and anxiously told the servant in her accented Hindi that her husband had seen them kissing, and that she was in trouble now. The domestic asked her calmly not to worry, and when the Sahib came he put his turban at the Sahib's feet and said: I am going to quit my job; Memsahib has accused me of stealing ghee [purified butter] and has gone so far as to smell my mouth! Hearing this, the Sahib turned to his wife and said—Yes I saw you smelling his mouth, but he is very honest and can never indulge in such an act. Then he turned to the domestic and said dear chef I'll double your pay, but please don't leave this job; to which the latter replied—Very well Sir!⁵⁰

The joke cited above has a striking structural resemblance with the pre-modern misogynistic jokes on cuckoldry and female adultery.⁵¹ In fact, this joke on a husband unable to control his hypersexual wife in liaison with the domestic is slightly modified by replacing generic characters with contemporary racial identities: white master, his wife and an Indian domestic. In the colonial context, then, the joke becomes politically charged for a Hindi reading public. It plays on the stereotype of the sexually licentious white woman. It underlines the patriarchal anxiety about the dangers of a nuclear family, without family elders keeping vigil over potentially licentious household women, who are exposed to the proximity of other sexually threatening males, such as domestics. Finally, it establishes the supremacy of an Indian male subaltern who wittingly dupes his colonial master and wins money and the body of a white woman.

Nearly all periodicals mentioned so far published columns variously titled '*Hāsī-dillagī kī bātem*' (wit and humor), '*Cuṭ'kule*' (jokes), '*Bujhavval*' (conundrum) at regular intervals that contained racy popular jokes with a direct or indirect political subtext. For example, a joke published in *Kṣatriya patrikā* (warrior-caste's

⁴⁹ 'Sahib' and 'Memsahib' were the Indian terms for 'white master' and his 'wife'.

⁵⁰ This is a literal translation of a nineteenth century Hindi joke which has been made at the cost of the rules of English grammar in order to be faithful to the original. See Simh, *Śrīhariścandrakalā*, 34.

⁵¹ Jokes about cuckoldry were already in circulation through oral and their printed versions. *Pañcatantra*, for instance, has many similar stories. See Franklin Edgerston, *The Panchatantra Reconsidered*, vol. 2, *Introduction and Translation* (New Heavens Connecticut: American Oriental Society, 1924), 289–91, 378–79. Lee Siegel also cites many jokes from the *Pañcatantra*, *Kathāsaritsāgara*, *Śukasaptati* and other folktales. Lee Siegel, *Laughing Matters: Comic Tradition in India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 62–63, 126–36, 197–98, 204, 206.

magazine, 1884) touched upon issues, such as child marriage, which were at the centre of public controversy. The joke went something like this:

Once, a priest was married to a child bride. With his child bride on his shoulder he was crossing a marketplace. A rowdy *jaj'mān* [religious client] quipped—is it your daughter Chaubeju? The priest replied: both my son and daughter are into her only.⁵²

Significantly, many of these jokes as the one cited above on cuckoldry, which were part of the north Indian oral repertoire, were reprinted without any changes or with only minor contextual changes, while retaining the original structure of the plot. To cite just one example, a joke on caste-based favouritism of the *kāyasthas*⁵³ appeared in *Kavivacan'sudhā* and *Kṣatriya patrikā* bearing the title of '*Jātīya pakṣapāt*' in the 1880s. It had already been published without a title in Lallujilal's *Latīfa-i Hind* in 1810 under the aegis of the Calcutta Fort William College. The joke was as follows:

Once, a Kaith [*kāyastha*] of high administrative rank was going somewhere. On his way there he found a Kaith tree [*acacia catechu*]. Pointing towards the tree he asked his servants, who is it? They replied: Lala Sahib, this is Kaith. Listening to this he joyously said, Oho, he is my caste-fellow! Ask him why he is standing in my way. The servants wittily replied: it is saying I am unclothed and suffering from cold. Upon hearing this the *kāyastha* ordered his servants to grant 25 bundles of silk from his storehouse to his caste-fellow.⁵⁴

The text of this joke is complex. It adopts the genealogy of caste myths as a rhetorical form. It draws from the structure of a traditional story of a social group's totemic genealogy and the consequent justification of kinship ties. The narrator of this joke mocks the partisan behaviour of a caste group member and, simultaneously, the textual form of the myth. A purely semantic similarity between two completely unrelated objects, a botanic and human entity, and the consequent favouritism underline the absurdity of caste-based sociality. Given the context of its print when hitherto dispersed and socially unconnected *kāyasthas* of different regions—Bengal, Bihar and the United Province—were uniting under one caste association,⁵⁵ the absurdity of an unrelated and coincidental similarity of terms referred to in the joke acquires a contemporaneous allegorical referentiality. Jokes on *kāyasthas* may have been in circulation for a long time but acquired new meanings in the time of their reproduction. Jokes and satires targeting them with clear references to late nineteenth century historical processes can be found aplenty. A joke book carried an epigrammatic comment on the inability of a *kāyastha* to ride

⁵² The priest meant to say that both his son and daughter would come out of his child-bride's womb. This joke is in Braj dialect and hence very difficult to render into English. I have provided an approximate rendition here. *Kṣatriya patrikā*, Jyēṣṭha-Āṣāḥ 1939/June–July 1882.

⁵³ A traditional clerical caste with administrative clout since pre-colonial times.

⁵⁴ *Kṣatriya patrikā*, Kārtik (October) 1890, Siṃh, *Śrīhariścandrakalā*, 38, Lallujilal, *Latīfa-e-Hind Or The New Encyclopedia Hindoostanica of Wit* (Calcutta: Indian Gazette Press, 1810), 13.

⁵⁵ Carrol, "Colonial Perceptions of Indian Society".

a horse around the same time when, erstwhile considered as shudras, the *kāyasthas* started claiming themselves to be kshatriyas (warriors).⁵⁶

A novice *kāyath*, awkwardly sitting on horseback, was going to the marketplace, a cavalier saw him sitting behind the saddle and asked, O brother, sit a little ahead. The *kāyath* asked, why? He clarified, your saddle is empty. The *kāyath* replied, why should I follow you? I sit in a position in which my horse keeper put me.⁵⁷

Essays

Like the British *Punch*, satirical essays, not uncommon in Pratap Narayan Misra's *Brāhmaṇ*, endlessly played with words, made false linguistic connections and teased new meanings out of them. In 1888 an editorial titled “Ṭ” was published.⁵⁸ It questioned the British imperialist character through a mock exercise in social linguistics obliquely communicating the pressing political anger of a Hindi intellectual crushed under the asymmetries of colonialism:

This letter neither has the loveliness of L, nor the difficulty of D, nor the motherly touch of M. Think a little: you will find it filled with selfishness. If observed minutely, Arabs and Persians are not unalloyed forms of deceit and cunning—they know how to kill or get killed, how to oppress the weak being the mightier, and how to help against all odds when pleased. And where calculation doesn't work, they simply fawn; but taking care of their public image and greasing others to further self-interest, which is indeed so essential, are absolutely alien to them. Look into the characters of all the Kings in history. You won't find a single one whose good or bad character could remain undercover for long. That's why they don't have Ṭ in their alphabet! Ask a Persian to pronounce *ṭaṭṭī*, he will make more than 20 attempts but ultimately utter *tattī*! Never ever hunted from behind a *ṭaṭṭī* [veil], how could they have this word? On the other hand see our White-lord, *haiṭ* (hat) on his head, *pyemṭ* (pant) and *būṭ* on his legs. The name of the God, *ālmāiṭī* (almighty);⁵⁹ the name of the Preceptor *ṭiṭar* [<tutor>] or *māṣṭar* [<master>], [. . .] or *ṭicar* [<teacher>]; the title of the beloved, *mīṣṭres*; the name of work, *ṭreḍ* [<trade>]; word for profit, *benīṭhiṭ*; the word for the poet, *poṭaṭ*; the word for idiot, *ṣṭupīḍ*; they eat on a *ṭebil* and earn by *ṭeks*. How far should I stretch this *ṭiṭil ṭeṭil* (chattering); take any of the big dictionaries, you'll hardly find a word without Ṭ. [. . .] He is the crown of the world because of this Ṭ. Leave aside the issue of comprehending his policy, common educated people can't articulate the meaning of a single word of this policy [. . .] Your selfishness is great! Came here as a merchant but became king of the kings! Why not, with whom everything is full of Ṭ, is it at all surprising that he should digestṬ anything and everything of others?⁶⁰ This is called morality.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Anon., *Manohar kahānī* (Lakh'naū: Naval'kiśor Press, 1880), 6. Horse riding is traditionally associated with military prowess.

⁵⁸ First published in *Brāhmaṇ* 4, no. 11, June 15, 1888. Cited from Candrikā Prasād Śarmā, ed., *Pratāp'nārāyaṇ Miśra rac'nāvalī* (2001), 59–61. In South Asian languages, the English *t* sound is usually realised as a retroflex *ṭ*, and this rule underlies this whole passage.

⁵⁹ The terms in brackets are the Hindi equivalents of the respective English terms in Devanagari script.

⁶⁰ Ṭ is given as *ṭakār*, and the rhyming word to that is *ḍakār* from *ḍakār'nā*, literally not 'to digest' but 'to burp'.

The author assigns essential wickedness to the letter *T* and offers a historical assessment of the moral character of the ruling classes of India by illustrating the lack or preponderance of this letter in their languages. A deficiency of this letter in Persian, the official language of the state in pre-British India, serves as evidence of a better state of affairs in medieval times. Likewise, preponderance of this letter in English is turned into an explanation for the political reality and nature of the British colonial rule.

Another good example of parody was the use of ‘mock’ lexicographies and dictionaries. *Punch* had this variety of satire aplenty.⁶¹ It is difficult to assume a linear connection between this kind of satire published in *Punch* and that published in *Brāhmaṇ* or *Hindī pradīp*. In colonial Northern India it sought to describe the colonial cultural condition by using pseudo-lexicographical keywords of Indian society and politics. This was achieved with a deliberate (mis)application of grammatical methods to elaborate on contemporary cultural meaning of everyday social and political parlance. And, by extension, it turns out to be a compressed articulation of multiple asymmetries in a colonial society perceived as, in Sudhir Chandra’s words, the ‘oppressive present’ of colonialism.⁶² For instance, Misra’s *Kalikoś* (encyclopaedia of fallen times) describes the following groups:

- Brāhmaṇ*—‘*Bāmbhan*’, one who sounds *bā*, meaning an ox—an animal without education.
Gurū—Shameless, scoundrel, crazy, etc., evident by the [living] encyclopedia of Benares.
 [...]
 Paṇḍit—*P* for *pāpī* [sinner], *Ḍ* for *ḍākū* [robber], *T* for *taskar* [smuggler].
 [...]
 Chatrī [Warrior]—One who does not even walk to the urinal without a *chat'rī* [umbrella], in other words the embodiment of feminine delicateness.
 [...]
 Vaiśya [Trader]—Seems to be the masculine counterpart of *veśyā* [prostitute] because ‘for the sake of money (s)he is ready to forsake self-esteem and be a slave’. But they are so envious that ‘this prostitute is expert in stealing others’ wealth and conscience’ and they earn for the Englishmen.

⁶¹ Altick, *Punch* cites such examples. A parody of Olivian Lore was serialised in the year 1843. Written by Percival Leigh and illustrated by H. G. Haine, it cast Hercules as *Punch*’s surrogate who deals with his numerous antagonists until 1843:

The Nemean Lion = war
 The Hydra = the law (‘the offspring of necessity by wickedness’)
 The Buck of the Brazen Countenance = swindlers typified by ‘Jew bill-discounters’
 The Great Boer = quackery (in medicine)
 The Augean Stables = parliament, bureaucracy, and courts to be cleaned by the force of public opinion
 The Harpies = vultures ‘of a certain “persuasion”’ who batten on debtors (Altick, *Punch*, 100).

⁶² Cf. Chandra, *Oppressive Present*.

[...]

Agnihotra [Fire sacrifice]—One who spoils the atmosphere by spending thousands of rupees on firecrackers for a marriage celebration.

Hospitality—Serving food to the British, honouring sacred thread, *coṭī* and *tilak* with eggs and chicken.

Dharma—Abusing followers of another sect.

Veda—Seed of division between Ārya Samāj and Dharma Sabhā.

[...]

Śivālay [Temple of Lord Shiva]—The place of *śivā* or the jackal [...]

[...]

Nāstik [Atheist]—One who follows the dicta of each and every sect except our own

[...].

Kacah'rī [Law court]—*kac* means hair and *harī* means remover [...]

Darbār—*darb* means wealth, *arī* means enemy [...]

Hākīm [Government officer]—The oppressed says *hā* [shouts in pain] and his highness says *kim*, meaning why the hell are you shouting?

Bakīl (Advocate)—*buḷ* + *kīl*, one who nails your heart, or in another language, *voḷ* + *kī*, What (is with you)? Give it to me [...]

[...]

Mard [Man]—One who has been trampled [...].

[...]

Santān [Son]—One who is born after the visit of a *sant* or characterless monk!⁶³

From the title onwards this piece can be read symptomatically. The author uses the trope of the Age of *kali*⁶⁴—an age of all-pervasive moral and cultural downfall. As a parodying encyclopaedia of colonial ethnography⁶⁵ and scholarly register of Sanskrit lexicography, the content of this essay satirises the general socio-cultural condition under colonialism. The Brahmins, a traditional social group with scholarly pursuits, are no more than the proverbial ignorant oxen, the spiritual preceptors are thugs, the warrior or ruling class is wallowed in pleasure and is emasculated, the merchant class is unethical and collaborates with the colonial masters, the epitome of the educated service class, *agnihotrī*, are far from being austere. The culture of hospitality is deeply colonised, the philosophical tradition of religious debate has been debased, the philosophers of atheism have become deeply opportunistic and superficial, and finally the colonial institutions of justice and welfare are misnomers and exploitative to their core.

⁶³ It was first serialised in *Brahman* between 1884 and 1886. The citation is from Miśra, *Pratāp'nārāyaṇ Miśra rac'nāvalī*, 27–31. Similar writings by Radhacharan Gosvami can be found in *Hindī pradīp*, July 1882.

⁶⁴ The Kali age is the last and worst temporal phase in the circular time of Hindu cosmology. See Romila Thapar, *Time as a Metaphor of History*, Krishna Bhardwaj Memorial Lecture, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996). For the cultural politics of the invocation of the Kali age in the colonial period, see Sumit Sarkar, “‘Kaliyuga’, ‘Chakri’ and ‘Bhakti’: Ramakrishna and His Times,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 27, no. 29 (1992): 1543–1566.

⁶⁵ Gosvami suggestively entitled his piece as ‘Mimicry of a new encyclopedia by Mr W’. Here Mr. W stands for none other than the orientalist scholar/administrator H. H. Wilson.

Cartoon

Another significant development in late nineteenth century Hindi periodicals was the incorporation of illustrations. In this context, what is significant is the beginning of illustrations in satirical columns. Cartoons in the sense of the British *Punch* were very much in vogue in Urdu, Bengali, Gujarati, and Marathi language periodicals from the second half of the 1870s. In Hindi they made their presence felt a little later. Beginning in the 1880s, a few attempts by the writer-editors themselves could be observed. For instance, Radhacharan Gosvami drew and published a cartoon titled ‘*Unnati kī gārī*’ (the cart of progress). It showed the cart of progress driven by a whip-carrying Englishman named *sāsan* (governance) and *anuśāsan* (discipline). This cart is pushed forward by Bengali, Marathi and Punjabi gentlemen, while a Hindustani (north Indian) is left behind, ensnared by *avidyā* (ignorance) and *ālasya* (idleness).⁶⁶ Mahavir Prasad Dvivedi, who was the editor of the influential literary monthly *Sarasvatī* for 17 years and regarded as a moderniser of Hindi language, made cartoons a regular feature in the initial years of *Sarasvatī*.⁶⁷ They were usually drawn by commissioned artists and their subject remained limited to literary polemics.⁶⁸ *Sarasvatī*, for instance, published a cartoon titled ‘*Kharī bolī kā padya*’ (Khari Boli poetry) in September 1902⁶⁹ (see Fig. 1). The cartoon targeted Ayodhya Prasad Khatri, who had been leading a literary movement for Khari Boli⁷⁰ to replace Brajbhasha⁷¹ as the language of modern Hindi poetry.⁷² He wrote a book, *Kharī bolī kā padya*, to highlight the variety of poetic compositions in the language to justify its potential viability to convey poetic sensibility. The cartoon mocked Khatri’s linguistic and ethnographic classification of Khari Boli poetry as ridiculous and, borrowing from the imagery of Hindu mythology, graphically represented it as a man with five heads: (1) Court or clerk style, (2) Muslim style, (3) Brahmin style, (4) Eurasian style and (5) European style. Interestingly, the head representing a Brahmin style is in the middle and hence the chief amongst them. An epigrammatic comment below this illustration says:

⁶⁶ See Rām'nirañjan Parimalendu, *Mohan'lāl mah'to viyogī* (Dillī: Sāhitya Akāḍemī, 2007), 21.

⁶⁷ Dvivedi was its editor between 1903 and 1920.

⁶⁸ It cannot be established whether Dvivedi himself drew these cartoons. What can be argued with conviction is that he conceptualised the themes of the cartoons, which were largely on literary polemics, and gave detailed instruction to draw accordingly.

⁶⁹ This cartoon is reprinted in Siv'pūjan Sahāy, ed., *Ayodhyā prasād khatri smārak granth* (Paṭ'nā: Bihār Rāṣṭrabhāṣā Pariṣad, 1960), 101.

⁷⁰ Khari Boli was a dialect spoken in the Delhi-Agra region, and language of communication in the north Indian cities. It was made the principal base of modern standard Hindi.

⁷¹ Brajbhasha was also a dialect in the Mathura area and had been the language of poetry since early medieval times.

⁷² Ayodhya Prasad Khatri was a Hindi nationalist who was of the opinion that if Khari Boli Hindi wished to be a language of literature its poetic oeuvre should not be in Brajbhasha but in Khari Boli. See Alok Rai, *Hindi Nationalism* Tracts For the Times, 13 (Delhi: Orient Longman, 2001).



Fig. 1 ‘*Kharī bolī kā padya*’ (Khari Boli poetry). *Sarasvatī*, September 1902

A torso on two legs with stunning five heads over them,
Lo behold the beautiful symmetry of my penta-colour poetry.

Dvivedi’s cartoon did not oppose the necessity of poetic composition in Khari Boli but, through graphic exaggeration, he underlined the absurdity of the internal diversity of Khari Boli as strange and demonic. It gave a clear hint at his future agenda of purging Khari Boli of its diversity, which he would do as the editor of *Sarasvatī* after a few months.⁷³

Bhārat'jīvan published a skit titled ‘*Pañcānan kī peśī*’ (the court of Panchanan). The pictures of an owl and a donkey are inserted in the satirical column.⁷⁴ At the court of Panchanan, two ‘strange species’ enter—an owl named ‘Ocean of

⁷³ Exercising the authority of the editor of the monthly, which was affiliated with the powerful cultural institution Nāgarī Pracārīṇī Sabhā (society for the propagation of Hindi), Dvivedi shaped a homogenous and standard style of literary prose and poetry in Khari Boli, borrowing heavily from Sanskrit register and simultaneously discouraging use of ‘dialects’ or rustic Hindi and words of Perso-Arabic roots.

⁷⁴ ‘*Pañcānan kī peśī*’ (the court of Panchanan). *Bhārat'jīvan*, 16 March 1903.

Wisdom’ and an ass that is afraid of education. The first introduces himself as a representative of a literary critic. He writes favourable or damning reviews and commentaries on monetary considerations.⁷⁵ The second introduces himself as a young man from the class of newly-rich merchants with no interest in modern education. They then leave. We need to recall the tradition of popular Indian fables, *Pañcatantra*, to trace one genealogical line of the usage of visual imagery: animals type-cast with human attributes of a social class. Significantly, this example also displays the initial attempts by the editors to incorporate illustrations in satirical columns. However, after 1920, with the proliferation in print and readership, the cartoon became an essential feature of most of the periodicals, and professional artists and cartoonists started to be employed.

Characteristic Features of Late Nineteenth Century Satirical Journalism

Using several examples, I have shown that there existed a literary space and style of satirical journalism of the *Punch* variety within the Hindi literary sphere prior to 1920. This tradition of satirical journalism was informed as much by the British *Punch* as by the existing literary and oral traditions of satire. The literary format of the periodical experimented with familiar but disparate literary and oral cultural repertoires of humour. It contributed towards attracting and training a readership with diverse tastes, new to the world of Hindi print, and in the process of self-constitution. Satirical columns using parody, farce, jokes, etc., were structurally familiar to readers from their lives before and beyond the printed word.⁷⁶ Their inclusion in literary periodicals added entertainment and pleasure value to their otherwise morally overloaded, dry nationalist messages.⁷⁷ In the introduction to his *Nāpit'sotra*,⁷⁸ Radhacharan Gosvami,

⁷⁵ The figure of a corrupt literary critic under satiric attack is an interesting case which points towards a broader development in the Hindi literary sphere. In 1900, what Alok Rai calls ‘The MacDonnell Moment’, the battle to establish Nagari/Hindi as the court language, was won (Rai, *Hindi Nationalism*, 17–49). With this, the process to reorganise, institutionalise, standardise and expand the literary world of Hindi was intensified further. Consequently, the question of moral and institutional authority as an arbiter in the literary field also becomes prominent.

⁷⁶ For the interface between oral and printed literature of entertainment in Hindi and Urdu, see Francesca Orsini, “Barahmasas in Hindi and Urdu,” in *Before the Divide: Hindi and Urdu Literary Cultures*, ed. Francesca Orsini (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2010), 142–177.

⁷⁷ Orsini makes a very important point about the publication of cheap tracts of entertainment literature in connection with the success of commercial printing in Hindi and Urdu. The success of the printer lay in tapping the proto-literate readership, which was trained to read already familiar modes of entertainment such as popular song and theatre. Drawing from the work on children’s literature by the Italian scholar Ermanno Detti, she argues that, though often frowned upon by educationists, a deeply pleasurable experience of, what Detti calls, ‘sensuous reading’ is necessary to develop a habit of reading, which is an essential pre-requisite for the development of a reading practice in general. These texts of pleasure, in which we can also include printed jokes, conundrums, skits, epigrammatic comments on politics and society, etc., can be seen as absolutely necessary in order to win people over to the printed page. Orsini, *Print and Pleasure*, 22–23.

⁷⁸ Rādhācaraṇ Gosvāmī, *Nāpit'sotra* (Banākīpur: Khadgavilās Press, 1882). Also published in *Kṣatriya patrikā*, July 1881. It depicts the Brahmanic anxiety and consequent attacks on the rising

one of the key Hindi literary figures of the time, clearly underlined the entertainment aspect of satire and its prospective role in attracting a greater readership:

Although the *Nāpit'sotra* is primarily humorous, yet it will be fruitful [...] Humour should increase interest in reading Hindi books and hence shall be a national service.

Compared to other articles written by the same set of people in the same periodicals on the same question of colonialism and its wider politico-cultural implications in Indian society, the examples above show another stark peculiarity of the satirical mode of writing. The general ambivalence of the intelligentsia towards colonial rule⁷⁹ is less apparent in satirical modes. Instead, the satirical attack is full-fledged and hardly spares any aspect of colonialism. The colonial intelligentsia—a product of the colonial encounter—uses satire as a potent means to tackle the perceived cultural asymmetries which colonialism produced through the general political subordination of the country. It consequently paved the way for what was considered to be a destabilisation of the Indian/Hindu social equilibrium visible in the assertions of the lower castes and women.

The Context of the *Mat'vālā* Moment

Mat'vālā carries forward the late nineteenth century literary experiments with its own novelty in the changed historical circumstances of the 1920s. With the rise of anti-colonial mobilisation under middle-class leadership⁸⁰ in the aftermath of the First World War, the publication and circulation of periodicals rose substantially in each and every district town, targeting and shaping the literate and semi-literate, potentially nationalistic, Hindi reading public.⁸¹ Hindi language had been deemed to be the most appropriate language of nationalist politics by none other than the 'Father of Indian Nation' Mahatma Gandhi himself.⁸² Hindu–Muslim identity politics had acquired a new dimension. In the nineteenth century community identity was articulated by the Hindi intelligentsia largely within the dominant nationalist logic as a different but constituent part of one Indian body politic. This

social power and liberty of the *nāpit* or barber caste which, according to the text, is reflected in their 'cunning' and assertive activities, particularly in the cities in colonial times.

⁷⁹ See Chandra, *Oppressive Present*; K.N. Panikkar, *Culture, Ideology, Hegemony: Intellectuals and Social Consciousness in Colonial India* (Delhi: Tulika, 1998).

⁸⁰ Gyanendra Pandey, *The Ascendancy of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh 1926–1934: A Study in Imperfect Mobilization* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978).

⁸¹ Its background had been set in the late nineteenth century. The programmatic political attempts of the pioneers of Hindi nationalism of the late nineteenth century and the consequent politics of Hindi-Hindu-Hindustan have been largely successful in transforming the linguistic choice of north India, and consequently, in winning over a large number of Hindu readers from Urdu to Nagari/Hindi.

⁸² Orsini, *Hindi Public Sphere*.

articulation was progressively giving way to violent and mutually hostile communal identity formations during this period.⁸³

In literary gossip, as well as factual accounts in the memoirs of the Hindi literati, or in books on the history of Hindi journalism in general, the story of the publication of *Mat'vālā* from Calcutta is described as a momentous event.⁸⁴ The *Annual Report on Newspaper and Periodical published from Bengal* shows that it had 200 annual subscribers and a circulation of approximately 2,000.⁸⁵ A leading member of its editorial team, however, wrote in his memoirs that it reached the unprecedented mark of 10,000 within a year.⁸⁶ There were many articles and cartoons on *Mat'vālā* in contemporary periodicals, which can also be taken as an index of its popularity.⁸⁷ It was a self-proclaimed humorous weekly with a judicious mixture of heterodoxy and commercialism. The press and the paper were owned by a young nationalist literary connoisseur and essayist, Mahadev Prasad Seth, who belonged to a rich merchant family of Mirzapur.⁸⁸ He successfully channelled the unrestrained, youthful literary talents of diverse, unique and path-breaking individuals like Suryakant Tripathi 'Nirala' and Pandey Bechan Sharma 'Ugra' on the one hand, and dedicated and disciplined ones like Munshi Navjadiklal Shrivastav and Shivpujan Sahay on the other.⁸⁹ In the moralist-rationalist Hindi world, dominated by hegemonic figures such

⁸³ Pradip Kumar Datta, *Carving Blocs: Communal Ideology in the Early Twentieth Century Bengal* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999); William Gould, *Hindu Nationalism and Language of Politics in Late Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁸⁴ Usually downplayed in the history of Bengal/Calcutta since the inception of the printing industry, it has been one of the major centres of Hindi printing. Apart from the first Hindi periodical *Uddand mārtand*, Calcutta always had more than one long lasting Hindi periodical, like *Sār'sudhānidhi*, *Bhārat'mitra*, *Ucit'vaktā*, which had circulation figures between 500 and 1,500. See, for instance, 'Report on Newspaper and Periodical in Bengal for the Week Ending 22 December 1882 in *Indian Newspaper Reports, c1868–1942, from the British Library, London [microform]*, part 1: Bengal, 1874–1903 (Marlborough: Adam Matthew Publications Ltd., 2005). Besides a sizable Hindi readership in Bara Bazar area, entire Bihar, north of the river Ganges, was a potential sphere of circulation. Calcutta was better connected than Allahabad, Benaras or even Patna.

⁸⁵ *Statement of Newspapers and Periodicals Published or Printed in Bengal—Revised Upto 31st December 1925* (Calcutta: Bengal Government Press, 1926).

⁸⁶ Śiv'pūjan Sahāy, *Merā jīvan* (Paṭ'nā: Parijāt Prakāśan, 1985), 101.

⁸⁷ To cite just one example here, see a cartoon on *Mat'vālā* in the monthly *Bhār'tendu* (Allahabad), December 1928. While publishing each other's appreciation and reviews was common in the fraternity of the periodical, *Mat'vālā*'s case was different. *Mat'vālā* attracted extra attention of the literary public as well as the government for its bold and provocative moral, political and literary stance. Finally, it succumbed to the dual pressure of the dominant, modernist, patriarchal moral orthodoxy of Hindi public sphere for promoting low-brow literature, and the colonial clampdown for writing inflammatory political articles within 6 years of its inauguration.

⁸⁸ *Statement of Newspapers and Periodicals Published or Printed in Bengal—Revised Upto 31st December 1925*.

⁸⁹ For general information on the story of the first year of *Mat'vālā maṇḍal* or *Mat'vālā* literary circle, there exist some (hagiographic) accounts. Sahāy, *Merā jīvan*; Karmendu Śīśir, "Mat'vālā maṇḍal: sāhityik patrakāritā kā ek anūthā adhyāy," *Pahal*, Special Issue (1988). For a more critical account of its early period until the great Poet Nirala was associated with it, see Śarmā, Rām'bilās, *Nirālā kī sāhitya sādhanā*, vol. 1 (Dillī: Rāj'kamal Prakāśan, 1972).

as Mahavir Prasad Dvivedi,⁹⁰ this weekly produced a refreshing change. Its scathing attacks on the orthodoxies of the Hindi literary sphere can be gleaned from its appearance.⁹¹ The name of the weekly itself celebrates liquor, which was in marked contrast with other publications: *Sarasvatī* (goddess of learning), *Abhyuday* (dawn), *Maryādā* (dignity), *Bhārat'mitra* (friend of India), *Cāḍ* (moon), *Viśāl bhārat* (sublime India), which symbolised lofty moralism. The image of an intoxicated Shiva dancing on the front page is accompanied by a couplet celebrating the theme of intoxication as a symbol of pleasure and detachment, and it continues in this vein stating its price: 'One anna per cup, three rupies in advance for an annual bottle.' The periodical and its writers were either loved or hated, but could not be ignored. They remained at the centre of public controversy whether for Nirala's experiments in Hindi poetry and his acerbic criticism of orthodoxy in Hindi literary culture,⁹² or for Ugra's bold and realist short stories on homosexual and cross-community love affairs.⁹³

***Mat'vālā*: The Satiric Narrator**

In the closing years of the nineteenth and the early years of the twentieth century an interesting phenomenon occurs: Apart from *Punch* columns, the most famous and popular satirical columns begin to appear under the title of *Śiv'śambhu ke ciṭṭhe* (letters from Śiv'śambhu), which became famous for their biting attacks on government policies in the *Bhārat'mitra* (friend of India) of Calcutta. In a way, we can observe a process of gradual transformation in the self-image of the satiric narrator—irreverent, quasi-divine and an articulator of public opinion—from Pañc's heterogeneous lineages to his Hindu origins, perhaps culminating in *Mat'vālā*.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Śarmā, Rām'bilās, *Mahāvīr prasād dvivedī aur hindī nav'jāgaran* (Dillī: Rāj'kamal Prakāśan, 1989).

⁹¹ Cf., e.g., the cover page of *Mat'vālā* 32, 1 Caitra śukla (March–April) 1925.

⁹² Śarmā, *Nirālā kī sāhitya sādhanā*, vol. 1; David Rubin, "Nirala and the Renaissance of Hindi Poetry," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 31, no. 1 (1971): 111–126; Heidi Pauwels, "Diptych in Verse: Gender Hybridity, Language Consciousness, and National Identity in Nirālā's 'Jāgo Phir Ek Bār'," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 121, no. 3 (2001): 449–481.

⁹³ Pandeya Bechan Sharma 'Ugra', *Chocolate, and Other Writings on Male–Male Desire*, trans., intr. Ruth Vanita (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006). Also, see Francesca Orsini, "Reading a Social Romance: 'Chand hasino ke khatoot'," in *Narrative Strategies: Essays on South Asian Literature and Films*, ed. Vasudha Dalmia and Theo Damsteeg (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998): 185–210.

⁹⁴ According to Shivpujan Sahay, *Mat'vālā* took its immediate inspiration from a Bengali satirical weekly, *Abatār*, which had been started just a couple of months before in 1923. Sahāy, *Merā jīvan*, 99. *Abatār* was a cheap, full-scape weekly. Its title page carried an illustration of an Indian youth simultaneously clad in a *dhotī* (a long piece of cotton clothing to be tied around the waist, worn by traditional Hindus) and trousers, with a hat on his head. It was edited by Amulyacharan Sen of Dakshineshvar. Its language was racy, rustic and contained a ruthlessly critical editorial. I am thankful to Chaiti Basu for this information on *Abatār*. This *Abatār* issue raises some significant questions. Can we map *Punch*'s influence on *Mat'vālā*? Given the evidence that the nineteenth century traditions of Bengali satirical journalism (*Basantak*, *Pañcā-nanda*, *Har'bolā bhāṛ*, etc.) were very much modelled on *Punch*, as the essays by Partha Mitter and especially Chaiti Basu in

The first issue of *Mat'vālā* talked about the self-image of the periodical in a long satirical essay.⁹⁵ The persona of *Mat'vālā* is described as the opium, weed-smoking henchman of Lord Shiva, named *Vīr'bhadrā* (noble-brave). On the insistence of his consort, Parvati, who had overheard some hue and cry coming from the direction of *Bhārat'varṣ* (India), he was sent to earth by the Lord himself to observe political and social affairs. The Lord asked him to throw his trident with full force and follow its direction to its landing place. In a state of intoxication, he heard a loud echo of a human cry coming from the east and confused this with the roar of a demon. He threw his trident to kill him, but the demon was nowhere to be seen. Looking for his trident in order to decide the location of his headquarter⁹⁶ as per his master's instruction, he arrived in the land of the Goddess Kali, *Kali-kāntā* (Calcutta), and finally chose to stay in the street named after his master, i.e., Shankar Ghosh Lane. Yet he kept wondering about his inability to find the demon (colonialism) at whom he had thrown his trident. He could clearly see the demon's *māyā* (vicious effects) but not the *māyāvī* (demon). In other words, the reporter *Mat'vālā* is God's emissary, hence invested with quasi-divine authority and answerable to his Lord. He is an impartial outsider, but stays inside society. He is a celestial being and therefore not bound by any social norms. He is always intoxicated and, in this state of drunkenness, is not restricted by reason, hence has the liberty to see beyond reality. He can articulate the unarticulated and can feel the mood of people being crushed by harsh reality.⁹⁷

***Mat'vālā* as a Brand**

Like the British *Punch*, the satirical weekly *Mat'vālā* not only cultivated a self persona, but also functioned as an internally cohesive editorial team leading to the consolidation of a strong literary identity amongst the reading public.⁹⁸ Most of the columns were titled accordingly and signed by the kind of pseudonyms that went well with the overall aura of *Mat'vālā* as aggressive, virile, irreverent, and iconoclastic. One of the characteristic features of *Mat'vālā*, for instance, was the short epigrammatic satirical comments in columns like '*Cal'tī cakkī*' (the unstoppable grinder), or '*Cābuk*' (the whip) (see Fig. 2).

this volume suggest, *Punch*'s formative influence can be linked to *Abatār* and then to *Mat'vālā*. After all, in the literary cultures of South Asia, many Western literary forms travelled indirectly via another, neighbouring literary culture, in this case in Hindi via Bengali or Urdu. Early historical, social or detective novels were introduced via Bengali. Orsini mentions, for instance, the circulation and translation of detective novels from English to Bengali and then to Hindi. Francesca Orsini, "Detective Novels: A Commercial Genre in Nineteenth-century North India," in *India's Literary History: Essays on the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Stuart Blackburn and Vasudha Dalmia (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), 435–482.

⁹⁵ It was written by Shivpujan Sahay after his discussion with other members of the team. Sahāy, *Merā jīvan*, 100.

⁹⁶ '*heḍ'kvārṭar*' in the Hindi original.

⁹⁷ *Mat'vālā*, August 26, 1923.

⁹⁸ For the case of *Punch*, see "Chap. 2: Mr Punch and His Men" in Altick, *Punch*, 41–66.



Fig. 2 ‘Cābuk’ (the whip). *Mat'vālā*, undated

‘Cābuk’ commented on literary affairs. It was written under the pseudonym of Śrīmān Gar'gaj'siṃh Varmā Sāhitya-Śārdūl or Mr Great Lion Armoured Literary Roc.⁹⁹ The illustration in the column depicts two north Indians fearfully running away from a giant with a whip. The caption below is a poem by Urdu poet Insha. It appealed to the audience/reader to listen to his affectionate plea to stop trembling in anger. Likewise ‘Cal'tī cakkī’, a column on political affairs, portrayed *Mat'vālā* as a devil who grinds a man in his grinder¹⁰⁰ and the verse below explains that he is determined to indiscriminately grind everything beneath the sky.

The young members of the *Mat'vālā* literary circle stayed as bachelors in one house working and indulging in leisure together. In the case of a public debate over literary or political issues, which often arose from the pages of *Mat'vālā* and involved other periodicals and litterateurs, the responses were written under the collective moderation of the team, at least in the early years.¹⁰¹ Litterateurs of

⁹⁹ A young litterateur born in the Unnav district of the present day Uttar Pradesh and brought up in Bengal Suryakant Tripathi, who wrote poems in a new style under the penname *Nirala*, was the main contributor to this column.

¹⁰⁰ This imagery of *Mat'vālā* puts him closer to the proverbial henchman of the death god, who is entrusted with dispensing justice in the hell of Hindu mythology. Cf. the cover of ‘Cal'tī cakkī’ (the unstoppable grinder). *Mat'vālā*, undated.

¹⁰¹ See Śarmā, *Nirālā kī sāhitya sādhanā*, especially the chapter on *Mat'vālā maṇḍal*, which discusses the controversy over the originality of Nirala’s poetry and Nirala’s arrogant comments on the language of the periodical *Sarasvatī* and the consequent polemics.

Mat'vālā maintained an everlasting friendship. Even when they left for different periodicals later, they defended each other's writings from the attacks of opponents.

A Variety of Literary Forms in the Service of Political Satire

Epigrammatic Political Comments

Short epigrammatic satirical comments in columns like '*Cal'tī cakkī*' (unstoppable grinder), '*Mat'vāle kī bahak*' (intoxicant's fluttering), '*Cābuk*' (whip), '*Āmyeṃ bāmyeṃ sām̐yeṃ*' (nonsense), '*Caṇḍūkhāne kī gapp*' (gossips of the opium tavern) contained burning social, political, and literary issues, real or imagined, and remarked on public figures at the helm of affairs. These epigrammatic comments, like those of *Punch*, required a prior knowledge of their core issues, which were already in the centre of public discourse either through newspapers and/or other oral sources. These comments were opinions, often had biting effects, and used literary strategies of satire such as incongruity, deformation or decontextualisation. I hereby quote a few of them to illustrate my points:

It seems the ghost of Lenin is ruling over Kemal Pasha's head. Muhammad Ali [Indian leader of the pro-caliphate movement] should look for an exorcist to cure him.¹⁰²

A strong similarity with *Punch*'s penchant for hoaxing and rumour mongering can be noticed here.¹⁰³ In the first sentence, two forms of communication, news and rumour are intermeshed.¹⁰⁴ News and rumour are both acts of communication from one source to another. While the original source of news is theoretically verifiable, the source of rumour is not.¹⁰⁵ 'Lenin has died' is news, his turning out to be a ghost is a deformation of news into rumour. 'A ghost has entered Kemal Pasha's body' is a statement. This statement, then, either makes a conjectural connection between Lenin's death and Pasha's decision to abolish the caliphate, thus insinuating that Pasha is occupied by a spirit who is not able to make rational decisions. Or, it is an allegorical statement about an overlap between the two leaders' ideologies, at least for those who knew that Lenin had welcomed Atatürk's revolution and that Lenin and revolutionary Russia were anti-religious. The first sentence reproduces news in the form of an allegory and/or rumour. Thus, it brings down the seriousness of

¹⁰² *Mat'vālā*, 15 March 1924.

¹⁰³ Altick, *Punch*, 71–72.

¹⁰⁴ I have shown the tradition of printing jokes and gossip in the periodicals. Reporting political rumour also has strong roots in the Hindi newspapers, at least during the anti-colonial mass movement in the twentieth century. See appendix of Shahid Amin, "Gandhi as Mahatma: Gorakhpur District, Eastern UP, 1921–1922," in *Subaltern Studies*, vol. 3, ed. Ranajit Guha (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984), 1–61.

¹⁰⁵ See Chap. 6 "Transmission" in Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), 220–277.

major political events. It was juxtaposed with the second statement prescribing magical treatment for the political dilemma the Indian Muslim leader faces, and thus decontextualises it from its local dynamics.

At a recently held convention in Allahabad priests of Hindu pilgrimage centres have taken a vow to do away with the custom of *dakṣiṇā* [offering to the priest], provided young and comely women of their Hindu clientele visit the shrines in a libertarian way [*svacchandatā pūrvak*].¹⁰⁶

This statement invokes two malpractices associated with the priestly class of Hindus, which are widely criticised by the male Hindi middle class: first, monetary exploitation of the believers by the clergy and, second, sexual exploitation of women, who move outside their patriarchal households to visit holy shrines. The satiric grotesqueness is achieved by making the culprits bargain, in a mock democratic forum of a convention, for the sanction of the second and more serious malpractice to quit the first.

The *māsik* [meaning both ‘monthly’ and ‘menstruation cycle’] of Jabalpur’s *Śrīśārādā* [a monthly periodical with irregular issues] has gone awry! What else could be the result of being *anek'patigāminī* or going around with so many men [editors].¹⁰⁷

Here is the case of a gendered description of literary news in which two seemingly incongruous objects are paralleled—an unfortunate literary periodical with a woman. It derives pleasure from invoking the hidden sexual meaning of words.

It is heard that few *meh'tars* [scavenger caste] also read newspapers. Therefore upper caste Hindus should quit this practice; after all, caste Hindus must refrain from following untouchables.¹⁰⁸

Here we see the satiric inversion of the logic of Brahmanic social ideology. The (ir)rationality of Brahmanic ideology is extended to the point of absurdity through the logic of mathematical rationality. It is a Brahmanic axiom that caste Hindus should not do what untouchables do. Hence, they should not read newspapers.

Some low-caste Hindus eat pork, therefore they are considered impure by Muslims. Muslims eat beef, so they are considered impure by Hindus. Englishmen eat both; hence they are considered pious and are worshipped by both.¹⁰⁹

Here, the rationale of dietary regime and its mutual social manifestation amongst (upper caste) Hindus and Muslims is made incongruous by juxtaposing it with their contradictory behaviour vis-à-vis the ruling elite.

Editorial Essays

The periodical always carried an editorial. It moved between satire and lampoon and was, at times, invective. It appropriated each and every spectacular public event like Hindu festivals, such as Holī, Dīvālī, or Vijayādaśamī, and even communal

¹⁰⁶ *Mat'vālā*, 7 March 1925.

¹⁰⁷ *Mat'vālā*, 15 March 1924.

¹⁰⁸ *Mat'vālā*, 22 April 1923.

¹⁰⁹ *Mat'vālā*, 10 May 1924.

riots,¹¹⁰ as an occasion to satirise ‘dormant’ and ‘emasculated’ Indian/Hindus suffering under British oppression. The language of the acerbic prose was highly aggressive, virile and masculinist. One example is this excerpt from an editorial titled ‘*Cūrī sārī kī jay bolo*’ (victory to bangle and petticoat).

The distance between an eye and an ear is four fingers, but the difference between the acts of seeing and listening is like that between the sky and earth. I am sick of hearing repeatedly that Lord Ramchandra had his great victory march on the day of *Vijayādaśamī*, [...] that the entire *Bhārat'varṣ* [India] gets bedazzled every year by the shine and sound of arms and ammunitions on the day of *Vijayādaśamī* [...]. But my eyes are not willing to accept the truth of these words that fall upon my ears. These poor eyes can see that Lord Rām is no more, that the victory march, arms worship, warrior's instinct and the sound of armoury are to be found no more; that the breast of the nation is pulverised, the forehead of bravery is smashed and that self-pride is demolished. What then is the use of *Vijayādaśamī* and its sacred memory? That's why I say ‘Victory to Bangle and Petticoat’ [...]. Instead of the musical sound of arms, the cry for councils is there; instead of justice, unbearable oppression, instead of peace, great hue and cry. See the joys of Vijayā? Well, close your eyes now or you'll be blinded; keep your mouth shut, or your tongue will be plucked out; don't pen down your feelings, or your heart will be squeezed [...]. Beware! Tolerate the shower of abuse, listen to the sound of arms, and even fall prey to arms; but never utter a word, lower your gaze, if mother earth gives you refuge, bury yourself[...] When all directions approach you with sympathy, shout at your loudest the immortal words: Victory to Bangle and Petticoat [...] When they ask: Who are you? Reply immediately and boldly: I am Indian. They'll ask: Why this new slogan of victory? Then, out of ten directions, speak pointing towards the white-complexioned, blood eyed, ‘Westward direction’, in a dim shy voice: Please ask this possessor of sword and skull, garlanded with human head, the great White goddess!¹¹¹

This quotation is typical of *Mat'vālā*'s masculinist invocations of a glorious mythical Hindu past and its juxtaposition with the emasculated colonial present to

¹¹⁰ Spectacular public events, such as communal riots in Calcutta in 1926, provided another occasion for publishing sensational articles and satirical comments with gory details of real or imagined violence. A government report said that: ‘The Hindi papers underwent marked deterioration during the year under review. They devoted much of their energies towards promoting communal antagonism [...] Sanction was given in May 1926 to the prosecution of the editor, printer and publisher (Mahadeb Prasad Seth) of the ‘*Mat'vālā*’ newspaper for the publication of objectionable articles entitled (1) “Lalkar svikar”, (2) “Tumdar Darhom Patpat” and (3) “Upvas cikitsa” [*lal'kār svikār, tum dār dār ham pāt pāt, up'vās cikitsā*] in its issues of the 27, 28 and 29 April 1926 respectively. The editor was convicted and sentenced to 4 months’ “simple imprisonment”.’ *Annual Report on Indian Papers Printed or Published in the Bengal Presidency for the Year 1926* (Calcutta: Bengal Government Press, 1927). Interestingly, even when the editor of the paper underwent prosecution and the trial was going on in court, the publication of such articles continued. The judgment on the prosecution of *Mat'vālā* under section 153 A of the Indian Penal Code for publishing objectionable article inciting communal riots noted: ‘They are the most dangerous and poisonous description [...] There was clearly a malicious intension on the part of the writer and he had no shred of an honest view to remove matters which were causing ill-feeling between the communities [...] The learned Public Prosecutor draws my attention to the facts that the accused has continued to write in the similar strain.’ Interestingly, in the annual assessment of the press and its role during communal riots the government noted that the popularity and circulation of communal papers went up. File no. 236, Political Department (Political), West Bengal State Archive, Calcutta.

¹¹¹ *Mat'vālā*, 20 October 1923.

awaken the 'dormant' members of the Hindu nation. The narration of valour and chivalry of Hindu gods and goddesses and their acts of violent subjugation of the treacherous ruling authorities of the mythical past is debased by contrasting that narration's continuum with the oppressive present of their emasculated and enslaved descendants under colonialism. This literary strategy of satirical debasement creates a self-irony for the Hindu present.

Cartoons in the Twentieth Century: The Case of *Mat'vālā*

Mat'vālā was one of the earliest Hindi periodicals that published cartoons on a large scale. Before *Mat'vālā*, *Prabhā* (Kanpur, 1920) published cartoons regularly.¹¹² They were usually independent in themselves, but sometimes functioned as illustrations of juxtaposed written columns. These cartoons were equally direct and blatant in their attack and multiplied the journal's aggressive approach. Cartoons exemplify *Mat'vālā*'s endeavour to grapple with multiple asymmetries of contemporary colonial India, from a Hindu nationalist vantage point.¹¹³ This is reflected in the cartoons about the question of forms of anti-colonial politics, caste, gender and community relations.

Mat'vālā was a staunch admirer of Gandhi because he was anti-British. Cartoons like '*Paśubal kā ullās*' (the joy of brute power) highlighted the asymmetries of power between the colonial state and the nationalist opposition by depicting the government's brute suppression of the Gandhian movement.¹¹⁴ The picture shows a laughing fat man in Western apparel, named *Brute Force*, jumping on the flattened *dhotī*-clad human bodies named *Non-violence* with full force. Clearly, the jumping man in coat, trousers and boots with a stick in his hands is emblematic of the colonial power. The flattened human bodies are the faceless masses of India, who are following Mahatma Gandhi's principle of non-violence during the non-cooperation movement against the colonial government at that time. However, *Mat'vālā* did not hesitate to poke fun at Gandhi's conservative views on female sexuality.¹¹⁵

¹¹² *Annual Report on Indian Papers*, noted in its report on the Hindi press that the appearance of the few illustrated magazines (*Mat'vālā* and then *Hindu Punch*) with improved sales was noteworthy in this section of the Press. *Annual Report on Indian Papers Printed or Published in the Bengal Presidency for the Year 1925* (Bengal Government Press: Calcutta, 1926).

¹¹³ With a belief in the foundation myth of India as a Hindu civilisation at its core, Hindu nationalism could take the form of an exclusivist and supremacist to moderately assimilative stance. See Gould, *Hindu Nationalism*.

¹¹⁴ See '*Paśubal kā ullās*' (the joy of brute power). *Mat'vālā*, 29 September 1923.

¹¹⁵ 'According to Mahātmājī [Gandhi], those widows should be remarried who hardly encountered their husband. But what to do with those child widows, who died two-four months after consummating with their husbands? It would be better if the Mahatma articulates the internal logic of widow remarriage!' This epigrammatic comment is published after Gandhi subscribed to the patriarchal idea of limited social reform allowing only those widows to be remarried who did not have sexual intercourse with their husbands and hence had their virginity intact. The last

It virulently attacked liberal constitutionalists that showed faith in colonial political institutions. The cartoon entitled '*Adbhut unnati*' (unprecedented progress) can be cited as representing Mat'vālā's strong opposition to them.¹¹⁶ In the aftermath of the non-cooperation movement, the Indian National Congress was divided over the approach to the colonial government's limited political reforms, aiming at sharing some legislative power with the Indian political parties. The Swarajists or 'Pro-changers' in the Congress argued that the Indians should enter into the legislative council and oppose and expose the government from within. The 'No-changers' rejected this idea as a measure to co-opt Indians by the government. In this picture, the Swarajists favouring the entry of the Congress into the legislative councils are shown as pushing the boulder of the Congress into a gorge. The gorge is symbolic of



Fig. 3 '*Hindū-mus'lim ek'tā*' (unity of *Hindus* and *Muslims*). *Mat'vālā*, 15 March 1924

sentence of the comment is directed at the absurdity of this patriarchal logic. For a general positive idea, see Madhu Kishwar, "Gandhi on Women," *Race and Class* 28, no. 43 (1986).

¹¹⁶ Cf. '*Adbhut unnati*' (unprecedented progress). *Mat'vālā*, 5 January 1924.

the deep and dangerous entrapment of colonial political institutions. The 'No-changers' try to save the party by stopping the boulder of Congress from falling down.

It belaboured the Congress for turning a deaf ear to the question of the Hindu victims of communal riots and the insecurity of women. This is quite well illustrated in another cartoon entitled '*Anveṣaṇ!*' (discovery).¹¹⁷ At the door of a makeshift tent of the 1925 Annual Conference of the Indian National Congress, malnourished Hindu poor, recognisable by their braided hair,¹¹⁸ and *dhotī*, are waiting with young Hindu women clad in sari. The leaders of the Congress are apparently inside, busy 'discovering' the solution through futile deliberation.

The next cartoon, entitled '*Hindū-mus'lim ek'tā*' (unity of Hindus and Muslims), can be viewed in conjunction with the cartoon '*Anveṣaṇ!*'. It ridiculed the attempt to unite Hindus and Muslims after the spate of communal violence in the 1920s. It showed the inconvenience of the 'forced' cooperation between the traditional leaders of the two communities. A Brahman priest's *coṭī* (hair lock) is tied to the beard of his Muslim counterpart (see Fig. 3). *Mat'vālā*, simultaneously, underlined the irony of a superficial unity in the wake of communal conflicts. For instance, the cartoons entitled '*Bhrātrprem*' (brotherhood) showed that the beneficiary of their mutual antagonism (which is always instigated by Muslims!) was the colonial government. It portrayed an aggressive Muslim attacking a Hindu monk, who was passing by a mosque singing an innocent religious song. The dragon of colonial bureaucracy ensnares both¹¹⁹ (see Fig. 4).

Mat'vālā's cartoons and editorials derived from and contributed to the Hindu nationalist discourse on communitarian and communal politics.

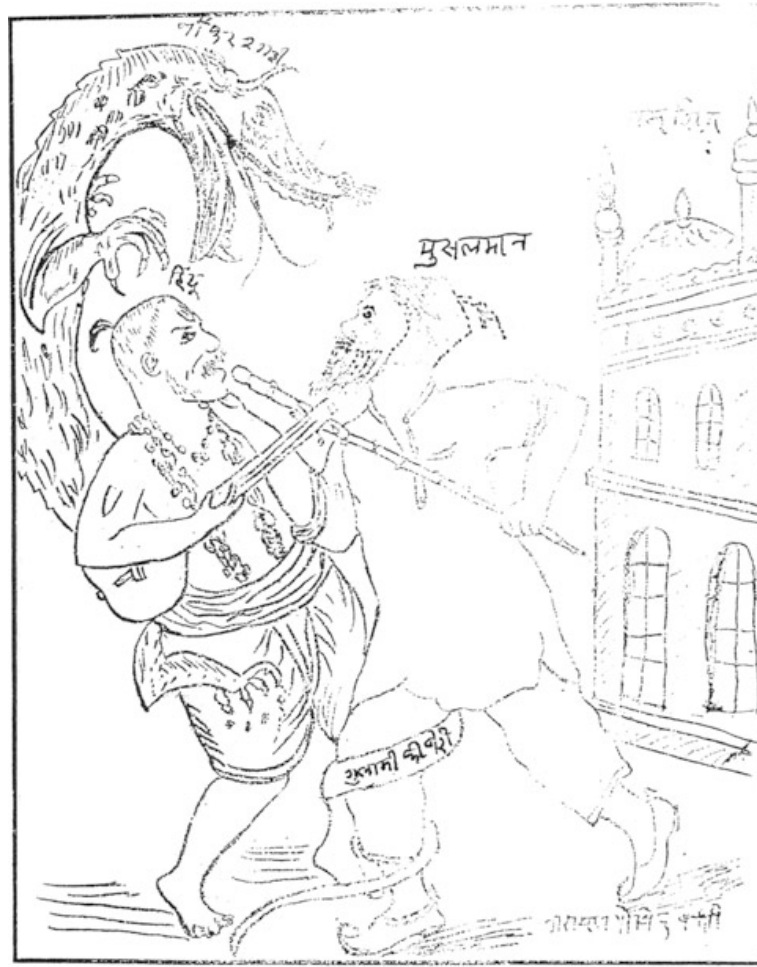
It spat fire at the imagined Muslim tyranny against the Hindus. It echoed the idea of a dying Hindu race—a result of the abduction and conversion of Hindu women by the Muslim (and British/Christian) goons,¹²⁰ and the conversion of untouchables by the *Tablīgī Jamā'at* and Christian missionaries. But it also found faults with the negligent attitude of the orthodox custodians of Hinduism and the 'dormant' Hindu middle class. Hence, it brazenly ridiculed the *Sanātani* Hindu organisations opposing the anti-untouchability movement. Sometimes, *Mat'vālā* gave space to writers with a proto-feminist and socialist agenda speaking in the language of human

¹¹⁷ Cf. '*Anveṣaṇ!*' (discovery). *Mat'vālā*, 16 January 1926.

¹¹⁸ A tuft of never-cut hair kept on the back of the head by caste Hindus.

¹¹⁹ The spectre of communal violence in the public arena of South Asia over the often repeated issues of music in front of the mosque, and the role of colonial state in this communal discourse, has been studied by Sandria Freitag and Gyan Pandey. Sandria Freitag, *Collective Action and Community: Public Arenas and the Emergence of Communalism in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992).

¹²⁰ *Mat'vālā* along with two other Hindi periodicals published from Calcutta, *Hindū Pañc* and *Viś vāmitra* were classified as fiercely communal by the colonial government. They drew from the Hindu nationalist discourse of the 'dying Hindu race,' which was widespread especially in Calcutta. See Datta, *Carving Blocs*.



हिन्दू—(तंभूरा बजाकर) भजुमन रामचरण दिनराती !
 मुसलमान—अवे-अ! छल्लू ! इबादतमें खलल डालता है !
 नौकरशाही—जब कि दो पूजियोंमें हो खटपट, अपने मतलबको डौल कर भटपट !

Fig. 4 ‘*Bhrātṛprem*’ (brotherhood). *Mat'vālā*, 9 August 1924

rights.¹²¹ They can be read as an attempt to include the dissenting voices—providing space to radical opinions within the periodical, but not engaging with their political agenda.

The cartoon entitled ‘*Dharm-sāṅ*’ (bull of religion) shows a creature with the torso of a Brahman priest and the head of a bull making advancements towards a young Hindu woman, who is frightened and runs away.¹²² ‘*Hā hindū!*’ (o Hindu, shame on you)

¹²¹ “Aurat ‘mard’ kā jhag'ṛā yā rām'nareś satyavādī saṃvād,” *Mat'vālā*, November 29, 1924. This was an excerpt from a polemic over the question of women’s rights between a patriarch, Pandit Ramnaresh Tripathi, and a rights-conscious woman, Satyavati Arya, published in *Strī darpaṇ* (women’s mirror) of Kanpur. Veer Bharat Talwar discusses the political-ideological significance of articles which started appearing in Hindi in the 1910s and 1920s in periodicals like *Strī darpaṇ*. Veer Bharat Talwar, “Feminist Consciousness in Hindi Journals,” in *Recasting Women*, eds. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (Delhi: Kali for Woman, 1990), 204–32.

¹²² Cf. ‘*Dharm-sāṅ*’ (the bull of religion). *Mat'vālā*, 20 February 1926.



हिन्दू-धर्म खड़ा है स्थिर, चरण-शूद्र कटते तुरफ़्त ।
'मियाँ' 'पादरी' चेत रहे हैं, चाबाजी करते हैं जैन !

Fig. 5 'Pad-vicched' (the cutting of feet). *Mat'vālā*, 7 March 1925

portrays sari-clad (Hindu) women being abducted by Muslim and British goons, while the Hindu gentleman, like a fool (symbolised by an owl) stands still in the centre.¹²³ And another cartoon entitled '*Tiraskār aur satkār*' (insult and respect) shows how an untouchable is kicked by a Brahman. In the background, he is caressed by a Muslim priest who points towards the mosque, and by extension, towards Islam.¹²⁴

Likewise, the cartoon '*Pad-vicched*' (the cutting of feet) depicts Muslim and Christian missionaries cutting the feet of a Hindu monk with a rat on his body (Fig. 5). The monk eaten by a rat symbolises decomposing Hinduism. His feet symbolise the Shudras, as per the mythology of the traditional body-politic of the

¹²³ Cf. '*Hā hindū!!!*' (o Hindu, shame on you). *Mat'vālā*, 29 November 1924.

¹²⁴ '*Tiraskār aur satkār*' (insult and respect). *Mat'vālā*, February 16, 1924.

Hindu social hierarchy. The chopping of the monk's feet symbolises further disintegration of Hinduism hastened by the conversion of untouchable castes into the folds of Christianity and Islam.

All the cartoons cited here feed on widely known themes and draw from the dominant rhetorical forms of modern and pre-modern registers of representation.¹²⁵ The iconography of social groups is based on their essentialised social markers with a satiric deflection achieved through caricatured exaggeration. The first stage in the production of a cartoon is the discovery and/or creation of subject matter. The analysis of the *Mat'vālā* cartoons reveals some major, innovative *topoi*: topicality, literary/cultural allusions, essentialised character traits of social groups. Topicality, like literary satire, forms the *raison d'être* of political cartoons in the sense that one cannot create a political cartoon without attracting readers' attention, at least momentarily, by some agreed-upon component of politics. A second source of cartoon image making is the literary/cultural allusion: any fictive or mythical character, any narrative or form, drawn from legend, folklore, literature, etc. The meaning of the image derives not solely from the topicality it employs but also from the interaction of the topical events with an allusion to an identifiable fiction. To decipher the cartoon, it is presumed that the reader is already familiar with the literary or cultural source to which it refers.

A third innovative source draws upon popular perceptions of the dominant stereotypes of the represented community, social class, political institution, etc. Such essentialised cultural traits as 'aggressive Muslims' or 'dormant Hindus' can be transformed into a combination of imagery and caption. No trait can be *totally* invented by the cartoonist. The trait must exist to some extent in popular consciousness or dominant public discourse before it can be amplified and caricatured by the artist.

Topicality, literary/cultural allusions and essentialised character traits of social groups form the creative storehouse from which cartoonists draw and construct first-order enthymemes that invite the reader to respond with certain values, perceptions, prejudices and predispositions. The targeted audience, (male) Hindu middle-class readers, fills in the missing premise as it reads the cartoon.

***Mat'vālā*: A Summary**

The satirical weekly *Mat'vālā* was a discursive, literary-visual space that spoke in the political language of Hindu nationalism, with an occasional incorporation of contending voices on a variety of issues, in the contemporary Hindi public sphere of the 1920s. It was simultaneously a supporter of Gandhi, sympathetic to

¹²⁵ The following analysis draws heavily from Martin J. Medhurst and Michael A. DeSousa, "Political Cartoons as Rhetorical Form: A Taxonomy of Graphic Discourse," *Communication Monographs* 48, no. 3 (1981): 197–236; 204.



Fig. 6 Cover page of the *Hindū Pañc*, 19 June 1917

revolutionary terrorists, and virulently anti-Muslim. It dared to raise taboo questions by publishing stories on homosexuality and Hindu–Muslim love affairs in a titillating language, but mutilated its radical potential by arriving at conservative resolutions asserting heteronormative Hindu patriarchal values. It gave space to proto-feminists and women’s reform initiatives, yet the language is sexist and gendered,¹²⁶ and the patriarchal idea of woman as a repository of the community’s honour was asserted. It supported the ‘uplift’ of ‘untouchable’ castes, but was guided by concerns of the perceived weakening of the majoritarian power of the Hindu community. Politically, the magazine remained Hindu nationalist despite its multiple contradictions.

Inheriting the legacy of its nineteenth century predecessors, *Mat'vālā* transformed the older style to such an extent that the elements of transcultural influences, which were visible until the beginning of the twentieth century, become difficult to grasp. Only a broader similarity in the characteristic features of satirical journalism remains. Three years after the publication of *Mat'vālā*, a weekly named *Hindū Pañc* was started in Calcutta under the editorship of Pandit Ishvari Prasad Sharma, and published and printed by Babu Ramlal Varma. Unlike *Mat'vālā*, which was registered as a satirical weekly and politically pro-Congress and anti-Muslim, the *Statement of Newspapers and Periodicals Published or Printed in Bengal for the year 1927* classified *Hindū Pañc* as an illustrated weekly with an overtly ‘anti-

¹²⁶ Interestingly, the linguistic and visual space of *Punch* were also gendered and remained almost misogynist. See Julie Codell, “Imperial Differences and Culture Clashes in Victorian Periodicals’ Visuals: The Case of *Punch*,” *Victorian Periodical Review* 39, no. 4 (2006): 410–428.

Muslim', politically 'extremist' attitude.¹²⁷ The cover page of the periodical (see Fig. 6) had an illustration depicting five types of male Hindus: an elderly Brahmin priest in his traditional apparel, and a topless young man with modern hairstyle, without any overt marker of community on the left; and a probable *Ārya Samājī* preacher in action, along with an educated Hindu gentleman with anointed forehead on the right, while the clumsy-looking *Pañc* is shouting in the middle, stretching his hands over the shoulders of the young man and the preacher. The motto of the paper, printed below the illustration, made its political agenda very clear.¹²⁸

To protect the honour of Hindus, to save the fame of Hindus;
Hindū Pañc has appeared in *Hind*, in order to awaken the Hindus.

Hindu Pañc for all practical purposes remains an illustrated political weekly with only two elements of *Punch*'s literary format cited in the beginning, namely cartoons and short epigrammatic comments on news in columns like '*Pañc'rāj kī kacah'rī*' (the court of *Pañc'rāj*). The latter become less satirical and oblique and more blunt and direct in their condemning. The term *pañc* itself had been loaded with local meanings, obscuring its transcultural genealogy, and cartoons no longer remained a monopoly of satirical periodicals but spread to all varieties of journals. So, ironically, it is a *pañc* that is seen to bring the immediate *Punch* legacy in Hindi satirical periodicals to an end.

¹²⁷ *Statement of Newspapers and Periodicals Published or Printed in Bengal—Revised up to 31st December 1927* (Bengal Government Press: Calcutta, 1928).

¹²⁸ It was an unapologetically militant Hindu nationalist/communalist paper with equal antagonism towards the Muslims and the British. Its selected articles and cartoons targeting Muslims, and special issues like *Balidān aṅk* (martyr special), were proscribed many times. 'Martyr Special' celebrated death for the cause of the nation and included short biographies of Indian heroes, ranging from early medieval Hindu icons to the then *Ārya Samājī* Hindus apparently killed by Muslims.