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Memory

Christian Lee Novetzke

The social and cultural study of memory, like human memory itself, is vast and amorphous. Since the early twentieth century, memory has appeared as a key concept used by anthropologists, sociologists, literary critics, folklorists, and religionists, and in all cases one finds a heterogeneity of opinion and use. Particularly since the 1980s, memory has enjoyed a bonanza of appearances in theoretical and critical scholarship, most notably as part of the postmodern critique of modern meta-theories, especially of nineteenth-century trends in professional historiography tied to the nation-state and in scientific reasoning about adjudicating past events. Understandably, historians have an ambivalent relationship to the notion of memory, many seeing it more as an enemy at the gates than a guest at the table. Scholars across disciplines outfitted their studies of memory with different adjectival designations that added to the complex character of the general field of memory research. Thus we have "collective memory" (Halbwachs 1992); "cultural memory" (Assmann 2006; Sturkin 1997); "social memory" (for Warburg 1927 see Ramply 2000; Fentress and Wickham 1992; Rampley 2000); "community memory" (Bellah et al 1985); and "popular memory" (Johnson et al 1982) in addition to "mimetic memory," "material memory," "connective memory," and "communicative memory" (Assmann 2006), all terms suggesting that memory is essentially a social phenomenon. The social situation of memory follows the seminal work of the Durkheimian sociologist, Maurice Halbwachs, who first proposed that memory is always a social and collective endeavor. Halbwachs made this proposal in a way that set his understanding of memory against the two views: one, of Sigmund Freud and others, that memory is an individual, psychological affair, and two, against the idea of memory as an "art" to buttress rhetoric or a "science of mnemonics" to aid education.[1] Contained in this social critique of memory is the inherent assumption that in modernity, memory comes into sometimes contentious relationship with other social forms, especially coercive and hegemonic ones, such as the nation-state and its official memories. This particular deployment of memory describes the work that surrounds "counter-memory" (Foucault 1977; Davis and Starn 1989) and the opposition between memory and history (Collingwood 1994; de Certeau 1988; Le Goff 1992; Nora 1989).

Despite the broad diffusion of memory studies across disciplines, the study of Hinduism fell largely outside the scope of these debates. In part this is because memory studies have tended to focus on Western religious traditions (Judaism and Christianity) and engaged specifically modern, Western historiographic issues, such as the impact of the Holocaust in Europe on teleologies of Western social progress. Yet the study of memory has in other ways always been a part of the study of Hinduism. From early understandings of religious genres of literature to contemporary ethnographies of how

small communities recall the past, memory remains important to the study of Hindu life worlds and to the practice of Hinduism. Scholars have thus approached memory in several forms: as mnemonic devices used in the oral preservation of texts, particularly the Vedas; as a literary genre of sacred composition (*smṛti*) that is "derived" rather than directly revealed (*śruti*); as a part of a system of traditional education; and as a motif in secular and religious literature (as in Kālidāsa's *Śakuntalā* or in the memories of the beloved in *viraha bhakti*).

These sites for the investigation of memory in Hindu studies do not usually draw on Western social and cultural theory about memory, but the two nonetheless might profitably be brought together. For example, in arguments about the presence of historiography among Indians in precolonial India, the positive invocation of a "historical sense" within this vast period is reminiscent of the language of memory in other contexts, as we will observe (Sharma 2003; Thapar 1990). Thus, the question of what constitutes "history" in premodern South Asia is similar to the set of questions that ask about differences between memory and history as modes of recollection. Similarly, memory studies are deeply invested in considering the way in which culture preserves recollections of the past through nonliterate means. Many of the issues surrounding memory in the study of Hinduism also involve questions of orality and literacy, such as the traditional transmission of the Vedas or, in the contemporary period, the palpable memories of the Partition, which are also memories of religious communal violence. In this vein, we also note how Western memory studies often undertake the subject of trauma and suffering—with the Holocaust as the quintessential "limit event" in Western historical memory—and how similarities with the ways in which South Asians remember the Partition and independence in 1947 now offer a meeting place for these two discursive worlds, of Western memory theory and South Asian practices of memory.

Given the immense field of memory and the prodigious scope of memory within Hinduism, I restrict this chapter to those salient aspects of the two fields of study that bear a particular relationship to how memory as a critical concept is—or might be—used in the study of Hinduism. These particularly pertinent areas include (1) understanding the link drawn between memory and religion, (2) observing the relationship established between memory and suffering or trauma, (3) uncovering the connection that scholars make between memory and orality, and (4) questioning the distinction between memory and history. In the first half of the chapter, I pinpoint theories and thinkers operating within one or more of these four areas in Western critical thought. In the second portion of the chapter, I note how memory has been studied in Hinduism in particular, correlating these studies with the four key rubrics above and suggesting avenues of theoretical and practical interest. I trace what I consider the most relevant and profitable aspects of memory studies in relation to the study of Hinduism, and I can only encourage the interested reader to pursue more deeply the few iceberg tips that rise above water in this essay.

Modern Memory Theory

Memory in Western theory is almost always construed as social, collective, and related to "identity" formations of many sorts. Memories are regularly considered localized and tied to specific places, particularly situated within the physical spaces of civic and public culture. Memory and history are often dialectically discussed, wherein memory has served the critiques of history mounted by cultural anthropologists and contained within the various forms of historical anthropology (or ethnohistory). History, conversely, tends to receive its power from the ubiquitous locales of the state and is often the domain of the archive, the repository of historical memory. Many scholars who engage in this large-scale debate about modernity's hegemonic forms come to see memory as inherently tied to modern ideas, such as the nation (Anderson 1991; Duara 1995; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), and the modern configuration of religion (Castelli 2004; de Certeau 1988; Herview-Leger 2000; Nora 1989); still other scholars see memory mediate between the nation and religion (Hayes 1960; Smith 1986). Given the expansive range of memory as a field of study, one finds excellent historical investigations of memory as a practice and an idea (Carruthers 1990; Coleman 1992; Hutton 1993; Matsuda 1996; Nora 1984–1993; Terdiman 1993). Such "histories of memory" go a long way to explain what differentiates memory from history and for what phenomena memory remains a sign.

Modern memory studies began with Maurice Halbwachs (1877–1945) and hence are grounded in both sociology and the political climate of Europe in the years between the World Wars, in which memory and memorials to the death, suffering, victories, and defeats of the first war perhaps summoned the subject of memory more fully into the field of sociology. Halbwachs argued that memory is a collective endeavor in which "[social] frameworks are…the instruments used by the collective memory to reconstruct an image of the past which is in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of the society" (1992: 40). In other words, almost all memories depend on a social environment to exist, an idea contravening the person-centered theories of memory espoused by Freud. As a student of Durkheim, we also see in Halbwachs a preoccupation with religion.[2] He wrote about Catholicism, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and Greek religion, granting "religious collective memory" a rubric all its own alongside "social classes," family, and locations. He chose as his first subject for the application of his ideas about collective memory the early Christian religion and the ways in which memory, and especially what he called its "localization," provided crucial social coherence. Halbwachs argued that early pilgrims and other Christian travelers set in collective memory the locales of the Gospels, wedding memory and place in a shared remembrance of the sacred geography attached to the life of Jesus.[3] Halbwachs does not argue that religion is the exclusive domain of memory, nor that memory is the only mode of recalling the past available to religion (indeed, he makes the point that formalized rational adjudication of events and ideas has always been part of Christian thought), but his choice of subjects presages the deep connections between memory and religion that would be a standard feature in the theoretical work of the 1980s and later.

While sociologists, particularly in the genealogy of Durkheim, continued their work on the social character of memory, historians became increasingly interested in

memory as a subset of inquiry within the larger context of the challenges of postmodernism and the linguistic turn of the 1980s. Pierre Nora is emblematic of this renegotiation of Halbwachs' legacy between historiography and the challenge to metanarratives.[4] As such, Nora investigates one of the greatest of the modern metanarratives, the nation, through an expansive study of what he called "sites of memory" (*lieux de mémoire*) throughout France, which he defined as "any significant entity, whether material or nonmaterial in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community" (1996: xvii). Nora had in mind obvious sites, such as memorials, archives, and museums, but also ritual moments of commemoration, linguistic formulae of recollection (mottos, for example, and clichés), and visual cultural artifacts, such as books, logos, motifs, and so on. Even archives, the exemplary source of history, are sites of memory for Nora because of their symbolic power as the inchoate repository of historical memory.

In theorizing his ideas about *lieux de mémoire*, Nora observes a deep fissure between historical and memorial recollection characterized by religious sentiment: "History, because it is an intellectual and secular production, calls for analysis and criticism. Memory installs remembrance within the sacred; history, always prosaic, releases it again" (1989: 9). Nora (1989: 13–14) seems to brood over the contradictions of a society that obsessively, even "religiously," documents itself through archives and technologies of data storage, yet transforms this information into the historiography that lays waste to practices of memory. Nora's (1989: 7) sympathies for "traditional memory" are apparent and contain a kind of postmodern nostalgia for the thought worlds of the premodern. He refers to "peasant culture" as "that quintessential repository of collective memory" and clearly understands this cultural field—itself preserved as a feature of public memory and consumption—to be deeply marked by religious sentiment woven through collective memory. This dichotomy of the modern and its antithesis, set along a dialectic between history as modern and memory as nonmodern, is discussed below.

Religion is most explicitly present in discussions about trauma and in particular about the nightmare of the Holocaust and its challenge to modern historiographic teleologies of humanistic, democratic advancement. This has also occasioned special attention to Judaism as an exemplar of "liturgical memory," the way in which religious traditions bring the past into the present through ritual and recital, reenactment through invocation, often as a means of healing social suffering (Caruth 1991, 1996; Friedlander 1993; LaCapra 1998; Spiegel 2002; Yerushalmi 1982). The unification of the memory of the Holocaust and religious ritual serves the purpose of displaying the effect of unimaginable trauma on ways of recalling the past. In this case, Judaism's liturgical practices of memory are extrapolated to the collective process of maintaining memories of trauma that modern historiography, because it must seek explanatory adjudication as its ultimate mandate, must fail to represent. In the shadow of the Holocaust, history is inadequate as a tool of comprehension, and what stands as the most reliable, enduring mode of fixing the truth of this event in consciousness is human testimony, human memory. This challenge to history is also, therefore, a challenge to

the nation-state, to its memory, and to its teleologies of advancement. A good deal of memory study involves, in one way or another, the nation, and here it is both aligned with historiography more generally (of which the preeminent subject is the nation-state) and in contention with professional history.

Implicit in this critique is the preserved nonmodern character of religions—Western or non-Western—and hence both their intimate connection to memory and their distrust or disavowal of history as a way of recalling the past. One aspect of this disavowal is the explicit connection made between orality and memory (Assmann 2006; Butler 1989; Connerton 1989; Fentress and Wickham 1992; *History and Anthropology* 1986, 2.2).[5] In these studies, memory tends to be aligned with orality and history with literacy.[6] Yet because these studies are also sympathetic to, or within, the larger postmodern critic of meta-theories, we often find the oral and mnemonic valorized as essential to understanding the meaning of literate phenomena—an argument that echoes Jacques Derrida's (1998) expansion of the idea that all verbal communication, whether written or oral, depends on the dynamics of orality or rather the uncertainties of language use generally. Scholars in this mode argue that writing, and historiography, distance the past from the present, whereas memory, and orality, make the present and the past coexist. Memory is, furthermore, the universal and public mode of recollection, whereas history is restricted to highly literate societies and is the preserve of the elite. Though such reasoning may drastically overemphasize the nonliterate mode of memory—think, for example, of the literate memoir or the engraving on statues, memorials, or other edifices of memory—their goal is often less a matter of documenting traces of memory than theorizing critiques of history and the supremacy of literacy.[7] Yet the central idea that history requires literacy whereas memory does not is both reasonable and self-evident to most historians whose craft of historiography, like an ethnography to an anthropologist, is both the means and the ultimate end of their endeavors.

Thus, the dialectic of memory and history, as it appears in the three categories above, remains the most basic point of contention in Western memory theory. Though late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century philosophers of history did not systematically use the term *memory* in an oppositional or conditional way with regard to "history," we can see as early as Georg W. F. Hegel the silhouette of this later debate. In *The Philosophy of History*, Hegel is broadly concerned with the alignment of the progress of reason and of "Spirit" in the course of human self-awareness and in those areas of the world (i.e., *most* areas of the world in Hegel's opinion, and especially India) that have not progressed; though they possess a past and a recollection of that past, their intelligence is only "half-awakened," preserved in "legends, Ballad-stories, Traditions" all of which "must be excluded from…history" (1944: 2). As for India in Hegel's thought, he finds that "Hindoos…are incapable of writing History.…All that happens is dissipated in their minds into confused dreams.…What we call historical truth and veracity—intelligent, thoughtful comprehension of events, and fidelity in representing them—nothing of this sort can be looked for among the Hindoos" (1944: 162). One can read throughout Hegel's work the word "dream" as a synonym for "memory" used

to characterize the non-Western, nonmodern practices of recollection (see, for example, 1944: 139, 140, 141, 148, 155, 162, 166, 167).

By the time we arrive at the work of such figures as Benedetto Croce, Wilhelm Dilthey, and R. G. Collingwood in the first half of the twentieth century, memory is clearly understood to be history's opposite in the field of recollection (see, for example, Collingwood 1994: 56, 221–5, 293–4). As Collingwood said in his lectures on the philosophy of history in 1926, "[H]istory and memory are wholly different things.…memory [is] *subjective* [and] *immediate*.…History on the other hand is *objective* [and] *mediate*," by which he meant that memory stands regardless of proof or rationale, whereas history must always rest on some ground of evidence, proof, and rationality (1994: 365–7; emphasis in original). The shape of this dialectic would largely remain intact, but the key characters would switch positions in the postmodern mode, wherein subjectivity and reflexivity would be lauded as method and wherein memory would become the protagonist of a story that opposed the meta-theories of "objective, mediate" history.

In the emergent study of memory, challenges to history were less common. Halbwachs does not directly oppose memory and history, and his sociological concerns tend more toward social reasons for organizing memory in particular contexts, a kind of sociological historicism. Aby Warburg's work on art, archetypes, and social memory was well within the nascent field of cultural history in the first quarter of the twentieth century. These two streams—of an uncomplicated relationship between memory and history in the philosophy of history and an emerging field of memory studies both from sociology and within the history of art and culture—did not merge until the "linguistic turn" of the 1980s, when together they came to embody a critique of modern historiography and modernity itself. This critique takes the forms we have already discussed, of a challenge to modernity on several grounds: (1) the valorization of the individual through an appraisal of memory as a person-centered psychological effect; (2) the teleology of superior development, humanistic principles, and democratic freedoms, countermanded by the horrors of the Holocaust in Europe; (3) the defeat of religious life worlds by rational modern systems (the state, science, and so on); (4) the supremacy of literacy, and hence of history, as a technology of communication, rationality, and recollection; and (5) the superiority of history over memory in the faithful recall and adjudication of the past.

Memory Studies and Hinduism

The study of memory in Hinduism is much older than the study of memory in Western contexts, but it is also less concerned with issues of social theory, modernity, and individual-collective questions. Instead, the study of memory in Hinduism has tended to explore particular applications of memory in religion, performance studies, literature, philosophy, and traditional education. Recently, scholars have been more interested in memory as it relates to the anthropology of recollection and narrative but also, equally important, to communal violence, such as the Partition of the subcontinent in August of 1947, the Bangladesh war of independence in 1971, and the anti-minority violence of 1984, 1993, 2002, and at other times.

In Sanskritic literatures, especially philosophical literature, the study of memory surrounds the key verbal root, *smṛ*, which demonstrates all the manifold complexity that has bedeviled Western memory studies. The verbal root can indicate a wide variety of things: to remember, of course, but also to feel nostalgia, sorrow, or regret and to teach or pass on. Memory is one of the five activities of the mind (*citta*) in Yoga.[8] The several nominative forms of *smṛ* can mean memory of many kinds and, as important, love, including sexual intercourse itself. In compounds with the noun *smara*, one finds a plethora of expression of sexual and romantic love. This intimate association suggests several alliances with Western memory theory, at least superficially, in its emphasis on social contexts, in this case, a context of only two lovers but a social one nonetheless.

Quite distant from this amorous genealogy, one key association with memory is *smṛti*, which literally means "memory" but comes to indicate that enormous body of religious, mythical, historical, and legal literature that has been "recalled" or rather theorized or produced by scholars over centuries. Materials in this genre include traditional treatises on law within the scope of Dharmaśāstra, such as the *Manusmṛti*, the *Śrauta* and *Gṛhya Sūtra*s, and the *Śāstra*s generally, including the *Āgamas* and the six traditional schools of Hindu philosophy or *Darśana*s, but also the vast collections of materials under the rubrics of Itihāsa and Purāṇa, two genres often glossed as "history" and "myth," respectively. As Sheldon Pollock (1985) has argued, the creation of Śāstric literature was understood to be a process of remembrance, of recalling past knowledge that had not been communicated directly, such as the Vedas. This includes the two massive and diversely imagined epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*. This heterogeneous genre of work is differentiated from *śruti*, "heard" literature, a record of the cosmic sound-discourse "heard" by ancient seers or *ṛṣi*s. The Vedas comprise the quintessential instance of *śruti* literature and are theoretically, or rhetorically, the basis of *smṛti*. Yet the traditional preservation of the Vedas was not literary but oral or rather through memory (through repetition and recollection or anamnesis), whereby expounders of the Vedas were expected to memorize portions and certain castes-individuals would serve as human archives for the untampered text. However, this was not memory as philosophical category but memory as rote action, tied to the idea that writing was a debasing practice and would consign the cosmic word to mundane parchment.

In Hinduism broadly speaking, *smṛti* does not differentiate between "memory" and "history," and this unity in Hindu thought of what have become two very different theoretical categories of knowledge in Western thought has aided the Orientalist conceit that India has no "history," by which is meant neither a historical literature or science nor a predisposition of mind to think historically. Hegel made this idea abundantly clear, and many scholars of India from John Stuart Mill to the present have concurred, though on the basis of a thorough understanding of inherent qualities of Indian epistemology rather than Orientalist prejudice.[9] The debate over the presence, or absence, of history in India is too broad to engage here. But it is important to point out that in *smṛti* one finds a social impetus similar to that which characterizes memory studies in Western contexts: *Smṛti*, as law or discursive text, is clearly meant as a social injunction, and *smṛti* as myth or legend assumes audiences to whom moral tales are

imparted. In the case of legal applications of *smṛti*, one even finds a broad caste designation, Smārta, indicating an orthodox Brāhmaṇical subcaste devoted to recalling and theorizing about legal religious texts.

Memory became a subject of debate in early Indian philosophical traditions, particularly around the question of "proof," or *pramāṇa*, which is to say, of legitimate forms of knowledge. Early philosophers argued that ultimate textual authority rested with the Vedas and other *śruti* literature, of which *smṛti* was a "recollection" and hence a discursive expansion thereof. Likewise, human memory was a second-order recollection of the received information of direct experience (*anubhava*) and could not stand as any sort of reliable proof. The objects of knowledge in the case of memory were gone; they were in the past, and hence memory could not be correlated with its object (see Bhandare 1993; Carr 2000; Larson 1993) The knowledge of memory is recycled knowledge, made unreliable because of the distance it reveals from its source of information. But it is nonetheless important even if it cannot stand as first-order knowledge. Particularly in Yoga, *smṛti* is an important part of understanding the cycle of rebirth, or *saṃsāra*, and how our past experiences are imprinted on our beings, carried with us from birth to birth. Yoga offers ways of undoing these imprints but also of recalling them, and the dialectic of remembering and forgetting in this life and in multiple lives is a recurring theme, not just in Yoga but in myth, literature, and religious texts (Eliade 1963; Goldman 1985).

Though memory might have suffered some pummeling in philosophical circles, it was a favorite trope in Sanskrit literature, in plays, epic, myth, and so on. A survey of examples of memory, forgetfulness, and its consequences would be too long to be contained in this chapter, so a few examples should suffice. Perhaps the most famous case of an excellent memory is Vyāsa, the sage who recalls the epic story of the Bharat dynasty, the *Mahābhārata*, to his sacred scribe, the deity Gaṇeśa. Whatever the mythic nature of this story, it suggests that the predominant site for the transference, preservation, and alteration over time for the epics was through the channels of oral memory; what written records we have are but a fractional trace of a vast world of epic in the collective memory of centuries of South Asians. The "oral theory" of epic, first proposed in the context of Homeric compositions by A. B. Lord (1960) and Milman Parry (1971) in the first half of the twentieth century, contained within it an emphasis on the twin processes of memory or mnemonics (understood as formulas) and spontaneous composition during performance. Subsequent work in epic literature and its purported oral origins specific to South Asia has been studied, in part, as a site of memory (see Smith 1977). Indeed, the epics are a quintessential form of public memory in India.

Memory and one of its principle associations, love, fuse in many stories from South Asia, not just in Hinduism but throughout Indo-Persian tales of longing, from Íūfī romances to the famous Lailā and Majnūn story. Within the cultural field of early Hinduism, Sanskrit theater used memory effectively, as we see in many plays from the Sanskrit master dramaturge of the early first millennium CE, Kālidāsa, such as *Abhijñānaśakuntalā* (The Memory of Śakuntalā), where a ring, as a kind of *lieu de mémoire*, triggers in a king the memory of his forgotten beloved (see Stoler-Miller 1984). The entanglement of love and memory in Sanskrit continues in multiple works,

perhaps most famously in the composition of the twelfth-century poet Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda*, a song that supposes between Kṛṣṇa and his beloved, Rādhā, a dialogue in which the language of yearning and separation is filled with the memory of the missing beloved (Stoler-Miller 1977).

Gītagovinda is a key text in the broad, heterogeneous, millennia-old tradition in Hinduism (and in Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism) in India called *bhakti*, a practice of expressing a direct relationship between devotee and god and creating diverse communities of mutual companionship centered on the worship of a deity. From South India as early as the fifth century; throughout central, western, and northern India from the twelfth to eighteenth centuries; and even in the contemporary period, *bhakti* continues to create vast publics of remembrance that leave rich records of their devotion both to god and to their coreligionists. Memory is a key component of these multiple performances—lyrical, theatrical, textual, visual, and so on—that express the sentiment of *bhakti*. Indeed, memory is so ubiquitous that it is one of the few elements central to the two divergent thematic rubrics that characterize most *bhakti* in South Asia: *nirguṇa*, the ineffable, and *saguṇa*, the describable. In either case, memory serves the important purpose of invoking remembered characteristics of a beloved deity who is often absent (*saguṇa*), as in the *Gītagovinda*, or keeping in mind the Name, the signifier of the ineffable deity, a locus of meditation and devotion (*nirguṇa*).

Furthermore, *bhakti*—particularly in its *saguṇa* aspect—is highly performative, engendering public displays of devotion, and both aspects of *bhakti* often espouse (though not always practice) ethics of broad inclusion across lines of caste, class, and gender. These moments of inclusion, as in performances of all sorts, are also acts of collective memory and are often undertaken at memorable times (births and deaths of deities or famous devotees), in memorable places, and in ritualistic ways that recall the memory of an important event. Given the deeply performative, and hence, oral nature of *bhakti* memory, even studies of the literary traces of *bhakti* traditions in South Asia often must contend with—and sometimes embrace—the "remembered" *bhakti* composer (*sant, bhakta,* and so on) and the texts attributed to that composer that remain extant (see Hawley 1984, 2005; Hess 1987; Lutgendorf 1991). I would argue that one finds in *bhakti* the longest, most sustained, most heterogeneous collective exploration of memory in South Asia.

Not only the memory of *bhakti* but the public memory of many other social, political, and cultural spheres have created in South Asia a "sacred geography" of sites associated with memory. In Islam, such sites are Ṣūfī *dargāh*s, the burial locations of famous "saints," or *pīr*s, and mosques that hold relics of memory (such as the Qadam Rasul and the Hazrat Bal); masoleums (such as the Taj Mahal); and other structures (such as the Qutab Minar complex in Delhi; see, for example, Ansari 1992). Likewise, in Hinduism, sites of memory are illimitable. They can take the form of *smṛtisthala*s ("places of memory") dedicated to famous religious figures and *samādhi*s that mark the final resting places of important individuals. Vital sites of memory through the centuries have been temples, where often religious and royal-state memory would converge (see Appadurai 1981; Dirks 1987; Orr 2000; Talbott 2001). One often finds texts that treat or record the memory of these places, and many times the places themselves bear the literary inscriptions of memory. However, the flux of collective

memory in such places is strong, and these Indian *lieux de mémoire* often serve as focal points of countermemory vis-à-vis the state, chauvinistic ethnic groups, and other parties with vested interests.[10] The recently reignited century-old contention over the cultural memory surrounding the supposed birth-place of the Hindu deity Rāma, in the northern city of Ayodhya, is one among many examples of the volatility, and hence importance, of cultural memory coerced into forms of political action (see van der Veer 1988).

There is perhaps no more important location for the imbrication of state history, collective memory, and religious community formation than the events surrounding the Partition of the subcontinent in 1947. Like the passing of the living memory of the Holocaust, the last several years have seen a resurgence of scholarly interest in documenting the eye-witness accounts of the atrocities and genocides of the days surrounding the Partition before the living memory of those events vanishes (see Alam and Sharma 1998; Butalia 2000; Chakrabarty 1996; Kaul 2001; Moon 1998). This is a living memory, as the recent communal violence in Gujarat in 2002, sparked by a fire aboard a train car occupied by Hindu Right activists, shows. Media images of the burning car elicited comparisons to the iconic site of the Partition violence, the massacres of trainloads of people fleeing the two new nations of Pakistan and India. This collective memory around suffering and trauma is a key element in the rhetoric of communal difference between Hindus and Muslims on the subcontinent. Of the studies of this collective memory, several works have now explicitly engaged Western memory theory (see Mayaram 1996; Pandey 1999, 2001). Indeed, the greatest degree of dénouement between Western memory theory and empirical subjects pertaining to Hinduism seems to revolve around narratives of suffering, one of the key locations of memory studies, as noted above (Amin 1995; Gold and Gujar 2002; Dube 1998; Mayaram 1997; Prakash 1990; Skaria 1999). Yet the investigation of memory surrounding the Partition, like the memory surrounding the Holocaust, is also richly detailed in nonacademic venues, particularly in film and literature.[10] Like memory itself, reflection on the past refuses disciplinary, formal, or literary boundaries.

The challenge posed by memory to formal historiographic modes of recalling the past, and particularly those tied to the nation, is exemplified not only in Partition studies but in those investigations of nonelite, or subaltern, areas of experience. Much of the work of the Subaltern Studies Collective, for example, has explored religion as a site of "subaltern consciousness" (see Novetzke 2006), and one can find some brilliant uses of memory within the general context of Hinduism, deployed to unseat both the dominance of state historiography and the elitism of professional historiography in general (Amin 1984, 1997; Bhadra 1985; Chatterjee 1992; Devi 1987; Dube 1992; Guha 1987; Guha and Spivak 1988; Hardiman 1997; Kaali 1999; Kaviraj 1992; Pandey 1997; Ranger 1992; Sarkar 1989; Skaria 1996). For example, Partha Chatterjee (2002) weaves a fascinating story of a trial in 1930s Bengal regarding the identity of a Hindu holy man who some claimed was a prince of the region and, assumed to have died, had returned. Chatterjee observes how public memory met judicial historiography in the legal determination of the holy man's identity. As

Chatterjee does here, many postcolonial historians find that memory—but not necessarily religious memory—offers an inherent challenge to state historiography.

One of the most recent and compelling studies of memory and Hinduism in India is the study of oral narratives of change and loss in Rajasthan written by Ann Gold and Bhoju Gujar (2002). Their book, *In the Time of Trees and Sorrows*, brings together many of the features of Western memory studies outlined in this chapter. Their access to memories is ethnographic, through oral interviews, and this reinforces the close alliance between oral history and memory. more than a theoretical treatise on memory and history, Gold has sustained a deep ethnographic engagement with memory, orality, gender, and history over the course of several monographs and articles (see Gold 1988, 1992; Gold and Raheja 1994). Gold and Gujar manage to produce a lucid anthropology of memory that involves gender, orality, and history in recalling the pasts of kings and ecology, of landscapes of all sorts. Their subjects seem entirely aware of the interrelationship of power and nature in their memories, giving them a kind of "historical consciousness" that elides the necessity of literacy, professional historiography, or the influence of (colonial or postcolonial) modernity.[12]

The nuanced work of Gold and Gujar finds several points of connection to Western memory studies. The recollections coded as "memory" often involve tales of sorrow and suffering. Though Gold and Gujar depart from many studies of memory in Western contexts when they note that memory testimony was not solely of suffering but of happiness—the good and the bad (2002: 90)—they did find that women more than men expressed memories of sorrow or memories not considered "history" (92–93) and that the overall character of the interviews and the ethnographic history Gold and Gujar composed, Gold lyrically characterizes as "the articulated deterioration of love and landscape" (314).

One also finds in Gold and Gujar's work here a distinct difference between memory and history, which they share with Western memory theory. Yet the difference they recognize is not adjudicating between modernity and its antinomies but takes the form of a gendered differentiation. Gold and Gujar find that men never intervened in their discussions of memory or "women's things—rituals, stories, songs, and so forth"—but when they inaugurated a conversation on "history" or *itihāsa* in Rajasthani, men would interject their voices as exclusively authoritative (2002: 34, 41). The dialectical association of orality and memory with femininity on the one hand and literacy and history with masculinity on the other seems to play out here, in a South Asian context, more so than in a modern European one. Yet we also find a parallel to narratives of sorrow and suffering embodying "memory," whereas stories of victory, nation, and kingship are categorized as "history." In Gold's earlier work, women seemed specifically to embody the power of memory rather than history. This most recent monograph perhaps bears a greater investiture in men's memories because it also involves questions of bygone kingship—a subject stereotypically germane to male-gendered history. In general, the interviews Gold transcribes with women center on household labor and emotion. The dialectic of memory and history here moves from critiques of modernity to concerns of gendered difference in localized collective systems of memory.

The broad spectrum of studies that can be generally considered to touch on the cultural fields of Hinduism resists distillation into neat categories, but I have tried here to outline those areas of study that engage with memory in the most explicit and profitable ways. We have seen a broad alignment between Western memory studies and the study of memory in Hinduism in terms of a shared concern with social, cultural, public, and collective modes of memory's maintenance. We have noted that orality is intimately associated with memory as a device of recollection, but literacy, at least in the South Asian context, has not implied a more sophisticated mode of recollection, associated with "history," for example, as we find in Western historiography. However, we have seen a division between history and memory along several axes: one, in classical philosophical circles, excluded what we might call "history" for what would more precisely be called memory, even as memory was relegated to a second-order way of knowing; two, memory and history in public culture might be distinguished in ways both gendered and conditioned by its relationship to kingship, as Gold and Gujar have shown. So memory and history are different, but we do not see the same difference as we do in Western memory theory. However, one aspect of both sorts of memory study—within Hinduism and within Western contexts—is a preoccupation with suffering and trauma. The reasons for this are no doubt connected in the context of the Partition that, like the Holocaust, is a challenge to the teleology of the nation-state, whether that of Germany and other European nations or that of Pakistan and India. However, Gold and Gujar have also shown that memory and suffering do not rely on modern state-centered historiography for their association. Suffering and memory are, after all, universal traits of humanity and, perhaps here, memory and the concerns of humanist study dovetail.

Notes

1   Freud and memory should be well understood but for the latter, see Carruthers (1992); Yates (2001).
2   Halbwachs was a Catholic who married a Jewish woman; politically, Halbwachs was a communist. His personal sentiments about religion are not speculated on here.
3   For a finer study in the tradition of this line of investigation, see Castelli (2002).
4   Nora wrote the entry for "collective memory" for an historical encyclopedia, *La Nouvelle histoire* (1978: 398).
5   For the fountainhead of debates about orality and literacy and their impact on history and memory, see the work of Goody and Watt (Goody 1969, 1986; Goody and Watt 1963).
6   In particular see the work of Jan Assmann.
7   For a lucid survey of history, orality, and memory through the works of James Clifford, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Jean-Franśois Lyotard, see Kline (1995).
8   The other four are: knowing (*pramāṇa*), wakefulness-/misapprehension (*viparyaya*), sleep (*nidrā*), and speech (*vikalpa*).

9   For exemplary treatments of this issue in classical India, see Aktor (1999); Perrett (1999); Pollock (1989, 1990); Sharma (2003); cf. Inden, Walters, and Ali (2000, especially Chapter 4); Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam (2003).

10   For a brilliant ethnography of memory, see Kumar (2002).

11   Though nothing of the magnitude of Claude Lanzmann's documentary, *Shoah* (1985), exists to record the oral testimonies of the Partition in audio-visual form, there have been a good number of films, documentaries, and other media that investigate the Partition. See, for example, the documentaries *Beyond Partition* (2006, Lalit Mohan Joshi, director) and *Stories of the Broken Self* (forthcoming, Furrukh Khan, director); such films as *Garam Hawa* (1973, M. S. Sathyu director), *Earth* (1998, Deepa Mehta, director), *Hey Ram* (2000, Kamal Hassan, director), and *Pinjar* (2003, C. P. Dwivedi, director); and such non-Indian films as *Partition* (2006, Vic Sarin, director). For literary treatments, see Lahiri (1999); Manto (1987); Mistry (2001); Rushdie (1980); Sahni (2001); Sidhwa (1989); Singh (1990); see also the recent dissertation, Bhaskar (2005).

12   See also the excellent work of Feldhaus (1995, 2003), for example, who combines text, oral history, ethnography, folklore, gender, and regional studies in her scholarship.

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