

RAPHAEL SUSEWIND  
Weidenhäuser Str. 102  
35037 Marburg  
Germany

Raphael Susewind – Weidenhäuser Str. 102 – 35037 Marburg – DE

Dr. Sugata Ghosh  
SAGE Publications India  
B-1/I-1, Mohan Cooperative Industrial Estate  
Mathura Road, Post Bag 7, New Delhi 110 044  
India

Marburg, May 8, 2011

**Book proposal: Being Muslim and Working for Peace (in Gujarat)**

Dear Dr. Ghosh,

many thanks for your recent email; I am now writing you to formally propose my finished manuscript on Muslim peace activists in Gujarat for publication. I am particularly interested in SAGE given your reputation for critical interdisciplinary scholarship, the ability to reach both Indian and international markets, and speedy production (possibly for the 10th anniversary of the Gujarat riots).

What is my manuscript about? The emerging literature about the “ambivalence of the sacred” (Appleby) tells us that religion can de-escalate as much as escalate violent conflict. I both deepen this literature at the micro-level of religious identity and political agency – and broaden its appeal towards South Asia. Looking at Muslims who work for peace in Gujarat after the 2002 riots in the state, I sketch four different ways of experiencing and enacting the ambivalence of the sacred as a personal dynamic: faith based actors, secular technocrats, emancipating women and doubting professionals challenge popular notions about Islam as much as conventional sociology of religion. I collected their narratives during field research in 2008 and used part of my material for a dissertation in 2009. After a year-long break, I have spent the last seven months to re-write the manuscript almost from scratch; it now spreads across 60.000 words in an appealing new structure.

Please find prospectus, short CV and a sample chapter attached; a full CV, growing publication list, and my recent conference papers are online at [www.raphael-susewind.de](http://www.raphael-susewind.de). The manuscript is ready for review as soon as you request it. Until then, I do wish you an inspiring read and hope that you find the manuscript both interesting and economically viable for SAGE.

With best regards,

Raphael Susewind

PS

Given the hard realities of academic publishing, you will understand that I explore several options simultaneously. Should you request the manuscript for review, it would be yours exclusively.

[raphael.susewind@area.ox.ac.uk](mailto:raphael.susewind@area.ox.ac.uk) / [susewind@uni-bielefeld.de](mailto:susewind@uni-bielefeld.de)

# Being Muslim and Working for Peace

Faith based actors, secular technocrats, emancipating  
women and doubting professionals in Gujarat

Book proposal by **Raphael Susewind\*** for Dr. Sugata Ghosh, SAGE India

Religion can escalate as much as de-escalate violent conflict. This emerging academic consensus on the “ambivalence of the sacred” (Appleby) has, however, not yet been substantiated on the personal micro-level nor has this body of literature substantially engaged with South Asia. My manuscript targets these gaps. It asks in which various ways religious beliefs, ritual practices and dynamics of group identification impact on the politics of Muslim peace activists in Gujarat, India – and how their activism in turn transforms their experience of Muslimness. Based on an innovative mix of narrative interviews and psychometric questionnaires, I distinguish four ideal-typical ways of “being Muslim and working for peace”:

**Faith based actors** draw strength from their ingroup, from comprehensive moral beliefs and from orthodox ritual practices. They interpret their activism through dogmatic foils and experience themselves as collective subjects. Still, this uniform facade hides considerable variation in religio-political orientation, including a minority of fundamentalist actors.

**Secular technocrats** are to the contrary neither influenced by religious beliefs nor by group identification; they share a relaxed secularism. Being Muslim but religiously unmusical, they are an interesting blind spot of both religious actors and non-Muslim civil society.

**Emancipating women** overcome the passivity of their own victimization through peace activism, but increasingly struggle against religious patriarchy. They initially rely on Islamic feminism to support their activities, but ultimately discard religion – to the extent possible.

**Doubting professionals** finally emphasize the complexity and ambivalence of religion in communal conflict. They embrace an aesthetical spirituality, feel responsible for their ingroup without identifying strongly and begin to challenge their earlier certainties about the assumed irrelevance of religion in development and about their own being Muslim.

Ten years after the 2002 riots in Gujarat, this empirical typology illuminates an often overlooked diversity of Muslim civil society and Muslims in civil society. The manuscript challenges popular notions about politically active Muslim in India, questions ill-conceived research designs in the sociology of religion and advances theoretical debates about the “ambivalence of the sacred”. It does so by sketching systematic similarities and differences between 21 exceptional individuals and their avenues of transforming communal conflict as faith based actors, secular technocrats, emancipating women and doubting professionals.

\*Associate of the Contemporary South Asia Studies Programme, University of Oxford  
and Doctoral Candidate in Social Anthropology, BGHS, University of Bielefeld,  
Weidenhäuser Str. 102, 35037 Marburg, Germany, +49 6421 1866910,  
susewind@uni-bielefeld.de / raphael.susewind@area.ox.ac.uk

## Selling points and SAGE's list

“Being Muslim and Working for Peace” puts forth two related arguments: substantively for an understanding of the “ambivalence of the sacred” as a *personal* dynamic and methodologically for more (and more rigorous) attention to the micro-level of belief, belonging and behaviour. It would fit your list in **Development Studies** and **Political Science** (given its concern with conflict resolution and civil society) as well as **Sociology** (and Anthropology). It

- unpacks the diversity of Muslim civil society and Muslims in civil society in Gujarat, India
- combines narrative and psychometric evidence in a rigorous typologizing design
- and so reinterprets the “ambivalence of the sacred” as a personal dynamic.

Both for marketing purposes and to allow readers to explore and judge its innovative methodology, an **online supplement** is in preparation. It provides an interactive access to the typology, additional psychometric material and original questionnaires, and an importable reference list. A draft supplement is available at <http://gujarat.raphael-susewind.de> (Keyword “extra”).

### Table of Contents (total extent: 60.000 words)

**Foreword** (probably by a prominent Gujarati activist?) **and acknowledgements**

1. **Gujarat 2002** (ca. 10.000 words)

Child's play — What happened? — Working for peace — My argument

*The introduction begins with a troubling field anecdote, summarizes the events of 2002 and sketches a vivid image of the institutional landscape of peace-building. The final section presents the book's main argument: that the interplay of religious identities and political agency is diverse – and research at the personal level thus crucial.*

2. **Belonging, belief and behaviour** (ca. 5.000 words)

Roles and rules — Field research — Analysing diversity

*The second chapter steps back and clarifies epistemology and methods. It asks what it means to belong, to believe and to behave and outlines the study's research design, which combines ethnography, narrative interviews and psychometrics.*

3. **Faith based actors** (ca. 10.000 words)

No stories — Competing orthodoxies — Fundamentalism?

*Chapters three to six present the empirical typology. This chapter on faith based actors analyses why they don't like to narrate, dissects competing orthodoxies hidden under alleged uniformity and asks where exactly the line to fundamentalism runs.*

4. **Secular technocrats** (ca. 7.500 words)

Getting things done — The forgotten Muslims — Secularized secularism

*The chapter on secular technocrats presents their rather different reasons to avoid storytelling, asks why they are ignored by both secular and religious “mainstream” – and contextualizes this irritating finding with respect to contested Indian secularism.*

5. **Emancipating women** (ca. 10.000 words)

Victimized bodies — Liminality — Islamic feminism — Dancing in the street

*This chapter problematizes how emancipating women's embodied grief became the root of their political behaviour. It illustrates the liminal spaces their spirituality used to occupy and follows them on their way into explicit Islamic feminism. The last section narrates the story of a young street actress's liberating emancipation.*

6. **Doubting professionals** (ca. 10.000 words)

Context matters — Feeling responsible – The beauty of Islam — Worries

*The fourth substantive chapter summarizes doubting professionals' elaborate contextualization of communal conflict, explores their feeling of responsibility post-2002 and interprets their spirituality as an example of modern aesthetical religion. The chapter concludes with the worries these professionals express about religion in conflict.*

7. **The ambivalence of the sacred as a personal dynamic** (ca. 7.500 words)

Summary – Ambivalence and ambiguity – Taking persons seriously

*The concluding chapter finally draws the typology together, links it back to the theoretical debates outlined in chapter one and ends with both methodological lessons for the sociological study of Muslims in India – and with hopes for the future of Gujarat.*

**References and index** (psychometrics and questionnaires in online supplement)

## Target market

Scholars of religion and politics at **postgraduate level and in the academy** constitute the book's main audience (through the **international library market**). They will be most attracted by the manuscript's deepening of the "ambivalence of the sacred" hypothesis which flows from serious attention to the diversity of personal experience. Indeed, the most frequent feedback to chapter drafts presented at several conferences was that "this kind of micro-level study is much needed" in both conflict and South Asian studies.

The innovative methodology, which combines ethnography with psychometrics in an explicitly typologizing research design, should appeal to and provoke productive criticism from **political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists and social psychologists** alike. The manuscript's interdisciplinary appeal was indeed a main reason to consider SAGE (rather than a more specialist publisher) in the first place.

In addition, the richness in exemplary detail might interest **members of civil society** in Gujarat and elsewhere, the book's second target group. Throughout the author's field research, many practitioners explained that they only just begin to deal with communal conflict and welcome any input on how to transform the same.

The **timing of the book's publication** could be an **additional asset for marketing**. The manuscript is completed and **ready for peer review**. Depending on the swiftness of the review process and the extent and nature of reviewers' comments, the book could thus potentially still be published in time for the 10th anniversary of the Gujarat riots in 2012. During this time, I will also be in India for long-term fieldwork in affiliation with JNU Delhi, and could thus assist in marketing and dissemination. My professional networks in Europe (including the German, British and European Associations for South Asian Studies) and frequent contributions to international conferences should also help in marketing.

## Review of competing books

A comprehensive book search in both the British Library and Amazon.com, covering the period post-2002, reveals a number of books which analyse the riots of 2002 – but only two expressively deal with peace activism: **T.K. Oommen’s “Reconciliation in post-Godhra Gujarat”** (New Delhi: Pearson Longman 2008, 625 INR) and **J.M. Powers’s “Kites over the mango tree”** (Westport: Praeger 2009, 75 USD). Both are very similar in combining some historical background on Gujarat with an almost purely descriptive account of peace-building initiatives post-2002. Both however tend to ignore Muslim civil society and Muslims in civil society.

More importantly: while several organizations portrayed by them also appear in the proposed manuscript, the same centrally engages with a *micro-level* study of individuals *inside* those institutions. In terms of research design, **R. Robinson’s “Tremors of violence”** (New Delhi: Sage 2005, 450 INR) follows a similar route. While her monograph is less rigorous and primarily concerned with Muslim *survivors* of riots, not with peace activists, “Being Muslim and working for peace” in many ways takes her implied methodological suggestions to their logical conclusion.

The upcoming 10th anniversary of the 2002 riots might of course inspire further monographs; I know that Dipankar Gupta at JNU is negotiating with Routledge and others might follow suit. I however expect such **surprises** mainly on the Indian market, since most colleagues working on the issue in Europe and North America have either published already or do not intend to do so soon to the best of my knowledge (a potential exception being Rubina Jasani at Warwick).

## Formalities and timing

The proposed manuscript has a **main body of 60.000 words**, excluding frontmatter, acknowledgements and foreword as well as backmatter, references and index. It won’t include pictures or graphs; these will eventually go into the online supplement.

As **potential reviewers**, I would suggest Prof. Rowena Robinson, Mumbai (mentioned above, and a renowned SAGE author), who did not come across my work yet, or Prof. Surinder Jodhka, JNU Delhi (director of the Religion and Development Programme). Prof. Scott Appleby, Notre Dame, would of course be a perfect reader to assess the manuscript’s appeal beyond South Asian studies. Further interesting (though more junior) readers could be Dr. Philippa Williams, Cambridge, or Dr. Anna Bigelow, UNC, who work in related fields.

The **full manuscript** is completed and **ready for review**. Until August 2011, I could react to reviewers’ comments immediately – from September onwards, I go on for fieldwork in Lucknow, India, but could take out the required time for revisions, indexing and proofing.

Unfortunately, an earlier, considerably shorter and rather different version of this research is already publicly available in an **electronic depository** at the University of Marburg (a required submission given that I used part of my material for a diploma thesis; the copyright is with me). Since then, the manuscript underwent **far-reaching editing**, including the dissolution of an earlier literature review chapter, the complete re-writing of all but the four substantive chapters, which were in turn heavily extended. It has also been copy-edited by a professional editor and native speaker of English. The manuscript is now almost double in length – still, I want to flag up this potential issue early on. Two forthcoming **German journal articles** and a contracted book chapter aimed at practitioners should generate additional interest in the monograph, rather than obstructing sales.

## Author Bio

I currently work as an Associate of the Contemporary South Asia Studies Programme at the **University of Oxford** and as a Doctoral Candidate in Social Anthropology at the **University of Bielefeld**, Germany. For the last 12 months, I worked as a temporal replacement on a post-doctoral Research Fellow position in Comparative Politics and International Development Studies at the **University of Marburg**, Germany; my **teaching portfolio** there included undergraduate and graduate classes on “Religion and micro-politics in South Asia” and on the comparative study of democracies.

I earlier read political science, sociology and conflict studies towards my first postgraduate degree – in political science – at Marburg. In 2010, I obtained my second degree – in area studies of contemporary India – from the University of Oxford with a dissertation on the Indian Foreign Service (recently published in the *Journal of International Relations*; in press). My current doctoral research in Bielefeld and Oxford explores the notion of Muslim belonging in Lucknow.

The proposed manuscript is based on **field research** conducted at the **American Institute for Indian Studies** / SIT Jaipur in cooperation with Jan Vikas Ahmedabad and funded through a merit-based German government scholarship; recent **related papers** include “Exploring the ambivalence of the sacred” (Religion and Development Conference, Birmingham 2010 – German book chapter forthcoming), “‘Victim’ and ‘activist’: two Muslim women struggle with and for religion” (Deutscher Orientalistentag, Marburg 2010 – German article submitted for review) and “Religious identity and peace activism of Indian Muslims” (in German; *Wissenschaft & Frieden*, Vol. 27, No. 4, 2009).

“Being Muslim and Working for Peace” will be my first monograph. While I hope that the manuscript stands on its own merits, I do acknowledge that the fact that I have not obtained a PhD yet might impact your overall risk calculation for its publication. I therefore applied for a **publication subsidy**, the decision about which is expected in late May.

# RAPHAEL SUSEWIND

Associate, Contemporary South Asia Studies (Oxford) and Doctoral Candidate (Bielefeld)  
Weidenhäuser Str. 102, 35037 Marburg, Germany — [raphael.susewind@area.ox.ac.uk](mailto:raphael.susewind@area.ox.ac.uk)

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Since 2006, my education was supported through several **Cusanus scholarships** (German federal competitive scholarships for 1% top batch) and various travel grants. My teaching portfolio includes roughly 220 contact hours in five undergraduate and two graduate classes.

- 2010→            **University of Oxford:** Associate, Contemporary South Asia Studies
- 2010→            **Bielefeld Graduate School in History and Sociology:** PhD on the formation of Muslim belonging in a North Indian town (co-supervised in Oxford; field research in affiliation with **Jawaharlal Nehru University**, Delhi)
- 2010–2011        **Universität Marburg:** Fellowship in comparative politics and international development studies with teaching and research responsibilities
- 2009–2010        **University of Oxford:** Master of Science in Contemporary India (grade 70); dissertation about Indian diplomatic culture; options: Hindi & Urdu
- 2006–2009        **Universität Marburg:** Diplom in political sciences (MA equiv.) with distinction (max. grade of 1,0); minors: sociology and conflict research; option: Hindi; empirical thesis on Muslim peace activists in Gujarat, India (fieldwork in 2008 while at the **American Institute of Indian Studies / SIT**, Jaipur)
- 2004–2006        **Universität Marburg:** Vordiplom in political sciences (BA equiv.; max. grade of 1,0); minors: sociology and conflict research; option: theology
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## SELECT PUBLICATIONS (full list at <http://uni.raphael-susewind.de>)

*Being Muslim and working for peace: Faith based actors, secular technocrats, emancipating women and doubting professionals*, submitted (monograph)

*Indian intervention in Afghanistan and the tradition of pacifying colonial frontiers*; International Convention of Asia Scholars; Honolulu, March 31 - April 4, 2011

*How “integrated” is the Indian Foreign Service? The example of Farakka, 1982-1997*; in: Journal of International Relations 8(2), in press

*Religiöse Identität und Friedensarbeit indischer Muslime*; in: Wissenschaft&Frieden 27(4), 2009

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## WORK EXPERIENCE AND LANGUAGE SKILLS

- summer 2008     internship at the **German Embassy**, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- summer 2007     internship at the **development agency Misereor**, Aachen
- spring 2005      internship at the **local NGO CARAVAN**, Mingora, Pakistan
- Languages        **German** (mother tongue), **English** (fluent), **Hindi & Urdu** (intermediate)