On the Indian Readers of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*

SUMAN GUPTA

This paper brings an analytical perspective to bear on media reports on the popularity of *Mein Kampf* in India and evocations of Hitler in Indian political and cultural discourses. The basis and implications of such reports are examined for the Indian context, and relatedly for North American and European contexts. It is argued that Hitler and his manifesto are now evoked in India and elsewhere in fractured and dispersed ways that elide their ideological significance. The coherence and continuing potentiality of fascist ideology and Nazi-like programmes are noted, and it is suggested that their conceptual shadow remains recuperable amidst contemporary circulation of *Mein Kampf* and evocations of Hitler.

Suman Gupta (*s.gupta@open.ac.uk*) teaches literature and cultural history, at the English department, Faculty of Arts, The Open University, UK.

Every once in a while a newsworthy "controversy" appears that has to do with how Adolf Hitler and Nazism feature in Indian political and cultural discourses. Over the last decade these have included: the making of the Bollywood film *Dear Friend Hitler* (2011, directed by Rakesh Ranjan Kumar, and later renamed *Gandhi to Hitler*); Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi being compared to Hitler (or Goebbels) after the 2002 Gujarat riots and particularly by various politicians in 2011-12; Maharashtra Navnirman Sena leader Raj Thackeray's admiration for Hitler (2008 onwards) reminiscent of his uncle Bal Thackeray, former Maharashtra chief minister; Class X Social Science textbooks published by the Gujarat State Board of Schools in 2003-04 giving a positive spin to Hitler's leadership and the Nazi regime; protests in 2006 about a Mumbai restaurant called "Hitler's Cross", and in 2012 about a fashion boutique in Ahmedabad called "Hitler".

Threaded around the reportage of these is a consistent strand which has reappeared regularly: the popularity of Hitler and of his autobiography and manifesto *Mein Kampf* in India. The circulation and sales of *Mein Kampf* (first published 1925/1926) in India have constantly seemed noteworthy, since it is well known that the book clearly portended the genocidal programme of the Nazi regime – the systematic murder of Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, disabled people, and other (particularly eastern European and Russian) civilians from the late 1930s to 1945. Various estimations of the total number of victims go well over 10 million, of which six million were Jews.

The success of *Mein Kampf* in the Indian book market, and Indian interest in Hitler and Nazism generally, has occasionally been noted in Indian news media and consistently picked up by news media outside India. To name a few instances, English-language reports have appeared in US-based *The Wall Street Journal*, CBS News, *The New York Times*, and *The Washington Times*; UK-based British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), *The Telegraph*, and *The Guardian*; the Russian TV Network RT; Germany-based *Der Spiegel* and Deutsche Welle. The consumption of *Mein Kampf* in India, and what that perceivably indicates, has been subjected to negligible analysis beyond these reports. This essay is an attempt in that direction.

I argue below that the issues in question derive, to a limited extent, from the specificities of Indian social circumstances, and are ultimately ensconced in an international drift of dissociating and fracturing histories and ideologies amidst contemporary capitalism. There is evidently a notable anxiety about evocations of Hitler and his manifesto, in India and elsewhere. The anxiety is not merely about the ethics of how a particular historical context is accounted in another, but about

an ideological potentiality that could pertain to any context. However, that potentiality is generally imperfectly grasped and seldom stated; indeed, it is systematically deflected amidst the fracturing histories and ideologies mentioned above. How the latter schismatic processes work is trivial to significant evocations of *Mein Kampf* and Hitler is charted and analysed here for the Indian context first, and then, relatedly, for European and North American contexts. The conclusion tries to state – to retrieve from these various evocations – the coherent and implicit ideological underpinnings that constantly arouse anxiety and are constantly elided.

Circulation

The alleged popularity of *Mein Kampf* in India cannot be dismissed lightly as apocryphal. The formal book circuit itself has a substantial stake here. English-language editions of *Mein Kampf* targeting Indian readers are produced by a significant number of publishers, including Jaico, Printline, Indialog, Maple Press, Mastermind, Prakash, Om Books, Rohan, Adarsh, Ajay, Embassy, Lexicon, and Wilco. Jaico is the first to have published the book in 1988, and it has gone into several editions – the 37th impression appeared in 2007, and the 55th in 2010. As was reported in 2010, 1,00,000 copies of the Jaico edition had been purchased in the previous seven years, and the Crossword book-retailing chain had sold 25,000 copies in three years (Ahmed 2010). A 2009 report quoted the Jaico chief editor R H Sharma saying: "The initial print run of 2,000 copies in 2003 sold out immediately and we knew we had a bestseller on our hands. Since then the numbers have increased every year to around 15,000 copies until last year when we sold 10,000 copies over a six-month period in our Delhi shops" (Munford 2009). Another 2009 report had Jaico's Delhi manager K C Maiti observing that "between April and December 2008, we sold 10,000 copies in Delhi alone" (Kurup 2009). The other publishers of *Mein Kampf* indicate similarly satisfactory sales without quoting figures, and usually offer the text at a lower price than Jaico.

In India, with a few exceptions like novels by Chetan Bhagat, J K Rowling and Dan Brown, any English book selling over 10,000 copies is regarded as a "bestseller". Within the formal book circuit *Mein Kampf* is also available translated into Indian languages – at least Hindi, Gujarati, Malayalam, Tamil, and Bengali, and possibly other languages too. The retailing channels and sales figures for these are difficult to trace.

Then, there are the unregulated circulations. I know from personal experience that pirated editions of *Mein Kampf* have been available from Delhi pavement booksellers since the late 1990s, and probably earlier. Aravind Adiga's novel *The White Tiger* (2008: 205) observes in passing that Hitler figures among the wares of a pavement bookseller in Delhi. Several reports confirm this: "At traffic lights in Delhi and other Indian cities, it's not uncommon to sight Hitler's 'Mein Kampf' among cheap, pirated editions of books by new age gurus Paulo Coelho and Eckhart Tolle, the self-help prophet Stephen Covey, and the popular Indian novelist Chetan Bhagat" (Dhume 2010). The lower cost that pirated editions offer is obviously pertinent here: "Indian editions are priced at roughly Rs 150-200 but pirate copies [of *Mein Kampf*] cost much less. Pavement vendors like Raju in Delhi's Connaught Place say there is huge demand from Indians and foreigners alike" (Kurup 2009). As in India, so in neighbouring Bangladesh: a BBC report (Lawson 2009) found that *Mein Kampf* is as popular as Dan Brown's novels, according to pirated book vendors in Dhaka. The appearance of a book in English in pirated editions is possibly the surest indicator of popularity.

There is no available attempt at gauging the extent to which Indian readers – or readers anywhere, for that matter – take recourse to the most unregulated of book circulations: file-sharing on and free downloads from the internet. A combination of terms put into the Google search engine, such as "Mein Kampf pdf free download", comes up with over 1,00,000 hits in various languages, a great many offering the full text of the book for free. It is freely available in English from established electronic repositories like Project Gutenberg Australia and Archive.com. A relevant factor here, as far as the Indian readership goes, might be the limitations of internet access. Optimistic estimates suggest that around 10.2% of the Indian population (approximately 121 million) had internet access of some sort in 2011 (Internet World Stats 2011), but a survey (Shukla 2010) covering 3,11,431 literate 13-35 year olds (the most likely group for internet use) found that the internet is accessed by only 3.7%, of which a tiny 4% use it for reading books online and 1.2% to search for book titles.

Who Reads It and Why?

Obviously, Indian readers need not be reading *Mein Kampf* in an ideologically aware and sympathetic fashion, though news media coverage tacitly assumes that to be the case. Reading can be critical, sceptical, curiosity-led, fad-led, etc. Having said that, it may be surmised that popular "non-fictional" reading – in the informal (pirated stocks) or formal (bookshop shelves) spaces of religious books, self-help manuals, reference books, biographies of exemplary figures – often comes with some inclination towards passive acceptance of the text's themes and subjects. Scholarly reading can safely be put aside here; it would account for a tiny proportion of popular book consumption in India, as anywhere else. Insofar as the Indian readership is presented in the typically hurried and symptomatic way of news media reportage, several directions are highlighted as to who reads it and why. Each of these directions suggests a piecemeal purchase on the significance of the book; different readerly lenses appear to break that significance down into predetermined and partial readings and misreadings.

It is surmised in the above-mentioned reports that at least some Indian readers approach *Mein Kampf* in a spirit of ideological sympathy because it appeals to their own fascist inclinations (Munford 2009, citing philosopher J Kuruvachira). This can be straightforwardly associated with the powerful position that right-wing Hindu communal politics has acquired, especially after the 1980s, which is also the period over which *Mein Kampf* has been increasingly consumed in India. Some of the reports relevant here have suggestively quoted the Hindu

fascist sentiments, inspired by *Mein Kampf*, of ideologues like V D Savarkar and Madhav Golwalkar (Kurup 2009). The latter's texts from the 1930s and 1940s had also started circulating widely in India since the 1980s. Bharatiya Janata Party leader L K Advani's 1976 defence of the Hindu communal Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) reappeared in 2002 (Chapter 4, also available on his website). The RSS and aligned organisations variously promote an idea of Indian "nationality" in biogenetically-underpinned and homogenised religious and ethnic terms. Advani's defence of it, against the charge of being fascist, involved circumventing the issue by misreading Hitler's ideology as primarily state-authoritarianism which used racism as a propaganda tactic. Ideological affinity with *Mein Kampf* can also be easily linked to the kind of narrower regional xenophobia that, for instance, Bal and Raj Thackeray have espoused, as have other localised ethnonationalisms and communalisms in India.

But, insofar as the popularity of *Mein Kampf* and Hitler can be linked to Hindu communal politics, it probably has less to do with overt political subscriptions and more with a widely-held myth of Aryan kinship in south Asia, which can be manipulated to political ends (for the issue at hand, mentioned in news reports by Giridharadas 2006, CBS News 2010, Frazier 2011, and others).

The scholarly history of the myth of Aryan kinship between European and Indian populations has been carefully laid out by Thomas K Trautmann (1997), and its links to Nazism detailed by Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke (1998). The latter charts a path from 19th century European comparative philology, through esoteric and bizarre European-Asian passages before and after the second world war.

A corrective, informed by historical evidence and analysis, to the distortions entertained in Indian accounts of Aryan identity (steadily exacerbated by the Hindu communal movement) has been usefully offered by Romila Thapar et al (2006). But sadly, such careful explorations of the issue do little to prick the persistence of a myth – it would scarcely be a myth otherwise. Those who buy *Mein Kampf* in a spirit of ideological sympathy are unlikely to turn to Trautmann, Goodrick-Clarke, Thapar, and other rigorous scholars. A hazy idea of Aryan identity and kinship simmers in undercurrents which flow beneath these. An account of visits to Iran, Pakistan, and India – and encounters with hairdressers, taxi drivers, and waiters – by a German reporter, citing German tourists, speaks of the surprise and discomfort they felt on often being received warmly for being Aryan, and due to admiration for the Nazis (Kazim 2010). In 2005, the German broadcasting company Deutsche Welle posted an article on its website (Lehmann 2005) to clear up misunderstanding about Hitler and Nazism in India.

Another ideologically-motivated, but quite differently oriented, Indian readership for *Mein Kampf* that is mooted is of anti-imperialist nationalists. These consist of readers who look back approvingly to Nazi Germany's unintended role in weakening British colonial power and putatively speeding up the process of India's independence. A report seeking to explain the sales of the book in India quotes "sociologist Ashish Nandy" (presumably Ashis Nandy), who refers to: "India's colonial inheritance when 'every enemy of Britain was a friend of India and at least potentially a good person', […] adding that among today's young readers 'there is kind a vague sense that it's about a person who gave a tough time to the Brits'" (CBS News 2010). "Senior academics", observes another report, "cite the mutual influence of India and Hitler's Nazis on one another. Mahatma Gandhi corresponded with the Fuhrer, pro-Independence leader Subhas Chandra Bose's Indian National Army allied with Hitler's Germany and Japan during the second world war, and the Nazis drew on Hindu symbolism for their Swastika motif and ideas of Aryan supremacy" (Munford 2009).

Inevitably, Bose's attempts to forge a tactical alliance with Nazi Germany and other Axis powers in organising an armed uprising against British colonialism is mentioned often in such contexts (also in, for example, von Tunzelmann 2010). It seems to me unlikely, however, that anti-imperial nationalist readers do actually read *Mein Kampf* – and it would be odd if they did so with a sense of ideological sympathy. This is not simply because of the book's pervasive racism, but because Hitler's brand of German nationalism repudiated support for anti-imperialist movements of any sort, and in *Mein Kampf* he was particularly scornful of Indian nationalists struggling for independence from British rule. The relevant remarks, though written in the 1920s, could almost have been offered in anticipation of the kind of alliance that Bose was to seek in the 1940s. But to get to that readers have to reach Chapter 14 of the second volume of the book, on his policy in the east. Bose was obviously aware of this when he met Hitler in 1942. Sugata Bose's (2011) account of the meeting (drawing on the official report) says: "Later in the conversation, Bose brought up the matter of Hitler's anti-Indian racist remarks in *Mein Kampf* and sought a clarifying statement for the Indian nation. Hitler evaded the question, saying that he had not wanted 'passive resistance for the Reich of the Indian pattern'" (ibid: 219).

So far then, suggestions as to who reads *Mein Kampf* in India are on purely speculative and shaky ground. News media's notice of the matter seems somewhat more firmly grounded when it points, almost ubiquitously, to a youth readership which seeks authoritarian leadership amidst various political and social problems, or turns to Hitler as a leadership model for business management studies. Here, readership appears to become disinvested of ideological awareness, and the book seems to serve functions that are only tenuously connected to its substance and import.

Leadership and Youth

A *Times of India* survey of 2002 was recorded in a leader article as follows:

> A recent poll in this newspaper of young students in elite institutions across the country revealed a startling finding – 17% favoured Adolf Hitler as the kind of leader India ought to have. Ahead of him, paradoxically, Mahatma Gandhi, the choice of 23% and Atal Behari Vajpayee [then Prime Minister], 20%. Does the placement of Hitler, above Subhas Bose, Abraham Lincoln and Nelson Mandela mean anything? Is it an indicator of a moral vacuity of the students surveyed from colleges like St Stephen's and Lady Shri Ram, Delhi, St Xavier's Mumbai, Presidency College Kolkata, Mount Carmel and Christ College, Bangalore? (Joshi 2002).

The "moral vacuity" of hazily-articulated "youth" makes good news everywhere, and in the context of the popularity of *Mein Kampf* in India youth appear consistently. The only readers of *Mein Kampf* who are quoted are given as "representative" of Indian youth. These include an Indian Institute of Technology Delhi management student (CBS News 2010), "students" in a general but quotable way (RT 2010), a "19 year old student from Gujarat" and a "research associate" (Ahmed 2010), and so on. "Indian business students" and "young people" are generally singled out by publishers and booksellers of *Mein Kampf* (Ahmed 2010; Kurup 2009; Munford 2009). All such readers are quoted to illustrate that Indian youth are able to separate the leader Hitler from the genocidal Hitler without qualms. "Experts" to whom journalists appeal for explanations usually speak of the youth, and their explanations have to do with these youth seeking strong leadership ("sociologist" Ashis Nandy in CBS News 2010; "political columnist" Prem Shankar Jha in Giridharadas 2006; "academic" Govind Kulkarni in Ahmed 2010). This cuts two ways: youth being seen as misguided (poorly educated, exposed to social problems, and tainted by corrupt guardianship), or being perceived as naïve and infantile (impressionable, ignorant, vulnerable, enthusiastically disordered, and in need of discipline). Youth are predominantly understood as institutional beings, students of this or that school or university.

In this drift of holding the youth responsible or regarding them as irresponsible, the interesting observation that business and management students particularly buy *Mein Kampf* slips through uncritically. One of the publishers cited in the news, Sohin Lakhani of Embassy Books, reportedly observed that,

> ...students are keen buyers because 'Mein Kampf is seen as a strategy management text'. He says, 'A number of management students buy it. I remember a college lecture when a professor talked about how a short, depressed man in prison made a goal of taking over the world and built a strategy to achieve it' (Kurup 2009).

It is a pity that no professor of business management and corporate leadership has been interviewed in the news coverage on *Mein Kampf*'s popularity in India. The possibility that business and management studies might be encouraging a top-down dissociation of the leadership and management principles of the Nazi regime from the ideological vision these cohere with seems worth exploring. Such encouragement need not be easily tractable. Hitler as a charismatic or authoritarian leader may well not figure in standard management textbooks. But, it seems plausible that a structure of thinking that has to do with management and corporate leadership practices, and in the pedagogy thereof, has come to prevail, which finds it convenient to gesture towards Hitler's leadership style and refer to *Mein Kampf*. Such a structure of thinking may resonate strongly in an ethos where political and public institutions are modelled on corporate management, corporations embed hierarchies and shadow militaristic principles, and academic institutions are designed to fit out workers for them. It is a consideration worth reiterating, and I return to it below.

Rather than the institutional and establishment encouragement that might be relevant here, the media coverage in question has chosen largely to place the business of Indian youth reading *Mein Kampf* alongside other popular cultural transactions. This is probably where evocations of Hitler and *Mein Kampf* appear at their most fractured and apparently ideologically untrammelled, evading the burdens of history with the blithe lightness of consuming pleasures. The consumption of Hitler memorabilia and brand names – t-shirts, key rings, bags, home furnishings, restaurants, etc – in India are mentioned (Ahmed 2010; CBS News 2010). The popular cultural ground is indeed worth analysing carefully. In a related fashion, it should interest cultural analysts that the name "Hitler" is often comprehensively dissociated from the historical figure and becomes a general appellation for an authority figure in India, even with otherwise endearing or upright qualities. In that vein, there are several Indian films with "Hitler" in their titles, as nicknames for their main and ultimately good protagonists: the Malayali film *Hitler* (1996, directed by Siddique), its Telugu remake *Hitler* (1997, directed by Muthaya Subbaya), the Hindi film *Hitler* (1998, directed by T L V Prasad), the Punjabi film *Hero Hitler in Love* (2011, directed by Sukhwant Dadda), and the TV soap *Hitler Didi* (premiered in 2011). A comic overlay on the image of Hitler is not unfamiliar in India: many Hindi film aficionados recall the Jailor in the 1975 blockbuster *Sholay* (directed by Ramesh Sippy), affectionately played by comic actor Asrani as a Hitler parody. What these signify is outside the scope of this paper; my concern is with direct evocations of Hitler and of his *Mein Kampf*. However, these are worth noting as ripples at the outer fringes of the dispersals of ideologically loaded signifiers into an apparently ideology-free everyday of commercial transactions and lifestyles.

A Bigger Picture

Insofar as the news media reportage I have been citing above homes in on the circulation of *Mein Kampf* in India, as if that characterises something distinctive about the contemporary "national" ethos in contradistinction from European/North American/western "national" *ethe*, it falls into a stereotyping trap itself. That is often the tacit drift of reports on the matter, especially when they appear in western European and North American news media. This is a trap because a more considered approach finds very little to differentiate India in this regard from, for instance, US, Canada, UK, France, Germany, Turkey, Japan, and other countries. In brief, what the above observations pertain to is not so much something characteristic or distinctive about the Indian national ethos, but something that fluidly and evenly extends across an international domain.

To begin with, let us consider some relevant differences between the political territory of India and political territories in Europe (European Union (EU) and member-states) and North America. And let us dispense with the slippery and nebulous term "nation" for the time being: when I say India, US, UK, etc, I mean the political territories described as such. With regard to manifestations of racism and fascism, India is somewhat less regulated in a top-down fashion than the EU countries (especially western Europe) and North America. I confine my observations below to the EU and North America. A vast

state-based and transnational apparatus is in place in the EU – incorporating legal provisions of various sorts and policing by state and state-supported entities – to regulate the "appearance" or "visibility" of racism and fascism. This extends to intellectual property regimes, media and cultural production environments, arrangements for policing and surveillance, structures for financial transactions, and so on. In the EU and North American contexts, the robustness of this regulatory regime is often tried and well-tested. In India, racism is a relatively low-profile social issue, and fascism (usually mistakenly linked exclusively to race) seems a similarly low-profile matter – though fascism pertains to any kind of biogenetically or ethnically "national" homogenisation programme, and Hindu communalism and other kinds of smaller ethnonationalisms and communalisms in India are indubitably fascist in character (in a potentially Nazi fashion). Indian regulatory apparatuses are not merely less responsive to fascism, they are generally more loosely applied, so that unregulated spheres of productions and transactions are simply more visible – of pirated books and other cultural circulations, unauthorised buildings and unlicensed trading, and so on (the entire panoply of exchanges and practices that are analysed in Sundaram 2010). Also pertinent to some degree here is the self-regulation or heightened sensitivity that arises from the coexistence of apparently visibly racially-variegated populations in various major western European and North American metropolises. Comparatively speaking, apparent racial differentiations are less visible in Indian metropolises. Superstructural regulation of the appearance of racism and fascism in the EU and North America has several purposes: it works towards keeping the historical record of Nazism and fascism clear, which, in turn, has a bearing on political governance in the present, especially amidst culturally and racially heterogeneous constituencies; and both of the above acknowledge anxiety about potential ideological recuperation of fascism and Nazi-like alignments in the future.

None of that, however, means that *Mein Kampf* or things to do with Hitler are consumed less elsewhere than in India, or consumed in ways that are less ideologically fractured, dispersed and lightweight. The superstructural regulation mainly means that circulations and exchanges are often difficult to track or have low visibility in the public sphere in European and North American contexts – they "appear" to be comparatively muted. But the indicative evidence is that all the points made above about the Indian situation obtain, if anything, on a larger scale and with similar effect in west Europe and North America. The Indian situation in this respect is but a hazy reflection of what obtains elsewhere. Let me go through the above-mentioned points that have been raised for India in brief, with a focus on anglophone west European and North American materials.

Circulation in North America and Europe

It is very difficult to gauge consumption and circulation of *Mein Kampf* in the latter case, where restrictions do not apply. The fact that the text is easily available for free downloading, usually uploaded or streamed from North American and European servers, is probably more pertinent there than in India. After all, compared to India's 10.2% of the population in 2011, 78.2% of the US population, 81.6% of the Canadian, 84.1% of the British, 82.7% of the German, and 77.2% of the French (and 61.3% across Europe at large) had internet access (Internet World Stats 2011). Where the book is available for sale, such indications as exist suggest good sales. Some online retailers offer sales ranks. Amazon.com (USA) gives ranks up to nearly 10 million, reflecting sales in the last 24 hours, and offers numerous editions in print and e-book forms. On 1 August 2012, the top-three bestselling print editions of *Mein Kampf* (e-books on sale which can be freely downloaded elsewhere are muddy waters) on Amazon.com were ranked 10,244, 33,327 and 35,671, respectively. If the total sales of all editions of the book were toted up to generate a rank, very good sales, indeed, would be shown. To put that into perspective, on the same date, the three bestselling print editions of Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* were ranked 31,570, 54,069 and 75,596, and those of M K Gandhi's *Experiments with Truth* were ranked 6,98,800, 9,25,835 and 9,45,455. The situation in this regard is matched by figures from Amazon UK, Amazon Canada, and Barnes and Noble's online sites (checked on the same day). In this context, the interesting 2001 controversy around royalties from *Mein Kampf* may also be recalled. A 2003 article tracking royalties of the book from publication onwards summed up recent developments as follows:

> The postwar history of *Mein Kampf* in England is simpler. It was out of print until 1969, when Hutchinson re-released a wartime translation by Ralph Mannheim […] the royalties of approximately £100,000 were donated to a secret charity. That charity was revealed as the German Welfare Council in 2001, when Edzard Grause, its chairman, publicly announced that it would no longer accept the money […] In 1989, Random House acquired Hutchinson. Then, in 1998, the German publishing conglomerate Bertelsmann bought Random House, and with it the English rights to *Mein Kampf*.
>
> So long as it does not sell the book in Germany, Bertelsmann's acquisition breaks no laws. Until 1999, however, an English translation of *Mein Kampf* was the second-ranked bestseller on Amazon.com's German website before complaints from the German government and the Simon Wiesenthal Center led both Amazon.com and Barnes & Noble.com to block German sales (Worthington 2003).

The figure that the charity received was £5,00,000 according to reports of the time (Edwardes and Hastings 2001; Bowcott 2001).

Insofar as this readership can be speculatively linked to ideological sympathy, fascist political tendency in India is very far from singular. The mass media reports and research publications, since, say, 2000, that have charted the growth of fascist movements in Europe and North America are too numerous to list here; amidst ongoing economic crises across the region, it is widely anticipated that these will grow further. Indeed, it is often observed that the consolidation of globalisation processes has been attended by a worldwide resurgence of right-wing and tendentiously fascist movements. Some commentators have, however, observed that *Mein Kampf* is possibly outdated, even for contemporary European neo-Nazis (e g, Cesarani 2012, while reporting on plans to publish *Mein Kampf* in Bavaria), who are focused more on Islamophobia than on anti-Semitism now. There may well be some truth in that: the Norwegian

neo-Nazi mass-murderer Anders Breivik's Islamophobic rant and manifesto, *2083: A European Declaration of Independence* (2011, freely available on the internet), pays little attention to *Mein Kampf* – and incidentally, draws upon fascist Hindu pseudo-history, as it does on the views of Islamophobic alignments elsewhere.

Insofar as readership can be linked to disenchanted youth desiring authoritarian leadership, as mooted often since the 2002 *Times of India* survey mentioned above, the apparent evidence for that is strong in Europe. In 2011, it was reported that a survey in Vienna of 400 16-19 year olds by the Institute of Youth Culture found that 11.2% felt "Hitler did many good things for the people" (Hall 2011). Surveys in 2006 and 2010 by University of Leipzig researchers, commissioned by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, revealed that even in West Germany (where, naturally, sensitivity about and regulatory measures apropos fascism have been strongest since the second world war) there is fairly strong evidence of right-wing views:

> The study examines six themes: attitudes towards dictatorship, national chauvinism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, social Darwinism and the placing of Nazism. The researchers evaluated respondents that agreed with extreme positions in all areas as having a 'consistently right-wing world view'. In West Germany they came to nearly 10% (Schwaabe 2012 – which gives links to the two German-language reports).

A broad-ranging report commissioned by the same institution, with surveys covering eight European countries, found that right-wing convictions and prejudices are widespread in all. By way of a small indication, the percentages of those surveyed who agreed with the statement "What the country needs most is a strong leader who does not bother about parliament or elections" came out as follows: Germany 32.3, Britain 41.8, France 43.2, Netherlands 23.1, Italy 38.2, Portugal 62.4, Poland 60.8, and Hungary 56.6 (Zick, Küpper and Hövermann 2011: 101).

But reading *Mein Kampf* in Europe or North America, as in India, is probably less to do with ideological sympathy than with curiosity. This is where the top-down regulation and sensitivities about race and fascism really play a role; in these contexts, curiosity is spurred, piggybacking upon and working "through" the regulatory regimes and their anti-fascist motivation, by a simply enormous Hitler industry. This has been extensively, and yet far from comprehensively, studied and analysed. The image of Hitler has been exploited in numerous literary texts, from serious fiction to action thrillers with increasing frequency since the 1960s (examined first in Rosenfeld 1985, more recently with a focus on American fiction by Butter 2009). "Put a swastika on a book cover and you are looking at an almost certain reprint", observes McCrum (2012) aptly. The list of films and television series in which Hitler makes an appearance is gigantic: Mitchell (2009) gave an extensive list covering the period 1940-2000, and there have been many more since; in this vein, German films were analysed in Kaes (1992). On British television, documentaries about Hitler and other Nazi war criminals feature on a weekly basis on some channel or the other. Correspondingly, there is a gigantic academic Hitler industry. Analyses of the manner in which "explainers" of Hitler and Nazism have gone about their task are available (especially Lukacs 1998 and Rosenbaum 1998 onwards). Cultural productions featuring Hitler tend to veer between characterising him as evil-incarnate, satirising him, and tentatively humanising him. The academic productions tend to move between articulating the evil of Hitler and using him as a pathway to abstract theorising. In all, a significant impetus is not merely to engage with Hitler as a historical figure or as an ideologue, but to channel contemporary concerns, normative exigencies and political manoeuvres through the evocation of Hitler. The consumption of Hitler memorabilia in Europe and North America rises above the level of petty cultural transactions to the sphere of specialist and elite collectors' interest. Robert Harris' (1986) account of how fraudulent personal diaries of Hitler were acquired for $2 million give an insight into this world. British news media features often pause on the phenomenon of Hitler memorabilia collectors (e g, Bell 2012). Internet vending and auction sites are rife with every imaginable kind of Hitler and Nazi memorabilia. Ethically or otherwise, Hitler is consumed on a grand scale in Europe and North America.

To draw this "bigger picture" to a close, let me put in a brief note on management- and leadership-related interest in Hitler and *Mein Kampf*. There is nothing in the least peculiar about Indian attitudes in this regard either. In March 2003, right-leaning historian Andrew Roberts presented a three-part programme comparing Churchill's and Hitler's leadership styles on BBC, *Secrets of Leadership*, and published a book in the same year. A review of the book observed ironically:

> On top of the problems inherent in the parallel lives form are those caused by the necessity of dredging up some leadership secrets […] He [Roberts] occasionally, with some sarcasm, deigns to use the jargon of 'management gurus': empowerment, micromanagement, MBWA (management by walking about), and so on. This is ungracious as, one assumes, managerial applicability was the unique selling point upon which the TV series this book accompanies was pitched (Litt 2003).

And in 2011, it was widely reported (Press Association 2010; BBC 2010) that a survey questionnaire administered to the ambulance staff of the British National Health Service (NHS) asked them to rate how "cool" Hitler was as a leader on a scale of 1 to 5.

Ideological Coherence

The above observations register some of the ways in which evocations of Hitler and *Mein Kampf* elide their ideological significance in India, as in Europe and North America, amidst a field of contemporary capitalist fractures, dispersals and transactions. These observations naturally gesture tacitly towards the coherent ideological significance that is thus elided, and towards how that significance plays with the modus operandi of such evocations.

Nazism was, and tendentiously remains, an ideological programme which crystallised a set of somewhat nebulous and loosely-defined proclivities, ideas, and formations that are thought of as fascist. As a programme, it crystallised fascism into a perversely ordered and terrible conceptual "whole", which seemed to prefigure a social vision that can be worked

towards and brought into existence. Therein, bureaucratic order, socio-economic organisation, the rule of aggression and fear, zones of hierarchised segregations, a militaristic ethic, a structure of totalistic aesthetic affects and every cog of state apparatus could apparently emanate "coherently" from and be arranged around conviction in racial purity and corruption, absolute leadership, and ultimately the homogeneity of the nation. The nation was fundamental as an imagined community which, even in its enunciation, through its very etymological echo, gestures towards a biogenetic and primitive basis in *nasci* or "birth". It is this sticky conceptual wholeness that gave Nazism its ideological drive – the principles, acts, arrangements, agendas, propaganda mechanisms, organisations, etc, could not be taken apart, they were "of a piece". However, as an ideological programme it could be translated and accommodated to different social and historical milieus. Nazism may have come together in a particular geopolitical context and at a historical juncture, but it had enough of an abstract structure to be replicated or modified and accommodated in other geopolitical contexts and historical junctures, with its conceptual and programmatic "wholeness" intact. Fascism thereby acquired the potential to compete with other ideological programmes of international scope (liberal capitalist, theocratic, socialist, etc).

Inextricable Relationship

The attempt to separate the genocidal Hitler from the leader Hitler, to separate the strategies of management in Nazi institutions and social arrangements from the ideological programme of Nazism, and to thereby draw general lessons in leadership and management, is to misrecognise the conceptual wholeness and potentially pave the way for its return. The inextricable relationship between the bureaucratic order and the genocidal programme was most powerfully apprehended in Hannah Arendt's (1963) reports on Adolf Eichmann's trial in 1961, and has numerously been contemplated since. But a dissociated misapprehension of fascist leadership is encouraged by more fundamental dissociations and fragmentations, some of them initiated by the Nazis themselves. Perhaps the most potent ploy for misrecognising the wholeness of the Nazi ideological programme, and thereby keeping its potential active, is in isolating the image of Hitler – and the superficial object-character of his manifesto – as a synecdoche, a fetish of Nazism, "at the expense of understanding the wholeness of the ideological programme and its implications". Instead of engaging Nazism in terms of its ideology, it seems to become possible to approach Nazism simply by engaging its fetish-god or fetish-anti-god Hitler, as an autonomous supersignifier, and by engaging *Mein Kampf* as a fetish-object, a book that stands apart more than any other biography/manifesto. This activation of the quasi-religious, rather than the intellectual dimension of Nazism, was, naturally, undertaken by the Nazis themselves in their deification of Hitler. The potency of the ideological programme that is elided and yet replenished through this move has been numerously examined with painful intellectual thoroughness. The investigations initiated by Theodor Adorno et al (1950) – now unfashionable – were attempts to get behind the subsuming fetish-god or fetish-anti-god Hitler to the positioning of leadership in the Nazi ideological programme. More recently, in one of the most searing and detailed attempts to comprehend the Nazi programme of genocide in literature, Jonathan Littell's novel *The Kindly Ones* (2009/2006) presents a few personal appearances of Hitler as ridiculous, and yet without consequence for the totalitarian power that the Führer firmly represents from the Nazi perspective. It also gives a detailed picture of how genocide was "managed" by the Nazi bureaucracy.

But the fetish-god or fetish-anti-god Hitler is easier to deal with than the enormity of the Nazi programme and its implications; it is easier to parody, demonise, spit upon, despoil, stick pins into, idolise, humanise, consume, buy and sell, package, etc, the image of Hitler. So the fetish-god that was put out by the Nazi regime slips smoothly and ever-more prolifically into post-war commodity fetishism. And as the scope of late capitalism, accommodating postmodern fragmentariness and pastiche (amply theorised by Jean Baudrillard, Fredric Jameson, David Harvey, and others), expands – across North America, Europe, Asia, the globe – the consumption of Hitler proliferates and the Hitler industry expands.

Every observation in the preceding sections, apropos India, and Europe and North America, seems to me within the grasp of the notions thus impressionistically and hurriedly articulated. It is ultimately always difficult to tell who reads *Mein Kampf*, why and where, or whether those who buy it do read it at all. Perhaps the "reading" of it does not really matter. Perhaps it is bought simply to be possessed, collected, and kept. It probably sells and circulates as a fetish-object, like a relic, that is consumed in the way that the image of Hitler is consumed. Its fetish-object fixity is symbolically suggested in the fact that in almost all English translations, and translations in other languages, its title is forever fixed untranslated from the German – simply *Mein Kampf* (in Hindi, Gujarati, and some other languages, however, its title is translated). At the bottom of such circulation and consumption within the contemporary capitalist order, there is a paradox. On the one hand, the apparent fragmentation of and dissociation from fascist ideology that is evidenced above – the eliding of the coherence of the Nazi ideological programme – brings an air of lightness to dealing with a particularly heavy burden of history without quite forgetting it. On the other hand, within the circulations of fragmented forms and objects, the conceptual shadow of that ideological programme remains available, and may, perhaps, be recuperated and reactivated in some future and similarly dangerous formation.

Having Hitler or *Mein Kampf* as high-profile brand names, appealing to these in search of management and leadership formulae, collecting Hitler memorabilia, fuelling consumer fetishism through Nazi signifiers, drawing upon these for political effect or countercultural provocation, picking at these for sensational or sentimental entertainment, trying to pigeonhole the "good" and the "bad" of Hitler and *Mein Kampf*, etc, might seem like processes of fragmentation and dispersal that

lay history to rest, but could potentially work to opposite effect. Since these are all, ultimately, of a piece within a coherent ideology that has the capacity of context-specific accommodation and adaptation, such evocations, wherever they appear, may come to instantiate a recontextualised programme that is reminiscent of and quietly inspired by Nazism. The lightly carried fragments and fetish objects could be made to fit together in renewed ways at some future juncture. This could occur with different terms for national homogeneity, biogenetic hierarchies and leadership appeal than those of the past. Such a fascist programme could be rearticulated in, for instance, religious terms, or in terms of mythic majoritarian or regional purities, or, for that matter, minority ethnonationalisms and biogenetic integrities. Such a programme may conscript democratic political process, a bureaucratic order or a clerisy, "spiritual" authority, and popular prejudices and normative sentiments to its purpose anywhere, and again. India is neither especially immune from that possibility, nor singularly vulnerable; India is part of the wider world in this respect. The thing to contemplate in any context is how lightly, thoughtlessly and frequently such evocations and circulations take place. Arguably, the more carefree such evocations and circulations of Hitler and *Mein Kampf* appear, the stronger the potential for fascist ideological programmes remains.

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