



CHETAN BHATT

# HINDU NATIONALISM

ORIGINS, IDEOLOGIES AND MODERN MYTHS

## **Hindu Nationalism**

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**Hindu Nationalism**  
**Origins, Ideologies and Modern Myths**

**Chetan Bhatt**



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**For Parul, Bina and Steve with love**

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## Introduction

On 16 May 1998, under the instructions of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party-led (BJP) government, Indian atomic scientists exploded three nuclear devices in the Rajasthan desert near Pokharan, and followed this with two further explosions three days later. The day of the first tests, Buddha Purnima, is traditionally celebrated as the day of birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha. This was the second time that India had undertaken nuclear tests (the first was conducted on 18 May 1974 under the orders of Indira Gandhi's Congress government). The first three devices detonated were said to be a fission device (which India already had the capability of producing), a low-yield weapon that could be used for India's short-range Prithvi missiles, and a thermonuclear device with a destructive power of several kilotons. This third bomb, and its potential deployment in conjunction with the second stage of India's proposed development of its intermediate-range Agni missile (Agni II) would provide India with intercontinental ballistic missiles with a destructive intensity and spatial reach that had previously been the preserve of the nuclear superpowers. The tests were followed by a national-popular resurgence in India in celebration of the country's emergence, under a BJP-led government, as a nuclear superpower that had demonstrated India's strength and put its chief enemy, Pakistan, 'in its place'.

If the name of India's ballistic missile, Agni, the god of fire in the archaic Vedic texts was an older one, its symbolization in 1998 was novel, reflecting the eruption of mass social movements and a political party of government that represented a majoritarian, chauvinistic, anti-minority ideology of 'Hindu' supremacism. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), the organization at the forefront of the upsurge of militant and violent Hinduism, and having close affinity with the ideological doctrine of Hindutva that also resulted in the formation of the BJP, called for a temple dedicated to Shakti (the goddess of power) to be built at Pokharan, some fifty kilometres from the site of the tests, the fifty-third addition to what it claimed are similar *Shaktipeeths* ('seats of strength') that symbolize Hindu power. The idea was mooted that sand from the explosion site be distributed across India in the 'tradition' of a religious offering, though the harmful consequences of 'radioactive *prasad*' resulted in the abandonment of this suggestion. The inevitable claim surfaced, one of many such enabling fictions, that nuclear weapons were

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traditional to Hinduism ('Om-made bombs?'), the Vedic god Agni adduced as proof that 'ancient Hindus' possessed nuclear bombs. The leader of the violent Bombay-based Hindu nationalist party, the Shiv Sena, declared that after the bomb tests, Hindus were 'no longer eunuchs' – reiterating a masculinist theme and an evocative anxiety that has animated Hindu nationalist ideology since its inception.

However, the triumphant Hindutva sacralization of weapons of mass destruction could have had only one consequence. By 28 May, Pakistan, under the government of prime minister Nawaz Sharif, had retaliated by exploding five fission bombs followed by one further bomb on 30 May in the Chagai Hills, Baluchistan. Pakistan announced its intention to nuclearize its intermediate-range Ghauri ballistic missile, while many of its population jubilantly celebrated the 'settling of its score' with 'Resurgent India'. The 'score' was certainly equalized as both countries now possessed a broadly equivalent destructive nuclear capability that had the capacity to kill millions in each other's major cities. While the development of nuclear weapons of mass destruction in south Asia had an autonomous trajectory, the BJP's decision to 'induct' India's nuclear weapons so soon after coming to power (March 1998) reflected a different history and ideological practice of 'Hindu nationalism', one that has been seen as peripheral to the Indian polity and social formation but has, since the early 1980s, moved to the centre-stage of Indian politics, state and civil society. The names of each country's missiles, Agni and Ghauri, symbolize, and have the capacity to make real exactly the imagined monumental conflict between a primordial Hinduism and a medieval Islam that the votaries of Hindu nationalism consider to be central to their political sociology.

The aims of this book are to provide a critical assessment of the ideological content to Hindu nationalism, and elaborate intellectual and historical influences that contributed to its development. The focus on ideologies and history is intended to supplement some of the existing and excellent literature published in recent years that has guided many of the directions of this book (Basu 1993, Jaffrelot 1996, Datta 1998, Hansen 1999, Ghosh 1999). The first three chapters are directed towards analysis of the main nineteenth and early twentieth century texts and personalities that were important in the development of Hindu nationalism. The methodological emphasis on idea, text and key personalities that symbolize the contours of Hindu nationalist thinking can inadvertently convey a holistic continuity to Hindu nationalism across a broad historical period. While rejecting the view of an uninterrupted historical development of Hindu nationalist ideology, and indeed highlighting critical epistemological and political discontinuities during the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century, one argument of the book is that one can trace a convergence in the substantive ideological *content*, if not the explicit political concerns, of Hindu nationalists across this period. This is a complicated argument, illustrated in the first two chapters, and its implications are that the generally dominant view of a distinct Hindu nationalism arising as a

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marginal movement during the 1920s, and of relatively little influence until the 1980s, requires modification.

Hindu nationalism, even in its recent 'cultural nationalist' forms, represents a dense cluster of ideologies of primordialism, many of which were developed during processes of vernacular and regional elite formation in colonial India during the second half of the nineteenth century. Chapter 2 presents a consideration of the impact of European varieties of 'primordialist' thinking from mid- to late-nineteenth century colonial India. The argument is that Hindu primordialist ideas developed in conjunction with evolutionary, 'physiological' and metaphysical conceptions of nation. This was not the result of an elementary and unmediated impact of European nationalist conceptions, but occurred through dialogic processes of negotiation and debate with such ideas, and through complex intellectual movement to and from colonial India and Europe. A key component of colonial Indian elite configurations of primordial nationalism was Aryanism, which in the Indian context represented the synthesis of a several intellectual strands arising from British and German Orientalism, and from processes of 'upper' caste, religious, regional and vernacular elite consolidation in colonial India. The theme of a variant 'Aryanism' continues throughout the book and is considered to be a definitive background to Hindu nationalism. Chapter 2 also examines the formation and impact during the later nineteenth century of Dayananda Saraswati's Arya Samaj movement, the 'Bengal Renaissance' and Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya's affective religious nationalism, Bal Gangadhar Tilak's synthesis of archaic primordialism with politicized devotionism, and other developments in regionalist nationalism, each of which imagined an overintegrated national future for India based on 'Hindu' precepts. The extraordinarily wide-ranging impact of neo-Arya Samajist ideologies in the twentieth century is also considered in Chapter 3.

Difficult questions haunt analysis of the relationship between the national movement for liberation from British rule and the projects of a distinctive Hindu nationalism. This is a complicated area to explore, since there were (it will be argued) several Hindu nationalist orientations that had a variety of strong associations with the national movement, both well before and after the emergence of M. K. Gandhi as a national leader. This is explored in Chapter 3 by examining the political trajectories of Lala Lajpat Rai and Lala Munshi Ram (Swami Shraddhanand) in the early decades of the twentieth century. These two political figures are used to symbolize the complexities and tensions between 'Indian' and 'Hindu' nationalism, and between 'anti-communal anti-colonialism' and Hindu majoritarianism during the troubled period of the 1920s. Both individuals were involved to differing degrees with the national movement and both can conceivably be called 'Hindu nationalists'. The divergence between strategies of non-cooperation with British rule, and strategies of 'responsive cooperation' with colonialism is also examined, the aim being to highlight the complex affinities between Hindu majoritarianism

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and ‘responsivism’. In Chapter 3, it is argued that there was a strong degree of political continuity between ‘Hinduized’ versions of ‘Indian’ nationalism and the specific ideology of Hindutva that emerged in the 1920s. More contentiously, it is also argued that much of the substantial content of 1920s Hindutva was already ideologically established much earlier, including the idea that Indian nationality was primarily to be based on a ‘common’ Hindu civilization, culture, religion and ‘race’. While aware of debates about the complex governmental, political, administrative, taxonomic, ideological and popular characteristics of ‘communalism’, the main focus of the book is on ideological Hindu nationalism – that Hindus did or should constitute ‘a nation’, and that Indian nationalism was solely or largely coextensive with, and to be based on, Hindu religious or ideological precepts. In this sense, what is usually referred to as ‘Hindu communalism’ is submerger under a narrative that essentially views the dominant forms of the latter as characteristically preoccupied with broader ideas of Hindu majoritarianism and ‘Hindu nationality’.

The distinctive ideology of Hindutva that animates contemporary Hindu nationalism was expounded at length during the early 1920s by the Indian anticolonial revolutionary, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. Chapter 4 critically, and in detail, explores the content of Savarkarism, the Hindu Mahasabha movement that he led after the mid-1930s, and the relationship of his ideology to strands of British evolutionist sociology. Savarkar is celebrated as a revolutionary hero in contemporary India because of his involvement, while in London during the first decade of the twentieth century, with revolutionary terrorist anticolonial societies. If the confluence of revolutionary nationalism with Hindu nationalism is apposite in his case, his activities during the 1930s also sharply demonstrated the difference between Hindu nationalism and the anti-colonial national movement.

In the mid-1920s, a new organization, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), was formed in Maharashtra and was to become the foundational organization for the ‘family’ (*sangh parivar*) that comprises the main, though not all, Hindu nationalist organizations and tendencies in contemporary India. Chapter 5 explores the origin, ideology and organization of the RSS. Despite the claims of the RSS and its affiliated organizations that they are embedded in the ‘traditional’ ethos of Hinduism, they are products of nineteenth- and twentieth-century modernist nationalism and are characterized as India’s own versions of authoritarian, xenophobic and majoritarian religious nationalism. It is argued that the RSS and its characteristic ideology of ordered and disciplined society, bodily control, hierarchy, conformity, and unanimist conceptions of collective Hinduism were formed in opposition to the national movement’s strategies of disobedience, disruption, non-cooperation, equality and freedom. There has been significant debate about whether the RSS and its *parivar* can be considered ‘fascist’. Both

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Chapters 4 and 5 consider aspects of these debates by examining the RSS's and Savarkar's orientation toward Italy and Germany during the 1920s and 1930s.

Chapter 6 provides a descriptive narrative of the formation, growth and successes of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh from the early 1950s, and of the BJP from 1980. This chapter also focuses on the BJP's 'two' founding ideologies, 'integral humanism' and 'Gandhian socialism'. The functionalist ideology of 'integral humanism', formulated by Jana Sangh activist Deendayal Upadhyaya during the 1960s, is critically evaluated, as is the claim that it emerged from authentic Hindu *advaita* traditions. The chapter also considers how aspects of both socialism and Gandhian utopianism had a resonance for Hindu nationalist tendencies, especially in the critically important period of Indira Gandhi's Emergency in the 1970s. The more recent tensions between the BJP's policy of 'calibrated globalization' and the RSS's adherence to 'economic nationalism' are also explored.

Chapter 7 describes the origins of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad in the mid-1960s, and its attempts at the mass mobilisation of Hindu religious communities since the 1980s. The chapter examines the VHP's novel and experimental use of religious symbols, mythologies and practices in order to dramatically transform and politicize Hindu devotional traditions and direct them to concerns with landscape, territory and xenology. The VHP's use of semiotic methods relies on the condensation of a vast and disparate cluster of popular and folk religious meanings onto its chosen political symbols. While religious symbols have their own independent histories of change and development, the emphasis of the chapter is on the novel and synthetic use by the VHP of Hindu religious symbolism. Of significance in both Chapters 6 and 7 are the stated Hindutva intentions of the BJP and the VHP, exemplified their respective election manifestos and 'Hindu agendas' of 1998. It is argued that these have to be taken seriously as declarations of political intent in parliamentary and extra-parliamentary settings and pose a serious danger to India's constitutional secular, democratic and federal status once the parliamentary BJP comes to power without facing the burden of constraining coalitions.

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- He: Your task is accomplished. The Muslim power is destroyed. There is nothing else for you to do. No good can come of needless slaughter.
- Satyananda: The Muslim power has indeed been destroyed, but the dominion of the Hindus has not yet been established. The British still hold Calcutta.
- He: Hindu dominion will not be established now. If you remain at your work, men will be killed to no purpose. Therefore come.
- Satyananda: My Lord, if Hindu dominion is not going to be established, who will rule? Will the Muslim kings return?
- He: No. The English will rule.
- Satyananda: Alas, my mother! I have failed to set you free. Once again you fall into the hands of infidels. Forgive your son. Alas, my mother! Why did I not die on the battlefield!

Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya, *Anandamath*, 1882

### Introduction: Primordialist Conceptions of Indian Nationalism

If the nineteenth century is to be conceived as the period in which varieties of primordialist, ethnic, republican and civic nationalism flourished in Europe, there needs to be a suitable register within which to locate incipient and formative nationalisms under the conditions of colonial and imperial domination. The rise of, and tense relations between, nationalisms and patriotisms in colonial India was formidably complex and their trajectory is often underdetermined by post-Independence nationalist readings which seek to evoke a linear path in which the nationalism of the nineteenth century led inexorably to the liberated independent democratic and secular nation state of the twentieth. In colonized India, various ‘indigenous’ primarily elite and ‘upper’ caste ideas of nation, national belonging and national destiny were certainly set in motion in the nineteenth century. However, post-Independence readings of this earlier period tend to confer a telos onto the development of such nationalisms, whether these are conceived as the signal of modernity’s progress towards secular nationhood, as the continuation of precolonial primordial destinies, or as ‘derivative discourses’ arising from the impact of the former in the recovery of the latter.

Nineteenth century colonized India was subject to complex processes of national, regional and, importantly, linguistic, caste, vernacular and religious elite

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formation. These processes were fuelled by changes in the spatially variegated organization and administration of the colonial economy, urban growth induced by both industrial and mercantile capitalism, a reconfiguration of feudal and caste relations and changes in the military, administrative, legal and educational apparatuses of colonial government (Bayly 1983). These economic and political processes are beyond detailed consideration here. However, the relations between the Indian merchant, industrial, landowner and feudal classes, the political, judicial, administrative, military and civil service elites and the emergent English-educated and especially vernacular intelligentsia neither form a reductive process of nationalist elite formation, nor were these relations pre-given as 'secular'. Of equal importance are apparently unrelated but concomitant processes of religious reorganization and reformation in the ostensibly 'traditional' structures of northern Indian caste Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism. These manifested most powerfully in what are often, and problematically, referred to as the 'reform' or 'revival' movements in northern Indian Hinduism and Islam, and typically located, from the middle of the century, in the towns and cities of the Punjab, Bengal, the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh) and what are now the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat.

Describing the intellectual import of these changes for subsequent formations of secular, religious or regional forms of nationalism is complicated by what may be conceived as 'external' intellectual influences, primarily those from Europe. The task is not simply to demonstrate how European nationalist ideas impinged upon and subsequently shaped varieties of secular or religious nationalism in the midst of deeper economic and social changes in nineteenth century colonial India. Rather, it is to uncover the extraordinary variety of intellectual currents that had moved back and forth between Europe and India since the eighteenth century, transmuting, magnifying, and gaining in importance up to and after the Victorian period. These ideas of nationalism were not uniformly received by the divergent elites in colonial India, nor could they easily or always be separated from patriotic loyalties to Empire among large sections of those elites, nor was there a sharp bifurcation of religious or nationalist sensibilities within them.

In so far as many of these currents had apparently European origins, or were influenced by Western intellectual discourses, nationalisms in colonial India can be conceived as 'derivative discourses' (P. Chatterjee 1986) or as 'catachreses' (Spivak 1993), as an example of 'hybridity' (Bhabha 1994), and indeed were 'invented traditions' (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). However, the use of such currently vogueish designations as if they are explanatory has the cost of a considerable and rather deterministic simplification of the complex relations and deep negotiations between apparently 'indigenous', regional and vernacular influences and apparently 'external' influences, both of which were to lead to religious nationalist movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Indeed,

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the designation of such processes as simply ‘derivative’ or ‘hybrid’ discourses only acquires power once the totality of nominally ‘indigenous’ influences is purged of religious or ‘communal’ significance under what is seen as the imposition of an overarching and often disagreeable ‘foreign’ secular, Western nationalism.

What is now conceived, in post-Nehruvian terms, as the story of the formation of an irreducibly secular nationalism in India, itself the conclusion to a universalizing movement for national liberation or independence, needs thoroughgoing problematization. This is not simply the (rather easily demonstrated) argument that Hindu (or Muslim) religious sensibilities were present or persistent in a national movement that was otherwise and primarily portrayed in the Nehruvian period as committed to secularism. Nor, conversely, is it argued that ‘indigenous’ varieties of Hinduism or a ‘Hindu ethos’ were necessary for or the dominant aspect of the national movement. It is however the argument of this chapter that an overarching process of the interpellation of discovered archaic and primordial Hinduism was a major, significant and before the 1920s often a dominating strand in the national movement such that secularism itself was neither sufficiently interrogated nor adequately developed beyond an elemental, if often strong and principled, commitment to anti-communalism. The combination of anti-communalism and anti-colonialism was, of course, neither equivalent to secularism nor could it form a sufficient ideological and cultural basis for a genuinely secular nation-state or, and more problematically, a ‘secular civil society’. Given its importance, there was an absence of detailed, elaborate and sufficient national discussion of what secularism might mean across both state and civil societies until arguably *after* the Nehruvian period. Hence, the argument that a colonial Western-imposed secular nationalism, the latter viewed as coextensive with taxonomic configurations of religious blocs and communities, was itself responsible for or complicit in the rise of Hindu nationalism is therefore rejected (Nandy 1985, Nandy 1994, Nandy et al. 1995, Madan 1987, Madan 1993, Madan 1997). While advocating a genuine and strong distance from Hindu nationalism, such arguments can also unwittingly reproduce the epistemic resources of the latter. For example, Nandy’s argument in 1983 that ‘the alternative to Hindu nationalism is the peculiar mix of classical and folk Hinduism and the unselfconscious Hinduism by which most Indians, *Hindus as well as non-Hindus*, live’ would find sympathy among those who make similar claims for ‘Hindutva’ (Nandy 1983: 104, emphasis added).

### **The Western Impact**

A key development in the flourishing of nationalist ideologies in Europe in the nineteenth century was a turn towards specifically primordialist ideologies as a basis for modern constitutional nationality defined primarily through a perceived collective ethnic, or to use the language of the time, ‘ethnological’ belonging. The

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association between exclusivist forms of ethnic nationalism and ideologies of primordialism need not have been a necessary one, but frequently was, and had its roots in eighteenth century varieties of nationalist thinking that were to grow in force within Europe during the nineteenth century. However, the impact of these ideas in colonial India after the mid-nineteenth century is complicated by the way the emergence of these ideas in Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was shaped by a converse engagement with the discovery of archaic Hinduism (McCully 1966, Marshall 1970, Edwardes 1971, Schwab 1984, Halbfass 1988, Trautmann 1997, Dalmia 1997).

The development of primordialist thinking in colonial India after the mid-nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century was inextricably related to processes of Indian elite caste formation. While regional nationalisms and local *patries* had existed in India before the colonial period (Bayly 1998), an overarching framework that served to provide ideological coherence for the idea of a primordial nationalism, primarily defined through an invention of archaic Vedic Hinduism, mainly gained force from the nineteenth century. 'Primordialism' here refers to the cultivation of primordialist thinking that gave shape and coherence to ideas of 'national unity' framed through discourses of archaic Hindu civilization, and which was instrumental in the concomitant development of the power of regional, vernacular and caste elites. Hence the term 'primordial' refers to an ideologically derived grid of intelligibility within which nationalism was understood, rather than to the linear development of an essential and extant ethnic unity among pre-given populations of India. While much ideological work was undertaken to give shape to nineteenth century Hindu nationalism, these projects were also divergent in locating the foundational content for their primordial nationalism. However, a key aspect to these projects was the idea of linear temporality, often linked to evolutionist ideas, in which viewing the past in linear terms was the first step towards imagining an overintegrated national future. If nomenclature and taxonomy, functionalism and positivism were epistemologically important for these projects, perhaps the definitive themes were new: vitalism, evolution and telos, palingenesis, survival and degeneration, 'social uplift' and 'social hygiene', spirituality, enumeration, a universalizing mission, and ideas of ethnology and race. As discussed in subsequent chapters, the way that apparently unproblematic narratives of 'upliftment' and 'hygiene' were inextricably linked to strong themes of religious 'upliftment' and purity betrayed a congruence between imperial and Hindu nationalist civilizing discourses.

Such ideas crossed both secular and religious forms of nationalism in nineteenth-century colonial India. Indeed, the period from the mid-nineteenth century until the turn of the century witnessed the flourishing of diverse intellectual projects preoccupied with the discovery of primordial Hindu belonging. To unproblematically categorize these as nationalistic or patriotic, within a milieu where

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patriotism often meant allegiance to Empire, is difficult. However they created the intellectual matrices for the kinds of Hindu nationalist thinking that were to follow towards the end of the nineteenth century. A definitive aspect of these ideas was their formation through a process of appropriation and interrogation of, as well as negotiation with ‘Orientalist’ and colonial scholarship related to the origins, languages and religions of the inhabitants of India. Here, ‘Orientalism’ is important not for its (allegedly) hermetic imagination of the non-West, but because of the complicated, indeterminate effects it had on those who were its willing or otherwise subjects. The dominant ‘Orientalist’ influence was inevitably British and in the English language, ranging from the eighteenth-century work of Charles Wilkins, William Jones and the Asiatic Society of Bengal, John Holwell, Nathaniel Halhed and Alexander Hamilton, through to the nineteenth-century work of Monier Monier-Williams and the British-German Indologist, Frederich Max Muller. However, it is important not to underestimate the influence of German ‘Romantic’ writers, from Herder, Frederich and August Wilhelm von Schlegel, to Goethe and Arthur Schopenhauer, nor to understate the exchanges between Indian writers and non-British Indologists and philologists (Halbfass 1988: 218). The idea that India was the cradle of all civilization (Voltaire, Herder, Kant, Frederich Schlegel among many others) or the original homeland of humanity (Schlegel, Schelling, even Hegel), that ‘Hinduism’ represented humanity’s primal philosophy (Herder, Schlegel), or that Hinduism offered redemption for contemporary humanity (Schopenhauer), even that ‘humanism’ itself could be conceived as resulting from ‘Hindu values’ (Herder), as well as the associated ideas that privileged a transcendental cultural epistemology of a ‘national soul’ above any determination of the state (variously Herder, Fichte, Renan among others) were widely disseminated in Europe (Halbfass 1988, Bhatt 1999). What precise intellectual processes were at work in Arthur Schopenhauer’s rejection of the veracity of Rammohan Roy’s rendition of the Upanishads? Schopenhauer’s own philosophy, written mostly in German and so, by and large, unavailable to the intellectual elites in India (who would have read and spoken vernacular Indian languages, English and possibly Persian) was conveyed by P. Deussen through lectures in Bombay and exchanges with Vivekananda during the 1890s (Halbfass 1988: 133, 239). What indeed are we to make of the claim that the *ethical* interpretation of the Upanishadic *ghosana*, ‘*tat tvam asi!*’ acquired an importance in India, and a place seemingly at the core of *advaita vedantic* philosophy after it had been so interpreted by German philosophers (ibid: 240–2)? Conversely, what was the basis of the popularity among Indian elites of the curious proposition by Auguste Comte that his Positive Philosophy offered brahmins the means to ‘free their theocratic country’ from the foreign ‘yoke’ of Christianity and Islam (Flora 1993)?

R. C. Majumdar’s view that Indians knew little of their history in the early nineteenth century, prior to the impact of Western scholarship, may seem brusque

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(1971a: 290). However, the impact of English-language texts documenting, and English-language education diffusing, discoveries and speculations in philology and archaeology was nevertheless monumental. From the mid-nineteenth century, but especially after the early 1870s, this was evident in the conscious cultivation of the ‘memory’, indeed affective remembrance of India’s archaic Hindu past by numerous societies and writers, in the burgeoning print media (newspapers, periodicals and journals), by nationalist and religious leaders and by British colonial officers and administrators (Marshall 1970) and Western religious societies, such as the Theosophists. This resulted in a glorification of India’s archaic Hindu past. India’s ancient civilization was demonstrated to be as old as that of the ancient Greeks and Romans and, it was speculated and then believed, may have been the progenitor of the latter. Its knowledge and philosophies demonstrated the superiority of its religion and culture. Its religious texts illustrated not simply the religious and (frequently) ‘racial’ unity of its past, but pre-eminently its *national* unity, as *Aryavarta* (the land of the Aryans) or *Bharatvarsha* (the kingdom of Bharat). The Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas and the Epics illustrated that ancient Hindu civilization possessed not simply a cultural and moral greatness, but a highly developed ethical system, polity, civil society and social formation.

A key epistemological component of this intellectual discovery concerned a comparison between the vitalism, dynamism and resilience of the ancient Hindus and what was perceived as the degeneration and stagnancy of contemporary Hindu society. Conversely patriotism and nationalism were seen as the mechanisms by which Hindu society would be reinvigorated. Indeed, much can be written about how the Hindu trope of civilizational or societal degeneration, and a consequently necessary ‘vitalism’, travelled back and forth from Europe to India from the 1840s right through to the 1930s. It is also worth noting that, in this nineteenth-century linearist paradigm of Hindu glory, degradation and invigoration, there is by and large an absence of the view that Islam was responsible for the alleged degradation of Hinduism during the medieval period, or of the view that this linear history was driven forward by a logic of Hindu war against foreign, Muslim invaders. These two elements were written more forcefully into the imagined ‘history’ of Hindus towards the first decade of the twentieth century and were to become dominant in V. D. Savarkar’s *Hindutva – or who is a Hindu?* ([1923] 1989).

### **Aryanism and Nationalism**

One aspect of both ‘Orientalist’ scholarship and primordialist nationalist thinking concerned the invention of Vedic Aryanism as the ideological basis for either Indian or Hindu nationality (Thapar 1992, Bayly 1995, Bayly 1999). (It will be seen in later chapters how varieties of Aryanism continue to remain important for contemporary Hindu nationalism.) A key aspect of this was the discovery and

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consolidation of Vedic Aryanism in the eighteenth and nineteenth century by British and German disciplines of comparative philology, comparative mythology and, subsequently, comparative ethnology and their complex diffusion in colonial India.

The 'Aryan myth' in Europe was consequent upon eighteenth-century discoveries of the philological affinities between archaic Latin, Greek, Sanskrit and Avestan, and between these and other languages. Convergences were also discovered between the mythologies and deities of ancient Greeks and Indians; hence the hypothesis of a common linguistic origin. The common language group was variously named 'Indo-Germanic', 'Indo-European', 'Japhetic', 'Mediterranean', and, by Friedrich Schlegel, 'Aryan'. The word 'Aryan' was a corruption of the word which occurs in the Rig Veda as 'arya', and in the Zend Avesta as 'airiia'. The word also occurs frequently in later Buddhist and Hindu texts. The Rig Veda and the Avesta are identified as the oldest existing literature created by *arya*-speaking groups, and hence have had particular importance for tendencies with an investment in Aryanism.

The idea of a common linguistic origin was rapidly supplemented by epistemologically separate hypotheses of an original people and an original geographical homeland. This unwarranted equivalence between the burgeoning 'sciences' of comparative philology, ethnology and mythology was fuelled by a considerable scholarly and dilettantist literature during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, speculating on the *Urheimat*, *Ursprache*, *Urvolk* and 'Urmythus' of the Indo-European language family (Mosse 1966, Poliakov 1974, Schwab 1984, Trautmann 1997).

In the late nineteenth century, the British-German Indologist, Friedrich Max Muller, following Schlegel, popularized 'the technical term Aryan' to refer to the Indo-European language family, his view being that the term 'Aryan', because it was of foreign origin, could not be used for the purposes of ethnic or national chauvinism in Europe. By this time, the Rig Veda had been interpreted by European writers as demonstrating that a powerful warrior 'race', Aryans, had entered India and conquered 'the dark-skinned, stub-nosed' original inhabitants, the *dasyus*. The Rig Veda does have a distinct xenology of selves (such as some *arya*-speaking tribes) and others (the *dasyus*, the *mlecchas*, those who speak other languages, worship other Gods, have other customs, and indeed other *arya*-speaking tribes). The furious speculations about the 'original Aryan homeland' in Europe during the late nineteenth century exasperated Muller, who concluded that the homeland was 'somewhere in Asia'. However, the idea of an Aryan myth had travelled widely in Europe and various original 'homelands' were proposed, including India, Germany, the Caucasus, Eire, Persia, the Baltics, and 'Atlantis'. In the hands of first Arthur Schopenhauer and then Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Wagner and the Bayreuth Circle, 'Aryanism' became a vicious anti-semitism, reflecting an earlier Enlightenment and Romantic philosophical polarization between the

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Hindu-Buddhist and the Judeo-Christian. The interpretation of the Rig Veda using the concepts of 'race' that were flourishing in nineteenth century France, Britain and Germany has been comprehensively rejected (Poliakov 1974, Trautmann 1997 for an excellent recent discussion).

For important intellectual strands in nineteenth century colonial India, an archaic civilizational Vedic Aryanism was also, if differently, important and became virtually a 'commonsense', an unquestioned backdrop, that provided a linear paradigm for what a future nationalism was to be. Aryanism also requires situating within a range of other reconstructive projects of regional, ethnic, caste or religious belonging that could considerably modify Aryanist thinking for more limited, vernacular or colloquial purposes. Aryanism in colonial India did not necessarily have the same kinds of association with 'race' that it primarily had in nineteenth-century Europe, nor does it now necessarily have the same connotations in India that it does in the post-Holocaust West.

Both race and Aryanism in colonial India signified a wide range of meanings and forms of methodological understanding that can be seen to constitute a distinctive nineteenth-century pedagogical field with its own thematic and lexical ramifications that were irreducible to, but were in negotiation and argument with those associated with the burgeoning racial Aryanism in France, Britain and Germany in the nineteenth century. Individuals as diverse as Vivekananda, Keshab Chandra Sen of the Brahmo Samaj, the Bengal novelist and writer Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya, the Bombay judge, social reformer and nationalist Mahadev Govind Ranade, the social reformer Har Bilas Sarda, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the 'Extremist' nationalist leader, the fiery revolutionary nationalist Aurobindo Ghose, Congress leader Annie Besant and the founder of the Arya Samaj, Dayananda Saraswati, employed conceptions of Aryanism within their various ideals of patriotism and loyalty to the monarch, religious reinvigoration, or reformist or revolutionary nationalism (Leopold 1970). The term 'Aryan' was widely used, including by national leaders such as M. K. Gandhi. Just as Frederick Max Muller had articulated the visit to England of Rammohan Roy as the 'return' of a lost Aryan cousin, for Sen, Aryanism demonstrated the patriotic unity of the British and Indians, cousins lost in antiquity who had, in the colonial period, rediscovered each other (Rothermund 1986, Trautmann 1997). For Besant self rule was to be the prelude to an international Aryan federation. Conversely, for Ranade, Ghose and Tilak, the European racial connotations of Aryan supremacy, and for the latter two the idea that Indians subjugated by the British could share a common descent, was anathema. For them, as for Dayananda and Sarda, Aryans were not necessarily racially constituted and were frequently characterized through a moral and dynamic propensity that was their genius. Nevertheless, for them, it was in India that Aryans had either originated or achieved the pinnacle of their culture and civilization which they had then bestowed on the world. There is an understated link between the

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universalizing conception of Hinduism as providing salvation, knowledge or redemption for all humanity, and the origin of this conception during the nineteenth-century fascination with Aryans as a world-dynamic force. Indeed, it could be argued that the nineteenth-century ‘worldling’ of Hinduism was inextricably related to such fascination. It is also worth noting that, even where the strictly racial or white supremacist connotations of ‘Aryan’ were rejected, a powerful xenological conception nevertheless remained.

The ethnologist, anthropometrist and Government of India Census Officer, Herbert Hope Risley had applied a racial Aryanist paradigm during the nineteenth century to ‘explain’ the existence of various castes, tribal groups and regional populations in India (Risley 1903, 1908); he portrayed dynamic Aryan man in India using a photograph of an aged, hirsute and fairly obese brahmin sadhu (plate XXV in Risley 1915). In the 1870s, he even attempted to describe India’s political movements on the basis of differentiated caste-racial affiliations. This would, of course, have been disagreeable to Indian thinkers who were aiming to cultivate national unity. Moreover, Risley’s work was also dominated by a racial supremacism that inevitably favoured the ‘white’ races. However, despite the rejection of this kind of racial Aryanism, an important characteristic of many Indian appropriations of a Vedic Aryanist paradigm was their thorough elision of populations that could not be seen to have shared in the fruits of ancient Hindu civilization: the tribals, the ‘untouchables’ and the shudra castes. Some writers, including Ranade, seemed to view southern Indians (‘Dravidians’) and tribal populations as inferior to or conquered by the chosen people or race of Hindu Aryans (Leopold 1970: 281). However, there is by and large either an instructive silence about these populations among other nineteenth-century Indian writers or a view that accommodates them as degenerate or errant wanderers from an original Aryan Vedism. The silence itself could betray a widespread and commonsense nineteenth-century view that considered brahmins as intellectually, morally, culturally or ‘ethnologically’ superior to the shudras, and the Aryan *dvija* (‘twice-born’ castes of brahmins, kshatriyas and vaishyas) as superior to the non-Aryans (Anaryans). As we see in the next chapter, it was exactly these populations of shudras, tribals and ‘untouchables’ that became the targets for a reinvigorated turn-of-century nationalist Hinduism that claimed primordial ownership of and authority over them.

This chapter examines three main developments in the nineteenth century within which varieties of primordialist thinking were to gain prominence: Dayananda Saraswati’s Arya Samaj movement, the Bengal ‘Renaissance’ and its instinctive combination of Hinduism with nationalism, and Bal Gangadhar Tilak’s conflation of regional Maharashtrian nationalism with a reconfigured and politicized martial-devotional Hinduism. These three northern Indian examples were divergent in their articulation of Hinduism with nationalism. However, their fabrication and configuration of archaic primordialism is illustrative of the themes highlighted above.

## **The Arya Samaj**

The Arya Samaj, founded by Dayananda Saraswati (1824–83) in Bombay in 1875 and Lahore in 1877, is sometimes described as the first modern ‘fundamentalist’ movement to have emerged out of Hinduism (on the Arya Samaj and Dayananda, see Dayananda [1908] 1970, Lajpat Rai 1915, Ghose 1925, Upadhyaya 1939, Pareek 1973, Jones 1976). However, more usually, the Arya Samaj is viewed as one example of an overarching nineteenth century ‘Hindu Renaissance’ or ‘revival’, a neo-Hinduism, or a ‘semitized Hinduism’. The analytical languages used to describe this period frequently use categorizations and dichotomies such as Hindu ‘revivalists’, ‘reformists’, ‘traditionalists’ and ‘orthodoxy’, these strictly religious taxonomies often differentiated from those used to describe nationalist movements and tendencies. Much of this analytical language requires problematization, at least in so far as an analysis of emergent nationalist strands is concerned. The nineteenth century certainly gave rise to a variety of what are often called ‘Neo-Hindu’ strands, but a focus on strictly religious reformation can elide a grander process in which the thinkability of nationalism for some was primarily figured from within a new Hindu religious and ethnicized framework such that, by the turn of the century, nationalism and Hinduism could be spoken of as synonymous, even by tendencies – Bipinchandra Pal is a good example here – that were seemingly *opposed to* sectarian communalism and Hindu majoritarianism. Indeed, what Vasudha Dalmia (1997) has been termed ‘the nationalization of Hindu traditions’ can considerably modify evaluation of the equivalence of ‘secularism’ with anti-communalism both within the Indian national movement and before and after Independence.

The name ‘Arya Samaj’ translates as ‘The Society of Aryans’ or, in contemporary usage, as ‘The Society of Nobles’. The *oscillation* in the meaning of the term *arya* from indicating an ‘ethnological’ or ‘racial’ concept to indicating a quality of noble virtuousness is worth noting. Dayananda believed that the Aryans were the original human inhabitants of the world, living first in Tibet and then, after separating from the ignoble, unvirtuous, lowly and ignorant *dasyus*, moving to uninhabited India or *Aryavarta*, the best nation in the world. The Aryans then established an empire that ruled the world until the advent of the Mahabharata war. This idea of primordial humanity arising first in Tibet and migrating to India and then the rest of the world was prevalent in Europe in the *eighteenth* century and was accepted, by among others, Immanuel Kant (Poliakov 1971:186). The quality that defined the Aryans, according to Dayananda, was two fold. The *arya* was one who had knowledge, virtue and was noble, and the *arya* was one who worshipped only *one* God and had accepted the Vedic religion (Dayananda 1970). This ideal of virtue, knowledge and especially nobility is not strictly a racial conception, but nevertheless has strong territorial, environmental and xenological

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aspects; not everyone, especially those from outside the borders of India could, in Dayananda's conception, become 'Aryan'. There was also a strongly environmentalist component in his *Satyarth Prakash* in which the physical geography of India, as the best nation of the Aryans, led to their distinctive qualities and attributes of 'nobility' and 'virtuousness'. If those qualities appear to be empty signifiers, they were not innocent terms and were especially important, both within and outside Europe, in cultivating hierarchical conceptions of hereditary privilege and nobility during both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Dayananda's social and political philosophy was predicated on the pristine and completed truth of some of the four Vedas, and sections of later Hindu texts that he asserted were in accordance with the Vedas. The Vedas were conceived by him to represent the literal word of God revealed to the ancient Aryans (an idea very similar to Friedrich Schlegel's earlier imagination of ancient India). This emulative idea of the Vedas as constituting 'the book' of the Hindus was supplemented by another conception of the Vedas as constituting the only true religion of humanity. This universalizing conception of Hinduism, the 'worldling of Hinduism', was influenced by some important strands of European romantic thinking and cannot be seen as unproblematically Indian in origin (Bhatt 1999). However, it has come to represent a potent invented tradition that combines a view of Hinduism's archaic and primeval nature with that of the first ever revelation to humanity (Dayananda 1970). This idea of Hinduism as constituting both a universal and a primordial revelation for all humanity has frequently been the mobilizing core of Hindu supremacism and performs considerable overarching ideological work.

Interestingly enough, Dayananda privileged the relatively ritualistic Samaveda (though the Rig Veda was by then known to be older and more authoritative) and rejected the authority and truth of the Puranas, Epics and Bhagavad Gita. Of importance here is that Dayananda rejected in its entirety the vast number of Hindu texts that were apprehended as 'sacred' within popular or devotional Hinduism. Indeed, he considered many of these texts as erroneous and responsible for the 'historical degradation' of Hinduism. This textual purging and simplification consequently meant that Dayananda rejected all conceptions of avatar and god mythology that dominated Hindu devotional traditions. This was a rejection of the beliefs and faiths of the dominant devotional movements centred on Rama, Krishna, Shiva and the goddess. Dayananda, while himself a brahmin, also rejected the privileged and unique role of brahmins in interpreting and expounding the Vedas. He vigorously opposed any form of idolatry, caste restrictions and untouchability, child marriage, and restrictions on the education of women. His ascerbic attacks on especially brahminic, popular or sectarian Hinduism, as well as on Christianity and Islam, were important both for distancing his Arya philosophy from these religions, and at the same time for emulating and modifying certain of their aspects. Dayananda believed that the Aryan fire ritual (*yagnas* or

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sacrificial fire rituals are widely practiced in many forms of traditional Hinduism) was one of few authentic Aryan Vedic practices remaining in Hinduism, whereas other Hindu rituals and sectarian practices were corruptions of the original revelation. Hence the fire ritual became central to Arya Samaj religious practice. Similarly, the idea of revelation and the literal word of God embodied in a text (accurately speaking, itself foreign to Hinduism), the infallibility of sacred books, a singular already written truth and one organizational structure ('the Vedic Church') were seemingly borrowed from the 'semitic' religions.

However, in vociferously rejecting *jati* (sub-caste), Dayananda nevertheless defended *varnashramadharma* ('the natural law of the four castes') and *varna vyavastha* ('the system of caste: brahmin, kshatriya, vaishya, shudra'), arguing that this functionally ideal method of social organization existed in the Vedic period and referred to the *non-hereditary* social classification of individuals based on their merits and actions, qualities or propensities. This was another important Arya Samaj invention that had an ambiguous basis in Hindu scriptures and which continues to strongly inform the contemporary Hindutva movement. Dayananda identified the corruption of the original caste system, and the degradation of Hinduism itself as occurring in the historical period documented in the *Mahabharata*, and in particular the war between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. The *Mahabharata* hence both documented this original degradation of Hinduism and, because of its sacred status within many contemporary Hindu and especially brahminic traditions, legitimized and enforced this degradation. Hence, Dayananda identified the causes of the degradation of Hindu civilization within Hinduism itself. (Interestingly, this particular theme was also prominent in both British and German Orientalism, and perhaps best stated by Friedrich Schlegel, who really set the paradigm for this in the early nineteenth century when he wrote of the 'slow and gradual declension' of India, which followed the original divine revelation. Much can indeed be said about how nineteenth-century Indian civilizational chronographies, and their epistemologies of time, were in debate with earlier European conceptions.)

Dayananda claimed for himself a revelatory mantle and believed that only he could authentically interpret the Vedas and those texts that accorded with Vedic teachings. His rejection of the exclusive role of the brahmins as interpreters of the Vedas did not mean that any other interpretations were valid or possible, and he placed considerable strictures on what an authoritative interpretation could be. Dayananda's ferocious attacks on brahminic, traditional and vernacular Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity were to earn him numerous enemies. However, of importance here was the specific and sustained attack by Dayananda and his followers on brahminism itself. Much of the early Arya Samaj literature, while inevitably written by brahmins, identifies other brahmins and the 'ecclesiastical' structures and practices of brahminic priesthood as responsible for

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the corruption of the original Vedic religion (Dayananda 1970, Lajpat Rai 1915). It is because of such views that some Christians and many British colonial administrators and governors often viewed the Arya Samaj as a positive movement for 'uplift' and reform (Lajpat Rai 1915: 36–50), albeit a movement that, for some, did not go far enough and accept the truth of Christianity (for example Lillingston 1901).

Dayananda, primarily because of his linguistic limitations, is typically characterized as a distinctly 'indigenous', if unorthodox Hindu reformer who Keshab Chandra Sen had attempted, unsuccessfully, to 'Westernize'. However, Joan Leopold has highlighted his direct and long-standing engagement with a range of Western writers and movements. These were not simply the fairly numerous Christian clerics and missionaries, as well as British officials, who met him, debated with him and reported his teachings within India and England, but included meeting with the British Sanskritist Monier Williams in 1876 and his then assistant, Shyamji Krishnavarma, meetings with the Indologists George Buhler and George Thibault, and extensive, if sometimes bitter, engagement with the Theosophists, including Olcott and Blavatsky herself. Dayananda was acquainted with the writings of a range of European Indologists, including Max Muller, Muir and Monier-Williams (Leopold 1970: 288–9). The Theosophical Society under Blavatsky and Olcott was already established in the US, Britain and India by the mid-1870s and was extremely influential in promoting a worldview based on Aryanist paradigms. Fascinatingly, from the mid-1870s until the late 1880s, there were extensive negotiations between Blavatsky and Olcott, representing the society, and Dayananda and the early Arya Samaj so as to merge the two bodies into a single organization. Olcott indeed viewed Dayananda as his own guru, and for a short period the Theosophists and the Arya Samaj were seen by the former and many members of the latter as a single society. Why these attempts at merging eventually failed is instructive. Whereas most Theosophists considered Americans, Europeans and Indians as 'Aryans', Dayananda rejected this for his view that only the inhabitants of *Aryavarta* ('India') could be so designated; and while most Theosophists were rejecting the monotheism, textual infallibility and clerical power of Christianity, Dayananda was seen as emphasizing precisely those aspects within his Vedic 'Church' and religion (Leopold 1970: 290–3). While Theosophy itself both diminished in influence and became occultist, and would have had much more to gain from merger of the two organizations than the Arya Samaj would, aspects of *its* version of Aryanism were to emerge in Congress and in some of the home rule leagues under the influence of the British feminist and Theosophist Annie Besant. A specifically Austrian and German version of the Theosophy movement ('Ariosophy') was later to provide much of the symbolic material for National Socialism (Mosse 1966, Goodrick-Clarke 1985).

The main activities of Dayananda and the early Arya Samaj centred on often large public disputes with brahmin priests. The Sanatan Dharm movement, formed

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earlier to defend Hindu orthodoxy and brahminism was quickly to become the Arya Samaj's main Hindu intellectual and indeed physical adversary (Jones 1989: 107–8); the importance of the Sanatanists, as well as the nineteenth-century Hindi language and cow-protection agitations, in supplying many of the political agendas and religious-political symbols for Hindu nationalism deserve fuller treatment than can be provided here (see Dalmia 1997). The Samaj's consistent and bitter attacks on brahminist orthodoxy and orthopraxy, while reconfiguring a simpler and 'purer' religious practice based on its interpretation of the Vedas, would require reconciliation in a later period. The tensions between the simplified formal rituals of invented religious nationalism and both the 'ecclesiastical' and vernacular practices of Hinduisms continue to exist today and in many senses provide the epistemic ground for varieties of religious, caste and regional nationalist thinking. However, in its formative period, the Arya Samaj's strong stress on nationalism and patriotism attracted many members of the emergent, English educated and typically 'upper' caste sections, some of whom had been disillusioned by both earlier reform movements (such as the Brahmo Samaj, which had split into three disputing factions by the last decades of the nineteenth century) and what was perceived as the backwardness of Hindu orthodoxy and superstition in the face of colonial or Christian 'social and ethical modernism' (Jones 1976).

After Dayananda's death (rumoured within the Arya Samaj to have been the result of poisoning by a Muslim concubine of his patron, a Maharajah) the first generation of Arya Samaj recruits expanded their *pracharak* ('preaching' or propagation) activities, especially in the Punjab, the north western Provinces and (what is now) Maharashtra. One major innovation of the Samaj, seen as another emulative strategy, was the *shuddhi* or conversion ritual. This 'purification' ritual was applied by the Arya Samaj's *shuddhi sabhas* (conversion councils) from the 1880s onwards. Initially *shuddhi* was used to convert to Hinduism elite *individuals* who had become Christians, as well as some 'lower' caste and 'untouchable' individuals, but it rapidly became applied to the collective conversion of *groups* whose 'ancestors had originally been Hindus.' This *shuddhi* innovation (and, arguably, the *pracharak* structure) did not have traditional precedents within Hinduism, and was to become extremely important for Hindutva organizations such as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) a century later during their *paravartan* ('homecoming') campaigns among syncretic Muslims, Christians and tribal groups. It is a moot point, both in understanding the Arya Samaj in the 1890s and the VHP in the 1990s, how an unrepresentative, parochial, minority group, professing a strikingly anomalous ideology and developed entirely outside the institutions of traditional Hinduism, could believe that it had the legitimacy, authority and competence to speak for and act on behalf of Hinduism. The Arya Samaj was born under conditions defined by such a model: colonialism was predicated on the ideology that a minority of the population, the British, could claim, hold

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ownership over, regulate and administer the lives of the vast majority according to its normative rules of power, domination and exploitation.

### *The Demographics of Christianity and Hinduism*

One of the key factors that influenced the institution of the *shuddhi* ritual by the Arya Samaj was the colonial census which (from 1871) regularly demonstrated an increasing proportion of the *Christian* population of India and a decreasing Hindu one. Significantly, prior to 1911, Arya Samajists, had demanded that they should not be categorized in the colonial census as ‘Hindus’, following the earlier Arya rejection of the label ‘Hindu’. Subsequently, the Arya Samaj urged their members to report a Hindu religious belief. The Censuses of 1901 and 1911 were also extremely important in fuelling a militant Hindu nationalist idiom of Hinduism under *demographic* threat from Christianity and Islam in the early part of the twentieth century. This complicates linear understandings of Muslims as the pre-eminent ‘other’ for Hindu nationalism over the last century. The key *emulative* strategy of many nineteenth-century Hindu ‘reform’ and ‘revivalist’ movements was undertaken initially in relation and opposition to Christianity, rather than Islam. This is not at all to diminish the anti-Islamic activities of the Arya Samaj, but to situate more centrally the multifaceted importance that Christianity held for these movements. The anti-Islamic activities of Arya Samaj proselytizers were certainly important and consequential, and were to lead to extensive Hindu-Muslim violence in Punjab in the late 1890s. This was sparked by an Arya Samaj tract published in 1892 that portrayed Islam as a sexually perverse and corrupt religion based on war, violence, theft and deception. This monological view of Islam was based on colonial and Orientalist pedagogy and recurred in various forms until the present period. However, the conversion threat was not primarily or always located against what was seen as Islamic proselytizing but against Christian preaching and conversions. The Arya Samaj also focused on the activities of the Ahmaddiyas, a sect disowned as heretical by the dominant Deobandi and Barelwi Sunni traditions in northern colonial India. In this sense, much of the language, propaganda and thematics of the threat to Hinduism from Christian conversions that was mobilized by the Hindutva movement during the 1990s was already fully developed in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The substitution of Christianity by Islam followed most clearly from the first decade of the twentieth century, mainly after the formation of Hindu Sabhas (societies) and the Hindu Sangathan movement, though even the latter were to focus squarely on Christianity. While studies of this period have tended to concentrate on the constitution of Islam as a threat, hence identifying a monologic discourse that continues to the present period, it seems important to situate the complexities in early Hindu nationalist discourse within which Christianity was considered a pre-eminent threat. Similarly, and

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notwithstanding the importance of the nineteenth-century Urdu-Hindi language controversies and burgeoning cow-protection agitations in forming politicized anti-Muslim constituencies, of importance, especially in the period after 1905 and into the 1920s (when ‘Islam’ was seen as the dominant threat), is how British colonialism was conceived not as political domination and economic exploitation but because of its potential conversion of ‘Hindus’ to Christianity.

#### *Fractures in the Arya Samaj*

The Arya Samaj established several educational institutions and colleges for Hindu women. This reflected Dayananda’s stress on educating Hindu women and preventing their conversion to Christianity. The Samaj also established a network of successful schools (*gurukuls*) and colleges. Of these, the Dayananda Anglo-Vedic College in Lahore, headed by Lala Hans Raj, and the subsequent Gurukula Kangri formed in Hardwar during 1900–2 by Lala Munshi Ram (Swami Shraddhanand) were the most important. The Arya Samaj educational system was very successful and provided an avenue for aspiring members of the emergent middle classes towards a modern education and a purified Arya world view that could combine simple religious practice and a self-avowedly depoliticized and loyal nationalism.

The Arya Samaj was continually riven by numerous extraordinarily bitter disputes and factions. It was precisely the success of the Dayananda Anglo-Vedic College that created one major fracture within the Samaj. This was between supporters of Hans Raj (the ‘Cultured’ or the ‘College’ party) and Munshi Ram (the ‘Mahatmas’ or the ‘Gurukula’ or ‘Radical’ faction). The dispute between the factions ostensibly concerned the curriculum of the Anglo-Vedic College, with the Munshi Ram faction demanding its radicalization – the teaching of ‘Vedic’ rather than ‘Western’ science, the prioritization of Sanskrit teaching, acceptance of strict vegetarianism, among other demands (on the disputes, see Lajpat Rai 1915, Shraddhanand 1961, Jones 1976).

However, the disputes reflected a deeper problem about the status and interpretation of Dayananda’s teachings. There were two layers to this. Dayananda claimed the Vedas to be infallible, complete and universally relevant; similarly, all knowledge could in principle be derived from them. However, within the Arya Samaj, Dayananda’s own teachings, especially his *The Light of Truth (Satyarth Prakash)*, Dayananda 1908), were also considered infallible and complete by some factions and individuals. The College faction withdrew from the Arya Samaj in 1893 and established separate ritual gatherings. However, individuals from both factions were to become important in the further development of Arya ideology into one of Hindu supremacism. The political trajectories of two figures – Lajpat Rai and Munshi Ram (Swami Shraddhanand) – early representatives of both

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factions are explored in the next chapter in order to draw out the complex influences of Hindu nationalist thinking within and outside Congress and the national movement. The impact of neo-Arya ideology, and in particular its instinctive religious nationalism, was to be extraordinary and wide-ranging in the twentieth century, despite the fact that the original movement which gave rise to it was both uncharacteristic and parochial.

### **The ‘Bengal Renaissance’**

A different movement, revolutionary nationalism in colonial India, is located in the growth of a regional, vernacular intelligentsia in Bengal in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and the subsequent spread of nationalist ideologies and networks in the aftermath of the Partition of Bengal in 1905. However, after the mid-nineteenth century, especially among some key figures within the ‘Bengal Renaissance’, there was a confluence of Hindu cultural nationalist ideas with those of Indian nationalism. These developments occurred in the aftermath of the two consecutive splits in the original Brahma Samaj founded in Calcutta in 1828 by Rammohan Roy. The first split in 1850, led by Debendranath Tagore (1815–1905), was ostensibly based on a rejection of Vedic authority and processes of ‘internal’ rational reform within Hinduism that had been initiated by Roy. Tagore promoted instead forms of customary Hinduism while arguing that intuitive knowledge as well as rationality should form the basis of the Samaj. The second breakaway in 1866 was orchestrated by the radical reformer Keshab Chandra Sen (1838–84) who had tried, to put it crudely here, to ‘Christianize’ Hinduism. This left Debendranath’s group, the ‘Adi’ (original) Brahma Samaj, arguing for the authority and supremacy of Hinduism against Sen’s zeal for ‘Christianity’. Of significance is that the various disputes in the Brahma Samaj, and arguments about the specific contributions of Hinduism in relation to Christianity, led to exclusivist conceptions of ‘Hindu nationalism’ (Sen 1993: 29).

Two of Debendranath’s close associates, Rajnarain Basu (Raj Narayan Bose) 1826–99 and Nabagopal Mitra (1840–94) were instrumental in promoting in Bengal some of the earliest ideas of nationalism based on Hindu superiority and exclusivity. The stamp of Hinduism, conceived as ancient, primordial and foundational, onto an incipient regional nationalism relied firmly on British Orientalist research into the antiquity of India (Majumdar 1960). These developments took place within an elite Bengali milieu in which the status of (aspects of) Christianity were contrasted with a Hinduism, which, among these same elites, was already unsettled because of the earlier fractious disputes within the Brahma Samaj: which ‘Hinduism’, Vedic, Upanishadic or Puranic was to acquire prominence for nationalism? Of similar importance was a long-standing controversy, still of political relevance today, about whether Hinduism had the capacity or resources for

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universal ethics of the kind allegedly emergent in either Christianity or Western secular philosophical humanism. A resolution of sorts to both these debates was later provided during the famous controversy in 1882 between Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya and the Scottish clergyman Dr William Hastie. The latter's attack on 'Hindu idolatry' was countered by Bankim's 'cultural' view of Hinduism in which the believer had undertaken to apprehend an idol as holy not because it was believed to be so, but because the believer, the latter already articulated by Bankim's in the language of ethical humanism, had 'made a contract with his own heart for the sake of culture and discipline' to treat the latter as an image of God (Flora 1993).

In 1866, the same year as Sen formed his breakaway 'Bharatvarsiya' Brahmo Samaj, Rajnarain wrote a 'Prospectus of a society for the promotion of national feeling among the educated natives of Bengal' (see Ghatak 1991: 35, see also Ispahani 1970, Majumdar 1971). By 1872, Rajnarain was promoting an exclusive Hindu nationalism based on what he perceived to be the superiority of Hindu religion and culture (*Hindu Dharmer Sresthata*), contrasting the latter with Christianity and 'European civilization'. The Hindus had, he said, forgotten their glorious past. Paraphrasing Milton, he foresaw

the noble and puissant Hindu nation rousing herself after sleep, and rushing headlong towards progress with divine prowess. I see this rejuvenated nation again illumining the world by her knowledge, spirituality and culture, and the glory of the Hindu nation again spreading over the whole world. (Basu, quoted in Majumdar 1971: 295-6)

In a later text, *The Aged Hindu's Hope (Vridhdha Hindur Asha, 1886)*, Rajnarain made clear that his Hindu Mahasamiti and the 'Hindu nation' could not have a place for Muslims. While Muslims were free to form their own societies, nationality was to be based on Narain's conception of an Upanishadic Brahmo-oriented religion (the latter based on opposing an intermediary between the human and the Divine, defending a modified idolatry and defending a 'Vedic' conception of caste). The Mahasamiti's aim was to unite all Hindus under a concept of Hindu nation based on Hindu religion, customs and 'memory' of ancient glories. This nationalism precluded unity with Muslims since their religion and traditions were conceived as different. The flag of the Samiti should, he argued, bear the inscription: 'God and Motherland: Triumph of *Sanatan dharma*' (Ghatak 1991: 45). During the 1880s, Rajnarain also became preoccupied with Aryanism as the basis of Hindu nationality (Sen 1993: 57).

The dominant Brahmo emphasis on Hindu 'degeneration' and reforms in caste, widow remarriage, idolatry, overseas travel, untouchability, and child brides was rearticulated by Rajnarain through a gradualist and conservative reformism based on a 'return' to glorious, ancient Hindu or Aryan traditions that, it was claimed, upheld no distinction between religion, society, culture, civilization and nationality.

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Rajnarain argued that the precepts for any societal reform had to be found not in 'evil' foreign influences but from precedents in ancient Hinduism. Similarly, it was because Hinduism comprehensively embraced all human knowledge, politics and economics that it could incorporate practices such as idolatry as 'inferior stages of religious belief in its own bosom in harmony with the nature of Man who cannot but pass through several stages of religious development before being able to grasp the Supreme Being' (Ghatak 1991: 43).

In 1867 an extremely influential annual 'Jatiya Mela' was started by Nabagopal Mitra. The Mela, which within two years had been renamed the 'Hindu Mela', was based on the 'Nationality Promotion Society' advocated by Rajnarain. The Mela aimed to promote national feeling, patriotism, unity and self help among Bengal's Hindus. Criticism of the Society for its exclusively Hindu orientation was countered thus: 'We do not understand why our [critics take] exception to the Hindus who certainly form a nation by themselves and as such a society established by them can very well be called "National Society"' (Majumdar 1971: 294).

Nabagopal, like Rajnarain, believed that 'the basis of national unity in India' was Hinduism. Moreover, 'Hindu nationality' embraced all Hindus in India regardless of region or linguistic difference: 'The Hindus are destined to be a religious nation' (Majumdar 1971: 295). The Mela went into abeyance by 1881 because of the formation of secular leagues and associations in Bengal. The ideological influence of both the Mela and of Rajnarain's lectures and writings has been described by Kamal Kumar Ghatak thus:

The Mela's primary objective was the revival of the past glory of Hinduism. Its leaders talked of patriotism, freedom and Hinduism in the same breath. In fact, they found no contradiction in this. Neither Rajnarain Bose nor Nabagopal Mitra thought of a common national sentiment which could enthuse the Hindus, Muslims and Christians of India in a feeling of brotherhood and unity. Nationalism and Hinduism were almost identical in their eyes. (Ghatak 1991: 38)

Of additional significance was the career of Chandranath Basu (1844–1910), and his popularization of the term *Hindutva* and its relationship to 'Indian history' that was to be consequential after the 1920s. Chandranath was very much part of the English-educated elite culture of Bengal in the nineteenth century. He worked as a librarian and a translator for the Bengal government and wrote regularly for Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya's *Bangadarshan*. Amiya Sen has argued that he represented an intellectual bridge between 'reforming' varieties of Hinduism in the Bengal Renaissance and the conservative 'revival' of Hinduism. Chandranath's work represented a defence of brahminism, an argument for retaining 'traditional' caste, gender and marriage practices in Hindu society, an advocacy of female chastity, restriction of Hindu women's education and civil rights, the upholding

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of male authority, an economic nationalism and an emphasis on Hindu rituals (Sen 1993: 210–13). His *Hindutva – an Authentic History of the Hindus*, published in Bengali in 1892 (Basu 1913) figured Hinduism in terms of its glorious archaic past and he aimed to demonstrate the superiority of Hinduism and its Gods in comparison with that of Christianity. In his *Hindutva*, ‘history appeared . . . as the unfolding of man’s innate spirituality’ (Sen 1993: 215–16). It is significant that the birth of the concept of ‘Hindutva’ was so intimately related to the threat of Christianity during the colonial period. Chandranath’s precise and novel link between ‘Hinduness’ and ‘history’ was to be decisive.

If these early stirrings of nineteenth century Hindu nationalism were overtaken by subsequent events, their impact in Bengal was important for crystallizing what was to later become both an anti-colonial patriotism and a ‘Hindu communal consciousness’ among the emergent Bengal intelligentsia (Datta 1999). Indeed, and conversely, the precise trajectories of Bengali elite formation in this period are intimately related to their role in furthering a distinctively Hindu oriented anti-colonialism that was based on the cultivation of a ‘love’ and freedom for a regionally or nationally conceived religious ‘motherland’. This theme was emergent in various Indian nationalist and ‘Hindu nationalist’ Bengal intellectual circles in the later nineteenth century, and crossed from Debendranath Tagore to Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya, Rabindranath Tagore, Aurobindo Ghose and the revolutionary nationalist sects of the early twentieth century.

#### *Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya and the Affect of ‘Hindu Nation’*

The novels as well as the journalistic, sociological and political writings and religious interpretations of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya (1838–94) present a complex legacy for both Hindu and secular nationalism (B. Chatterjee [Chattopadhyaya] 1986, P. Chatterjee 1986, Haldar 1989, B. Chatterjee, 1994, Kaviraj 1995, Kaviraj 1989, Sarkar 1996). Bankim is considered to be the ‘father’ of the modern Bengali novel and perhaps the most important figure in the Bengal Renaissance from the late 1860s. His huge body of work is subject to various interpretations. In particular, a regular distinction is made between his earlier writings, committed to humanistic forms of social, ‘religious’ and gender equality (the latter demonstrating the influence of John Stuart Mill), and his later ones that seem to celebrate Hindu nationalist supremacism, expound consistent anti-Muslim sentiments and erase his earlier and dramatic support for women’s equality (this erasure was literal: later reissues of his seminal *Samya* did not contain the critical chapters on women’s equality).

In the tradition of what is conceived to be secular nationalism, the themes of Hindu nationalism in Bankim’s writings can be glossed. Conversely, for Hindu nationalists, his earlier writings for gender equality and a conception of sexual

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freedom, and his satirical, humorous and mocking prose directed against Hindu sadhus and Bengali babus is overwritten by his celebration of violent Hindu struggle against Muslims, and in particular his glorification of Hindu religious-territorial nationalism in his song, *Bande Mataram*, a virtual anthem for the contemporary Hindutva movement. As important for both secular and religious appropriations was Bankim's view that, while Western science (and indeed the West as the home of empirical science) was both valuable and important for Indian sensibilities to learn from, it was India and Hinduism that had provided advanced philosophical and religious learning that the west had barely reached, let alone moved beyond. The Kantian ideal of humanity as an end was in principle reachable not by Western utilitarian atheism, as some Western philosophers argued, but by a devotionism to a humanized god – this was one of the distinctive potentials of Indian or Hindu philosophy.

Bankim can be rather effortlessly appropriated by or uncritically enfolded into apparently secular nationalist tendencies despite the thoroughgoing Hindu religious nationalist imaginary that not only permeated especially his later and most important writings but quite fundamentally structured them. Tanika Sarkar has argued for more subtle readings of his fictional writing that neither underplay the prominence of violent Hindu masculinities in his later novels nor understate his (earlier) humanist narratives that can embrace the poor, female or Muslim characters in his novels (Sarkar 1996). She has also argued for a more nuanced reading of the disruptions in his later 'Hindu nationalist' novels that can work against the exclusivist religious nationalism he was ostensibly promoting. The discussion below has a different aim: to highlight the Hindu nationalist themes in his work in the context of a telos of nationalist development that characterised his critical (and initially enthusiastic, but later diminishing) appropriation of Positivism (on Bankim and positivism, see his own essays in Chatterjee 1986, Gupta 1972, Forbes 1975, Flora 1993).

Bankim's later novels and writings were important for articulating an often rather didactic aesthetic of Hindu nationalism through their symbolisation first of the Bengal 'motherland' and then 'the Hindu nation' in visceral gendered and religious terms. While Bankim's novels were often occupied with apparently reforming concerns within Hinduism, especially in relation to poverty, equality and gender (*Samya*), in four of his novels (*Mrinalini*, 1869; *Rajsimha*, 1881; *Anandamath*, 1882; *Sitaram*, 1886) and in *Dharmatattva* (1888) and *Krishnacarita* these concerns were either displaced or intertwined with powerful themes of Hindu resilience and suffering, Hindu resistance to British colonialism, and what was conceived to be Muslim tyranny in Bengal or in medieval and colonial India. The merging of religion with nationalism in his novels is striking not simply because nationalism was often conceived as a battle against British colonists *and* Muslims, but because of his deployment of a powerful affective dimension as an integral

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component of what Hindu belonging to the Motherland must mean. Bankim recognized that political affect had to be made central to religious-nationalist affiliation. This sympathetic pity identified the sorrow at the historic plight of the symbolically conceived Motherland with the affect manifest in the inability of his masculine characters to exactly decide their future in the face of unanswerables, the aporias of and limits to their national condition. This was a consistent, *familial* and gendered theme in Hindu-leaning nationalist discourse: a cultivation and invocation of a strictly *grievous* emotional wounding as an abyss that both defined the Hindu man and turned him towards perpetually futile action against his 'enemies'. This theme of love for a suffering motherland was often crudely supplemented in Hindu nationalist discourse with past glories, the present need for militant action against perceived 'enemies', and future redemption. Of salience was a powerful metonymic relation established between domestic maternal suffering and affliction, the consequent affect of the son, and the imagined historical injury to the nation.

The affective configuration of Hindu nationalism in Bankim's novels may appear to sit uneasily with Bankim's critical sociological and philosophical commitments, notably to that distinctive combination of utilitarianism, strong positivism and social evolutionism that was flourishing, at least for a period, in nineteenth-century Bengal intellectual circles. Not only was Bankim familiar with the dominant trinity of Comtean positivism, John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism and Herbert Spencer's evolutionist sociology but had engaged with various other European writers. Aspects of what appears to be Kantian rationalism make an appearance in his writings, in particular the transmutation of Kant's conception of the faculties of mind in Bankim's distinctive idea of the harmonious cultivation of the human faculties (*Dharmatattva*, fifth and sixth *adhyaya* (chapters) in Chatterjee 1986). Bankim also appeared to be familiar with the abstracted conception of God and religious existence in German idealism (as demonstrated for example by Schelling, Fichte and Schleiermacher) which Bankim sought to displace with a humanized neo-Puranic God (Krishna) and a conception of *anushilan dharma* – a neo-Kantian harmonious cultivation of the human faculties in accordance with the necessity of action in a field that is defined by culture. In Bankim there was a displacement of an abstracted metaphysical-spiritual idea of religion for one in which the 'cultural cultivation' of religious affect was made central. He was also familiar with the work of some Indologists, such as William Jones and Max Muller, as well as the philosophies of Bentham, Hume, Rousseau, Locke and the Mills. However, Bankim's engagement with both Utilitarianism and Spencerianism was critical and he was to reject the atheistic and individual rights based thrust of utilitarian liberal political philosophy in favour of a view that inserted love, duties and obligations to the national or social collective under an overarching Hindu religious conception of humanism. Of all the objects

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of his 'faculty of love', the love for one's nation was of the highest kind (*Dharmatattva*, 24th *adhyaya* (chapter) in Chatterjee 1986).

The influence on Bankim of disciplines from Europe, such as British sociology, Orientalism and romanticism, can be seen in his strongly evolutionary perspective on Hindu national development and his conception of the development of 'Man', both of which were integrally related to the priority he gave to a neo-Puranic, neo-*bhakti* interpretation of Hinduism. There is certainly debate about Bankim's precise relationship to positivism. Bankim is both identified as the key proponent of positivism in nineteenth-century Bengal, primarily through articles that he himself wrote or published in his periodicals, as well as one of the stronger critics of the view that Comtean 'positive religion' could or should replace Hinduism (Flora 1993, Forbes 1975, B. Chatterjee ed. 1994). However, one cannot separate his commitment to a reconfigured humanized, intelligible Puranic conception of Krishna, ostensibly against his Brahmo or Christian adversaries, from his critical affiliation with a Comtean cosmology.

In his novel, *Anandamath*, redemptive Hindu nationalism was the necessary, but unfinished, conclusion to British colonialism. The latter was necessary for providing Hindus with knowledge of the physical world as the condition for Hindus to then comprehend *and feel* knowledge of the spiritual world and hence displace the 'vulgar, debased religion' that they possessed, manifested in his time in the aridity and rationalism of varieties of reformist Brahmoism. Hence 'English rule' was the prerequisite for revival of the eternal Hindu faith. However, the novel is also vigorously critical of the Hindu king and kingdom established after the overthrow of 'Muslim tyranny' in Bengal. The novel ends with the gaze of two ordinary, poor Hindu men for whom the tumultuous and violent Hinduism that structures the novel is abstracted from their daily lives, and is accessible to them only as rumour or fiction (Chatterjee 1992). This disappointment of Hindu nationalism at the end of *Anandamath* is also explicable in Comtean themes.

Comtean Positivism was an important resource for the project to promote Hinduism as a transforming, but nevertheless *perennial* religion that had travelled from an ineffable past and that could consolidate as a future nation. It may appear unusual that positivism could play such a role. However, it was of importance to the reconstructive conception of religious being in Bankim's work. Of additional significance is the distinctive positivist language of survival, degeneration and vitalism. Bankim's project can be seen as an attempt to simultaneously refute an abstract conception of God and an ineffable conception of nature or Spirit in both Upanishadic and Western post-Enlightenment traditions in favour of a conception of 'Man' or humanity in this world. Enlightened humanity had accession to God through both a semi-historicist understanding of the Puranic myths and a non-vulgar conception of devotion to an intelligible God, Krishna. Consequently, Bankim criticized the 'inscrutable power' that defined Herbert Spencer's conception

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of a transcendental nature, in favour of the positive conception of a 'religion of humanity'. The influence of Comte included Comte's 'law of three stages', his hierarchy of the sciences, his stress on natural science and the nomothetic rendering of humanity and society, his conception of the religious nature of 'Man', and his vision of religion as central not for individual salvation but for the collective redemption of an enlightened humanity (Forbes 1975: 134–5). These themes were explicitly propounded by Bankim in *Rajani, Dharmatattva and Anandamath*. Comte's 'positive philosophy', which made the natural and social world intelligible and could provide a basis for social progress and development through empirical investigation and the discovery of laws, is also clearly manifest in *Dharmatattva* and *Krishnacarita* (Chatterjee 1986). Of significance was Comte's 'law of three stages' of societal development, from the theological, to metaphysical abstract universalism to a positive philosophy of society in which the evidence of empirical investigation and reason provided the basis of societal organization. Importantly, Comte rejected a final or absolute conception of full knowledge in this final or third stage: absolute explanations were impossible and instead one proposed advancement through what could be known and intelligible in relation to the societal and historical norms that prevailed. In other words, the final limit point is not a conclusion to the threefold stagist development of societies but its aporia, though one in which humanity, through the development of its faculties, has acquired knowledge of itself and its society based on the prevailing historical and cultural circumstances.

In Bankim's work, each of these themes – the emphasis on empirical knowledge and a religion of humanity, this threefold developmentalism and this resolute aporia of the end-point – are manifest. There is therefore another possible reading of his critique of the Hindu kingdom at the end of *Anandamath*: the future is left open once the understanding of the potentials and corruptions of Hindu *rashtra* have been explicated as the only ground that has *as yet been possible and knowable* in a societal idiom that, nevertheless, cannot but reach towards an unfinished Hindu nation. In other words, what appears to be Bankim's muted return to social reform issues need not conflict with, but can enhance the performance of a Hindu nationalist imaginary.

One final point about Bankim's philosophy concerns his extremely careful transmutation of the figure of Krishna in *Krishnacarita* (and adjacently *Dharmatattva*). Bankim rejected what was conceived as the crude form of devotionism within sectarian Hinduism, but he vigorously defended devotionism and *bhakti*. He rejected the conception of abstracted, transcendental God or religion within traditional, Brahmo or Western metaphysical thinking, and yet defended the idea of God as accessible, intelligible, and humanised. He similarly vigorously rejected atheism and yet refused to concede to traditional conceptions of a Supreme Being, nor would he displace 'humanity' as foundational for his conceptions of religion or society. He rejected the abstract ritual textualism of Dayananda Saraswati and

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the appropriation of the soaring metaphysics of the Upanishads by the Brahmos, yet defended the absolute centrality of some kind of *transcendental religion* to human development. Bankim is often said to have created a new religion (*anushilan dharma*) based on a reconfiguration of Puranic, devotional religion such that Krishna symbolized a ‘de-sexualized’, ethical, militant ideal of what humanity could become. Here, the implied association between Puranic (rather than Vedic or Upanishadic) religion and politics is not the only consequence. This synthetic, rather than simply syncretic, association of ‘Comtism’ with Puranic Hinduism created a space that did not simply mimic neo-Vedantism using a different idiom, but made a closer relation between temporal politics, a necessary cultural field, and an apparently rationalized, humanist, scientific rendition of Hindu religion necessary.

### **Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Hindu Nationalist Activism**

If the ‘Bengal Renaissance’ can be said to have created the grids of intelligibility through which nationalism could be naturalized in Hindu registers, a different and extraordinarily influential configuration of religious nationalism was being played out elsewhere. Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856–1920), a Ratnagiri Chitpavan brahmin, became a central figure in the national movement until his death in 1920. He was the most important figure in the ‘extremist’ faction of the Indian National Congress and the most vociferous critic of the ‘moderate’ tendencies in Congress that sought degrees of accommodation with colonial rule and which wished to elicit a process of gradual social and constitutional reform. Tilak, alongside Ranade, Gokhale and Gandhi, is celebrated as one of the most important leaders of the national movement that led to independence. His secular credentials are demonstrated by uncompromising activism for the boycott and self-rule (*swaraj*) movements, rural reform, foundation of the Home Rule League in India (1914), and his role in the negotiations with Mohammed Ali Jinnah and the Muslim League in 1916 (the ‘Lucknow Pact’), the latter serving as the basis for joint action between Congress and the League during Gandhi’s non-cooperation movement (and allowing for separate Muslim electorates in provincial council elections and for greater than proportionate Muslim representation in all provinces except Bengal and the Punjab). Tilak founded two regional newspapers, the Marathi-language *Kesari* (The Lion) and the English-language *Mahratta*, that were the main mouthpieces for anti-British agitation in north-western India. Against the ‘Moderates’ who wanted to ensure cooperation with the British, Tilak also led the separate section of the ‘Extremist’ party during the December 1907 session of Congress at Surat (‘the Surat split’). Tilak was imprisoned several times for his anti-British activities and gained the honorific ‘*lokamanya*’ – ‘revered by the people’. As a past leader of the national movement, his standing in contemporary India is perhaps second only to that of Gandhi.

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While this is less apparent today, Tilak was important for cultivating a Hindu primordialism based on early Orientalist precepts about Indian civilization and combining this with a reconfigured and politicized form of public, urban Hindu devotionalism. The latter included the development of a new form of mass Hindu political activism in Maharashtra in the late nineteenth-century that depended on linking his bare Orientalist primordialism with two other ideological configurations, and in the process transforming the import of both: the novel politicization of the Hindu devotional idiom around the figure and competing and layered symbolism of the (then perhaps unlikely) God Ganapati (Ganesh); and the formation of politicized regional folk genealogies around the seventeenth-century medieval Hindu leader of the Mahratta confederacy, Shivaji. A partial rendering of the history of Shivaji and the Mahratta 'Empire' supplied potent symbols for the Hindu nationalist political imaginary of a 'Hindu state' and uncompromisingly militant aggression against Muslims. As with the Bengal intellectual 'upper' caste elite, the constitution and political sharpening of a regional, linguistic and elite-brahminical Maharashtrian *patrie* by Tilak was combined with a grander claim about Indian nationalism. The potential, in both the Bengal and Maharashtrian cases, that a distinctly regional nationalism could conflict with an Indian nationalism was one consequential dynamic. As important in both cases is how a regional nationalism became inextricably linked both to the political formation of upper (especially brahmin) castes and to the invigoration of Hindu traditions and symbols in the service of an 'Indian' nationalism and against colonial rule. Similarly, in both cases, one can see the transfiguration of symbols of Hindu religious devotionalism – the religious pantheon – into a nationalist pantheon.

Richard Cashman (1970, 1975) has argued that these processes were especially important in Poona and Bombay (now both part of Maharashtra). The Chitpavan brahmin community was threatened by a variety of colonial reforms in avenues for both educational attainment and government administration during the late nineteenth century, primarily because of colonial proposals that aimed to extend employment and education to non-brahmin castes. Cashman has argued that the Chitpavans, who together with other brahmin groups had traditionally held high-status posts in provincial administration and had benefited most from education, were viewed with revulsion by many British governors, officers and administrators. The latter saw the Chitpavan brahmin community of Poona as corrupt and deceitful, a locus of anti-British conspiracy, and wilfully obstructive of social reform initiatives that compromised what the Chitpavans viewed as their heritage in terms of serving the ruling power of the region. (The peshwa or chief minister elite had emerged from this community during the Mahratta confederacy; the Chitpavans also viewed themselves as both warriors and the priestly caste – *kshatriya brahmins* – inheritors of a glorious heritage under Mahratta rule.) Consequently, from the mid-1880s, there was considerable agitation from Chitpavan and other brahmin

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groups against the reservation of half the number of free college scholarships to the Deccan and Ferguson colleges for Muslims and 'backward' Hindu castes (Cashman 1975: 37–8). The status of the Poona brahmins was also threatened by the regional implementation of legislation for representation in the provincial legislative councils (1892). The previous year, the government had passed legislation that raised the female age of consent from 10 to 12 years. This resulted in considerable opposition to what was viewed as British interference in Hindu 'religious' and 'traditional' matters. A number of societies were formed, ostensibly protesting against the Age of Consent Bill but extending their activities to a general defence of brahminism, the latter seen as under threat. After 1893 in both Bombay and the Deccan, there was also considerable inter-religious violent conflict between Hindu and Muslim communities following the growth of militant cow protection societies, as well as Hindu protests against the restriction of music outside mosques.

Tilak's interventions during this troubled period are illustrative. Tilak had opposed the Age of Consent legislation for both pragmatic and political reasons. There was widespread opposition to the legislation among 'upper' caste Hindus; hence Tilak's support for the latter worked to further his political stature. Tilak also believed it was an illegitimate intervention by the colonial power in both Hindu religious matters and brahminic orthodoxy (Wolpert 1977). Similarly, prior to the Bombay and Deccan riots during 1893, Hindus in Poona had traditionally attended the annual Muslim festival of Muharram. However, in 1894, Tilak instigated a new public celebration by Hindus alone of Ganesh Chaturti. Prior to this, the annual traditional Ganesh celebration had primarily been a private or family affair among Hindus. Ganesh had also traditionally been a favoured deity primarily among the Chitpavan brahmin communities. Tilak instead publicly mobilized the symbol of Ganesh for the political forging of a mass movement among Hindus that both protested British rule and was marshalled against the Muslim Muharram festival, which hardly any Hindus thereafter attended (Cashman 1970). While the annual public Ganesh celebrations took on a momentum of their own among 'lower' caste communities, these were apolitical in comparison with the Chitpavan and Gujarati-speaking brahmin festivals, the latter explicitly exhorting Hindus to abandon associating with the Muslim festivals and to celebrate their martial Hindu, Aryan or Maratha heritage (Cashman 1975: 83–84). This was a practical example of the manner in which exclusivist Hinduism was mobilized so as to create fissures between religious communities and cleave apart the urban and public spaces of civil society into contending sections defined by nominal religious affiliation. The Ganesh festivals were to die down after a few years, partly because of the restrictive conditions upon them imposed by the British (though the festivals did re-emerge in the early part of the twentieth-century).

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This distinctive and novel propagation of a devotional deity for a communal purpose that served as agitation against the British was supplemented with Tilak's next important intervention, that of instituting the figure of Shivaji as the pre-eminent symbol of Hindu militancy, anti-colonial agitation, Mahratta nationalism and finally as a symbol for Indian nationalism (see 'Is Shivaji not a national hero?' in Tilak 1919). While initiated as a memorial fund with associated festivals aimed at raising funds to refurbish the monument where Shivaji was buried, the Shivaji celebrations were to quickly turn violent under the conditions of both famine and plague that were affecting the Deccan and Bombay during the mid-1890s. Tilak used the Gita to justify violent means, symbolized in the manner in which Shivaji had killed Aurangzeb's general, Afzal Khan (see also 'Speech on the occasion of the Shivaji Coronation festival', in Tilak 1919: 62–4). Cashman has argued that Tilak primarily sought to mobilize Ranade's more moderate conception of Shivaji for the purpose of generating funds from the landed classes (Cashman 1975). Nevertheless, Tilak's was an ambiguous message, because the prominent abstraction of Shivaji's killing of Afzal Khan displaced the Muslim chief commanders of Shivaji's military force, his Muslim foreign secretary and various other close Muslim associates of Shivaji. Conversely, that Shivaji was captured and detained at Agra as a result of a military campaign by Mirza Raja Jai Singh, a Hindu and Aurangzeb's most important military general, and that Shivaji's escape from Agra was aided by his Muslim associates was similarly elided.

In his depiction of Shivaji, Tilak may have been justifying the use of violence against colonial rule but was simultaneously unleashing a communalized abstraction of India's medieval period. Violence was to be rehearsed as an ethical philosophy by Tilak in his *Srimad Bhagavatgita Rahasya (The Secret Meaning of the Bhagavad Gita)*, Tilak 1936) written towards the end of his life. Here, Tilak defended the ethical obligation to the active principle or action, even violent action including killing, as long as this was undertaken according to the dictates of dharma, that is in a fashion that was selfless and without personal interest or motive. The idea that the *Bhagavad Gita* could be interpreted as providing *guidance* for temporal action had existed since the thirteenth century (Wolpert 1977: 260). However, Stanley Wolpert has argued that its use by Tilak to legitimate violence as a duty for which one could not necessarily find any moral or ethical principle beyond self-preservation and a disinterested disposition was novel (Wolpert 1977: 259, 262–3).

Such uses of Shivaji also demonstrated an appeal to those, like the Chapekar brothers, who viewed violent resistance to British rule as a *religious* duty and obligation on behalf of a greater Hinduism. Indeed, the articulation of revolutionary or violent nationalism as a religious obligation and a legitimate religious impulse was as important for the nationalist groupings that flourished in Bengal both during the nineteenth century and after the first Partition of Bengal in 1905. Several violent

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revolutionary Shivaji societies and clubs were also formed in the aftermath of his political elevation by Tilak. Similarly, the symbolic potency of Shivaji for Hindu chauvinist, anti-Muslim sentiments was not lost on the burgeoning 'upper' caste Hindu organizations that had come to be keen to celebrate 'Hindu victory' against Aurangzeb, and the glory of a 'Hindu empire' during the Mughal period. It was also to be a short step from a narrative of 'Hindu victory' against the Muslim Aurangzeb, to another narrative that Aurangzeb (who, like the Mughal emperors except the sixteenth century Babur, was born in India) was an illegitimate presence within, and an 'invader' of India. This late nineteenth century insertion of Shivaji into an emergent Hindu nationalist pantheon can be seen as one definitive stage in what, two decades later, was to become within the Hindu nationalist historical imaginary a monologic, unending, 800-year war by the Hindu nation against Muslim 'invaders'.

### *Tilak, Aryanism and Hindutva*

If these strictly political interventions of Tilak in Maharashtra generalized the deity of Ganesh beyond its traditional 'upper' caste devotional constituency, and generated the figure of Shivaji as the pre-eminent symbol for Hindu and Mahratta power, Tilak's writings about ancient Indian history rehearsed the themes of primordialism that were discussed previously. Indeed, Tilak's political astuteness can be seen in combining an intellectual ground of archaic Hindu-Aryan primordialism with a populist reconfiguration of Hindu devotionalism and Hindu regional nationalism. This deeply political syncretism of the archaic-Vedic and the popular-devotional (*bhakti*) was to become an important method in later Hindu nationalism. In 1893 (the year before the Ganesh festival was instigated), Tilak published his *The Orion, or researches into the antiquities of the Vedas* (Tilak 1984). This was followed in 1903 by his larger *The Arctic Home in the Vedas: A new key to the interpretation of many Vedic texts and legends* (Tilak 1956). The former, critically inspired by Max Muller's writings, argued that the Aryan Vedic period be pushed back from the then-accepted date of 1500 BC to at least 4000 BC, when the vernal equinox was in the constellation of Orion and was allegedly observed and documented by 'Vedic seers'. Moreover Tilak, rather unfaithfully, drew upon the writings of Frederich Max Muller among others to present the argument that not only were the Aryans responsible for the first civilization in the world, but they had started the process whereby the world received civilization as such (Tilak 1984). This thesis was extended in *Arctic Home*, Aryan civilization both being pushed back even further to before 8000 BC, and being more advanced than the subsequent Bronze and Iron Age civilizations. Tilak reinterpreted both Vedic and Avestan deities as polar Gods representing a land that was the paradise of the Aryans, and that was destroyed by the advance of ice during the second glacial

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period. The original Aryan homeland was the Arctic (Tilak 1956). (It is of interest that a similar argument about human origins had been advanced by the French astronomer Jean-Sylvain Bailly in the eighteenth century, and had been later attacked by, among others, Hegel.)

If these tracts may now seem to be unimportant flourishes, Tilak was quite explicit even in 1906 about the importance of the Vedic Aryan heritage, not just for cultivating a common tie among Indians but for consolidating a future Hindu nation.

Religion is an element in nationality . . . During Vedic times, India was a self-contained country. It was united as a great nation. That unity has disappeared bringing great degradation and it becomes the duty of the leaders to revive that union. A Hindu of this place [Benares] is as much a Hindu as one from Madras or Bombay. The study of the Gita, Ramayana and Mahabharata produce the same ideas throughout the country. Are not these – common allegiance to the Vedas, Gita and Ramayana – our common heritage? If we lay stress on it forgetting all the minor differences that exist between different sects, then by the grace of Providence we shall ere long be able to consolidate all the different sects into a mighty Hindu nation. This ought to be the ambition of every Hindu. ('Speech at Bharat Dharma Mahamandala', Benares, 3.01.1906, in Tilak 1919: 13–14)

More ominously perhaps was Tilak's view that the 'common factor' in Indian society was the '*feeling of Hindutva*'. Hindus, he argued, not only constituted the majority of India's population but that all Hindus were one because of their adherence to *Hindudharma* (Wolpert 1977: 135).

While it would be highly inaccurate to describe Tilak's ideological and pragmatic political projects as reducible to a bare Hindu nationalism, the severe elisions in his association of Hinduism with ideas of both primordial national belonging and Indian national destiny require noting. Hindu *dharma* and 'Hindutva' can by no means be said to have united, or indeed been a common sentiment among the populations of nineteenth-century colonial India; their attempted naturalization is itself an hegemonic claim that announced how these conceptions were constituted in politics. Tilak's claim about Hindu *dharma* and 'the feeling of Hinduness' situated these conceptions above and beyond the histories of societies and nations as transcendental ideas that paralleled the narratives of imperial progress and national destiny that they attempted to substitute. Similarly, the process whereby Hindu *dharma* could be articulated as the main basis for Indian nationality was a substitution of one narrative of the civilizing mission, the imperial, with another primordialist narrative of national formation and national progress that vigorously elided caste, both in the sense that the 'lower' castes and those outside the caste system were evaded, but also in the glorification of certain Hindu symbols, which was designed to appeal to brahminic, 'upper' caste and northern Indian constituencies during a process of political vernacular elite formation.

### **Other Influences**

These themes were brought out explicitly by two of Tilak's associates in the 'extremist' wing of Congress, Lala Lajpat Rai (see next chapter) and Bipinchandra Pal (the three were called 'Lal-Bal-Pal' in the national movement). Bipinchandra Pal (1858-1932) argued that Indian nationality was a composite of its various religious communities and could not be a 'Hindu' or 'Muslim' India, and he could genuinely celebrate the contributions of Islam and Muslims to India (see Bipinchandra Pal, 'Contributions of Islam to Indian nationality' in Johari 1993, volume 3, book 2: 389-93). Pal was also to turn away from his earlier adherence to militant non-cooperation.

However, in an essay published in 1901, 'Reform on "national lines"', Pal explicitly advocated 'the thought structure of the Aryan race consciousness', the 'civic' Aryan social structure, and the genius of Aryan fellowship as key components that distinguished nationality in India (and ancient Greece) from other nationalisms. The civic, constitutional social polity of the Aryans was distinguished from the military, legalistic, despotic polity of the 'Semitic races', the latter defined by their uncritical obedience to the commands of God. It was precisely these differences in the structure of thought and society that constituted individual nationality, the latter conceived by him as the regulative idea in the historical evolution of nations and societies (Bipinchandra Pal, 'Definition of Nationality' in Appadorai 1973 vol 1: 476-8). Of significance here was a different opposition between the 'Aryan', conceived as Hindu, and the 'Semitic', conceived as Muslim (or Christian). This can also be seen as signifying a characteristically 'Indian' differentiation of the 'Aryan' from what was conceived as 'semitism'. The latter was not concerned with Jewishness as such, but could prefigure other groups within a 'semitic' register. We can discern here what might legitimately be called a current of Indian 'anti-semitism' that possessed its own distinctive characteristics based the perceived alterity of Islam and Christianity.

Bipinchandra Pal's Hegelianism, very similar to, though of lesser philosophical sophistication than that articulated by (Lala) Har Dayal, was extended by him in a book published at the turn of century that situated the nature of Indian nationality as the unfolding and development of 'Hindu Spirit' from an archaic past up to the boycott and *swaraj* movements of his time (Bipinchandra Pal 1910). In opposition to what he conceived as the dead secularism of the old Congress, the new national movement was defined exclusively by its 'intensely religious and spiritual character'. Religion and the new patriotism that demanded self-rule were inextricably intertwined such that the former, as *Vedanta*, was the evolutionary basis of the latter. To view the national movement through political, social or economic categories, he argued, was to misunderstand it altogether. The philosophy that stood behind the movement was religion, the philosophy of Brahman (the

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Absolute). Indeed, the militant demand for ‘self-rule’ was itself an Hegelian return of the Hindu self to itself, after it had thrown off the ‘hypnotism’ of British rule. If a narrative of Hindu conflict with Muslims was absent from Pal’s philosophical history, the overintegrated Hindu religious idiom within which this history was conceived by a central figure in the national movement is illustrative of the instinctive confluence of Hinduism with Indian nationalism.

### *Aurobindo’s Dharmic Nationalism*

The Bengal revolutionary Aurobindo Ghose (1872–1950), an important inspiration for the revolutionary and terroristic nationalist movements and secret societies that proliferated in Bengal after the turn of twentieth century, was as adamant about the relation between nationalism and Hinduism, though he was not averse to transforming this into an anti-Muslim narrative. Ghose spent much of his childhood and youth in England, where he received his schooling and his university education in classics and modern languages. He was to return to India as a young man and became embroiled in revolutionary activities until imprisoned in 1908, after which he fled to the French colony of Pondicherry and remained there for the rest of his life, becoming a spiritual teacher of an evolutionist metaphysics of human transcendence into ‘the Supramental’. While accepting, like Bipinchandra Pal, *some* conception of a religiously composite Indian nationality, although one that was ‘largely Hindu in spirit’, (Ghose in Johari ed. 1993 volume 3: 32, 64), neither he nor Pal, who were both leading Congress activists and consecutive editors of the Bengal nationalist periodical, *Bande Mataram*, attempted to further Muslim inclusion in the national movement itself. Ghose, in several extensive commentaries on comparative philology and ethnology, accepted an indigenist version of Aryanism, but rejected the view of European Orientalists that Aryans had entered geographical India in pre-history or that there were fundamental racial or linguistic differences between the northern Indian Aryans and the southern Indian Dravidians (Ghose 1971, Ghose 1995). Like Dayananda, though with considerably more sophistication, Ghose viewed the Vedas as foundational to Hindu religion and Indian culture.

Ghose also conceptualized Indian nationalism in Hindu religious registers. However, for him nationalism was not simply related to Hindu religion: to be a nationalist *was* to be religious and vice versa. As he famously said in 1907:

Nationalism is not a mere political programme: Nationalism is a religion that has come from God. Nationalism is a creed which you shall have to live . . . If you are going to be a Nationalist, if you are going to assent to this religion of Nationalism, you must do it in the religious spirit. You must remember that you are the instruments of God . . . [The national movement in Bengal after 1905] is a religion by which we are trying to realize God in the nation. (Ghose in Appadorai 1973, volume 2: 483)

### *The Primordial Nation of the Hindus*

Just over a year later, Aurobindo modified this: the advance and rise of India was the rise of *sanatan dharma*, a conception of Hinduism as a perennial religion. Nationalism was *sanatan dharma* (Ghose 1993: 48–50). Similarly, just as Bankimchandra had represented the nation as the Mother of the Hindu pantheon, for Aurobindo, nationalism was devotion to the Goddess. Ghose represented very clearly a curious but extremely powerful theme that travelled across the tendencies examined earlier in this chapter, namely the characteristically Hinduized sacralization of nation and nationalism, the view that the ‘nation’ was *literally* sacred. This idea was novel, and quite distinct from conceptions of ‘national soul’, and from the popular ‘sanctification’ of and ‘reverence’ for the Indian nation by the freedom movement. It was conceived by thinkers like Bankim, Tilak, Bipinchandra Pal and Aurobindo in solely Hindu idioms. The concept of ‘sacred nation’ was to be definitive of Hindu nationalist political philosophy in later decades.

### **Conclusion**

The equivalence of Hinduism with nationalism in the latter half of the nineteenth century was more than a persistent or marginal tendency in the burgeoning movements of novel Hinduism, regional patriotism or revolutionary nationalism. This, however, is not to say that they were direct precursors to the varieties of Hindu supremacism that emerged in the 1910s, or the Hindutva movements that were formed from the 1920s and 1930s onwards and which, indeed, did claim them as their predecessors. While the ideological contributions of Tilak, Bipinchandra Pal or Aurobindo Ghose cannot be seen as unmediated influences on the militant Hindutva nationalism that emerged after the early 1920s, it would be as difficult to situate them as examples of secularism. The problem here is not one of taxonomic differentiation between an anti-communal nationalist who happened to be a devoted Hindu, or one for whom nationalism was to be largely defined by a Hindu ‘ethos’ and ‘spirit’, to a nationalist for whom India had to become a Hindu nation-state. The difficulties are present because ‘religious’ and ‘non-religious’ nationalist tendencies shared considerable epistemic space, and both of them can be opposed to a genuine secularism that was fleetingly glimpsed. In the next chapter, which primarily considers the trajectory of figures and movements unleashed by the Arya Samaj into the heart of the national movement in the early decades of the twentieth century, these difficulties become increasingly compounded.

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## Beyond the Arya Ideal

The Hindus are a nation in themselves, because they represent a civilization all their own. (Lala Lajpat Rai 1899)

The fact is that the best and the most glorious period of Aryan supremacy is yet a closed chapter to us. Almost the whole of the pre-Buddhistic period is shrouded in mystery. Even the literature that has reached us is so full of allusions, enigmas, signs, and names and is written in such an archaic language that the whole thing seems to be a mystery . . . Still we know and understand enough to be proud of, and to glory in the heritage which has descended to us from our ‘barbarian’ ancestors in the shape of national literature. And this must be the fulcrum of the lever with which we are to rise as a nation. It will not do to be unjust to our forefathers and to deny the idea of national love in them. (Lala Lajpat Rai [1902] 1966a: 37)

### Introduction

The rise of a distinctive Hindu nationalist ideology and political movement with a coherent ideology of Hindu exclusivity, supremacy and nationhood is usually traced in historical scholarship to the troubled and violent – but puzzlingly short – period from 1919 (the end of the First World War) to the mid-1920s. It was indeed in 1923 that V. D. Savarkar’s founding statement on Hindu identity, *Hindutva – who is a Hindu?* was published. Swami Shradhanand’s *Hindu Sangathan – Saviour of the Dying Race* was written the following year. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh was formed in 1924–6, and the Hindu Mahasabha was re-established and was to gain in political influence from the mid-1920s. These crystallizing events are seen as consequent to Hindu resentment at Gandhi’s support for Khilafat, the role of the Muslim League in securing separate electoral representation, and the aftermath of the Khilafat agitation, all of which resulted in the consolidation of a distinct Hindu supremacist, anti-Muslim constituency whose demands were articulated by Hindu nationalist organizations that generally remained outside the fold of the national movement. This is indeed also the post-independence secular reading of the national movement itself.

However, in this register, Hindu nationalism can be seen as an external factor, subsidiary to the movement for independence and of relatively limited and minor

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importance until well after independence. As seen in the previous chapter, the tangible relationship between Hinduism and Indian nationalism, articulated primarily through a civilizational and cultural discourse of archaic Vedism supplemented by a politicization of devotionalism, had been politically and discursively established in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. In the formative activities of vernacular elites in colonial Maharashtra and Bengal, there was a substantive generation of a 'nationalist pantheon' built from symbols drawn from archaic Vedism, devotional Hinduism and medieval Indian history. This chapter continues this theme by considering several political figures and movements within and outside the national movement and Congress in the early decades of the twentieth century who extended Arya Samaj ideology to elaborate the relation between Hinduism and nationalism more sharply both against other religious communities and through a bio-power narrative of Hindus as under political, social, cultural, physical and demographic 'threat', even 'extinction' (Datta 1993, Datta 1999).

While substantial analytical distance must be retained between earlier varieties of Hindu nationalism and the specific ideology of Hindutva that emerged from the 1920s, much of what is conceived as a fully-formed ideology of Hindutva in the 1920s and 1930s was in its main ideological content elaborated before the 1920s and was to retain an ambiguous but important relationship to ideas of Indian nationalism. The explicit languages of 'Hindu nationalism' and 'Hindu nationality' were present at the start of the twentieth century, although the precise meanings of these terms for their proponents remain to be interrogated. A further argument, started in this chapter and continuing throughout the book is that, conceptually, *Hindu nation* as expressing a cultural, religious, ethnic and possibly 'racial' nationalism retained an ambiguous relation to the idea of a *Hindu nation state*, or a *Hindu government*, the latter representing territorially bounded sovereign political and administrative structures based on permanent 'Hindu majority rule'. Residing somewhere between 'Hindu nation' and 'Hindu state' is the indistinct conception of *Hindu sovereignty*. Notwithstanding the variety of archaic and medieval Indian language terms used to variously connote 'nation', 'state', and 'people' (including *rashtra*, *rajya*, *desh*, *qawm*, *gana*, *janapada*, *jati*, *watan*), an ambiguity regarding both '*Hindu rashtra*' ('nation') and '*Hindu rajya*' ('government' or 'rule') was foregrounded from the late nineteenth century. This reflected an elision of the distinctions between 'state', 'nation' and 'the people' that continues to characterize, and indeed give power to, Hindu nationalism. In pre-1920s formulations, however much embedded in Hindu idioms, there was also the absence of an unambiguously formulated conception of an ideological and cultural Hindu nationalism that was inextricably linked to the different idea of a constitutionally defined Hindu nation state or government and a 'Hinduized' civil society. Hence, there was an epistemological distance between the ideological, cultural, political and communal forms

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of Hindu nationalism proliferating in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and a concept of Hindu nationalism in which territory, nationhood, citizenship, subjecthood, the constitutional nature of the state and a concept of 'the people' were cohesively articulated in Hindu registers. A claim for an exclusive 'Hindu state' or 'Hindu government' was not programmatically formulated prior to the 1920s, but instead retained in a vague manner. Taking the example of the former Arya Samajist, revolutionary Hindu nationalist and American-based founder of the Ghadar Party, Lala Har Dayal, his earlier proposals for an independent Indian nation state comprised detailed constitutional plans but were substantially different from his militant Hindu nationalist declarations of the mid-1920s, even though the latter articulated a 'Hindu Raj' (Brown 1975). If the concern of many Hindu nationalists was with elaborating a cultural conception of 'Hindu nation' in opposition to civic nationalism, this did not clearly articulate a 'Hindu state' explicitly defined through its constitution, governmentality, legislature, its relation to a 'Hindu civil society' and its structures of national and federal organization. However, if the imprecisions regarding Hindu 'nation', 'state', 'government' and 'people' were not resolved by Hindu nationalist ideologues, they were nevertheless held in reserve: one of the definitive characteristics of Hindu nationalism has been its discursive capacity to articulate Hindu 'people' with 'nation' while also invoking, indeterminately, 'state'. This had consequences for any potential theory of political power and governance that Hindu nationalism could be placed to offer in later decades.

This chapter also presents an overarching argument about a relatively strong degree of continuity in Hindu nationalist thinking from the latter decades of the nineteenth century and into the mid-1930s. It is an uncontroversial claim that the kind of Hindutva ideology formulated by Savarkar in the early 1920s was shaped by earlier influences but also represented an epistemological break from previous Hinduized forms of Indian nationalism (see, for example, Pandey 1993). The converse argument that stressing the novelty of Hindutva ideology in the 1920s elides the strong continuity of Hindutva with a range of what are usually encapsulated as modern 'Hinduized nationalist', 'Hindu-leaning' or 'proto-Hindu nationalist' strands that emerged from the latter decades of the nineteenth century has been countered by other writers. Peter Heehs, for example, has argued that the similarities between the post-1920s Hindutva and nineteenth-century 'Hindu revivalism' as represented by Vivekananda, Bipinchandra Pal or Aurobindo are basically superficial while the differences are deep (Heehs 1998: 117). More compellingly, 'Hindu-leaning Indian nationalism' did not demarcate Muslims as inherently exterior to an imagined nationhood, but very much within it and, so the argument goes, this is a definitive demarcation of Hindutva from earlier influences.

While acknowledging the force of such arguments, and without wishing to impute ideas of *logical* and unbroken progression, this chapter emphasizes the

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continuity between early forms of Hinduized Indian nationalism and later developments. The lack of an all-embracing and accurately descriptive label for these various 'Hindu-influenced' nationalist strands that can sharply and consistently demarcate them from the burgeoning Indian nationalism of the early decades of the twentieth century is itself instructive. However, the taxonomic problems reflect deeper issues about the conditions of possibility that allowed the coextensive imagination of redemptive Hinduism with Indian nationalism prior to the 1920s. Accepting the strong version of the continuity argument has a number of consequences, explored later, which can work against the grain of accepted secular histories and analyses of the Indian national movement, Hinduism in the modern period and Hindu nationalism itself. Expressed differently, it can be difficult to understand both the historical and contemporary appeal of Hindu nationalism if assessment of it is restricted to relatively marginal avowedly Hindu nationalist figures and organizations that only emerged after the mid-1920s. It is also the argument of this chapter that sharply bracketing Hindutva ideology in these historical and political ways can leave what is considered to be 'Hinduism' analytically untouched as if it existed transcendentally and separately from the dramatic political transformations occurring around and within it. Similarly, while the specific ideology of Hindutva has come to dominate contemporary Hindu nationalism, the latter is by no means completed by it.

This is as much a political problem as one of interpretation: the contemporary Hindutva movement does indeed legitimize its existence as the logical culmination of the nineteenth-century 'Hindu Renaissance', the movement for national liberation, and the ideologies of key figures ranging from Vivekananda to Tilak to Aurobindo. Even Gandhi's rather differently politicized Hindu devotionism can be marshalled for this purpose. Hence stressing the continuity of Hindutva ideology with nineteenth-century movements and ideological currents can be viewed as providing contemporary Hindutva ideologues with the long intellectual 'Hindu heritage' that they crave. However, accepting the strong continuity argument does not result in the granting of any intellectual or political gifts to the Hindutva movement.

Various thinkers from the Arya Samaj, the Indian National Congress, the Hindu Sangathan movement, the early Hindu Sabhas and the pre-Savarkar Hindu Mahasabha, and the variety of revolutionary nationalist groups and Hindu 'proto-ecclesiastical' institutions can be accurately described as Hindu nationalists in the strong sense, rather than as Indian nationalists with Hindu leanings, exhibiting a proto-Hindu nationalism or being solely interested in Hinduizing extant Indian social, political or cultural traditions within the sphere of the private institutions of emergent Indian civil society. Though each of the latter characteristics certainly existed, they were often consequences of an existing Hindu nationalist thematic and lexical universe that existed prior to the 1920s.

### **The Troubled 1920s and 1930s**

The period from the turn of the century, through the 1920s and into the 1930s was one of immense political change and upheaval in colonial India (Chirol [1926] 1972, Phillips et al. 1962, Majumdar 1971, Azad 1988, Kulke and Rothermund 1986, Nair 1991; these sources have been drawn on below and in parts of Chapter 4). In 1905, the colonial government under Curzon partitioned Bengal province so as to create a Muslim majority province made up of East Bengal and Assam with its capital at Dacca, leaving Calcutta, seen as the proud intellectual and cultural core of Bengal regional 'nationalism', grouped with what were seen as the backward, apolitical provinces of Bihar and Orissa. This 'vivisection of the Bengal motherland' was seen as (and almost certainly was) an attempt to isolate and marginalize the heartland of militant anti-colonial Indian nationalism, dominated by a politicized, Westernized Bengali-speaking Hindu intellectual elite. This action was welcomed by sections of Bengal's Muslim leadership, but virtually caused an open rebellion against the colonial government and an upsurge of politicized revolutionary nationalist action throughout India. Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya's *Bande Mataram* ('Hail to Thee O Mother [land]'), from his novel *Anandamath*, was set to music by the Bengal poet Rabindranath Tagore and became the anthem for the Indian National Congress (for example, see Mukherjee and Mukherjee 1957). The Hinduized nationalist slogan, *Bharat Mata Ke Jai!* [Victory to the [Holy] Mother Land!] was also at that time a Congress slogan. Mass protest movements, boycotts of British and foreign products and British educational institutions in favour of Indian goods (*swadeshi*) and newly formed Indian schools and universities grew. Self-rule (*swaraj*) became an explicit Congress demand as a result of the partition of Bengal. As important was the massive wave of violent, terrorist forms of political agitation that grew as a result of Curzon's actions.

The bifurcation of both colonial political administration and nationalist political activity along Hindu-Muslim religious lines had a longer pedigree, but from this point it acquired a different resonance and a grotesque trajectory. In 1909, the colonial government introduced the Indian Councils Act ('the Morley-Minto reforms') whose purpose was to introduce a (severely limited) elective principle to membership of Indian Legislative Councils and increase Indian representation in the Supreme Council and provincial legislatures. It also guaranteed separate electorates and electoral seats for Muslims.

In 1906, Minto had received (and had actively encouraged) a deputation of Muslim leaders who wanted to safeguard the separate interests of Muslims within any proposed constitutional reforms. The successes of the Muslim delegation led by the Aga Khan coincided with the formal inauguration of the Muslim League in the same year through which demands were made to advance the separate political

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rights and interests of Indian Muslims. Resolutions passed at this founding meeting included support for Curzon's partition of Bengal, condemnation of the boycott movement against the British and loyalty to the British government, all of which aroused widespread resentment among many Hindus. The increasing violence in Bengal and elsewhere during 1909 and 1910, following the first Partition of Bengal, was met with extreme repression. However, under a new viceroy, East and West Bengal were reunified (1911), and a separate province comprising Bihar and Orissa was created. The capital of British India was moved from Calcutta, the heartland of the Bengal (Hindu-dominated) nationalist movement, to provincial Delhi, the former seat of Mughal power in India. The latter action was seen as a symbolic concession to Muslims for the loss of the short-lived, Muslim-dominated Bengal province, but was seen by many of Bengal's Hindus as another humiliation because of their involvement in the nationalist movement.

During and in the aftermath of the First World War, there was considerable pressure on the colonial government for increased representation of Indians – if not direct home rule – in return for the support by Indians of the war effort. The Montague-Chelmsford proposals from 1917, continuing a precedent established in the first decade of the century, admitted separate Muslim electorates. They increased the number of proposed Muslim seats in Bengal. Separate electorates, limited reforms and the proposals for 'dyarchy' were consolidated in the 1919 Government of India Act which was followed by elections in 1920.

In 1916, Tilak had signed a pact of nationalist alliance with the Muslim League ('the Lucknow Pact') which committed Congress to greater separate electoral and institutional representation of Muslims than had been legislated for in the 1909 Act. Britain was also at war against Mesopotamia (now Turkey), and Indian troops were mobilized in very large numbers during this military campaign. For sections of the Indian Muslim leadership, Indian troops were fighting for Britain against a Muslim power, the Ottoman Caliphate as represented by the Sultan. Consequently, some Muslims appealed to Muslim Afghanistan to create a military alliance against the British. This was the start of the massive south Asian Khilafat movement, which gained strength from 1919 and especially after the Treaty of Sevres of August 1920, which effected the break-up of the Ottoman Empire by the Allies, including Britain. The movement grew massively in India under the leadership of the brothers Shaukat and Mohammad Ali, who in 1920 led a *hijra* (emigration) from India into Afghanistan of some 20,000 Muslims in protest at Britain's role against the Ottoman Empire and their belief that colonial India was a land of 'apostasy'. This catastrophic action was considered necessary as British India was seen as at war with a Muslim power, and hence Indian Muslims had a religious obligation to leave India for a Muslim country. Many Hindus contrasted this action and the Khilafat agitations with what was seen as a lack of mass Muslim involvement in the struggle for national liberation.

### *Beyond the Arya Ideal*

Gandhi, who by 1920 had become the dominant influence in Congress following the deaths of both Gokhale and Tilak, launched his non-cooperation movement (the *satyagraha*, or ‘truth-force’ campaigns) and, in an attempt to build unity ‘across the religious divide’, committed Congress to make support of the Khilafat movement a key plank in its non-cooperation program. The Khilafat movement was linked by Gandhi to the massive 1920 *satyagraha* and boycott campaigns against the colonial Government that were launched in the aftermath of the 1919 Jallianwala Bagh (Amritsar) massacre and the repressive Rowlatt Acts of the same year. In 1921, partly as a result of the nationwide Khilafat agitations, a peasant rebellion in Malabar in Kerala was superseded by a violent uprising by sections of the Muslim Mapilla (‘Moplah’) community, some of whom installed their own ‘caliphate’ and forced the conversion of some Hindus to Islam. The atrocities committed during the ‘Moplah Rebellion’ led to India-wide revulsion and retaliatory violence against Muslim communities, commencing a pattern of communal violence that was to intensify after the mid-1930s. It was perhaps Gandhi’s support for Khilafat and the subsequent events in Kerala that were to dramatically alienate some Hindus within and outside Congress and lead to the distinctive movement promoting the notion that India was to be an exclusively Hindu nation. It is significant that B. S. Moonje, a founder of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, was part of the Congress deputation to Malabar in the wake of the Mapilla ‘rebellion’.

The Muslim League had opposed Gandhi’s support for the Khilafat movement and in late 1920 the League broke its alliance with Congress because of Jinnah’s complaints about Hindu and Hindi language domination of Congress and the non-cooperation movement. This symbolized the collapse of the ‘Lucknow Pact’ of 1916. The Muslim League discourse of Hindu majority domination of Muslim minorities in the colonial legislatures and, ominously, in a future independent India was to become the key plank in the League’s campaign from this point. However, the idea that India was ‘two-nations’ was already being articulated at the turn of the century by *Hindu* leaders of Congress and the national movement, such as Lajpat Rai, and was reiterated forcefully by Savarkar and the Hindu Mahasabha in the 1930s. The languages of majorities and minorities, religious nationalism and communal violence were firmly established by the early 1920s. Furthermore, Gandhi’s decision in February 1922 to suspend *satyagraha* because of the killings of over twenty colonial police officers by anti-colonial demonstrators (the ‘Chauri Chaura’ incident), and his arrest and imprisonment soon after, were to lead to the collapse of the non-cooperation movement, and to serious rifts within the nationalist movement about the meaning, extent and reach of non-cooperation. The nature and meaning of non-cooperation had been the focus of considerable, complex debate and dissension for several years, both within and outside Congress, and the unfolding of several political tendencies either abandoning Gandhite methods

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or arguing for various degrees of cooperation with colonial rule during the 1920s was to be extremely significant for the shape of Hindu nationalist and Hindu communalist thinking. The question here becomes not one of whether Hindu nationalists were involved in the national movement but instead a different question about the nature of the dominant strategies advocated by Hindu nationalists regarding cooperation with British rule.

In 1935, the British government introduced two more Government of India Acts. The Acts were primarily aimed at extending the franchise and widening political representation, though with severe limits of British veto and a conception of 'dyarchy' in which the most important provincial powers and institutions were to remain British-controlled. However the Acts and the Communal Award of 1932, were as important for the further institutional codification of separate, mostly religiously defined minorities in the widening structures of electoral and political representation (electoral constituencies, electoral seats and reserved offices); these were extended from Muslims to Sikh, Christian, Anglo-Indian and European minorities, and reservations based on non-religious criteria were made in the case of, for example, women and labouring classes.

The British had also attempted to extend a separate electoral franchise to the 'untouchables' or 'scheduled castes' but withdrew following what was seen as a blackmailing 'fast unto death' by Gandhi in 1932, during which Gandhi made an agreement (the 'Poona Pact') with the reluctant dalit leader, Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891–1956) to create, for a 10-year period, more reserved seats within the legislatures for the 'depressed classes' than the British had promised. Gandhi argued that the British proposals would cleave the scheduled castes from 'the Hindu fold' to which he believed they belonged. Gandhi articulated a domineering caste-Hindu ideology about 'untouchables' that was barely different to that of the Hindu supremacist groups he opposed. The salience of the inter-war period was that a disastrous communal framework based on bare religious affiliation and the language of majorities and minorities had become established, would be foundational to demands for the Partition of India, and would dominate both Indian and Pakistani politics, and the character and campaigns of Hindu nationalism and Islamism after independence.

### **From Arya Samaj to Congress to Hindu Mahasabha**

Amidst these developments before and after the First World War, Lala Lajpat Rai's (1865–1928) symbolic trajectory from the Brahmo Samaj to the Arya Samaj, thence variously into and out of Congress, his alignment with the 'Extremist' section of Congress and some revolutionary nationalist activities, and then his emergence as a key figure in both the pre-Savarkarite Hindu Mahasabha and the Hindu Sangathan

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movement is both evocative and characteristic of the shape of Hindu nationalism in this period (Lajpat Rai 1965, 1966a, 1966b, Argov 1967, Nagar 1977.)

Lajpat Rai was important in the development of the Anglo Vedic College and was to head the 'College' faction of the Arya Samaj after its split. He had first come across Arya Samajists at the Government College at Lahore after 1881. He had previously been under the guidance of Pandit Shiv Narain Agnihotri, a Brahmo Samaj leader who was also initially associated with Dayananda and had subsequently fallen out with him, eventually starting his own Dev Samaj (on the latter, see Jones 1989: 103–6). Lajpat Rai joined the Arya Samaj in 1882 and rapidly became an influential figure. He became a legal representative in Jagraon and Rothak, and finally a lawyer, working first in Hissar, south Punjab and then in Lahore in the early 1890s. It was during this period, starting from 1893, that Lajpat Rai became practically involved in Congress activities. His interests in educational and industrial development (the latter becoming explicitly socialist in the following decades, particularly after his meetings with British socialists such as Hyndman) led to him becoming a member of the Indian National Congress Committee in 1901. While during his political career, Lajpat Rai was heavily involved in a wide range of social reform, industrial, anti-colonial and political activities, and in 1907 was deported to Mandalay Prison with Ajit Singh for revolutionary and seditious activities, this chapter will primarily focus on those of his activities that related to specifically political Hindu concerns.

Prior to his serious involvement in Congress, Lajpat Rai had published a series of *Open Letters* to Sir Syed Ahmed Khan between October and December 1888 (Lajpat Rai [1888] 1996a: 1–25). In 1887, Syed Ahmad Khan had both criticized Congress proposals for representative councils as 'seditious', and had declared that the interests of Muslims and Hindus were not identical as far as political representation in the councils was concerned, claiming that proposals for representation would mean Hindu majority domination over Muslims. If this was an example of what was frequently viewed in Hindu nationalist discourse as the early stirrings of Muslim separatism and Muslim collaboration with the British colonial government, its trajectory was by no means set.

Lajpat Rai's critique of Syed Ahmad Khan used the latter's earlier patriotic declarations against himself, particular those that argued for a common nationhood based on geography and irrespective of religious, 'racial' or linguistic differences (Lajpat Rai [20.12.1888] 1966a: 17–25). However, while Lajpat Rai criticized Ahmad Khan for suggesting that the interests of Muslims and Hindus were different, he did not powerfully state in those letters that the interests of Hindus and Muslims were the same or defined by a common nationhood. It was this formative lacuna or asymmetry that constituted an important characteristic of early Hindu nationalism, and allowed the latter to slide between Congress nationalism and an instinctive Hindu supremacism until it faced a different ideological challenge

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after the 1920s. Elaborating on the Hindu contours existing in pre-1920s Indian nationalism is not a difficult task and is illustrated by a variety of currents in the national movement, both moderate and revolutionary. Some of these areas are at least partially illustrated by Lajpat Rai's own views about Hindu nationalism elaborated from the late 1890s onwards.

#### *Lajpat Rai and Hindu Nationalism*

In 1899, Lajpat Rai published an article for the Indian National Congress in the *Hindustan Review* in which he declared that 'Hindus are a nation in themselves, because they represent a civilization all their own' (Mathur 1996: 1). This was not a new idea even then (see Chapter 2). However, for Lajpat Rai, this idea was directly influenced by a conception of Hindu nationalism in the aftermath of the 'purification' of Hinduism by the Arya Samaj. In 1902, Lajpat Rai entered a debate occurring in the pages of *Hindustan Review and Kayastha Samachar* between an anonymous 'Hindu Nationalist' and Pandit Madhao Ram about the basis for creating a 'Hindu Nationalism' ('A Study of Hindu Nationalism' in Lajpat Rai 1966a: 37–44). Indeed, discussion about the idea of 'Hindu Nationalism' spread from the pages of *Hindustan Review and Kayastha Samachar* and into the *Times of India* between 1900–1902 (*Kayastha Samachar: A monthly record and review*, November 1902 Vol. VI. No. 5: 468–70).

Lajpat Rai agreed with the main prescriptions of 'Hindu Nationalist', arguing that these echoed his earlier writings (Lajpat Rai 1966a: 37). It was his areas of disagreement with the 'Hindu Nationalist' that are important here. The 'Hindu Nationalist' had asserted that the concept of nationalism was a modern, European idea that could be appropriated by Hindus in their project of coming to nationhood. Lajpat Rai disagreed both with the view that the origins of the national idea were to be found in Europe and with the view that Hindus had historically possessed no sense of nationality.

In several key passages of his response, Lajpat Rai expressed a series of gestatory ideas, many of which were to find their way virtually unchanged in Savarkar's definitive *Hindutva*. Lajpat Rai dismissed the argument that the term 'Hindu' was a Persian term of abuse invented by 'Mohammedan invaders'. He argued that it had a much more ancient history, and only became a pejorative term under Muslim rule because it signified the fall of the 'Hindu nation'. However (as Savarkar was also to reiterate) it was used in ancient times as a name that *others* – such as the Persians of the Vendidad – used to describe the inhabitants of India. This formative idea that the name 'Hindu' was a patronymic that had been conferred by a constitutive outside, rather than as emergent from within Vedic or other religious texts, is both highly significant and proved repeatedly troublesome for

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later Hindu nationalists who could find no such name in the archaic texts of 'Hinduism' itself.

However, while ancient Hindu literature did not use the word 'Hindu' as a self-description, but instead the term *arya*, for Lajpat Rai even these ancient texts contained the sentiment of nationality, expressed most strongly in Aryan battles against their enemies, the *dasyus*, *chandals* and *mlechhas*. Against the view of 'Hindu Nationalist' that nationalism was a modern invention, Lajpat Rai explicitly situated the birth of 'Hindu nationality' in the Aryan Vedic period. This heritage, he argued, 'must be the fulcrum of the lever with which we are to rise as a nation'. He argued that the history of India had still to be written from 'a Hindu point of view', a task which would demonstrate Hinduism's ancient nationalism.

We the English educated Hindus of the present day, who claimed to have imbibed the new spirit of nationality and patriotism from the West would really do well to study a few chapters of the Vedic literature with care and thought. (Lajpat Rai 1966a: 40)

In opposing the view that nationalism was invented in nineteenth-century Europe, Lajpat Rai used precisely the method and epistemology of the latter to discern what he believed to be an earlier idea of nationalism in the Vedas. The idea that the foundations of modern nationalism were to be found in archaic primordialism was a key component in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European invention of nationalism.

In accordance with Dayananda's critique of brahmins, Lajpat Rai situated the fall of the 'Hindu Nation' after the Buddhist period as resulting from 'the genius of a jealous and perverted, sometimes corrupt and selfish priesthood [who] built a vast and stupendous superstructure of conventionalities and formalities, with an almost interminable labyrinth of rituals and ceremonials' (Lajpat Rai 1966a: 40–1). These obscured the true role of religion as the mainstay of nation. (Interestingly enough, unlike Savarkar after him, Lajpat Rai was well-disposed to Buddhism and did not view the non-violence of the latter as responsible for the degradation of an original Hindu nationalism.) For Lajpat Rai, 'Hindu ritualism', and not the absence of the spirit of nationality, was the bane of the Hindus. This antagonistic separation of Hindu nationality from caste Hindu religious tradition was an archetypal Arya Samaj formulation that was to find its way into the 'post-religious' authoritarian nationalism of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, but was also to become of source of tension within Hindu nationalism, both before and after independence. Lajpat Rai also situated the historical expression of Hindu nationality in the 'efforts of the Mahrattas and the Rajputs to throw off the foreign yoke and found a Hindu empire'. This transcendental conception of a temporal link between an ancient and a medieval 'Hindu nation' is significant and was stated most militantly by Savarkar.

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After having stated that nationality did not imply a complete union in all the details of religious, social, economic and sectarian life, Lajpat Rai asserted a comprehensive definition of nationality:

Run on a few basal principles in religion, on the community of a sacred language, and on the community of interests, the Hindus ought to foster the growth of a national sentiment which should be sufficiently strong to enable them to work for the common good in the different ways and according to the lights vouchsafed to each. Let us keep one ideal before us. *Let our ideal be sufficiently high to cover all, sufficiently broad and extensive to include all, who take pride in a common name, a common ancestry, a common history, a common religion, a common language and a common future.* We will not advance the cause of nationality by one inch if we decide to preserve an attitude of silent quietude and non-disturbing peace in all matters, religious and social. Such an attitude can only mean stagnation and gradual extinction. Struggle, hard struggle is the law of progress. Yes struggle we must, both inter se as well [as with] others. (Lajpat Rai 1966a: 43, emphasis added)

With one possible exception, the idea of a common ‘race’, perhaps indicated above by ‘ancestry’, this formulation of nation is virtually equivalent to that of Savarkar and vividly elides the distinction between a ‘Hindu’ and an ‘Indian’ nationalism.

As important was the thoroughgoing influence of Spencerian evolutionist political sociology, indicated above in the ‘hard struggle’ that was the ‘law of progress’. This frequently defined the field of intellectual production for many colonial and anti-colonial currents. The consequences of this epistemology were brought out most clearly by Lajpat Rai in an article published in 1907:

A question has often haunted us, asleep or awake, as to why is it that notwithstanding the presence among us of great, vigorous and elevating truths, and of the very highest conception of morality, we [Hindus] have been a subject race, held down for so many centuries by sets of people who were neither physically nor spiritually nor even intellectually so superior to us as *a fortiori* to demand our subjection. (‘The one pressing need of India’ [1907] in Lajpat Rai 1966a: 55)

This deceptively powerful formulation that encapsulated both ‘Hindu weakness’ and ‘Hindu strength’ has been foundational to successive waves of post-independence Hindu nationalism. The translation of the question, articulated in the colonial period, of why British colonialism had occurred into an *entirely different imaginary* of why Hindus had ‘repeatedly failed to repel foreign invaders’ over some ten to thirteen centuries is striking and considerable ideological and political content follows from posing the logic of a transcendental ‘Hindu history’ in this way. It was precisely this question that preoccupied both B. S. Moonje and K. B.

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Hedgewar, from which they derived the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh as the answer. In a densely fascinating way, a logic was started that severely minimized British colonialism within a much longer ‘historical’ frame of Hindu resistance to what were conceived as all ‘foreign invaders’. This logic culminated in Savarkar’s *Hindutva* ([1923] 1989), and Swami Shradhdhanand’s *Hindu Sangathan – Saviour of a dying race* (1926), both written in the midst of one of the most violent and troubled periods of anti-colonial agitation during the first manifestation of a genuinely mass anti-colonial movement, but which can be read with barely any indication within them that British colonialism was even present. (A similar theme preoccupied later Hindutva ideologues: the British colonial period was effectively dismissed or conceived as relatively benign, even civilizing and moral in character in comparison with the early or high medieval periods of Mughal rule, which were seen as periods of ruthless oppression and genocide of Hindus.)

The framing of colonial subjugation in such terms had distinctive intellectual conditions of possibility. As Lajpat Rai said:

We do not require a Herbert Spencer to tell us that the social efficiency of a social organism as such, depends upon the sense of social responsibility amongst the members of such an organism. The greater and the intenser [sic] the sense of responsibility amongst the individual members, regarding the safety and welfare of the whole, the greater and the stronger the efficiency of the organism. (‘The one pressing need of India’ [1907] in Lajpat Rai 1966a: 55)

Lajpat Rai’s political speeches frequently employed Spencerian themes of organicism, social flexibility, adaptability and adaptation, efficiency and inefficiency, survival and extinction. In particular, Spencer’s critical combination of ideas of the *collective survival of the fittest* with *individual liberty from domination* was to have significant resonance in colonial India. Spencerianism allowed for the development of a specifically naturalistic, ‘physiological’ and ‘biological’ theory of imperialism and anti-colonialism (see Chapter 4).

Lajpat Rai claimed that Hinduism did contain an organic sense of responsibility and survival, since it had continued to ‘reign supreme’ even after ‘twelve centuries of Islamic propaganda backed by all the forces of political ascendancy and moral superiority which is the anchor sheet of a virgin religion and a conquering creed’, and after a further ‘100 years of active evangelical work done in the name of Christ’. The fact that Hinduism existed at all was testimony to its strength and power. This was a key teleological and functionalist component of evolutionary sociology: the elementary fact of the contemporary existence of a social phenomenon was evinced as proof both of its inherent functional fitness and an indication of its telos. In essence, this was a naturalistic theory of imperialism, a transmutation of Spencer by those fighting colonialism. The use of Spencerian

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themes would inevitably lead to a focus on Hindu biological and physiological 'fitness', reproductive 'efficiency' and the necessity of strengthening the fertility of Hindu women.

One consequence of conceiving both nationalism and colonialism in naturalistic and 'physiological' terms was the requirement to explain a strong and powerful Hinduism able to resist other 'conquering' religions *and* the 'historical weakness' of Hindus unable to repel 'foreign invasions'. Both themes, central to Lajpat Rai's political epistemology, were to travel through Savarkar's formulation of Hindu identity and then into the 'man-moulding' activities of the RSS. Lajpat Rai articulated the strength and resilience of Hindus through their simple existence in the face of repeated 'foreign invasions'. (Interestingly enough, in the eighteenth-century Herder had used an idea of brahmin-Hindu religious and cultural resilience, which he argued the British could barely scratch the surface of, to make the case for the cultural depth and incommensurability of his nationalism concept.)

What then was the cause of the 'weakness' of Hindus and Hinduism, demonstrated most clearly for Lajpat Rai by the elementary fact of British colonial domination? He argued that this was primarily because of *individual* selfishness, greed and calculation that prevented organismic consciousness of the greater society and nation. The political remedy for Lajpat Rai was to inculcate a 'sense of social responsibility which requires each and every member of the organism to place the interests of the community or the nation over and above those of his own' (Lajpat Rai 1966a: 57). While individualism could be identified by Lajpat Rai with the 'selfishness' of, for example, the brahmin castes, there is another sense here in which the individualism of political rights and that of economic and social possessive individualism were problematized. A political sociology of the collectivity, drawing on influences such as Spencer, were mobilized to provide an organic view of the overintegrative capacities of Hinduism, the latter indeed dovetailing neatly into extant colonial discourses about Hinduism's amalgamating properties.

In his conceptions of nationalism, Lajpat Rai discussed Hindu nationality in a 'commonsense' and naturalized way as an integrative function that elided its difference from Indian nationality. This is an historical and theoretical issue of considerable importance during a period when distinct and sophisticated political languages of secularism were not available. After the 1920s, the distinction between Hindu nationalism and anti-communal (but not necessarily 'secular') Indian nationalism was to be politically forged, but a naturalized British discourse of group communalism and group rights substituted for a deeper elaboration of the meaning of secularism as constituting a substantive field distinct from a principled 'anti-colonial anti-communalism'.

Hence, Lajpat Rai both appeared to accept and frequently stated that Hindus and Muslims had something like a common national destiny, and severely castigated Syed Ahmad Khan for suggesting otherwise, and yet articulated Indian

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nationality as a Hindu nationalism. The faithful and imaginative holding of both these positions continued to be reproduced in Hindutva literature after the 1920s and is still central for what are viewed as the ‘moderate’ tendencies in the contemporary Hindutva movement. Lajpat Rai cultivated associations with both Gandhi and Jinnah, with ‘moderates’ and ‘radicals’ in Congress, *and* with organizations that explicitly called for ‘Hindu Raj’ and Hindu self-organization against Muslims. This was a convergence between an Indian nationalist who happened to have been raised within and affiliated to a Hindu religious tradition, and a Hindu supremacist for whom Hinduism was nationalism.

Lajpat Rai’s view of a Hindu nation represented a general intellectual current manifested around the turn of the century in colonial India. The distinctive aspect of this was the view that Hindus were historically a nation, and that they were a nation solely because of the associated view that Hinduism was an ancient civilization. There were various examples, often associated with Arya Samajist currents, which articulated a similar equivalence between the alleged historical existence of a Hindu nationality in India that was claimed to be primordial precisely because of another, different claim that there existed a primordial civilization that was in all its important aspects ‘Hindu’. The term ‘civilization’ was neither neutral nor unrelated to a longer intellectual project that disputed, while emulating, British claims about the civilizing mission while vehemently criticizing, and offering historical explanations for what were perceived as the uncivilized, barbaric or degenerate aspects of Hinduism. This intellectual equivalence between imagined nationalism and imagined civilization was extremely important and the civilizational method was indeed definitive (on the importance of civilizational aggrandisement for Hindu nationalism, see Bhatt 1997: 195–7, Bhatt 1999). The early Hindu nationalist organizations indeed had a civilizing mission that promised another ostensibly ‘indigenous’ path into modernity for those wayward populations that were deemed to require ‘upliftment’ into Hinduism, a mission that continues to this day.

#### *The Superiority of the ‘Hindu Race’*

One illustrative tract, written in the early 1900s by Har Bilas Sarada (1867–1955), an Arya Samajist social reformer and legislator now perhaps best known for his sponsorship of the Child Marriage Restraint Act (1925), and who could not easily be considered ‘extremist’ in his political views and activities, was entitled *Hindu Superiority: an Attempt to Determine the Position of the Hindu Race in the Scale of Nations* (Sarada [1906] 1975). This large uneven tome is striking for a variety of reasons. It engaged with and appropriated, if rather selectively, Orientalist and Western assessments of Indian antiquity while deploying a racial conception of the Hindu. Its fundamental thesis of an original, primordial Hindu nation that fell

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because of Hindu disunity was complemented with an eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European view of India as the cradle of world civilization. All ancient civilizations from America and Africa, through Europe to China were conceived by Sarda as originally Hindu and consequential upon a global ancient Hindu system of colonization and world conquest. According to Sarda, the ancient Hindus were virile, brave, strong, chivalrous patriots. Hindu women had complete equality with men; their oppression was a subsequent introduction by non-Hindus. Ancient Hindus had also comprehended all the arts, philosophies, jurisprudence, political and economic science, religion and the natural sciences which had been subsequently discovered or vindicated by the west. In line with Arya thinking, he defended the 'scientific' nature of the *varnashramadharma* while rejecting sub-caste. Typically, for its time, it located the downfall of the Hindus as of their own making.

The importance of *Hindu Superiority* did not reside in its claims, many of which pre-existed it, but rather its fragmentary, autodidact and dilettantist methodological approach in which *Western* texts of uneven veracity were deployed to demonstrate, *under modern colonial conditions*, the *ancient* achievements of *Hindu colonists*. The 'indigenous' idea emergent in the British imperial period that Hindus had also been colonists and empire-builders is suggestive. The book was published in 1906, the year after the Partition of Bengal and the rise of violent and terroristic movements against British rule. Yet, apart from asides against James Mill's chauvinism, its main concern with British colonialism was to demonstrate that ancient Hindus already possessed the art of good government and law, and indeed had given it to the world, and that the origins of both Christianity and of ancient English paganism (such as the druids and Stonehenge) were Hindu. But perhaps the most important aspect of *Hindu Superiority* was the development of a phantasmatic space of archaic Hindu greatness, evinced through religious texts mediated through Western understandings, which was understood to be equivalent to an unbroken essence of Hindu nationhood. It is instructive that the positive content of this nationhood resided in exactly those qualities of character, strength, valour, chivalry and patriotism that were associated with *British* ideological promulgations of self, and seen as lacking in their colonial subjects.

### **The Early Hindu Mahasabha and the rise of Hindu Sangathan**

Many of these pre-1920s currents were to take organizational forms that were to become especially important during the early 1920s. In 1906, the year that the All-India Muslim League was founded in Dacca and was received by the Viceroy, Minto, a Hindu Sabha (society) was formed in Punjab (a region that had also seen the first stirrings of the Muslim League) to promote Hindu interests within a framework, similar to that of the League, of complete loyalty to the British

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government. In a meticulous assessment by Richard Gordon, it has been argued that the early Hindu Sabhas were heavily restricted in their influence beyond a very few urban centres, were loosely formed conservative associations of middle-class men (such as lawyers, *zamindars* and *taluqdars*) from the kayastha, bania and brahmin castes, and tended to be affiliated with the Sanatan Dharm orthodoxy, rather than Arya Samaj modernizers (Gordon 1975). The influence of Arya Samaj activists upon their ideology and activities was hence nominal. However, not only do we see the presence of Arya Samaj activists in the early Sabhas but also that their interventions were decisive in formulating a wider ideological Hindu communalism.

### *Lal Chand and 'Hindu Nation'*

One of the influences behind both the formation and politicization of Punjab's Hindu Sabhas was a series of letters written by Rai Bahadur Lal Chand (1852–1912), an Arya Samajist and first President of the Dayananda Anglo-Vedic College, to *The Punjabee*. These were published as a pamphlet in 1909 entitled *Self-Abnegation in Politics* (Lal Chand [1909] 1938) and presented a prominent series of themes about Hindu self-deprecation in the face of Muslim communal interests in the aftermath of the Partition of Bengal and the Morley-Minto proposals. Lal Chand's themes about the 'lack' of Hindu self-pride, the 'shame' in calling oneself 'Hindu' and Hindu 'self-abnegation' in the face of minority religious demands are resonant in the contemporary Hindutva movement. Muslims, he argued, had extra-territorial support based in Constantinople and were seeking a 'Muslim Raj' in India, whereas Hindus, who had no support outside the walls of Hindusthan, were weak, gullible and disunited.

Lal Chand's key targets were Congress, and the Indian press which supported it. Within Congress, he claimed, the term 'Hindu' was 'forbidden' and 'tabooed', and Hindu nationality, Hindu sentiments and Hindu interests were 'obliterated' or submerged under 'Indian' grievances. We were, he said, 'afraid to utter the word Hindu' (Lal Chand 1938: 21). Conversely, Congress was keen to pass resolutions supporting 'purely Mohammedan interests'. A common and united nation may be a high and sentimental ideal, but was an impossibility when differences of race and nation existed (Lal Chand 1938: 4). The 'physiology of nations' demanded strength in the face of challenge.

[It] looks to me the very height of folly and absurdity to go on crying for a united nation when one important community, by its words and actions, make it persistently and absolutely clear that they do not desire nor seek union. The remedy when such evil exists is not to say we are one, but to declare emphatically that we are two. (Lal Chand 1938: 5)

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Lal Chand's letters were uncompromising in their open sectarianism, explicit advocacy of Hindu communal interest, and of their expressed fear that those professing Hinduism in India would diminish in numbers as the British facilitated the rise of a Muslim leadership and consequent 'Muslim domination' of India. Conversely, he held that in their quest for an Indian nation, Hindus had adopted a 'suicidal self-abnegation' in politics. To illustrate this, he presented examples of proportionate communal numerical representation in provincial councils and municipal administration in Punjab, Bengal, the Sind and elsewhere, within the judiciary, the police and army, educational institutions and in land distribution, within which he argued Muslims had been overwhelmingly favoured. Similarly, he vehemently criticized the privilege attached to Persian ('the badge of past slavery') and Urdu, rather than the Sanskrit or vernacular 'Hindu' languages. The letters aimed to demonstrate the oppression of and discrimination against Hindus and Hindu culture: 'This is the pass to which the Hindus, sons of the soil and its most ancient inhabitants, have been reduced' (Lal Chand 1938: 33). 'This is the depth of the degradation into which we have fallen. When shall we open our eyes and begin to see, speak and think as Hindus?' (Lal Chand 1938: 42).

Lal Chand made the plea for Hindus to form a separate nation (Lal Chand 1938: 20). The love for one's country, he argued, was based on the predominant *communal ideal* based on common descent and love of one's community. Conversely, the love for the geographical 'tract' in which communities settle was secondary:

Communal love, in fact, is the root of the majority of the sentiments which we love and cherish, not excluding even religion . . . The idea is to love everything owned by the community. It may be religion, it may be a tract of country, or it may be a phase of civilization. But these are mere outward clothes of the inner feeling. This then is the fire I wish to rekindle. (Lal Chand 1938: 103)

Blaming Congress for Hindu 'imbecility', Lal Chand proposed that Congress be dispensed with in its entirety. In its place, he advocated forms of Hindu communal self-organization for furthering and strengthening the Hindu interest, 'untrammelled by any consideration whatever for the interests of the other community' (Lal Chand 1938: 101). This would involve bringing all Hindu sections onto a common political platform where they would realize they are 'merely branches of the same stock and community' (Lal Chand 1938: 118).

I also intended and I have evidently succeeded partly to instil into the Hindu mind what some people choose to call sectarianism; but which I regard as the very breath of life, viz, that a Hindu should not only believe but make it part and parcel of his organization, of his life and of his conduct, that he is a Hindu first and an Indian after. (Lal Chand 1938: 70)

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Lal Chand argued that given the ‘weak’ position of the ‘Hindu community’, such organizations would fight for their interests within the legislative and administrative machinery of colonial government, to reconcile with rather than seek to antagonize the ruling powers (Lal Chand 1938: 100). He even opposed colonial self-government or a form of Dominion status as ‘chimerical’, partly because the British would not voluntarily grant it, but mostly because Hindus have ‘abjured and neglected’ work for themselves in ‘pursuit of a mirage’ of a united nation (Lal Chand 1938: 117–8). Instead, Lal Chand advocated the substitution of Congress Committees by Hindu sabhas, the Congress press by a Hindu press and the organization of a Hindu Defence Fund for the protection of Hindu interests against those of the Muslim League – ‘there ought to be political agitation [but] conducted in the interests of a purely Hindu cause’.

One of the most prominent aspects of such views at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, only a few years after the Partition of Bengal and the rise of revolutionary terrorist anti-colonialism, increasing demands for Home Rule in India and abroad, and Congress negotiations for some form of self-rule or increased representation of Indians in government is not simply the Hindu communal consciousness they inspired. It is also the concomitant setting into play a substitutionist logic, which was to become extremely important in the further development of Hindu nationalism over the decades that followed, in which Indian reformist or revolutionary struggles against British colonialism were counterposed to a demand for Hindu communal interests within the framework of British colonialism. This can be seen as a change in Hindu nationalist ideology from a preoccupation with demonstrating the political capacity of Hinduism as an ‘Indian nationalism’ equivalent or superior to British ideas of nation, to an accommodation with British colonialism within which a separate politicized public sphere of Hindu communal interests defined the ‘national interest’. It is significant that Lal Chand explicitly argued (indeed, warned) against making proposals, such as self-rule or independent status, which he believed would be detrimental for future generations of Hindus. This can be seen as major change in Hindu nationalist ideology and demonstrated how from this point Hindu nationalism developed in accordance with the manoeuvres of the British.

Until about 1915, the activities of the early Hindu Sabhas remained confined to cities in the Punjab, an Arya Samajist stronghold (Gordon 1975: 150). However, its 1909 Provincial Hindu Conference, held at Lahore, was attended by Lajpat Rai who made a speech on the ‘Desirability of Feeling of Hindu Nationality and Hindu Unity’, during which he reiterated his earlier statement of 1899 about Hindus constituting a distinct and separate ‘nation’ (Mathur 1996). In 1913, the Hindu Sabha undertook to form an India-wide (Sarvadeshik) Hindu Sabha to ‘safeguard the interests of the Hindu Community throughout India’ and the following year, the first Akhil Bharatiya (All India) Hindu Mahasabha Conference was organized

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at Hardwar during the Kumbh Mela. Further meetings were held during 1915 that defined the objectives of the All India Hindu Sabha:

- a. To promote greater union and solidarity amongst all sections of the Hindu Community and to unite them more closely as parts of one organic whole.
- b. To promote education among members of the Hindu Community.
- c. To ameliorate and improve the condition of all classes of the Hindu community.
- d. To protect and promote Hindu interests whenever and wherever it may be necessary.
- e. To promote good feelings between the Hindus and other Communities in India and to act in a friendly way with them, and in loyal Co-operation with the Government.
- f. Generally to take steps for promoting religious, moral, educational, social and political interests of the community.

Note – The Sabha shall not side or identify itself or interfere with or oppose any particular sect or sects of the Hindu Community. (Shraddhanand 1926: 109–10)

Notably, the Sabha framed its objective of loyal cooperation with the colonial government. Indeed, the All India Hindu Sabha did not organize annual national meetings during the mass *satyagraha* and boycott periods of 1919 or 1920, partly because it was by then a moribund organization but also because it tended to remain aloof from the explicit non-cooperation strategy of Congress. However, in its session of April 1921, during which the Sabha was renamed the ‘All-India Hindu Mahasabha’, the objective of loyal cooperation was appended with the aim of evolving ‘a united and self-governing Indian nation’. While cow protection societies and leagues had existed for over a decade, the Mahasabha launched further campaigns against ‘the slaughter of cows for the military and the export of beef, cows and bullocks to other countries’ and resolved non-cooperation with the British administration until cow slaughter had ended.

The Hindu Sabha viewed Hindus as part of an ‘organic whole’, and it viewed itself as above the many doctrinal or sectarian differences within Hinduism. This was a reflection of the persistent antagonism between Arya Samaj and Sanatan Dharm representatives whenever the issue of religious or caste reforms arose and from which the Mahasabha attempted to distance itself. It is curious that an overarching, all-embracing, non-sectarian ideal of militant ‘Hinduism’, the model for both Savarkar’s *Hindutva* and much contemporary Hindu nationalism, arose not directly from antagonism to Islam or Christianity but as a result of a deep, sectarian conflict between two novel nineteenth-century *Hindu* movements, the ‘fundamentalist’ Arya Samaj and the brahminic Sanatan Dharm. Prior to the 1920s, the Mahasabha had opposed communal representation – with the significant proviso that if communal representation was to take place, Hindus should be represented commensurate with their numerical weight in the population. But by the early 1920s, it considered its role as representing, defending and strengthening the separate public sphere of Hindu communal interests.

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The influences upon and leadership of the Hindu Mahasabha from 1924 included N. C. Kelkar, Lajpat Rai, Madan Mohan Malaviya and B. S. Moonje, important figures in the next phase of the development of Hindu nationalist ideology and practice. (However, it should be noted that both Motilal Nehru and M. K. Gandhi presided over major Hindu Mahasabha events and indeed some Congress leaders were to ask the Mahasabha to merge with it after Independence.) After 1922, under the leadership of Malaviya (whose precise relationship with Hindu nationalism requires much further elaboration), the Mahasabha's annual meetings coincided with the annual meetings of the Indian National Congress, within which it was to play an increasingly influential, if complex political role, remaining ideologically distant from the non-cooperation strategy of the Swaraj Party, while aligning itself with 'responsive cooperation' factions within Congress and with remnants of the Hindu Sabha movement of the previous decade (Gordon 1975).

From 1925, the Mahasabha, which was committed to a strategy of co-operation, allowed its provincial sabhas to contest provincial elections and its elected officers to take up government posts. The Mahasabha strategy of exclusively promoting its candidates was directly related to its opposing Muslims, representatives of non-brahmin parties, and those it considered prejudicial to 'Hindu interests' who were elected to the legislatures; conversely, its own candidates were seen to safeguard what it viewed as 'Hindu interests'. Under Malaviya, the Mahasabha had made significant inroads into the political machinery of Congress, opposing both the Gandhian and Swarajist factions and their (divergent) strategies of non-cooperation. By 1926, the Mahasabha had not only claimed the right, within Congress, of its local Sabhas to nominate their own candidates for local elections but had attempted to get Congress to abstain from provincial elections where the Mahasabha proffered an alternative candidate representing 'Hindu interests'. Communal organizations had been blacklisted by Congress in 1925 and 1926. The Swaraj Party, then controlling Congress, was to curtail the influence of the Mahasabha, viewing the later as a communal organization (Gordon 1975). Congress later resolved in 1934 to forbid any of its members to simultaneously belong to the Hindu Mahasabha, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh or the Muslim League.

From the early 1920s, the attention of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha turned towards the issue of religious conversions and *shuddhi*, and the formation of the All-India Shuddhi Sabha in 1923 under the aegis of the Arya Samaj. This had two aspects: campaigns to 'reclaim' 'neo-Christians' and 'neo-Muslims', and eventually any Muslims, into Hinduism; and campaigns to 'purify', 'uplift' and 'return to the Hindu fold' those belonging to 'untouchable' or *adivasi* (tribal) groups. During the Arya Samaj *shuddhi* campaigns of the previous century, these strategies had been extremely problematic for Hindu orthodoxy and for various regional caste and *jati* leaderships who had refused to accept 'converted' individuals and groups or to dispense with the strictures around untouchability or caste commensal rules.

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Similar issues confronted those in the Hindu Mahasabha who argued for caste reforms. This area is worth dwelling on by considering the Hindu Sangathan movement, because it was through the issue of ‘conversions’ that the next key stage of Hindu communal-nationalist ideology was forged and continues to resonate strongly today.

#### **Shraddhanand, Biopolitics and Hindu Sangathan**

In 1909, Lt Colonel U. N. Mukerji of the Indian military service had published an influential pamphlet, *Hindus – A dying race*, based on his articles to *The Bengalee*. Using the results of the 1901 Colonial Census, he had argued rather simplistically that in just over 400 years, Hindus (‘the Indo-Aryan race’) would cease to exist both because of the relative increase in the Christian population (due to missionary activity) and the increase in the Muslim population (resulting from conversions to Islam and allegedly higher Muslim birth rates). This terrifying invocation of *biological* Hindu extinction (Datta 1999) had a remedy: a focus on those groups of the Indian population that were otherwise considered marginal – the ‘tribals’ and ‘untouchables’ who were seen as willing if misguided fodder for Christianity. The pamphlet hugely influenced an Arya Samajist, Munshi Ram (1857–1926), who had become a *sannyasi*, Swami Shraddhanand, and was a key founder of the Hindu Sangathan movement that emerged from the revitalized Hindu Mahasabha of the early 1920s.

Swami Shraddhanand was previously leader of the ‘Mahatma’ faction during its dispute with the Dayananda Anglo-Vedic ‘College’ faction within the Arya Samaj that led to its first major split. He subsequently headed the Punjab Arya Samaj (becoming president of the Punjab Arya Pratinidhi Sabha) and founded his own Gurukul Kangri (school) in 1900, which was itself subject to bitter internecine disputes about curriculum and doctrinal purpose. Similarly, vicious disputes about the status and fallibility of Dayananda’s teachings continued to affect both Arya Samaj factions. Shraddhanand, like the previous head of the opposing ‘College’ faction, Lajpat Rai, was also to be involved in Congress activities in the 1920s; to differing degrees, both were associated with Hindu Mahasabha activities from the same period.

In the period from 1905 until 1919, Shraddhanand had severely criticized anti-British political agitation, whether revolutionary or reformist. When the Arya Samaj had come under suspicion for seditious activities, particularly after the arrest and deportation of Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh in 1907, Shraddhanand, while opposed to the arrests, portrayed the Arya Samaj as a loyal, non-political, purely religious organization having no subversive or seditious aims (Shraddhanand 1926, Shraddhanand 1961, Jordens 1981). He viewed politics as in essence an impure diversion from religious learning. However, he had strongly agitated for a range

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of reforms within Hinduism, mostly within the framework of Arya Samaj ideology but with significant modifications that were to be consequential for his militant Hindu nationalism.

Shraddhanand had remained aloof from the national movement until he met Gandhi. According to one of his biographers, it was Gandhi's religious simplicity and commitment that transformed Shraddhanand towards active support for the *satyagraha* and non-cooperation campaigns (Jordens 1981). Shraddhanand is frequently viewed as a central figure in the 1920s anti-Rowlatt *satyagraha*, and often portrayed as a major and unique symbol of Hindu-Muslim unity, especially because of his preaching of national unity from the pulpit of the Jama Masjid in Delhi and his singular bravery in the face of armed colonial police. However, his active involvement in the non-cooperation movement and Congress spans just a few years from 1919 until 1922, when Congress opposed participation in his *shuddhi* campaigns. Thereafter, from 1923, he devoted himself to Hindu nationalist and Hindu communal interests on an India-wide scale. Again, his trajectory into and out of Congress, like that of Lajpat Rai, muddies an easy understanding of the 'secular' foundations, and indeed anti-communalism, of Congress.

In 1912, Shraddhanand met U. N. Mukerji in Calcutta who explained to him his fear of Hindu extinction (Shraddhanand 1926: 14–15). Shraddhanand claimed to have then spent the next thirteen years as a student of statistics, analysing the census reports for 1901, 1911 and 1921. These resulted in his book, *Hindu Sangathan: Saviour of the dying race*, written in 1924 as the 'solution' to Mukherji's *Hindus – The dying race*.

The great Aryan Nation is said, at the present moment, to be a dying race not because its numbers are dwindling but because it is completely disorganised. Individually, man to man, second to none on earth in intellect and physique, possessing a code of morality unapproachable by any other race of humanity, the Hindu Nation is still helpless on account of its manifold divisions and selfishness. (Shraddhanand 1926: 127)

Shraddhanand's influential tract was important for its reiteration of the fear of Hindu extinction, and because it proposed a solution, *sangathan* or the strategic organization of Hindu society, to the perceived problem of Hindu numerical decline and degeneration into the system of sub-castes. *Hindu Sangathan* knitted together Shraddhanand's quite dogmatic Arya Samajist philosophy into a political programme for Hindu organization while presenting a renewed framework for interpreting Indian history and the place of Hindus within it. *Hindu Sangathan* was written within the same few years as Savarkar's *Hindutva* (while it does not refer to the latter, Shraddhanand does commend Savarkar in other texts). It can be seen as a product of the consolidation of Hindu nationalist ideology in the 1920s following Gandhi's withdrawal of the non-cooperation movement, and in the political aftermath of the Khilafat agitations.

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*Hindu Sangathan* is a prominent example of the products of late nineteenth-century and turn-of-century 'neo-Vedic' ideology, bearing the unmistakable stamp of the Arya Samaj. For Shradhdhanand, who based his historical methodology on primarily colonial and Orientalist writers, ancient India had been ruled by the Aryan race for 'millions' of years and had colonized and given birth to the entire civilized world. (The term 'Aryan' would have been based on the ethnological and anthropometric studies of Herbert Hope Risley and his collaborators, studies adjacent to the colonial censuses that Shradhdhanand claimed to have read and that were readily available in India.) Aryan colonists, he claimed, had been sent from India to both poles, to bring civilization and knowledge to both hemispheres. The Aryans, who gave the ancient name of *Aryavarta* 'to our motherland' possessed 'a real civilization which has not been equalled even up till now' (Shradhdhanand 1926: 1). Similarly, the Aryan social polity was an ideal organized according to the *varna vyavastha* or system of four castes, which, according to Shradhdhanand meant the organic and functional organization of society according to one's 'attributes and works, quality and action, character and conduct' rather than because of heredity. This displacement of individual heredity for a hierarchically defined social organism retained biological tropes while apparently claiming to dismiss hereditarianism. As with Lajpat Rai, Shradhdhanand usurped and strategically reversed colonial discourse, while demonstrating a modernist preoccupation with biopolitics and population demographics.

The 'downfall of the nation', according to Shradhdhanand, occurred because of the rise of pride and jealousy, as shown in the Mahabharata war between the Pandavas and Kauravas, and the rise of a brahmin aristocracy that reduced the other castes to servility. The system of *brahmacharya*, in which the brahmin-Hindu renounced the world and sought spiritual education, was replaced by heredity, blind faith, superstition and fetish worship. Sub-castes mushroomed, untouchability (the 'panchamas' or fifth 'caste') arose and with it grew the shudras and 'untouchables', a third of the population, living under 'a social and economic tyranny unparalleled in the history of the world'. If this is one reason for 'the dying of the Hindu race', Shradhdhanand was also at pains to highlight at length what he viewed as the conversions by violence, force, fraud and inducements of those groups by Muslim conquerors and Christian missionaries. (These long sections of *Hindu Sangathan* could be virtually reproduced unchanged today and would be barely distinguishable from the propaganda of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad.)

While Shradhdhanand was clear that it was the tyranny of brahminist orthodoxy that often drove some groups to Islam or Christianity, he also needed to demonstrate the resilience of 'Hinduism' in the face of the corrupt and dishonest methods of conversion allegedly used by Islamic and Christian proselytisers. In this sense, deeply resonant today, the strength of Hinduism is simply that it existed despite the fraudulent attempts to disparage it. There were precise intellectual conditions

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of possibility by which the Arya Samaj, an explicitly unorthodox, and initially an avowedly non-Hindu movement, could undertake conversion campaigns legitimately while considering those undertaken by Christianity or Islam as inherently illegitimate.

Shraddhanand proposed several remedies to restore to Hindus their 'ancient status in the world'. He recommended the revivification of the practice of *ashram dharma*. Opposing the Hindu Sabha's lower minimum ages for the marriage of boys and girls, he urged Dayananda's prescriptions of 25 years for males and 16 years for females. Shraddhanand's reasons were twofold – his belief that the progeny of younger adults was biologically weaker, and hence a source of weakness for the 'Hindu race'; and that the recommended ages allowed for the education of youth, and the institution of *brahmacharya*, whose knowledge would filter down and strengthen the Hindu community. He also proposed that all child widows be allowed to remarry, and provided various remedies for unconsummated marriage or widowhood (Shraddhanand 1926).

Shraddhanand also urged the revival of the *varnashramadharma* while urging the destruction of the system of sub-castes. The 'resurrection' of the system of only four main castes and the abolition of all sub-castes may appear a paradoxical, if not entirely anomalous solution to the problem of untouchability, particularly for a person like Shraddhanand who opposed untouchability. However, this was a dominant strand in Hindu nationalist thinking that attempted to articulate the Vedic and *Manudharmashastra* caste system, which was considered sacred, while opposing sub-caste, since the latter was considered to be the basis of Hindu weakness and division.

Of considerable importance was the use of the warning in the *Manudharmashastra* of the degradation and doom, symptomatic of the advance of the Kali Yuga, that can befall a society once shudras become the majority of the population. Both Shraddhanand and Lajpat Rai used this section of *Manu* to argue against untouchability and for the necessity of 'purifying' the 'scheduled castes' and 'reconverting' them to Hinduism. (This particular section of *Manu* is also frequently quoted in later Hindutva literature.) *Manu* is the most important text of archaic religious jurisprudence for the legitimation of brahmin and kshatriya caste superiority and shudra, 'untouchable' and women's inferiority and suppression by the caste Hindu traditions. The use of *Manu* to argue against untouchability or for 'purification' is disingenuous and can only make logical sense once its founding precepts about caste hierarchy and shudra subjugation have already been accepted as necessary and legitimate. Indeed, the section of *Manu* that warns against shudra 'over-population' explicitly begins by stipulating the solely *hereditary* rights enjoyed by brahmins to provide guidance on justice (*dharma*), rights which a shudra can *never* possess. As *Manu* in its characteristically direct manner states, if a shudra did dispense advice on righteousness (*dharma*), the kingdom would go under like

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‘a cow in the mud’. The deeply political and biological nuances in the way *Manu* was used need to be noted. Of importance here is the manner in which caste was articulated in a ‘Malthusian’ language of social checks on biological population demographics, a coupling of *Manu* and Malthus that highlighted a radically different socio-political agenda.

Shraddhanand urged that brahmins abolish intra-caste differences, and that the Rajputs, Khattris, Jats, Gujjars and others

be one recognised society of protectors of nation. All the castes and sub-castes engaged in trade and agriculture should be included in the vaishya caste. And the rest should constitute the Shudra caste and serve society. There should be free marriage relations, to begin with, within the castes, and Anuloma marriages should not be interfered with. Then gradually Pratiloma marriages should be introduced. And lastly, character and conduct should become the determining factors in fixing the Varna of a Hindu. But interdining among all the castes should be commenced at once – not promiscuous eating out of the same cup and dish like Muhammadans, but partaking of food in separate cups and dishes served by decent Shudras. (Shraddhanand 1926: 136)

Why shudras could only be placed to serve the other castes, which does not in fact alter their social position, is not explained. Similarly, to argue that this was a tract of its time, and simply reiterated a modernized version of Hinduism’s allegedly transcendental capacity ‘to include and hierarchize’ (Dumont 1980) would be misleading since Shraddhanand was writing during a period when strong anti-caste discourses were well established.

Shraddhanand’s partial opposition to *jati*, aspects of gender inequality and untouchability has to be considered within his narrative against what he perceived as the threatening demography of Islam and Christianity. His prescriptions on child marriage were directly related to his belief that early marriage and conception led to physically weak children and thus physiologically weak Hindus. His belief that young widows be allowed to remarry was precisely related to his fear that young widows could not procreate if they remained unmarried. He compared traditional Hindu prescriptions about child marriage and widowhood directly with Muslim and Christian age variations in marriage and widowhood, as well as the allegedly more prolific Muslim birth rate. Christians and Muslims, he argued, also married later and thus had biologically stronger and numerically greater progeny. Similarly, his attacks on the Hindu Mahasabha for earlier passing a resolution against untouchability that (in the face of Sanatan Dharma opposition) nevertheless did not go so far as to allow ‘untouchables’ to draw water from a common well, attend any Hindu temple or wear the sacred thread, was compared directly to Muslims and Christians who could use the same water wells as caste Hindus. ‘Muslim prostitutes’, he argued, were allowed to dance in front of temples that

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‘untouchables’ could not enter (Shraddhanand 1926: 136–7). In each of the caste and gender reforms he proposed, the treatment of ‘untouchables’ by brahmin and other caste Hindus was explicitly contrasted with the favourable treatment enjoyed by Christians and Muslims.

One of the most consistent arguments of Shraddhanand concerned ‘the untouchables’, who he argued should be immediately brought into the shudra caste after a purification ceremony. They numbered some 75 million individuals who were prey to conversions ‘by beef eating religious denominations’ because of the stubbornness of a mere four million orthodox brahmins. ‘Untouchables’, including ‘tribals’, he argued, once belonged to one of the three higher castes of Hinduism. They had become ‘socially degraded’ probably because of their ‘moral degradation’ but once ‘uplifted’ and having reformed their way of life and morality, ‘nothing should stand in the way of their regaining their former positions.’ It is clear throughout the text of *Hindu Sangathan* that the mass of those outside the Hindu caste system were important precisely because of their numerical and demographic strength for Hinduism and of the fear, consistently projected by Shraddhanand, that they would be lost to Islam or Christianity, and thence contribute to the extinction of the Hindu race. His was not an argument that scheduled castes should as of right, and with reference only to their condition, enjoy greater freedoms and liberties; it was rather that Christians and Muslims already had such liberties whereas those who were only important because they could potentially become incorporated as low castes within a hierarchical Hinduism and increase its numerical strength, did not. This orientation whereby the strategy towards populations outside the caste system should be to bring them into a hierarchical system of caste was definitive of *sangathan*, and is a key characteristic of today’s Hindutva movement.

### *Syncretism and Repugnance*

The main practical remedy Shraddhanand proposed to prevent the decline of the Hindus was to oppose the ‘evil’ of conversions to Islam and Christianity. He recounted an incident in 1923 during which, while Congress was meeting with Khilafat leaders, the All India Kshatriya Mahasabha had resolved to ‘take back’ 450,000 Malkana Rajputs into the kshatriya caste. The Malkana Rajputs practised a form of religion that was syncretic and comprised Hindu and Islamic beliefs and practices, but they were often seen as Muslims. The first large-scale ‘reconversion’ campaigns Shraddhanand highlighted as indicative of the growth of the Hindu Sangathan movement concerned *not a Muslim population but a syncretic one* that could not be categorized unambiguously by ‘Hindu’ or ‘Muslim’ labels. Of similar importance was Shraddhanand’s concern that ‘Muslim proselytizers’

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had targeted this same community. Shradhdhanand proposed in 1923 the formation of the Bharatiya (All-India) Hindu Shuddhi Sabha to undertake India-wide conversions, initially of those termed 'neo-Muslims', but often comprising communities with syncretic religious traditions. This syncretism was interpreted by Shradhdhanand as the 'casting of yearning glances towards their Hindu brethren for the past two centuries or more' by communities whose entry into Hinduism was forbidden by orthodoxy. He hence urged the 'reclamation' of these 'strayed brethren', the neo-Muslims and neo-Christians.

Two conspicuous processes, the logic of modernist demographic enumeration and the imperative of unambiguous classification, are glaringly obvious throughout Shradhdhanand's text. These process of numerical and categorical reasoning are distinctive to modernist configurations of the populace, groups and nations. As Datta has argued, groups that could not be enumerated or categorized under dominant religious classifications were problematized by Hindu communalism (Datta 1999). Of additional importance here is the logic of purity and danger highlighted by Mary Douglas (1991) in which the target groups for Hindu supremacism were not Muslims and Christians but those who offended and created revulsion for the Hindu chauvinist sensibility because they could not be nominated as Christians, Muslims or Hindus. Instructively, a circular by E. A. Gait, census commissioner for the 1911 census, proposed syncretic 'Hindu-Muslim' categories and the classification of 'untouchables' as 'not Hindus'. This was received by Arya Samajists and Hindu leaders in the Punjab and United Provinces as the potential 'loss' of sixty million 'Hindus', and resulted in the political galvanization of Hindu 'orthodoxy' against the census categories, combined with an intensification of Arya Samaj *shuddhi* activities (Lajpat Rai 1915: 227–33).

The central thrust of these activities was about the disciplining and 'purification' of Indian groups and communities that were economically, politically and culturally marginal, and yet numerically large – 'untouchables' and hybrid communities were important because they could be nominated as 'Hindu'. As important was the different civilizing mission, based on 'purification', 'social hygiene' and 'upliftment', whose intellectual conditions of thinkability were those of British colonialism itself: how could a minority claim political hegemony over a majority, if not by modernist processes of nominal reasoning, as subjects of the British King-Emperor, or as subjects of a Hindu nation? Finally, Shradhdhanand urged the adoption of Hindi and the Devanagari script throughout India, and, as the first step towards Hindu national solidarity and unity (*sangathan*), building of a Hindu Rashtra (Hindu Nation) *mandir* (temple) in every town and major city, which would hold at least as many people as the major mosques in northern India. The Hindu Rashtra *mandir* would be based on the worship of the cow as mother, the goddess of knowledge, and the motherland.

### **The Vagaries of Non-cooperation**

Shraddhanand was shot and killed by a Muslim in 1926, the year that *Hindu Sangathan* was published. However, the Hindu Sangathan movement and the Hindu Mahasabha grew in strength from the mid-1920s under the guidance and leadership of Madan Mohan Malaviya, Lajpat Rai and B. S. Moonje. From 1921, coinciding with the end of Gandhi's mass *satyagraha* campaigns, to the middle of the decade, there were significant and instructive developments in the national political field. The mass arrests of nationalist activists and the outlawing of Congress by the British in 1921 resulted in the imprisonment of Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Lajpat Rai and other Congress leaders and activists within the national movement. This created considerable factional dissension within Congress regarding the strategy of non-cooperation with the British.

While Gandhi was imprisoned, Motilal Nehru (1861–1931) and Chitta Ranjan Das (1870–1925) formed a faction within Congress, the Swajarist group (1922) which became the Swaraj (Self-Rule) Party (from 1923–7). The Party had the initial aim of contesting the elections to the Central Legislative Assembly in 1923 while adopting a policy of indiscriminate walk outs and 'uniform, continuous and consistent' obstruction of all processes of legal policy making in the colonial legislature. However, even during their formative stage in 1922, the Swarajists had internally split between those wishing to continue the formal Congress policy of non-cooperation by obstruction and those who advocated entry into the legislatures with the aim of 'responsive cooperation' with the British. A key factor in the split of the Swaraj Party 'from top to bottom' was the impact of the Malaviya group organized through the Hindu Mahasabha, which was important in explicitly aligning 'responsivism' with Hindu communal demands (Gordon 1975, Hasan 1991). The Swaraj policy was later changed to 'resistance to the bureaucracy [in so far as it] impeded the nation's progress towards Swarajya'. It is here worth analytically distinguishing the complex political tendencies in and around the Swaraj Party and noting the salience of the last one: absolute non-cooperation, unreconstructed Gandhianism, forms of limited cooperation still having the aim of self-rule, 'responsive cooperation', and 'responsive cooperation' solely in order to secure 'Hindu interests'.

Lajpat Rai joined the Swaraj Party in 1923 and worked for the elections in the Punjab that year. While throughout the initial period of dissension he remained with the Congress group, he typically articulated intermediate positions between absolute non-cooperation and 'responsive cooperation' while supporting the latter (see, for example, Lajpat Rai 1966b: 316–22). In 1925, the Swaraj Party was riven with serious conflicts because of the rise in strength of the 'responsivist' group, led by M.R. Jayakar, N.C. Kelkar and B. S. Moonje, the latter a foundational figure

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in the newly formed Hindu nationalist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, which evolved in the period 1924–6.

Similarly, and in a complex but parallel development, Madan Mohan Malaviya and Lajpat Rai, both leading figures in the Hindu Mahasabha, were to form variously an ‘Independent Congress Party’ and a ‘Nationalist Party’ (in 1926) again with the aim of ‘responsive cooperation’ with the British government. Conversely, by the end of 1929, Congress had passed its historic Purna Swaraj (Absolute Self-Rule) resolution declaring complete freedom from the British. While it would seem to be an elementary matter to present a narrative in which the non-sectarian national movement was determined to oppose and obstruct British rule, while those with Hindu nationalist leanings chose at virtually every turn to cooperate with British rule, this would be a simplification, because there had historically been non-sectarian ‘moderates’ within Congress who supported varying degrees of cooperation (such as Gokhale), while ‘Hindu nationalists’ such as Tilak had consistently taken ‘radical’ positions of absolute and immediate self-rule. However, in the crucial if extremely complex period of the mid-1920s, it is striking that the major figures involved in the national movement who opposed absolute non-cooperation – Lajpat Rai, Madan Mohan Malaviya and B. S. Moonje – were also important in the by then burgeoning and militant Hindu nationalist organizations that existed within and outside the Indian National Congress.

#### *Lajpat Rai, ‘Cooperation’ and Hindu Communal Interests*

Lajpat Rai’s political trajectory and concerns after 1924 until his death in 1928 form an illustrative ideological map of the kinds of complex positions that were ostensibly central to the national movement but clearly favoured Hindu communal interests and generally opposed Muslim ones. Lajpat Rai lobbied for purely Hindu interests and consistently argued against the ‘policy of appeasement’ of Muslims. He provided strong leadership for the Hindu Mahasabha (of which he was President in 1925), Hindu Sangathan and the *shuddhi* movements, urging the growth of the latter against the corresponding *tabligh* and *tanzim* activities among Muslim communities. He opposed the politicization of the Hindu Mahasabha, and talk of ‘Hindu Raj’ or ‘Muslim Raj’ while bemoaning the historic weakness of Hindus, claiming that Hindu Sangathan and Indian nationalism were entirely compatible and necessary for each other. Lajpat Rai was an extremely influential member of Congress who accepted the need for Hindu-Muslim unity, that Hindus and Muslims shared a common interest, even a composite nationality (Lajpat Rai 1966b: 157–9, 162–3). But he had already declared in 1917 that he was ‘a Hindu nationalist’. While a willing supporter of non-cooperation (‘Speech at 35th session of Indian National Congress, Nagpur, December 1920’ in Lajpat Rai 1966b: 67) who was extremely critical of Gandhi’s suspension of civil disobedience (Lajpat Rai 1966b:

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88, 91), he consistently adopted a more pragmatic position towards absolute non-cooperation and absolute independence, typically arguing that these were legitimate aims, but the reality of political possibilities demanded a more compromised position, if not their absolute rejection.

His conception of the politically possible delineated his movement towards an explicitly Hindu communalist position within a few years. In discussing the 'Hindu-Muslim problem' during 1924, following his resignation from Congress, Lajpat Rai (using Spencer) bemoaned the growth of the idea of absolute freedom and absolute rights in religious matters, at the expense of duties towards the nation: 'All organic relations depend upon the mutual obligations of the members comprising the organism. No part of the organism has any absolute right' (Lajpat Rai 1966b: 176). While consistently viewing communalism as an invention of British statecraft, he traced its growth to the principle of separate communal organization, cooperation with the British and opposition to self-rule of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and the Muslim leadership that followed in his wake – 'the Aligarh School of Muhammadans became characteristically anti-Hindu and pro-Government'. He portrayed Islam as an intolerant, dogmatic religion in comparison with Hinduism, which despite its caste system, was 'the most tolerant of all great religions in the world' (Lajpat Rai 1966b: 184, 186–7). Gandhi was criticized for asking Hindus to concede to Muslim religious demands while never making a similar request to Muslims; similarly Gandhi's assertion that Muslims had accepted non-cooperation 'was absolutely unwarranted'. Remarkably, he said that untouchability must have arisen as a result of Hindu 'non-cooperation with foreign rulers who happened to be beef-eaters' (Lajpat Rai 1966b: 189–90). However, the 'enemies' of previous centuries were now neither foreigners nor rulers and were an integral part of the Indian nation. Despite this, he argued, Muslims leaders over the past fifty years had implanted the idea in the Muslim masses that Hindus were 'Kafirs'.

While Lajpat Rai also consistently blamed the Arya Samaj, as well as Vivekananda and Sister Nivedita for fostering an intolerant Hindu communal consciousness, he viewed this as a response to what he perceived as earlier Muslim communalism and cooperation with British rulers, first through the formation of the denominational Aligarh College and then the subsequent fostering of a logic of separate representation and separate electorates. Lajpat Rai conceded that some of these activities may have been necessary for Muslim advancement into education and government, in a manner that Hindus already enjoyed. But the fact that Muslims were underrepresented in government posts was their own fault for not taking sufficient advantage of education under British rule, and not the fault of Hindus who did.

Lajpat Rai's narrative which depicted Muslim communalism as exclusive, self-seeking, anti-national, anti-Indian and in complete alliance with the British, whereas

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Hindu communalism was both a response to Muslim separatism and represented a 'cult of political freedom' from British imperialism, was central to his justification for the flourishing of Hindu communalist organizations from the mid-1920s. This discourse was pivotal in legitimizing Hindu nationalist strategies of cooperation with the ruling British power and of opposing both the Congress and the national movement, especially strands in the latter that were to remain committed to absolute non-cooperation, obstruction of British rule and immediate and complete independence.

Lajpat Rai argued that many Muslims *had* genuinely committed themselves to the non-cooperation movement, but 'in very many cases, their nationalism seemed to be secondary to their Pan-Islamism' (Lajpat Rai 1966b: 196). Muslims, he argued, were opposed to the British mainly because the British had been at war against other Muslim countries, and not because of their unconditional love for India and its freedom. 'Divided allegiance and divided love cannot produce either good nationalists or good patriots' (Lajpat Rai 1966b: 197). Moreover, it was only in India that exclusivist and Pan-Islamic Muslims could be found, whereas in every other Muslim country, the task of nation-building had predominated. Conversely:

Hindus cannot be anything but Indians. They have no other country and no other nation to look to. They cannot, therefore, be accused of any kind of Pan-Hinduism, in the sense in which the term is used in relation to Islam. Hinduism and Indianism are, in their case, synonymous terms. (Lajpat Rai 1966b: 203).

Lajpat Rai's discussions of the *shuddhi* and *sangathan* movements were couched in similar terms. While critical of Swami Shradhanand and the earlier Arya Samaj *shuddhi* activities, he defended *shuddhi* as 'non-political', and its adoption by the Hindu Mahasabha as 'partly political, partly communal and partly humanitarian'. The *shuddhi* movement, he argued, had come to stay and had to be accepted; it could not be stopped as long as non-Hindu agencies were undertaking proselytizing work. Similarly the *sangathan* (Hindu Sabha) movement need not be inherently anti-Muslim (though Lajpat Rai also said that the fact that it was anti-Muslim was 'the only thing that keeps it alive'), but, in comparison, *tanzim* activities were 'obviously anti-Hindu' (Lajpat Rai 1966b: 209).

The thrust of his analysis of communalism was criticism of Muslims and of Muslim communal representation since, he argued, this was the surest way of not achieving *swaraj*. After iterating a fear among some Hindu leaders that Muslim communal representation of electorates was designed, with the assistance of foreign Muslim states, to establish Muslim rule of Hindustan, Lajpat Rai argued on the one hand for proportional communal representation in the provincial legislatures and local bodies where Muslims were in a majority; but on the other hand opposed separate electorates, the principle of 'effective' minority representation in the

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provinces where Muslims were in a minority, and communal representation in government service or educational institutions.

In 1923, Lajpat Rai argued that Muslims should have four states (the Pathan province, western Punjab, the Sind and eastern Bengal), but he added, 'it should be distinctly understood that this is not a united India. It means a clear partition of India into a Muslim India and a non-Muslim India' (Lajpat Rai [1923] 1966b: 213). He used the term non-Muslim India because 'all that the Muslims are anxious for is a guarantee of their own rights. All other communities they lump into one as non-Muslims' (Lajpat Rai 1966b: 211). Lajpat Rai is indeed credited with being the first major leader of the national movement to propose the theory of two exclusive nations in India and is said to have proposed this from the late nineteenth century.

His message in 1924 to both Muslims and Hindus is worth quoting at length, since it encapsulated the ideological map of a primordial, majoritarian Hinduism that grew rapidly from 1923–25.

For God's sake don't threaten us with Jihad. We have seen many Jehads! For the last twelve hundred years, we have heard that cry every day of our national existence. Yet, Jehads have not succeeded in killing us, and God willing, no threat of Jihad will influence us by one hair's breadth in our determination to continue to live. We are prepared to subordinate our communal life to national life. For united national existence we would do anything, but we shall not submit to threats or to coercion. It is true that Muslim distrust of Hindus can successfully block the avenues of Swarajya, but brother Muslims! don't forget that active Hindu hostility may also be productive of some harm to the Islamic world. Away, then with these threats and distrust. Let us live and struggle for freedom as brothers whose interests are one and indivisible . . . India is neither Hindu nor Muslim. It is not even both. It is one. It is India. To the Hindus, I will say, 'If there are any among you who still dream of a Hindu Raj in this country; who think they can crush the Mussalmans and be the supreme power in this land, tell them that they are fools, or to be more accurate, that they are insane, and that their insanity will ruin their Hinduism along with their country . . . You have no one outside India to help you. You are like a lonely waif in the world and your position is extremely delicate.' (Lajpat Rai 1966b: 221)

### *Leaving the Swaraj Party*

Lajpat Rai's withdrawal from the Swaraj Party is equally instructive. Lajpat Rai opposed 'unreserved' non-cooperation because in his view the national movement was too weak and disunited to paralyse the administration or bring it to a standstill. Characteristically arguing that the principles of non-cooperation were correct, he nevertheless opposed the practice of uniform obstruction, because the movement had not 'correctly estimated the facts and conditions of national life'. After

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resigning from the Swaraj Party in September 1926 and forming the Nationalist Party, with Madan Mohan Malaviya, Lajpat Rai argued that non-cooperation had been frustrated because of the separatism of the Muslim community (Lajpat Rai 1966b: 316). Hence, the policy of non-cooperation or obstruction by only Hindus would also fail. Conversely, the Muslims would continue to cooperate with the British to secure their own rights, the acceptance of which would reduce the Hindu community to a position of inferiority and subordination. ‘What would be the position of the Hindus after 10 or 20 years hereafter if the present alliance of the Government and the Muslims continues and the Hindus continue to allow themselves to be influenced by the mentality of [non] co-operation and boycott?’ (Lajpat Rai 1966b: 319). Contrasting his nationalism with that of the Swaraj Party, he said his nationalism would be consistent with ‘justice’ to the Hindu community, and it would not abide the formation of national unity at the cost of ‘Hindu rights’. While rejecting the conversion of all Muslims in India to Hinduism and establishing a Hindu Raj, and while claiming that his policy was not that of unfettered cooperation with the British, he urged instead what he called a ‘balanced’ and ‘reasoned’ approach to the issue of cooperation: ‘I do not want to change masters’ (Lajpat Rai 1966b: 320). Hence, the answer to Muslim communalism was Hindu communalism, cooperative with the British and in accordance with the separate sphere of exclusively Hindu interests.

Such sentiments were to gain greater force in Lajpat Rai’s activities as president of the Hindu Mahasabha and in his Sangathanist activities. In his speech to the Bombay Hindu Provincial Conference in 1925 (as President of the Hindu Mahasabha) the theme of ‘Hindus in danger’ was very strong: ‘it was incumbent on Hindus to take active steps to repel the attacks and to resist the attempts that are being made to destroy their unity and communal existence’ by Muslims, the latter wishing to become ‘the dominant communal entity’ in India. Failure to do this would mean Muslim domination. He asserted that if organizing Hindus ‘is anti-Muslim or anti-national, than I frankly confess that the Hindu Sabha movement is both’ (Lajpat Rai 1966b: 247). Hindus should cultivate internal unity and unity with the Christians and Parsees (Lajpat Rai 1966b: 249). Similarly, in a reference to the upsurge of the Non-Brahman movement in Maharashtra in the early to mid 1920s, he argued that the brahmins must ‘destroy’ the movement for the separate political existence of the non-brahmins and bring into the shudra fold all ‘untouchables’. He argued, using the *Manudharmashastra*, that a nation in which shudras were a majority and the *dvija* (or ‘twice-born’) castes were a minority is ‘doomed’. Hinduism was a living organism and life implied adaptability and growth; hence, Hindus had to ‘move every nerve’ to become communally efficient and united (Lajpat Rai 1966b: 252–3). The ancient *varnashrama* system had to be restored and modified according to contemporary exigencies. The Hindu Sangathan movement, he said, had to face the odium of orthodoxy (Sanatan Dharmis), and

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an unpopularity within the anti-sectarian national movement that wanted to keep the Hindu community ‘eternally inefficient’. One may ask why ‘untouchables’ should become shudras and not brahmins; it is indeed curious how gently brahmins were dealt with by Lajpat Rai and Shradhdhanand given their views about the abject and deplorable state brahmin selfishness and ‘inefficiency’ had brought Hinduism to. Of additional significance was the fact that the national movement’s attempts, under uniquely difficult political circumstances, at cultivating a non-communal, non-sectarian political strategy was viewed by Lajpat Rai as a matter of *inefficiency*.

If these Spencerian, organicist themes are prominent (and were propounded in a similarly forceful way by Swami Shradhdhanand, who was indeed explicit about the metaphoric usefulness of bodily tropes), it should not be surprising that Lajpat Rai, like Shradhdhanand, focused on the biological and physiological weakness of the Hindu race, which could only be remedied by the reproductive strengthening of Hindu women:

The Hindus of today are inefficient, lacking in courage, lacking in enterprise, lacking in the zest for life, lacking in enthusiasm, lacking in solidarity, scattered units of a once great race *because* the condition of their women is not what may be called healthy. (Lajpat Rai 1966b: 255, emphasis added)

The answer to this ‘physical disability’ was to attend to ‘our girls’, living in ignorance and superstition, physically poor because of the social restrictions of Hindu orthodoxy and early child marriage, while girls in other countries ‘are at school, developing their muscles and nerves, hands and feet by suitable exercise’ (Lajpat Rai 1966b: 255) He contrasted this with ‘ancient times’, during which Hindu women were independent, assertive, self-reliant, physically competent and as free as men, and produced brave, kind, self-confident, able-bodied and strong Hindu children.

### **Conclusion**

One of the most striking aspects of the period from the turn of the century into the mid-1920s examined in this chapter is just how significant the preoccupations of the Arya Samaj of the previous century were in configuring the non-Gandhite ideological universe for both Hindu internal reform and Hindu political assertion within and around the Congress, the non-cooperation and national movement. While Lajpat Rai and Swami Shradhdhanand represented ostensibly adversarial positions, their remedies for Hindu reform and political organization were very similar and reflected the preoccupations of earlier Arya Samajist ‘rationalist’ reform of Hinduism, though also strongly inflected with Spencerian, evolutionist, and Malthusian themes of population, demography and fertility. The reforms included

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the abolition of sub-caste, but the symbolic reinstatement of the *varna* system, the education of women, the conversion of ‘untouchables’ and tribals to Hinduism, the opposition to Hindu orthodoxy and superstition, but the ‘reclamation’ of syncretic religious and cultural communities into a caste-based Hinduism.

Of importance was the development of a distinct language of Hinduism under social, cultural, political and demographic threat, and the consequent formation of the political languages of separate Hindu rights and interests within the public sphere created under the purview of the national movement. For Hindu nationalists such as Bhai Parmanand and Lala Har Dayal during this period, ‘Hindu interests’ could be expanded to a series of demands for Hindu *sangathan*, ‘Hindu Raj’, the *shuddhi* of all Muslims, and the conquest and *shuddhi* of Afghanistan (Brown 1975: 233, Dharamvira 1970, Parmanand 1982).

Equally evident was the birth of ‘languages of equivalence’ around communities defined communally, the legitimacy of proportional numerical reasoning and the consequent idea of political power as a zero-sum game. By and large, Hinduism was conceived as problematic and in need of strengthening and reform, not principally to remove its injustices or irrationalities, but because Hindus were weak, disorganized and disunited in the face of religious *minorities*. There is indeed a consistent narrative of despair at the perceived state of Hindus in the political tendencies examined above. Political *sangathan* may have been legitimized through the language of internal reform, but its clear purpose was to create, strengthen and consolidate the idea of a distinct nationwide imagined community of Hindus whose interests had to be articulated in the political sphere of Indian nationalism, but which could also be constituted as a distinct communalized public sphere in its own right. This agenda was very different from that of the anti-sectarian tendencies of the national movement, but the two often shared the same public space and sphere of organization. This new ‘Hindu community’ was idealized not as secular and comprised of individual citizen subjects, but as an organic, ancient Vedic *varnashrama*. The idea of Hindus constituting a ‘nation’ was now clearly present. However, the claim that Hindus should constitute an exclusive and self-governing nation of the future was to be most powerfully articulated in Vinayak Damodar Savarkar’s ideology of Hindutva.

## **From Revolutionary Nationalism to *Hindutva***

Not only [do] we own a common Fatherland, a Territorial unity, but what is scarcely found anywhere else in the world we have a common Holyland which is identified with our common Fatherland. This Bharat Bhoomi, this Hindusthan, India is both our [Fatherland] and [Holyland]. Our patriotism [is] therefore doubly sure. Then we have common affinities, cultural, religious, historical, linguistic and racial which through the process of countless centuries of association and assimilation moulded us into a homogeneous and organic Nation and above all induced a will to lead a corporate and common National Life. The Hindus are no treaty Nation – but an organic National Being . . . That is the reason why today we the Hindus from Kashmere to Madras and Sindh to Assam will be a Nation by ourselves – while the Indian Moslems are on the whole more inclined to identify themselves and their interests with Moslems outside India than Hindus who live next door, like the Jews in Germany. (V. D. Savarkar, Presidential Address, 21st Session of the Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha, Calcutta, 1939 in Savarkar 1949: 100–2)

### **Introduction**

The concept of Hindutva, the imputation of a core essence to ‘Hinduness’, or the ‘beingness of a Hindu’ that was imagined to be constitutive of Hindu identity is of recent lineage. ‘Hindutva’, a neo-Sanskrit term, does not have a basis in tradition. (The Sanskrit masculine suffix, ‘-tva’, appended to ‘Hindu’ creates an abstract noun, representing ‘Hinduness’.) Popularized in Bengal during the 1890s by Chandranath Basu and used by national figures such as Tilak, its contemporary usage derives largely from Vinayak Damodar Savarkar.

Many of the ideological strands, political demands and forms of mass activity of post-1980s Hindu nationalism are already prefigured in ‘Savarkarism’, and in the activities of the early movements he influenced, the Hindu Mahasabha (Great Hindu Assembly) and the associated Hindu Sangathan (Hindu Organization) movement. Indeed, the key political ideas of the contemporary Hindutva movement were being articulated by Savarkar and the Hindu Mahasabha (after Savarkar became its president in 1937) some eighty to ninety years ago in virtually identical languages. These included the belief that ‘Hindus’ constituted in and of themselves, ‘a nation’, that Hinduism was under siege or threat of ‘extermination’ in India,