

Hindutva in the West: mapping the antinomies of diaspora nationalism

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Abstract

This introduction provides a historical background to Hindu nationalism and examines several theoretical and empirical themes that are important for its analysis both in India and the diaspora. It is argued that there has been a relative neglect within the research field of diaspora nationalist movements and the impact they can have on constituting antisecular and absolutist orientations to minorities and majorities both within the diaspora and in the “homeland”. The introduction examines the rise of the Hindutva movement in the 1920s and considers the debates about its relation to ethnic, nationalist, religious, racist and fascist ideologies. We consider how an examination of Hindu nationalism can modify many recent debates on “race” and ethnicity, multiculturalism and “diaspora”. Several themes relating to caste, gender and “Aryanism” are examined. The contents of this Special Issue are contextualized within these debates and a summary of the key themes of the contributions is provided.

Keywords: Hindu nationalism; Hindutva; South Asian fundamentalism; diaspora; migration; majorities and minorities; Aryanism; multiculturalism.

This Special Issue of *Ethnic and Racial Studies* examines closely a phenomenon – Hindu nationalism in the South Asian diaspora – that has received relatively little attention outside the Indian subcontinent. The resurgence of acute ethnic, nationalist and religious conflict in the last decades of the twentieth century has occurred during a period of apparently unprecedented ‘globalization’ of economic, political, cultural and social processes. If the term ‘globalization’ requires modification in order to encompass the asymmetric and contradictory impact of global processes in non-Western compared to Western countries, a related argument can be made about the theoretical terms of debate about South Asian migration to the West. These have consolidated in recent years around certain key themes, including ‘diaspora’, ‘transnational communities’, cultural syncretism, minority cultural rights and pluralist conceptions of citizenship. These are important interventions; however, there has been a relative neglect of ‘émigré nationalism’ and its impact,

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a key component of social globalization and the formation of diaspora communities.

Exploring the antinomies of diaspora nationalism is a general theme within many of the contributions to this Special Issue. A consideration of Hindu nationalism and its impact on the diaspora can highlight key problems within debates on migration, diaspora, ethnic and religious identity, 'fundamentalism', nationalism, culture and 'race' (Sarhadi Raj; Searle-Chatterjee, this volume). It is, indeed, our argument in this Introduction and in several of the contributions to this issue that the example of resurgent Hindu nationalism can modify some of the intellectual certainties and novelties that have become important since the early 1990s in several disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, religious studies and postmodern and postcolonial theory. Because of the relative unfamiliarity in the West, outside of specialist circles, with politicized Hinduism and of developments within Indian political systems over the last few decades, this introductory essay provides an overview of the origins, ideologies and reach of Hindu nationalism in India and the diaspora, together with discussion of some of the key themes of caste, gender and the resurgence of 'Aryan primordialism' which we think are important for its analysis.

'Hindu nationalism' or 'the Hindutva movement' has, since the early 1980s, transformed the parameters of Indian domestic politics and foreign policy, the organization of significant aspects of north Indian civil society and the affective relationships between different religious communities in India (Jaffrelot 1996 is the best recent overview). In its most elementary form, Hindu nationalist social and political philosophy is predicated on an idea, whose lineage is described later, that the Indian state, social formation and civil society be reorganized in a holistic and organic way along exclusively 'Hindu' precepts. Muslim and Christian minorities in India should be compelled to live in India under the prescription that India is primarily to be a strong 'Hindu nation' to which they must practically demonstrate unconditional obeisance. Resurgent Hindu nationalism has resulted in highly organized violence against Muslim and Christian minorities in India during the 1990s (Akbar 1991; Das 1992; Basu *et al.* 1993; Padgoankar 1993; Bidwai, Mukhia and Vanaik 1996). In its practice of government, the votaries of Hindu nationalism became apparent in the international sphere by ordering the explosion of nuclear devices at the Pokharan test site in northern India in 1998, in a single stroke dramatically and dangerously escalating the South Asian nuclear arms race.

This Special Issue deliberately focuses on the emergence and impact of Hindu nationalism in the South Asian diaspora, rather than in India itself. There is now a small volume of literature that has been published recently in the West on Hindu nationalism in India (Gold 1991; Frykenberg 1993; Jaffrelot 1996; Ludden 1996; McKean 1996; Vanaik 1997)

together with a considerable body of work published in India itself. The consideration of Hindu nationalism in the South Asian diaspora is both intended to complement this work and to rectify a persistent omission from much of the extant literature on Hinduisms in the West. Islamist movements in the West, including South Asian Islamist organizations, have received significant sociological attention (for example, Kepel 1997). Consequently, an examination of Hindu nationalism in the diaspora can provide a useful comparative dimension to an analysis of minority religious resurgence in the West, not least because of the often remarkable and formal similarities in the political languages and activities of ostensibly adversarial 'fundamentalist' movements.

It is argued by several contributors to this issue that diaspora Hindu nationalism has been important for the ideological and political shape of Hindu nationalism in India (Thapar this issue; van der Veer 1996). This is a striking argument for a number of theoretical and empirical reasons, and reflects an important theme concerning the power asymmetry between 'Third World' migrants in Western countries and those in their countries of origin. Central to this idea is how processes of discrimination or minority status in the West become translated in religious and ethnic terms to create new languages of majorities and minorities that are rearticulated as coherent ideologies of religious or ethnic nationalism and which then have repercussions on the countries of origin themselves. There is a persistent argument in the literature on Islamism in which the experience of migration to or exile in the West of key Muslim intellectuals (such as Ali Shariati, or even Ruhollah Khomeini) was important to the ideological configuration and content of post-war Islamist movements in the Middle East and north Africa. Similar points have been made in relation to both South Asian and African anti-colonial independence movements. The argument presented in this issue is slightly different, because it is preoccupied with the migration and subsequent phenomenological experience of minority status of *communities* in the West, and the political consequences on the nations from which they originate. This view can complement – or perhaps notably grate against – recent sociological, postcolonial, literary and cultural theory interventions that have argued for the hybrid, syncretic and necessarily progressive cultural formations that have resulted from the black and ethnic minority experience in the diaspora.

The term 'Hinduism' in the West, like Buddhism, tends to have an elective affinity with ideas of tolerance, peace, non-violence, liberalism, innocence, pluralism, asceticism and democracy. These associations can represent a dehistoricization of the development and changing forms of Hinduism. The view, for example, of Hinduism's ingrained non-violence is of relatively recent lineage (Pinch 1996; Subrahmanyam 1996, p. 58–66) and in this century has been most notably associated with Gandhianism. The detachment of Hinduisms from their historical, social and

irreducibly political processes has an academic dimension, reflected most acutely in the way sociological and anthropological discipline has tended to create Hinduism in India and the diaspora as an object of study.

It has been argued by al-Azmeh that the Orientalist reification of Islam is entirely congruent with the 'fundamentalist' conception of Islam as a fixed, unchanging truth that is above and beyond the histories of societies and nations (al-Azmeh 1993). In a similar way, the anthropological and sociological tendency to concentrate mainly on a few facets of Hinduisms, especially those concerned with ritual, belief and religious preservation, leads to a similar academic abstraction of Hinduism and a consequent reification of the ethnic habitus and cultural dynamics of its followers. That many academic processes can reflect precisely the epistemological claims about Hinduism that are also made by Hindu nationalists does imply a value-laden standpoint which we do not think can be ethically sustained in the face of the dramatic transformations that have occurred in both South Asian and diaspora politics over the last two decades. Hence, several contributors to this volume (Searle-Chatterjee, Sarhadi Raj, Bhatt) critically examine several intellectual paradigms in the disciplines of religious studies, political science, sociology, history and anthropology that are employed in the study of Hinduism in the West. The various positions adopted by the contributors and editors of this volume reflect a vigorous debate in India, which has only relatively recently begun to reach non-specialist Western audiences, about the possibilities of secular democratic pluralism in a multi-ethnic, multi-caste, multi-religious postcolonial 'Third World' nation which has witnessed the rise in recent decades of a majoritarian and exclusivist religious movement (Gopal 1990; Gandhi 1992; Nandy 1992; Basu *et al.* 1993; Juergensmeyer 1993; Madan 1993, 1997; Pandey 1993; Lele 1995; Nandy *et al.* 1995; Jaffrelot 1996; Vanaik 1997).

A central aspect of these discussions concerns the meaning and, indeed, the future of secularism. There is an intense, perhaps fraught debate in India about the role of either religious or secular principles in informing the nature of political systems and governance, the codification of law and the organization and relationship between state and civil society. This includes debate on the influence of either religious or secular ideas as foundations for personal freedoms, civil liberties and desirable relations between different religious and caste communities. These debates raise important questions about the formation of citizenship, nation, community and gender (am I a woman first before being a 'tribal', a dalit or a Muslim?). The responses to these issues can determine a variety of conceptions of state, nationalism, religion, civil society and the nature of social being. The positions within this debate have ranged widely and include a defence of the essential principles of secularism formed in late eighteenth-century Western Enlightenment to positions that question their relevance for a social formation such as India,

which, it is argued, is constituted primarily in and through religious modalities (see Sen 1996 for a useful overview; Madan 1997; Vanaik 1997). The contributors to this issue and Introduction represent viewpoints that range from the secular to the critical, and do not represent a singular perspective.

The origins of Hindu nationalism

The idea that India was, or was to be a Hindu nation (a *Hindu Rashtra*) has complex origins in the mid to late nineteenth century during the British colonial period. Exploring this historically is a troubled exercise primarily because contemporary Hindu nationalism also claims its legitimacy in the writings of this period and views the nineteenth-century Hindu renaissance as a necessary reinvigoration of an 'ancient Hindu tradition' of which it is the contemporary culmination. There is therefore considerable scholarly debate about the relationship between the Hindu nationalist movement which formed from the 1920s and earlier advocates of Hinduism. A striking example is the status of Vivekananda (1863–1902), the 'Hindu ambassador to the West' who received a rapturous welcome in the US following his addresses to the World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893. Vivekananda is now a central icon in Hindu nationalist discourse, and yet the Ramakrishna Mission he founded, one of the first Hindu missionary movements to the West, has been one of the few Hindu bodies that has tended to remain outside of the fold of Hindu nationalism.

Perhaps the key intellectual influences representing different strands in 'Hindu nationalist' thinking in the nineteenth century and into the early part of this century were Dayanand Saraswati (1824–93), who founded the puritanical-reformist Arya Samaj (Aryan Society) movement in 1875, and Aurobindo Ghose (1872–1950), a nationalist activist who later retired to Pondicherry in southeast India and became a spiritual teacher and interpreter of Hindu religious texts. Dayanand Saraswati rejected caste, image and idol worship, the practice of *sati* and Hindu polytheism and urged a return to the four Vedas, the books which are traditionally considered sacred in many northern Hindu, especially brahminic traditions. For Dayanand the Vedas were the literal revelation or word of God. Hence, temporal authority and Hindu practice were to be derived from the Vedas. It is in this sense that Dayanand is often referred to as a 'fundamentalist'. The Arya Samaj was primarily a brahminic-mercantile movement that had mass following, especially in the Punjab, and where its followers were implicated in considerable violence against Muslim and Christian minorities.

Aurobindo's social and political philosophy, while also initially privileging the Vedas, contained several other important strands. He had written that India was not only a Hindu nation and a Hindu civilization,

but that its Hindu origins were primordial, existing from time immemorial, and reflected that first revelation which was heard by the original inhabitants of India, the Aryans. While Ghose's social and political philosophy cannot be said to be informed by simple racial concepts, he was widely read in the literature of comparative philology and the debates about the original homeland of the Aryans that was animating European linguists and philologists. Ghose rejected the dominant, but not exclusive, European view of the later Victorian period that Aryans had entered geographical India from elsewhere. He simply stated, based on his interpretations of the Vedas, that the Aryans were autochthonous to India. This strand is important to the later development of Hindu nationalism, including many of its contemporary manifestations in the diaspora. It represents a distinctively Indian variety of primordialist thinking which has different connotations to those that the term 'Aryan' typically invokes for non-specialist Western readers. This area is explored later and in Romila Thapar's contribution to this volume.

Dayanand and Aurobindo represented two strands in formative 'Hindu nationalist' thinking. However, there were many other influences on a wide-ranging Hindu renaissance, and their precise relationship with a specifically nineteenth- and turn-of-century 'Hindu nationalism' is subject to considerable debate. Such influences included Bharatendu Harishchandra (1850–85), the Benarasi Hindi playwright (Dalmia 1997), the Bengali novelist Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay (1838–94) (Sarkar 1996), the writer K. M. Munshi, and the nationalist activists Lala Rajpat Rai (1865–1928) and B. G. Tilak (1856–1920), the latter a central figure in the Indian Liberation Movement. Indeed, in the revival of Hinduism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, it can be extremely difficult to separate any putative and distinctly Hindu nationalist currents from the numerous and fervent Hindu reform and revival movements and intellectual endeavours that were fundamentally redefining what Hinduism itself was to mean, first in a situation of imposed colonial modernity, and later Independence and nation-building.

The birth of Hindutva

However, from the 1920s, a new set of themes emerged that were to become definitive of Hindu nationalism; in this sense, one can speak of a sharp epistemic break from the varieties of Hindu revivalist thinking which preceded them. The founding text of the Hindu nationalist movement was written by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, venerated as an Indian revolutionary hero, who was arrested in England and imprisoned by the British on the Andaman Islands for seditious activities in 1911. The book *Hindutva – or who is a Hindu?*, drafted while he was in jail and published in 1923, defined the concept of Hindutva. This was to become fundamental to the political ideology of Hindu nationalist movements in India

and later in the diaspora (Savarkar [1923] 1989). For Savarkar, Hindutva meant 'Hinduness', *the essence of being Hindu*. It is more accurate to refer to 'the Hindutva movement' to represent Hindu nationalism in this century. Hence, both 'Hindu nationalism' and 'the Hindutva movement' are used interchangeably, hereafter and in the contributions to this volume.

Hindutva is a foundational concept in Hindu nationalist ideology and politics and its formulation by Savarkar is an exemplary instance of the invention of primordial tradition in order to create a contemporary politics of exclusive identity. Hindutva is fundamentally an empty signifier that has become extraordinarily politically potent. For Savarkar 'Hindutva is not a word but a history' (Savarkar [1923] 1989, p. 3). That history began with the 'intrepid Aryans' who had crossed the Indus river in ancient times, entered a new land, India, and were reborn as a new people.

Fundamental to this conception is Savarkar's view that Hindu identity was formed by the commingling of the blood of the Aryans with the people they encountered. However, despite this syncretic origin for Hindus, it is clear that it was the infusion of Aryan blood that was of any consequence for Savarkar. Once this had taken place, the inhabitants recognized the land as 'the best nation of the Aryans', a geographically enclosed, well demarcated land that 'vivifies into a living Being'. For Savarkar, Hindutva, the essence of the Hindu, comprised a common nation, a common civilization and a common 'race'. This idea of 'race' was defined by the blood that Hindus share and which has flowed down from the ancient Vedic fathers. Savarkar uses the term *jati* ('type'), or 'race-jati' to define membership of the Hindu nation – 'a race determined by a common origin, possessing a common blood'. As important is his view that Hindutva is manifested as a fundamental structure of emotion that is roused by the memory, written in the blood, of Hindutva itself. From his rather taxonomic cultivation of Hindutva, Savarkar consequently derived his conception of Hindu identity. A 'Hindu' is a person 'who looks upon the land that extends (. . .) from the Indus to the sea as his Fatherland, his Motherland and his Holyland' (Savarkar [1923] 1989).

Savarkar also added a second criterion to the above which is often forgotten in the contemporary literature on Hindu nationalism: '[one] who inherits the blood of that race whose first discernible source could be traced back' to the Vedic-Aryan forefathers. Muslims and Christians, in Savarkar's derivative schema, cannot belong to the Hindu nation because their holyland is seen as physically outside India. Similarly, Savarkar defines a common civilization as 'Sanskritic', another exclusionary factor that privileges Hindi-based north Indian Vedic-brahminic traditions.

Savarkar's two-fold definition of Hindu identity as comprised of both belonging and blood is highly resonant in contemporary Hindu nationalism. Savarkar's conceptions of Hindutva and Hindu identity have 'racial'

overtone which have been carefully discussed by Christophe Jaffrelot (1996) as indicating a racism that is not biological but reflecting a dominant ethnic nationalism of the late nineteenth century, primarily based, in Savarkar's case, on the ethno-German nationalist ideas of Johann Kaspar Bluntschli. There is also a Lamarckian strand in Savarkar's view of the physical land impressing upon and conversely affected by the people so as to instil a hereditary quality to land, nation and people. This idea of 'race' is important for other reasons. Its advocates do not have to rely on strict biological conceptions but can still retain a powerful hereditarianism. This conception of 'race' is very slippery indeed and can use the epistemic resources of culture and civilization or spirituality and religion or 'blood' and nation without necessarily having any epistemic responsibility for the use of any these ideas. In a sense that is fundamentally consequential for understanding contemporary Hindutva ideology, Savarkar's 'Hindu nationalism' cannot be conceived as an ethnic, religious, 'racial' or nationalist ideology, but can float in an indeterminate way across all these ideas. Contemporary Hindutva formations, from the Bharatiya Janata Party to the writings of 'New Age' Hindutva supporters in the West, make eclectic use of these diverse ideas (Mathew and Prasad; Bhatt, this volume).

The Sangh Parivar: Hindutva in action

Savarkar's Hindutva was to profoundly influence Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, an activist in the Indian Independence Movement who went on to found, in 1924, the most important male Hindu nationalist organization in India, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh [RSS, the National Volunteers' Corps]. The RSS is by far the most important of Hindu nationalist organizations and is the foundational core of the vast majority of organizations that are allied to Hindutva ideology. Hedgewar's key skills were in organization, and the cultivation of organized discipline. The RSS was, and remains, a militant semi-paramilitary organization with a highly centralized structure and authority. It is based on the recruitment and training of young, ideally pre-adolescent boys for service to Hinduism and the Hindu Nation. A core aspect of its activities is on the highly disciplined physical and pedagogic 'character building', 'man-making' or 'man-moulding' that was required to prepare members mentally and physically so that they would be able to fight for Hindutva and safeguard what was seen as the Hindu nation against foreign influences (these started, according to the RSS, from the first Turkish-Afghan Muslim invasion of 'India' which Hindus had previously failed to repel.) The necessity of building new united Hindu people implied an attention on civil society and the need to create disciplined organizations within it. Prior to 1948-49, the RSS claimed not to concern itself with the state or strictly 'politics' and chose to, in its words, be the independent

'conscience of the nation'. Involvement in 'politics' and the state was seen to be polluting and diverting of its main aim to transform civil society and to create new Hindus-Indians (Andersen and Damle 1987; the latter is still the most comprehensive study of the RSS). However, this 'non-political' orientation was to change fundamentally from the 1950s and especially the 1960s, as the RSS and its offshoot organizations achieved increasing prominence within, and later outside India. In the diaspora, the first RSS branches began to form during this early period of post-war migration (Mukta; Bhatt, this volume).

The early form of RSS organization developed by Hedgewar was highly authoritarian, centralist, antidemocratic and paramilitary. It exists in virtually the same form today. It was also very modernist in conception and stressed a peculiar Westernized military and boy-scout discipline. RSS members (*swayamsevaks*) were required to attend gymnasium and highly regimented *shakhas* (military drills, educational classes and branch meetings). Members were also required to wear Western (not Indian) uniforms (khaki shorts and white shirt, based on the colonial police uniform), undergo Indian martial-arts training, swear allegiance to the saffron flag (the *bhagawa dhvaj*) and to Hindutva, idolize warrior Gods, revere what were seen as anti-Muslim heroes and saints (such as Shivaji), perform intimidating public military drills, and attend political education classes and rural training camps (Andersen and Damle 1987, pp. 83–92). The RSS membership was recruited primarily from young boys, usually under fifteen years of age, but also men. In line with the RSS's official anti-caste ideology, members were ostensibly from all castes and Hindu backgrounds but included a high representation of upper- and middle-caste teachers, government bureaucrats, soldiers and merchants. The leadership and officers of the RSS were, however, from Maharashtrian *brahmin* castes.

The daily local branch meetings (*shakhas*) which members (*swayamsevaks*) were obliged to attend were the main basis for religious and nationalist inculcation and physical and martial exercise (see also Rajagopal; Bhatt, this volume). The *shakha* is the bottom level structure of the RSS and is divided by age groups with their own group leaders (*gatanayak*) and teachers (*shikshak*). These functionaries are below the higher tier of full-time organizers (*pracharaks*), the local secretary (*karyavah*) and higher teachers (*mukhya shikshaks*). Above this hierarchy are local and city committees and the state and central assembly. The *pracharaks* are the main organizational, activist and networking layer and are frequently on loan to work on other 'non-RSS' projects or in other organizations. The 'Guide and Philosopher of the RSS' is the Supreme Leader or *Sarsangchalak*. The organizational principle of the RSS is *eka chalak anuvartitva*, or 'devotion to the one Supreme Leader'. This mantle was first held by Hedgewar, followed by Madhav Golwalkar, Balasaheb Deoras and currently Rajendra Singh. The leaders of the RSS,

especially Hedgewar and Golwalkar, are virtually deified within the RSS and its offshoot organizations, both in India and the diaspora (Mukta, this volume).

The RSS gained considerable support for its activities during Partition, in particular because of its assistance to Hindu refugees coming into India from (now Pakistan) Punjab and its paramilitary squads working among Hindus living in Muslim areas. Partition was seen by Hindu nationalist organizations as an unjustified concession to Muslim separatism and continues today to act as a powerful symbol for Hindu nationalist mobilization. Conversely, Hindu nationalist ideology has at its core the idea of 'Akhand Bharat' or 'undivided India' that includes Pakistan, Bangladesh and Kashmir and some of the border territories lost to China during the 1960s.

The anger at Partition was part of a rejection by Hindu nationalist organizations of all Gandhian methods of national liberation, in particular the idea of *satyagraha* ('truth force', defeating the enemy by forcefully and actively demonstrating their moral weakness without compromising one's own moral and ethical standpoint) and *ahimsa* (an essentially Jainist religious concept of 'non-harm', reconstructed by Gandhi to mean non-violent non-cooperative direct action). Gandhian ideology was seen to portray Hindus as weak, effeminate and emasculated. The reconstruction of Hindu masculinities was especially important to the RSS and depended on selecting violent *kshatriya* ('warrior caste') histories and violent masculine Gods for their devotional, symbolic and pedagogical appeal.

Following Gandhi's assassination by Nathuram Godse, who was previously a prominent member of both Savarkar's organization, the Hindu Mahasabha, as well as the RSS, these Hindu nationalist organizations were banned during the period 1948–49 by the new Congress government of India. In 1936 the RSS had endorsed its first affiliate organization, its women's wing, the Rashtriya Sevika Samiti. After its unbanning, the RSS, while claiming to devote itself solely to cultural activities, created several more offshoot organizations, including the Vishwa Hindu Parishad [VHP, the World Hindu Council] in 1964, the political party the Jana Sangh in 1951, which was the precursor to the current Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP, formed in 1980], the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (the All India Students Federation, the largest students' body in India), the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (an Indian trade union federation, perhaps the largest unofficial body of organized labour in India) and numerous other organizations. The 'family' of organizations that the RSS has created is frequently called the *sangh parivar* or often just 'the *sangh*' ('organization') or 'the *parivar*' ('family'). The RSS has several million direct members in India. It and its offshoot organizations have become among the largest organizations in Indian civil society and, indeed, the RSS often claims to be the largest

voluntary organization in the world. The impact of the *parivar* on various institutions of Indian civil society has been immense, though by no means unchallenged. The RSS network has also grown in the South Asian diaspora (Mathew and Prashad; Rajagopal, this volume).

If the RSS's founder Hedgewar had supreme organizational skills – 'Organization! Organization! Organization!' sums up the RSS's day-to-day philosophy – then the most important theoretical and philosophical input came from Madhav Golwalkar (idolized as 'Guruji') who became the RSS's second Supreme Guide (*Sarsangchalak*) after an extremely close association with Hedgewar and after the latter's death. Golwalkar was a profoundly important figure in the political development of the RSS. Some of his earlier writings and, in particular, his forbiddingly Nazi-like treatise on nationalism, *We, or Our Nationhood Defined* (first published in 1939, hereafter *We* . . .), have been suppressed by the RSS because of some embarrassment about their contents. Later works, such as *Bunch of Thoughts* (1966) are promoted instead, though, in essence they reproduce the philosophy of *We* . . .

Golwalkar's social and political philosophy, like that of Savarkar, is dominated by the question of Hindu identity but takes a much clearer racialized turn. For Golwalkar, there is a complete rejection of 'the White Man's' view that Aryans came from outside India. Instead, Hindus had existed in India *as a nation from time immemorial*.

(. . .) we Hindus came into this land from nowhere, but are indigenous children of the soil always, from time immemorial and are natural masters of the country (. . .) And we were one nation – "Over all the land from sea to sea one Nation!" is the trumpet cry of the ancient Vedas! (Golwalkar [1939] 1944, p. 8)

However, according to Golwalkar, Hindus had become complacent and divided among themselves and had lost the consciousness of the one nation and the one race. They were therefore unable to resist the first invasions of 'murdering hordes of Mussalman [Muslim] freebooters' (Golwalkar [1939] 1944, p. 10). For Golwalkar, like Savarkar before him, the history of India after the Turkish-Afghan invasions was an extended and continuous period, lasting some 800 years, of unflinching war against Muslims that had left the Hindus tired and easily conquerable by the British. Fundamentally, it was through war that 'the peculiar Race spirit' of the Hindu Nation was awakened. The history of Hindus is therefore one of a flourishing national life followed by one thousand years of unending war against foreign aggression and Hindu heroism, martyrdom and strength. This monologic narrative of Hindu war against others, first clearly articulated by Savarkar, is fundamental to the world-view of contemporary Hindu nationalism. It has its roots in both British colonialist knowledge of India and the colonial British division of Indian history

simply into the ancient Vedic-Aryan, the medieval-Muslim and the modern Colonial-British periods (Thapar 1985, 1989; Pandey 1992). There are, indeed, congruences between Hindutva and colonial British views of predominantly passive Hindus that failed to repel 'Muslim aggression', and the prominence given to what are seen in both as certain Indian martial traditions (such as Sikhs, Marathas, Rajputs and Gurkhas).

Golwalkar's formula for nationhood was based on what he called the unassailable and scientific 'famous five unities': country, race, religion, culture and language. 'Race' for Golwalkar was fundamental to the idea of nation:

It is superfluous to emphasise the importance of a Racial Unity in the Nation state. A Race is a hereditary Society having common customs, common language, common memories of glory and disaster; in short it is a population with a common origin under one culture. Such a race is by far the most important ingredient of a Nation (. . .) We will not seek to prove this axiomatic proof that the Race is the body of the Nation and that with its fall the Nation ceases to exist (Golwalkar [1939] 1944, p. 21).

This racial idea of nation is fundamentally intolerant of minorities. This strand in Golwalkar's philosophy continues to inform important aspects of contemporary Hindu nationalism. For Golwalkar, '(. . .) all those who fall outside the five fold limits of that idea [of nation] can have no place in the national life, unless they abandon their differences, and completely merge themselves in the National Race' (Golwalkar [1939] 1944, p. 46).

However, minorities that choose to remain so can 'live only as outsiders' at the sufferance of the nation

[Minorities] must also cultivate a positive attitude of love and devotion (. . .) in a word they must cease to be foreigners, or may stay in the country wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment – not even citizen's rights. We are an old nation; and let us deal as old nations ought to and do deal with the foreign races who have chosen to live in our country (Golwalkar [1939] 1944, pp. 48–9).

At the core of this idea of nationhood is the identification Golwalkar created between the situation in India and that in both Italy and Germany during the 1930s. The quotation from *We . . .* which follows is frequently cited to show Golwalkar's, and hence the Hindutva movement's allegiance to the ideas of German National Socialism. Certainly, there were important contacts between early Hindu nationalists and Italian fascists, and the National Socialist *Volkischer Beobachter* wrote approvingly about Savarkar in 1938 (Jaffrelot 1996, pp. 51–2).

German race pride has now become the topic of the day. To keep up the purity of the Race and its culture, Germany shocked the world by her purging the country of the semitic Races – the Jews. Race pride at its highest has been manifested here. Germany has shown how well nigh impossible it is for Races and cultures, having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindusthan to learn and profit by (Golwalkar [1939] 1944, p. 37).

Savarkar was also to say of the Muslim League ‘if we Hindus in India grow stronger in time these Moslem friends of the league will have to play the part of German-Jews’ (Savarkar’s *Collected Speeches, 1938–41*, quoted by McKean 1996, p. 87).

There is little doubt that Golwalkar and Savarkar sympathized with both German National Socialism and Italian Fascism and, indeed, Golwalkar even seems to interpret the latter in ‘racial-cultural’ terms (Bhatt 1997, p. 207). It has been argued by Jaffrelot (1996, pp. 53–55) that Golwalkar’s ideas, like those of Savarkar, are based primarily on the ideas of German nationalism advocated by Bluntschli, and are combined with the traditional hierarchies that are said to exist within Hindu, especially northern brahminic traditions. One aspect to this argument is that Muslim minorities are seen in essentially religious or cultural terms rather than racial ones (though it is also argued by Savarkar and Golwalkar that Muslims have for the most part ‘unadulterated’ and originally ‘Hindu blood’ and therefore are conceivable as part of the same ‘race’.) This is similar to the arguments of the 1980s about a ‘new racism’ that is based on the idea of cultural or ethnic difference, rather than racial superiority.

Other writers have seen Golwalkar’s (and, indeed, Hindutva) ideology as reflecting essentially an upper-caste ‘racism’. It is also argued that the distinctively Indian aspects of Hindu nationalism, and the RSS’s disavowal of the seizure of state power in preference for long-term cultural labour in civil society, suggests a strong distance from both German Nazism and Italian Fascism (Andersen and Damle 1987). Part of the problem in attempting to classify Golwalkar’s or Savarkar’s Hindu nationalism within the typology of ‘generic fascism’, Nazism, racism and ethnic or cultural nationalism is the unavailability of an appropriate theoretical orientation and vocabulary for varieties of revolutionary conservatism and far-right-wing ethnic and religious absolutist movements in ‘Third World’ countries, not least because of the changed character of ‘fascism’ in the aftermath of its ‘classical’ period in the 1930s and 1940s.

Expanding the Sangh Parivar

The two outstanding successes of the RSS family of organizations are the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP – Indian People’s Party] and the Vishwa

Hindu Parishad [VHP – World Hindu Council]. The BJP was formed from the remnants of the previous Jana Sangh political party (see Baxter 1971; Graham 1990 on the Jana Sangh). The political ideology of the BJP was at its inception officially ‘Gandhian Socialism’, but this was later changed to ‘Integral Humanism’. Deendayal Upadhyaya, an RSS member and one of the founders of the Jana Sangh political party, developed a corporatist social and political philosophy, Integral Humanism, which became increasingly important from the mid-1960s. Using traditional Hindu tropes, he defined an ideal social order as an organic unity (based on *ekatmata*, ‘the unifying principle’ or ‘oneness’) in which *kama* (‘desire’, especially bodily desire) and *artha* (‘wealth’, but including political and economic instrumental need), are to be subsumed under the greater principle of *dharma* (‘natural law’, order and duty) for the ideal of *moksha* (‘salvation’ or liberation) (Upadhyaya 1979 *et al.*; Upadhyaya 1991).

While there is a variety of ideological as well as pragmatic strands within the BJP, ‘Integral Humanism’ and ‘Cultural Nationalism’ form its central ideological planks and are based on a view of the ideal social formation as one regulated by Hindu *dharma* (religion, ethical code) which is seen as transcendent and prior to the exigencies of the state and civil society. As in Golwalkar’s cultural nationalism, Upadhyaya’s philosophy stresses the *a priori* nature of the cultural-*dharmic* field which exists above and beyond the social and political histories of states and societies and is, indeed, the condition for them. Integral Humanism also emphasizes an organicist view of the social formation and state-civil society relations: all social relations are conceived as non-conflictual and non-contradictory if religious principles (*dharma*) are followed.

In 1998, the BJP formed India’s government under a shaky coalition led by Atal Behari Vajpayee and Lal Krishnan Advani, both long-term members of the RSS. It ordered the explosion of five nuclear devices, including allegedly a thermonuclear device, at the Pokharan test site in north India, near the border with Pakistan. This was followed rapidly by Pakistani nuclear bomb tests and a wave of international condemnation of the sudden nuclear proliferation in South Asia. The Hindutva wave in the early 1990s brought the BJP to electoral victory as head of a coalition government. A second BJP coalition government came to power in 1999. This was due to a resurgence of popular-nationalism in India following increased armed hostility during 1999, mainly in the Kargil region of Kashmir, between the Indian Army and Pakistani-backed Islamist insurgents. The increased role of the military in the political affairs of the Pakistani state makes for a sombre scenario in the region and for future relations between what the BJP calls ‘Resurgent India’ and a militarized Pakistan.

The VHP was formed at the instigation of Golwalkar to bring together and unite the numerous Hindu religious leaderships and sectarian

communities. The VHP's first meeting took place at the ashram of the late Swami Chinmayananda, known in the West for the Chinmaya Mission, and included representation of Sikh and Buddhist traditions, the latter represented by the Dalai Lama himself. Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, along with all the major Hindu sects, are seen as indigenous to India and offshoots of an essential Vedic Hindu religion. They are sharply contrasted with what are seen as the 'invader' semitic religions of Christianity and Islam. Similarly, within Hindutva discourse, Hinduism is seen primarily as a primordial and perennial civilization; indeed, a civilizational ethos for the whole of humanity, whereas Islam and Christianity are viewed as merely religions or religious ideologies. Hinduism, in this view, is not a religion at all but the primordial way of life revealed for all humanity, the sacred knowledge of which is possessed solely by Hindus. This distinctive polarization between the semitic and non-semitic religions can itself be traced back to German romantic and idealist philosophy in the nineteenth century, in particular the work of Arthur Schopenhauer. Similarly, the view of Hinduism as a civilization in contrast to the semitic religions has had many Western adherents in this and the previous century.

The VHP has created numerous offshoot organizations, including its violent youth wing, the Bajrang Dal and its women's wing, the Mahila Mandal. From its inception, the VHP has campaigned for the appropriation of mosques and other Islamic monuments, including the Taj Mahal, claiming them to be historically Hindu sites. It has thus campaigned for 'the liberation' of the God Rama's mythological birthplace in northern India, resulting in the destruction of the sixteenth-century Babri Masjid (mosque) at Ayodhya in 1992. This led to a wave of violence primarily against Muslim communities in both urban and rural, northern and (uncharacteristically) southern Indian cities. Violence against Muslim communities took on an especially sinister, systematic and planned character in Bombay during 1992 and 1993. The destruction of the Babri Masjid also had violent communal repercussions in the diaspora (Kundu 1994). The VHP has also launched campaigns for 'the liberation of Krishna's birthplace' in Mathura and 'the liberation of the Kashi Vishwanath' temple complex at Varanasi. Indeed, there are several thousand Muslim religious sites in India which strands in the VHP wish to 'reclaim' for Hinduism. Central to VHP strategy is the 'reconversion' to Hinduism of those who have left the 'Hindu fold' and adopted Islamic or Christian faiths. In the late 1990s this led to a systematic Hindutva focus on Christian minorities, especially in the Dangs district and Surat in Gujarat, and communities in Orissa and Goa (Mukta, this volume). This resulted in international condemnation and pressure on Indian federal and state governments during 1998 following the killings of Indian and Western Christians and the rapes of Indian nuns.

Caste politics, Hinduism and nationalism

Max Weber was correct in his observation that without caste, there can be no Hindu. Caste forms the bedrock of Hinduism, and the relationship of these two to the various forms of Indian nationalism has been a turbulent one. Before analysing the ways in which caste both feeds into and poses a challenge to contemporary Hindu nationalism, it is worth outlining the trends in the structure of caste and religion which took place in the late nineteenth and in the twentieth centuries in the Indian sub-continent.

The late nineteenth century witnessed immense ruptures in economic, political and social life in colonial India. British rule was consolidated, delinking the caste system from older structures of feudal patronage. The impact of colonial capitalism, which was attendant upon new mores, futures and aspirations, was to have a profound impact on the emergent intelligentsia which was at the forefront of new intellectual movements. In particular, the young men from the *brahmin* (priestly), service and commercial castes were to initiate religious reform movements which attempted to do away with traditional caste strictures. The liberal Brahmo Samaj, founded in Bengal in 1828, and the 'fundamentalist' Arya Samaj (mentioned above) were two significant initiatives which set out to establish religious practices and institutions shorn of the taboos of untouchability. The Arya Samaj is particularly important here, for out of the communities of *brahmins*, as well as the commercial castes of Khatri, Aroras and Baniyas which formed the core of the reform movement, young men and women were to migrate out globally in the twentieth century, taking with them the ideological framework of the Arya Samaj and establishing educational institutions – nursery, primary and secondary schools and colleges – in many parts of the world.

These educational institutions inculcated other generations into the Arya world-view, linking them up with events taking place in the homeland, even as they created a different milieu of beliefs and practices elsewhere. The Arya Samaj stressed a purified Vedic religion with a strongly proselytizing framework which emphasized the organization of Hindus into an active body (*sangathan*). The Arya Samaj in India was also to have a profound impact on the nature and form of latter-day Hindu nationalism (and its extension globally) through the novel introduction of the practice of the *shuddhi* ceremony. This publicly and ostensibly 'purified' individuals from the 'untouchable' communities, as well as reconverted those who had newly chosen the Christian faith (as did considerable numbers of those seen as 'untouchables' in the Punjab in the late nineteenth century.) The insistence on *shuddhi* was accompanied by a defence of traditional Hindu symbols, primarily with the Cow Protection Movement (which was set up under the aegis of the Arya Samaj) and which was being implicated in communal riots in northern India in

the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The breaking of caste commensal rules led to mass conversions of dalits ('untouchables') to the Arya Samaj fold in the 1890s and again in 1900–1903 (Jones 1976, pp. 202–215, 303) thus broadening the sweep of the movement. Through this practice of conversion and reconversion, the departure from traditional Hinduism, whereby an individual is born within a caste defined in the fold of this religion, was complete.

Conversion and reconversion into Hinduism was introduced by the militant wing of the Arya Samaj in the context of the fear of the loss of numbers to other religious communities. This particular structure of feeling was bolstered by the imperial Census operations which were then taking place. The imperatives of those times in British India is described by Kenneth Jones:

The class interests of an emerging Hindu elite converged with Arya ideology which stressed literacy and the need for Vedic knowledge. Both focused on education as the path to spiritual and worldly success. It lay at the nexus of their hope and fear. The threat of apostasy cast gloom over the rewards inherent in the new economic opportunities. Aryas would provide an answer to this dilemma, a chance to acquire English education without fear of conversion, of the loss of one's soul to Christianity or godless materialism (Jones 1976, p. 66).

The taut contradictions of the English-educated youth in the colonial milieu in India was mirrored in the conditions of certain sections of South Asians in the diaspora in the twentieth century, whereby some of the émigrés (not necessarily of the Arya faith) chose to send their sons and daughters to Arya Samaj gurukuls (spiritual schools) for moral education. The reach of the Arya Samaj was thus to extend beyond the borders of the subcontinent, whereby women and men dedicated their lives to the cause of creating a unified global Hindu community based on Vedic foundations (Mathew and Prashad; Mukta, this volume). Importantly, the *shuddhi* (purification) ceremonies were later to be adopted by the newly-created Vishwa Hindu Parishad to 'reclaim' Christian and Muslim citizens into the Hindu fold. This was undertaken in a systematic way from the early 1980s and, most spectacularly, in December 1998 and January 1999.

Scholarship on the late nineteenth century in the Indian subcontinent has centred around the ways in which the process of colonial enumeration (through the massive census operations) gave caste a new, politicized form. What is of significance here is that political movements consolidated around the question of caste identities, giving caste an organizational space in the political sphere which it had lacked before. This dynamic was to mark the nature of social movements, as well as the very basis of a mature nationalism. It was to lead to the caste-based

politics witnessed in post-Independence India. The salient point to note here is that the attempt to speak, act on behalf of and defend a 'unified' Hindu community has had to contend with the reality of differential caste interests, and with the hierarchy of privilege and lack of privilege that the caste structure has historically held.

The Hindutva movement has from its inception attempted to address the issue of caste (Savarkar [1923] 1989) through an incorporation into its fold of all those who own a 'common blood' and a common Fatherland. However, like Savarkar, who was a Chitpavan *brahmin* from a land-owning community that had held considerable power under Peshwa rule, most of the founding leadership and intelligentsia of the Hindutva movement originated in *brahmin* or other upper castes. In the late nineteenth-century, though, just as there were movements of socio-religious reform led by upper-caste men, so there developed powerful movements of the oppressed sections. Of significance here is the Non-Brahman Movement led by Jotirao Phule in Maharashtra, which later fed into and continues to be upheld by the Ambedkarite movement of the dalit ('oppressed') sections. Maharashtra was the birthplace of the RSS (in the city of Nagpur in 1924–1925), and was founded and developed by upper-caste Maharashtran men. Hence, the consolidation of the RSS must be situated both within the rising influence of the stalwart dalit leader, Ambedkar, as well as the collapse of the nationalist non-cooperation movement which had instigated joint political actions that cut across the Hindu-Muslim religious divide.

Thus, the early Hindutva movement has had to respond to the challenge posed by movements of the lower castes, and certainly the non-upper-caste movements have caused the most serious fracture within this particular agitation. In the hey-days of Indian nationalism particular caste structures and caste organizations acted as centres of political mobilization in and through which Indian nationalism could be expressed and articulated. The most well-known is the movement of the Patidar-caste landholders of Gujarat, the region which produced the strong Gandhian strand of the nationalist movement. Here, the network of *gols* (marriage circles) together with educational institutions such as schools for Patidar boys, forged a strong consciousness which led to the famous Gandhian no-tax campaigns of the 1918–34 period (Hardiman 1981). The shifts in the basis of Indian (particularly Gandhian) nationalism are showing most vividly in the case of this caste. Many Patidars, once stalwart Gandhians, now form a major power base for the BJP in Gujarat. Where members of this caste have migrated and settled in Britain and the US, they have often lent support to the Hindutva movement (Mukta, this volume).

In its attempt to demonstrate its extra-parliamentary strength, the *sangh parivar* rallied around the call to reclaim the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. This gained the greatest momentum from December 1990

when the BJP leader, L. K. Advani, backed by the VHP, undertook a national ceremonial procession to 'reclaim' the mosque in the name of the mythological warrior prince and Lord Rama. The shift in public consciousness from an agitation surrounding the question of affirmative action for backward castes, to a communal agitation which sought to unite all Hindus in defence of the mythological land of Rama, is worth charting here, since it demonstrates vividly the fraught relationship between caste politics and religion-based politics in India.

The former National Front government under V. P. Singh announced its decision in mid-1990 to implement the recommendations of the Mandal Commission to reserve 27 per cent of public sector jobs and places in higher education for backward castes (such as Yadavs and Kurmis). Leaving aside here the question of electoral political strategies, the implementation of the Mandal Commission report would have substantially broadened the caste base of public sector employers, and would have created some inroads for other castes into the monopoly that the upper castes have had in this sector. The upper-caste backlash came in particular from college-going youth, especially in the capital city of Delhi in September 1990, where public self-immolations took place by young women and men who were protesting against affirmative action. Editorials in English-language newspapers previously known for their liberal leanings urged upper-caste students not to give up on their movement. This student agitation marked an intellectual hiatus, whereby large sections of the intelligentsia came out in support of 'meritocracy', young women students lamented that the kind of men they had hoped to marry would now be demoted to the rank of a shoe-maker or a rickshaw-driver, and there were widespread declarations that India should not be ruled by hick, small-town dwellers.

Proponents of the Hindutva world-view saw events surrounding the Mandal Commission report as a profound threat to the consolidation of a unified Hindu body, as clearly caste identities and solidarities were rising to the fore, cleaving the notion of a homogeneous Hindu community. Advani's decision to take out a procession from the temple of Somnath in western India, through the major towns and cities of north India (leaving a trail of communal violence in its wake) was an astute move not only to side-step the question of the Mandal report, but instead to raise a very different political configuration. BJP supporters were by and large anti-Mandal, although the BJP, RSS and VHP officially denounce caste restrictions. On 30 October 1990, while the V.P. Singh government was attempting to contain the anti-Mandal agitation, VHP supporters entered the Babri Masjid, climbed up the domes, and raised saffron flags over the mosque.

It would be reductive to designate the Hindutva movement as purely 'upper-caste' or 'urban-based' or, in the diaspora, composed mainly of merchants, computer experts and lower-middle-class professionals (see

variously Mathew and Prashad, Rajagopal, Sarhadi Raj and Mukta, this volume.) The strength of the Hindutva movement lies in its ability to draw in large numbers of people who are not upper caste or middle class, both in India and the diaspora. While members of the Indian upper castes and emergent middle classes have undoubtedly provided the intellectual leadership of the Hindutva movement, both within India and outside of it, there are important signs of previously stigmatized groups rising in social status through an espousal of Hindutva ideology. In India, for example, very poor migrant workers have been implicated in violence against Muslim communities. In Britain, there is evidence that working-class individuals from a traditional leather-working community in Leeds became leading members of the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh [HSS] (Knott 1994, p. 220). The contradictions of caste for Hindu nationalism have been illustrated electorally in India by the challenges that the BJP has faced from electoral alliances between non-élite-caste groups and Muslim communities, and the important opportunities that the BJP has created by forming its own electoral alliances with non-élite caste parties. It remains valid, however, to say that political movements by non-élite castes continue to fracture the movement for a Hindu nation.

Recreating new masculinities and femininities

Gender is a fundamental organizing principle of the Hindutva movement. The Hindutva movement has sought to create specific forms of masculinity and femininity within 'the Hindu fold' that direct attention to, and construct the men and women of 'other' communities as sexualized objects that are to be contained and punished. Attention to the gender and sexual politics of the Hindutva movement has been central to the analytical and political endeavours of secular Indian feminism over the last decade (Sarkar and Butalia 1995; Jayawardena and de Alwis 1996).

As relevant has been the exploration of the ideologies of strong and affective masculinities that have informed the organization of the RSS and the political-religious iconography of the VHP and the BJP (Kapur 1993). Central to the Hindutva processes of recreating Hindu tradition has been a careful and strategic attention to the visual and literal representation of Hindu Gods.

The little known story of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's sole visit to an RSS office is worth recapitulating here. Seeing on the wall pictures of the martial Hindu leaders of the past, Gandhi, a life-long devotee of Ram, had reportedly asked why a picture of Ram was not there. The elders of the RSS present there explained for his benefit that Ram was too effeminate a figure to serve their purpose (Nandy *et al.* 1995, p. 99).

If the RSS believed in the 1940s that an illustration of Rama was too effeminate to be displayed in their offices, the situation now is the reverse. It needs remembering that both the major north Indian Hindu epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, have at their core the story of a monumental and decisive war. These epics have been utilized for the recreation of Hindu religious and nationalist iconography in militant ways. The visual representation of Rama has been transformed from that of benign or noble patriarchal civility, perhaps even humility, to that of an aggressive warrior (Kapur 1993). In a similar way, Hindutva privileges the Krishna on the battlefields of Kurukshetra, as depicted in the Mahabharat, who is urging his doubtful and reluctant companion Arjuna to go to war against those who were his own kin.

Compare the popular representation of Rama (Figure 1) with that constructed by the VHP in the late 1980s (Figure 2). The former is found framed and worshipped within domestic shrines; it has also appeared as a familiar and identifiable icon in calendars and Diwali cards since the broad spread of the print media. In Figure 1, Rama holds the bow and arrow lightly with Lakshmana and Sita by his side. Hanuman kneels in devotional service. Rama is a just ruler, brother, husband and bestower of patronage in a tableau which contains his power within a benevolent frame. In Figure 2, Rama walks through angry waters as a lone vengeful figure unleashing his weapon.

The RSS has remained a male organization. Its emphasis on the aesthetics and integrity of aggressive and physical masculinity has been noted by several writers. There is a central dynamic in RSS man-moulding activities that privileges the physical exercise of the masculine body as central to the inculcation of nationalist ideology (Golwalkar 1966). The founders of the RSS did, indeed, see effeminacy, identified with modern ideas of liberalism and free speech, as conducive to the destruction of the nation. It also needs noting that a central dynamic in RSS ideology is between the necessity of regimented, calculated and rationalized discipline in which the efflorescence of emotion is strongly regulated and the importance of rousing the powerful nationalist – one is almost tempted to say libidinal – passions of Hindutva. Much can be written about the ideology of sexuality, affective masculinity, warm brotherhood and the spiritual identification with ancient fathers that both dominates RSS organization and happily coexists with its promotion of an aggressive masculinity against others (Baccheta 1994).

Central to this masculine defence of the nation is the familiar identification of the national space with the body of a woman. Indeed, as in many Islamist examples, some of the key campaigns of the Hindutva movement in the 1980s and 1990s were centred on the figure of a woman's body (Chhachhi 1991). This has included the Hindutva-based campaign to defend as Hindu tradition the self-immolation of the widow Roop Kanwar in Rajasthan in 1987, as well as the defence of a Muslim woman

Figure 1. Rama in the 1970s

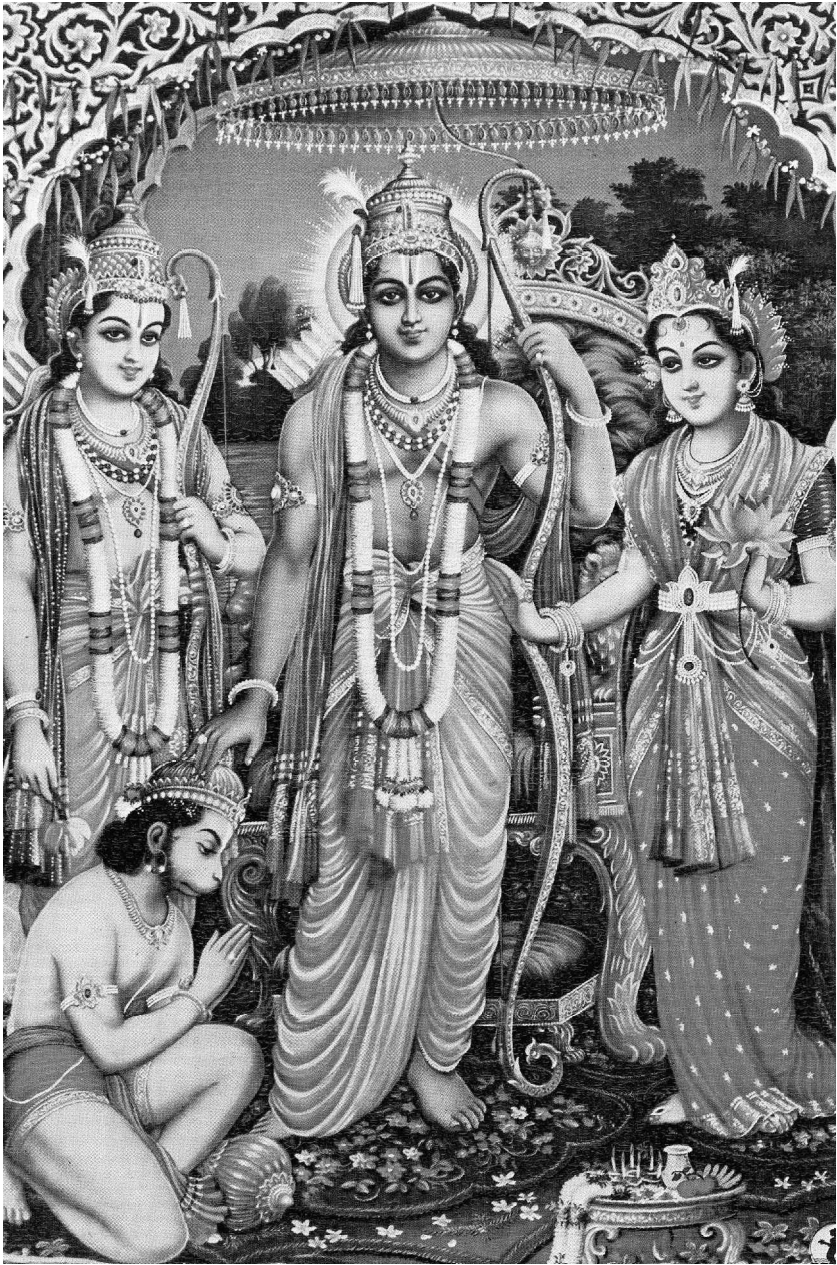


Figure 2. *Rama in the 1990s*



Shahbano who was abandoned by her husband without any alimony payments, and in whose favour the Indian Supreme Court ruled in the mid-1980s, thus overturning the legitimacy of Muslim Personal Law in India (a decision that was reversed by Rajiv Gandhi).

The Rashtriya Sevika Samiti (the 'National Women Volunteers Corps') was formed in 1936 by Lakshmi Kelkar and was the RSS's first affiliated organization. The Samiti is subordinate to, but organized on the

same centralist principle as the RSS. It also stresses the martial and violent aspects of Hindu mythology. It has focused on the disciplined training of young Hindu women in martial arts and the ideology of Hindutva. Both the RSS's and the Samiti's gender ideology starts from the patriarchal premise of *matruvat paradareshu*: all Hindu women, except one's wife, are to be regarded as one's mothers. Consequently, all Hindu women are semiotically identified with the religious motherland itself, Bharatmata (or 'Mother India'). Motherland acts as a powerful gendered trope for nation in which minorities within the nation are represented as an assault on Hindu womanhood itself.

Within the Hindutva ideal, Hindu women have a dual family role which is not simply confined to motherhood and homemaking, since the greater 'family' in RSS ideology is fundamentally the nation itself (Sarkar 1995). The Samiti articulates both these strands thus:

Woman is a common bond of affection and attachment in a family, in her capacity as a daughter, a sister, a wife and a mother. The family, society automatically becomes weak and feeble when this bond loses its grip and power. It is, therefore, utterly necessary to make women strong physically, mentally, intellectually and spiritually also, so that she can get correct and coordinating outlook regarding her duties towards the family and society and create a deep sense of devotion and pride for nation, religion and culture (. . .) Samiti has also enunciated the theory that the women are the foundation pillars of the nation taking into account their capacity to mould the [domestic and national] family. Samiti worships Goddess Ashtabhuja which is an integral combination of [the goddesses] Mahakali, Mahasaraswati and Mahalaxmi. Co-ordination of Strength, Intellect and Wealth elevates the nation to a higher plane. (. . .) A Hindu woman is an eternal mother a symbol of love, sacrifice, dedication, fearlessness, sanctity and devotion. The tenderhearted woman becomes bold and aggressive if time demands (Rashtriya Sevika Samiti, not dated).

During the 1980s and 1990s, the popularity of what is perhaps best called 'the Hindutva women's movement' grew among sections of urban and rural women. It has been argued that this was the result of a strategic policy by Hindutva organizations created in direct response to the huge success of Indian feminism during the 1970s and 1980s (Setalvad 1995). This resulted in a 'communalization' of gender and sexual politics that sharply differentiated Muslim from Hindu women. This was undertaken through manufacturing a wide range of symbolic and ideological representations of a distinctive, powerful Hindu womanhood (Basu *et al.* 1993, pp. 78–88; Basu 1995; Sarkar 1995; Bacchetta 1996), the massive mobilization of Hindu women in political activism, specifically in relation to organized violence against urban Muslim communities, and the

sponsorship of a few women Hindutva political figureheads, such as Uma Bharati and Sadhvi Rithambara who were renowned for their militant and inflammatory anti-Muslim and pro-Hindutva rhetoric. Central to Rithambara's political rhetoric was the goading of Hindu men to demonstrate their masculinity by taking on 'the Islamic foe'. These areas emphasize that Hindutva gender ideology is not straightforwardly about keeping women within the home but reflects a more complex orientation to gender that has configured a militant Hindutva womanhood. Consequently, Hindutva ideology and iconography abounds with representations of powerful and militant Hindu women and, indeed, the BJP itself calls for *nari shakti*, or 'woman power', exploiting the fact that the traditional words for power and energy within many north Indian Hindu traditions are feminine.

What has been termed 'the feminization of violence' has raised important questions for Indian feminism (Agnes 1996). For it is not simply the case that Hindu women, seen in many Hindu and secular Indian traditions as passive citizens and silent housewives disinterested in politics, have mobilized in surprisingly large numbers under Hindutva ideology. (The activism of Hindu women for Hindutva causes has also been reflected in the diaspora, especially among second-generation members.) Hindu women in an organized and active form have lent considerable and wide-ranging support to the Hindutva movement and have been active in instances of communal violence against urban Muslim communities. Conversely, it has been consistently reported that the incidence of violence against Hindu women has itself increased over the past few years, during the period of BJP government, and has itself led to protests by Hindutva women against Hindutva men (Bacchetta 1994; Srivastava 1997; Mukta 2000). These areas raise important questions about Hindu women's agency within an overarching neo-patriarchal Hindutva configuration that can place severe but differential limits on both Hindu and Muslim women's autonomy and freedom.

The return of Aryanist thinking

A key strand in the elaboration of Hindu nationalism above has been the issue of Aryanism (Thapar 1996; Vasunia and Prashad 1998; Bhatt 1999). The contemporary Hindutva movement has invested considerable energy in an endeavour to refute late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Western Aryanist paradigms that few scholars would accept today. Their interventions have dramatically affected contemporary Indological and South Asianist disciplines within and outside India. Facing political Hindutva claims about the so-called 'Aryan Invasion Theory' has become an important and difficult issue for many academics researching and teaching in India, the US and Europe.

A contextual understanding of the complex manifestation of Aryanist

thinking in South Asia requires both a distance from the specifically German National Socialist appropriation of Aryanism as well as a nuanced understanding of the complex historical links between European and South Asian varieties of Aryanism of which the pre-Nazi and Nazi versions are one important example. The 'Aryan myth' in Europe was dependent on the discoveries in the eighteenth century of the philological similarities between archaic Latin, Greek, Sanskrit and Avestan. The formal similarities discovered initially between these languages and then, later, a number of other European languages lead to the hypothesis of a common linguistic origin. Several similarities were also discovered between the myths, Gods and Goddesses of the ancient Greeks and those of the speakers of archaic Sanskrit. The common language group was given various names, including 'Indo-Germanic', 'Indo-European', 'Japhetic' and 'Mediterranean'. Alongside the view of a common linguistic origin was an epistemically separate but, in practice, related view of an original people and a common geographical homeland. In other words, an unwarranted equivalence in objects of knowledge was established among the burgeoning 'sciences' of comparative philology, ethnology and mythology. There is a considerable literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, both scholarly and dilettantist, that is obsessed with speculations on the *Urheimat*, the *Ursprache* and the *Urvolk* of the Indo-European language family (Mosse 1966; Poliakov 1974).

In the late nineteenth century, the British-German Indologist, Friedrich Max Muller popularized 'the technical term Aryan' to refer to the Indo-European language family. His argument was that the term 'Aryan', being of foreign origin, could not be used for the purposes of ethnic or national chauvinism in Europe. The word 'Aryan' is a corruption of the word which occurs in the Hindu Rig Veda as '*arya*', and in the Zoroastrian Zend Avesta as '*airiia*'. The Rig Veda and the Avesta are identified as the oldest existing literature created by *arya*-speaking groups, and hence have had unique importance for tendencies with an investment in Aryanism. The term '*arya*' also occurs frequently in later Buddhist and Hindu texts.

The Rig Veda was interpreted by European writers to demonstrate that a powerful warrior 'race' called the Aryans had entered India and conquered what were interpreted as 'the dark-skinned, stub-nosed' original inhabitants, the *dasyus*. The Rig Veda does have a distinct and complex 'ethnology' and 'xenology' of selves (such as some *arya*-speaking tribes) and others (the *dasyus*, the *mlecchas*, those who speak other languages, those who worship other Gods or have other customs, and indeed other *arya*-speaking tribes). The interpretation of the Rig Veda using the concepts of 'race' that were flourishing in nineteenth-century France, Britain and Germany has been virtually universally considered by scholars to be erroneous since at least the end of World War

II (Poliakov 1974; Trautmann 1997 for a recent discussion). In a sense that is important for the discussion which follows and in contextualizing Romila Thapar's contribution to this issue, the Western racial interpretation of '*arya*' in the Rig Veda has been fundamentally rejected by most scholars for several decades.

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 and various original 'homelands' were proposed, including India, Germany, the Caucasus, Eire, Persia, the Baltics, 'Atlantis' and so forth. In the hands of Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Wagner and the Bayreuth Circle, Aryanism became a vicious anti-Semitism, reflecting an earlier German romantic polarization between the Hindu-Buddhist and the Judeo-Christian. The rapid appropriation of Aryanism during the 1920s and 1930s into 'Ariosophy', a German and Austrian version of the Theosophy movement which had spread out from India and Britain, led directly to much of the symbolic material for Nazism (Goodrick-Clarke 1985).

The Aryan myth was unexpectedly reinforced by another discovery this century in India. During the 1920s the ruins of what was later shown to be a vast, ancient, relatively advanced urban civilization were discovered in northern colonial India. Numerous other sites have since been discovered across northern India and (mainly) within Pakistan, with the two main centres of the civilization identified as the cities of Mohenjo Daro and Harappa. The Indus Valley civilization was broadly contemporaneous with the main ancient riverine civilizations in the Middle East and Africa. Importantly, the few existing examples of the written script of the Indus Valley civilization have not been convincingly deciphered. The scholarly consensus is that the Indus Valley script represents a non-Indo-European, non-Indo-Aryan language which existed prior to the Vedic Sanskrit period.

However, the state of some of the ruins of the Indus Valley civilization were interpreted by British archaeologists, such as Sir Mortimer Wheeler, as direct evidence of a conquering Aryan invasion that destroyed the civilization of the original inhabitants of India, thus further fuelling European Aryanist thinking. This view has also been rejected in post-war scholarship and the consensus is that the Indus Valley civilization declined over a considerably long span of time, possibly due to environmental and ecological factors. There has been an academic consensus for several decades that there was no destructive 'Aryan invasion' of India but instead complex and multiple processes of migration by pastoral *arya*-speaking tribes over an extremely long period of a thousand years and in the main well after the decline of the Indus Valley civilization. The linguistic evidence for the migration *into* India of *arya*-speaking tribes, probably from a region bordering Iran and India, is

overwhelming. Consequently, the ‘original’ speakers of the *arya* languages were not indigenous to India but had migrated into India and this process and the syncretism with the cultures that existed eventually gave rise to Vedic culture and the Sanskrit language and, in a much later period, what we now know as Hinduism.

It is at this point that the Hindutva claims about the Aryan origins of Hindu civilization become important. If a pre-Vedic, pre-*arya* civilization existed in India, and if the speakers of Indo-Aryan languages came from outside India, the ancient foundations of Hinduism are themselves exogenous to India and not an indigenous product. Consequently, over the last decade there has emerged a large body of academic, autodidact and dilettantist literature published in India and the US (and, indeed, increasingly Pakistan) that is occupied with demonstrating that Aryans were indigenous to India and migrated out to the rest of the Middle-East and Europe, and that India is the original Aryan homeland. The most important and contentious of these claims is that the Indus Valley civilization is Aryan, its language Indo-Aryan (or Sanskritic) and its Gods and Goddesses Vedic. These claims rest on an evasion of the linguistic evidence for the migration of *arya*-speaking groups or the movement of the *arya* language into India. The Indus Valley civilization has also been erroneously renamed in Hindutva literature as the ‘Indus-Saraswati’ civilization, ‘Saraswati’ being a Rig Vedic and a Hindu name for a Goddess. Fundamental to these claims is the resurrection of an earlier European idea that influenced various romantic and early Enlightenment thinkers who were seeking to criticize both clerical authority and the biblical chronology of humankind—that India received the first revelation and was the cradle of all the civilizations of the world. Despite this Western pedigree, Hindutva supporters of these views contend that the denial of Aryan indigeneity in India is a result of racist, colonialist and Christian chauvinism.

The interview in this volume with Romila Thapar provides a stimulating discussion of these areas and engages directly with the core and origin of ‘the Aryan myth’ which had such horrifying consequences this century and continues to resonate in unexpected ways in the contemporary period. Thapar explores the distinctive importance of Aryanism for the Hindutva imaginary. She focuses detailed attention on recent Hindutva claims about the relationship between Aryans and the ‘civilizational discourse’ of India, as well as the older European foundations from which such claims could be made by a variety of groups. Thapar also discusses the wider impact and consequences of Hindutva ideology for academic freedom, scholarly discipline and civil liberties.

Conclusion: the vagaries of racism and the growth of diaspora nationalism

It is perhaps a paradox that relatively little academic work has considered the political transformations among the largest Indian migrant groups in the diaspora. Since the early 1990s, Hindutva ideology and organization has become increasingly and, in some instances, dramatically visible in South Asian communities in the UK, the US, Canada, the Caribbean and eastern and southern Africa. The often dense complexities of these areas are explored in the contributions that follow. None of the contributors argues that Hindutva has become the dominant ideology of Hindus abroad or in India, or that it has replaced traditional Hindu belief or secular formation among the majority of Hindus living abroad. However, in denying the naturalness of 'Hindu community', the contributors have sought to analyse the undeniable impact, social contours and organizational aims of Hindu nationalist formations in the Indian diaspora.

Exploring the relation between the hierarchies within Hinduism and Hindutva itself, and the manner in which these have emerged within the UK is a key focus of Mukta's contribution. In particular, she explores the manner in which a wide variety of Hindu organizations, *sampradays*, religious leaders and the diaspora Gujarati vernacular press has mobilized active support for UK and Indian Hindutva causes during the late 1980s and 1990s. This raises fundamental questions about the malleability of the religious boundaries – or perhaps the core – of diaspora Hindu organizations in the face of an all-embracing Hindutva ideology. This is a densely challenging area about which few writers on diaspora Hinduism have written. Mukta also explores the ways in which the Hindutva movement in the West appropriates the languages of anti-Orientalism and anti-imperialism to articulate an illiberal and exclusionary global formation.

Attempting to map a distinction between diaspora Hinduism and Hindutva is also a central theme in both Sarhadi Raj's and Searle-Chatterjee's contributions. Both contributors highlight the potential inadequacies of various intellectual frameworks and debates that have been concerned to provide an assessment of diaspora Hinduism. For Sarhadi Raj, the key movement is from a 'pro-Hindu' orientation towards one that is 'pro-Hindutva'. She analyses this through an anthropological study of a student organization in the UK and its attempts to create a politics of 'Hindu' identity.

Searle-Chatterjee provides a critique of several British sociological and anthropological writings on Hinduism in the diaspora. She argues that the analytical categories used to situate Hinduism within a dominant 'world religions paradigm' are inextricably, though in a complex way, related to nineteenth-century colonial codifications of Indian religions, castes and communities. These same categories, she argues, provide for

a strong commensurability between colonial classifications, contemporary sociological analytical categories and the political languages of the Hindutva movement. Similarly, in stressing the integrative, or perhaps over-integrative nature of religion, many UK academics reproduce a Durkheimian functionalist paradigm that is very similar to Hindutva claims not simply about what Hinduism is, but what it ought to be.

It is precisely the task of making sense of emergent diaspora religious nationalism within the context of Western racism and multiculturalism that Rajagopal's and Mathew and Prashad's contributions can be situated. This is a difficult area which the contributors approach from different perspectives while at the same time documenting and analysing the organizational, ideological and practical impact of the Hindutva movement in the US. Rajagopal demonstrates, through an ethnographic account of a US HSS *shakha*, and through interviews with key American Hindutva activists, how Hindutva organizational forms and networks have to be seen in the distinctive context of the structures of American multicultural identity-formation that need not necessarily reproduce Hindutva in the way it has been emergent in India. Both Rajagopal and Mathew and Prashad trace the complex patterns of migration of some urbanized, relatively élite workers and students from India to the US and thence into the institutional structures of work and academy in which, though non-reductive processes of exclusion, racialization and ethnic and religious identity-formation, new recruits for Hindutva organizations are generated. Rajagopal, in particular, locates this phenomenon in the changing configurations of communications and 'globalization' through which a novel Internet Hindutva has become established. The RSS did, indeed, launch its first 'cybershaka' in September 1999 at an event in New Delhi attended by several hundred *swyamsevaks* from the US, the UK and across the globe and presided over by its current Supreme Leader, Rajendra Singh (*The Organiser*, 10.10.1999).

Mathew and Prashad's article similarly highlights the creation of what they term 'Yankee Hindutva'. Its key components are related to broadly American as well as Indian 'traditions'. They trace the organizational links and financial support that the diaspora Hindutva movement provides to Indian Hindutva projects (also an important theme in both Rajagopal's and Mukta's contributions). They, as well as Bhatt, highlight the importance of new 'Aryanist' thinking that has become important for diaspora Hindutva groups.

The contributions of Bhatt, Prashad and Mathew, Rajagopal and Mukta consider what diaspora nationalism may mean in the context of Western, ostensibly multicultural environments within which South Asian minorities have faced complex histories of racialization, violence and discrimination. The differing traditions of US and UK minority multiculturalism and racism are explored as providing both possibilities and obstacles from which distinctive minority nationalisms may emerge

in a non-reductive way. Several contributors explore the idea that minorityhood and minority identity are formulated not simply in relation to dominant majorities, but from a sharp negotiation with the discourses which define 'other' racial and ethnic minorities in the West. This creates a different dynamic of minority nationalism that is articulated precisely through its attempt to distinguish itself from the range of other minorities that exist in the West.

'Minority discourse' is also an important strand in the interview with Romila Thapar. She argues that one of the puzzles of the Hindutva language of 'discrimination against Hindus' in India, who constitute more than 80 per cent of the Indian population, is its origin and its relation to the discourse of minority discrimination of Hindus who have moved to the West. Equally important perhaps is the American and British New Right language of the 1980s which carried similar themes of 'majority discrimination' and an attack on minority rights and protection. In the complex global traffic of ideas and ideologies, the example of US ultra right-wing Senator Pat Robertson, who attacked Hinduism as 'demonic' and therefore a bar to the migration of Hindus into the 'majority Christian' US, perhaps says more about the conditions in which Hindutva ideologies have emerged than his Hindutva opponents may ever care to admit.

As instructive in illustrating some of the 'racial' and religious absolutisms that can be manifest in the lives of diaspora Hindus is the example of Amartya Sen's winning of the Nobel Prize for Economics in 1998. The Indian VHP president Ashok Singhal launched a ferocious attack on Sen, claiming that the award was part of a world-wide Christian conspiracy to propagate an 'alien' religion in India through the literacy and anti-poverty programmes that Sen advocated (*Indian Express*, 28.12.1998). There were also concerns about Sen's safety, including an appeal to the Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee, following RSS propaganda about his 'allegiance' to Islam and the consequently 'undeserved' nature of the prize (*The Hindu*, 3.11.1998). On his way to receive the prize, Sen was held up by Swiss immigration authorities who believed he was trying to enter Switzerland without sufficient funds (an action which later resulted in an apology to Sen from the Swiss parliament). That European racism and Indian Hindutva attempted to ensnare a representative of a principled Indian humanism seems to say much about the nature of both.

A key theme in all the contributions concerns the meaning and relevance of 'diaspora religious nationalism' in a period of 'globalization' for migrant groups and communities in the West who may have little practical engagement with Indian social, economic and political realities. If 'racial' marginalization is important, how precisely does living within a discourse of racial or ethnic minorityhood come to be articulated in religious nationalist terms? A series of important issues emerge from this which can potentially shift the paradigms in which minorities in the West,

as well as majority racisms, are thought through. For it is clear that the diaspora Hindutva movement has concerned itself with two different sets of minorities and majorities: those in the West and those in India. It is as concerned with its minority ethnic and religious rights in the West as it is with the 'majority rights of Hindus' in India. The diaspora Hindutva movement is actively engaged in an avowal of 'Hindu rights' in the West and an active disavowal of Christian and Muslim rights in India. Put differently, there are powerful diaspora Hindutva ethnic nationalist discourses of the homeland, and equally powerful Hindutva ethnic nationalist discourses of minorities within both the homeland and in the West. The unequal power geometry of globalization that is concentrated in the West can create significant advantages for diaspora Hindutva movements in their relationships with India. The formation of absolutist religious identities by claimed representatives of some minorities in the West is a will to power from which they thence have a privileged stake in deciding the future of absolutely less powerful minorities in the homeland.

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