The Hindutva Movement and Colonial Consciousness

THE PROBLEM OF ORIENTALIST NOTIONS IN THE HINDUTVA MOVEMENT: A PRELIMINARY ENQUIRY

Garima Raghuvanshy

Research Master Religion And Culture

Student: Garima Raghuvanshy

Student Number: S2492865

Course: Research Master Religion and Culture

First Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Kocku von Stuckrad (Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Groningen)

Second Supervisor: Dr. Clemens Six (Faculty of Arts, University of Groningen)

Third Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Jakob de Roover (Faculty of Arts and Philosophy, University of Ghent)

Academic Year: 2015-2016

Word Count: 35,340 (Including footnotes and references)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I must begin by expressing heartfelt gratitude to Professor Jakob de Roover. His guidance, patience, and kindness made the process of writing of this thesis a deeply enriching experience. Under his guidance I have been able to make progress not only in understanding the theoretical framework of Comparative Science of Cultures, and thus, in gaining insight into the Hindutva movement, but also, in beginning to learn how to think and how to write. My sincere thanks also to the India Platform, and to the research group in Ghent, in India, and in Pardubice. To Marianne, Nele, Sarah, Sarika, Sufiya, Dunkin, Anne, Ashok, Anil, and Martin. Their love and support has been and is an invaluable source of strength.

I would like to thank Professor Kocku von Stuckrad, my supervisor for this thesis. At a moment when I no longer expected to be able to write this thesis, his help made it possible to do so. Prof. von Stuckrad's comments and feedback have improved this thesis and my own understanding. For this, and for his kindness I am deeply grateful.

I would like to express my gratitude to my family for their unwavering support and continuous encouragement, in this as in all my endeavours.

In the end, I would like to thank Professor S.N. Balagangadhara. Without his support and guidance, it would not have been possible for me to write this thesis. His work has enabled me to begin making sense of my own experience as an Indian, and to be able to learn from it. It has opened up a direction in which this master thesis is but a first step. I hope that those who are guides and who have become friends in the process of writing this thesis will continue to be part of the long and fruitful learning process that lies ahead.

ABSTRACT

Present descriptions of the Hindutva movement characterise it (i) as various forms of nationalism, (ii) as patriarchy, (iii) as Brahmin hegemony, and (iv) as a perpetuator of Orientalist discourse. The first three characterisations are deeply problematic and do not enhance our understanding of the movement. The fourth, however, is an important insight into the Hindutva movement. How does a movement that explicitly seeks to return India to its Hindu roots accrue criticisms that it is a continuation of colonial and Orientalist notions about India? Balagangadhara's theory of colonial consciousness allows one to use this insight about Hindutva to begin a very productive enquiry about the nature of the movement. Such a study of the Hindutva movement allows one to gain insight not only into *why* the Hindutva movement continues to repeat Orientalist discourse, but also, into *how* it does so. While the movement repeats Orientalist discourse as a true description of Indian culture, it also distorts this discourse in a systematic fashion.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgement *3*
Abstract *4*
INTRODUCTION 6
CHAPTER ONE – DEVELOPMENT AND DEFINING ISSUES OF THE HINDUTVA MOVEMENT 9
CHAPTER TWO – OVERVIEW AND CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF ACADEMIC DISCOURSE ON HINDUTVA 27
CHAPTER THREE – BALAGANGADHARA'S THEORY OF COLONIAL CONSCIOUSNESS 60
CHAPTER FOUR – COLONIAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN HINDUTVA WRITINGS 85
CONCLUSION 120
Works Cited *125*
Bibliography *133*
Apendix 1- PhD Research Proposal *148*

INTRODUCTION

The Hindutva movement in India is characterized differently by different academics and commentators. While the movement itself is perhaps best visible in the form and activities of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and its Sangh Parivar, it also encompasses the many thousands of Indians who support the Sangh Parivar and other Hindutva organisations but are not affiliated to these organisations in any official manner. This support for Hindutva amongst the general population was evident in the 2014 general election in India, wherein the Bharatiya Janata Party, a part of the Sangh Parivar, won the election with a simple majority. Given the fragmented nature of Indian politics, wherein successive multi-party coalitions have formed the central government for the last three decades, the 2014 election is a historic victory for the movement.

The Sangh Parivar also saw this as a significant opportunity, which it described as the recurrence of Hindu rule in Delhi after 800 years.[1] Since its political victory in 2014, the Sangh Parivar has taken initiatives that have been identified as 'Hindutva' in nature. One example is the replacement of German with Sanskrit as one of the optional languages in Kendriya Vidyalaya schools (a national chain of public schools). World Yoga Day and Narendra Modi's speech at the 102 Indian Science Congress, wherein he referred to the practice of plastic surgery in ancient India, are other instances of the government's push to Hindu culture, presumably as part of its 'Hindutva' agenda. At best, such initiatives were seen as indications of the fact that finally, India has a government that is proud of its Hindu heritage. At worst, they were seen as attempts to organize a Hindu fascist coup in education and research in India.

[1] ''Proud Hindus' Have Come to Rule Delhi after 800 Years: Vhp', *Outlook,* (2014).

However, deviating from both these perspectives, recent the initiatives of the Sangh can be seen as a tokenism of sorts - symbolic policy changes that do not change the fact that there has been no real reorientation of Indian politics or society. When one considers the Sangh's statement that this election victory is the recurrence of Hindu rule in Delhi after 800 years, the question naturally arises, what is particularly Indian, or even particularly 'Hindu', in the present government and its policies?

Indeed, quite contrary to its aim of creating a Hindu nation that breaks away from westernisation, the movement has been criticised for remaining mired in Orientalist discourse, and for failing to generate any meaningful alternative to the dominant framework for understanding India.[2] This thesis takes this criticism as an avenue into gaining an understanding of the Hindutva movement. Based within Comparative Science of Cultures, the research framework developed by S.N. Balagangadhara, this thesis uses Balagangadhara's theory of colonial consciousness to study the Hindutva movement and critically assesses the consequences of this theory by examining the writings of some Hindutva authors and organisations.

RESEARCH QUESTION AND STRUCTURE OF THESIS

The following research question and sub questions guide this thesis:

Is the Hindutva movement an expression of colonial consciousness? If so, in what ways?

Sub Questions:

1. What are the Orientalist aspects of Hindutva ideology?
2. What are the factors/mechanisms that inform these aspects?

[2] This criticism of the movement will be discussed in the last section of chapter two.

3. What is colonial consciousness?
4. If it is an expression of colonial consciousness, what patterns of thought can be predicted in the Hindutva movement?
5. Do these patterns indeed emerge within the movement?

The first chapter is an introduction to the Hindutva movement – an overview of important historical developments and issues that have shaped the movement and academic discourse on it. The second chapter focuses on four important characterisations used to understand the movement: (i) Hindutva as a form of nationalism (religious, ethnic, cultural), (ii) Hindutva as Patriarchy, (iii) Hindutva as Brahminism/an upper caste movement, and (iv) Hindutva as Orientalism. The chapter provides an overview and critical discussion of academic discourse on the movement, arguing that such descriptions do not advance our knowledge about the Hindutva movement, but rather are deeply problematic. The third chapter is focused on Balagangadhara's theory of colonial consciousness. It focuses on his discussion of colonisation, the colonial framework of description, colonial consciousness, and the role of the colonised in perpetuating this framework of description. In this theory Balagangadhara puts forward certain criteria that allow us to identify colonial consciousness. The fourth and final chapter of the thesis uses these criteria to analyse Hindutva rhetoric and test, in a very preliminary manner, whether one can build the following hypothesis about the Hindutva movement: namely, that it is a form of colonial consciousness.

CHAPTER ONE – DEVELOPMENT AND DEFINING ISSUES OF THE HINDUTVA MOVEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The following is a brief history of the Hindutva movement. Instead of focusing on a detailed historical account (which would not be possible within the scope of this thesis), the present overview focuses on important organisations and events that have shaped the movement as it exists today. The events described in this overview also form an important constituent of the material analysed by academics in their study of Hindutva. As such, the quotations presented in this chapter are embedded in larger critiques of the movement.

While the beginning of the movement is located in different instances by different scholars, several histories begin with 19th century organisations such as the Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj. Academic writing on the movement identifies these organisations as ideological precursors to contemporary Hindutva organisations such as the RSS. In *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader* Christophe Jaffrelot describes Hindutva as "heir to a long tradition"[3], the beginnings of which he describes as follows:

> The first expression of Hindu mobilization emerged in the nineteenth century as an ideological reaction to European domination and gave birth to what came to be known as 'neo-Hinduism'[4]

Similarly, Chetan Bhatt describes the Arya Samaj as follows: "The Arya Samaj…is sometimes described as the first modern fundamentalist movement to have

---

[3] Christophe Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007) at 3.

[4] Ibid., at 6-7.

emerged out of Hinduism."[5] Both scholars see Hindutva as a larger phenomenon, of which the 19th century organisations were a first instance. While Jaffrelot describes Hindutva as Hindu mobilization, Chetan Bhatt describes it as Hindu fundamentalism.

In their study of the Arya Samaj and the Brahmo Samaj scholars identify British education, exposure to Britain, to European history, to nationalist movements in the West, and to ideas of the Enlightenment, as important influences on these organisations. These pre-cursors to Hindutva are termed as reformist-revivalist organisations, a characterization that is extended to the Sangh Parivar of today with some qualifications. The Sangh Parivar is the family of Hindu Nationalist organisations created and headed by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). It includes organisations such as the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram. The RSS and its Sangh Parivar will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

THE BRAHMO SAMAJ AND THE ARYA SAMAJ

The founder of the Brahmo Samaj, Ram Mohun Roy, was one of the most well known Hindu reformists and a key figure of what is termed as the Bengal 'Renaissance'. In keeping with his views on Hinduism and Hindu society, Ram Mohun Roy convened the Brahmo Sabha in 1828 in order to bring about a reformation of Hinduism. Though it was Ram Mohun Roy who conceived of the Brahmo Samaj, it was founded by Nobin Chunder Roy in 1868. The Brahmo Samaj took up social reform movements that sought to encourage widow remarriage and abolish practices such as child marriage and Sati. Members of the Brahmo Samaj were primarily the urban

---

[5] Chetan Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism: Origins, Ideologies, and Modern Myths* (Oxford: Berg, 2001) at 16.

intelligentsia and elite in West Bengal. Christophe Jaffrelot comments on the reformist-revivalist inclination of this section of Bengali society as follows:

> They were inclined to reform their traditions along modern lines but not to the extent that they would abandon or even disown them; in fact they often wanted to reform these traditions in order to save them. Reformists, therefore, became revivalists by pretending that, in emulating the West, they were only restoring to pristine purity their own traditions via eliminating later accretions.[6]

Thomas Blom Hansen, in his discussion of Roy and the Brahmo Samaj, writes that Roy and his followers were strongly influenced by Unitarian Protestantism, which guided their efforts to reform Hinduism.[7] The Brahmo Samaj rejected idol worship and polytheism and denounced the superstition that its members believed had crept into Indian society.[8] Over the years internal fissures led to the division of the Samaj into two factions. Nonetheless, both groups focused on social reform. While the Brahmo Samaj was able to influence the colonial government's policy on Indian practices and traditions, it did not gain political prominence or a significant following in general society.

In 1875 Dayanand Saraswati set up the Arya Samaj, which is described by Jaffrelot as the inheritor of the Brahmo intellectual tradition. Like the Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj also focused on social reform in India, notably, the abolition of sub-castes. However, unlike Ram Mohun Roy, Dayanand Saraswati did not see British rule in

---

[6] Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader* at 7.

[7] Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999).

[8] Some central ideas of the Brahmo Samaj are discussed briefly in the next chapter under 'Hindutva as Orientalism'

India as a providential event, nor did he believe that the West was culturally superior to the East, or to Indian culture in particular. However, he admired what he perceived as the West's "capacity for discipline and organisation",[9] which was lacking in Hindu society. Dayanand Saraswati believed it was vital to build these capacities within Hindu society in order to strengthen it. In his work Jaffrelot comments on Dayanand Saraswati, arguing that: "His idea of reform was not to make India like the West, but to make its standards acceptably Western."[10]

Describing the role of the Arya Samaj within the long tradition of 'Hindutva' or "neo-Hinduism", Hansen writes that it was in the Arya Samaj that important aspects of Hindutva ideology, such as a strong anti-Muslim stance and a focus on Sanskrit and sanskritized Hindi, crystallized. Importantly, it was within the Arya Samaj that the idea of an Aryan Nation with a Hindu society became central to nationalist rhetoric.[11] The Arya Samaj built a significant presence in society through its activities and the institutions it set up. One example is the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic educational institutions, of which currently there are seven hundred and eighty in total, spread across India and abroad.[12]

---

[9] Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* at 72.

[10] Jaffrelot, C. (2007). Introduction. In *Hindu nationalism: A reader* (p. 9). New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

[11] Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* at 71-76.

[12] See: 'President's Message', <http://davcmc.net.in/presidents_message.html>, accessed 12/10/2015 2015.

MINTO-MORLEY REFORMS AND THE CREATION OF THE HINDU MAHASABHA

Descriptions of Hindutva as an anti-minority movement are based on, among other factors, Hindutva's negative view of religious conversion. Scholars trace this stance back to the Brahmo and Arya Samaj's critical view of missionary activity in India. While the Arya Samaj and Brahmo Samaj sought to emulate the form and structure of Christianity and Islam, both organisations were opposed to proselytization.[13] In 19th century Punjab, the Arya Samaj engaged in public debates with Christian missionaries and Muslim clerics regarding religion and religious conversion. The Arya Samaj had inherited a view of communities and their demarcation that was rooted in the perspective and policies of the British Raj. This British view and its resultant policies have been studied extensively, and there is a significant body of work on the crystallizing of erstwhile fluid religious identities through the legal system of the British Raj and the censuses it conducted in India.[14]

This demarcation of communities on the basis of religion was further entrenched when in 1909 the colonial government in India enacted the Minto-Morley reforms, which led to the creation of separate electorates for Muslims, with the stated aim of increasing political representation and power for the Muslim community in India. In the Punjab province of British India, a sizable percentage of the population was Muslim, and after the enactment of the Minto-Morley reforms Hindu communities in Punjab began to form Hindu Sabhas. Soon after the end of the First World War and

---

[13] Bhatt, C. (2001). The primordial nation of the Hindus. In *Hindu nationalism: Origins, ideologies and modern myths* (p. 21). New York: Oxford.

[14] See: Norman Gerald Barrier, *The Census in British India: New Perspectives* (1981 edn.: Manohar, 1981)., Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India.* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996). And R.B. Bhagat, 'Census and the Construction of Communalism in India', *Economic and Political Weekly,* (24/11/2001 2001).

the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, a movement to save the Caliphate was launched in India. Known as the Khilafat movement, it led to a series of communal riots in present day Kerala. In the wake of these riots, in 1915 the Hindu Mahasabha was formed, a national umbrella organisation encompassing all regional Hindu Sabhas. Jaffrelot identifies this development as an expression of "Hindu anxiety" and an important moment in the crystallization of Hindutva ideology:

> The Hindu Mahasabha was rekindled in the 1920s. At this time the ideology of Hindu nationalism was codified and acquired its distinctive features. This development followed the same logic as the initial stages of socio-religious reform movements. Hindu nationalism crystallized in reaction to a threat subjectively felt if not concretely experienced. This time the threatening Other was neither Christian missionaries nor colonial bureaucrats, but Muslims - as evident from the separate electorates issue - but also because of their mobilization during the Khilafat movement.[15]

Soon after this development, in 1923, while Vinayak Damodar Savarkar was still imprisoned in the British jail at Port-Blair, his book *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* was published on the mainland. Today, academics consider this book as central to Hindutva ideology. In his work, Savarkar described the wide-ranging meaning of Hindutva, and the nature of the Hindu nation, which he described as bound together by a common territory, culture and civilization. A frequently quoted passage from the book states that Hindus are those for whom Hindustan, or India, is not only their

---

[15] Jaffrelot, C. (2007). Introduction. In *Hindu nationalism: A reader* (p. 13). New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

fatherland, but also their holy land – thus precluding the possibility of Muslims and Christians being true members of the Hindu Nation.[16]

THE RASHTRIYA SWAYAMSAVAK SANGH AND ITS SANGH PARIVAR

In 1925, ten years after the formation of the Hindu Mahasabha, Keshav Baliram Hedgewar founded the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh in Nagpur, Maharashtra. The RSS was formed with the aim of bringing organisation, unity and strength to Hindu society, which was, according to Hedgewar, in a state of disarray. He believed that lack of unity, mutual distrust and a general lack of strength had left the Hindu community and the nation at the mercy of invaders. After Hedgewar's death in 1940, Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar became the second sarsanghchalak of the RSS. Golwalkar's *We, Our Nationhood Defined*, and *Bunch of Thoughts*, are studied by academics as important sources of RSS ideology. After Golwalkar's death in 1973, Madhukar Dattatraya Deoras became the third sarsanghchalak of the RSS. Under his leadership several affiliate organisations of the RSS were founded, such as Vidya Bharati in 1977[17] and Sewa Bharati in 1979.[18] Today, along with key organisations such as the Vishva Hindu Parishad (est. 1964)[19] and the Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram (est. 1952)[20], this family of organisations forms the Sangh Parivar. The Sangh Parivar, with

---

[16] Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* at 77-80.

[17] See: Vidya Bharati; Akhil Bharatiya Siksha Sansthan. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://vidyabharati.net/organization.php

[18] See: Sewa Bharati . (n.d.). Retrieved from http://sewabharti.org/history/

[19] See: Vishva Hindu Parishad. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://vhp.org/swagatam

[20] See: Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram, Delhi. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://vanvasikalyanashramdelhi.org/index.php/about-us

the RSS at its centre, espouses the cause of Hindutva and aims to create a Hindu Rashtra.[21]

In 1948 Nathuram Godse assassinated Mahatma Gandhi. Godse had been a member of the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS, and thus, in the aftermath of Gandhi's assassination a nationwide ban was imposed on the RSS. This catalysed a section of RSS leadership to call for active participation in politics, and in 1951 the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS, or Jana Sangh) was formed. Deendayal Upadhyay, a member of the RSS, was one of the founding members of the BJS and later became its president. The Jana Sangh only had moderate success in politics, though it played a role in defeating Indira Gandhi's bid for a third term in office after the emergency. The BJS remained a presence in Indian politics between 1951 and 1977. However, after poor results in the 1980 election, members of the BJS broke away to form the Bharatiya Janata Party, or, the BJP. Today the BJP is considered the political wing of the Sangh Parivar and is one of the two national parties in India. The BJP won the 2014 general election with a majority of 282 out of 543 seats in the Lok Sabha, and formed a government under Narendra Modi.[22] The relationship between the BJP and the RSS (and by extension the Sangh Parivar) is influenced significantly by the degree of congruence of their views on different issues. However, the link has never completely been

---

[21] For an insider's account of the RSS, its development and degeneration over the years see: Kelkar, S. (2011). *Lost years of the RSS*. New Delhi ; Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications. Kelkar's insight and analysis is based on an intimate knowledge of the organisation, resulting in a critical perspective that breaks away from predominant narratives about the RSS and it's Parivar.

[22] 'General Election 2014 Results', *Daily News and Analysis* (dnaindia.com: Diligent Media Corporation).

severed, and academics and journalists study this as a relationship between a mentor organisation and its executive branch (in the field of politics).[23]

DEFINING ISSUES

In Independent India, several significant upheavals mark the last three decades. Many of these hallmark events and issues continue to remain centre stage in increasingly complex and fragmented politics at national and regional levels. These events and issues have also had an important impact on the rhetoric and actions of Hindutva organisations and on how the movement has been understood by academics and commentators alike. The following is a brief overview of some of these events.

SHAH BANO AND THE UNIFORM CIVIL CODE

While the Indian constitution declares its objective of creating a Uniform Civil Code, this objective was never achieved. Though this issue was not entirely forgotten in decades following the enforcement of the constitution in 1950, it was the Shah Bano controversy[24] that reignited debate over religious personal law and Uniform Civil Code. In 1985, the Supreme Court of India ordered Muhammad Ahmed Khan to pay a certain amount as maintenance to Shah Bano, his ex-wife. The court based this

---

[23] For examples of such an analysis see: *Routledge Handbook of Indian Politics*, eds Atul Kohli and Prerna Singh (Oxon: Routledge, 2013) 81-81. And: Prashant Jha, 'The Shifting Sands of Sangh-Bjp Relationship', *The Hindu,* 2013-10-17 2013.

[24] For an overview of the case and the resultant commentary in the media, and on the BJP, see: Mody, N. B. (1987). The Press in India: The Shah Bano Judgment and Its Aftermath. *Asian Survey*, *27*(8), 935–953. http://doi.org/10.2307/2644865

decision on the Indian Code of Criminal Procedure and on its own deliberations on the nature of Mahr.[25] Khan and the counsel of the Muslim Personal Law Board saw this as an infringement on the Muslim community's right to maintain its way of life and follow its own religious personal law. The case became the focus of a raging national debate. In 1986, Rajiv Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, proposed and ensured the passing of The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act. The Act nullified the 1985 Supreme Court judgment and put forward a system of alimony for Muslim women that was in keeping with the Muslim Personal Law Board's interpretation of Shari'a. This move by Rajiv Gandhi was widely criticized and was seen by Hindutva organisations as an act of minority appeasement at the cost of national interest. Since 1985, the Shah Bano case is recurrently referred to by Hindutva organisations in their criticism of 'pseudo-secularism' in India. They use this term to refer to perceived minority appeasement carried out by the Indian state in the name of secularism. While this case is also seen as one of the strongest sources of Hindutva feminism, the movement's use of the case in its call for a Uniform Civil Code is seen by academics as an instance of the now common strategy of using feminist critique to denounce Islam.

---

[25] Mahr has been interpreted as maintenance/security in case of divorce, decided before the marriage, or as bride price.

For an interpretation of Mahr as maintenance and security, and a commentary of how it is practiced in contemporary India, see: Flavia Agnes, 'Women and Law: Critical Feminist Perspectives', in Kalpana Kannabiran (ed.), (2015; New Delhi: Sage, 2014).

For an interpretation of Mahr as bride price, see: *Promoting Women's Rights as Human Rights* (Studies on Women in Development, 2015: United Nations Publication, 2000).

THE RAMJANMABHOOMI MOVEMENT

Shortly after the Shah Bano case, the VHP reignited a centuries-old conflict over a disputed site in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh. Organisations such as the VHP, RSS, and BJP, claimed that the Babri Masjid, a mosque/defunct structure[26] in Ayodhya, was built on a Mandir commemorating the birthplace of Lord Rama. Hindutva organisations claimed that a general of the Mughal king Babur had destroyed the Rama Mandir and constructed a mosque over its ruins. This mosque/defunct structure was referred to as the Babri Masjid. The RSS and VHP called for reclamation of the birthplace of Lord Rama, and also demanded that upon the site of the Babri Masjid, another Rama Mandir must be built in order to restore to Hindus an important place of pilgrimage, and to destroy a symbol of foreign tyranny over India. This call for demolition of the Babri Masjid and reconstruction of a Rama Mandir was called the Ramjanmabhoomi movement.

Two momentous developments took place in 1990 – (i) L. K. Advani began a rath yatra, or, chariot journey, from Somnath in Gujarat to Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh, calling for the reconstruction of the Rama Mandir at the site of the Babri Masjid, and (ii) V. P. Singh, the then prime minister of India, decided to implement the recommendations of the Mandal Commission, significantly extending caste based reservations in government jobs and educational institutions.[27] In the national debate that followed, and in subsequent elections, the Ramjanmabhoomi movement and caste-based reservation became key issues. Advani's yatra led to large-scale mobilization, with tens of thousands of people joining the procession to Ayodhya. Advani was arrested before he could reach his destination, but many kar sevaks (volunteers) succeeded in reaching the disputed site. In December 1992, a group of

[26] The status of the structure as a functioning mosque is disputed.

[27] Caste-based reservations had originally been prescribed in the constitution as a temporary measure.

kar sevaks destroyed the Babri Masjid, leading to widespread violence and riots across the country. The Ramjanmabhoomi movement and the demolition of the Babri Masjid are perhaps the most studied events in scholarship on Hindutva. The BJP's success in Indian politics had been marginal in the period between 1980 and 1989. In the 1989 general election it won 85 seats, a huge rise compared to the 2 seats it had won in the previous election. The party's subsequent rise in Indian politics since then has been attributed to the Ramjanmabhoomi issue, and also to what is seen as a growing 'communalization' of the Hindu majority.[28]

COW PROTECTION

Cow slaughter and the consumption of beef are highly contentious issues in India. Several state governments across the country have put in place restrictions or complete bans on the slaughter of cows.[29] These laws are seen as an example of the cultural and political hegemony that Hindus are believed to enjoy. Anti-cow slaughter agitations can be traced back to the first rebellion against colonial rule in India, known as the Mutiny of 1857.[30] Over the last hundred and fifty years, cow slaughter has repeatedly resurfaced as an issue of contention. The Arya Samaj undertook the Gosamrakshana movement in the north-western provinces of colonial India, gaining substantial popular support on the issue over the course of almost two decades,

---

[28] For such an analysis of the political effects of Ramjanmabhoomi movement, See: Leena Misra, 'Temple Rerun: Tracing Ram Rath Yatra, 25 Years Later', *The Indian Express* (indianexpress.com, 2015). And: Priya Sahgal, '1990 - L.K. Advani's Rath Yatra: Chariot of Fire', *India Today* (indiatoday.in: Living Media India Limited, 2009).

[29] 'Report of the National Commission on Cattle', in Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying (ed.), (Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, 2002).

[30] Ibid.

between 1880 and 1894.[31] Peter van der Veer argues that the Arya Samaj played a key role in making cow protection a 'Hindu' issue that was meant to resound with all sections of the community.[32] The debate on cow protection continued throughout the independence struggle in India[33] and was also a subject of the constituent assembly debates during the drafting of the Indian constitution.[34]

In 1986, the VHP created a national cow protection department, which in turn led to the creation of the Gau-Vigyan Anusandhan Kendra in 1996. This center was in charge of research in fields such as agriculture and medicine, organizing awareness drives for cow protection, etc.[35] In 2012, the RSS organized a Vishva Mangal Gou Gram Yatra as part of its cow protection activities.[36]

---

[31] Ibid.

[32] Peter Van Der Veer, 'History and Culture in Hindu Nationalism', in J. C. Heesterman et al. (eds.), *Ritual, State and History in South Asia* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), 721-32.

[33] The cow protection movement in India culminated in mass mobilization and violence on several occasions, for instance, in 1893 and 1966. On the 1893 riots see: Shabnum Tejani, 'Nationalism', *Indian Secularism: A Social and Intellectual History, 1890-1950* (Indiana University Press, 2008), 27-7. For a news report on the 1966 riots see: 'Indian Riots Erupt', *The Spokesman,* 1966.

[34] 'Report of the National Commission on Cattle'.

[35] 'Cow Protection', <http://vhp.org/dim4-cow-protection>, accessed 04/10/2015

[36] 'Save the Cow to Save the Existence of the World-Baba Ramdev', <http://www.rss.org//Encyc/2012/10/22/Save-the-cow-to-save-the-existence-of-the-world-—Baba-Ramdev.aspx?lang=1>, accessed 04/10/2015 2015.

The recent ban on slaughter of cattle in Maharashtra has propelled the issue once more to the forefront of national debate.[37] The debate over beef is predominantly a debate on the relationship between religious communities in India, carried out in the rhetoric of cultural identity and minority rights, pitting communities against each other as rivals. The most recent case of violence over the issue of cow slaughter took place in Dadri near New Delhi, where a Muslim man was killed by a mob on the basis of rumours that his family had stored and consumed beef.[38]

HINDUTVA AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The M. F. Husain controversy is one among a number of cases that led to the characterization of Hindutva as archaic and authoritarian – a movement that is intolerant of any version of Indian culture except the one it sanctions. Maqbool Fida Husain, an acclaimed Indian painter, became the centre of controversy after his depictions of Indian devas and devis in complete and partial nudity. Groups such as the Shiv Sena and Bajrang Dal held protests at exhibitions of Husain's paintings and broke into his home, vandalizing the artwork present there. These incidents, lawsuits, and death threats led to Husain's self-imposed exile from India in 2006.[39]

---

[37] See: 'Indian Media Milks the Beef Ban', *Deutsche Welle,* 2015, sec. 20/03/2015. And: @Bbcworld, 'India's Maharashtra State Bans Beef', (BBC News: @BBCWorld, 2015).

[38] For details see: 'The Dadri Lynching: How Events Unfolded', *The Hindu* (thehindu.com: @The_Hindu, 2015).

[39] 'M.F. Husain: An End in Exile', *The Times of India* (The Times of India: Bennett, Coleman & Co. Ltd).

Consequently, this case entered larger debates about Indian traditions of eroticism, freedom of expression, and Hindutva organisations' stance on these issues.[40]

Another recent case is the controversy surrounding Wendy Doniger's *The Hindus: An Alternative History*, published in 2009. The book, though positively received in the West, was criticized for factual errors. In India and within the Indian diaspora the reception was much more negative. The Shiksha Bachao Andolan Samithi protested against the book, lodging cases against the publisher, Penguin, India, in 2010. Dinanath Batra, founder and head of the organisation, stated that Doniger's book was a biased and incorrect depiction of Hinduism.[41] In their petition the complainants – Siksha Bachao Andolan Samithi and other individuals - stated that:

> …the book was based on "unreliable and unauthentic and one sided sources" and is full of biases, generalizations and pre-conceived notions. "That it has not only used and misused but abused Indian history and religion in an undignified manner. It is a mis-interpretation of Hindu dharma and its glorious past. That the defendant along with the author have selected scattered events of their choice and given them their own interpretation…[42]

---

[40] For details of the case and examples of this discussion see: Rajeev Dhavan, 'Harassing Husain: Uses and Abuses of the Law of Hate Speech', *Social Scientist,* 35/1/2 (2007), 16-60. And Monica Juneja, 'Reclaiming the Public Sphere: Husain's Portrayals of Saraswati and Draupadi', *Economic and Political Weekly,* (1997), 155-57.

[41] Nilanjana Bhowmick, 'Sex, Lies and Hinduism: Why a Hindu Activist Targeted Wendy Doniger's Book', *TIME Magazine,* (2014).

[42] Smriti Singh, 'Penguin Pulls out Wendy Doniger's Book 'the Hindus' from India', *The Times of India,* 12/02/2014 2014.

In 2014 Penguin, India reached an out of court settlement with the complainants, deciding to recall and destroy all remaining copies of the book. In reaction to this development several national and international commentators and publications criticized the controversy and retraction of Doniger's book as an indication of lack of freedom of expression in India.[43]

These two events, among others, and their consequent descriptions have led to characterizations of the Hindutva movement as chauvinist, authoritarian, conservative and steeped in Victorian morality, which is alien to Indian culture.

CONCLUSION

The 1989 elections were the first time Hindutva had gained political success – the demolition of the Babri Masjid and the BJP's national presence in politics brought the movement into the radar of international media and academia. Since then, it has been the subject of intense discussion and criticism. In 2002, riots took place in Godhra and Ahmedabad in Gujarat after kar sevaks returning from Ayodhya were killed in a train fire at Godhra. On the one hand, media commentary and academic work attributed the 2002 Gujarat riots to Hindutva organisations in general, and to Narendra Modi in particular, while, on the other hand, the courts ruled otherwise.

---

[43] For instance see: Jaideep Prabhu, 'Wendy Doniger's the Hindus': Another Blot on India's Free Speech Landscape', *Daily News and Analysis,* 2014., Rama Lakshmi, 'Book Censorship Prompts Freedom of Expression Fears for Indian Publishers', *The Guardian,* 14/07/2014 2014, Ratna Kapur, 'Totalising History, Silencing Dissent', *The Hindu,* 15/02/2014 2014, Vijay Prashad, 'Wendy Doniger's Book Is a Tribute to Hinduism's Complexity, Not an Insult', *The Guardian,* 12/02/2014 2014. For divergent views on this controversy, see: Jakob De Roover, 'Untangling the Knot', *Outlook,* (2014).

The Ramjanmabhoomi movement, demolition of the Babri Masjid, and the Gujarat riots led to descriptions of Hindutva organisations as para-military organisations that take recourse to extra-legal measures in order to enforce their own notion of justice.[44]

On the larger canvas of the history of Independent India, the issues that have defined the study of Hindutva are also issues at the centre of much wider national debates. In these debates, the stance that Hindutva took, (or in some cases, the stance that it was perceived to have taken,) was one among other voices. While on the one hand the Hindutva movement has been seen as symptomatic of the Hindu community and its concerns, on the other hand it has been viewed as a fringe element at odds with the diverse communities that make up India's Hindu majority. After the 2014 election and formation of a BJP government at the centre under Narendra Modi, commentators state that the 'fringe' has now become mainstream. The argument is that the 'right-wing' Hindutva movement can now no longer be derided as an aberration of Hindu society – it has come to political power primarily on the basis of support from Hindu communities in India. Consequently, concerns over the future of secularism in India have become ever more frequent, and warnings of dire consequences for the social fabric of India have become ever more urgent.

These fears arise largely from descriptions of Hindutva as a fascist, para-military movement seeking to make India a violent, authoritarian, Hindu state. As such, these descriptions must be investigated. Are current categories of description applicable to the Hindutva movement? Are current explanations and analyses of the movement scientific? Do they allow us to understand the movement, or do they make the phenomenon of Hindutva opaque? In the next chapter I will provide a brief overview of scholarship on the movement and attempt to show the problematic nature of

---

[44] See: Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi, *Pogrom in Gujarat: Hindu Nationalism and Anti-Muslim Violence in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

characterizations used to describe Hindutva, and the how these characterisations do not help us to a formulate an understanding of what kind of phenomenon the Hindutva movement is.

CHAPTER TWO – OVERVIEW AND CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF ACADEMIC DISCOURSE ON HINDUTVA

This chapter is a brief overview of academic discourse on the movement. The overview focuses on four characterizations of Hindutva in academic scholarship – (i) as an instance of various forms of nationalism,[45] (ii) as patriarchy, (iii) as an upper caste movement and (iv) as a continuation of orientalist notions about Hinduism. In academic discourse on Hindutva these characterizations are often conflated or seen as coterminous. These characterizations, while used most commonly to describe the movement, are however, deeply problematic. This chapter discusses these characterizations and problematic elements therein.

HINDUTVA AS A FORM OF NATIONALISM

Different authors describe Hindutva as an instance of different forms of nationalism. In *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*, Thomas Blom Hansen uses the category 'cultural nationalism' to describe Hindutva. His study of the cultural nationalist traits of Hindutva is focused on Savarkar's *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* which is widely considered to be a seminal text in the ideological development of the movement. Chetan Bhatt in *Hindu Nationalism: Origins, Ideologies and Modern Myths*, describes Hindutva as a movement with the characteristic attributes of cultural nationalism:

> The Hindutva investment in primordialist, archaic and mythological fictions is a characteristic method of cultural nationalism, and is seen as

[45] Different scholars refer to Hindutva as an instance of Religious Nationalism, Ethnic Nationalism, or Cultural Nationalism respectively.

> essential for the cultural and 'moral' regeneration and invigoration of an imagined 'historic community'[46]

Christophe Jaffrelot, in his introduction to Hindu Nationalism: A Reader, states the following:

> Hindu Nationalism appears for the first time as resulting from the superimposition of a religion, a culture, a language, and a sacred territory - the perfect recipe for ethnic nationalism.[47]

In his discussion of the 2002 Gujarat riots, Ghassem-Fachandi refers to Hindutva as religious nationalism and fundamentalism. Each of these authors identifies the following characteristics in Hindutva; (i) that it manipulates/creates fictional accounts of Indian history, (ii) that it seeks to create an 'imagined community', (iii) that it is focused on the notion of a common culture and language of the Hindu people, and (iv) that it is the manifestation of the Hindu community's need of and search for an identity. However, when widely read authors such as Hansen, Jaffrelot, and Bhatt argue for these different categorizations of Hindutva based on the same characteristics, it becomes unclear how these forms of nationalism - cultural, religious, and ethnic – are in fact different from each other. If Hindutva can be religious, cultural, or ethnic nationalism, do these authors see the Hindus as members of a religion, as a group sharing Hindu culture, or as an ethnic group, or as all of the above? Indeed, these authors insist that the idea of Hindus as an ethnic group, the idea of a Hindu culture, or the idea of Hinduism as a unified religion, is a fiction perpetuated by Hindutva organisations. In the light of this fact, the characterization of the movement as ethnic, cultural, or religious nationalism is confusing. The terms themselves – religion, ethnicity, and culture – appear to be

---

[46] Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism: Origins, Ideologies, and Modern Myths* at 210.

[47] Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader* at 15.

significantly different from each other. However, if Hindutva can be religious, cultural, and ethnic nationalism for the same reasons, then the difference between religion, culture, and ethnicity itself is not clear. If the difference is unclear, what is gained by identifying Hindutva as religious, ethnic, or cultural nationalism?

Within the larger narrative of modernity and globalisation, the Hindutva movement is seen as a reaction to developments in the Indian socio-political arena. Catarina Kinnvall's book, *Globalization and Religious Nationalism in India: The Search for Ontological Security* is an example of scholarship that sees Hindutva as the rise of religious nationalism in response to insecurity brought about by globalization. Kinnvall describes the movement as a fulfilment of what she identifies as the psychological need for a stable, simple, and clearly defined identity in the face of globalization. Similarly, in *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*, C. Ram-Prasad identifies the movement as a response to the contemporary Hindu's search for identity. He refers to the movement as 'political Hinduism', and in his discussion he asserts that Hindutva organisations face the challenge of having to ascertain "…what Hinduism could possibly mean in politics."[48] In a later observation in the chapter, Ram-Prasad notes:

> Contemporary political Hinduism, then, is a complex phenomenon. On the one hand, the actual experience of political power demonstrates the limits of religion-derived ideology in the governance of the Indian polity, democratic, pluralist, economically emergent, and geopolitically promising as it is at the beginning of the twenty-first century. On the other hand, as Hindu culture becomes implicated in the affirmation of identity in the face of global erosion of difference – as Hindus construct identities through creative interpretations of history and community – organisations mediating cultural

[48] C. Ram-Prasad, *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism* (Malden: Blackwell Pub, 2003) at 543.

> politics can seem to offer ways and means for such construction. It is here that the VHP in particular seems able to exploit the need of some Hindus in their search for self-definition…If there is sufficient support for such activity, then the cultural route to making India a Hindu nation might still seem open. But this does not seem a straightforward or open route. The very plurality of the Indian people – especially the "Hindus" – that seemed to have made a direct political transformation of India virtually impossible, now stands in the way of any easy prognosis about the future of Hindu nationalism.[49]

Let us analyse this quotation. Ram-Prasad begins by saying that "political Hinduism" is a complex phenomenon. He then goes on to make claims about the movement, although the language – can seem, seems – makes it clear that he does not in fact put forward a definite analysis. He claims that the "democratic, pluralist, economically emergent, and geopolitically promising" nature of the Indian polity makes possibility of governance by a "religion-driven ideology" limited. It is not clear why or how this is the case and Ram-Prasad does not explain what makes a "democratic, pluralist, economically emergent..." polity difficult to govern on the basis of a "religion-driven" ideology. Later in the quotation, Ram-Prasad places the word Hindus in scare-quotes. Why is this so? Is this because he thinks this categorization does not work? If who or what the Hindus are is unclear, then how can there exist an ideology based on the religion to which these Hindus supposedly belong? In other words, how can Ram-Prasad confidently imply that "political Hinduism" is a religion-driven ideology, when it is unclear who the Hindus are, what makes a Hindu into a Hindu, what Hinduism is, and whether it is a religion at all?

The Hindutva movement uses 'Hindu nationalism' and 'cultural nationalism' as self-descriptions. However, it does not follow from this that academics should use these terms as characterizations as well, especially when these characterizations do not

---

[49] Ibid., at 549.

clarify the nature of the phenomenon or allow us to develop hypothesis about its future development. In fact, given the uncertainty regarding the nature of the phenomenon identified as Hinduism, claims about Hindutva that link it to Hinduism by characterizing it as religious nationalism, a religion-driven ideology or an expression of the Hindu community's anxiety, in fact result in uncertain proclamations that do not advance our knowledge of the movement.

Breaking away from this description of Hindutva as a response to modernity, Peter van der Veer's work, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India*, discusses the development of religious nationalism in India as pre-colonial, with deep roots in the mechanisms that allowed Islam and Hinduism to spread across the subcontinent. Van der Veer argues that religious nationalism in India cannot be reduced to "the master narrative of European modernity".[50] Instead, he describes the RSS as an amalgamation of European ideas such as nation and nationalism, with the structure of Indian ascetic traditions. Van der Veer notes that these ascetic traditions are accorded significant respect in Indian society and argues that by mimicking the structure of these traditions, the RSS also enjoys some of Indian society's respect for asceticism.

Van der Veer's insight into the nature of the RSS and its position in Indian society could indeed prove to be a fruitful line of enquiry into the nature of the organisation in particular and the movement in general. However, let us consider the larger

---

[50] Peter Van Der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (University of California Press, 1994). In his later work Peter van der Veer argues that 'modernity' and its markers, such as a national identity, were formed in Britain and in India simultaneously, and that in both countries this process was deeply influenced by the encounter between these cultures as coloniser and colonised. See: Peter Van Der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001).

argument made in van der Veer's work. He argues that Hinduism is not the indigenous religion of India and that it spread across the Indian subcontinent through the same mechanisms as Islam (trade and conversion). Van der Veer suggests that Hinduism spread across India through orders of ascetic-traders, a process that he compares to the spread of Islam through the influence of Sufi saints. He argues that this spread of Hinduism through violence and conversion show that this is an Indian form of religious nationalism that began long before 19th century. He concludes that the Hindutva movement's assertion that Islam and Christianity are foreign religions is thus baseless, since Hinduism, according to him, is also a religion foreign to India. Van der Veer explains the spread of Hindu traditions as follows:

> There is *no doubt* that the expanding influence of groups of saints led to the conversion of enormous groups of people to *some form of Hindu identity*. Nevertheless, Hindu devotional communities remained bound to certain regions and social groups, so that Hindu identity continued to be fragmented. To the extent that there is a common denominator, it can be found in the discourse and practice of devotionalism.[51](Emphasis added)

Here van der Veer argues that due to the "expanding influence of groups of saints", people converted to "some form of Hindu identity". Let us consider this argument. What does van der Veer mean when he speaks of 'some form of Hindu identity'? If some group of saint-ascetics spread their practices, how can we conclude that this led to the spread of "some form of Hindu identity"? Such a conclusion is possible only if the practices of these saints, which were spread through their spreading influence, are considered to be the core or foundation of Hindu religion. If this is not the case, then the spreading of these practices cannot establish any "form of Hindu identity".

---

[51] Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* at 50.
Note that in his later work van der Veer does not specifically address or alter this stance.

Van der Veer's ambiguity about the nature of Hinduism and the problems he faces in identifying Hindu identity become clear when one considers his descriptions – "some form of" Hindu identity and its "fragmented nature". He concludes that "devotionalism", its discourse and practice, is the "common denominator" in Hindu religion. However, as is the case with Hindu identity, van der Veer is ambiguous as to the extent to which this "common denominator" exists at all, and what is meant by the "discourse" and "practice" of "devotionalism".

It becomes clear that while authors discuss Hindutva as Hindu nationalism, political Hinduism, religious nationalism etc., they are unable to address the problems that arise in discussing Hinduism, Hindu identity, and its relation to religion. As Balagangadhara points out, this confusion in academic discourse points to something very important – there is at present a very limited understanding of Indian traditions as a phenomenon.[52]

---

[52] For this argument see: S.N. Balagangadhara, *Reconceptualizing India Studies* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012). Here Balagangadhara shows how the social sciences have not deviated in any significant manner from Orientalism and its discourse, especially in the study of India and Indian traditions. Thus, what descriptions of Indian traditions are available today continue to repeat Orientalist discourse, which is itself deeply rooted in Christianity and Western culture. As such, Balagangadhara argues, presently available descriptions are, almost entirely, descriptions of how one culture, i.e., Western culture, experienced and understood Indian traditions. As Balagangadhara argues, due to the constraints of Western culture, its study of India (encapsulated in the social sciences) transforms Indian traditions into a variant of itself, i.e., into a variant of Western culture. As such, these descriptions do not tell us about the nature of Indian traditions and what kind of phenomenon they are. Indeed, this is a field where extensive research remains to be done.

HINDUTVA AS PATRIARCHY AND MACHISMO

The Hindutva movement has been described as an expression of the anxiety of upper-caste Hindu men, caused by their suddenly unstable position in society and politics. Identified as belonging to the conservative side of the political spectrum, Hindutva is studied as a movement that is deeply patriarchal, subscribing to and propagating a view of women that is misogynist and paternalistic. Certain key elements form the nucleus of the study of Hindutva as patriarchy and machismo: (i) the focus in Hindutva rhetoric on virility and manliness, (ii) the RSS's stated objective of man-making, its focus on celibacy and physical self-control, (iii) the prevalence in Hindutva organisations of highly constricting and conservative notions of gender (identification of womanhood as synonymous with motherhood and domesticity;

It is perhaps worth adding that to the extent that Indians have been unable to make any significant deviation from the current understanding Indian traditions, the fact that they *as Indians* have added to and concurred with current discourse on Indian traditions does not in itself endow this discourse with validity.

For a discussion specifically about the aspect of continuity between Orientalism and post-colonial studies and social sciences in general, see the section titled 'The Litmus test' in Balagangadhara, *Reconceptualizing India Studies*. In chapter three of this thesis I will discuss Balagangadhara's argument regarding the constraints of Western culture, and this aspect of continuity as well.

Additionally, it is important to note that Balagangadhara's theory acknowledges that Indian and Western culture are not monolithic, homogenous entities, and that there is enormous internal diversity within these cultures. However, he refers to their outer limits, and discusses cultural difference from this context.

seeing women as carriers of community honour, tradition and values,) (iv) the conflation of nation and mother-goddess in the ideal of Bharat Mata, (v) the expression of anxiety and a complex cantered around feelings of emasculation, humiliation and lack amongst Hindutva men. Scholars argue that this last aspect in particular leads to the hyper-sexualization of the Muslim 'Other' and a drive to regain honour and masculinize the 'effeminate Hindu man'.

Dibyesh Anand studies the movement through a feminist perspective. In his book *Hindu Nationalism in India and the Politics of Fear*, Anand argues that Hindutva is an example of porno-nationalism –

> Nationalism has typically sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation, and masculinized hope (Enloe 1989: 44). Hindu nationalism illustrates this clearly. It fantasizes potency (of a Hindu collective), yet it fears impotency. Nationalism, for Hindutva, is a politicocultural project to create, awaken, and strengthen a masculinist-nationalist body…I analyzed Hindu nationalism by conceptualizing it as a porno-nationalism. Hindu nationalism, as a narcissistic ideology, has at its core a sexualized conception of sometimes the Self and often the Other; and at the level of nationalized corporeal bodies too, sexual desire and "perversions" play a crucial role…Such a porno-nationalist imagination of the hypersexualized Muslim Other convinces the Hindu nationalist Self of its moral superiority but at the same time instills an anxiety about the threatening masculine Other. Hindu nationalism…has at its core a deep masculinist anxiety that it claims will be solved through a masculinist, often bordering on militarized, awakening.[53]

---

[53]Dibyesh Anand, *Hindu Nationalism in India and the Politics of Fear* (Palgrave, 2011) at 153.

In his discussion of the RSS and gender, Chetan Bhatt addresses each of the five aforementioned aspects of Hindutva as patriarchy and machismo. Focusing on the Rashtra Sevika Samiti, Bhatt describes the Samiti's ideology of service to the family – the immediate family, and the larger, national Hindu family – as the development of a "distinctive Hindutva gender ideology within an overarching patriarchal configuration established by the RSS".[54] He goes on to discuss the use of Durga as the symbol of Bharat Mata – a symbol that he identifies as capable of generating political affect through the Hindutva story of the unconditional love and sacrifice of Bharat Mata for her children, despite centuries of torment by foreign aggressors and mutilation in form of partition and on going separatist movements. Bhatt argues that the gender ideology of Hindutva legitimizes the suffering of Hindu women at the hands of Hindu men without explicitly addressing this subjugation by endorsing the ideal of a sacrificing, self-effacing mother-wife whose domain is domesticity.[55]

Several feminist scholars[56] have conducted ethnographic fieldwork with the women's wing of the Sangh Parivar – the Rashtra Sevika Samiti. These scholars analyse the movement by focusing on the work of the Samiti, its rhetoric, and female leaders within the BJP and other Hindutva organisations. In *Everyday Nationalism: Women of the Hindu Right in India*, Kalyani Menon discusses women involved in the Hindutva

---

[54]Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism: Origins, Ideologies, and Modern Myths* at 138.

[55] See: Ibid., at 136-40.

[56] The study of this aspect of Hindutva is in no way limited to feminist scholarship and forms an essential part of the development of critiques of the movement. The analysis of Hindutva as machismo and patriarchy, as it appears in the work of authors like Hansen, Bhatt and Jaffrelot, is largely in agreement with feminist scholarship on the subject. However, a focused analysis of this aspect of the movement is clearest in feminist scholarship and hence this section of the chapter shall primarily use feminist scholarship as its material.

movement. Menon describes the restrictive gender constructions subscribed to by the Sangh Parivar, within which the role of women is primarily that of wives and mothers, and as such, as procreators of the nation and its culture. She discusses the Sangh Parivar's acknowledgement of women's power over their children, which gives them extraordinary potential to perpetuate Hindu culture and ideas to the next generation. As such, Menon argues, the Sangh Parivar has always asserted that women are central to the Hindutva movement. However, in their role as Hindutvavadis, these women contradict the Sangh Parivar's gendered rhetoric and its encouragements of limits in female behaviour. They diverge from men's constructions of India's past by looking at woman as historical agents, and call upon others to follow, lamenting that Hindu men have become weak and it is up to the women to protect themselves. Thus, in their rhetoric these women maintain entrenched notions upheld by the Sangh Parivar, which focus on the threatening Other, most often the Muslim, who has violently sullied the honour of Hindu women in the past. Menon notes that sexuality is one area where dissonance to the rhetoric of the Parivar is not tolerated, and nor is it attempted. Women were actively encouraged to get married and have children. Most women who are not married yet, or who wish to remain single, work and live under the watchful eye of elderly members and their families. In some cases, they take a vow of celibacy. Menon concludes that while the Sangh Parivar may prescribe a domestic and circumscribed role for women in society, within its ambit women play an extremely important role in spreading the message of the movement.[57]

In an earlier set of papers, Zoya Hasan, Amrita Basu and Paola Bacchetta discuss different aspects of the use of women by Hindutva and their place within the movement. Hasan critiques the Indian state and its strategy of "identitarian" politics

---

[57] See: Kalyani Devaki Menon, *Everyday Nationalism: Women of the Hindu Right in India* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

as the foundation that allowed for subversion of women's rights.[58] According to Hasan, the Indian state, whether governed by the Congress or the BJP, has used religious communities in order to achieve electoral success. She discusses the creation of Muslim identity around the mythical idea of a unitary Indian Islam with a supposedly paramount commitment to certain doctrines. Hasan argues that the idea of Hinduism and Hindu society is similarly created, supposedly cantered on the notion of the centrality and sacredness of family. In this construction of Hindu identity, the role of women as wives and mothers is deemed crucial to the sustenance of Hindu society and culture. Hasan argues that given these constructions, women are often used as symbols of a community and made to sacrifice their own rights in order to uphold the identity of their community. Hasan writes that, on the one hand, conservative clerics and some Muslim women's organisations demand a return to traditions like purdah, while, on the other hand, the Rashtra Sevika Samiti distances itself from women's rights movements in India since it believes that fighting for individual rights is the cause of broken families and unhappiness amongst women.

Amrita Basu undertakes an analysis of three prominent female politicians of the BJP – Uma Bharati, Sadhvi Rithambara and Vijaya Raje Scindia.[59] Basu argues that while these women are highly successful in politics, their success is not based on their roles as wife or mother.[60] Given their unique position in the realm of spirituality, and thus

---

[58] Zoya Hasan, 'Communalism, State Policy, and the Question of Women's Rights in Contemporary India', *Critical Asian Studies,* 25/4 (1993).

[59] Amrita Basu, 'Feminism Inverted: The Real Women and Gendered Imagery of Hindu Nationalism', Ibid. (

[60] Vijaya Raje Scindia was a divorced woman, later widowed. Her estranged ties to her son were widely known. Sadhvi Rithambara and Sadhavi Uma Bharati, as

beyond domesticity, they are able to command, chide and address men with a familiarity not available to other female politicians. Basu argues that this unique position allows these women significant influence. She goes on to investigate the BJP's commitment to women's rights. Basu argues that the relatively high number of prominent female leaders the party has had indicates that the BJP is aware that its popularity amongst women as a constituency comes at least partially from their perception of the party as being committed to women's issues. However, Basu concludes, upon investigation the BJP's lip service to female empowerment and the presence of women in the higher levels of its political hierarchy do not in fact entail a commitment to or movement towards gender equality. Basu notes that the 'emancipation' of women from their domestic roles and their subsequent entry into politics and activism fulfils a higher goal of the BJP – the demonization of Muslims. She writes that the BJP encourages women to be pro-active and violent in retaliation to a supposed Muslim threat to their honour. She notes that the communalization of women, most clearly visible during the Ramjanmabhoomi movement, departs from the notion of women as essentially passive, suffering, and nurturing beings. However, Basu argues, their newfound agency is not directed towards the subjugation women face within Hindu society, but rather, against a demonized idea of the Muslim man. Furthermore, Basu notes, the activism of women in the BJP has rarely, if ever, questioned the established hierarchy of power, or the gender constructions ascribed to by the party. Basu concludes that the communalization of women by the Sangh Parivar leads to one weak section of society gaining agency by engaging in and endorsing violence against another weak section of society.

---

sanyasins, occupy a highly respected position in Hindu society, as ascetics who have renounced worldly ties, including their domestic roles and duties towards family.

In a similar vein, Paolo Bacchetta provides an ethnographic sketch of Kamlabehn, a member of the Rashtra Sevika Samiti.[61] Bacchetta argues that the image of a demonic, lascivious Muslim is central to the activism of Hindutva women. She concludes that while the activism of Hindutva women and some of their constructions of femininity are indeed at odds with the RSS, these women's constructions of self and the focus of their activism remains firmly within the patriarchal structure ascribed to by the RSS.

The criticism that the Sangh Parivar endorses a view of women and their place in society that is out dated and at odds with the aspirations of women's movements in the country, and with the reality of India's diverse population, is indeed valid. Some of the opinions expressed by leaders from the RSS, VHP, and to a lesser extent, the BJP, assert that women only belong within the realm of domesticity. Similarly, Hasan's analysis that identity politics has used women as symbols of communities and caused the subversion of women's rights is an accurate description of the identity politics that grips India and its socio-political debates. However, the high numbers of female leaders within the VHP and the BJP cannot be dismissed as a calculated move to pay lip service to women's rights. Basu's analysis that the BJP is aware that its popularity amongst women as a constituency is based on the significant presence of female politicians in its leadership is based on two unproven premises. Firstly, it is worth noting that Basu assumes the existence of 'women as a constituency' in Indian politics.[62] Whether women in India vote primarily on

---

[61] Paola Bacchetta, 'All Our Goddesses Are Armed: Religion, Resistance, and Revenge in the Life of a Militant Hindu Nationalist Woman', *Critical Asian Studies,* 25/4 (1993).

[62] For a discussion of gender-wise voting patterns in the 2014 general elections and the yet to materialize "possibility of arrival of a women's constituency." see: Rajeshwari Deshpande, 'Women's Vote in 2014', *The Hindu,* 25/06/2014 2014.

considerations of gender is a matter for research and enquiry and cannot be assumed as a premise. Similarly, it cannot be assumed that men in India vote on the considerations of gender. For instance, Mayawati and Vasundhara Raje Scindia have been/are chief ministers of states that have a reputation for being highly feudal and patriarchal. One wonders how the presumably patriarchal men of these states have voted for women to become their leaders. Secondly, Basu assumes that the BJP is more popular amongst women in comparison to its political competitors such as the Congress, and that the high number of female leaders in the BJP *causes* this popularity, or that this popularity is *because* the BJP is seen as committed to women's rights. However, Basu presents no arguments proving this causal relation. Again, what makes a political party popular amongst women, and whether gender plays a role in an Indian voter's decision is a matter for research, and not an assumption that one can take as the premise of one's argument.

The popularity that the Hindu Right enjoys amongst women despite its conservative, skewed notions of gender roles has been discussed in academic literature at length, most significantly in the aftermath of the Ramjanmabhoomi campaign and the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 2002. Tanika Sarkar discusses the prominent role of women in the Ramjanmabhoomi agitation and subsequent demolition of the Babri Masjid, but puts forth a divergent analysis of the seeming popularity of Hindutva among women. Sarkar studies the role of women in the Sangh Parivar, based on her fieldwork amongst members of the Rashtra Sevika Samiti. She describes the domestic and ritualized identity of women in the worldview of the Sangh Parivar. The author argues against the lamentations of Left wing and lower-caste women's organisations that even the space of women's rights movements has been taken over by the Parivar.[63] Citing statistics and fieldwork data Sarkar argues that Hindutva women's

[63] Sarkar refers to 'Hindu Right' while discussing the Samiti and other Hindutva women's organisations such as within the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra. For the sake of

organisations work to emphatically distance themselves from rights groups, since they see movements for equal rights as a source of discord in the family and at dissonance with their perception of the primary roles of women as mothers and wives. Sarkar notes that female politicians in the BJP and Shiv Sena have no connection to the women's organisations within these parties, and as female politicians they seldom address women's issues. According to Sarkar, while left wing and (as Sarkar refers to them) radical organisations are focused on citizenship rights and socio-economic problems faced by women, Hindutva's women's organisations are the custodians of traditions and core values. The author concludes that the two types of women's organisations are necessarily facing opposite ways – one towards an emancipatory politicization of women, and the other towards a deliberate socialization of women and young girls as progenitors and pedagogical tools that will spread Hindutva ideology through their influence over their children and bring about the Sangh's dream of a Hindu Rashtra. On the place of women within the Sangh, as politicians or as fulfillers of the wife-mother ideal venerated by the Sangh, Sarkar concludes:

> I would argue that the need to push women into electoral politics is counter-pointed deliberately by efforts to ensure that this does not add an edge to gender concerns or to empowerment of women within the Sangh Parivar. Women enter electoral politics and earn the party some kudos for progressive attitudes, without a concomitant compulsion for the Sangh Parivar as a whole to sensitize itself to women's needs. Moreover, women MPs or MLAs of BJP cannot enter the sanctum sanctorum of decision-making - the Sangh itself, which remains exclusively male…The implications of their prominence in public politics are thus clipped at both ends. Women's

---

clarity, in this thesis I will use 'Hindutva' or 'Sangh Parivar' instead of 'Hindu Right', since the organisations and the ideology referred to are the same.

> organizations on the other hand, cannot borrow the lustre of their elected sisters who, on the other hand, are individuals unconnected with organised women as a front within the parivar.[64]

Ironically, a feminist critique can be built against this argument. Deeming it necessary for female leaders to address women's issues is to impose centrality of certain issues onto a leader on the basis of her gender. Sarkar puts forward a peculiar test of gender sensitivity by demanding that female politicians should be connected to organised women as a front. She then indicts the Hindutva movement of ignoring women's issues precisely by placing female leaders at its forefront. This is an allegation with many problematic presuppositions, such as what is deemed an appropriate and necessary focus for female leaders. Sushma Swaraj, Vasundhara Raje, Smriti Irani and other female leaders hold key positions (such as Union Minister for External affairs in the case of Swaraj) in the present BJP government. Demanding that because they are women they must make women's rights their primary focus is a self-defeating form of feminism. It puts forward the idea that women are a group with sectional interests, and that when a woman is in a position of power, she is bound to serve the interest of her own group before any other. Indeed, this is the turn that identity-politics has taken in India, to such an extent that ensuring material benefits for themselves and their own vote bank has become the accepted primary vocation of politicians in India. It is perverse to suggest that within this divisive political logic of sectional interests, female politicians must add another section - 'women as a constituency'. Moreover, a fundamental question is whether the interests of men and women in India are divergent, and if so, in what ways.

---

[64] Tanika Sarkar, 'Pragmatics of the Hindu Right: Politics of Women's Organisations', *Economic and political weekly,* (1999), 2159-67.

HINDUTVA AS AN UPPER-CASTE MOVEMENT – BRAHMIN INTERESTS AND HEGEMONY

The Hindutva movement is characterized as a perpetrator and perpetuator of Brahmin hegemony. According to scholars, the movement's 'Brahmin' or 'upper caste' nature lies in the following aspects – (i) that the movement was pioneered by Brahmins, and today the Sangh Parivar is headed largely by Brahmins, (ii) that the movement subscribes to and propagates a form of Hinduism that is described by scholars as being 'predominantly Brahmin'[65] (iii) that the VHP, the RSS, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Brahmo Samaj denounced untouchability, but did not speak of the abolition of the caste system itself. Whilst denying any hierarchy between castes, these organisations uphold the Varna system as an ideal form of social organisation.

Thomas Blom Hansen describes Hindutva organisations in the following manner:

> The VHP is probably the affiliate of the RSS in which a strategy of "nationalist sanskritization" within the Sangh Parivar is most clearly articulated. The syncretic platform, the recruitment of the religious establishment; and the paternalistic reconversion strategies all point to the equation of a brahminical "great tradition," seeking to heal up and cover over the many disparate Hindu practices under a simplified, "thin" national Hinduism, largely defined in terms of sanskritized practices. In this sense the VHP is broadening and reinterpreting the Arya Samaj strategy of nationalization through "classicization"- going back to the Vedas and Sanskrit.

---

[65] Scholars argue that this form of Hinduism is focused on texts, gods, and practices considered central to Brahmins. For instance, the movement's focus on the Vedas, or on 'mainstream' Hindu gods like Rama, instead of incorporating tribal or lower caste gods and heroes, and its encouragement of celibacy, vegetarianism, and other notions of good conduct that scholars describe as Brahmin notions of good conduct.

> The sanskritization strategy is clearly articulated in VHP publications that report the teachings of Sanskrit to poor and backward people…[66]

Christophe Jaffrelot discusses the Sangh Parivar, describing the 'Brahmin' ethos of the Parivar as an outcome of the context in which it was born:

> Hindu Nationalism is imbued with the Brahminic ethos. Its chief ideologues all come from this milieu…The belief system of the Arya Samaj and the Sangh Parivar borrows many of its features from Brahminism. For instance, the key notion of Shuddhi or samskar in the discourse of the Arya Samaj and the RSS echoes that of sanskritization…and, in the RSS shakhas, swayamasevaks are requested to emulate Brahminical values as embodied in their pracharaks. While the RSS is virtually open to each and every caste, its modus operandi implies imitation of 'the purest'.
>
> The upper caste dimension of the Sangh Parivar is largely due to the circumstances in which the RSS was born. In the 1920s Dalits had begun to organise themselves…The shakhas, therefore, were also intended to train Brahmin youth to react to the growing Dalit assertiveness, and possibly to defuse their aggressiveness by co-opting them through sanskritization….the RSS is also hostile to reservations because they are caste based, which means that poor Brahmins cannot benefit from these measures and - more importantly - that the Hindu nation it is building is challenged by divisive caste identities.[67]

Jaffrelot makes several claims about the RSS, one of which is that all chief ideologues of the RSS came from the same milieu, which he describes as 'Brahminic'. Let us

---

[66]Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* at 107.

[67] Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader* at 255-56.

analyse this claim. Milieu is defined as "the physical or social setting in which something occurs or develops: environment".[68] Jaffrelot thus claims that there is a social setting common to all Brahmins in India. However, he does not describe this social environment and its 'Brahminic' nature. Nor does he conclusively demonstrate that all Brahmins in India share the same social environment. Even if we consider that the chief ideologues of the RSS, such as Hedgewar, Golwalkar, and Deoras were Brahmins from Maharashtra, it does not follow that because of this they shared the same milieu.

Later in the extract Jaffrelot describes the RSS shakhas, where he makes a startling claim about the intentions behind the shakhas: That they were intended to (i) train Brahmin youth to react to growing Dalit assertiveness and (ii) defuse the aggressiveness of the Dalit youth through sanskritization. Thus, Jaffrelot claims that one of the intentions behind starting the shakhas was to counter this "Dalit assertiveness". How does Jaffrelot know this? He does not put forward extracts from personal communications between RSS leaders, nor does he cite an official document, not even a personal conversation. In order to know the intentions behind the creation of the shakhas, Jaffrelot would either have to refer to documents/communications of the RSS, or he would have to have access to the thoughts and intentions of RSS leaders who instituted the shakha system. He does not provide us with proof of either source. Jaffrelot's second claim is that the RSS wished to subdue Dalits through sanskritization. Jaffrelot's own words "…*and possibly* to defuse their aggressiveness by co-opting them through sanskritization …" (emphasis added) make it clear that this is a speculation presented as a claim.

In the collection of essays *Religion, Power and violence: Expressions of Politics in Contemporary Times*, two chapters deal with the Brahmanism of Hindutva and its co-optation of Dalit and tribal communities. The authors discuss Hindutva's bid to gain

---

[68]'Milieu', *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (2016).

parliamentary power through the numerical strength of downtrodden and backward communities, while simultaneously bringing into existence its ideal of a united Hindu society that encompasses almost every community in India. In his contribution to this book, Anand Teltumbde discusses what he identifies as the essentially upper-caste and caste-ist nature of the Hindutva movement:

> The ideology of Hindutva represents a Brahmanical counter-revolution to pre-empt the democratic aspirations of the downtrodden people. It is based on brahminical Hinduism duly adjusted for the new reality of parliamentary democracy. The core of that order, upper caste supremacy, is embedded in the majoritarian concept of the Hindu national community, of which Dalits and Adivasis, although excluded socially, are made to be a part. While Hindutva cries hoarse about 'one people', it neither shows any remorse for its oppressive past, nor has any programme to undo it in the present. If at all, it is proud of its 'glorious' past and tends to trivialize its problematic present. The fog of Hindu unity could never really hide the revivalist agenda of neo-brahminism to re-subjugate Dalits.[69]

Prakash Louis, who also contributed to the aforementioned collection of essays, describes Hindutva's co-optation of depressed classes as follows:

---

[69] Anand Teltumbde, 'Hindutva Agenda and Dalits', in Ram Puniyani (ed.), *Religion, Power & Violence: Expression of Politics in Contemporary Times* (New Delhi: SAGE, 2005).

> Going further, it needs to be stated that the Hindutva forces not only upheld the anti-human, exploitative and oppressive caste system but also engaged in cultural manipulations of the weaker sections.[70]

Other scholars make this criticism of cultural manipulation as well. Badri Narayan's book *Fascinating Hindutva: Saffron Politics and Dalit Mobilization* builds a detailed argument about co-optation of Dalit communities by Hindutva. Narayan uses Uttar Pradesh as the basis of his case study, a state with polarizing and complex caste identities. He discusses the Sangh Parivar's use of Dalit cultural icons, its manipulation of Dalit history and of the history of Hindu - Muslim relations, as well as the difference between what he refers to as 'Dalit' parties like the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and 'upper-caste' parties like the BJP. Narayan explores what he describes as 'communal spaces in Dalit folk lore', and he argues that these spaces can and are being used by organisations like the RSS to further their own rhetoric, which Narayan describes as explicitly communal and anti-Muslim.[71]

While discussing the role of caste and religion in the socio-political transformation of India that is to come, Rajni Kothari also refers to the co-optation of lower castes by the upper-caste Hindutva movement, which he attributes to the ideological

---

[70] Prakash Louis, 'Hindutva and Weaker Sections', in Ram Punyani (ed.), *Religion, Power and Violence: Expression of Politics in Contemporary Times* (SAGE, 2005) at 167.

[71] On a related note: Hansen argues that the symbolic 'Muslim' is a means of expressing the anxiety generated by increasing assertiveness of the lower castes on the once secure world of the upper castes. See: Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* at 90-133.

bankruptcy in post-Ambedkarite Dalit movements and the self-serving objectives of its leaders.[72]

These claims about the upper-caste nature of Hindutva are problematic for several reasons. What is Brahminic Hinduism? If the answer is, 'that Hinduism which is practiced by Brahmins is Brahminic Hinduism', then one has to show that Brahmins can be identified as one composite group and that all Brahmins have the same practices and traditions, which together make up 'Brahminic Hinduism'. However, no scholar has put forward proof to this effect so far. Similarly, what is neo-Brahminism? If neo-Brahminism is explained as 'that Brahminism which is carried out by the Sangh Parivar', this self-fulfilling characterization does not tell us anything about the activities of the Sangh, it only labels them. Teltumbde and other scholars easily conflate Hindutva with the idea of the exploitative Brahmins, without providing any arguments for why this is the case or how Hindutva and Brahmins can be used interchangeably, as Teltumbde does when he argues that Hindutva "…neither shows any remorse for its oppressive past, nor has any programme to undo it in the present." Their argument is backed by the following rationale: since the RSS has a majority of Brahmins (again, a claim that needs to be proven), and where a number of Brahmins are present there will be Brahminism, thus the RSS is a bastion of Brahminism (neo or otherwise). Proving this is the case would involve the following, among other steps: (i) defining Brahminism independent of the example of Hindutva, (ii) proving that this Brahminism is present in the Hindutva movement, (iii) proving that the presence of individuals belonging to the several jatis that come under the category 'Brahmin'[73] is the cause of the presence of Brahminism in Hindutva, (iv)

---

[72] Rajni Kothari, 'Rise of the Dalits and the Renewed Debate on Caste', *Economic and Political Weekly,* (1994), 1589-94.

[73] There are several jatis that call themselves Brahmins – Devrukhe Brahmins, Karade Brahmins, Konkanastha Brahmins, and Deshastha Brahmins (Deshastha

proving that this is the case in most organisations or institutions where Brahmins form a majority, and (v) that which is identified as Brahminism is missing in organisations and institutions that do not have a majority of Brahmins in its ranks.[74] Without taking the above-mentioned steps, the argument that Hindutva is a form of Brahmanism does not have much basis and is not scientific. Such steps are so far missing in the arguments presented by academic scholarship on the Hindutva movement.

Additionally, the claim that Hindutva upholds the caste system does not seem plausible in the face of Hindutva's glorification of Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar[75] who is seen as the champion of the "democratic aspirations of the downtrodden people". In order to explain this affinity expressed by Hindutva, scholars have described the

---

Brahmins have a further subdivision between Yajurvedi and Rugvedi Brahmins), Sanketi Brahmins, Halenadu Karnataka Brahmins, Shivalli Smartha Brahmins, Panchagrama Brahmins, Nambudiri Brahmins, Hussaini Brahmins, Maithil Brahmins of Nepal, Gangaputra Brahmins, Goud Saraswat Brahmins…the list can be continued endlessly.

Another step that would be required in proving the above-discussed claim would be to show that these varied and various jatis share a common ideology, namely, 'Brahminism'.

(Since there is no notion, nor a possibility, of an 'authoritative' account of such things, the names of these jatis have been collected through personal conversations with acquaintances who are Brahmin)

[74] Of course, if such research is undertaken, anomalies might arise and the conclusions I have listed may not be the only ones. However, for the theory of Hindutva as Brahminism to hold, it must be able to explain these anomalies.

[75] For an instance of this see: Aravindan Neelankandan, 'Hindutva and Dr Ambedkar', *Swarajya,* (2015).

Sangh Parivar's glorification of Ambedkar as co-optation of Dalits. However, the idea of co-optation of Dalits, put forward by Badri Narayan amongst many other scholars, is based on selective characterization. While every political party in India has determinedly wooed Dalit and OBC communities, only the Sangh Parivar and the BJP's activities aimed at involving more Dalits into their fold are characterized as co-optation. How do the scholars determine when involvement of Dalits is inclusiveness and egalitarian, and when it is co-optation? If there are any criteria at all, these are not elucidated by scholars even as they make claims of co-optation of Dalit communities by Hindutva.

HINDUTVA AS ORIENTALISM

Before a discussion of the characterization of Hindutva as a continuation of Orientalism can be presented, this section requires a brief description of the Orientalist study of India.

The earliest Orientalists were missionaries and merchants, followed by colonial officials of the East India Company and later, the British Crown. After them came scholars of the many Oriental institutes and Asiatic societies spread across Europe, and to some extent, across India. In its discourse on India, Orientalist scholarship employs categories and ideas about human beings and societies that developed in Western culture. As such, in order to understand a culture that is so manifestly different from its own, Orientalist scholarship effaces difference and makes India another version of what is familiar, i.e., Western culture. Early Orientalist scholarship on India took the existence of a native Indian religion as a given, and then began the search for this religion. The resultant creation, Hinduism, was said to be the religion of the majority of Indians. It was described as having a priestly class, the Brahmins, who were identified as officiators of rituals that were deemed to be 'religious', and who were considered authorities on texts that were deemed to be 'religious'.

Orientalist scholars identified the Gita as the holy book of Hinduism, though other texts such as the Upanishads, the Vedas, the Puranas, the Manusmriti, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, were also given the status of 'sacred scriptures'. Identified as scripture, these texts were then read and studied as sources of and authorities on Hinduism and its purported laws. These texts were usually written in Sanskrit, so it was concluded that Sanskrit was the holy language and also the language of the Brahmins, since they were deemed the custodians of these texts and the knowledge contained therein. Hansen identifies this construction of Hinduism in Orientalist scholarship:

> This identification and construction of a classical Hinduism, organized around a central high culture, was extended to have a subcontinental dimension, that is, to be a single Hinduism—a religious civilization—with many variations. It was broadly assumed that there existed a common Aryan or Brahminical high culture knit together by a common language (Sanskrit), a body of ancient texts assumed to be relatively coherent, and a shared sacred geography marked by centers of pilgrimage all over the subcontinent, as well as shared ritual practices, shared codes of purity and pollution, and so on… This construction of Hinduism was an attempt to understand and construct the other in one's own image by privileging the scriptures to be an expression of an assumed indispensable center of a Hindu civilization. The problem was, however, that a coherent great tradition was at first sight absent in the subcontinent. *Yet "Hinduism" slowly emerged as a metaphysical construct of what should be there in order to make the other intelligible within a system of systematic differences*, an idea that made it possible to identify the difference

of the East from the West within a single conceptual grammar of civilizational order and hierarchy.[76] (Emphasis added)

Early Orientalist scholars considered only 'classical Hinduism' to be worth studying, which they believed was encapsulated within the texts that they had designated as 'religious'. The rituals and traditions they saw around them in India they described as a degenerate version of the original pure religion, and consequently set out to recover its essence. In doing so, they created the story of the Vedic golden age of India - the age of the composition of the Vedas. They described the Vedic Age as one of strident progress in philosophy, spirituality and fields such as astrology and medicine.[77] The Vedas were described as tracts encapsulating the knowledge of this time. According to scholars, these texts also indicate that Hinduism was monotheistic. Translations of Indian scriptures and texts aimed at locating the essence of Hinduism and its laws was seen as an attempt to return to India its glorious Vedic tradition. Max Müller's Sacred Books of the East is the most well known instance of this large-scale endeavour.

According to the Orientalists, the practices of people, in other words, the popular Hinduism that missionaries encountered in India, was in stark contrast to the classical Hinduism of the Vedic Age. It was a degenerate religion of many gods and goddess and still more practices and communities. According to the history of India constructed by these scholars, the conniving priests of Hinduism, i.e., the Brahmins, began to establish control over society, leading people into superstition and manipulating their credulity in order to make material, social, and political gain for

---

[76] Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* at 65-66.

[77] For the Orientalist construction of the golden age, see: David Kopf, 'The Birth of British Orientalism 1773-1800', *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance* (University of California Press, 1969), 22-42.

themselves. Thus, as Orientalist discourse states, the Brahmins brought about the decline of the Vedic Age, they established an unjust, hierarchical society, and reduced Hinduism to superstition and polytheism. While Protestant scholars saw Brahmins as the Hindu counterparts of the Catholic priests and denounced them as corrupt and corrupting agents, the Catholic Church strove to prove that its clergy was nothing like the debased priestly class of the heathens in India. Thus, the Brahmins were reviled by scholars across the board, Protestant or Catholic. The result of this alleged decline of Hinduism into superstition and polytheism, i.e., popular Hinduism, was opposed to the 'Vedic Hinduism' of the Vedic golden age. In this decline, the Vedic Civilization reportedly lost its clarity of reasoning and its traditions of spiritual and philosophical reflection.[78]

As mentioned above, Orientalist discourse states that Brahmins established an unjust social hierarchy in Indian society - this aspect is related to the story of the caste system in India. Orientalist discourse states that India has a social structure, namely the caste system, which divides Hindus into four major caste groups. In the hierarchy of caste, as scholars describe it, Brahmins occupy the highest position, followed by the Kshatriyas, then the Vaishyas and lastly, the Shudras. The narrative continues that with time these castes were subdivided into sub-castes and another set of communities was identified as the 'untouchables' – people who were outside Hindu society but were required to serve the upper castes. Orientalist scholars found references to the four caste groups in texts such as the Gita and the Manusmriti, and concluded that Hindus believe that the caste system is religiously ordained, i.e., it is a social structure ordained by God.

---

[78] For a comment on Orientalist constructions of India see: Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Post Colonial Theory, India And "The Mystical East"* (London: Routledge, 1999).

Since Hinduism has several gods and goddesses, it does not mean much to say that something is 'ordained by God', unless one also believes that Hinduism is in fact a monotheist religion with one Supreme Being whose Will is the governing law of the universe. As mentioned earlier, Orientalist scholars did indeed make this claim, arguing that in the Vedic Age Hinduism was monotheistic but that it had been corrupted through the ages. According to the theory of the Vedic golden age, in that period the caste system was based on meritocracy, so that each individual's caste was determined by ability. However, Orientalist discourse argues, this caste system became hereditary after the rise of Brahminism, since Brahmins wished to ensure the highest status and benefits for their own progeny. The development of Buddhism, Jainism and the Bhakti traditions were seen as revolts against the caste system, or, against Brahminism, since the two are often considered much the same.[79] Later developments such as mass conversions to Islam and Christianity are also seen as moves by lower caste individuals to escape the humiliation and suffering that scholars say the Hindu caste system has imposed on them.

This story of India and in particular, of Hinduism, was taught to Indians as the story of their civilization. Classical Vedic Hinduism created by Orientalist scholars later became the focus of reformist-revivalist organisations such as the Arya and Brahmo Samaj, which sought to return Hinduism to its pristine purity. Still later, it became the objective of the Hindutva movement to restore this former glory to Hinduism. In the context of this thesis, it is sufficient to say that academics, historians and lay people in India have taken on several Orientalist notions about the country. Some of this general public constitutes members and followers of the Hindutva movement, and within the rhetoric of the movement, Orientalist ideas live on.

---

[79] For a divergent analysis of Bhakti traditions and caste see: Dunkin Jalki, 'A Bhakti Tradition's Understanding of Caste (Lingayats, Vachanas and Jati)', *The Journal of Contemporary Thought,* /Summer 2015 (2015).

Of the large sum of scholarship generated by the Orientalist study of India, some key aspects were taken on by the Hindutva movement. Scholars identify these as the following: (i) the idea that Sanskrit is the mother language of Indo-European languages, (ii) the notion of a Vedic golden age, (iii) the perception of Hinduism as a religion (iv) the idea of India as a spiritual, mystical land (v) identification of communities based on caste and religion.

As Hansen argues (refer to first quotation in this section of the chapter), Hinduism as scholars and lay Indians know it today was constructed in the image of Christianity. Indians learnt the Orientalist descriptions of their culture and its traditions. The Brahmo Samaj, identified as one of the precursors to the Hindutva of today, adopted these descriptions and reproduced them. In his book *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind*, David Kopf traces the deep influence that Unitarianism had on the early Brahmos, and the consequences of this influence in the later developments of the movement. In his concluding chapter, which discusses the legacy of the Brahmo Samaj, Kopf writes:

> What were some of the concrete achievements of Brahmos that they bequeathed to twentieth century Hindus? The selection of a scriptural source as the holy book of Hindus -Vedas, or Vedanta…was a brahmo innovation. The updating of two traditions as neo-Vaishnavism and neo-Shaktism were pioneered by brahmos. The earliest systematic theology of Hindu religion was Brahmo by inspiration. The symbolic interpretation of Hindu festival Images were the work of Brahmos. The creation of a this-worldly social Hindu ethic parallel to the Protestant or Puritan ethic of the West was originally Brahmo. Hindu Dharma as social service and the reevaluation (sic) of the Upanishadic

> ethic for modern use…was…an established part of Brahmo missionary programme.[80]

Several of the notions held by the Brahmo Samaj were shared by organisations such as the Arya Samaj and later, the Hindu Mahasabha.[81] Chetan Bhatt traces the history of Hindutva ideology, from its early form in organisations such as the Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj, to the Hindu Mahasabha, and then to the RSS and the BJP. Bhatt discusses the influence of Orientalist and colonial precepts about India on important individuals such as Dayanand Saraswati and later leaders of the movement such as Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar. Bhatt also discusses the important influence that British Orientalism and German Romanticism had on the Bengal Renaissance, wherefrom, he argues, there emerged a "confluence of Hindu cultural nationalist ideas with those of Indian nationalism".[82] In his analysis, Bhatt identifies Balagangadhara Tilak's nationalist activities in Maharashtra and Tilak's use of Ganapati for mass mobilization as the 'transfiguration' of what he calls a 'religious pantheon', into a 'nationalist pantheon'. Extensive scholarship has conducted similar analyses of the use of Hindu icons and symbols by the BJP and VHP in more recent times. Scholars have argued

---

[80] David Kopf, *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979) at 314.

[81] John Zavos, 'The Ārya Samāj and the Antecedents of Hindu Nationalism', *International Journal of Hindu Studies,* 3/1 (17/11/2015 1999), 57-81. Though Zavos argues against a link between the Arya Samaj and the Hindutva movement, he provides an overview of Orientalist ideas prevalent in the Arya Samaj and the Hindu Mahasabha. See also: Krishna Kumar, 'Hindu Revivalism and Education in North-Central India', *Social Scientist,* 18/10 (17/11/2015 1990), 4-26.

[82] See: K.N. Pannikar, 'Religious Symbols and Political Mobilization: The Agitation for a Mandir at Ayodhya', *Social Scientist,* 21/7/8 (1993), 63-78. And Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism: Origins, Ideologies, and Modern Myths* at 23.

that these symbols and icons are manipulated in political or divisive campaigns, leading in turn to the manipulation of lay Hindus, resulting in a surge of support for Hindutva, as was seen in the build up to the demolition of the Babri Masjid.[83]

In *Cultural Pasts: Essays in Early Indian History*, Romila Thapar explores the historical development of Hindu identity, and discusses Hindutva, which she refers to as 'Syndicated Hinduism'. Thapar notes that the Hindutva movement seeks to remodel Hinduism on the basis of Islam and Christianity – "there is a search for a central book, a search for ecclesiastical authority, worship is increasingly congregational, and there is an insistence on the historicity of gods such as Rama."[84] Thapar's observation includes in it two intertwined criticisms of Hindutva – (i) that the movement uses Orientalist notions about India, and that (ii) in its attempt to do so, Hindutva also attempts to construct a 'Hinduism' that fits the structure of religions such as Islam and Christianity, i.e., it attempts to 'semitize' Hinduism. Rajni Kothari, in his article on the demolition of the Babri Masjid, also levels this criticism; "What Advani and company represent is indeed an effort to semitize Hinduism, the most non-semitic of all cultures…"[85] This charge of 'semitization' of Hinduism, closely linked to the continued propagation of precepts about Hinduism based in Orientalist scholarship, is an inevitable criticism. As Hansen has identified, the Orientalist study of India attempted to build the Other in its own image, and could only resort to familiar ideas and concepts in its attempts to describe and understand what was so fundamentally different.

---

[83] See: Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism: Origins, Ideologies, and Modern Myths*.. And Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*.

[84] See: Romila Thapar, 'The Present in the Past', *Cultural Pasts: Essays in Early Indian History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1025-54 at 1047.

[85] Rajni Kothari, 'Pluralism and Secularism: Lessons of Ayodhya', *Economic and Political Weekly,* 27 (1992), 2695-98.

Nonetheless, this is an important criticism of the movement. Hindutva explicitly positions itself against the 'Westernization' of India, including commercial colonisation by the West. The movement states that it seeks to rejuvenate Hindu culture by throwing off the shackles of Western ideology as embodied (according to Hindutva) in the pseudo-secularism practiced by the Indian State and in the general disdain towards Indian culture amongst most Indian intellectuals and academia. However, as Chetan Bhatt observes: "…the 'paradox' of Hindu Nationalism is that it remains the last loyal practitioner of Orientalist and colonial reason in India."[86]

While it has been argued that there are other "loyal practitioner(s) of Orientalist and colonial reason in India.",[87] Bhatt's insight into the paradoxical nature of Hindutva is indeed an important avenue into a better understanding of the movement. How does a movement that explicitly seeks to 'make India Hindu' accrue criticisms that it is trying to 'semitize' Hinduism? Why do Hindutva organisations continue to believe and propagate Orientalist notions about Hinduism and India? Moreover, if this is the case, why and how have thousands, if not millions, of Indians accepted and actively supported this movement?

Existing scholarship explains this popular support as a result of manipulations of Hindu icons and symbols, or as a response to the uncertainties and existential challenges of modernity and post-liberation India, or as a result of 'identitarian' politics in post- and pre-independence India, or indeed as an amalgamation of all of these factors, and then some others. The following chapters in this thesis will put forward an alternative answer these questions, arguing that Hindutva is an expression of colonial consciousness – a state that shapes how the movement and an overwhelming majority of Indians understand themselves and their own culture and traditions.

---

[86]Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism: Origins, Ideologies, and Modern Myths* at 206.

[87] For such an argument see: Balagangadhara, *Reconceptualizing India Studies*.

CHAPTER THREE – BALAGANGADHARA'S THEORY OF COLONIAL CONSCIOUSNESS

As discussed in the previous chapter, one of the important criticisms of the Hindutva movement is that it continues to use Orientalist notions of India. As a movement that claims to be anti-colonial, it in fact continues to use colonial ideas about India in its ideology. This recycling of Orientalist discourse is present not only in Hindutva's canonisation of the Vedas or the Gita, nor only in its notions about the Vedic golden age. Richard King demonstrates the creation of 'Hinduism' by Orientalist scholarship and the subsequent adoption of this concept by the Hindutva movement.[88] Similarly, Romila Thapar charts out how colonial rule in India led to the creation of a world religion 'Hinduism' – a result of a British understanding of the varied and often conflicting traditions and communities in India. Thapar also identifies Hindu Nationalism or Hindutva as the inheritor of this notion of 'Hinduism'.[89] In his work on Sikh Nationalism in India, Arvind-Pal Mandair demonstrates how Sikh traditions have been reinvented as religions, conforming to Western, Judaeo-Christian notions of religion, faith, God, etc.[90] Both King and Mandair argue that in the post-colonial reality of South Asia, imaginations and expression are constricted by the language and framework of the coloniser. Whenever Indians speak about their traditions, they are

---

[88] Richard King, 'Orientalism and the Modern Myth Of "Hinduism"', *Numen,* 46/2 (1999), 146-85.

[89] Thapar, 'The Present in the Past'. And Thapar, 'The Present in the Past', at 1025-54.

[90] Arvind-Pal Singh Mandair, *Religion and the Specter of the West: Sikhism, India, Postcoloniality, and the Politics of Translation* (2013 edn.; New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

compelled to do so in an idiom that is not their own. Thus, as King notes, even attempts to break from notions about Indian traditions generated through a Western framework in fact end up re-creating that framework.

COGNITIVE ENSLAVEMENT AND IMPERIALISM OF CATEGORIES

Identifying this problem, in the last few decades, primarily intellectuals of Indian origin have begun developing theories that explain the current intellectual and academic atmosphere in India; they argue that colonisation of India continues in intellectual, academic, and public spaces. Akeel Bilgrami calls this the 'cognitive enslavement' of India, and in his discussion of Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence, Bilgrami argues that Gandhi strove to provide a fundamentally different alternative to the Western framework dominant in India.[91] Ashis Nandy uses the notion of 'imperialism of categories' to critique the dominance of the conceptual category of 'secularism' in contemporary India.[92]

Let us consider the terms used by Bilgrami and Nandy – 'cognitive enslavement', and, 'imperialism of categories', respectively. In his paper 'Gandhi, the Philosopher', Bilgrami puts forward the term 'cognitive enslavement'. However, he does not develop the term into a theory, and consequently our analysis of 'cognitive enslavement' is perforce limited to the term itself. The term appears once in Bilgrami's paper, in the following context –

---

[91] Akeel Bilgrami, 'Gandhi the Philosopher', <http://philosophy.columbia.edu/files/philosophy/content/BilgramiGandhi.pdf>2015.

[92] Ashis Nandy, 'The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance', *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political,* (01/04/1988 1988).

> …Gandhi chose his version of non-violent civil disobedience instead of the constitutional demands of the Congress leadership because he thought that the Indian people should not merely ask the British to leave their soil. It was important that they should do so by means that were not dependent and derivative of ideas and institutions that the British had imposed on them. Otherwise, even if the British left, the Indian populations would remain a subject people. This went very deep in Gandhi and his book Hind Swaraj, is full of a detailed anxiety about the *cognitive* enslavement even of the nationalist and anti-colonial Indian mind, which might, even after independence, never recover from that enslavement.[93] (Emphasis in original)

Thus, Bilgrami uses cognitive enslavement to refer to something that Gandhi feared would happen – that even after independence the Indian mind would not break free from institutions and ideas imposed on it by the British. How well does the term 'cognitive enslavement' denote this phenomenon? The first half of the term, 'cognitive', means "Of or pertaining to cognition, or the action or process of knowing," according to the Oxford English Dictionary. However, how could the process of knowing or knowledge possibly enslave, if it truly is knowledge? It is very difficult to make sense of the idea that knowledge of the world enslaves people's minds. On the other hand, if the institutions and ideas imposed on Indians by the British are not based on knowledge, then indeed, these can only be perpetuated by enslaving people. However, the use of the word 'cognitive' makes Bilgrami's term 'cognitive enslavement', an oxy-moron. The second part of this term is 'enslavement'. The meaning of the word 'enslavement' is "to make (someone) a slave".[94] When a person is a slave, s/he is aware of his or her own enslavement. Is this true in the case of Indian intellectuals and politicians? Is this true in the case of

---

[93] Bilgrami, 'Gandhi the Philosopher',

[94] 'Enslave', *Merriam-Webster* (@MerriamWebster, 2015).

the Hindutva movement? Indian academics and politicians each make claims about how the others are trapped by British ideas and institutions. However, they emphatically deny that they themselves are similarly enslaved. Despite being slaves to ideas and institutions, they do not seem to be aware of their slavery. Consequently, the term Bilgrami uses, 'cognitive enslavement', in both its parts and in its entirety, does not capture or accurately convey the problem with India's academia, intellectuals, and politicians.

Let us consider the term used by Ashis Nandy to describe this state of affairs in India - 'imperialism of categories'. In his article, 'The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance', Nandy describes this term as follows:

> Within this form of imperialism, a conceptual domain is hegemonised by a concept produced and honed in the West, hegemonised so effectively that the original domain vanishes from awareness.[95]

In this article, Nandy identifies inter-religious coexistence as one such domain, which has been completely hegemonised by the category 'secularism'. He argues that the original domain – Indian traditions of religious tolerance and coexistence – has vanished from awareness, and Nandy urges a re-exploration of these traditions. Unfortunately, while Nandy formulates a very important insight here, he does not develop 'imperialism of categories' into a theory that can be used to identify and study intellectual and political stagnation in India. The term alone can only label the hegemony of Western ideas as 'imperialist', but this does not tell us much about how or why this situation came about and why it continues to endure.

---

[95] Nandy, 'The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance', (

BALAGANGADHARA'S THEORY OF COLONIAL CONSCIOUSNESS

In contrast to these authors, S.N. Balagangadhara has developed a set of hypotheses about the stagnation, unoriginality and barrenness of current Indian socio-political, intellectual, and academic thinking. He refers to this phenomenon as 'colonial consciousness'. Balagangadhara describes colonial consciousness as the barrier that denies the colonised subject access to his or her own experience. The colonised takes on a Western colonial experience of India and uses it to understand him/herself and his/her experiences. As Balagangadhara writes,

> Colonial consciousness does not involve only subscribing to the truth of an isolated statement about civilizational superiority. Rather, it requires commitment to a theoretical framework that structures how one experiences the social and the cultural world. Such a framework intervenes between oneself and one's experience, and forms an understanding and articulation of what one sees in the world.[96]

Thus, Balagangadhara expands the scope of this critique. He argues that colonial consciousness is the state in which an overwhelming majority of Indians live – a prime example being those Indians who have been inculcated in the formal education system of India, which was set up by the British to propagate English education in India and continues to serve that function today.

In this thesis, I aim to study Hindutva as an example of colonial consciousness. In doing so I use a critique that has so far been used almost exclusively for Indian academics, and apply it onto the Hindutva movement, arguing that the movement's imagination and expression are constricted by the framework within which it emerged, and to which it has failed to generate an alternative. Studies and commentaries on the

---

[96] Balagangadhara, *Reconceptualizing India Studies* at 115.

Hindutva movement have consistently criticised the movement's continued propagation of Orientalist notions about India. Thus, Hindutva, a movement that explicitly wishes to be anti-colonial and anti-Orientalist, is identified as the product and continuation of colonial, Orientalist frameworks. If the movement is a form of colonial consciousness, it is in fact compelled to come to conclusions or policies that are then critiqued for continuing the colonial, Orientalist project in India, even though it is consciously and explicitly striving to combat the effects of colonialism and 'Westernisation' on the socio-cultural fabric of India.

The first two sections that follow will provide an overview of Balagangadhara's theory of colonial consciousness. I begin by summarising Balagangadhara's arguments on the nature of Orientalism and the inter-dependence of Orientalism, social sciences and Orientalist discourse. This is followed by a summary of the theory of colonial consciousness. In the third section, I put forward Balagangadhara's argument on the nature of the culpability of the colonised.

ORIENTALISM AND ITS CONTINUATION IN SOCIAL SCIENCES

Orientalism is a culturally specific way of experiencing cultural difference – an experience specific to the West. In his epoch-making book, *Orientalism*, Edward Said argues that in its encounter with the Orient, Western culture encountered something that was manifestly different from itself. It could only make sense of this new culture by using categories available to it. Thus, in its descriptions of the Orient, the West effaced difference and transformed the Orient into a flawed version of itself. The West's experience of the East was structured by categories that exist in Western culture, categories such as religion or ethics. As such, Orientalist discourse tells us

more about the culture that gave rise to it, i.e. Western culture, than it does about its purported subject, the Orient.[97]

Balagangadhara differentiates between the two kinds of Orient that Said refers to: (i) the Orient as a place in the world – a geographical location that does indeed exist, and (ii) the Orient as an experiential entity – the Orient as it was experienced and described by the West. The Orient as an experiential entity exists in the experience of the West, but does not exist in the world. Thus, while the Orient as a place in the world always existed, with Orientalism, i.e., a culturally specific way of experiencing cultural difference, another Orient came into being - the Orient as an experiential entity of the West. Orientalist discourse is a description of the Orient as an experiential entity of the West, and not, as it claims to be, of the Orient as a place in the world.[98]

On Orientalism, Balagangadhara writes the following:

> 'Orientalism' is how Western culture came to terms with the reality of the East. Thus, 'Orientalism' refers not only to the discourse about experience, but also to the way of reflecting about and structuring this experience. In this sense, even though Orientalism is a discourse about Western cultural experience, it is not direct but oblique. It is oblique because it appears to be about other cultures. It is also oblique because the experience is not directly reflected upon. It is Western in the sense that it

---

[97] Balagangadhara uses 'discourse' in a neutral manner, in Balagangadhara's work and in this thesis, the word discourse refers to a particular way of speaking and writing about a given theme or subject.

[98] In the rest of the chapter I will refer to these as the following – the Orient as a place in the world as Orient^{P}, and the Orient as an experiential entity as Orient^{E}, except where clarity requires use of the entire terms.

> refers to the experiences of the members of a particular culture. Orientalism is the Western way of thinking about its experience of non-Western cultures. However, *it takes the form of an apparent discourse about the Orient*.[99]

Thus, Balagangadhara argues that Orientalism is a "culturally specific experience of cultural difference", which took the specific form of an apparent discourse about other cultures. He states that Orientalism is the result of a set of constraints on thinking – these constraints function as limits on the kinds of inquiries Western scholars undertake into other cultures, on the kinds of answers they come to, and on the Western imagination in general. In itself a result of these constraints, Orientalism is also the continued imposition of these constraints on thinking. This set of constraints is specific to Western culture, and therein lies the cultural specificity of Orientalism as "a discourse about Western cultural experience".

In his work, Balagangadhara argues that while the Orient^{E} is an experiential entity of the West, the West also experiences itself as an entity. The resultant self-image of the West, let us call it 'the Occident as an experiential entity', does not factually describe the Occident as a place in the world. The West's experience of itself is dependent on how it experiences other cultures, and vice-versa. Balagangadhara writes that as Said shows, Orientalism has taken the form of an academic domain, set of institutional structures and a discourse. He then raises and answers the next question - what form does the self-image of the West take? It has taken the form of the social sciences. Since these two images are mutually constituted, Balagangadhara argues, "*…the social sciences constrain Orientalist discourse, Orientalism constrains the social sciences*". [100]

---

[99] Balagangadhara, *Reconceptualizing India Studies* at 41.

[100] Ibid., at 48.

The earliest European descriptions of India came from merchants and missionaries, followed by colonial officials. A few decades later, the writings of different scholars belonging to the various Oriental institutes and Asiatic societies appeared. Together these writings form the content of Orientalist discourse, and they provided 'empirical material' or 'facts' to be explained for social science disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, and psychology. On the other hand, when social sciences of today encounter societies, they make sense of this encounter using Orientalist discourse. For instance, when students of anthropology come to India, they already 'know' that notions of 'purity' play a central role in Indian society. This 'knowledge' comes from Orientalism, and Orientalist 'explanations' of Indian society.

Thus, Orientalism constrains the questions that the social sciences raise, while the data and theories that the social sciences generate form the present day addition to Orientalist discourse. This is how "…*the social sciences constrain Orientalist discourse, Orientalism constrains the social sciences*". Balagangadhara demonstrates this through two examples – the idea of the ethical domain, and the creation of the religions of India. He writes "…*orientalism and social sciences clarify each other's questions*. The former constrains the latter to ask particular questions; these tell us about the kind of culture that asks *these*, and *no other*, questions."[101](Emphasis in original) Thus, as Balagangadhara notes, there has been no fundamental break between descriptions of the early missionaries and merchants and today's social scientists.

CULTURAL CATEGORIES AND HOW THEY STRUCTURE EXPERIENCE

Balagangadhara puts forward an analogy in order to illustrate how a category from one's own culture can give structure to one's experience of another culture – one

[101] Ibid.

experiences patterns in what one sees, though this pattern may not be present in the phenomenon being experienced. The analogy is as follows:

> Imagine an extra-terrestrial coming to earth and noticing the following phenomena: grass is green, milk turns sour, birds fly, and some flowers put out a fragrant smell. He is convinced that these phenomena are related to each other and sees *hipkapi* in them. The presence of *hipkapi* explains not only the above phenomena but also how they relate to each other. To those who doubt the existence of *hipkapi*, he draws their attention to its visible manifestations: the tiger eating the gazelle, dogs chasing cats, and the massive size of elephants. Each of these is a fact, as everyone can see it. However, they do not tell us anything about *hipkapi*. When more extra-terrestrials come to earth and reiterate the presence of *hipkapi*, other conditions permitting, *hipkapi* not only becomes a synonym for these phenomena but also turns out to be their explanation. Thereafter, to ask what *hipkapi* is, or even how it explains, is an expression of one's idiocy: does not everyone see *hipkapi*, this self-explanatory thing? In this analogy, the extra-terrestrial visitor has 'constructed' the *hipkapi*. To him, it is an experiential entity. He talks, as his fellow-beings do, about this experiential entity in a systematic way.
>
> This is what the Europeans did. The puja in the temples, the sandhyavandanam of the Brahmins, the sahasranamams etc., became organic parts of the Indian religion. Purushasukta was the cosmogony of the caste system, and 'untouchability' its outward manifestation. Dharma and Adharma were the Sanskrit words for 'good' and 'evil', and the Indian 'deities' were much like their Greek counterparts. To the missionaries, Indians were idolaters; to the contemporary liberal, 'polytheism' has to do with the conception of 'the deity'. In terms of the analogy, these visitors 'construct' a

hipkapi. To them, it is an experiential entity. They talk about this experiential entity in a systematic way.[102]

Through this analogy, Balagangadhara discusses the creation of religion in India. The experience of the Europeans had a particular structure. The theological concepts 'religion', 'worship', 'scripture' … gave structure to this experience. Thus in the European experience, certain practices, rituals, stories, devis and devas appeared to be interrelated parts of a larger experiential entity, namely, Hinduism, the religion of most Indians. Thus, as Balagangadhara argues, Hinduism refers to an experiential entity, a pattern in experience, which has been created over time by a Christian framework. Functioning within this framework – either explicitly or implicitly, Europeans also spoke of these different phenomena in India as components of Indian religion(s), and as such, they spoke of these components in systematic ways. There are three important points we must note at this stage: (i) that Hinduism is an experiential entity of the West, it does not refer to some phenomenon present in India,[103] and (ii) the construction of Hinduism is based on a Christian theological framework, and thus (iii) the 'patterns' experienced by Europeans and encapsulated in Orientalist discourse, one of them being 'Hinduism', do not tell us anything about the practices and traditions in India, what kind of phenomenon they are, and their interrelations, if at all they are inter-related.

---

[102] Ibid., at 52-53.

[103] For a related argument see: Jakob De Roover and Sarah Claerhout, 'The Colonial Construction of What?', in Esther Bloch, Marianne Keppens, and Rajaram Hegde (eds.), *Rethinking Religion in India* (4: Routledge, 2010). In this book chapter De Roover and Claerhout argue that while the category religion is not a construct, but rather, exists in the theology of the three Abrahamic religions and is their self-description, 'Hinduism' is indeed a construction of Orientalism and the European, Christian experience of India.

As Balagangadhara argues, Orientalism and the social sciences are both expressions of Western culture and operate within its constraints. One of these constraints is the conceptual apparatus of 'religion' and its cognates, which is integral to Western culture, and which has shaped the European experience of India. He goes on to write that the present day social sciences do not form an alternative to Orientalism, as they continue to describe the Orient as an experiential entity, instead of generating knowledge about the Orient as a place in the world. Given that the social sciences today continue Orientalism, all work on Asian cultures becomes suspect. Since Orientalism and the social sciences do not generate knowledge about the Orient as a place in the world, how does one go about gaining an understanding of the cultures that exist in the Orient? Based on his reflection on Said's work, Balagangadhara outlines the telos of post-colonial studies:

> The difference between the colonial and the post-colonial intellectual would have to lie in the types of questions asked and the kind of answers sought. When the post-colonial intellectual engages himself with Orientalist writings…he should not contest the truth of Orientalist discourse or its imagery…Instead he has to look at Orientalism in a way that his predecessors did not. Orientalism is the raw material from which he has to construct an understanding of how Orientalism was at all possible. Simply put, Orientalism should tell us more about the West than about the Orient.[104]

And;

> …through a critique of Orientalism, we attempt to understand a particular culture's way of understanding itself, other cultures and the world.

---

[104] Balagangadhara, *Reconceptualizing India Studies* at 44.

> Such a task will force us to provide alternate descriptions of the world that are richer and fuller than those we have today.[105]

These alternate descriptions of the world are a necessary outcome of a critique of Orientalism since, as Balagangadhara writes, "Because Orientalism presents itself as a veridical discourse about the peoples of the Orient, a critique of this discourse is coterminous with developing an alternate set of theories in many domains"[106]

Given the nature of Orientalist discourse, the criticism of Hindutva on the grounds that the movement continues to perpetuate Orientalist ideas about India is a charge that indicts the movement for perpetuating descriptions of the experience of one culture, i.e., Western culture, as the true description of Indian culture. However, as Indians, the members of the Hindutva movement cannot have access to this culturally specific experience, especially since, as Balagangadhara writes, Orientalism is an oblique reflection on Western culture's experience of other cultures. Without access to this experience, members of the Hindutva movement, indeed, members of any non-Western culture cannot understand the resultant description of non-Western cultures in Orientalism and Orientalist discourse. However, as several academics have noted, the movement enthusiastically endorses such descriptions, and indeed, generates its own additions to these. When one considers the analogy of *hipkapi*, it becomes clear that in propagating and perpetuating Orientalist discourse, Hindutva is in fact propagating and perpetuating belief in phenomena that do not exist in Indian culture – indeed, phenomena that do not exist at all, except in Western culture's experience of India.

In perpetuating Orientalism and Orientalist discourse, the Hindutva movement is perpetuating ideas and concepts that are deeply rooted in a Christian framework, but

---

[105] Ibid., at 48.

[106] Ibid., at 54.

it does so (i) without having access to this framework or even having a minimal understanding of it and (ii) without being aware that these ideas and descriptions are rooted in a Christian framework. Let us focus on these two aspects of Hindutva's use of Orientalism and Orientalist discourse, i.e., that it reproduces Orientalist discourse without having access to the background framework, namely, Christian theology and Western culture, and, that it is thus also unaware of the rootedness in a Christian framework, of the Orientalist ideas it perpetuates. How can this be the case? In order to arrive at a possible answer, let us discuss Balagangadhara's theory of colonial consciousness.

COLONISATION AND COLONIAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Balagangadhara argues that while there is a near complete consensus over the immoral nature of colonialism, there is no evident answer as to what makes colonialism immoral. He concludes that this is only one of the indications of our ignorance about the nature of the phenomenon of colonialism. In his theory, Balagangadhara argues that colonialism imposes a framework of description onto the colonised, which denies them access to their own experience. Since this framework is cognitively unjustifiable, it can only be perpetuated through violence. As Balagangadhara concludes, colonialism is both violent and immoral, because it denies human beings access to their experience by imposing and perpetuating, through the use of violence, a cognitively unjustifiable framework.

COLONIALISM AND THE COLONIAL FRAMEWORK OF DESCRIPTION

Why is the colonial framework of description cognitively unjustifiable? The colonial framework of description is Orientalism, and through its imposition, the colonised is taught to accept the coloniser's experience, encapsulated in Orientalist discourse, as a true description of his or her own culture. In other words, the colonised learns to

see himself as s/he appears to the coloniser. This framework of description is not based on an empirical, scientific study of the Orient[P] and hence cannot be cognitively justifiable. It denies the colonised access to his or her experience by transforming the experience itself. Even though colonialism appears to be a pedagogical project because it teaches the colonised to accept the coloniser's descriptions as the truth about themselves, as Balagangadhara argues, this is not in fact the nature of colonialism.

Let us consider Balagangadhara's discussion of the nature of pedagogical frameworks and how they transform experience. As young children, when we place a stick in water, it appears bent to us. As we grow older we are taught about the refraction of light, and we learn that though the stick appears to be bent, this is not in fact the case. It is important to note that not only do we learn that the stick does not actually bend when inserted in water; we also learn why it appears so to us. Once we have learnt about the phenomenon of refraction, we can never again access our childhood experience of seeing the stick 'bending' in water in the same way. As children we may think that the stick truly bends in water and thus attribute special properties to water, such as, the ability to bend a stick, or, we may think that the water 'deceives' us, since we see the stick as bent and cannot grab it when we try. As we learn about refraction of light, we learn that neither is the case. Thus, this framework of description, i.e., refraction of light, transforms our experience. Such a framework, based on scientific and empirical enquiry, is cognitively justifiable. This makes it a pedagogical framework, since it allows us to learn about phenomena in the world.

As Balagangadhara has shown, the colonial framework of description is not based on empirical and scientific enquiry.[107] Being cognitively unjustifiable, it can only be

[107] For a detailed argument see: S.N. Balagangadhara, *"The Heathen in His Blindness ...": Asia, the West and the Dynamic of Religion* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994). And Balagangadhara, *Reconceptualizing India Studies*.

sustained through violence. Imposed onto Indians in pre- and post- independence India, this framework teaches them to accept colonial descriptions as the truth about themselves and their culture. In doing so, this framework transforms experience. By transforming experience on cognitively unjustifiable grounds, this framework denies Indians access to their own experience. Thus, while it appears to be a pedagogical project that apparently teaches us about phenomena in the world, the colonial framework of description puts forward unscientific descriptions and explanations of phenomena, or indeed, invents phenomena that do not exist in the world.

Consider another example used by Balagangadhara. It is widely known that Indians do puja to the Shiva linga. As it stands today, the academic study of this ritual describes the Shiva linga as an erect phallus, and Shivalinga puja as worship of the erect phallus.[108] As Balagangadhara argues, such a description of Shivalinga puja translates 'puja' as 'worship'. He goes on to argue that such a translation is based on the notion that a theological concept such as 'worship' is universally applicable, i.e., that Hindus worship, or even that they *can* worship. The mapping of 'puja' onto 'worship' presupposes what phenomenon puja is, namely, that it is a form of worship, and in this case, results in the conclusion that while Christians, Muslims, and Jews worship the Biblical God, Hindus worship, among other things, the erect phallus. When this translation of Shivalinga puja is taken over by Indians, their experience of the ritual is transformed. They experience it as the performance of rituals to an erect phallus and can no longer access the experience of the ritual as puja to a particular

[108] For such descriptions see: Wendy Doniger, 'God's Body, or, the Lingam Made Flesh: Conflicts over the Representation of the Sexual Body of the Hindu God Shiva', *Social Research,* 78/2 (2011), 485-508. And Yudit Kornberg Greenberg, *Encyclopedia of Love in World Religions* (Illustrated edn., 1: ABC-CLIO, 2008).

form of Shiva.[109] Even in this transformation, Indians do not have access to 'worship', i.e., they do not know what it means to worship, and hence, though their experience of Shivalinga puja is transformed, they do not share the European experience of Shivalinga puja as worship of an erect phallus. It is here that colonial consciousness is doubly blinding – one loses access to one's own cultural experience without having access to the experience of another culture.

Thus, the colonial framework of description creates a barrier between the colonised and his or her own culture and experience. Balagangadhara calls this barrier 'colonial consciousness'. Western Christian concepts and frameworks, such as those built around the notion of 'religion', structure the European experience of the East. In this experience, puja becomes worship, devas and devis becomes gods and goddesses (or, in an explicitly theological framework, so many minions/forms of the Devil), and dharma becomes duty, ethics, truth, etc. In all these descriptions, Western culture is the original and the epitome against which other cultures are juxtaposed, and as such, they can only be flawed versions of Western culture. Thus, Orientalism simultaneously presupposes and implies the cultural superiority of the West. It

---

[109] See: S.N. Balagangadhara, 'Denying Experience: Do Hindus 'Worship'? Do They Do Pooja to Phallus (Linga)?', (updated 2011-02-28) <http://www.hipkapi.com/2011/02/28/denying-experience-do-hindoos-worship-do-they-do-pooja-to-a-phalluslinga-s-n-balagangadhara/>
And S.N. Balagangadhara, 'Does Shivalinga 'Mean' Phallus? A Theoretical Dispute', (updated 2011-02-28) <http://www.hipkapi.com/2011/02/28/does-shivalinga-mean-phallus-a-theoretical-dispute-s-n-balagangadhara/>
And S.N. Balagangadhara, 'Linga, Puja, Symbolism', (updated 2011-03-02) <http://www.hipkapi.com/2011/03/02/linga-puja-symbolism-s-n-balagangadhara/>
And S.N. Balagangadhara, 'Puja and Worship', (updated 2011-03-02) <http://www.hipkapi.com/2011/03/02/puja-and-worship-s-n-balagangadhara/>

transforms other cultures into deficient variants of Western culture. Through colonial consciousness, the cultural superiority of the West becomes the premise and the conclusion of how Indians experience themselves and their own culture. Colonial consciousness embodies the continuation of Orientalism in the experience and self-knowledge of Indians. Thus, Balagangadhara argues, colonialism is not a phenomenon of the past, but continues today in the form of colonial consciousness, i.e., the colonised continue to experience themselves as they were experienced by the coloniser, though India gained political independence from the British in 1947. In this sense, the colonial and 'post' colonial experience of Indians remains the same.

One result of this barrier between the colonised and his or her experience is loss of access to knowledge generated by Indian culture. Balagangadhara argues that the knowledge generated by Indian culture is transmitted through practices and concepts that depend on a larger conceptual framework for intelligibility. In Orientalist descriptions, these practices and concepts become opaque because they lose their conditions for intelligibility, i.e., the conceptual framework of which they are a part. Without access to their own traditions and conceptual frameworks, Indians loose access to such concepts and can only rely on translations, even though these translations are distortions. For instance, concepts such as *manas* and *atman* are distorted when they are translated into words from European conceptual language, where *manas* is described as mind and *atman* as soul. Thus, as Balagangadhara writes about the manifold implications of colonialism and colonial consciousness:

> …colonialism is not merely a process of occupying lands and extracting revenues. It is not a question of encouraging the colonized to ape the Western countries in trying to be like them…It goes deeper. Colonialism denies the colonized peoples and cultures their own experiences; it makes them aliens to themselves; *it actively prevents descriptions of their own experiences except in terms defined by the colonizers*…Colonial consciousness

> is not only an expression, but also an integral part, of the phenomenon that colonialism is. In that case, colonial consciousness itself becomes immoral. Colonialism is also immoral because it creates an immoral consciousness.[110](Emphasis added)

Colonial consciousness denies experience, and actively prevents descriptions of the colonised except in terms defined by the coloniser. What is the role of the colonised and the coloniser in the creation and perpetuation of colonial consciousness?

THE ROLE OF THE COLONISED

Balagangadhara's theory of colonial consciousness explains the role and moral culpability of the colonised in perpetuating the colonial framework of description. He writes:

> …both the colonizer and the colonized are morally responsible, but *in two different ways*. The colonizer is responsible for *actively initiating* the

---

[110] Balagangadhara, *Reconceptualizing India Studies* at 111-12.

In the context of the argument that colonialism actively prevents descriptions of the experience of the colonised except in terms defined by the coloniser, data presented in David Chidester's work *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa* provides striking examples. See particularly, the translation of Sotho-Tswana *Morimo* as God and the creation of a purported 'structural-equivalence' between religious elements from Christianity and elements from the traditions of southern African communities. David Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa* (The University Press of Virginia, 1996) at 182, 94, 98.

> process that prevents people from accessing their own experiences. The colonized is morally responsible for *propagating* and *perpetuating* the same process; but he does that in a different timeframe.[111]

In accepting the descriptions of the coloniser as true descriptions, the colonised is indeed responsible for the continuation of colonialism. However, in this regard Balagangadhara identifies two important aspects: (i) there is an entire framework inserted by the coloniser that generates psychological attitudes and feeling necessary to keep itself in place. Feelings such as shame for one's own culture and its backwardness, and the consequent desire to learn from the coloniser, and, (ii) the apparent form of the colonial framework of description, that of a scientific theory. The fact of colonisation acts as the evidence for this 'theory' and its conclusion, i.e., backwardness of the colonised culture. Thus, the colonial framework of description creates and sustains psychological attitudes required for the colonised to continue believing in this framework. The form taken by this framework – that of an apparently scientific theory proved by the event of colonisation, plays an integral part in generating and sustaining these psychological attitudes, and so the cycle continues.

Thus, Balagangadhara makes an important distinction between the role of the coloniser and the colonised – he does not attribute any role to the colonised in the *creation* of the colonial framework of description. As Balagangadhara writes, it is the coloniser who creates and imposes such a framework of description. The colonial framework of description expresses the coloniser's experience of the colonised. As such, the colonised cannot possibly contribute in the creation of such a framework. This is because the colonial framework of description is a product of Orientalism, i.e., it is the product of a culturally specific way of experiencing cultural difference, namely, the West's experience of the East.

---

[111] Balagangadhara, *Reconceptualizing India Studies* at 115.

Here it is relevant to briefly address the post-colonial criticism of denying agency to the colonised in shaping descriptions about his own culture. In post-colonial studies, it is argued that Said's theory of Orientalism denies agency to the colonised since it denies them the ability to shape descriptions about themselves. For instance, Peter van der Veer writes:

> European and later American views created a reality in which the Oriental had to live, according to Said. Although we have to admit that this is a forceful vision, it is also surely a misleading one. It is itself a product of orientalism, since it neglects *the important ways in which the so-called Orientals not only have shaped their own world but also the orientalist views criticised by Said. It would be a serious mistake to deny agency to the colonized in our effort to show the force of colonial discourse*.[112] (Emphasis added)

What are the important ways in which the colonised have shaped Orientalist views? Indians did indeed enter into conversations with Europeans regarding their traditions. However, as Jakob de Roover and Sarah Claerhout write in the context of Orientalist discourse and the idea of a joint creation of Hinduism by coloniser and colonised:

> How did this dialogue and dialectical exchange work? Did Indians, with their own background framework and cultural experience, understand what the British meant when the latter said 'religion', 'law', 'scripture', 'priests' or 'caste'? Did the British and other Europeans, with their specific background

---

[112] Peter Van Der Veer, 'The Postcolonial Predicament and Contemporary History', in Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter Van Der Veer (eds.), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia* (Illustrated edn.; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993).

> framework and cultural experience, understand Indians when they spoke of 'dharma', 'shastra', 'puja', 'brahmanas' or 'jati'?[113]

They conclude:

> The difficulty in defending the claims about the joint construction of Hinduism, then, is that we cannot begin to understand how Indians contributed to this construction, since we do not know today how they made (and make) sense of the western terminology, concepts and descriptions. The challenge is to understand the cognitive agency of Indians in the colonial encounter, rather than make the somewhat worn-out point that they also had agency.[114]

Thus, Indians did not passively receive the colonial framework of description. Indeed, as Balagangadhara identifies, the two aspects of this framework: (i) that it generates shame about one's own culture, and (ii) the apparent form it takes– as a scientific discourse, led Indians to actively adopt this framework of description. However, as De Roover and Claerhout argue, the agency of the colonised lies in *how* they adopted this framework, rather than in its construction.

As De Roover and Claerhout argue, today we do not possess the knowledge to understand what the colonised meant when they used concepts and categories from their own cultures and traditions in their 'conversations' with the British. As such, a study of the agency of the colonised requires a study of the terms and concepts Indians used in their encounter with the British. Such a study entails researching these terms and concepts *as they exist in Indian traditions*, and not as variants of terms and concepts of Christian theology. In turn, this requires research into the Indian traditions themselves.

---

[113] Roover and Claerhout, 'The Colonial Construction of What?', at 174.

[114] Ibid., at 175.

It is through such enquiry that one can gain insight into the ways in which Indians transformed Orientalist discourse even though they adopted this discourse and continue to reproduce it. At the same time, we have only begun to understand the culture that produced Orientalism itself – i.e., Western culture. Thus, as Balagangadhara argues, Orientalist discourse, rather than being a description and explanation of Indian culture, becomes our avenue into understanding Western culture.

SOME PREDICTIONS

Orientalist discourse about India and its 'religions' endures today, largely unchanged. Balagangadhara's theory allows us to consider this fact and raise a very productive question – why do the erstwhile colonial subjects continue reproducing Orientalism and Orientalist discourse as though it is the truth about their cultures? The colonised still participate in perpetuating the colonial framework of description – not by creating or contributing to Orientalism, but rather, by adopting its discourse - terms of description and clusters of concepts. It is in this sense that Hindutva is a colonial force – it has not broken away from the colonial framework of description.

As Balagangadhara's theory suggests, the colonised simply reproduce Orientalist discourse without having access to the background framework that informs Orientalism, and without having access to the cultural experience that is expressed in Orientalist discourse. When one does not have access to the larger framework in which terms and ideas are embedded and still adopts those terms and ideas, something predictable happens: one begins to map these terms and ideas onto the prior background ideas already present in one's mind. As such, when the colonised adopt terms of descriptions and clusters of concepts, they map them onto terms and concepts that form the common sense of their own culture. The result is a distortion of these adopted terms and concepts.

Thus, the theory of colonial consciousness can be tested through the 'predictable distance' it postulates. In the case of India, the prediction would be that when Indians take over Orientalist discourse, they don't understand it and begin to distort the terms and concepts in Orientalist discourse, and that there is a systematicity in this distortion. This systematicity should then be caused by the fact that Indian intellectuals map terms and ideas from the Orientalist discourse onto the clusters of common-sense ideas and attitudes that they already share. Predictable distance refers to this distortion and its systematicity. This does not require stating that all Indians share the same common-sense ideas, or that Indian culture consists of a uniform monolithic set of ideas, but only that we can hypothesize such a set of clusters of ideas and then test how widely these ideas are shared across the Indian intelligentsia.

This prediction functions as a test for building the hypothesis that Hindutva is a form of colonial consciousness. If this is indeed the case, then this repetition of Orientalist discourse, as well as its systematic distortion, should also be present in Hindutva discourse. How does one come to this conclusion? There are four steps needed to answer this question:

(i) The continuation of colonial descriptions shows that the movement accepts colonial descriptions as a true description of Indian culture. Thus, they have accepted the Orientalist discourse and its many terms as the framework to describe their own culture and traditions, while simply modifying the value judgement involved from negative to positive. According to them, 'Hinduism' is now an 'eternal religion' and not a false one; they argue it is superior as 'a way of life' because it is tolerant; they say 'idol worship' is not a bad thing in Hinduism, but simply a stage in 'the worship of the true God'; they say the 'many gods' of the Hindus are all expressions of this 'one God'.

(ii) The distortion of concepts and categories taken from Orientalist discourse suggests that Hindutva ideologues do not have access to the background framework

and culture wherefrom these concepts come. They do not see how terms like 'religion', 'worship', and 'God', are part of a larger framework or cluster of Christian-theological ideas, which may have taken on a secular guise, but is no less theological because of that.

(iii) These concepts do not correspond to the subject matter which they purportedly describe, namely, Indian traditions, practices, concepts etc. Puja rituals cannot be worship; the Indian traditions are not religion; 'Brahmana' does not mean 'God'; 'devas' and 'devis' are not 'gods'. Hence, when these Indian authors use these theological terms, they must face major difficulties in making sense of the Indian traditions, practices, and concepts they claim to be discussing.

(iv) This distortion should give us, to some extent, a window of insight into the traditions, practices, concepts etc. that are being discussed using the colonial framework of description. That is, because Hindutva writers share certain background ideas typical to their own cultural common sense, they distort the terms and concepts taken from Western discourse in the same systematic way. Consequently, if we can circumscribe the systematicity in the distortion, we can also trace the systematic interrelations between certain ideas and terms inherited from the Indian traditions.

These four steps constitute the predictions that emerge from the theory of colonial consciousness. In the remainder of this thesis, I intend to assess their validity in the context of the Hindutva movement. In the following chapter, therefore, I will analyse extracts from Hindutva texts and authors in order to test if one can indeed find the repetition of Orientalist discourse and its systematic distortion.

INTRODUCTION

The three sections of this chapter progressively show three different aspects of colonial consciousness - repetition, distortion, and systematicity in distortion of Orientalist discourse. The first section brings to light the repetition of Orientalist discourse, the second section delves into the theological roots of this discourse, and the third section demonstrates the distortion of these theological concepts by Hindutva authors and delves into the systematicity of this distortion.

The first section discusses the confusion about Hinduism present in Orientalist discourse, and the striking continuity of this problem and its solutions in Hindutva writings. It begins with extracts from Orientalist discourse, which are compared to the writing of the early Hindutva ideologue, V.D. Savarkar. It then turns to the writings of the Indian judiciary, followed by writings of the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS, the international branch of the RSS) wherein the continuation of this discourse and its problems is apparent.

The second section focuses on the writing of the Arya Samaj regarding social reform and the state of Hindu society. This section demonstrates two things: (i) that the Arya Samaj is repeating Orientalist discourse, and (ii) that this discourse is deeply rooted in Christian theology and theological concepts. Thus, in its repetition of Orientalist discourse, the Arya Samaj repeats theological ideas and descriptions that *cannot* pertain to what existed or exists in India.

In repeating this discourse, the Arya Samaj also took on a project that had been carried out by missionaries and colonial agents for centuries – an attack on idolatry. Colonial agents and missionaries saw idolatry in the various practices of Indians, and set out to disabuse them of their false knowledge and false worship. The third

section of this chapter analyses two Indian responses to this criticism – by Swami Vivekananda and by the HSS. In this section the distortion of concepts used in Orientalist discourse is demonstrated. In this section I also discuss the systematicity of distortion in these writings, and argue that this systematicity is rooted in the practice that Indians such as Vivekananda and the HSS refer to when using the term 'idolatry', namely, murthipuja, or, the performance of rituals to a statue/image/symbol.

COLONIAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE REPETITION OF ORIENTALIST DISCOURSE

As discussed in the second chapter, scholars writing on Hindutva are unable to address problems generated by lack of clarity about Hinduism as a phenomenon. These problems are inherent in the Orientalist story about India, and arise repeatedly in scholarship that uses Orientalist discourse, whether in the work of academics, or indeed, in the writings of Hindutva ideologues and the movement's rhetoric.

THE 'HINDUISM' OF HINDUTVA

Let us consider first the confusions around identifying Hinduism and Hindus as described by Orientalist writers.

At a meeting of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland in 1846, Scottish missionary Rev. Dr. Stevenson presented a paper on the religion that he believed existed in India before the coming of "Brahmanism". He describes the diversity of Hindu gods, and indeed, the many varied and contradictory interpretations of these gods by their followers. Rev. Stevenson goes on to discuss the variety of rituals and rites of the Hindus, and the contradictions between practices of different groups. He concludes:

> The present Hindu religion must be considered not as one system, but as a congeries of parts derived from several systems, and we may as soon look for order and consistency in it, as in the iceberg where trees carried down by the mountain torrents, polar bears which had gone out to sea in search of their prey, and the amphibious seal, had all been hemmed in by the irresistible power of congelation, and united with the frozen liquid in the formation of one heterogeneous mass.[115]

Though the Rev. is unable to describe in any manner the 'religion' that existed in the India of his time, he does gives an account of the religion of India as he thinks it exited before the coming of Brahmins. Whatever his conclusions on this front may be, the problem of understanding Hinduism was clear to the Rev. and to his readers. This problem had practical consequences for the governance of India, and Mr. Henry Beverly, Inspector of General Registration in Bengal in 1874, expressed his frustration with regard to Hinduism and the challenges it raises in the process of census-taking:

> The fact is, it is absolutely impossible to draw the line between the various Hindu races and the aboriginal tribes, so insensibly do they merge into one another. *In the first place we have no clear definition of what we mean when we speak of a Hindu. Sometimes the term is used in a generic sense, to denote all or any of the inhabitants of India. Sometimes it is used in a religious sense, to designate the great body of the people who are not Mahommedans.* Sometimes again a distinction is insisted on between what are called pure and impure Hindus. But what pure Hinduism consists in, and what is to be the shibboleth by which the orthodoxy of the various races of India are to be tried, has never, so far as I am aware, been laid down by competent authority…Those who have made the subject their study, tell us that the

[115] Dr. Stevenson, 'The Ante-Brahmanical Religion of the Hindus', *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland,* 8 (1846), 330-39 at 330.

> Hinduism of the present day is as unlike the Hinduism of the Vedas…And the cause of this, they go on to say, is due to contamination from aboriginal sources. … writes Sir G. Campbell, who has given considerable attention to this subject, "…both in the west and the east many new Hindus exist *who are in no degree Hindu in blood*."[116] (Emphasis added)

Orientalist writers were convinced of the existence of the religion of India, 'Hinduism', and of 'the Hindus', a people who were Hindu in blood – i.e., they were a people united by a common ancestry. As such, Orientalist scholars attempted to study this people, 'the Hindus', and their religion, 'Hinduism', and indeed, the British Raj followed policies and procedures that presupposed its existence. However, in this process, significant problems arose. Because they did not now what characterises Hinduism as a religion, i.e., what properties constitute the Hindu religion, they could not identify or circumscribe a particular group of people called 'the Hindus'. Because they could not distinguish between 'the Hindus' and others, they could not use the identification of this community as a basis for identifying 'Hinduism' as a religion. In order to solve this problem Orientalists devised many solutions, but the problem persisted. This process – the problem of defining Hinduism and ensuing patchwork solutions to the problem - is evident in its entirety in the writing of V. D. Savarkar. Let us consider his description of Hinduism and the Hindu nation as put forward in his book, *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?,* Savarkar writes:

> *Hinduism must necessarily mean the religion or the religions that are peculiar and native to this land and these people. If we are unable to reduce the different tenets and beliefs to a single system of religion then the only way would be to cease to maintain that Hinduism is a system and to say that it is a set of systems consistent with, or if you like, contradictory or even conflicting*

---

[116] Henry Beverly, 'The Census of Bengal', *Journal of Statistical Society of London,* 37/1 (1874), 69-113 at 84.

> *with, each other*. But in no case can you advance this your failure to determine the meaning of Hinduism as a ground to doubt the existence of the Hindu nation itself, or worse still to commit a sacrilege in hurting the feelings of our Avaidik brethren and Vaidik Hindu brethren alike, by relegating any of them to the Non-Hindu pale.[117] (Emphasis added)

He continues:

> Hinduism is a word that properly speaking should be applied to all the religious beliefs that the different communities of the Hindu people hold. But it is generally applied to that system of religion which the majority of the Hindu people follow… But if you identify the religion of the Hindus with the religion of the majority only and call it orthodox Hinduism, then the different heterodox communities being Hindu themselves rightly resent this usurpation of Hindutva by the majority as well as their unjustifiable exclusion. The religion of the minorities also requires a name. But if you call the so-called orthodox religion alone as Hinduism then it naturally follows that the religion of the so-called heterodox is not Hinduism. The next most fatal step being that, therefore, those sections are not Hindus at all!![118]

Thus, the circular problem faced by the Orientalists comes back in Savarkar's writings. He begins by saying that "Hinduism is a word that properly speaking should be applied to all the religious beliefs that the different communities of the Hindu people hold." However, what are these religious beliefs held by communities of the Hindu people? Which communities belong to the Hindu people? if one does not know what Hinduism is, how can one know who the Hindus are? If one does not

---

[117] Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, *Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu?* (Pune: V. V. Kelkar, 1923) at 104-05.

[118] Ibid., at 105-06.

know who the Hindus are, how can one know what Hinduism is? By postulating that there must be a Hindu nation and hence a 'Hindu people', Savarkar attempts to find a solution to this problem. However, his insistence on the existence of a people 'the Hindus' raises further problems – even if one takes those people to be Hindus who live in India and who are not Muslims, Christians, Parsis or Jews, one must still settle questions about other communities. Are the Jains Hindus? Are Sikhs Hindus? Are followers of Buddhist traditions Hindus? When Savarkar discusses the dangers and problems of identifying only the orthodox or majority tradition as Hinduism, it shows that calling certain traditions as 'Hinduism' and certain groups as 'Hindu' is a pragmatic decision for him, and not a cognitive step. For Savarkar the problem is situated in the name one gives to certain 'religions'; they all require a name; hence, it is best to call all of these religions 'Hinduism'. He argues that it would be a fatal step to only identify the religion of the majority as the religion of the Hindus, since that would mean so many people in India are not Hindus – shrinking the Hindu nation considerably. Thus, he makes this decision on the basis of practical considerations, and not with the objective of understanding 'Hinduism', or indeed, of correctly identifying 'the Hindus'.

In his work, *Hindutva*, Savarkar labours to show the legitimacy of the nationhood of Hindustan, or, India. In doing so, he puts forward several arguments about what makes the Hindus a nation, including the ancient Persian reference to those who lived beyond the river Sindhu. He goes on to list "institutions" that he believes were favourable to nationality – such as the caste system and the prohibition against travelling to foreign, or, 'malechha', lands. Savarkar begins by describing Hindutva, as that which embraces "all the departments of thought and activity of the whole Being of our Hindu race."[119] He concludes his book by listing the three elements that constitute Hindutva:

---

[119] Ibid., at 4.

> These are the essentials of Hindutva-a common nation (Rashtra) a common race (Jati) and a common civilisation (Sanskriti). All these essentials could best be summed up by stating in brief that he is a Hindu to whom Sindhusthan is not only a Pitribhumi but also a Punyabhumi.[120]

Savarkar takes on the Orientalist view that the Hindus were a nation, and indeed, that they were a nation because they had a common religion. However, Orientalist writers and Savarkar accept that they are unable to discern a structure of unity in the many practices and traditions that they characterise as the religion of India. Even so, into this category, i.e., the religion of India, they labour to fit all kinds of discrepancies that they observe empirically in their encounters with Indian traditions. An important difference, however, is that while for the Orientalists this experiential entity was their own, a product of their cultural framework, for the Hindutva movement it is doubly problematic, since it is not something that exists in their own experience, and neither does it correspond with their cultural framework.

Thus, while Orientalists, being aware of the difficulties of identifying the Hindu religion, saw this as a serious problem which had to be investigated and solved through considered enquiry. For the Orientalists, the correct identification of Hinduism and the Hindus was a cognitive question, and one with consequences for their understanding of Indian society. In contrast, Savarkar sees this question only within the context of the consequences it has for the idea of the Hindu nation. The existence of this people and this religion are necessities for the Hindu nation to exist and to be legitimate, and thus, he looks for that identification of Hinduism and the Hindu people which is most suitable to the existence and strength of the Hindu nation.

---

[120] Ibid., at 116.

This indifference to the question of Hinduism as a religion is repeated in other Indian responses. Let us consider two approaches to the problem of Hinduism, the first by the Supreme Court of India, the apex judicial body in the *secular* state of India, and the second, by an organisation that forms part of the Sangh Parivar, the HSS.

In India, the judiciary is often called upon to sit in judgement of matters that are identified as concerning 'religion' or 'religious practice' in India. In 1986 the Supreme Court pronounced its judgement on a case against Bal Thackeray, in which he was accused of using religion as a basis for garnering votes and thus violating the law regarding election campaigning. In its judgement, the Supreme Court discussed the difficulty in determining the nature of Hinduism, and uncertainty about whether it is a religion or not:

> When we think of the Hindu religion. We find it difficult, if not impossible, to define Hindu religion or even adequately describe it. Unlike other religions in the world, the Hindu religion does not claim any one prophet; it does not worship any one God; it does not subscribe to any one dogma; it does not believe in any one philosophic concept; it does not follow any one set of religious rites or performances; *in fact, it does not appear to satisfy the narrow traditional features of any religion or creed. It may broadly be described as a way of life and nothing more.*[121] (Emphasis added)

It is clear that these Indian judges sense that Hindu traditions are very different from religions like Islam and Christianity. However, they do not have the conceptual language to make sense of this difference. Thus, they resort to vacuous notions such as 'way of life'. These judges also take the root taken by Savarkar: they easily drop

---

[121] 'Dr. Ramesh Yashwant Prabhoo Vs. Shri Prabhakar Kashinath Kunte and Others', (Guilty
Supreme Court of India, 1995) at 19.

the notion of religion, but have nothing to replace it with. The judgment explicitly states this inability:

> These Constitution Bench decisions, after a detailed discussion, indicate that *no precise meaning can be ascribed to the terms 'Hindu', 'Hindutva' and 'Hinduism'; and no meaning in the abstract can confine it to the narrow limits of religion alone, excluding the content of Indian culture and heritage*. It is also indicated that the term 'Hindutva' is related more to the way of life of the people in the subcontinent. It is difficult to appreciate how in the face of these decisions the term 'Hindutva' or 'Hinduism' per se, in the abstract, can be assumed to mean and be equated with narrow fundamentalist Hindu religious bigotry…[122](Emphasis added)

Clearly, one can say that, in the least, the problem of characterising Hinduism is not solvable for the Supreme Court, or, at the most, that the characterisation of Hinduism as a religion does not seem to be important for the Supreme Court, even though it was considering a case that dealt with the breach of election rules through use of a person's *religious* identity. Thus, while the SC was unable to determine what 'Hindu', 'Hindutva', and 'Hinduism' mean, it pronounced a judgement on a case that dealt with Hinduism as a religion and Hindu religious identity being used in election campaigns.[123] A similar confusion and indifference to the characterisation of

---

[122] Ibid.

[123] In itself it is remarkable that in India the Judiciary is considered a competent authority to judge on matters concerning religion, including the various elements of a practice that is deemed to be an essential religious practice by the judiciary. It is primarily with regard to Hinduism that the judiciary is expected to fulfil the role of an authority and reformer, in the absence of a central religious authority within what is known as the Hindu religion. For the description of a recent instance see:

Hinduism as a religion can be seen in the writings of the international branch of the RSS, the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh, or, the HSS. The HSS encourages its members to organise balagokulams, weekly schools on Indian culture, in their respective communities. It provides a teacher's handbook, which prescribes content for these classes. Consider the following entry on Hindu Dharma:

> There are a variety of religious sects or traditions in Hinduism. However, in spite of this diversity, here is a unity among all the doctrines and schools of thought because their basic principles are based on the *'eternal laws of nature'* which can be rightly defined as Sanatana (eternal) Dharma (laws of nature). The knowledge of the universe and the laws contained in the Vedas and in the subsequent scriptures is considered to be *applicable at all times and places*. As these laws bind the universe and its components together, it is called 'Dharma', i.e. that which keeps all together. 'Dharma' is one of the most intractable terms used in the Hindu philosophy and is derived from the root 'dhru', meaning to uphold, sustain or support. Hindu Dharma comprises a medium, an instrument or an integrated scheme of life by which one is prevented from falling down and is uplifted spiritually. It is thus a way of life or a value system. The word 'Religion' is used for the lack of a better synonym for 'Dharma' in English language.[124] (Emphasis added)

Thus, the HSS, like the Supreme Court of India and Savarkar, does not place much importance on the characterisation of Hinduism as religion. In its description, the HSS appears to think that the problem of characterising Hinduism is located in the words one uses. Thus, the HSS handbook easily substitutes 'religion' with 'Dharma'. Let us

---

Nitin Pai, 'Reform, Only Left to the Judiciary, Asks Nitin Pai', *The Hindu,* 18/01/2016 2016.

[124] 'Balagokulam Teacher's Handbook', <http://www.balagokulam.org/teach/handbook.php>

consider the meaning given to dharma in the description of the HSS. The HSS admits that "'Dharma' is one of the most intractable terms used in the Hindu philosophy". Indeed, in the above extract Dharma is described as *'eternal laws of nature',* as the laws that "bind the universe and its components together", and as a "way of life" or "value system". Most strikingly, the HSS identifies Dharma as those laws in the Vedas and subsequent scriptures that are "applicable at all times and places." What does the HSS mean when it describes Dharma as 'eternal laws of nature', as the laws that "bind the universe and its components together"? Newton's laws are one of the best examples we have of laws of nature. Is Dharma similar to Newton's laws? If this is the case, then Dharma cannot be "an integrated scheme of life by which one is prevented from falling down and is uplifted spiritually." If Dharma is a way of life or a value system, it is unclear how Dharma binds the universe and all its components together. Why then does the HSS speak of Dharma in such terms as 'eternal laws of nature' and "applicable at all times and places"?

What becomes clear in the description of the HSS is that, on one hand, it reproduces the characterisation of Hinduism as religion, while on the other hand, it is dissatisfied with this characterisation. In providing an alternative, however, the HSS appears incoherent and contradictory - in its description of Hindu Dharma, as well as in its use of Christian theological notions within this description. This reproduction of Orientalist discourse, and the distortion of concepts therein is repeated in the writings of other important individuals and organisations belonging to or related to the Hindutva movement, such as Vivekananda and the Arya Samaj. In order to study this repetition of Orientalist discourse as a self-description, as well as its distortion, let us consider discussions regarding social reform, idolatry, and the nature of God in Hinduism.

THE ARYA SAMAJ AND SOCIAL REFORM

The present day Hindutva movement is closely tied to 19th century reformist movements in Hindu society. These reformist movements accepted Orientalist discourse and its description of Hinduism, and set out to reform Hinduism and rid it of its flaws. Kenneth W Jones, in his work on the Arya Samaj in 19th century Punjab, quotes the Samaj's description of contemporary times:

> "…Enlightenment is fast dislodging the superstitions which people had fallen in, being persuaded to do so by the so-called Brahmans. The flood of western education is sweeping away before [a] remorseless tide the accumulated filth of ages." Replacing the centuries of decadence, a new age of progress and enlightenment dawned. Aryas accepted the most unique of western concepts, progress, and believed fully in it. "Brethren now the time has come when we can openly discuss matters-religious as they are-which we dared not give out in time gone by for fear of being considered liable to penalties of excommunication and the like. Now as the people advance morally and intellectually they can thoroughly understand the motives which actuate the popes of forcing us to undergo certain ceremonies…Let us come forward with our purse if need be and protest against the ravages of priestly caste."[125]

In the above quote there are two aspects to consider. The first aspect is that this stance presupposes several aspects of the Orientalist story about the decline of Vedic civilisation and Indian culture in general, and its cure through western education. Thus, the Arya Samaj believed that (i) the Indian people had fallen into superstition,

---

[125] Quoted from *Regeneration of Arya Varta* October 8th 1883, page 4, in: Kenneth W. Jones, *Arya Dharm: Hindu Consciousness in 19th Century Punjab* (Manohar, 1976) at 49.

and implicitly, (ii) that this fall had been from a higher level of religious practice, (iii) that this fall had come because of the persuasions of the Brahmins, and that (iv) over the ages, "filth" had accumulated, which was being swept aside by Western education. The sign of this removal of "filth" was, according to the Aryas, that people could now discuss 'religious' matters, a discussion that they purportedly had been unable to have before western education for fear of "excommunication and the like". The second aspect is this – that in their description Aryas use theological concepts such as 'excommunication', 'popes' and 'priestly'. Let us consider first the story they tell, and then, the concepts they use in telling this story.

According to the Aryas the Indian people have fallen into superstitions because they were persuaded by the Brahmins. How could this be possible? It presupposes that the Brahmins have an authority in the Hindu traditions which allows them to prescribe to all Hindus what they should believe and think. This is hardly the case. In order for Brahmins to have such an authority, there would also have to be a centralised institution that prescribes practice and belief to all Hindus, and this institution would then have to invest a degree of authority on the Brahmins. No such institution has ever existed in India. So wherefrom comes this story of manipulation by the Brahmins? The quote gives some indication: it has something to do with "the accumulated filth of ages" which is being swept away by "the flood of western education". This raises another question: what is the accumulated filth produced by the Brahmins and how could western education remove it?

The quote mentions "the penalties of excommunication and the like" in order to explain why Hindus had not dared to discuss certain matters openly before. 'Excommunication' is a notion that comes from the Roman-Catholic Church and later developed in Protestant churches. It has a specific meaning: because of certain violations, one is excluded from the communion of believers. Through this exclusion, the offending individual is no longer able to access the spiritual benefits that accrue to members who remain within the Church. Excommunication is one of the most

severe punishments of the Church because it disallows a person the morally necessary sacrament, without which it is "very difficult to resist grave temptations and avoid grievous sin."[126] Thus:

> …in the Bull "Exsurge Domine" (16 May, 1520) Leo X justly condemned Luther's twenty-third proposition according to which "excommunications are merely external punishments, nor do they deprive a man of the common spiritual prayers of the Church". Pius VI also condemned (Auctorem Fidei, 28 Aug., 1794) the forty-sixth proposition of the Pseudo-Synod of Pistoia, which maintained that the effect of excommunication is only exterior because of its own nature it excludes only from exterior communion with the Church, as if, said the pope, excommunication were not *a spiritual penalty binding in heaven and affecting souls*… The rites of the Church…are always the providential and regular channel through which Divine grace is conveyed to Christians; exclusion from such rites, especially from the sacraments, entails therefore regularly the privation of this grace, to whose sources the excommunicated person has no longer access.[127] (Emphasis added)

Only the Church can excommunicate a person, and in order for this to happen certain procedures have to be followed. As the Catholic Encyclopedia notes:

> "The fundamental proof, therefore, of the Church's right to excommunicate is based on her status as a spiritual society, whose members,

---

[126] Morrisroe Patrick, 'Holy Communion', *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (7; New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910).

[127] Boudinhon Auguste, 'Excommunication', *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (5; New York: Robert Appleton Company).

> governed by legitimate authority, seek one and the same end through suitable means."[128]

Again, a central and legitimate authority is a necessary requisite for the very existence of a spiritual society according to the Encyclopedia.[129] These things – the notion of a religious community as one society seeking a common goal through suitable means, and of a necessary, legitimate and central authority – are and have been absent from the Hindu traditions. Why then does the Arya Samaj speak as though these things were present in the India of their time?

Similarly, the Aryas speak of 'popes'. The Pope is the Bishop of Rome, the successor of St. Peter, and the Vicar of Christ on Earth. As such, he has the highest power and jurisdiction over the faithful on matters of "morals and faith".[130] This power and universal jurisdiction comes from the belief that Christ made St. Peter his Vicar on Earth, and in doing so, invested on him this authority and universal jurisdiction. As successors of St. Peter, the successive Popes also command the authority and universal jurisdiction that Christ is believed to have given to St. Peter.

In order for Brahmins to be the 'popes' of Hindu traditions, several pre-requisites would be necessary, such as the existence of a central, final authority with universal jurisdiction on matters of "morals of faith". It would derive from the investiture of such authority and jurisdiction onto some individual Brahmin or even a set of Brahmins, *by the Divine power*. Even without going into questions of existence of Divinity in Hinduism and the investiture of authority and universal jurisdiction on

---

[128] Ibid.

[129] See: Charles Macksey, 'Society', *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (14; New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912).

[130] George Joyce, 'The Pope', *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (12; New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911).

some individual or group by this Divinity, we can safely say that the external factors – a central, final authority on matters of "morals and faith" does not exist in Hindu traditions. No one Brahmin or group of Brahmins has that role. Why then did the Aryas identify them as 'popes', or even as 'priestly caste'?

One of the recurring stories retold by the reform organisations such as the Arya Samaj is the story of the manipulative Brahmins and the "ravages of the priestly caste." The criticism of Brahmins by Europeans, both Protestant and Catholic, was a reflection of the raging debate over the Catholic clergy during the Protestant Reformation. The Protestants strove to show that the Brahmins in India were the priests of Hinduism, much like the clergy of the Catholic Church. This 'priestly caste' of Hinduism was criticised for doing in India what the Catholic Church and its clergy had done in Europe, i.e., add human inventions (such as ceremonies) to the divinely revealed, true religion and mislead the people for their own self-serving interests. Thus, Brahmins too became minions of the Devil, a role that Protestants also ascribed to the clergy of Catholicism. On the other hand, Catholics strove to show that they are nothing like the heathen priests. Thus, Brahmins were the object of strident criticism, for Protestant and Catholic authors alike.

Let us consider the writings of some Orientalist authors, both Catholic and Protestant. In his 1510 work, Ludovico Di Varthema describes the Brahmins as priests, and writes of them under the following title: "The chapter concerning the Brahmins, that is the priests of Calicut". He writes: "you must know that they are the *chief persons of the faith, as priests are among us*".[131] (Emphasis added) Similarly, Barbosa describes the "Bramenes" as follows: "Bramenes, who are *priests among*

---

[131] Lodovico De Varthema, *The Travels of Ludovico Di Varthema in Egypt, Syria, Arabia Deserta and Arabia Felix, in Persia, India, and Ethiopia, A.D. 1503 to 1508*, trans. John Winter Jones (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1863) at 141.

them and persons who manage and rule their houses of prayer and idol-worship".[132] (Emphasis added) Thus, establishing that Brahmins are the priests of the religion of India, these authors go on to describe them further. It is clear to these authors that the Brahmins are diabolical in nature. Thomas Bowrey describes the Brahmins as follows:

> As for the Seduceinge and bewitching Brachmans, they beare great Sway over the Gentues in Generall, causeinge all (or most of them) soe much to confide in theire Sorceries and faire Stories, as if they onely were the true Worshippers of a Deity, and noe Other Sect to live Eternally save theire Owne.[sic][133]

Similarly, the Jesuit missionary, Francis Xavier, described the Brahmins as follows:

> These are the most perverse people in the world…they never tell the truth, but think of nothing but how to tell subtle lies and to deceive the simple and ignorant people, telling them that the idols demand certain offerings, and these are simply *the things that the Brahmans themselves invent*, and of which they stand in need in order to maintain their wives and children and houses…They threaten the people that, if they do not bring the offerings, the gods will kill them, or cause them to fall sick, or send demons to their houses, and, through the fear that the idols will do them harm, the poor simple people do exactly as the Brahmans tell them…*If there were no*

---

[132] Duarte Barbosa, *The Book of Duarte Barbosa: An Account of the Countries Bordering on the Indian Ocean and Their Inhabitants, Written by Duarte Barbosa and Completed About the Year 1518 A.D.*, trans. Royal Academy of Sciences at Lisbon (1; London: The Hakluyt Society, 1812) at 115.

[133] Thomas Bowrey, *A Geographical Account of Countries Round the Bay of Bengal 1669-1679* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1993) at 23.

Brahmans in the area, all the Hindus would accept conversion to our faith.[134] (Emphasis added)

Charles Grant, one of the directors of the East India Company, was also a supporter of Evangelical and Baptist missionary activity in India. In 1792 he wrote *Observations on the State of Society among Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain*, which is described as a "significant missiological apologia for integrating education and Christianity."[135] Grant believed that the religion of the "Hindoos" was responsible for their state of moral degradation. He described the Brahmins as the cause of this degradation:

> One of the heaviest grievances attending this state of degradation, is, that it discourages all liberal exertions, and consigns those who are destined to it, to ignorance, mean opinion of themselves, and consequent meanness of manners, sentiment, and conduct. Lest however, through the medium of learning, they should have a chance of emerging from this low and confined state, the Brahmins (by an ordinance of the Vedes, *which through their imposture have the credit of proceeding from a divine origin*, and containing all valuable science) have forbidden them, on pain of death, to read the sacred books…Nothing is more plain than that this whole fabric is the work of crafty and imperious priesthood, *who feigned a divine revelation and appointment*, to invest their own order, in perpetuity, *with the most absolute*

---

[134] Stephen Niell, *A History of Christianity in India: The Beginnnings to A. D. 1707* (Cambridge University Press, 2004) at 146.

[135] Allan K Davidson, 'Grant, charles', in Gerald H Anderson (ed.), *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions* (New York: Macmillan Reference, 1988) at 256.

empire over the civil state of the Hindoos, as well as over their minds…[136] (Emphasis added)

One of the most well known examples of Orientalist discourse, James Mills' *A History of British India*, describes the Brahmins as follows:

> The priesthood is generally found to usurp the greatest authority, in the lowest state of society. Knowledge, and refined conceptions of the Divine nature, are altogether incompatible with the supposition, that the Deity makes favourites of a particular class of mankind, or is more pleased with those who perform a ceremonial service to himself, than with those who discharge with fidelity the various and difficult duties of life. It is only in rude and ignorant times that men are so overwhelmed with the power of superstition as to pay unbounded veneration and obedience to those who *artfully clothe themselves with the terrors of religion*. The Brahmens among the Hindus have acquired and maintained an authority, more exalted, more commanding, and extensive, than the priests have been able to engross among any other portion of mankind…[137] (Emphasis added)

Thus, as it is clear, this description of Brahmins was very much a part of Orientalist discourse about India and Brahmins. Just as the Arya Samaj took on this description of Brahmins and their manipulations, it has also been repeated by intellectuals and statesmen in India and in Europe, before and after India gained Independence from

---

[136] Charles Grant, *Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain: Particularly with Respect to Morals: And on the Means of Improving It* (The Bavarian State Library, 1813) at 45.

[137] James Mill, *The History of British India*, 6 vols. (Third edn., 1; London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1826) at 159.

the British, and continues to be repeated today by the many political parties of India and by the intellectuals of India and the rest of the world.[138]

It is important to note, however, that this discussion of the nature of Brahmins is deeply rooted in theological notions such as the purity of true religion. For instance, the objection repeated by the Arya Samaj – that the Brahmins had imposed all kinds of superstitions onto the people, which is the "accumulated filth of ages" – is a concern raised by Christian European authors through the centuries. For instance, Francis Xavier, the Jesuit missionary, speaks of the "things that the Brahmans themselves invent". When does the invention of traditions or rituals become a problem? When religion is understood to be the revelation of God. Any human additions to this revelation are corruptions, used by the priests in order to control the masses and to enrich themselves. There can be only one true religion, and as De Roover writes, in a theological framework, "the absence of true religion *does imply* the presence of its negation, false religion"[139](Emphasis in original) Since all traditions in India were by default instances of false religion, they had to be the "accumulated filth of ages" invented by Brahmins. Even so, how did the Brahmins impose all these inventions onto 'the Hindus'? This is only possible if they are thought to have some form of religious authority. It is completely unclear what role Brahmins play in Indian tradition, and what, if any, is the sphere and extent of their authority. However, in describing Brahmins as priests of Hinduism, Orientalist writers made them religious authorities in the religion of India – Hinduism. In keeping with the view of Hinduism as false religion, these authors describe Brahmins as impostors "who feigned a divine revelation and appointment". Thus, they were priests, but not priests of the true

---

[138] See: Jakob De Roover, *Europe, India, and the Limits of Secularism*, ed. Aakash Singh Rathore (1st edn., Reconceptualizing Religion, Culture, and Politics in a Global Context; New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015) at 202-34.

[139] Ibid., at 211.

God. Hinduism being a false religion, its 'priests' were minions of the Devil who enjoined the Hindus to worship him by imposing on them idolatry and superstition.

In their denunciation of the Brahmins, the Aryas were repeating an old theological story, using words and concepts that they did not understand, and which could not have existed in India.[140] One of the many consequences of accepting this story is that one loses sight of what Brahmins are, and what role they play in Indian traditions. What is the relationship between the category of jatis referred to as Brahmins, and the notion of Brahmana as debated in different traditions of India, (such as within the Buddhist and Chaitanya Vaishnava traditions)? These questions can only arise when one rejects Orientalist descriptions of Brahmins and the theological basis of these descriptions. The Hindutva movement, in being unable to move beyond Orientalist descriptions, cannot formulate such questions about Brahmins, let alone begin research towards an answer. This is one example of the manner in which it remains trapped within Orientalist discourse, and its resultant failure to generate alternative frameworks for understanding Indian society.

What are the other consequences of accepting Orientalist stories about Indian culture? In accepting the theological diagnosis of the many ills of Indian society, the Aryas also accepted the prescribed cure – the flood of western education. Charles Grant, who described the moral degeneration of the Hindus, goes on to put forward a remedy. He writes:

---

[140] These concepts and notions could not have existed in India because they are based on theology. Today, we have no proof to say that there is an indigenous religion in India, let alone an understanding of the 'theology' of 'Hinduism'. The only means of making a claim about the presence of religion in India is to accept as truth the story of the Bible and of the universal revelation of God. See: Balagangadhara, *"The Heathen in His Blindness ...": Asia, the West and the Dynamic of Religion*.

> It is perfectly in the power of this country, by degrees, to impart to the Hindoos our language; afterwards through that medium to make them acquainted with our easy literary composition, upon a variety of subjects; and, let not the idea hastily excite derision, *progressively* with the simple elements of our arts, our philosophy and religion. These acquisitions would silently undermine, and at length subvert, the fabric of error;[141](Emphasis in original)

He continues:

> But undoubtedly the most important communication which the Hindoos could receive through the medium of our language, would be the knowledge of our religion…Thence they would be instructed in the nature and perfections of the one true God, and in the real history of man; his creation, lapsed state, and the means of his recovery, on all which points they hold false and extravagant opinions; … they would learn the accountableness of man, the final judgement he is to undergo, and the eternal state which is to follow. *Wherever this knowledge shall be received, idolatry, with all the rabble of its impure deities, its monsters of wood and stone, its false principles and corrupt practices, its delusive hopes and vain fears, its ridiculous ceremonies and degrading superstitions, its lying legends and fraudulent imposition, would fall*.[142] (Emphasis added)

Thus, for Christian Europeans idolatry was an abhorrent practice – the epitome of false religion - which had to be removed through western education and the truth of

---

[141] Grant, *Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain: Particularly with Respect to Morals: And on the Means of Improving It* at 77.

[142] Ibid., at 79-80.

Christianity. What is the nature of idolatry and why was it so abhorrent a practice for Christian Europeans? Consider the following:

> Idolatry etymologically denotes Divine worship given to an image, but its signification has been extended to all Divine worship given to anyone or anything but the true God. St. Thomas (Summa Theol., II-II, q. xciv) treats of it as a species of the genus superstition, which is a vice opposed to the virtue of religion and consists in giving Divine honour (cultus) to things that are not God, or to God Himself in a wrong way. The specific note of idolatry is its direct opposition to the primary object of Divine worship; *it bestows on a creature the reverence due to God alone*.[143] (Emphasis added)

As is clear from the above extract, idolatry is a theological notion, which requires other theological concepts such as God, worship, Divine etc. in order to retain its coherence. Without these it becomes completely unclear what is problematic in performing rituals to a statue. Given the nature of idolatry – that it is opposed to the primary object of Divine worship - it cannot but be a Sin. Christian European missionaries and company officials saw various practices in Indians, and many of these they understood as horrific instances of idolatry. However, as is evident in the India of today, their attempts to end such practices through education and conversion were largely unsuccessful. Some Indians also described practices such as murthipuja as idolatry, and denounced them as such. Notable among them were the likes of Dayananda Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj. However, even the reform movements that attempted to eradicate this 'vice' from Indian society did not go very far in achieving their goal. Let us consider some Indian reactions to this Christian attack on 'idolatry'.

---

[143] Joseph Wilhelm, 'Idolatry', *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910).

THE INDIAN DEFENCE OF 'IDOLATRY'

During his lifetime and after his death, Swami Vivekananda was widely admired in India. Gandhi described him as the man who had saved Hinduism and Hindu culture from extinction. Vivekananda continues to be deeply respected in large sections of Indian society today and is an important figure for the Hindutva movement; commentators within and outside the Sangh Parivar have called him the pioneer of Hindutva. In his famous speech at the Parliament of World's Religions at Chicago in 1893, Vivekananda put forward the following description of idolatry:

> If a man can realize his divine nature most easily with the help of an image, *would it be right to call it a sin*? Nor, even when he has passed that stage, should he call it an error. To the Hindu, man is not travelling from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from lower to higher truth. To him all the religions, from the lowest fetishism to the highest absolutism, mean so many attempts of the human soul to grasp and realize the infinite, each determined by the conditions of its birth and association; and each of these religions, therefore, marks a stage, of progress... Idolatry in India does not mean anything horrible. It is not the mother of harlots. On the other hand, it is the attempt of undeveloped minds to grasp high spiritual truths.[144] (Emphasis added)

Christian missionaries had told Indians for centuries that idolatry is one of the worst sins and certainly a grievous error. Idolatry is worship of the devil instead of the true God; it misdirects worship at human creations; it leads to eternal damnation. As discussed earlier, the notion of idolatry depends on a series of clusters of theological

---

[144] Swami Vivekananda, *Speeches and Writing of Swami Vivekananda* (3rd: Revised and Enlarged edn.: G. A. Natesan & Company, 1927) at 44-46.

ideas of Christianity. Without knowing these, one cannot understand what idolatry is. The manner in which Vivekananda suggests that like most Indians, he too did not understand what idolatry is. His disagreement with the characterization of idolatry as Sin is an avenue of insight into several important aspects of this debate over the Indian practice of murthipuja.

Most notably, according to Vivekananda one can determine whether a practice is a Sin by asking such questions as "would it be right to call it a Sin?" Thus, when Vivekananda uses the word Sin, he considers it a *matter for human deliberation* and not a part of God's Revelation. He goes on to argue that in deliberating whether or not idolatry is a Sin, one should look at the positive and negative consequences of the practice and, based on these considerations, we must determine whether or not it should be *deemed* a 'Sin'.

Debates over the use of images in worship also took place in medieval Christianity, however, they are different from Vivekananda's arguments. The pope suggested that these images were *libri pauperum* ('the books of the poor'): since the poor could not read, they could only understand the message of the Gospel through images. This helped the poor in their worship of the true God. It is important to note that the Pope emphatically said that this use of images was *not* idolatry. On the other hand, Vivekananda accepts that murthipuja is idolatry, and then goes on to suggest that *in Hinduism*, idolatry may help one realize one's divine nature. In Christianity, it would be unclear what it means to realize one's divine nature, but idolatry cannot help with anything divine, since it involves the worship of evil, the devil, the very opposite of the Divine. Even so, Vivekananda adds: "Idolatry in India does not mean anything horrible. It is not the mother of harlots." What does it mean, when one says that idolatry is not the mother of harlots?

'Mother of harlots' is a term used in the Bible to describe the whore of Babylon. The whore of Babylon refers to the city of Rome and the Roman empire, which was pagan and idolatrous. In the Protestant Reformation, this description of Rome returned as

an attack on the Catholic Church. The description of the Catholic Church as the mother of harlots characterizes Catholicism as the counterfeit church, the imposter that is idolatrous, and that seeks the position of true religion. The following description of the mother of harlots identifies her as Rome, and described the children that will be born of her adultery:

> The harlot's name on her forehead is another sample of Satan's mimicry. Rome is the mother of harlotry and of the world's idolatries. The offspring of this mother of harlots will be numerous. Apostate Christendom will be the parent of all kinds of religions, idolatries and arts used by Satan to turn men from God. Under the figure of the mother of harlots we have religion at its worst and the source of all that is morally loathesome.[145]

Here, Rome is the mother of harlotry and idolatry – it is apostate Christendom, i.e., it has turned its back on the true church and the true religion. As the mother of harlots, its offspring will be false religions that trick human beings into worship of the Devil. Clearly, this description of the Roman Catholic church and its use of images and statues is a Protestant criticism based on Christian theology. In the Bible, one of the common metaphors for apostasy is harlotry. The people of Israel broke their covenant with God by worshiping other gods and idols. Thus, Israel is also called a harlot - it is God's unfaithful wife who turned towards the worship of false gods. It is in this sense that the Protestants denounced the Catholic Church as the mother of harlots, i.e., mother of false religions that shall entice human beings into worship of the Devil.

Why does Vivekananda refer to this evidently Christian debate when he denies that 'idolatry in India' is the mother of harlots? If such a theological discussion is

---

[145] Herbert Lockyer, 'The Mother of Harlots', *All the Women of the Bible* (Zondervan, 1988).

accessible to him, i.e., if indeed Vivekananda understood the theological criticism that Protestantism makes of Catholicism by describing it as the mother of harlots, it is even more perplexing that he describes Sin as a matter of human deliberation and that he denies that 'idolatry in India' is a terrible thing. How can one say this? Because if the theological concepts of idolatry, Sin, and 'mother of harlots', are accessible to Vivekananda and if he understood these concepts, then his description of idolatry in India is in contradiction with his understanding. Why then does he use these concepts, and why does he use these concepts in such a manner?

Before we address the apparent incoherence of Vivekananda's writing on idolatry, let us consider a more recent Indian defence. Indians have come to learnt that idolatry has strongly pejorative connotations. Their solution has been to use strategies other than disputing its characterisation as Sin. The HSS handbook for balagokulam teachers describes the nature of God in Hinduism and practices of Hinduism as follows:

> Hindu scriptures also point out that whilst God is one, God cannot be fully defined. To define is to limit. Whatever is limitless defies definition. Total knowledge about God is beyond human comprehension and expression, so for this reason Hinduism allows use of various symbols and images to allow people to discover God in whichever way they want to. This freedom of thought and worship is unique to Hinduism and has been misunderstood by many who claim that Hindus worship many Gods.[146]

In the Abrahamic religions of Christianity, Islam and Judaism, it is the very properties of God that require believers to not worship him in any image or symbol, indeed, in no form at all. That is to say, 'God', 'worship', 'idolatry' are all theological terms embedded in a particular conceptual framework, namely, Christian theology in the

---

[146] 'Balagokulam Teacher's Handbook',

most generic sense, and as such, there are limits to how these terms can be used. Thus, within the framework of Christian theology, even though God is beyond human comprehension and expression, this does not mean that one is free to use various symbols and images "to discover God in whichever way they want to."

While some theologians argue that since we cannot know God, we can only talk about Him through metaphors[147] (Indeed, one way of knowing God is through Nature), however, in the framework within which concepts such as 'God' and 'worship' are embedded, namely Christian theology, it is unthinkable that you can 'discover' God through the many devas and devis of India, or through 'symbols' such as the Shivalinga. Consider the massive attack on Indian practices that missionaries undertook when they encountered India and its traditions - they went to extraordinary lengths to 'show' Indians that their 'idols' were not Divine and that these 'idols' were not the true Object of worship. They strove to show that image worship and the many Hindu deities can not be a way of discovering God, but rather, are a way of being led away from God.

However, the HSS not only says that there is a God in Hinduism, but also appears to be saying that he has the same properties as the Biblical God, and that *because of these properties* human beings worship him in many different forms. Thus, while idolatry is a Sin, in the description of the HSS it becomes a sign of "freedom of thought and worship". Not only does the HSS turn the notion of idolatry onto its head, there is also a perversity in its argument. Thinking that one can worship God through human creations like images and symbols is precisely the nature of idolatry and the reason it is a Sin. The HSS, while attempting to deny that Hindus 'worship'

---

[147] For instance, see: St.Thomas Aquinas, 'Question 13 from the Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas', *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (Second and Revised edn.: Kevin Knight, 1920).

many gods, instead unknowingly accepts that Hinduism is idolatry, and hence, false religion.

In this discussion between Indians and Europeans, whether at the level of institutions, organisations, or individuals, there is continuity of terms used and arguments made. Continuing over centuries, the discussion that these individuals, organisations, and communities were involved in was a theological discussion centred on a theological concept, namely, idolatry. Debating whether 'Hinduism', 'Sikhism' etc. are idolatrous or not is in itself a theological discussion. Indians have taken on the Orientalist story of India and its religions, which *necessarily* directs them into discussions based on theology, on which this Orientalist discourse itself is based. While discussing a theological concept, Indian discussants seem to have no knowledge of theology - of what idolatry is, why it is a Sin, what Sin is, etc. Thus, Indian participants distort the concepts they are discussing, transforming idolatry into a practice to be evaluated by human beings, one of the "so many attempts of the human soul to grasp and realize the infinite" and to grasp "high spiritual truths," or evidence of "freedom of thought and worship".

This distortion once again raises questions that arose in the discussion of Vivekananda's defence of idolatry; why does the HSS use theological concepts? Why does it use these concepts in this particular way? When one considers the terms Vivekananda uses, and his defence of 'idolatry' itself, the swami comes across as incoherent and inconsistent. Similarly, the HSS appears to understand what worshipping many gods means, and also seems to agree that it is grievously wrong to do so. Accordingly, it attempts to clear Hinduism of this charge. Its explanation, however, ends up transforming Hinduism into false religion.

Thus, one seems bound to conclude that the HSS and Vivekananda are incoherent and inconsistent. However, if we are to ascribe some basic intelligence to the Swami and the organisation, this distortion becomes an anomaly that needs to be explained. Why do these Indian authors use theological terms and concepts? Why do they use

them in a manner that leads to the conceptual distortion of these terms and concepts?

SYSTEMATICITY IN THE DISTORTION

Let us consider the defences of Vivekananda and the HSS. Both, Vivekananda and the HSS accept the Orientalist description of murthipuja as idol worship. They do so not by accepting that performing rituals to a statue is worship of the Devil, but rather, by mapping 'idolatry' onto 'murthipuja'. Thus, while discussing the practice of idolatry, Vivekananda and the HSS are in fact referring to the Indian practice of murthipuja, (or puja, as the case may be), whether it is performed to a cow, a car, or to a murthi (statue) of a deva or devi. Without the theological notions that made Europeans experience such pujas as evidence par excellence of idolatry, Indians cannot understand what is wrong in the rituals they perform, or indeed, what is wrong in the objects to which they perform these rituals. If this is the case, why do Indians use theological terms such as 'God' and 'idolatry' at all?

In their debates with missionaries, Indians were compelled to use theological concepts such as 'God'. They were defending themselves against Christian (and Islamic) allegations of worship of idols and false gods. Contemporary Indians, such as the authors of the HSS handbook, continue to face this criticism, though implicitly. One could always argue that Hindus mean something different, when they talk about 'God'. However, the way that Indians talk about 'God' in these quotations inevitably refers back to the God of the Bible (consider the properties of God listed out by the HSS). It is a Western-Christian framework that sets the terms of the debate; and these terms are components of Christian theology. Indeed, without the imposition of this framework, Indians would not use the word 'God' at all.

However, even though Indians learnt to use Christian language and phrases in order to discuss and debate over their practices, but the subject of the conversation

remained Indian, that is to say, they were using English terms to refer to Indian practices. Thus, a Western-Christian framework and its terms of debate were imposed, but that does not mean that concepts from this framework, such as God and worship, came to exist in Indian conceptual frameworks. The result is an argument such as the one by Vivekananda and the HSS – an argument using Christian theological language to express Indian cultural intuitions about Indian practices. In the case of idolatry, the responses of the HSS and of Vivekananda echo a common-sense notion in India, namely, if a practice helps an individual in his or her efforts to attain *Ananda*, human happiness, or Enlightenment,[148] then the practice should be allowed.

Consider the words used by Vivekananda and the HSS. The notions of God that the HSS refers to – that he is unique, that he is limitless – are a learnt way of speaking. If the Biblical God is indeed the point of reference, and if the HSS can understand His properties, then the HSS's subsequent description and explanation of 'idolatry' is inconsistent and incoherent. If, however, we attribute some basic intelligence and consistency to the authors of the handbook, then the statement that "various symbols and images…allow people to discover God in whichever way they want to,", can only refer to something very different from the theological concepts of 'God', 'idol' 'idolatry', etc. Indeed, in order to accept Vivekananda's or the HSS's explanation of 'idolatry' while also attributing to them an understanding of theological concepts such as God, compels us to render both, the Swami and the organisation, incoherent and inconsistent. When the same explanations are understood with the Indian

---

[148] *Ananda* or Enlightenment are notions very similar to Aristotle's Eudaimonia. A deeper discussion of *Ananda* is not possible within the scope of this thesis. To gain some insight into the nature of Indian traditions and *Ananda* as their goal, see: S.N. Balagangadhara, 'How to Speak for the Indian Traditions', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion,* 73/4 (2005), 987-1013.

practice of murthipuja as its reference, however, they gain some systematicity. This is not to say that either Vivekananda or the HSS is putting forward a highly accurate, scientific explanation of murthipuja. Whether this is or is not so is not very relevant here. It is relevant, however, to point out the systematicity that emerges in the distortion by both Vivekananda and the HSS.

CONCLUSION

How is this discussion of Indian traditions such as murthipuja, and of the mapping of idolatry onto murthipuja relevant to the larger argument of this thesis? It is relevant in that it begins to clarify two arguments Balagangadhara makes, both of which are integral in the theory of colonial consciousness. These arguments are as follows: the first, that the conceptual clusters that are required to make sense of notions such as idolatry, excommunication, worship, the corrupt and corrupting nature of priests, etc., are absent in Indian culture and its traditions,[149] and the second, that what

[149] This is not to say that Indian culture and Indian traditions did not have the Latin words for the concepts of worship or excommunication. Rather it is to say, as Balagangadhara argues, that Indian culture and its traditions did not and do not have theological concepts such as worship, God, or excommunication. To prove otherwise would require extensive research that shows that Indian traditions are phenomenon of the same kind as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, despite prima facie evidence to the contrary. To study Indian traditions in order to locate the 'correct' words for concepts of worship or God is to presuppose that these traditions have elements analogous to concepts such as worship or God.

As Balagangadhara has argued, such an approach functions within the constraints of Western culture, which both *presupposes and concludes* that Indian traditions are a variant of religion. For a discussion of this exercise in petitio principii, the Orientalist

exists is very different from the Western-Christian model of religion. Acceptance of Orientalist discourse as a true description of Indian society leads to repetition of Orientalist descriptions of the European experience of India – as corrupt, ridden with idolatry and false religion, deeply immoral and in need of being saved from damnation through reform. As the distortions of theological concepts[150] show, the Indian acceptance of Orientalist descriptions takes place without any access to the conceptual framework and culture that gave rise to these descriptions. As Balagangadhara predicts, the result is a distortion of the Christian theological concepts being used to describe and understand Indian society.

Here, there is a possibility of misunderstanding the prediction that this chapter has tried to test. What is not being said? It is very important to note that the diagnosis about 'conceptual distortion' here is not normative. Consider the analysis of

---

transformation of Indian traditions into variants of religion, and for the continuity of this approach from Orientalism to contemporary social sciences see: Balagangadhara, *"The Heathen in His Blindness ...": Asia, the West and the Dynamic of Religion*. Balagangadhara, *Reconceptualizing India Studies*. For a discussion on Universality of Religion as a theological notion see: Jakob De Roover, 'Incurably Religious? Consensus Gentium and the Cultural Universality of Religion', *Numen,* 61/1 (2014), 5-32.

[150] It could be argued that missionaries also 'distorted' Christian theology in their attempts to explain Christian theology to people they encountered in non-Christian cultures, and indeed, to convince these people of the truth of Christianity. However, these deviations or distortions are bound by the outer limits of Christian theology. The distortion being referred to in this thesis, i.e., the distortion that takes place in the Indian use of theological concepts and ideas, is a distortion of a *different kind*. It violates the conceptual limits of theological concepts, rendering these concepts unintelligible to the very conceptual framework wherefrom they come.

Vivekananda's claims about idolatry, or about Sin. This is not a normative judgment about the language use of Vivekananda, which takes Christian-theological language use as the correct reference point and then says that he violates the terms of this reference point. To elaborate, the point being made is not that Vivekananda's (or any of the other sources quoted) use of theological words such as God, soul, Sin, etc. is different from how these words are used and understood in Christian theology, and therefore that this usage is wrong.

There is an enormous diversity in how English speakers, even when sharing a common background framework, would use these words, just as there is a diversity of theologies within Christianity and a diversity of philosophies of life within Western culture more generally. However, even so, those who use English as a natural language learn to use these terms against the background of a particular conceptual framework. This framework is not some one theory shared by all Europeans, but a series of clusters of common-sense ideas widely shared across Anglophone Western societies. The crucial point is the following: this common framework has allowed and continues to allow for a *mutually intelligible* conversation between these speakers of English, even if they belong to different Christian denominations or when they declare themselves atheists, agnostics, pantheists, non-confessional freethinkers, or Pastafarian followers of the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster.

The difference of use, between European speakers of English as a natural language, and between these speakers and an Indian, say, Vivekananda, is *a difference of a different kind*. In Vivekananda's case, words such as 'God', 'soul', 'idolatry', are used in a significantly different way, which fails to make sense to European English speakers (given their background framework). That is, his usage of these terms violates the semantic and conceptual limits of the background framework shared by European speakers of English, however vague and loosely structured this framework may be. Both, Vivekananda and the HSS go beyond these conceptual limits, distorting the concepts, and making mutually intelligible dialogue impossible, even though it is

clear from the extracts that they are addressing a Christian audience. Importantly, there is a systematicity to the distortion that takes place in these writings. This is conceptual distortion – the systematic distortion of concepts by going beyond the semantic and conceptual limits that allows them to make sense to a linguistic community (or set of such communities) sharing a background framework (namely, European speakers of English, in this case).

The systematicity of this distortion is particularly interesting and it brings us to the second argument that Balagangadhara makes – that what exists in India is very different from the Western-Christian model of religion. The systematicity in distortion points to a set of ideas and attitudes that Vivekananda and the HSS refer to, some of which, as is the case with their defence of 'idolatry', appear to have the status of common-sense to these authors. Such common sense notions must depend on the culture to which these authors belong, namely, Indian culture. By mapping English terms onto the conceptual structures and ideas of Indian culture, Vivekananda and the HSS in fact refer to Indian traditions, practices, ideas and attitudes, albeit in English.

What can we conclude from this? If the hypothesis about colonial consciousness, tested only in a preliminary sense here, is valid, then we should be able to predict certain kinds of distortion in other works of Hindutva ideologues and within Hindutva rhetoric. Due to the disruptive force of colonisation and colonial consciousness, Indians have lost access to their traditions. What remain are intuition and cultural common-sense. In research that seeks to gain an understanding of Indian traditions, distortions of Orientalist discourse and systematicity therein can open up a productive route that allows us to gain insight into the practices, concepts, and intuitions that Indians refer to in their distorted use of Orientalist concepts. Similarly, from the perspective of understanding the cognitive agency of Indians in their repetition and reproduction of the colonial framework of description, these distortions and this systematicity can lead to important insights.

CONCLUSION

The rhetoric of the Sangh Parivar – its denouncement of the caste system, its attempts to eradicate superstition from Indian traditions, its search for the pure and pristine Hinduism, its objective of the Hindu Nation – is based on the conceptual framework of Orientalism.

The remarkable continuity between the Sangh's rhetoric and Orientalist discourse shows that the Sangh has been unable to discover or adopt a non-colonial, non-western framework to understand India. It continues to accept and propagate Orientalist discourse as a true description of Indian culture, even though its ideologues may dispute the value judgements attached to a few of these descriptions. Even as the Sangh accepts such descriptions, it does not have access to the culture and background framework that generates them. Without this access, the Sangh can only repeat Orientalist discourse at a superficial level. As the distortions discussed in chapter four show, without access to Western culture and its background framework(s), and with the background framework of Indian culture, the Sangh distorts Orientalist discourse, and distorts it in a systematic manner.

Colonisation and the colonial framework of description broke the access that Indians had to their own traditions, colonial consciousness maintains this barrier. The Sangh, like an overwhelming majority of Indians, has only a very limited, superficial knowledge of Indian traditions, which amounts to common sense ideas and intuitions. This is supplemented largely by Orientalist discourse's descriptions of Indian culture as its experiential entity. The result is that in going about its objective of protecting Indian culture, the Sangh has instead gone about protecting the subject matter of Orientalist discourse – i.e., elements that form the European experience of India, and a distorted understanding of Indian traditions.

For instance, Orientalist discourse distorts Indian practices such as murthipuja, and it puts forward a distorted understanding of communities such as the Brahmins. The Arya Samaj adopted this discourse and its distortions almost unchanged. Under the guidance of Dayananda Saraswati, the Arya Samaj strove to break the hold that 'evil' Brahmins purportedly enjoyed over Indian society. Similarly, it denounced murthipuja as idol worship and called for a return to the pure monotheism of the Vedas. These activities of the Samaj sought to end practices and vilify communities. However, such activities were based on a deeply distorted understanding of these communities and practices themselves. As mentioned earlier, when the theological framework is rejected, it becomes completely unclear what is problematic in performing rituals to a statue. If this is the case, then on what grounds can one call for an end to the practice of murthipuja?

Today, the Hindutva movement continues this Arya Samaj tendency of 'reform'. That is to say, the movement continues to accept Orientalist discourse and its distortions of Indian traditions and practices as a true description, and in its zeal to reform Hindu society, it acts on the basis of these Orientalist descriptions. Because these Orientalist descriptions do not pertain to what in fact exists in Indian society, Hindutva is mounting an attack on practices which it does not understand, and indeed, practices which it may well have no grounds to condemn, except through a theological standpoint. It is here that the extent of damage that colonial consciousness can wreck becomes clear. The continuation of colonial consciousness will necessarily lead to the loss of large parts of Indian culture – because the loss of access to traditions will increase with subsequent generations, but also because the Hindutva movement, as an instance of colonial consciousness, and as a very popular and influential force in Indian society, actively seeks to transform these traditions into something they are not – (flawed) variants of Christianity.

As a result, Balagangadhara notes, what damage could not be wrought by centuries of colonial rule, the Sangh Parivar will wreck in a matter of decades.[151] In this scenario, an understanding of the movement is urgently required if we are to understand the damage done by Hindutva to Indian traditions, and if we are to take even a few steps towards undoing some of this damage and preventing more. Indeed, for the movement itself, this is a necessity if it is to fulfil its goal of protecting Indian culture.

This thesis sought to take a very preliminary first step in the direction of gaining an understanding of Hindutva as a phenomenon. Let us return to the research question and sub-questions in order to take stock of this attempt. As mentioned in the introduction, the following research question and sub questions guide this thesis:

Is the Hindutva movement an expression of colonial consciousness? If so, in what ways?

Sub Questions:

1. What are the Orientalist aspects of Hindutva ideology?
2. What are the factors/mechanisms that inform these aspects?
3. What is colonial consciousness?
4. If it is an expression of colonial consciousness, what patterns of thought can be predicted in the Hindutva movement?
5. Do these patterns indeed emerge within the movement?

---

[151] S.N. Balagangadhara, 'What Do Indians Need, a History or the Past? A Challenge or Two to Indian Historians, Parts I and Ii', *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Lecture* (Indian Council of Historical Research: Indian Council of Historical Research, 2014) at 16-17.

The analysis of this thesis, specifically chapter four, indicates towards an affirmation of the hypothesis regarding Hindutva – studying Hindutva as colonial consciousness can indeed generate important insights about the movement.

The movement takes over Orientalist discourse about India as a true description and works to 'rectify' Indian society in order to fit an ideal that is based on a very shallow understanding of both, western theories and concepts such as nation, as well as of Indian traditions and communities. The different Orientalist aspects of Hindutva ideology were discussed in chapter two and chapter four. In chapter two I discussed these elements as identified by academics, and in chapter four these elements were discussed as they became clear during the analysis of Hindutva rhetoric and the concepts of which it makes use.

On the basis of the discussion in this thesis, the factors that inform these Orientalist aspects of Hindutva can be narrowed down to two – (i) Orientalist discourse, and (ii) colonial consciousness, (which in turn sustains Orientalist discourse and belief in its veracity by generating attitudes such as shame about one's own culture). The third chapter discusses colonial consciousness – what it is, how it comes about, etc. As Balagangadhara writes, colonial consciousness is the barrier between the colonised and his or her experience. Indians continue to follow their traditions and practices, but they can no longer reflect on these without becoming dependent on the vocabulary, descriptions, and conceptual framework of Orientalism. Nonetheless, common sense intuitions from Indian culture remain. It is these common sense intuitions that can be predicted as patterns in Hindutva rhetoric - while the language of the description is theological, the practice or tradition being described or referred to is Indian. In chapter four we see in the example of idolatry that these patterns do indeed emerge and are present in the systematicity of distortion of Orientalist concepts and categories.

These conclusions show that this route to studying the Hindutva movement can prove to be fruitful. It goes without saying, however, that as a master thesis, this is a

very preliminary enquiry in the nature of colonial consciousness and the Hindutva movement as an instance of the same. As such, while the hypothesis has been strengthened by analysis presented herein, it has been tested only in a very preliminary sense. This is a first step towards a much larger research endeavour. Such research requires us to look beyond not only the dominant descriptions of the movement, but also dominant descriptions of Indian culture and its traditions. In doing so, we stand to gain an understanding of the movement and of the culture it seeks to preserve – a gain for those who wish to understand Hindutva as a phenomenon, but also for those who wish to understand different cultures and the diversity of differences between cultures.

Works Cited

'Balagokulam Teacher's Handbook', <http://www.balagokulam.org/teach/handbook.php>

'General Election 2014 Results' *Daily News and Analysis*; <http://www.dnaindia.com/lok-sabha-elections-2014>.

'M.F. Husain: An End in Exile' *The Times of India*; <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/M-F-Husain-An-end-in-exile/articleshow/8794810.cms>.

'President's Message', <http://davcmc.net.in/presidents_message.html>, accessed 12/10/2015 2015.

'Indian Riots Erupt', *The Spokesman,* 1966.

'Dr. Ramesh Yashwant Prabhoo vs. Shri Prabhakar Kashinath Kunte and others', (Guilty

Supreme Court of India, 1995).

Promoting Women's Rights as Human Rights (Studies on Women in Development, 2015: United Nations Publication, 2000).

'Report of the National Commission on Cattle', in Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying (ed.), (Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, 2002).

'Cow Protection', <http://vhp.org/dim4-cow-protection>, accessed 04/10/2015

'Save the cow to save the existence of the world-Baba Ramdev', <**Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**>, accessed 04/10/2015 2015.

Routledge Handbook of Indian Politics, eds Atul Kohli and Prerna Singh (Oxon: Routledge, 2013) 81-81.

''Proud Hindus' Have Come to Rule Delhi After 800 Years: VHP', *Outlook*, (2014).

'Enslave', *Merriam-Webster* (@MerriamWebster, 2015).

'Indian media milks the Beef Ban', *Deutsche Welle,* 2015, sec. 20/03/2015.

'The Dadri Lynching: How Events Unfolded' *The Hindu* (2015); <http://www.thehindu.com/specials/in-depth/the-dadri-lynching-how-events-unfolded/article7719414.ece>.

'Milieu', *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (2016).

@BBCWORLD, 'India's Maharashtra state bans Beef' (2015); <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-31712369>.

AGNES, FLAVIA, 'Women and Law: Critical Feminist Perspectives', in Kalpana Kannabiran (ed.), (2015; New Delhi: Sage, 2014).

ANAND, DIBYESH, *Hindu Nationalism in India and the Politics of Fear* (Palgrave, 2011).

AQUINAS, ST.THOMAS, 'Question 13 from The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas', *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (Second and Revised edn.: Kevin Knight, 1920).

AUGUSTE, BOUDINHON, 'Excommunication', *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (5; New York: Robert Appleton Company).

BACCHETTA, PAOLA, 'All Our Goddesses are Armed: Religion, Resistance, and Revenge in the Life of a Militant Hindu Nationalist Woman', *Critical Asian Studies,* 25/4 (1993).

BALAGANGADHARA, S.N., *"The heathen in his blindness ...": Asia, the West and the Dynamic of Religion* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994).

---, 'How to Speak for the Indian Traditions', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion,* 73/4 (2005), 987-1013.

---, 'Denying Experience: Do Hindus 'worship'? Do they do Pooja to phallus (linga)?', (updated 2011-02-28) <http://www.hipkapi.com/2011/02/28/denying-experience-do-hindoos-worship-do-they-do-pooja-to-a-phalluslinga-s-n-balagangadhara/>

---, 'Does Shivalinga 'mean' phallus? A theoretical dispute', (updated 2011-02-28) <http://www.hipkapi.com/2011/02/28/does-shivalinga-mean-phallus-a-theoretical-dispute-s-n-balagangadhara/>

---, 'Linga, Puja, Symbolism', (updated 2011-03-02) <http://www.hipkapi.com/2011/03/02/linga-puja-symbolism-s-n-balagangadhara/>

---, 'Puja and Worship', (updated 2011-03-02) <http://www.hipkapi.com/2011/03/02/puja-and-worship-s-n-balagangadhara/>

---, *Reconceptualizing India studies* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012).

---, 'What Do Indians Need, a History or the Past? A challenge or two to Indian historians, Parts I and II', *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Lecture* (Indian Council of Historical Research: Indian Council of Historical Research, 2014).

BARBOSA, DUARTE, *The book of Duarte Barbosa: An Account of the Countries Bordering on the Indian Ocean and their Inhabitants, written by Duarte Barbosa and completed about the Year 1518 A.D.*, trans. Royal Academy of Sciences at Lisbon (1; London: The Hakluyt Society, 1812).

BARRIER, NORMAN GERALD, *The Census in British India: New Perspectives* (1981 edn.: Manohar, 1981).

BASU, AMRITA, 'Feminism Inverted: The Real Women and Gendered Imagery of Hindu Nationalism', *Critical Asian Studies,* 25/4 (1993).

BEVERLY, HENRY, 'The Census of Bengal', *Journal of Statistical Society of London,* 37/1 (1874), 69-113.

BHAGAT, R.B., 'Census and the Construction of Communalism in India', *Economic and Political Weekly,* (24/11/2001 2001).

BHATT, CHETAN, *Hindu Nationalism: Origins, Ideologies, and Modern Myths* (Oxford: Berg, 2001).

BHOWMICK, NILANJANA, 'Sex, Lies and Hinduism: Why A Hindu Activist Targeted Wendy Doniger's Book', *TIME Magazine*, (2014).

BILGRAMI, AKEEL, 'Gandhi the Philosopher', <http://philosophy.columbia.edu/files/philosophy/content/BilgramiGandhi.pdf>2015.

BOWREY, THOMAS, *A Geographical Account of Countries Round the Bay of Bengal 1669-1679* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1993).

CHIDESTER, DAVID, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa* (The University Press of Virginia, 1996).

COHN, BERNARD S., *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India.* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996).

DAVIDSON, ALLAN K, 'Grant, Charles', in Gerald H Anderson (ed.), *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions* (New York: Macmillan Reference, 1988).

DESHPANDE, RAJESHWARI, 'Women's vote in 2014', *The Hindu,* 25/06/2014 2014.

DHAVAN, RAJEEV, 'Harassing Husain: Uses and Abuses of the Law of Hate Speech', *Social Scientist,* 35/1/2 (2007), 16-60.

DONIGER, WENDY, 'God's Body, or, The Lingam Made Flesh: Conflicts over the Representation of the Sexual Body of the Hindu God Shiva', *Social Research,* 78/2 (2011), 485-508.

GHASSEM-FACHANDI, PARVIS, *Pogrom in Gujarat: Hindu Nationalism and Anti-Muslim Violence in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

GRANT, CHARLES, *Observations on the State of Society Among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain: Particularly with Respect to Morals: and on the Means of Improving it* (The Bavarian State Library, 1813).

GREENBERG, YUDIT KORNBERG, *Encyclopedia of Love in World Religions* (Illustrated edn., 1: ABC-CLIO, 2008).

HANSEN, THOMAS BLOM, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999).

HASAN, ZOYA, 'Communalism, State Policy, and the Question of Women's Rights in Contemporary India', *Critical Asian Studies,* 25/4 (1993).

JAFFRELOT, CHRISTOPHE, *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

JALKI, DUNKIN, 'A Bhakti Tradition's Understanding of Caste (Lingayats, Vachanas and Jati)', *The Journal of Contemporary Thought,* /Summer 2015 (2015).

JHA, PRASHANT, 'The shifting sands of Sangh-BJP relationship', *The Hindu,* 2013-10-17 2013.

JONES, KENNETH W., *Arya Dharm: Hindu Consciousness in 19th Century Punjab* (Manohar, 1976).

JOYCE, GEORGE, 'The Pope', *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (12; New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911).

JUNEJA, MONICA, 'Reclaiming the Public Sphere: Husain's Portrayals of Saraswati and Draupadi', *Economic and Political Weekly,* (1997), 155-57.

KAPUR, RATNA, 'Totalising History, Silencing Dissent', *The Hindu,* 15/02/2014 2014.

KING, RICHARD, *Orientalism and Religion: Post Colonial Theory, India and "The Mystical East"* (London: Routledge, 1999).

---, 'Orientalism and the Modern Myth of "Hinduism"', *Numen,* 46/2 (1999), 146-85.

KOPF, DAVID, 'The Birth of British Orientalism 1773-1800', *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance* (University of California Press, 1969), 22-42.

---, *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

KOTHARI, RAJNI, 'Pluralism and Secularism: Lessons of Ayodhya', *Economic and Political Weekly,* 27 (1992), 2695-98.

---, 'Rise of the Dalits and the Renewed Debate on Caste', *Economic and Political Weekly,* (1994), 1589-94.

KUMAR, KRISHNA, 'Hindu Revivalism and Education in North-Central India', *Social Scientist,* 18/10 (17/11/2015 1990), 4-26.

LAKSHMI, RAMA, 'Book Censorship Prompts Freedom of Expression Fears for Indian Publishers', *The Guardian,* 14/07/2014 2014.

LOCKYER, HERBERT, 'The Mother of Harlots', *All the Women of the Bible* (Zondervan, 1988).

LOUIS, PRAKASH, 'Hindutva and Weaker Sections', in Ram Punyani (ed.), *Religion, Power and Violence: Expression of Politics in Contemporary Times* (SAGE, 2005).

LUTGENDORF, PHILIP, *The Life of a Text: Performing the Ramcaritmanas of Tulsidas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.).

MACKSEY, CHARLES, 'Society', *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (14; New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912).

MANDAIR, ARVIND-PAL SINGH, *Religion and the Specter of the West: Sikhism, India, Postcoloniality, and the Politics of Translation* (2013 edn.; New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

MENON, KALYANI DEVAKI, *Everyday Nationalism: Women of the Hindu Right in India* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

MILL, JAMES, *The History of British India*, 6 vols. (Third edn., 1; London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1826).

MISRA, LEENA, 'Temple Rerun: Tracing Ram Rath Yatra, 25 Years Later' *The Indian Express* (2015); <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/bic-picture-temple-rerun-tracing-bjps-ram-rath-yatra-25-years-later/>.

NANDY, ASHIS, 'The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance', *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political,* (01/04/1988 1988).

NEELANKANDAN, ARAVINDAN, 'Hindutva And Dr Ambedkar', *Swarajya*, (2015).

NIELL, STEPHEN, *A History of Christianity in India: The Beginnnings to A. D. 1707* (Cambridge University Press, 2004).

PAI, NITIN, 'Reform, only left to the Judiciary, asks Nitin Pai', *The Hindu,* 18/01/2016 2016.

PANNIKAR, K.N., 'Religious Symbols and Political Mobilization: The Agitation for a Mandir at Ayodhya', *Social Scientist,* 21/7/8 (1993), 63-78.

PATRICK, MORRISROE, 'Holy Communion', *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (7; New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910).

PRABHU, JAIDEEP, 'Wendy Doniger's The Hindus': Another blot on India's free speech landscape', *Daily News and Analysis,* 2014.

PRASHAD, VIJAY, 'Wendy Doniger's book is a Tribute to Hinduism's Complexity, not an Insult', *The Guardian,* 12/02/2014 2014.

RAM-PRASAD, C., *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism* (Malden: Blackwell Pub, 2003).

ROOVER, JAKOB DE and CLAERHOUT, SARAH, 'The Colonial Construction of What?', in Esther Bloch, Marianne Keppens, and Rajaram Hegde (eds.), *Rethinking Religion in India* (4: Routledge, 2010).

ROOVER, JAKOB DE, 'Incurably Religious? Consensus Gentium and the Cultural Universality of Religion', *Numen,* 61/1 (2014), 5-32.

---, 'Untangling The Knot', *Outlook*, (2014).

---, *Europe, India, and the Limits of Secularism*, ed. Aakash Singh Rathore (1st edn., Reconceptualizing Religion, Culture, and Politics in a Global Context; New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015).

SAHGAL, PRIYA, '1990 - L.K. Advani's Rath Yatra: Chariot of fire' *India Today* (2009); <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/1990-L.K.+Advani's+rath+yatra:+Chariot+of+fire/1/76389.html>.

SARKAR, TANIKA, 'Pragmatics of the Hindu Right: Politics of Women's Organisations', *Economic and political weekly,* (1999), 2159-67.

SAVARKAR, VINAYAK DAMODAR, *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* (Pune: V. V. Kelkar, 1923).

SINGH, SMRITI, 'Penguin pulls out Wendy Doniger's book 'The Hindus' from India', *The Times of India,* 12/02/2014 2014.

STEVENSON, DR., 'The Ante-Brahmanical Religion of the Hindus', *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland,* 8 (1846), 330-39.

TEJANI, SHABNUM, 'Nationalism', *Indian Secularism: A Social and Intellectual History, 1890-1950* (Indiana University Press, 2008), 27-7.

TELTUMBDE, ANAND, 'Hindutva Agenda and Dalits', in Ram Puniyani (ed.), *Religion, Power & Violence: Expression of Politics in Contemporary Times* (New Delhi: SAGE, 2005).

THAPAR, ROMILA, 'The Present in the Past', *Cultural Pasts: Essays in Early Indian History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 965-89.

---, 'The Present in the Past', *Cultural Pasts: Essays in Early Indian History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1025-54.

VARTHEMA, LODOVICO DE, *The travels of Ludovico di Varthema in Egypt, Syria, Arabia Deserta and Arabia Felix, in Persia, India, and Ethiopia, A.D. 1503 to 1508*, trans. John Winter Jones (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1863).

VEER, PETER VAN DER, 'History and Culture in Hindu Nationalism', in J. C. Heesterman, et al. (eds.), *Ritual, State and History in South Asia* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), 721-32.

---, 'The Postcolonial Predicament and Contemporary History', in Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter Van Der Veer (eds.), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia* (Illustrated edn.; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993).

---, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (University of California Press, 1994).

---, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001).

VIVEKANANDA, SWAMI, *Speeches and Writing of Swami Vivekananda* (3rd: Revised and Enlarged edn.: G. A. Natesan & Company, 1927).

WILHELM, JOSEPH, 'Idolatry', *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910).

ZAVOS, JOHN, 'The Ārya Samāj and the Antecedents of Hindu Nationalism', *International Journal of Hindu Studies,* 3/1 (17/11/2015 1999), 57-81.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

'Balagokulam Teacher's Handbook', <http://www.balagokulam.org/teach/handbook.php>

'FAQ - Religious Conversions', <http://vhp.org/faq-rel/>, accessed 11/12 2015.

'General Election 2014 Results' *Daily News and Analysis*; <http://www.dnaindia.com/lok-sabha-elections-2014>.

'M.F. Husain: An End in Exile' *The Times of India*; <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/M-F-Husain-An-end-in-exile/articleshow/8794810.cms>.

'President's Message', <http://davcmc.net.in/presidents_message.html>, accessed 12/10/2015 2015.

'Indian Riots Erupt', *The Spokesman,* 1966.

Muslims under Congress rule, 1937-1939: A Documentary Record, ed. Khursheed Kamal Aziz (Stosius Incorporated/Advent Books Division, 1987).

Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags: A Critique of the Hindu Right, ed. Tapan Basu (Tracts for the Times - 1; New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1993).

'Dr. Ramesh Yashwant Prabhoo vs. Shri Prabhakar Kashinath Kunte and others', (Guilty Supreme Court of India, 1995).

Mission and Conversion: a Reappraisal, eds Joseph Mattam and Sebastian C. H. Kim (Fourth Annual Meeting Fellowship of Indian Missiologists; Mumbai, India: St Pauls, 1996).

Promoting Women's Rights as Human Rights (Studies on Women in Development, 2015: United Nations Publication, 2000).

'Report of the National Commission on Cattle', in Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying (ed.), (Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, 2002).

Accounting for Fundamentalisms: The Dynamic Character of Movements, eds Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004) 852.

'The Satanic Verses: A Chronology', *Index on Censorship,* 37/4 (2008), 144-47.

Introduction to Politics of the Developing World, eds Mark Kesselman, Joel Krieger, and William A. Joseph (6th edn.; Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2010).

'Cow Protection', <http://vhp.org/dim4-cow-protection>, accessed 04/10/2015

'Save the cow to save the existence of the world-Baba Ramdev', <http://www.rss.org//Encyc/2012/10/22/Save-the-cow-to-save-the-existence-of-the-world-—Baba-Ramdev.aspx?lang=1>, accessed 04/10/2015 2015.

'Hindu Brotherhood: RSS steps up its political role after years of pulling the BJP's strings behind the scenes', *Daily Mail,* 11/07/2013 2013.

Routledge Handbook of Indian Politics, eds Atul Kohli and Prerna Singh (Oxon: Routledge, 2013) 81-81.

'RSS steps up its political role after years of pulling the BJP's strings behind the scenes', 2013.

''Proud Hindus' Have Come to Rule Delhi After 800 Years: VHP', *Outlook*, (2014).

'Enslave', *Merriam-Webster* (@MerriamWebster, 2015).

'Indian media milks the Beef Ban', *Deutsche Welle,* 2015, sec. 20/03/2015.

'The Dadri Lynching: How Events Unfolded' *The Hindu* (2015); <http://www.thehindu.com/specials/in-depth/the-dadri-lynching-how-events-unfolded/article7719414.ece>.

'Milieu', *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (2016).

@BBCWORLD, 'India's Maharashtra state bans Beef' (2015); <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-31712369>.

AGNES, FLAVIA, 'Women and Law: Critical Feminist Perspectives', in Kalpana Kannabiran (ed.), (2015; New Delhi: Sage, 2014).

ANAND, DIBYESH, *Hindu Nationalism in India and the Politics of Fear* (Palgrave, 2011).

ANDERSEN, WALTER K. and DAMLE, SHRIDHAR D., *The brotherhood in saffron: the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu revivalism* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987) 317.

AQUINAS, ST.THOMAS, 'Question 13 from The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas', *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (Second and Revised edn.: Kevin Knight, 1920).

AUGUSTE, BOUDINHON, 'Excommunication', *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (5; New York: Robert Appleton Company).

BACCHETTA, PAOLA, 'All Our Goddesses are Armed: Religion, Resistance, and Revenge in the Life of a Militant Hindu Nationalist Woman', *Critical Asian Studies,* 25/4 (1993).

BALAGANGADHARA, S.N., *"The heathen in his blindness ...": Asia, the West and the Dynamic of Religion* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994).

---, 'How to Speak for the Indian Traditions', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion,* 73/4 (2005), 987-1013.

---, 'Orientalism, Postcolonialism and the 'Construction' of Religion', in Esther Bloch, Marianne Keppens, and Rajaram Hegde (eds.), *Rethinking Religion in India* (Routledge South Asian Religion Series: Routledge, 2010).

---, 'Denying Experience: Do Hindus ‘worship’? Do they do Pooja to phallus (linga)?', (updated 2011-02-28) <http://www.hipkapi.com/2011/02/28/denying-experience-do-hindoos-worship-do-they-do-pooja-to-a-phalluslinga-s-n-balagangadhara/>

---, 'Does Shivalinga ‘mean’ phallus? A theoretical dispute', (updated 2011-02-28) <http://www.hipkapi.com/2011/02/28/does-shivalinga-mean-phallus-a-theoretical-dispute-s-n-balagangadhara/>

---, 'Linga, Puja, Symbolism', (updated 2011-03-02) <http://www.hipkapi.com/2011/03/02/linga-puja-symbolism-s-n-balagangadhara/>

---, 'Puja and Worship', (updated 2011-03-02) <http://www.hipkapi.com/2011/03/02/puja-and-worship-s-n-balagangadhara/>

---, 'To Follow Our Forefathers: The Nature of Tradition', (updated 2011-04-02) <http://www.hipkapi.com/2011/04/02/to-follow-our-forefathers-the-nature-of-tradition-s-n-balagangadhara/>, accessed 14/12 2015.

---, *Reconceptualizing India studies* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012).

---,'On the Dark Side of the “Secular”: Is the Religious-Secular Distinction a Binary?', *Numen,* 61/1 (2014/01/01/ 2014), 33-52.

---, 'What Do Indians Need, a History or the Past? A challenge or two to Indian historians, Parts I and II', *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Lecture* (Indian Council of Historical Research: Indian Council of Historical Research, 2014).

BALAGANGADHARA, S.N. and ROOVER, JAKOB DE, 'The Dark Hour of Secularism: Hindu Fundamentalism and Colonial Liberalism in India', in Ranjan Ghosh (ed.), *Making Sense of the Secular: Critical Perspectives from Europe to Asia* (Rutledge Studies in Religion; New York: Routledge, 2013).

BARBOSA, DUARTE, *The book of Duarte Barbosa: An Account of the Countries Bordering on the Indian Ocean and their Inhabitants, written by Duarte Barbosa and*

completed about the Year 1518 A.D., trans. Royal Academy of Sciences at Lisbon (1; London: The Hakluyt Society, 1812).

BARRIER, NORMAN GERALD, *The Census in British India: New Perspectives* (1981 edn.: Manohar, 1981).

BASU, AMRITA, 'Feminism Inverted: The Real Women and Gendered Imagery of Hindu Nationalism', *Critical Asian Studies,* 25/4 (1993).

BEVERLY, HENRY, 'The Census of Bengal', *Journal of Statistical Society of London,* 37/1 (1874), 69-113.

BHAGAT, R.B., 'Census and the Construction of Communalism in India', *Economic and Political Weekly,* (24/11/2001 2001).

BHATT, CHETAN, *Hindu Nationalism: Origins, Ideologies, and Modern Myths* (Oxford: Berg, 2001).

BHOWMICK, NILANJANA, 'Sex, Lies and Hinduism: Why A Hindu Activist Targeted Wendy Doniger's Book', *TIME Magazine*, (2014).

BHUYAN, RAGINI, 'Ramanujan and the Ramayana', *The Sunday Guardian,* 30/10/2011 2011.

BILGRAMI, AKEEL, 'Gandhi the Philosopher', <http://philosophy.columbia.edu/files/philosophy/content/BilgramiGandhi.pdf>2015

BOWREY, THOMAS, *A Geographical Account of Countries Round the Bay of Bengal 1669-1679* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1993).

CHATTERJEE, PARTHA, 'History and Nationalization of Hinduism', *Social Research,* 59 (1992).

CHIDESTER, DAVID, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa* (The University Press of Virginia, 1996).

COHN, BERNARD S., *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India.* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996).

COSSMAN, BRENDA and KAPUR, RATNA, 'Secularism: Bench-marked by Hindu Right', *Economic and Political Weekly,* 31/38 (1996), 2613-30.

DALRYMPLE, WILLIAM, 'All Indian Life is here', *The Guardian,* 23-08-2008 2008.

DAVIDSON, ALLAN K, 'Grant, Charles', in Gerald H Anderson (ed.), *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions* (New York: Macmillan Reference, 1988).

DESHPANDE, RAJESHWARI, 'Women's vote in 2014', *The Hindu,* 25/06/2014 2014.

DHARESHWAR, VIVEK, 'Politics, Experience and Cognitive Enslavement: Gandhi's Hind Swaraj', *Economic and Political Weekly,* XLV/12 (20/03/2010 2010), 51-58.

DHAVAN, RAJEEV, 'Harassing Husain: Uses and Abuses of the Law of Hate Speech', *Social Scientist,* 35/1/2 (2007), 16-60.

DONIGER, WENDY, 'God's Body, or, The Lingam Made Flesh: Conflicts over the Representation of the Sexual Body of the Hindu God Shiva', *Social Research,* 78/2 (2011), 485-508.

ELST, KOENRAAD, *Decolonizing the Hindu Mind: Ideological Development of Hindu Revivalism* (New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2001).

FROERER, PEGGY, 'Emphasizing 'Others': The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in a Central Indian Tribal Community', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute,* 12/1 (2006), 39-59.

GHASSEM-FACHANDI, PARVIS, *Pogrom in Gujarat: Hindu Nationalism and Anti-Muslim Violence in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

GOLWALKAR, M.S., *Bunch of Thoughts* (Third edn.).

GOTTSCHALK, PETER, *Beyond Hindu and Muslim: Multiple Identity in Narratives from Village India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

GOULD, WILLIAM, *Hindu Nationalism and the Language of Politics in late Colonial India* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

GRAHAM, BRUCE DESMOND, *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics: The Origins and Development of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

GRANT, CHARLES, *Observations on the State of Society Among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain: Particularly with Respect to Morals: and on the Means of Improving it* (The Bavarian State Library, 1813).

GREENBERG, YUDIT KORNBERG, *Encyclopedia of Love in World Religions* (Illustrated edn., 1: ABC-CLIO, 2008).

HANSEN, THOMAS BLOM, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999).

HASAN, ZOYA, 'Communalism, State Policy, and the Question of Women's Rights in Contemporary India', *Critical Asian Studies,* 25/4 (1993).

---, 'Gender, Religion and Democratic Politics in India', *Third World Quarterly,* 31/6, THE UNHAPPY MARRIAGE OF RELIGION AND POLITICS: PROBLEMS AND PITFALLS FOR GENDER EQUALITY (2010), 939-54.

ILAIAH, KANCHA, 'The Problem in RSS' Hinduism', *Asian Age*.

JAFFRELOT, CHRISTOPHE, *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

---, *Religion, Caste, and Politics in India* (New Delhi: Primus Books, 2010).

---, 'The Sangh Parivar', *Religion, Caste, and Politics in India* (Delhi: Primus Books, 2010).

JAISWAL, SUVIRA, 'Semitising Hinduism: Changing Paradigms of Brahmanical Integration', *Social Scientist,* 19/12 (1991), 20.

JALKI, DUNKIN, 'A Bhakti Tradition's Understanding of Caste (Lingayats, Vachanas and Jati)', *The Journal of Contemporary Thought,* /Summer 2015 (2015).

JHA, PRASHANT, 'The shifting sands of Sangh-BJP relationship', *The Hindu,* 2013-10-17 2013.

JONES, KENNETH W., *Arya Dharm: Hindu Consciousness in 19th Century Punjab* (Manohar, 1976).

JOYCE, GEORGE, 'The Pope', *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (12; New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911).

JUNEJA, MONICA, 'Reclaiming the Public Sphere: Husain's Portrayals of Saraswati and Draupadi', *Economic and Political Weekly,* (1997), 155-57.

KAPUR, RATNA, 'Totalising History, Silencing Dissent', *The Hindu,* 15/02/2014 2014.

KELKAR, SANJEEV, *Lost Years of the RSS* (New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2011).

KESSELMAN, MARK, *Introduction to Politics of the Developing World: Political Challenges and Changing Agendas* (Wadsworth Publishing).

KHAN, ATIQ, 'Court awards two-thirds of Ayodhya site to Hindu parties, one-third to Waqf Board', *The Hindu,* 30/09/2010 2015.

KING, RICHARD, *Orientalism and Religion: Post Colonial Theory, India and "The Mystical East"* (London: Routledge, 1999).

---, 'Orientalism and the Modern Myth of "Hinduism"', *Numen,* 46/2 (1999), 146-85.

KINNVALL, CATARINA, *Globalization and Religious Nationalism in India: The Search for Ontological Security* (London: Routledge, 2006).

KIRSTE, J, 'The Mahabharata Question', *The Indian Antiquarian,* (1902).

KOPF, DAVID, 'The Birth of British Orientalism 1773-1800', *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance* (University of California Press, 1969), 22-42.

---, *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

KOSAMBI, D. D., 'The Autochthonous Element in the Mahabharata', *Journal of the American Oriental Society,* 84/1 (1964).

KOTHARI, RAJNI, 'Class and Communalism in India', *Economic and Political Weekly,* (1988), 2589-92.

---, 'Pluralism and Secularism: Lessons of Ayodhya', *Economic and Political Weekly,* 27 (1992), 2695-98.

---, 'Rise of the Dalits and the Renewed Debate on Caste', *Economic and Political Weekly,* (1994), 1589-94.

KUMAR, KRISHNA, 'Hindu Revivalism and Education in North-Central India', *Social Scientist,* 18/10 (17/11/2015 1990), 4-26.

LAKSHMI, RAMA, 'Book Censorship Prompts Freedom of Expression Fears for Indian Publishers', *The Guardian,* 14/07/2014 2014.

LOCKYER, HERBERT, 'The Mother of Harlots', *All the Women of the Bible* (Zondervan, 1988).

LORENZEN, DAVID N., 'Who Invented Hinduism?', *Comparative Studies in Society and History,* 41/04 (10-1999 1999), 630-59.

LOUIS, PRAKASH, 'Hindutva and Weaker Sections', in Ram Punyani (ed.), *Religion, Power and Violence: Expression of Politics in Contemporary Times* (SAGE, 2005).

MACKSEY, CHARLES, 'Society', *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (14; New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912).

MANDAIR, ARVIND-PAL SINGH, *Religion and the Specter of the West: Sikhism, India, Postcoloniality, and the Politics of Translation* (2013 edn.; New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

MANI, LATA, *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India* (University of California Press, 1998).

MANIAN, PADMA, 'Harappans and Aryans: Old and New Perspectives of Ancient Indian History', *The History Teacher,* 32/1 (1998 1998), 17-32.

MARSHAL, JOHN and PRYME, ABRAHAM DE LA, 'A Letter from the East Indies, of Mr. John Marshal to Dr. Coga, Giving an Account of the Religion, Rites, Notions, Customs, Manners of the Heathen Priests Commonly Called Bramines. Communicated by the Reverend Mr. Abraham de La Pryme', *Philosophical Transactions,* 22 (1700-1701), 1683-775.

MARX, ANTHONY W., *Faith in Nation: Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

MASSEY, JAMES, *Minorities and Religious Freedom in a Democracy* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors in association with Centre for Dalit/Subaltern Studies, 2003).

MATHUR, BARKHA, 'Muslim Sutradhaar Delighted to be part of Ramayana Play', *The Times of India,* 22-10-2015 2015.

MCCULLY, BRUCE T., 'The Origins of Indian Nationalism according to Native Writers', *The Journal of Modern History,* 7/3 (1935), 295-314.

MENON, KALYANI DEVAKI, *Everyday Nationalism: Women of the Hindu Right in India* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

MILL, JAMES, *The History of British India*, 6 vols. (Third edn., 1; London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1826).

MISRA, LEENA, 'Temple Rerun: Tracing Ram Rath Yatra, 25 Years Later' *The Indian Express* (2015); <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/bic-picture-temple-rerun-tracing-bjps-ram-rath-yatra-25-years-later/>.

MODY, NAWAZ B., 'The Press in India: The Shah Bano Judgment and Its Aftermath', *Asian Survey,* 27/8 (1987), 935-53.

MONIER-WILLIAMS, MONIER, 'On Buddhism in Its Relation to BrÄhmanism', *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland,* 18/2 (1886), 127-56.

NANDA, MEERA, 'Hindu Triumphalism and the Clash of Civilisations', *Economic and Political Weekly,* 44/28 (2009), 106-14.

NANDY, ASHIS, 'The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance', *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political,* (01/04/1988 1988).

NARAYAN, BADRI, *Fascinating Hindutva: Saffron Politics and Dalit mobilisation* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2009).

NEELANKANDAN, ARAVINDAN, 'Hindutva And Dr Ambedkar', *Swarajya*, (2015).

NIELL, STEPHEN, *A History of Christianity in India: The Beginnnings to A. D. 1707* (Cambridge University Press, 2004).

PAI, NITIN, 'Reform, only left to the Judiciary, asks Nitin Pai', *The Hindu,* 18/01/2016 2016.

PANIKKAR, K. M., *Indian Nationalism: Its Origins, History and Ideals* (Edinburgh: Turnbull and Spears, 1920).

PANNIKAR, K.N., 'Religious Symbols and Political Mobilization: The Agitation for a Mandir at Ayodhya', *Social Scientist,* 21/7/8 (1993), 63-78.

PAREKH, BHIKHU C., *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political theory* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 2000).

PATRICK, MORRISROE, 'Holy Communion', *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (7; New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910).

PRABHU, JAIDEEP, 'Wendy Doniger's The Hindus': Another blot on India's free speech landscape', *Daily News and Analysis,* 2014.

PRASHAD, VIJAY, 'Wendy Doniger's book is a Tribute to Hinduism's Complexity, not an Insult', *The Guardian,* 12/02/2014 2014.

RAGHURAMARAJU, A., *Enduring Colonialism: Classical Presences and Modern Absences in Indian Philosophy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012).

RAJAGOPAL, ARVIND, *Politics after Television: Hindu Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Public in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

RAM-PRASAD, C., *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism* (Malden: Blackwell Pub, 2003).

ROOVER, JAKOB DE, 'The Indian Jews', *Outlook India*, (2008).

ROOVER, JAKOB DE and CLAERHOUT, SARAH, 'The Colonial Construction of What?', in Esther Bloch, Marianne Keppens, and Rajaram Hegde (eds.), *Rethinking Religion in India* (4: Routledge, 2010).

ROOVER, JAKOB DE, CLAERHOUT, SARAH, and BALAGANGADHARA, S.N., 'Liberal Political Theory and the Cultural Migration of Ideas: The Case of Secularism in India', *Political Theory,* 39/5 (2011), 571-99.

ROOVER, JAKOB DE, 'Incurably Religious? Consensus Gentium and the Cultural Universality of Religion', *Numen,* 61/1 (2014), 5-32.

---, 'Untangling The Knot', *Outlook*, (2014).

---, *Europe, India, and the Limits of Secularism*, ed. Aakash Singh Rathore (1st edn., Reconceptualizing Religion, Culture, and Politics in a Global Context; New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015).

ROY, BETH, *Some Trouble with Cows: Making Sense of Social Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

SAHGAL, PRIYA, '1990 - L.K. Advani's Rath Yatra: Chariot of fire' *India Today* (2009); <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/1990-L.K.+Advani's+rath+yatra:+Chariot+of+fire/1/76389.html>.

SARKAR, SUMIT, 'The Fascism of the Sangh Parivar', *Economic and political weekly,* (1993), 163-67.

SARKAR, TANIKA, 'Pragmatics of the Hindu Right: Politics of Women's Organisations', *Economic and political weekly,* (1999), 2159-67.

SAVARKAR, VINAYAK DAMODAR, *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* (Pune: V. V. Kelkar, 1923).

SHARMA, ARVIND, 'Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on the Aryan Invasion and the Emergence of the Caste System in India', *Journal of American Academy of Religion,* 73/3 (2005 2005), 843-70.

SHOURIE, ARUN, *Harvesting Our Souls: Missionaries, their Design, their Claims* (New Delhi: ASA Publications, 2000).

SINGH, SMRITI, 'Penguin pulls out Wendy Doniger's book 'The Hindus' from India', *The Times of India,* 12/02/2014 2014.

STEVENSON, DR., 'The Ante-Brahmanical Religion of the Hindus', *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland,* 8 (1846), 330-39.

STEVENSON, JOHN and WILSON, JOHN, 'On the Ante-Brahmanical Worship of the Hindus in the Dekhan', *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland,* 5/1 (1839), 189-97.

STONE, CHARLES J, 'Historical Suggestions in the Ancient Hindu Epic, The Mahabharata', *Translations of the Royal Historical Society,* 2 (1885).

TEJANI, SHABNUM, 'Nationalism', *Indian Secularism: A Social and Intellectual History, 1890-1950* (Indiana University Press, 2008), 27-7.

TELTUMBDE, ANAND, 'Hindutva Agenda and Dalits', in Ram Puniyani (ed.), *Religion, Power & Violence: Expression of Politics in Contemporary Times* (New Delhi: SAGE, 2005).

THAPAR, ROMILA, 'The Theory of Aryan Race and India: History and Politics', *Social Scientist,* 24/1/3 (1996), 3-29.

---, 'The Present in the Past', *Cultural Pasts: Essays in Early Indian History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1025-54.

---, 'The Present in the Past', *Cultural Pasts: Essays in Early Indian History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 965-89.

TONER, PATRICK, 'Nature and Attributes of God', *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (6; New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909).

---, 'Relation of God to the Universe', *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (6; New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909).

TZOREF-ASHKENAZI, CHEN, 'India and the Identity of Europe: The Case of Friedrich Schlegel', *Journal of the History of Ideas,* 67/4 (2006), 713-34.

VARTHEMA, LODOVICO DE, *The travels of Ludovico di Varthema in Egypt, Syria, Arabia Deserta and Arabia Felix, in Persia, India, and Ethiopia, A.D. 1503 to 1508*, trans. John Winter Jones (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1863).

VEER, PETER VAN DER, 'History and Culture in Hindu Nationalism', in J. C. Heesterman, et al. (eds.), *Ritual, State and History in South Asia* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), 721-32.

---, 'The Postcolonial Predicament and Contemporary History', in Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter Van Der Veer (eds.), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia* (Illustrated edn.; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993).

---, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (University of California Press, 1994).

---, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001).

VIVEKANANDA, SWAMI, *Speeches and Writing of Swami Vivekananda* (3rd: Revised and Enlarged edn.: G. A. Natesan & Company, 1927).

WHEELER, JOHN DOWSON AND J. TALBOYS, 'Histories of India', *The North American Review,* 106/218 (1868).

WILHELM, JOSEPH, 'Idolatry', *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910).

ZAVOS, JOHN, 'The Ārya Samāj and the Antecedents of Hindu Nationalism', *International Journal of Hindu Studies,* 3/1 (17/11/2015 1999), 57-81.

APENDIX 1

PHD RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Garima Raghuvanshy

ReMa Religion and Culture

S2492865

INTRODUCTION

From the mid 19th to the early 20th century, several Hindu organisations came into being. These can be divided into two categories – (i) reformist-revivalist organisations such as the Arya Samaj and the Prarthana Sabha, and (ii) Sanatana Dharma organisations such as Bharat Dharma Mahamandal and the Nagari Pracharini Sabha. Both kinds of organisations were a response to criticisms of Indian traditions by the British government and Christian missionaries, and to colonial interference in Indian practices. Though both grew out of communities identified as 'Hindu', except on issues such as cow slaughter, these two kinds of organisations were opponents in the debate over Indian traditions. On the one hand, reformist-revivalist organisations accepted colonial descriptions of Indian traditions and set out to remove the corruptions that were supposed to have crept into Hinduism according to Orientalist discourse. On the other hand, Sanatana Dharma organisations strived to show that Hinduism was the most refined of all religions and aimed at defending Hindu practices and traditions. In doing so, Sanatana Dharma organisations took the route demanded by the colonial legal system, which required them to, among other things, refer to texts recognised as 'sacred scriptures' of Hinduism.

Thus, in both cases, it was missionaries and colonialists who set the terms of debate. Both kinds of organisations accepted these terms, and while the reformist-revivalist

organisations accepted Christian critique and went about attempting to rectify Indian traditions based on this critique, Sanatana Dharma organisations also accepted European descriptions about Indian traditions, but went about disputing the value judgement regarding these descriptions. Both kinds of organisations used print media extensively in order to propagate their arguments. It is in the publications of these organisations that the reproduction of terms of debate set by Christian Europeans is most clearly visible.

One of the important Orientalist ideas taken on by these organisations was that of the existence of a people, 'the Hindus', who were united by a common religion.[152] Thus, as per this idea, 'the Hindus' refers to a people, who are a religious community separate from other religious communities in India. While these organisations adopted this idea from Orientalist discourse, they also faced certain questions that arise from it. For instance, what is Hinduism? Who are the Hindus? Who is part of this community? Are Sikhs Hindu? Are Jains Hindu? Are Buddhists Hindu? Apart from attempting to answer such questions, these organisations began to undertake activities with the aim of creating a Hindu community or nation. For instance, the reformist-revivalist organisations in particular began a campaign to 'remove' caste from Indian society. They argued that caste was a divisive force in Hindu society, and that in order to unite the Hindus as one community or people, caste and its distinctions had to be done away with. This notion of 'the Hindus' (however vague), and questions and problems it gives rise to, continue to be an important part of academic and public discourse about and within Indian society today.

---

[152] Early Orientalists referred to 'the Aryas' as one people who had come down from central Asia into India. Later, the notion of 'the Hindus' took shape, though it is similar to the idea of the Aryas as one people sharing a common religion, and indeed, is related in important ways to the idea of 'the Aryas'.

Existing literature on reformist-revivalist organisations traces the influences of European ideas on these organisations, and also provides accounts of their activities. Scholarship has indicated patterns in the ideology and activities of these organisations, and discusses the conflicts that these organisations were involved in. This study will focus on the idea of 'the Hindus' as a people, and how this idea was adopted and acted upon by 19th and 20th century organisations. It will bring new insights by attempting to study how this idea influenced the activities of these organisations, and the relation, if any, of this idea to conflicts that emerged in Indian society during this period.

Preliminary research in my master thesis suggests that reformist-revivalist and Sanatana Dharma organisations took on Orientalist discourse about India almost unchanged. Given that (i) these organisations had vast influence in Indian society, particularly in North India, and that (ii) they had accepted the terms of debate, so to speak, of Orientalism and its discourse, it is important to examine if and how these organisations became vehicles for Orientalist descriptions to percolate into India society and to be accepted and adopted as true descriptions of India. In other words, this PhD project will evaluate whether these organisations are and were agents of colonial consciousness in India, i.e., whether they began to transform how Indians experienced and understood their traditions by propagating a different framework of understanding Indian traditions, namely, through Orientalist discourse.[153] It will study these organisations as such by focusing on the idea of 'the Hindus' as a people united by their adherence to one common religion - Hinduism.

---

[153] For an example of a transformation in the understanding of Indian traditions, see the description of a 1890 conflict between Hindus and Sikhs regarding the practice of rituals to Hindu 'idols' at the Golden Temple, wherein Sikhism is described as monotheism and Hinduism as polytheism: Jones, *Arya Dharm: Hindu Consciousness in 19th Century Punjab* at 211.

RESEARCH QUESTION:

Were the 19th and 20th century reformist-revivalist and Sanatana Dharma organisations agents of Colonial Consciousness in India?

SUB QUESTIONS:

1. Are both kinds of organisations – reformist-revivalist and Sanatana Dharma – instances of colonial consciousness? What role did Orientalist discourse play in the work of both kinds of organisations?

2. What role did the notion of 'the Aryas', and later, 'the Hindus', as one group of people play in the work of reformist-revivalist and Sanatana Dharma organisations, and in their understanding of different Indian traditions?

3. Though these organisations are seen as opponents, did they *together* transform the questions and problems pertaining to the idea of 'the Hindus' into relevant questions and problems for the Indian population?

4. What kind of conflicts, if any, were caused in Indian society by this notion of 'the Hindus' as a religious community and as a people?

5. Did 19th century reformist-revivalist and Sanatana Dharma organisations begin to transform Indian traditions into religion? If so, in what ways?

6. How did these organisations mimic the work of missionaries?

7. Does the contemporary Hindutva movement inherit the views and projects of both these camps? If so, in what way?

AIM

The aim of this PhD research is to gain a scientific understanding of the development of these two organisations in Indian society and their impact on the Indian discussion about Indian traditions.

MOTIVATION

It is striking from the work on the Arya Samaj alone that several conflicts in Indian society today have been influenced in an important way by developments that took place in the 19th and 20th century in Hindu society. Revisiting the activities and writings of these organisations will allow us to gain important insights on conflicts that emerged during this period, conflicts that endure in India society today.

PROPOSED TIMETABLE:

YEAR	ACTIVITY
YEAR ONE	Conceptualisation of research project
YEAR ONE AND TWO	Reading and data collection
YEAR TWO AND THREE	Data Analysis
YEAR FOUR	Writing Phase

BUDGET ESTIMATE

[exceeding the usual (reimbursable) costs of travel, conference visits etc.]:

AMOUNT (EUROS)	ACTIVITY
4000	Visit to European libraries such as the British Library and SOAS (Four visits, each for one month, to be completed in the first three years of the PhD)
4000	Visit to Indian libraries such as the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (Four visits, each for two months, to be completed in the first three years of the PhD)
4000	Photocopy costs (total for four years)
100	Camera for collecting data copies in libraries and archives.

METHODOLOGY

Theoretical framework: This PhD will be embedded within Comparative Science of Cultures, the research framework of S.N. Balagangadhara.

Archival research – Apart from descriptions of these organisations available in academic scholarship, this PhD will also use publications of reformist-revivalist and Sanatana Dharma organisations as data for analysis. I will refer to newspaper articles, pamphlets, lectures, and magazine articles in Hindi and English, belonging to the period roughly between 1830s and 1900s.

As Philip Lutgendorf has pointed out, while reformist-revivalist movements such as the Arya Samaj have been studied extensively, studies of the Sanatana Dharma

movement are sparse and rarely incisive.[154] As a result, the publications of Sanatana Dharma organisations in particular, will be an important source of data for this PhD. To the extent that these publications are in Hindi, gaining access to them might prove to be a challenge, since these publications have not been studied and archived to the same degree as English language publications. It is especially through the study of Hindu language sources that this PhD will contribute new data and insights in the study of these organisations.

Concept mapping – This thesis will use concept mapping, a technique that entails creating a visual 'map' or flowchart of concepts. This allows for a systematic and detailed representation of the concepts, and also their relationship with each other. In turn, this allows one to: (i) examine or contrast one conceptual framework with another, and thus (ii) examine the presence or absence of continuity between the colonial, orientalist framework of understanding India and the framework of reformist-revivalist organisations.

SUPERVISION REQUIRED

Field of expertise – India studies, Comparative Science of Cultures, Hindi studies, extensive knowledge about colonial debates in the context of India, and about how these debates were shaped by Christianity.

---

[154] Philip Lutgendorf, *The Life of a Text: performing the Ramcaritmanas of Tulsidas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.) at 360-65.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The World's Eternal Religion (Publication Department of the Sri Bharat Dharma Mahamandal, 1920).

Rethinking Religion in India: The Colonial Construction of Hinduism (Routledge South Asian Religion Studies: Routledge, 2010).

BAYLY, CHRISTOPHER ALAN, *The Local Roots of Indian Politics: Allahabad, 1880-1920* (Illustrated edn.: Clarendon Press, 1975).

FARQUHAR, JOHN NICOL, *Modern Religious Movements in India* (New York: Macmillan, 1915).

JONES, KENNETH W., 'Communalism in the Punjab: The Arya Samaj Contribution', *The Journal of Asian Studies,* 28/1 (1968), 39-54.

---, 'Ham Hindu Nahin: Arya-Sikh Relations, 1877-1905 on JSTOR', *The Journal of Asian Studies,* 32/3 (1973), 457-75.

---, *Arya Dharm: Hindu Consciousness in 19th Century Punjab* (Manohar, 1976).

KARPATRI, SWAMI, *Marxvad Aur Ramrajya* (Gita Press).

KOPF, DAVID, *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

LUTGENDORF, PHILIP, *The Life of a Text: Performing the Ramcaritmanas of Tulsidas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.).

MANDAIR, ARVIND-PAL SINGH, *Religion and the Specter of the West: Sikhism, India, Postcoloniality, and the Politics of Translation* (2013 edn.; New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

MANI, LATA, *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India* (University of California Press, 1998).

PANDEY, GYANENDRA, 'Hindus and Others: The Question of Identity in India today', (Viking, 1993).

SARASWATI, DAYANANDA, *Satyarthprakash* (2 edn.: Subodh Pocket Books, 2011).

SAVARKAR, VINAYAK DAMODAR, *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* (Pune: V. V. Kelkar, 1923).