Chapter Four:
The Invention of Hinduism for National Use

In the course of the previous chapters, the category that has been imposing its presence on this book has been 'Hinduism'; and it should be clear that it is impossible to proceed without confronting it. What work does the category 'Hindu' do for, or in, the 'national'?

Is the problem of what constitutes 'Hinduism' one merely of terminology? Is 'Hinduism' a 'modern' concept, an ancient religious identity or a modern political movement? Is 'Hinduism' a set of practices, a textual tradition, or a collective umbrella term for a wide range of divergent things? And possibly more importantly, what is the work done by the set of claims made for 'Hinduism' in the colonial period? The questions of when what we now know as 'Hinduism' came into being, or indeed whether it exists or existed at all, or perhaps whether we are forced to acknowledge its existence because those who believe it does exist are so vocal and aggressive about it, refuse to go unanswered. This, on the one hand, is a very public debate. On the other hand, there is an increasingly loud academic debate on whether 'Hinduism' as we know it is a colonial artefact or invention or whether it has continuities with practices and doctrines in the precolonial past. It seems we might be working at the very least with several Hinduisms, which is of course not unusual to anything that has remotely been close to claiming the category 'religion', or having such claims made on behalf of its imagined collective practitioners. The debate, then, may boil down to a matter of *etic* categorisation versus *emic* recognition, in which case it might indeed be relevant to find particular dates for the emergence of particular *terms*. There are many possible irrelevances that we might chase in this way.

In part, then, the debate on what constitutes 'Hinduism' has been cast as one about terminology: the 'ism' is obviously a suffix that comes from the English language, the 'Hindu' part is old Iranian, then Arabic, has the same etymology as the Greek ''*Indoi*' and was more geographical, at least in early usage, than religious in connotation;[1] and in some later uses, a name-change from 'Hindustan' to 'India' itself signified a change in the way the politics of identifying the geographical entity operated.[2] Alternatives have been proposed, which are those that contemporaries at various points under discussion would themselves allegedly have recognised (which includes, for more recent times, 'Hindu' with the suffix '*-ta*' or '*-tva*', but excludes 'Brahminism' on the grounds of the 'ism', though some would argue that the '*ta*' and '*tva*' suffixes were themselves inauthentic neologisms despite their Sanskritoid etymology).[3] Among the candidates for the contemporaneous would be *Saiva*, *Vaisnava*, *sampraday* etc to denote sects that were often violent and hostile towards each other and did not think of themselves as sharing anything like a common set of

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[1] See BN Mukherjee, *The Foreign Names of the Indian Subcontinent* (Mysore: Place Names Society of India, 1989)

[2] IJ Barrow, 'From Hindustan to India: Naming Change in Changing Names', *South Asia* 26, 1 (April 2003), pp. 37-49

[3] David Lorenzen rather impatiently writes that quibbling about terminology rather than the thing itself doesn't get us very far. David Lorenzen, 'Who Invented Hinduism?' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41, 4 (October 1999), pp 630-659, reprinted in David Lorenzen, *Who Invented Hinduism?* (Delhi: Yoda Press, 2006); see p.3. The trouble is, the terminology is itself contested on political grounds, which makes it important to separate terminological disputes from thing-in-itself disputes while acknowledging the political importance of both.

beliefs, doctrines, practices, books or worldviews.[4] This leaves behind an agonised debate as to what constitutes the core of the-whatever-we-like-to-call-it-that-is-the-religion-that-existed-on-the-Indian-subcontinent-that-goes-back-a-long-time. Some argue that there has never been an identifiable core, and that it has been put together in retrospect.[5] These are often people with a strong stake in the politics of opposition to the Sangh Parivar. There are others who claim there is a core that has existed for a long time, and at least since the twelfth century, where it was even called 'Hindu', however much the term might have been merely geographical before.[6] In the main, these are often Orientalists, or Indologists, suitably renamed or uncertainly named after the post-Saidian debate that debased their name, who like to have a name for what they study. This is an oversimplification, of course, but these polar positions define the ground for debate.

If there has never been something that has collectively been considered Hindu (choose your preferred suffix here) in religious or doctrinal senses (pedants would point out that 'dharma' doesn't translate as 'religion' very easily, assuming we know better what a 'religion' is, meaning something like 'way of life', 'path of duty', 'law', 'custom', or 'conduct' instead), the reason for studying it as a religious formation is pointless. If we need to have a big picture on what it is, perhaps we need to ask whether it was because it was *available for use* as an axis along which to invent or structure a *national* entity that its existence as a unified collective entity has been claimed. Then there is the question of relevant chronology: the terms used in connection with it have shifted considerably at different points. And the question of retrospective claims: at various points, there have been claims made about Hinduism with serious political implications. These claims have also been the subject of debates about history and by historians, not to mention archaeologists and linguists. Many of these claims have been sharply political; many of them have been crucially concerned with finding resources in the past untainted by colonialism to restore in a notionally purified post-colonial future.

This chapter asks instead when the category 'Hinduism' was invested with the meanings it now has: religion, textual sources, finite doctrines, national identity. More specifically, it is an attempt to study the stages of preparation of the category for *national* use. 'Preparation' need not suggest instrumentality; as the previous chapters indicate, the resort to 'Hindu' is not necessarily intended as a conscious act of exclusion (though it sometimes is), but it becomes a plausible basis for a positive identification of the 'precolonial' 'national', when it becomes important to identify and to identify with the 'national'. This approach, of course, somewhat avoids the question of Hinduism's 'precolonial' presences or multiplicities, if we take all of these together rather than separately. The 'precolonial' is of course a problematic, flat, and retrospective category, for which generalisations cannot and should not be made, and good historians or Indologists tend not to. It seems, then, strange how important the category has become, often even among those who wish to reject the hegemony of colonialism in the writing of Indian history.

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[4] DN Jha, 'Destereotyping Hinduism', lecture at the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, August 19, 2006; DN Jha, *Rethinking Hindu Identity* (London: Equinox, 2009), Chapter Two: 'Tolerant Hinduism: Evidence and Stereotype'.

[5] Heinrich von Stietencron, 'Hinduism: On the Proper Use of a Deceptive Term' in GD Sontheimer and HD Kulke (ed), *Hinduism Reconsidered* (Delhi: Manohar, 1989), pp 11-27.

[6] e.g. Lorenzen, 'Who Invented Hinduism?'

The purpose of this chapter is not to focus on doctrinal, sectarian or theological debates, of which they were many, nor on the precise chronologies of various social formations that called themselves or can retrospectively be recognised as ‘Hindu’, but to examine some of the political, social and economic contestations that occur(red) around the category ‘Hinduism’, and especially those that related to the use of Hinduism as a *national* resource. It is intended as a commentary on an ongoing debate, and a potential agenda for further research. What it is not, however, is a conspiracy theory ('the British invented Hinduism to mislead the people'), or a contribution to a polemic that seems to operate by deliberately misreading opponents' views. Since this book has already stated its opposition to categories such as 'indigenous' and 'foreign', there is nothing much to be gained from the argument that what was once thought of as fundamentally 'Indian' or 'eastern' is actually not. It might be nonetheless important to begin to trace the social and intellectual history of a set of very influential ideas that helped structure the allegedly authentic 'national' in India.

The chronological framework of this chapter, thus, is not linear from the ancient to the present. It is colonial, reaching back to various stages of the precolonial past, depending on the debate, and postcolonial. We could identify the beginning of our story in the eighteenth century, in colonial times, and pick up crucial moments in which a number of questions emerge in varying combinations: of the political, emotional and/or ideological investments in the category ‘Hindu’, in the transformations of that category for political use, and its connections to metropolitan arguments that give it strength and validity.

One further point that has already made its appearance in this book and will reappear later needs to be underlined here. While ‘Hindu’ and its relative expressions were never fully ‘national’, because their multiple meanings spread well beyond the disciplining framework of the imagining of an Indian 'nation', or a future Indian state, *the ‘national’ in the Indian case was extremely reliant on one or another version of the ‘Hindu’.*[7]

The argument

The narrative that I present here, run backwards and oversimplified to provide a teleology rather than a genealogy, is that ‘Hinduism’ was completed and properly available for modern political use after Gandhi’s fast and the Poona Pact in 1932. This is when the boundaries of political Hinduism get fully drawn, and backed up by legislative authority in the 1935 Government of India Act, colluding inadvertently (the oxymoron is deliberate) with census operations.[8] Thereafter, the ‘Who Is a Hindu?’ question is not one of arguing about definitions, but working with a reality backed by

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[7] This is different from the argument that only the wrong sort of nationalism is so dependent. For a version of this argument, applied in conventional Marxist mode mostly to the Swadeshi period in Bengal, and based on an argument about the 'inhibited and deformed' development of capitalism in India, therefore on the continuity of 'pre-capitalist' aspects of ideology, see Horst Krüger, 'Hinduism and National Liberation Movement in India', in Sontheimer and Kulke (ed), *Hinduism Reconsidered*, pp 81-92. Krüger sees the survival of caste as the central indication of the survival of 'pre-capitalist production relations' and 'ideology' into the modern period.

[8] Michael Haan, 'Numbers in Nirvana: How the 1872–1921 Indian censuses helped operationalise “Hinduism”', *Religion* 35, 1 (January 2005), pp 13-30, hedges his bets: he looks at emerging definitions of 'Hinduism' through the census, but concludes that 'Hinduism' is both a colonial construct and a precolonial reality.

legislative authority; and without incorporating 'untouchables' or 'Harijans', along with 'tribals', the claim that 'Hindus' were or are a majority in India cannot be numerically upheld. Until then, 'Hindu' is a residual category that means either non-Muslims, or those without clearly defined faiths (unless they can claim caste status within the upper three *varnas*, in which case the question of faith becomes irrelevant).

However, and this has been said many times before, a crucial period of contestation that gives us a 'Hinduism' available for political use is the late nineteenth century, when ideas of Aryanism, race, culture and religion were run alongside ideas of nation and nationalism, intermingled with each other, and borrowing terms and categories that had resonances in metropolitan or European usage. Here, perhaps, some attention to languages of legitimation, an argument that this book has by now repeated *ad nauseum*, might be of interest.[9] Some attention, too, might be given to a history of crucial politicised ideas and their uses in specific contexts: something akin to a *Begriffsgeschichte*, or a history of important terms and categories in Indian political life, is useful.[10] Unfortunately, much of this work is nationally circumscribed (or at least circumscribed in terms of the shared language of a relatively coherent group), and cannot deal properly with questions of translation and of the use of certain terms outside their allegedly 'native' context: *Begriffsgeschichte* of individual countries, Holland, Britain (England or Scotland or Wales), Ireland, etc. might miss the propensity of *ideas*, not necessarily reducible to the *terminology* that claims to carry the ideas, to travel across contexts.[11] I have made this point earlier; I shall have more to say about this later. Of related interest is Peter van der Veer's argument about the 'colonial-Orientalist dynamic', in which internalised conceptions of British Orientalism, in its pre-Saidian sense, return to political debate among the colonised, in some cases with a suitably shifted normative framework, in order to legitimate a sometimes nationalist project of self-strengthening.[12]

The argument, then, is about whether there is a 'core' to Hinduism: generations of books on the 'ism' have reified it and given it a sometimes quite spurious coherence, even if they have done it differently.[13] Recent attempts by historians of early India to

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[9] The connections between my emphasis on languages of legitimation and the Skinner-Pocock school of historical semantics has been alluded to earlier: see Introduction, footnote **18.**

[10] The work of Reinhart Koselleck is paradigmatic in this regard, as is the large project that bears the name *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*. See Introduction, footnote **19.**

[11] An assessment of the possibilities of *Begriffsgeschichte* from the early 1990s stumbled on this point: 'the extraordinary difficulty of translating the meaning of terms and concepts from one language into another, from one cultural tradition into another, and from one intellectual climate into another': Detlef Junker, 'Preface', in Hartmut Lehmann and Melvin Richter (ed), *The Meaning of Historical Terms and Concepts: New Studies on Begriffsgeschichte* (Washington, DC: German Historical Institute Occasional Paper No. 15, 1996), p. 6. The problem seems to be one of trying too closely to map *terminology* onto *content*. This of course would apply to the term 'Hindu' as well.

[12] Peter van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (Berkeley: University of Californai Press, 1994).

[13] See Madeleine Biardeau, *Hinduism: The Anthropology of a Civilization* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989)*;* and Chris Fuller, *The Camphor Flame: Popular Hinduism and Society in India* (revised edition, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) [1992]; TN Madan, *Non-Renunciation: Themes and Interpretations of Hindu Culture* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987), despite their different focal points: Madan even admits, in his Preface to the paperback edition (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), that he is talking about 'the Brahmanical tradition' (p ix). The psychoanalyst Sudhir Kakar simply assumes the identity of 'Hindu' and 'Indian' in publication after publication. See Sudhir Kakar, *The Inner World: A Psycho-Analytic Study of Childhood and Society in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981) [1978]; Sudhir Kakar, *Intimate Relations: Exploring Indian Sexuality* (Delhi: Viking, 1989).

problematise legends such as that of a coherent 'Hinduism' (which most people now recognise as an anachronistic or at least an etic category), or even a 'Brahmin' ethos (to attempt a more emic category), have found an academic audience despite attempts to blackmail or intimidate the writers: DN Jha's material on beef-eating by Brahmins across several centuries from early to medieval India, and Romila Thapar's carefully iconoclastic writing, might be taken as good examples.[14] The recognition that 'Hinduism' was, either as a whole, or in its parts, neither coherent nor unified, that it was violent, sectarian (with various *sampraday* taking up arms against each other, and normative texts extolling the virtues of Vaishnavas killing Saivas), has of course brought into public debate some uncomfortable details in terms of both Indian and post-1960s (or perhaps post-Theosophical) European and North American myths of Hindu non-violence and spirituality. It is of course still possible to argue that there was nonetheless a 'core' despite these violent (internal) differences, but a glorious and relatively harmonious past does not emerge from this material.

There remains also the tension between *practices*, as historians can discover, and *normative frameworks.* These normative frameworks have been allowed to masquerade as practices (which of course are notoriously difficult to identify for the distant past), and have been reified in many cases through the good offices of the British, who sought finite texts with which to understand the minds of those they sought to govern. This question has been obscured in recent years by a mostly futile debate about the role (or collusion) of the native informant in the creation of that form of 'colonial knowledge' that became the basis for governing the 'native'. This is sometimes a somewhat subtler version of the conservative argument about 'collaborators' with imperial rule that was prevalent in the 1960s and 1970s, and is perhaps is still prevalent in some bubbles of academia.[15] It is also sometimes an argument about the importance of restoring the 'agency' of the colonised subject in the making of 'colonial knowledge', or in structuring his own subjection. (A sort of obligatory etiquette has taken hold of the academic world, in which it is the height of bad manners not to attribute 'agency' *a priori* to anyone; to say that 'man makes history, but not in circumstances of his own choosing' is simply not done if one wants to have access to the best circles.)[16] The question of the discursive structure of the

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[14] DN Jha, *Holy Cow: Beef in Indian Dietary Traditions* (Delhi: Matrix, 2001), Romila Thapar, *Somanatha: The Many Voices of a History* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2005), Romila Thapar, *Early India*: *from the origins to AD 1300* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Romila Thapar, 'Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and the Modern Search for a Hindu Identity', *Modern Asian Studies* 23, 2 (1989), pp 209-231; Romila Thapar, *Cultural Pasts: Essays in Early Indian History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); for predecessor arguments, see Romila Thapar et al, *Communalism and the Writing of Indian History* (Delhi: People's Publishing House 1969); DD Kosambi, *Myth and reality: studies in the formation of Indian culture* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1962); DD Kosambi, *The culture and civilisation of ancient India in historical outline* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965).

[15] See in particular CA Bayly, *Empire and Information* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Michael S Dodson, *Orientalism, empire, and national culture: India, 1770-1880* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

[16] 'Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living.' Karl Marx, *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch01.htm – though how this works in an argument based on a 'break with tradition' due to colonial rule, and in cultural and linguistic translation, again complicates matter.

argument into which 'knowledge' is placed – within paradigms that the 'informant' could in many cases not have had access to – is often not adequately raised.

Indeed, the question, if you like, of the agency of the native informant, and the possible manipulation by that informant, or subversion by him (usually him) of the implicit projects of those he was informing, arose only in a situation when the colonised could speak the language of the coloniser, in both a literal and metaphorical sense. Thus, a Rammohun Roy could fluently present his cases in terms either of Christian theology or the language of liberalism; he wrote also in Persian, and this material might yield further insights into his ability to write in several social and political idioms, with different audiences in mind and therefore in different languages of legitimation.[17] Whether this would make him a Christian theologian or a liberal is a question that is difficult to answer: the inner self and its convictions and intentions are not necessarily accessible even to the self, let alone the retrospective reader. Commentators have been less than satisfactory in explaining why he turned to monotheism and unitarianism in his English writing; an interesting question on the subject might relate to *intended audiences* and his ability to *frame* an argument within a *language of legitimation* that would reach those audiences. If Rammohun was interested in influencing legislation (and we know he was), he needed to be able to access the language that would influence legislation, that would have resonances with an administration that spoke that language.

There remains a related question: that of the class inflection (or social stratification) of various frameworks that we retrospectively might lump together as 'Hinduism'.[18] If there is indeed a core to 'Hinduism', retrospectively *named* but (semi-)eternally *present*, there is nonetheless an importance to the multiplicity of meanings contained in the name(s) that enable 'Hindu' to have resonances across a good number of contexts;[19] and those meanings need to be explored specifically for each context. Our question here is what sorts of belief systems – what sorts of meanings of 'Hindu' – became available for political use and what sort did not; and perhaps this is a question of the resonances of 'Hinduism' in a modern sense with the political languages of nationalism, race and racial destiny that became crucial to the late nineteenth century. This, like it or not, is an *elite* discourse, or at least a middle-class one: popular forms of religious belief and social organisation do not centrally come into the picture.[20] How, then, does 'Hinduism' become a category that interpellates – shouts 'Hey, I'm talking to you' at – elite Indians seeking frameworks of self-

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[17] See Sumit Sarkar, 'Rammohun Roy and the Break with the Past', in Sumit Sarkar, *A Critique of Colonial India* (Calcutta: Papyrus, 1985), **pp**

[18] It may not be productive here to get into discussions about the use of 'class' as a historical category in the Indian context or more generally'; there is always a tension between a class in itself and a class for itself (Marx) and the idea of a status group (Weber); caste always comes into the picture in India, and the debate continues as to how far caste is transmuted into class. Perhaps the simple and provisional answer that we can have here is that caste and class are nearly congruent on the upper rungs of the social ladder, but the metaphor starts to unravel if we note that the ladder itself has several branches and sub-branches at the lower levels.

[19] For a statement of this case, see Arvind Sharma, 'On Hindu, Hindustan, Hinduism and Hindutva', *Numen* 49 (2002), pp 1-36.

[20] Elite/popular is here a provisional formulation that needs to be contextualised in specific cases to make sense – this remark is by way of distinguishing myself from the elite/subaltern dichotomy in which both terms are mutually dependent residual categories, and hence can lead to circular arguments.

fashioning and political self-expression?[21] How, in turn, do nineteenth century trends in romantic anticapitalism interpellate the colonial subject? And how are these trends fashioned into the political neo-Hinduism that we come to know so intimately in colonial Indian politics?

This of course leaves space for the argument that not all forms of Hinduism come to have a central presence in the political debates of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Let us examine an element of this multi-layered beast that is 'Hinduism' as an example of this problem. Does the *sadhu* sitting on the *ghats* smoking *ganja* really engage with the politics of a *bharatiyata*, or is his world different? William Pinch looks at the moment of the 'political sadhu' and his connections with peasant society – a problem that centrally enters Indian politics in the 1920s with Mohandas Gandhi and with Swami Sahajananda as competing figures for the loyalties of peasants in a politics of anticolonialism. In particular, Pinch focuses on the eighteenth century and the importance of the Ramanandi *sampraday*'s recruitment practices, reformist agenda, and engagement with issues of social change and inequality. The connections between religion, religious belief and popular participation in politics, especially peasant politics, are at the core of these concerns.[22]

Pinch is concerned that both religion and caste, not as colonial construction, which applies less, he says, to peasant consciousness of their own condition (and as *jati* rather than *varna,* a lived category of actual status rather than the normative category of high Sanskritic texts) and in any case more to the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, have not been given enough of a space in the history of peasant consciousness and peasant politics. And he believes that religious motivation is only looked at in exceptional rather than everyday situations. He explicitly discounts this work as meaning something about 'Hinduism' in general, which he accepts is something that was 'influenced in part by European attempts to understand Indian religion according to European paradigms, in part by a nationalist movement that sought to draw on noncontradictory religions meanings, and in part by religious reformers who sought to reconcile regional religious contradictions so as to participate in the emerging Indian political discourse of nation and race'.[23] However, he draws connections between the trends he describes and the overall political culture of north India. The routes opened up for lower caste recruits to the Ramanandi order to claim and adopt *kshatriya* origins then become central to a more assertive political culture that also looks back at history to claim genealogies from ancient and valorous kshatriya kings and warriors; but the explanation of the decline of the kshatriya starts to depend upon a narrative of the destruction of sacred royal lineages by Muslim invader; this tendency, amplified by the printing press and supported by British historical interpretations of India, had plenty of sectarian potential.[24] In some ways, this argument draws on the Subaltern Studies group's early invocation of the peasants' 'autonomous domain' away from elite politics of all types,[25] as Pinch's operative categories are vaishnava, bhakti, Vishnu and his avatars. Pinch seeks to draw away from this simplistic 'autonomous domain'

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21 Louis Althusser, 'Ideologies and Ideological State Apparatuses', in Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), pp 11-44.

22 William Pinch, *Peasants and Monks in British India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999).

23 Pinch, *Peasants and Monks*, p 21.

24 Pinch, *Peasants and Monks*, pp 141-2.

25 Ranajit Guha, 'On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India', in Ranajit Guha (ed), *Subaltern Studies* vol. 1 (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982), **pp**

argument himself, and commendably so.[26] Chris Bayly's references to political powers that were not states in the eighteenth century, which would include militant and arms-bearing sadhus but also Jat raiders of the area around Delhi, are also possible comparators to Pinch's study.[27]

But these descriptions of some non-colonially invented aspects of the multi-layered beast, of course, do not amount to what is required of a Hinduism that becomes available for *nationalist* use. The *sadhu* or the *naga* as militant proto-nationalist has of course been *invoked* by various trends that sought to fashion a nationalism for India: Bankimchandra in Bengal thought the *sadhu* could be invoked as the authentic figure of resistance to British rule, refashioned as Muslim rule, both being able to stand in for one another by being 'foreign'.[28] As a nationalist icon, of course, the *sadhu* or the *sanyasi* is ambiguous; it provides a link to an allegedly earlier India untainted by colonial rule, and therefore it provides the resources of authenticity, but the *sadhu* cannot be claimed as a fully modern element of the projected nation-state without some important modifications. Even if the *sadhu* is interested in politics, what role does he really play in nationalist politics? The Baba Ramchandras of the peasant movements of the 1920s were successfully marginalised and/ or appropriated by the Congress and other groups, who could better speak the language of politics required in a colonial setting; the holy man is more useful to nationalist politics – as opposed to anticolonial politics more generally, where he might well have a role – as *symbol* than as reality, or in other words, the discursive *sadhu* of nationalism might bear no resemblance to the actual *sadhu*, or might be recast, for instance via Gandhi, as a necessary icon who must be translated for national use. The continued resonance in a colonial context of the *sadhu-sanyasi* figure has been explored, in particular for Bengal, for instance in the life of the Bhowal *sanyasi*,[29] the importance of Ramakrishna Paramhansa or his (Bengali bhadralok) disciple Swami Vivekananda,[30] naturally in much work on Gandhi,[31] and in the intellectual-terrorist-turned-ascetic, Sri Aurobindo,[32] not to mention in the engagement with *bauls* and *fakirs* by relatively affluent and usually urban intellectuals;[33] the collective point that might well be made here is that all these figures are less about some sort of 'authentic' (non-elite, 'innocent' and precolonial, in Ashis Nandy's terminology)[34] behaviour and much more about their providing resources for middle-class arguments.

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[26] Pinch, *Peasants and Monks*, pp 147-8.

[27] CA Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion 1770-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

[28] Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, *Anandamath*, translated from the Bengali by Julius J Lippner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) [1882].

[29] Partha Chatterjee, *A Princely Impostor? the strange and universal history of the Kumar of Bhawal* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

[30] See Sumit Sarkar, 'Kaliyuga, Chakri and Bhakti: Ramakrishna and his Times', in Sumit Sarkar, *Writing Social History* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp 282-357; on the movement as a whole, see G Beckerlegge, *The Ramakrishna Mission: the making of a modern Hindu movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000)

[31] Joseph Alter, *Gandhi's Body: Sex, Diet and the Politics of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), is the best work to deal with the bodily aspects of the Mahatma's politics.

[32] Peter Heehs is the best non-mystical commentator on Aurobindo. See his recent biography: Peter Heehs, *The Lives of Sri Aurobindo* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

[33] Jeanne Openshaw, 'The Radicalism of Tagore and the Bauls of Bengal', *South Asia Research* 17, 1 (Spring 1997), pp. 20-36; Jeanne Openshaw, *Seeking Bauls of Bengal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)

[34] Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983).

It might bear restating that for the purposes of this argument I am not interested *per se* in the question of restoring the 'agency' of the *sadhu* as historical actor, 'organic intellectual' or non-nationalist-but-anticolonial-subject – unless as emblem of and manipulator himself ('agency?) of 'authenticity' and 'tradition' – but in types of engagement with categories which are definitely in our times (modern times) called 'Hindu', but not all of which are available for political use in the same sense. In any case, the diversity and problematic nature of *sadhus* and *sanyasis* in terms of their lives and actual practices, in particular their non-conformity with norms of civilised social and sexual behaviour, make them only partially available for nationalist purposes, as a system of 'national' values inflected with colonial-era concerns about appropriate behaviour for the 'nation' could not easily accommodate them.[35]

The usefulness here of the *sadhu-sanyasi* figure is in its ability to allegedly embody 'authenticity' while various uses of the category Hindu are conflated and confused. Fundamentally, then, the *sadhu-sanyasi* figure does the work that 'Hinduism' does at a wider level in nationalist argument: 'Hinduism' becomes a code for indigeneity, authenticity, authentic indigeneity, which every nationalism must have. This is not necessarily only in consciously sectarian argument: Hindus (as opposed to the complicated, questionable indigenous position of Indian Muslims, Parsis, Jews, etc) can provide the 'ancient-tradition-worth-reviving' and/or the 'already-modern-ancient' trope far better. Different aspects of 'Hinduism' might be highlighted to be presented as the 'core', depending on the type of nationalist manoeuvre made by various protagonists in the debate, as they become selectively useful for making some larger claim to authenticity in a particular context.

This is where the importance of the 1932 moment can be properly contextualised. The Poona Pact is the key moment that suddenly incorporates the 'backward castes', *dalits*, as Hindus, and really positions Muslims as not properly indigenous. This is contradictory as far as the importance of Gandhism to an eventual India is concerned: on the one hand, it is always alleged that Gandhi's ideas do not properly make their way into the creation of an Indian state; on the other hand, his contribution to defining 'Hindus' *is* enshrined in legislation, even though it is initially British legislation, and it is what finally makes 'Hindus' politically and therefore practically a single entity. Once this conflation is achieved, the *sadhu* has without knowing it become one with the Indology professor at Oxford and future President of India, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. At this point, the categories Hindu and Muslim are counterposed to each other.

British Discoveries, Native Informants: Manoeuvres, Reifications, Reiterations, Modifications and Reappropriations

A few reminders of the opening of the confrontation of what has come to be called 'colonial knowledge' and the 'indigenous' might be attempted here. These categories, as they appear in the literature, are of course reified ones even when the polemic points out that 'colonial knowledge' is a product of 'indigenous agency' through the figure of the 'native informant'. Peter Marshall's anthology on the 'British discovery of Hinduism' is instructive in its insistence that British views of Hinduism bore no

[35] Similar anxieties are recorded by Tapati Guha Thakurta in attempts to deal with the erotic in Indian art. Tapati Guha Thakurta, *Monuments, objects, histories: institutions of art in colonial and postcolonial India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004)

necessary resemblance to Hinduism itself[36] (as indeed no 'Hindu' view of Hinduism bore any necessary resemblance to Hinduism itself). In fact, the coincidence of the urge to knowledge and the needs of governance are amply borne out by codes of 'Gentoo laws', the 'customs' of the natives, their 'religion', 'priests', etc. It has of course been pointed out that the need to reconcile the new knowledge of the strange peoples of the colonies with a Biblical worldview was paramount in structuring the new knowledge, as pre-evolutionary thinking had to treat human beings as emerging from their common ancestors, Adam and Eve;[37] the Hindus became the Gentiles of Biblical fame, and the continuation of 'Hindu' as a residual category in thinking about India was assured for a longer time. The discoveries of the common origins of 'Indo-Aryan' languages by William Jones and others had to be mapped onto a 'Mosaic ethnography', to use Thomas Trautmann's phrase, with the sons of Noah providing an overarching framework for linguistic and racial genealogies, the two seen as congruent.[38]

'Caste', on the other hand, that analogy brought to India from the New World by the Portuguese, was given its major shapes by the activities of colonial institutions, in particular by census operations, which insisted on attempting to map conceptions of *varna*, the alleged 'great tradition', onto the 'little tradition' of *jati*, thereby providing in the course of time a form of social mobility. 'Sanskritisation', the ability to claim higher caste and therefore social status by adopting the customs and *mores* of higher castes,[39] was at its moment of success something that was written down in the census. The crude version of this argument is that 'caste' was therefore entirely a European invention; the allegedly subtler version of this was that 'caste' was a collaborative project between Europeans and their native informants. Nicholas Dirks points out that the argument was not that Europeans invented caste, but that caste was always responsive to political power rather than providing an unchanging and static grid;[40] and that therefore caste as it emerged in the colonial period was something very much interlinked with colonial politics, which of course included coloniser and colonised.[41]

A related debate is about Hinduism as a textual tradition: if, as the seekers-after-knowledge-for-administrative-purposes believed, religions had sacred books, they merely had to find the right ones; and the race among pundits to provide the British

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[36] See PJ Marshall, *The British Discovery of Hinduism in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), introduction. See also William Sweetman, *Mapping Hinduism: 'Hinduism'and the study of Indian religions, 1600-1776* (Halle: Verlag der Franckeschen Stiftungen, 2003).

[37] PJ Marshall and G Williams, *The Great Map of Mankind: British perceptions of the world in the age of enlightenment* (London: Dent, 1982)

[38] Thomas Trautmann, *Aryans and British India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

[39] See MN Srinivas, *Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India* (Oxford, 1952) for his coining of the term; see also MN Srinivas, 'A Note on Sanskritization and Westernization', *Far Eastern Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (August, 1956), pp. 481-496; MN Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966).

[40] Nicholas Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 1993).

[41] Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind: colonialism and the making of modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). The argument that caste emerged in the forms that become familiar in the colonial period more under late Mughal rule than under the colonial order, even if accepted, makes the not dissimilar point that caste was not an ancient and immutable set of institutions, written in sacred books and upheld by societies at large. See Susan Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

with sacred books for their purposes, as is well known, turned out many fakes as well as many texts whose actual presence in any really existing social or religious practice was difficult to ascertain. Nevertheless, a collection of texts was anointed over the years and centuries after the eighteenth century, which were then reified as the 'core' of 'Hinduism', and had consequences such as in the founding of 'Hindu law', or in the construing of Hindu/Indian society in terms of Brahmanical knowledge backed up by British political power.

The great 'Orientalist-Anglicist' confrontation was of course driven by contending efforts to characterise 'India' among various groups of British administrators.[42] James Mill, writing at the beginning of the nineteenth century, noted what he saw as the tendency among Indian informants,

> ... to attach to the loose and unmeaning phraseology of some of their own writings, whatever ideas they find to be in esteem; or even to interpolate for that favourite purpose. It was thus extremely natural that Sir William Jones, whose pundits had become acquainted with the ideas of European philosophers respecting the system of the universe, should hear from them that those ideas were contained in their own books: The wonder was that without any proof he should believe them.[43]

Mill's polemical purpose is of course well known, and much ink has been spilled accounting for the pernicious effects of his and his fellow Anglicists' denigration of past Indian civilisation, and his historical periodisation of India's 'Hindu', 'Muslim', and 'British' periods. But here he addresses the problems of translatability and compatibility of languages of legitimation tracking one another: according to Mill, the native informants were well placed to elaborate the ideas that they wished to see anointed as the dominant ideas that drove 'Indian' society *in terms of European ideas that were held in high regard.* This, if you like, is Mill's stumbling upon the Rammohun Roy principle. This is not of course to suggest with Mill that Rammohun was, or others were, merely instrumental in his or their use of ideas; but in a public domain that, for a multilingual elite, encompassed the domestic and local as well as the far-flung and international, engagements with ideas that might be retrospectively considered 'foreign' can hardly be seen as surprising. For the less educated 'native informant', the refractions might have been greater had they been interpreting European philosophical vocabulary, finding equivalents in their own vocabulary, and rendering it back to the Orientalists in terms of the former vocabulary, but as in the case, for instance, of Nathaniel Brassey Halhed's 'Gentoo laws'[44] or William Jones's Biblical narratives[45] the importance of the framing discourses and their effects on the natives' information is obvious. 'Colonial knowledge', then, is not produced without the contribution of the colonised, but s/he makes this knowledge not in circumstances of his/her own choosing. In acquiring 'agency', therefore, the native might be informed by the native informant via his colonial mediators.

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[42] Martin Moir and Lynn Zastoupil (ed), *The Great Indian Education Debate: Documents Related to the Orientalist-Anglicist Controversy, 1781-1843* (Richmond: Curzon, 1999); Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959).

[43] James Mill, *The History of British India* [abridged version, 1817]; (reprinted Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp 223-4.

[44] Marshall, *The British discovery of Hinduism*, **pp**

[45] Trautmann, *Aryans and British India*

To take an example that only partially renders unto us the category 'Hindu' might be informative here. The long life of the 'ancient Indian village community', unchanging, static, the basis for 'Oriental despotism' and the 'Asiatic mode of production', is a case in point. Now considered the quintessential Orientalist (in the extended, Saidian sense of the term) image of Indian society, it was also once an empowering idea, allowing people with a sense of grievance at having been colonised to invent a space untouched by foreign powers of any description, where the true 'nation' could survive, regenerate, revive and re-emerge.[46] The genealogy of this moment has been traced in some detail by now, starting from Karl Marx's readings of Charles Metcalf's pleas in the House of Commons over the renewal of the East India Company's charter in 1853, through Henry Maine's comparative jurisprudence from the 1860s, and onward to anticapitalist romanticism or romantic anticapitalism in India and in various forms. Marx of course contrasts political turbulence caused by the imperial impact to Metcalf's image of social continuity (and in Marx's view, stagnation): the imperial impact was already breaking down these self-sufficient communities, and capitalism would come about not because of imperialist good intentions, but in the manner of the pagan idol 'who would not drink the nectar but from the skulls of the slain'.[47]

By the time one Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi got hold of the idea of the ancient Indian village community in the early twentieth century,[48] it had therefore had a long history in the public domain. The first Finance Minister of independent India, John Matthai, wrote his doctoral dissertation at the London School of Economics under the supervision of Sidney Webb on the subject, not long after Gandhi wrote *Hind Swaraj*, though Matthai made less use of the theme himself in later life than Gandhi did.[49] Gandhi came across Henry Maine's *Village Communities of the East and West*, included in the short bibliography at the end of his *Hind Swaraj*,[50] in the course of his legal training in London in the late 1880s and eary 1890s. Maine himself drew on his Indian experiences and on accounts of the 'Indian village community', which had been influential in early Orientalist accounts.[51] Gandhi was far from being the only Indian to come up with a romanticised account of 'village India'; the rural community ordered as an ideal and harmonious society, and the privileging of an indigenous past before it was defiled by invaders appears, for instance, in the works of the sociologist Radhakamal Mukerjee and the historian Radhakumud Mookerji, both of whom were

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[46] Ronald Inden, *Imagining India* (London: Hurst, 2000) [1990], pp 131-142, makes the point that it was considered an 'Indian' 'essence'.

[47] The complete quote reads: 'When a great social revolution shall have mastered the results of the bourgeois epoch, the market of the world and the modern powers of production, and subjected them to the common control of the most advanced peoples, then only will human progress cease to resemble that hideous, pagan idol, who would not drink the nectar but from the skulls of the slain'. Karl Marx, 'The Future Results of British Rule in India', written July 22, 1853, first published in the *New York Daily Tribune*, August 8, 1853, http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1853/07/22.htm. See also Karl Marx, 'The British Rule in India', written June 10, 1853**;** first published in the *New York Daily Tribune*, June 25, 1853, http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1853/06/25.htm.

[48] MK Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj* (1909), in AJ Parel (ed), *Gandhi: Hind Swaraj and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Polity, 1997)

[49] John Matthai, *Village Government in British India* (London: T Fisher Unwin, 1915).

[50] Parel, 'Introduction', to Parel (ed), *Gandhi: Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, p xlii.

[51] On Maine see JW Burrow, *Evolution and Society* (1970 edn; 1st edn Cambridge, 1966), pp 137-87; Inden, *Imagining India*, pp 137-140. Maine had outlined his first major contribution to his field, *Ancient Law*, before he had ever been to India; he elaborated these ideas in his *Village Communities of the East and West*, published in 1871, with his Indian experience behind him.

interested in the alleged unity of ancient (and Hindu) India, which would justify its re-emergence in the present.[52]

The debates with which Henry Maine was concerned – the origins of the Teutonic Mark and the Russian *Mir*, could, he felt, be illuminated by a study of the Indian village community, already shown to be closely related to a common 'Aryan' past through the comparative philology begun by William Jones, and popularised, in the Oxford of Maine's day (Maine was at Cambridge), by Friedrich Max Mueller.[53] This debate had an analogous version in Russia, and became the scholarly basis of the *Narodnik* movement, which then spawned its own debate on the authenticity of the 'East' versus the 'West': in this case, the Russian East had to avoid employing non-indigenous categories imported from the developed West.[54] This was a position associated with Tolstoy, who closed the circle of these circular arguments by writing in his diary upon reading Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj*, which the latter had sent him as a token of respect: 'Read Gandhi about civilisation, wonderful'.[55] Again, a potential village community as a basis for socialism, rather than as antithetical to the ascendancy of an industrial working class, can be found in Vera Zasulich's famed correspondence with Marx towards the end of the latter's life,[56] and perhaps in the Chinese Communist Party's making a virtue out of necessity after having been destroyed by the Guomindang in their Shanghai bases in 1927.[57] In these latter debates, at least, it is not the 'indigenous' that is served by a reified village: the Chinese communists did not romanticise or eternalise 'their' villages.

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[52] See for instance Radhakamal Mukerjee, *The Foundations of Indian Economics* (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1916); Radhakumud Mookerji, *Local Government in Ancient India* (London: Oxford University Press, 1919); Radhakumud Mookerji, *The Unity of Ancient India (from Hindu sources)* (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1914).

[53] Burrow, *Evolution and Society*, pp 141, 148-9.

[54] Burrow, *Evolution and Society*, p 159; Clive Dewey, 'Images of the Village Community: A Study in Anglo-Indian Ideology', *Modern Asian Studies* 6, 3 (1973); for a concise account of the Russian situation, in particular the *Narodnik*-Marxist divide, see Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed: Trotsky, 1879-1921* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), pp 1-18. *Narodnaya Volya* defended the 'indigenous' *Mir* as the basis of action, and attacked the emergent Marxists as outsiders and Westernisers. The 'Marxists', on the other hand, referred to the *Mir* as a bulwark of absolutism; the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 had given the responsibility for periodic land redistribution to the *Mir*.

[55] Tolstoy's diary, entry for April 20, 1910, quoted in Raghavan Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1973), p 24.

[56] Ironically, Marx himself seems to have tended towards accepting the so-called 'indigenist' and 'terrorist' position of *Narodnaya Volya* and was suspicious of the 'Genevans', as he called the *Cherny Peredel* group of Georgi Plekhanov, who called themselves 'Marxists'. Cyril Smith, *Marx at the Millenium* (London: Pluto Press, 1996), pp 52-9. Zasulich was of course herself a Plekhanovite. See Karl Marx, 'first draft of a letter to Vera Zasulich', March 1881, http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1881/03/zasulich1.htm, part of which reads: 'in Russia, thanks to a unique combination of circumstances, the rural commune, still established on a nationwide scale, may gradually detach itself from its primitive features and develop directly as an element of collective production on a nationwide scale. It is precisely thanks to its contemporaneity with capitalist production that it may appropriate the latter's *positive acquisitions* without experiencing all its frightful misfortunes. Russia does not live in isolation from the modern world; neither is it the prey of a foreign invader like the East Indies.' He quotes LH Morgan on the possibility of the '"revival in a superior form of an archaic social type"', and says 'we must not let ourselves to be alarmed at the word "archaic"'.

[57] Conrad Brandt, *Stalin's Failure in China 1924-1927* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1958); Harold Isaacs, *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution* (2nd revised edn, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961) [1938]. The victorious Chinese revolution abandoned the village.

The authentic village, thus, had many variants in the period from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century; it was not particularly 'Indian'. It has of course now been widely accepted that such a thing as the self-sufficient village community cannot be shown to have had a historical existence.[58] However, it is in some arguments *by default* a 'Hindu' or 'Aryan' institution in India, especially in its allegedly self-ruling and 'democratic' tendency to collective rule by a *panchayat* of village elders, but is not quite as available for potentially sectarian tendencies as some of the other matters on show at the time. It is, however, an apt example of the changing contexts and fates of an idea, and its ability to appeal to the new protagonists of the 'national'. And it can be mobilised differently by conservative or radical tendencies: the Gandhians certainly saw it as radical to suggest it as the basis of a possible new society, and at least some contemporaries classified the decentralisation and return to village life as an anarchist tendency. This is a resurrectionist rather than a preservationist argument: Gandhians, when challenged to justify their commitment to 'backwardness', were by the 1930s keen to demonstrate that the 'ancient' village was not 'backward' and was not to be revived entirely in its ancient form, but had to be revitalised to adapt to 'modern' conditions.[59]

If we accept, as we have above, that 'Hindu' and its cognate categories resonated with a larger public in some ways despite, or perhaps because of, its fluid meanings, then we need to get to the larger question: that of the invigoration of that category for 'national' political use. We can render this problem in terms of what we might call the revolt of the 'native informant' in a number of situations: religion, social 'reform', the engagement with the 'Western' and the reconstruction of 'tradition'

We have, however, a certain problematic argument to consider before we go any further: if 'religion' is, as it was by colonial officials as well as by many Indian reformers, considered the basis of Indian 'society', then what is the distinction between 'religious reformation' and 'social reform'? This, indeed, is something difficult to discern in the writings of the protagonists of religious/social reform(ation): a 'Hindu' (later also Muslim and Sikh) society had to be cleansed of its backward or obsolete elements (modernised), returned to its true 'fundamentals' (purified), or brought together in a situation that resonated with the norms of a public domain that was increasingly dominated by colonial assertions of proper normative behaviour (civilised). What was therefore necessary was for a politics of reform, that was at least in part performative, to acquire an adequate set of 'moral languages'[60] that could provide the basis for the moral public performances of coloniser-versus-colonised. And if the 'mystic east' versus the 'materialistic west' was a borrowed dichotomy that could be normatively reversed and used in an anticolonial moral language, this could also be the basis for a claim that a true religiously-informed spirituality that was conducive to a morally superior political order was always

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58 Tapan Raychaudhuri, 'The Mid-Eighteenth Century Background', in Tapan Raychaudhuri *et al* (ed), *The Cambridge Economic History of India Volume II, c.1757-c.1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp 3-35, on the so-called *jajmani* system. See also SP Dunn, The Fall and Rise of the Asiatic Mode of Production (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982); on the 'mode of production debate' of the 1970s, though not about the 'authentic' village in this version so much as about incomplete transitions to capitalism, see Utsa Patnaik (ed), Agrarian relations and accumulation: the 'mode of production' debate in India (Delhi: Oxford University Press for the Sameeksha Trust, 1990).

59 Zachariah, *Developing India*, chapter four.

60 Bob van der Linden, *Moral languages from colonial Punjab: the Singh Sabha, Arya samaj and Ahmadiyahs* (Delhi: Manohar, 2008).

preferable to an (allegedly) secularised space provided by 'Western' political systems.

The Return of the Native: Romantic Anticapitalism, Eastern Spirituality and Aryanism

Here, of course, the dichotomy of east and west, and of material and spiritual, is one that becomes available not least because it is a subject of metropolitan anxieties in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The allegedly secular world of the late nineteenth century could also be represented in the residual spiritualism and Christianity of a Gladstonian morality,[61] or a refusal to allow a Charles Bradlaugh to take his place in the House of Commons because of his inability as an atheist to take an oath before God; his associate Annie Besant was before long taking up the cause of an esoteric religion that had a global following.[62] The rebellion against materialism and the attempt to hold on to nobler virtues in Ruskin or the Pre-Raphaelites,[63] the anxieties about loss of religion and its replacement with a variety of allegedly scientific attempts to reclaim the magical and the spiritual in communing with spirits beyond the grave, photographing fairies and ectoplasm, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle writing about science and the intellect as well as taking the secret doctrines of Madama Blavatsky seriously, were all part of the same age.[64] By the latter half of the nineteenth century, the search for alternatives to the anxieties of the industrial world had taken India and Hinduism into the realms of metropolitan philosophico-theological discussion, albeit often at an amateur level, throughout Britain, Europe and North America.[65] By the time Annie Besant encountered Theosophy, she had some years of reading on Hinduism behind her, which she had already begun to use in some of her polemical writings. In 1873 an American, Moncure Daniel Conway, was an extremely popular figure among free thinkers in London, with his lectures on 'Hindu' themes, among them on the Bhagavad Gita, some years before Sir Edwin Arnold's celebrated translation.[66] and in the academic domain, Friedrich Max Mueller had brought to Britain something of a vibrant Indological tradition from Germany, merging the question of Aryanism with the study of India in ways that were not yet considered ominous.[67]

These concerns that sought to illuminate the fast-moving industrial world and make it intelligible also had an audience in the periphery, even if they were inflected differently as they travelled. The central testimonial that historians of South Asia know well is of course that of Gandhi: his readings of Thomas Carlyle, Ruskin, Thoreau,

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[61] See for instance Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1785-1865* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp 340-345.

[62] See Anne Taylor, *Annie Besant: a biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Andrew Prescott, ,"The Cause of Humanity": Charles Bradlaugh and Freemasonry', *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, 2003, online at http://eisteddfa.lamp.ac.uk/dspace/bitstream/10430/9/1/bradlaugh.pdf

[63] John Ruskin, *Pre-Raphaelitism* (New York: John Wiley & Son, 1865)

[64] Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004). See also Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993).

[65] SN Mukherjee writes that William Jones prefigures this anxiety in his own life and writings. SN Mukherjee, *Sir William Jones* (Calbridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

[66] Taylor, *Annie Besant*, p 63; Sir Edwin Arnold, *The Song Celestial* (London: Roberts Bros., 1885).

[67] On Max Mueller, see Nirad C Chaudhuri, *Scholar Extraordinary* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1974); JH Voigt, *Max Mueller: The Man and His Ideas* (Calcutta; Firma KL Mukhopadhyay, 1967).

Tolstoy;[68] his engagements with vegetarianism and turn-of-the-century dissent in London,[69] his reconsideration of his 'indigenous' past through, among other things, his first reading of the *Bhagavad Gita*, later to be his central spiritual inspiration, in the Theosophist Sir Edwin Arnold's translation.[70]

And it is these resonances in metropolitan arguments that the colonial subject who is able to tune into these debates can focus upon to create the resource that is 'Hinduism'. Much has been written about attempts by Indian political actors to sift the worthwhile foreign from the destructive foreign from the impact of colonialism, using the dichotomies of 'east and west' mentioned above, although some of it perhaps might do well to note the ambivalence of this attempt at sifting. More to the point might be the trends that enabled the coming together of various strands: romantic anticapitalism across the world, the rise of mysticism and the search for the occult, the continuing significance and increasing political presence of the category 'Aryan', and the increasing normalisation of the national principle as one that orders 'races' into states. Here, then, is what might well be an agenda for further research, on romantic anticapitalism, spiritualism, Aryanism, Arya Samajis, Theosophy, Gandhi, and more.

The trend towards effecting a 'return' to one's native practices, accepting one's natural national heritage, and reviving and modernising it for future use is one that is extremely present in self-consciously nationalist narratives. These somewhat awkward life-stories are a clue to the difficulty of disciplining a genre of talking about lives in terms of the heroic (auto)biography that takes its heroic mode from the nature of the cause that the hero fights for.[71] That the hero absorbs what is best of the 'western' or 'foreign' world goes without saying, of course; that he realises the ultimate value of his own national civilisation is also well known.[72] The author of *A Nation in Making* begins his story with that of his caste and family lineage, which sits uneasily with the English language and the invoked liberal tropes, but in other respects tells his tale within the unfolding narrative of liberal teleologies of a nation coming into itself.[73] Mohandas Gandhi, in the serialised autobiographical essays he wrote in the 1920s, ridicules his own belief in stories of the manly Englishman's ability to rule the effeminate Indian because of the former's beef-eating capacities.[74] And his deputy in the All-India Village Industries Association, JC Kumarappa (previously Joseph Chelladurai), has a slightly different, though structurally similar, narrative of

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[68] Anthony Parel, 'Introduction', to *Gandhi: Hind Swaraj and Other Writings.*

[69] James D Hunt, *Gandhi in London* (Delhi: Promilla and Co, revised edn, 1993) [1978]. On that milieu, see Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought and the Politics of Friendship* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); which is, however, based on a romanticised assumption about the relationship between metropolitan dissent, sexual nonconformity and anticolonialism, and in terms of the political impact of its protagonists, could also be a book named *ineffective communities.*

[70] M.K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography, or the Story of My Experiments with Truth* (translated from the Gujarati by Mahadev Desai; edn. Harmondsworth, 1982; first published Ahmedabad, 1927); Arnold, *The Song Celestial*; see also Brooks Wright, *Interpreter of Buddhism to the West: Sir Edwin Arnold* (New York: Bookman, 1957)

[71] See David Arnold and Stuart Blackburn (ed), *Telling Lives in India: Biography, Autobiography and Life History* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004) for an exploration of the auto/biographical genre in India; the concerns covered there are, however, different from those I refer to here.

[72] See also Chapter Three, on Bengali 'returns'.

[73] Surendranath Banerjee, *A Nation in Making* (London: Oxford University Press, 1925).

[74] Gandhi, *My Experiments with Truth*, **pp**

return written for him: the grandson of a priest, he was himself a devout Christian,[75] was a late convert to nationalism, apparently arriving at his views on British exploitation of India in the course of his study of Indian public finance at Columbia University in New York. Thereafter he turned his back on his 'upbringing on English model', met Gandhi in 1929, began to wear *khadi*, the handspun cloth that was the moral fabric of Gandhian ideology, and (although he remained a Christian, and enjoyed debating Christian theology with Gandhi) adopted the Hindu family name 'Kumarappa'. This was not without moments of misreading; turning up at Gandhi's ashram to indigenise himself, he allegedly asked to be measured for a *dhoti*, only to be told that *dhotis*, comprising as they did a single piece of cloth that was tied and not stitched, did not require tailoring.[76]

This of course is a variation on the theme that the indigenous is foreign: another case study could be provided by the Theosophical Society's movements in India.[77] Theosophists proceeding to India sought out that other proponent of ancient Aryan wisdom, Swami Dayanada Saraswati, and were most disappointed to discover that Dayananda was not willing to lend his organisation and his authority to the infant Theosophical organisation.[78] The Arya Samaj had its own agenda, its own propaganda and agitational literature aimed at sections of society that were less easy to reach through the rarefied atmosphere of Vedic authority as propounded in its English language or elite-directed publications. In its training programmes and schools, a new generation of neo-Hindus could be trained,[79] and in its more popular literature its agenda of hatred of Muslims could be propounded in a cruder manner.[80] But in its sophisticated version, the Arya Samaj could now draw upon an increasingly well-loved, though perhaps as yet ill-defined, rhetoric of the Aryan Path (also to be the name of a journal run by abreakaway from the parent Theosophical Society, BP Wadia's United Lodge of Theosophists, in India);[81] and the Theosophical Society provided Hinduism with a respectable social network in which Theosophists brown and white could together accept the authority of Hindu/Indian scriptures. 'The Hindu religion, in particular, went up in my estimation', wrote Jawaharlal Nehru in his autobiography about his encounters with Theosophy through Mrs Besant and through his tutor, Ferdinand Brooks.[82] Annie Besant had herself been active in the Co-Masons, the Masonic organisation for women; the Theosophical movement in India built on and absorbed Masonic networks and mapped some of the ideas of the two

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[75] K. Muniandi, 'Kumarappa the Man', *Gandhi Marg* 14, 2 (July-September 1992), pp. 318-26; Devendra Kumar, 'Kumarappa and the Contemporary Development Perspective', *Gandhi Marg* 14, 2 (July-September 1992), pp. 294-5. More recently, see Mark Lindley, *J.C. Kumarappa. Mahatma Gandhi's economist* (Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 2007)

[76] The similarity of this tale with that of Gandhi's own description of his turning away from 'playing the English gentleman' may be noted here: see Gandhi, *My Experiments with Truth*, pp 60-63.

[77] For histories of Theosophy, and of Annie Besant, its main protagonist in India, see for instance, Bruce F. Campbell, *Ancient wisdom revived: a history of the Theosophical movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); AH Nethercot, *The First Five Lives of Annie Besant* (London: Hart-Davis 1961); AH Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant* (London: Hart-Davis, 1963); Taylor, *Annie Besant*; Catherine Lowman Wessinger, *Annie Besant and Progressive Messianism (1847-1933)* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellon Press, 1988).

[78] Taylor, *Annie Besant*, **pp**

[79] Harald Fischer-Tine, *Der Gurukul-Kangri oder die Erziehung der Arya-Nation: Kolonialismus, Hindureform und 'nationale Bildung' in Britisch-Indien (1897-1922)* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2003)

[80] KW Jones, *Arya Dharm: Hindu Consciousness in Nineteenth Century Punjab* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976)

[81] Published by the Theosophy Co, Bombay.

[82] Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (London: The Bodley Head, 1936), p 15.

onto one another. Elite Indians whose interest in Theosophy sat well with the networking possibilities of Freemasonry could partake of the same public culture that provided space for Dayanand's reified Vedas, Nivedita's neo-Hindu interpretations of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda cult, Annie Besant's versions of Hindu nationalism. India could now impress upon a world that included Irish nationalists such as William Butler Yeats, or indeed Annie Besant herself as a distant Irish nationalist despite her very English and then Indian life, the common Aryanism of Indian and Irish mythology and therefore national roots.[83] Hinduism and Aryanism were coming together and were both translatable and marketable.[84]

The Theosophists were particularly useful in setting up institutions and social networks that were available for 'Hindu' use. Annie Besant, of course, was instrumental in the setting up of the Benares Hindu University, which grew out of her Central Hindu College, founded in 1899, and was later sustained by Madan Mohan Malaviya, funded by the industrialist GD Birla, and became the base for Hindu Sabha ideologues.[85] And Theosophical and Masonic networks were integral to the success of Annie Besant's Home Rule League activities during the First World War – an aspect of organisational politics that did not escape the attention of the Government of India.[86]

The Bengali *bhadralok*-turned-monk Swami Vivekananda provided a visual image to much of this trans-religious excitement with his saffron-clad figure and well-tempered English when he announced the arrival of this world religion at the Chicago World Congress of Religions in 1893.[87] The Irishwoman, Margaret Noble or 'Sister Nivedita', as her now-Indian persona was called, became the interpreter of Vivekananda, and Hinduism, for a wider, and often metropolitan, audience. A sense of the concerns of the Vivekananda circle might be provided here in Noble's description:

> From hymns and chanting they [the disciples] would pass into history. Sometimes it would be the story of Ignatius Loyola; again Joan of Arc or the Rani of Jhansi; and yet again the Swami would recite long passages from Carlyle's French revolution, and they would all sway themselves backwards and forwards dreamily, repeating together "vive la république! Vive la république!"[88]

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83 On Ireland, Yeats and theosophy, see e.g. Mary E. Bryson, 'Metaphors for Freedom: Theosophy and the Irish Literary Revival', *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Jun., 1977), pp. 32-40; Katherine Mullin, 'Typhoid Turnips and Crooked Cucumbers: Theosophy in Ulysses', *Modernism/modernity* Volume 8, Number 1 (January 2001), pp. 77-97; Ken Monteith, *Yeats and Theosophy* (London: Routledge, 2007).

84 J Leopold, 'The Aryan Theory of Race in India: Nationalist and Internationalist Interpretations', *Indian Economic and Social History Review* (1970); J Leopold, 'British Applications of the Aryan Theory of Race to India, 1850-1970', *English Historical Review* 89 (July 1974).

85 Leah Renold, *A Hindu education: early years of the Banaras Hindu University* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

86 Government of India, Home Department, Political Branch, File No. 247 & K.W., Part A, March 1917, National Archives of India, NewDelhi.

87 The speech can be found, in companionship with other speeches at that conference, in JW Hanson (ed), *The World's congress of religions: the addresses and papers delivered before the Parliament, and an abstract of the congresses held in the Art Institute, Chicago, Illinois, U. S. A., August 25 to October 15, 1893, under the auspices of the World's Columbia Exposition* (reprint: Taylor & Francis, 2008) [1894]

88 Nivedita, *The Master As I Saw Him* (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1910), p 88.

It is hard to pin this down to a specific and defined 'religion'; But a concern with national narratives and nationalism is never too far away.

Within this context much has been made of Rabindranath Tagore's apparent refusal of the tenets of modern nationalism, after his close encounter and identification with it at the time of the Swadeshi movement. It needs to be said however, that even the 'Eastern' spiritualism of Rabindranath Tagore had a proto-nationalist feel to it. In his attempts to remain aloof from modern nationalism, his refusal was grounded in his claim that nationalism was not properly suited to 'eastern' wisdom and was thus a 'western' idea. Such thoughts could also without too much difficulty be drawn into this milieu of mysticism and the quest for spirituality, with the poet and occasional Theosophist William Butler Yeats providing a space for the travel of such Indian spirituality via the poet anointed as a world figure through his 1913 Nobel Prize> Rabindranath Tagore.[89] The connections and cross-currents admit of no clear separations: another major figure whose life interlocks with many of these currents is Aurobindo Ghosh, cultural returnee with a vengeance: having been carefully shielded by his father from any knowledge of the Bengali language and of 'Indian' culture lest he be distracted from the goal of proficiency in the English language, European culture and a place in the Indian Civil Service, Aurobindo turned from Classics in Cambridge to a strong place in the Swadeshi Movement and the wave of revolutionary 'terrorism' thereafter, before retiring into spiritual life as a Hindu sage; Nivedita sought release from her formal entanglements with the Ramakrishna Mission in 1902 to follow a now more appealing and directly political calling alongside this new figure.[90]

A short methodological reflection on resonances might be provided once again here. In Geraldine Forbes' rather neglected study on the impact of the Positivist movement in Bengal – among whose followers counted several prominent Bengali bhadralok intellectuals in addition to imperial civil servants said to be somewhat sympathetic to the aspirations of Indian nationalism (a measure of self-government was of course all it meant at the time) – she raises the question of why Positivism was popular in Bengal. Her conclusions are particularly apt: Positivism's impact on a Bengali intelligentsia was enabled by its stress on an enlightened, morally and spiritually skilled leadership, which of course fitted in well with a Brahmanical elite's desire to share in political power. She points out that Positivism had little direct impact in its French avatar, instead finding its way to India through its British branch, in English translation, and through the activities of various British Indian officials such as Sir Henry Cotton, whose association with the early Indian National Congress is well-known. Among Bengali intellectuals, there were few who actually became full members of the Positivist movement, but far larger numbers engaged closely with Positivism and cited it as an influence or a legitimating set of ideas in their own writing.[91]

This illustration works in the other direction as well: the ancient Aryan wisdom theme was influential in securing Theosophy with its European and North American resonances, and while connections between these ideas and subsequent fascist or

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89 See Michael Collins, 'History and the Postcolonial: Rabindranath Tagore's Reception in London, 1912-1913', *International Journal of the Humanities* vol. 4, no. 9 (2007), pp. 71-84

90 In this connection see Elleke Boehme, *Empire, the National and the Postcolonial: Resistance in Interaction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)

91 Geraldine Forbes, *Positivism in Bengal* (Calcutta: Minerva, 1975)

proto-fascist ideals can be overdrawn, the potential significances are impossible to ignore. Then again, the mutually reinforcing aspects of this are obvious: rulers and ruled, as fellow Aryans, could make legitimate claims to equality and neither could affirm primacy, therefore neither could legitimately rule each other. On the other hand, they could collectively rule others.[92]

The great Orientalist, Friedrich Max Mueller, is another link figure in the growing appeal of 'Hinduism' in India via its rise to the status of world religion outside India. As is well known, Mueller had a large fan-following in India among educated intellectuals, and had a large correspondence with them, although he never visited India.[93] His set of lectures, *India: what can it teach us?* was regarded in India as a vindication of the rights of India not to be colonised, because it was a nation that was part of that great stream of mankind that was of the same civilisation as that of the coloniser. Max Mueller in fact made a somewhat lesser point in that text: India was not, he said, central to the history of Europe; Europeans, insofar as a study of worthwhile things was a study of one's own past (and this Max Mueller took for granted), should still study the Greeks and Romans. But India provided at least a major contributing factor.[94] He was less than unequivocally enthusiastic about the body of work upon which he made his reputation (although current scholarship would dispute a good deal of the philosophical genealogies contained in these statements):

> … it cannot be denied that the Sacred Books of the East are full of rubbish, and that the same stream which carries down fragments of pure gold, carries also sand and mud and much that is dead and offensive. That many things which occur in the hymns of the Veda, in the Brahmanas, and in the Upanishads also, struck even an Oriental mind as so much rubbish, accumulated, we hardly know how, in the course of centuries, we may learn from the Buddha. His hostility towards the Brahmanas has been very much exaggerated, and we know by this time that most of his doctrines were really those of the Upanishads. But though he would take and retain the gold in the ancient literature of India, he would not accept the rubbish. [95]

And he went on: '… even an Oriental mind could not bring himself to admire all that had been handed down as ancient and sacred. Here is an example which we ought

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92 See Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism* (London: IB Tauris, 2004) [1985], on the Ariosophist movement in Vienna, but see especially pp 19-29 on the Theosophical connection of German occultism (we might note the teleology of the argument: 'anticipation' or 'roots' make for difficult historical arguments – in parallel with another argument that is similarly problematic: about the pre-war 'roots' of many of the ideas that went into fascism: see Zeev Sternhell, 'How to Think About Fascism and its Ideology', *Constellations* 15, 3 (2008), pp. 280-290). Later books by Goodrick-Clarke deal with post-war matters: Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *Hitler's Priestess: Savitri Devi, the Hindu-Aryan Myth, and Neo-Nazism* (New York: New York University Press, 1998) traces neo-Nazi spaces in India. Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun: Aryan Cults, Esoteric Nazism, and the Politics of Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), traces post-war neo-Nazism more generally.

93 On the reception of Max Mueller, see Nirad C Chaudhuri, *Scholar Extraordinary*, **pp**

94 F Max Mueller, *India: What Can it Teach Us?* (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1883). This might well have been a point he needed to make to his audience in Britain.

95 *Collected Works of the Right Hon. F. Max Mueller, vol. XVI: Three Lectures on the Vedanta Philosophy. Delivered at the Royal Institution in March, 1894* (New Impression, London, Longmans, Green, and Co., 1901) [1894], Third lecture, pp 113-14.

to follow, always trying to separate the wheat from the chaff, to prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good.'[96]

But the common Aryan origins theme was already, as we have seen, a central aspect of writing about India, whether in a sympathetic tone or not, at the turn of the last century. The enthusiast for Indian art and culture, EB Havell, an associate of and co-promoter of an 'Indian' school of art,[97] expounded the cause of India as Aryan:

> The description of the old English village communities in Sleswick and Jutland given by a well-known historian, and the characteristics ascribed to the ancestors of the Anglo-Saxon race, correspond closely with what is known of the early Aryan settlements in India from their literary records and from traditional evidence. The Indo-Aryan resembled the Anglo-Saxon in his detestation of the restraints of city life and his love for the independence which agriculture and the organisation of village communities gave him.[98]

The key to this book was the common Aryan-ness, and thus the common love of freedom, of ruler and ruled, something that we have noted was not out of place in Henry Maine's work.[99] Havell made a case for self-respect among Indians on the basis of Aryanism. 'Whether unintentional or not, no greater spiritual injury can be done to a people than to teach them to undervalue or despise the achievements of their forefathers.' 'India's present Aryan rulers' [i.e. the British] would do well to remind Indians of their glorious Aryan past – the first Aryan conquest of India brought as glorious an epoch as the later Aryan [British] present.[100] 'Indian loyalty' to British rule is 'a sentiment which is deeply rooted in Indo-Aryan religion and in devotion to the Aryan ideal'.[101] Here was an attempt to concede the basis of a distinctly Indian identity that Havell, here and elsewhere, was willing to promote as national, no less, though he clearly believed this was not incompatible with the British presence, as benevolent fellow-Aryans. Nor was he unaware of the potential sectarian implications of this idea for the belonging of Muslims to the Indian body politic. He therefore postulated a geographically specific Islam for India. Since most Indian Muslims were, he wrote, converts from 'Hinduism', 'The great development of Islamic culture in India is thus shown in its true aspect as a distinct branch of the Indo-Aryan tree…'[102]

It is no doubt possible to attempt a subtle separation of the themes that appear in this description to be so thoroughly intermingled as to be an indistinguishable part of a strange *Gestalt*; but such a separation might well have seemed artificial to contemporaries.

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96 Mueller, *Three Lectures on the Vedanta Philosophy*, Third Lecture, p 115.

97 Tapati Guha Thakurta, *The Making of a New 'Indian' Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

98 EB Havell, *The History of Aryan Rule in India* (London: George G. Harrap & Company Ltd, 1918), p 3. The 'well-known historian' he cites is JR Green, *Short History of the English People* (London: Harper & Brothers, 1878), pp 3-4.

99 Henry Maine, *Ancient Law* (London : John Murray, 1866) [1861]; Henry Maine, *Village Communities in the East and West* (London : John Murray, 1876).

100 Havell, *The History of Aryan Rule in India,* p viii.

101 Havell, *The History of Aryan Rule in India* (ix)

102 Havell, *The History of Aryan Rule in India* (xvi)

We can see, therefore, a number of things coming together: the discovery of an ancient and glorious past, that included arguments about Aryans and their achievements, leading on to the achievements of 'Hindu science', the connections among ideologies of 'Swadeshi', of 'Science', of the consideration of 'Hindu' achievements, and of the genius of the 'eastern' mind, as for instance in the writing of Jagadish Chandra Bose in his later life, as he attempted to reconcile Hindu philosophy and modern science, urged to do so by Sister Nivedita.[103] Among other prominent figures were Pramatha Nath Bose,[104] or Brajendranath Seal,[105] who wrote on Hindu science, its brilliance in the ancient Hindu past and its degeneration under Muslim rule; an exception was the chemist Prafulla Chandra Ray, who avoided the ancient-Hindu-achievement trap in his *History of Hindu Chemistry*, despite the fact that it was written in 1903 and 1908 at the time of the Swadeshi Movement, and that Ray himself was a prominent Swadeshi entrepreneur.[106] One way or another, 'scientific' idioms borrowed from state-of-the-art 'Western' academia were mobilised in attempting to provide legitimate forms for Indian imaginings of a 'nation'; though not all these 'scientific' idioms were recognised by practitioners of science to be scientific by the standards of the time.[107]

Various conflations, then, became important to the resonances that 'Hindu' was to have by the turn of the century. A number of questions have to be raised in reference to the use of the category 'Hindu'. What did it mean in relation to the debates on 'nation-building', 'race', or (later) eugenics?[108] What have questions of language politics to do with 'Hinduism'? Are 'Urdu' and 'Hindi' separate languages? What is 'Hindustani'?[109] In all these cases, what was in dispute was not so much the nature of 'Hinduism' in the sense of custom or faith (because of course many of these debates were not about matters of custom or faith at all), but about what is worthwhile to celebrate in the service of a present and a future 'national'.

We should pause here for breath and note that most of the networks and persons considered above fit only awkwardly into that set of writings on South Asian history that qualifies them as 'communal forces'. We should also note that there was little possibility of getting away from any engagement with the category 'Hindu' even if one was not searching for a sectarian definition of India. On the other hand, colonial Indian politics already had a language of legitimation that excluded a resort to an

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103 Ashis Nandy, *Alternative Sciences: Creativity and Authenticity in Two Indian Scientists* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995)

104 Pramatha Nath Bose, *A History of Hindu Civilisation During British Rule* (3 vols, Calcutta: W Newman, 1894-1896).

105 Brajendranath Seal, *The Positive Sciences of the Ancient Hindus* (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1915).

106 Prafulla Chandra Ray, *A History of Hindu Chemistry* (2 vols, Calcutta: Bengal Chemical & Pharmaceutical Works, Ltd, 1902-08)

107 This distinction is ignored in Gyan Prakash, *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

108 Zachariah, *Developing India*, Chapter Five

109 Vasudha Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions: Bharatendu Harishchandra and Nineteenth-century Banaras* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997); Christopher King, *One Language, Two Scripts: The Hindi Movement in Nineteenth Century North India* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1994); Sudhir Chandra, *The Oppressive Present: Literature and Social Consciousness in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992); Francesca Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere, 1920-1940: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002); Alok Rai, *Hindi Nationalism* (Delhi: Orient Longman, 2001).

argument that could be called ‘communal’. Political and social groups had to find legitimate categories outside 'communalism' to define themselves or define their activities, for instance, in terms of their defending 'community rights' or 'minority rights', which were considered acceptable. ‘Communal’ could however, be used to refer to the policies and activities of *other* groups. This has now found its place in a historiography that speaks not of nationalism versus communalism in the old sense, but of ‘Hindu nationalism’, though still juxtaposed against a (more inclusive) Indian nationalism; and as mentioned before, the distinction does not work. As for the work that considers ‘secularism’ not to be possible in the Indian context, there the question is one of defining ‘secular’ across various contexts; this can also become a non-debate.[110]

But then there is a question that recurs throughout this chapter: the readings here are resolutely elitist; they rely on translations and responses to metropolitan debates, and cross-engagements between colonial elites and metropolitan concerns. And the general argument is that the resonances of these arguments with a wider public relied on the polyvalence of the category ‘Hindu’. On the other hand, there is little good evidence that this wider public related to the category ‘Hindu’ *as a national category*, or in other words that they saw it as meaning loyalty to a ‘national’ entity. This is a line of argument that is in line with a ‘dominance without hegemony’ position that the ‘national’, or indeed the colonial-induced transformations of India, never achieved hegemony among ordinary people. This may be carrying the argument too far, of course, but there is no good evidence that when ordinary people were said to be ‘nationalist’ they actually were. A recent argument for post-independence India argues that the post-independence state was willing to admit it failed to achieve this sense of collective belonging, despite attempting it.[111] And yet, any claim to collective legitimacy on the part of any non-elite group had to be made through a claim to a share of national resources on the grounds of belonging to the state, or in the colonial period, of having a place in the nation, or indeed retrospectively of having had a place in the anticolonial struggle, as qualifying for national belonging.

So the incorporation of the ‘people’ into a national project, however defined, was not on the basis of creating a sense of belonging to elite-defined national spaces. It may be that, as recent work has begun to show, a lower-level secondary and vernacular-writing elite also had a sense of the national that was inflected differently, though still in terms of the ‘Hindu’, that then was more successful in reaching an audience of non-elite participants: the Arya Samaj’s more aggressive and populist propaganda, for instance, or the circulation of supposedly ‘Ayurvedic’ pamphlets that spoke of the importance of the body of the individual as contributing to the body of the nation[112] – a parallel (although not exactly 'autonomous') discourse to that of the eugenics that might have been debated in the Congress’s National Planning Committee or the Government of India’s medical services.[113] It is difficult to be sure how these ideas actually spread, and ‘autonomy’ is a difficult argument to make, just as ‘derivation’ is never perfect. One thing is clear; ‘subaltern agency’ would be a mythology to invoke

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110 See Chapter One.

111 Srirupa Roy, *Beyond Belief: India and the Politics of Postcolonial Nationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007)

112 Rachel Berger, ‘Ayurveda and the Making of the Urban Middle Class in North India, 1900-1945’ in Dagmar Wujastyk and Frederick M Smith (ed), *Modern and global Ayurveda: pluralism and paradigms* (Albany: State Uuniversity of New York Press, 2008), pp 101-116.

113 Zachariah, *Developing India*, pp 248-252.

in this regard. So it is fair to say that whether it was a bilingual or a vernacular, and probably relatively lower-level, elite that carried national ideas, it was they who sought to guide the 'masses', or to claim to do so and thereby establish their own claims to the 'nation'. And if they did not succeed in actually establishing their hegemony, they at least attempted to make the 'national' the framework of legitimate public communication.

The question is, however, not whether anyone ever *truly believed* in a national ideology, but whether it could appear as if they did so. So the 'public' had not just to be spoken to: and even if it was not being spoken to, it had to be created and defined, or produced for display in a national project. And this was, to a large extent, a numbers game.

The numbers game

Who, technically, was a 'Hindu'? The fact that the categories of caste, religion, community, faith and so on have had something historically to do with the attempted administrative organising of the colonial census has long been known.[114] Until the Census of 1871-72, 'Hindu' was equivalent to 'not Muslim', and therefore a residual category; the derivation was not unreasonable. Thereafter, the category belonged to only those who professed the Hindu faith. Still this remained unclear – 'semi-Hindu' versus 'Hindu'; 'animist', 'tribal' etc, remained categories that permeated the census-takers' operations. A 'pure Hindu' tended to be of the 'Aryan' stock; and 'Aryan' was automatically 'Hindu'. The question of faith was thus to be asked of non-'Aryans'.[115] Census operations in India were, as is well known, prized opportunities for administrator-anthropologists to do some fieldwork, and their categories and categorisations proved remarkably long-lived, with present-day Indian administrative categories often being based on no more than minor modifications of these antiquated moments in nineteenth-century race-science. The Census Commissioner for 1901 was proud that this census had enumerated 'the wild Nicobarese and Andamanese' for the first time.[116] 'In all Provinces much attention was paid to religion and ethnography'.[117] The chapter on 'Caste, Tribe, and Race' paid much attention to the emergent discipline of anthropometry;[118] and much was made of the alleged congruence of race and caste, which was said to provide good material for anthropometry.[119] Nonetheless, just in case it was thought that the Census was merely a playground for anthropologists, it was made clear that:

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114 Bernard Cohn, 'The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia', reprinted in Bernard Cohn, *An Anthropologist Among the Historians and other essays* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp 224-254.

115 See the history of the census' categories provided in HH Risley, Officer of the French Academy, Corresponding Member of Berlin Anthropological Society, and EA Gait, Fellow of the Royal Statistical Society, Anthropological Secretary to the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Census of India, 1901, volume I: India - Part I – Report (Calcutta: Government of India, 1903), pp 489-557. For a study of the politics of census categorisations over a longer period, see Sumit Guha, 'The Politics of Identity and Enumeration in India c. 1600–1990', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45 (2003), pp 148-167, especially pp 157-159.

116 *Census of India, 1901, volume I: India - Part I – Report*, p x

117 *Census of India, 1901, volume I: India - Part I – Report*, p xxv (Risley)

118 *Census of India, 1901, volume I: India - Part I – Report,* pp 489-557.

119 *Census of India, 1901, volume I: India - Part I – Report*, p 496.

> [O]ur object is not purely scientific. The costly and laborious operations of an Indian Census can only be justified by their direct bearing on the actual government of the country. The Census presents a series of pictures of the national history of the past ten years; it sums up the effects of the vicissitudes of the seasons - of religious and social movements, of educational effort, of commercial and industrial progress. It enables the rulers of India to take stock of their position and to see how it has fared with the people committed to their charge. For the current decade it fixes the statistical data on which all administrative action must be based. It tells the governing body what manner of men they have to deal with; how many will suffer from a failure of the rains or will benefit by a well-conceived scheme of irrigation; what are the prospects of a new line of railway; what proportion of the population will be reached by a reduction of taxation; to what extent an over-worked government can be relieved by a transfer of jurisdiction, and, what interests will be affected by the change.[120]

It did not question, however, that the Census had an allegedly 'scientific' role to play. By contrast, the 1941 Census Commissioner had a different complaint:

> There exists, I think, a widespread impression that the main object of the Indian census is anthropological. This was illustrated by a letter from a certain Association which suggested that census comments on anthropology were amateur, should be replaced by the work of trained anthropologists and therefore would I put up the funds accordingly. This approach illustrated in marked fashion the confusion of issues. The first two points are acceptable but the third doesn't follow at all. The conclusion from the first two is that the census should be freed from the conduct and the cost of operations which it does not control and indeed it would have been to the advantage of anthropological studies in India if this logical separation had been realised sooner. Anthropological interests are among the most highly personal that can be imagined and where this personal predilection does not exist it is foolish to attempt to create it. While in any case even predilection is no good without experience. One unfortunate result of this excessive association of the census with anthropology was to obscure the basic importance of the country-wide determinations which so far the census was the only means of securing; and the tendency to dismiss it as something concerned with the peculiar activities of castes and tribes had, I think, some part in encouraging the incuria regarding the actual machinery whereby a unique operation was carried out. It must also have affected adversely the proper consideration and financing of anthropological work in India. Such work should be carried on year in year out and not forced into the constricted periods of a 10-yearly convulsion.[121]

The two moments in census-taking are instructive in more ways than the changed views of its anthropological ambitions make out: in 1941, colonial authorities are far more acutely conscious that it is the census itself that can legitimise identity claims. In

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120 *Census of India, 1901, volume I: India - Part I – Report,* p 2

121 MWM Yeatts, CIE, ICS, Census Commissioner for India, *Census of India 1941 vol. 1 -India, Part I, Tables* (Delhi: Government of India, 1943), p 2.

1941, accordingly, problems of ‘communal’ considerations in census reporting were identified as very acute. Head count falsification in terms of numbers living in a house was affected by this, with a strong tendency towards overdeclaration. Some of the census figures were consequently deemed ‘worthless’, notably with reference to Urdu and Hindi speakers, where lies were notoriously difficult to detect. The Census Commissioner’s advice for future operations was to stop collecting this information regarding language altogether.[122] He further added that questions on ‘Mother tongue, script of literacy’ could also be ‘dropped altogether’.[123]

> The 1931 census coincided with a civil disobedience movement which occasioned a good deal of localised trouble to certain superintendents particularly however in Bombay. 1940-41 saw also political influences on the census but in the opposite direction; since whereas the difficulty in 1931 ha been to defeat a boycott the difficulty in 1941 was to defeat an excess of zeal.
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> It can be taken as certain that this single instance operated heavily to secure perhaps the fullest record yet achieved in an Indian census. The whole population was census conscious or at any rate the active part of it. To this extent the public interest was a definite gain and part of the heavy Bombay and Bengal increases is undoubtedly due to under-enumeration in 1931 being overtaken now.
>
> The interest however was not all beneficial and in some areas the communal excitement passed all bounds. ...[124]

This records, from the reverse angle, a by-now well-recorded phenomenon. Incorporation of lower castes, as of members of a ‘community’, was played out as a numbers game: for ‘Hindus’, the Arya Samaj and *Shuddhi* (the 'purification' by 'reconversion' of Muslims who had allegedly once been Hindus), the Hindu Mahasabha and lower caste inclusion, Gandhi and untouchables, played the function of making ‘Hindus’ a majority. This downward propagation of ‘Hinduism’ was, it is said, met in the other direction by processes of ‘Sanskritisation’. Census-wise, a person became one with the identity that he named when recognised as such in writing. The use made of the numbers thereafter was outside of his control.

This is a set of questions raised earlier on. The Gandhian manoeuvre of the 'fast unto death' and the Poona Pact with Ambedkar led to the answer to the the question of how to count someone as a 'Hindu'. This counting was now more important than self-definitions or solidarities.

It is instructive to look briefly at exactly what happened between the Communal Award and the Poona Pact. Clause 7 of the Communal Award read: ‘All qualified electors who are not voters either in a Mahomedan, Sikh, Indian Christian, Anglo-Indian, or European constituency will be entitled to vote in a general constituency.’ Clause 8 read: ‘Seven seats will be reserved for Mahrattas in certain selected plural number general constituencies in Bombay.’ And clause 9:

> Members of the “depressed classes” qualified to vote will vote in a general constituency. In view of the fact that for a considerable period

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122 *Census of India 1941 vol. 1 -India, Part I, Tables,* p 9.

123 *Census of India 1941 vol. 1 -India, Part I, Tables,* p 22.

124 *Census of India 1941 vol. 1 -India, Part I, Tables,* p 9.

> these classes would be unlikely by this means alone to secure any adequate representation in the Legislature, a number of special seats will be assigned to them. These seats will be filled by election from special constituencies in which only members of "the depressed classes" electorally qualified will be entitled to vote. Any person voting in such a special constituency will, as stated above, be also entitled to vote in a general constituency. It is intended that these constituencies should be formed in selected areas where the depressed classes are most numerous and that, except in Madras, they should not cover the whole area of a province. In Bengal, it seems the majority of votes will belong to the depressed classes. Accordingly, pending further investigation, no number has been fixed for the members to be returned from the special depressed class constituencies in that province. It is intended to secure that the depressed classes should obtain not less than 10 seats in the Bengal Legislature […]
>
> His Majesty's Government do not consider that these special "depressed classes" constituencies will be required for more than a limited time. They intend that the constitution shall provide that they shall come to an end after 20 years, if they have not previously been abolished under the general powers of electoral revision referred to in Para. 6.

The relevant passage of Para. 6 reads:

> Provisions will be made in the constitution itself to empower the revision of this electoral arrangement [i.e. communal electorates and electoral areas excluded from the communal electorates as 'backward'] … after 10 years, with the assent of the communities affected, for the ascertainment of which suitable means will be devised.[125]

The Poona Pact, September 1932 had the following adjustments to clause 9 of the Communal Award: 'There shall be seats reserved for the Depressed Classes out of the General electorate seats in the Provincial Legislatures as follows […] Elections to these seats shall be by joint electorates', subject to certain procedures.[126]

If the question that Gandhi insisted upon was whether the Depressed Classes were 'Hindus' or not, it might be noted that the legal rubric at issue was 'general': the word 'Hindu' does not appear. We might complicate this further and do the arithmetic in another way: since the franchise was itself a property franchise, how many 'backward caste' voters were there anyway? The ambiguity is of course not restricted to the question of numbers of voters: it is also a matter of majorities and minorities, and if in 1932 this was not quite clear, the consequences for 1947 were far clearer: 'Hindus' were a *structural majority* according to the settlement of 1932.

Some conclusions: fascisms, nationalisms

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[125] Quotes taken from Christine Dobbin (ed), *Basic Documents in the Development of Modern India and Pakistan 1835-1947* (London: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1970), p 117.

[126] Dobbin (ed), *Basic Documents in the Development of Modern India and Pakistan 1835-1947*, p 118.

It is certainly unusual not to address the Hindutva brigade in a chapter on political Hinduism or on the politics of Hinduism. And the failure of this chapter to address them directly is not because they are not important.[127] In part this is because the story is relatively well-known. Savarkar, Golwalkar, and company and the conflation of Hindutva with race and nation, rather than with religion, is an argument that has been made before. The positive engagement with fascism and *völkisch* models, the borrowing from fascist and Nazi ideals, the explicit exclusion of Muslims, the support for genocidal solutions, have all been listed. But that is the logical end to a story that isn't quite so logical, and the purpose of this chapter is to nudge us gently in the direction of also looking beyond the obvious. The question of engagements with fascism in India must be told elsewhere (and with more subtlety than it has been so far).[128] But the trouble with the fascist side of the story is that it is too neat, and not quite as strange as is made out. Nationalisms tend towards fascism; that is well known and belongs to the central definitions of fascism that we have.[129] Nationalisms have exclusionary tendencies well before they become or need to be murderous. And the engagements with 'Hindu' as a set of categories described above had wider resonances that perhaps *contributed to* fascist or quasi-fascist trends. But just as an intellectual history of fascism 'proper' needs to take account of ideas that were a part of fascism as well as of non-fascist social and intellectual formations,[130] a history of the social and intellectual uses of 'Hinduism' must resist the temptation to use the story of Hinduism-as-fascism as the central illustration by taking account of its non-fascist uses.

Another absence, despite the Poona Pact teleology, is that of Gandhi and Gandhians. They are at least not so explicitly present. Was Gandhi's version a successful version of 'Hinduism'? In some influential readings, this version seems to have competed directly with the Hindutva version of Hinduism:[131] tolerance and non-violence versus intolerance and violence; the assimilative potential of Hindu spirituality and the similarities or unity of this spirituality with aspects of a Christian, Buddhist, Jewish or universal morality, as against the idea of a sacred soil and race. One could, however, argue that these are equally stereotypical, and that both contribute to the use of 'Hindu' as a political category and as a *national* category in colonial and post-independence India – in different ways, but also sometimes in complementary ways.

Thus: the category 'Hindu' operates as a 'national' category in conjunction with ideas of 'race' as well as nation. It leans heavily on readings of 'Hindu' that come from outside the Indian subcontinent. This is true of the 'Hindutva' readings, of course – the fascist and Nazi connections – but also of the 'Aryan' (Orientalists, Theosophists,

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127 I have attempted to deal with this question elsewhere: Benjamin Zachariah, 'Rethinking (the Absence of) Fascism in India, c. 1922-1945', in Kris Manjapra and Sugata Bose (ed), *Cosmopolitan Thought Zones: South Asia and the Global Circulation of Ideas* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp 178-209.

128 See for example Marzia Casolari, *The Italian Connection: Hindutva's Foreign Tie-up in the 1930s: Archival Evidence* (New Delhi: Footnotes, 2000), which largely bases itself on showing the association of individuals from the Hindutva brigade with Italian Fascists.

129 See Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Pinter, 1991)

130 See Kevin Passmore, 'The Ideological Origins of Fascism Before 1914', in RJB Bosworth (ed), *The Oxford Handbook of Fascism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp 11-31.

131 There has been a strong attempt by interested parties to try to reclaim Gandhi from the Hindutva brigade. See David Hardiman, *Gandhi in His Times and Ours: the Global Legacy of His Ideas* (London: Hurst, 2003)

comparative jurists). There were several very productive confusions behind this invention.

Is this too 'discursive' a reading? I don't think so. *Practices* coexist with *claims* made discursively for a cause, and if an argument persuades practitioners that they should sign up to the claim, then and only then are the practitioners also ideologues or demonstrants for the cause. Otherwise the two inhabit parallel worlds that happily coexist in mutual ignorance, or in mutual tension, or in mutual tolerance. The shadow between the motion and the act, between the idea and the reality, may be noted, but without anxiety. National *claims* are made on the basis of 'what ought to be' in the eyes of self-proclaimed leaders; a long-standing anti-'communal' polemic that has relied on *what people do* as opposed to *what ideologues say* misses the point: Practices are messier than ideological statements. This doesn't mean that the practice disproves or delegitimates the ideological statements. Not necessarily; in fact the ideological statements might be comforting *because* they create a spurious neatness to one's perceptions of practices that in practice are ambiguous. A category was found to meet a need: that of the 'authenticity' of the entity that had to be imagined as a 'nation'. 'Hindu' was in many senses a flexible category; as a term it had normative resonances, and as a concept it was unable to describe an external reality with any precision. But it did not have to.

Were there less exclusionary alternatives to the 'Hindu' to invoke the 'nation'? The 'Nehruvian' version has always claimed to be one, or has long had that claim made on its behalf. The next chapter will turn to the question of the Nehruvian and its relationship to nationalism.