Professions of faith: Hindu nationalism, television and the avatars of capital.

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the question of the nation-form ...is the question of knowing under what historical conditions it is possible to institute such a thing: by virtue of what internal and external relations of force and also by virtue of what symbolic forms invested in elementary material practices?²

The subject of Hindu Nationalism has been approached from varying theoretical perspectives, some of which have a particular bearing on the concerns of this chapter, and its articulation to the themes of globalization, modes of cultural belonging and television. In the field of political science, the subject has been investigated by Christophe Jaffrelot, who has meticulously analysed the organizational structures, strategies of mobilization and ideological sub-strata of the Hindu Nationalist movement. His approach emphasizes the organizational and ideological conditions of possibility for the historical construction and evolution of Hindu Nationalism.³ In the field of anthropology and sociology, Peter van der Veer has analysed Hindu Nationalism, with a particular thematic focus on some of the structuring frameworks of the field, such as the divide between Tradition and Modernity, colonialism, orientalism and nationalism as well as the necessity for rethinking the spatial and temporal dimensions of the ongoing consolidation of Hindutva.⁴ In the last few years, a combination of different modes of entry into the topic have been broached. Thomas Blom Hansen has made a critical intervention in the field, by investigating the political dimension of Hindu Nationalism, yet departing from organizational analyses, he focuses on democracy as the crucial solvent which has dissolved the certainties of a supposed self-enclosed Indian socius. Using a combination of Lacanian psychoanalysis and the kinds of theories developed around new social movements, Laclau and Mouffe, in particular, he brings a strongly (post-)structuralist reading of Hindu Nationalism.⁵ In a recent contribution to the field, Chetan Bhatt has made a theoretically sophisticated intervention in the field of cultural studies and social theory, in his analysis of new religious movements including Hindu Nationalism and pan-Islamism.⁶ Through a combination of discourse analysis, and a thorough rethinking of some of the claims of social movement theory, Bhatt intervenes in the field by focussing particularly on the transnational dimension of new religious movements, in his call for moving beyond “race thinking” in grasping the complexity of contemporary religious movements.

Within India itself, and among the Indian Subaltern Studies group (located across the globe), there has been and continues to be an engagement with Hindu Nationalism, primarily in the field of history. The Jawaharlal Nehru University historians

3 Peter van der Veer, Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India, New Delhi: Oxford University Press 1998 (First edition, 1994, University of California Press, Berkeley), from now on quoted as RN
such as Romila Thapar, Bipin Chandra, K.N. Pannikar and others have made important interventions in the field of Indian nationalist history, ancient history, the history of the Independence movement and the contemporary postcolonial conjuncture. The Subaltern Studies group ranges itself against "official" historiography by attempting to render visible the voices marginalized by the above, although recently the work of historians like Gyanendra Pandey has focussed on the rise of Hindu nationalism in India. There have been important interventions by certain Indian historians in the field including Sumit and Tanika Sarkar, Tapan Basu and others with a specific focus on contemporary Hindu Nationalism. The relations between these groups and within them are much more complex than the description above offers, yet they lay down the general lines of thinking on the study of Hindu Nationalism.

This is not an exhaustive enumeration of the various important contributions to the field. I only signal their work as an acknowledgement of a particular field of thought which bears, to different degrees of intimacy, a relationship to my present concerns. The subject of Hindu Nationalism broached below is historical in approach beginning with what are mistakenly considered the "origins" of Hindu nationalism. This is mistaken partly because tracing some originary moment that can be historically or spatially located becomes a difficult task, given the multiple influences which have shaped Hindu Nationalism from its inception. It is also mistaken if "origin" implies the moment of birth of a particular "thing" called Hindu Nationalism. Rather, as my narrative progresses, the shifts in ideology, mode of mobilization, internal differences etc. stressed below all signal the need to refuse any unitarian understanding of Hindu Nationalism. The latter is obviously consistent to some degree, yet it is not homogenous or historically static. The narrative below then, is partly historical, and necessarily implies a particular perspective, that is relevant for our ensuing discussion of the Hindu nationalist engagement with culture in the form of television. Hence, the question of "culture" and how it is developed within a Hindu idiom is a thread that runs through the chapter. Further, the issue of globalization, in particular the transnational dimension of the formation and ongoing construction of Hindutva, at the level of a social imaginary and material practices and organisations is signposted throughout the narrative where appropriate. Given the role of media within such transnational spaces of imagination and material practice, the focus on globalization is specifically linked to both the ideological development of Hindutva and the practical construction of a "Hindu Nation" through modern means of communication including television and the Internet. This engagement with the media and high-technology, seen sometimes as particular "symptoms" of modernity, or postmodernity as some characterise it, necessarily entails in my view, a look at the Tradition/Modernity divide which has structured understandings of religion. The critique of this form of thinking is well-known, yet its relevance for the present study demands outlining some of its main arguments. This exercise is particularly relevant given that in the present period, increasing empirical material is available to update this critique and map out the role of technology for example, in the particular modernist modality of new religious movements like Hindu Nationalism and their engagement with media like television.

The narrative below moves across different levels, threading them together so as to thicken the picture of Hindu nationalism along the specific themes outlined above. Thus, no claims are being made for an exhaustive analysis of the historical development of Hindu Nationalism. However, the analysis below does situate itself within some broad parameters that have been set and become particularly influential within
the fields of political science, anthropology and cultural studies, and I will address some of these issues now and situate my understanding of Hindu nationalism within and beyond them. The particular political science approach of Jaffrelot has proved very useful in grasping the ground-level organization of Hindu Nationalism. I do identify particular organizations and signal some of their modus operandi in the discussion that follows, yet also link this organisational history to particular thematic interventions addressed by theorists like Peter van der Veer, particularly with regard to questions of tradition, modernity, colonialism and the contemporary postcolonial conjuncture as it manifests itself along increasingly complex spatial and temporal dimensions. The crucial question of the relationship between the postcolonial nation-state, the construction of citizenship, and the new modalities of belonging that religious movements are integrally involved in, requires a radical revision of the theorization of the place of religion within contemporary globalization, particularly with regard to its transnational mode of belonging.\(^6\) Hansen's focus on the destabilizing effects of democratic development in the Indian socius, as a lens through which Hindu nationalism needs to be understood also influences my understanding of the movement, although I reject the temptation to view his intervention as particularly post-structuralist or postmodern, given that he invokes theorists like Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, and Jacques Lacan, who are very often cast in such a light. For alternative readings of Lacan, Slavoj Žižek's important contributions to the study of ideology, fascism and nationalism have necessitated a thorough re-reading of claims that subjectivity (citizenship, a community of believers, etc.) is structured along a post-structuralist model of language.\(^7\) While I am sympathetic to his debt to Lacan, Hansen's notion of radical democracy understood through Laclau and Mouffe pose important problems, that cannot be engaged with in great detail here.\(^8\) The crucial point I would like to make here is that a theory of radical democracy that is based on "absolute contingency", that posits almost and sometimes, no sense of lines of force and sedimented power-relations in its understanding of the after-shocks of democratic development, remains fundamentally flawed and historically suspect. The basic problem here is that the formation of subjectivity is understood along the model of language as an infinite, destabilising process of meaning-construction, and hence the subject, and by extension social groups are understood in their evolution along the lines of the movement of the "floating signifier." I have already emphasized that I do not see either subjectivity or group-formation as a static, essentialist once-and-for-all act. Yet, to analyze them on the basis of language as the privileged model often results in an evacuation of the historically-specific conditions through which both subjects/groups, and languages evolve. The tendential lines of force, accumulated historically and evolving at the present, do pose limits on the possible destabilizing consequences of democracy, and although Hansen is prudent in not wholeheartedly ascribing to such a view, it is important to mark out my appropriation of his valuable insights with the caveat that the rise of Hindu nationalism was not the result of an absolute flattening out of power-relations, or a thoroughly destabilizing impact of democratic development in India understood at the level of the "empty signifier", but explainable within the complex of social, historical, and economic factors that he analyzes.\(^9\) I would argue

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\(^8\) See Stuart Hall, "On Postmodernism and Articulation".

\(^9\) Hansen argues that the nation could be understood as "an effective 'empty signifier'", *Saffron Wave*, p. 29.
that keeping strictly to Lacan's own formulations, it is impossible to designate terms like "democracy" as either signifier or signified. "Democracy" is a loaded term with a particular history in particular historical locations – thus, it functions more as a signified than a signifier that has the capacity to connote further meanings. It nevertheless, is open to contestation and reinterpretation, and here lies, as Hansen argues, its potential as a destabilizing signifier – but it is not “empty”. Resignifications of “democracy” must engage with its accumulated history and negotiate on that terrain as it is redeployed for the present and future. Hansen’s own thorough analysis of the historical formation of Hindu nationalism testifies to this, although his theoretical introduction does not do justice to his commitment to empirical analysis.

Since the term “ideology” crops up throughout this chapter, a minimal description of it might be useful. A political science analysis of Hindu Nationalism might sometimes fall into the habit of explaining away the success of the movement through a theory of ideological indoctrination by elite organisations. In my analysis below, I do not assume such a theory of ideology, and theorists like Jaffrelot and even Hansen are nuanced enough to signal, at least briefly, that the success of Hindu nationalist organisations was only partly predicated on their organizational skills and did articulate these with real concerns of different groups who gave them their support, particularly in terms of class. Thus, Jaffrelot modulates Paul Brass’ implied thesis of elite manipulation by addressing the particular emotive attachment to particular rituals and symbols, practices and beliefs that groups in society have, and their articulation to Hindu Nationalist organisations. Peter van der Veer, in his understanding of the particular ideological dimension of Hindu Nationalism offers what I call a doubly-articulated structure of analysis, firstly, that grounds itself in historically-specific sedimented emotive attachments and perspectives of self-identity of particular groups, and secondly, their articulation to the deployment of Hindu nationalist discourses by organisations. Hindu nationalism must not be understood as the emergence of certain repressed “passions [that] are “natural”. Rather, he argues that “their very ‘naturalness’ is produced”. Simultaneously, the production of this sentiment and its practical deployment “is related to fundamental orienting conceptions of the world and of personhood “which are not simply ideological constructs of elite organisations but also the historical sedimentations of group understandings of self-identity.

By including in my analysis a number of Hindu nationalist organisations then, I am not implying that the success of the movement can be attributed solely to their organizational skills. There had to be a fertile ground for the recent success of the movement at the level of consciousness among certain groups. It is for this reason, that I focus on the internal differences and the changes in strategy of the movement, since these illustrate that the particular political, social and economic shifts in Indian society played an important role in the vicissitudes of the movement. An analysis of Hindu Nationalism is thus not a bildungsroman, whose characteristics are laid in stone at its inception and gradually unfold within its boundaries. It is keeping this framework in mind, that I follow Walter Benjamin’s still relevant warning against historicism: “Origin [Ursprung], although a thoroughly historical category, nonetheless has nothing to do with beginnings. The term origin does not mean the process of becoming of that which has emerged...but...that which emerges out of the process of becoming...”

10 Jaffrelot, HNM, pp. 109-113, 172-178
11 Ibid., pp. 80.
12 van der Veer, RN, pp. 5-6.
13 Ibid., pp. 7-8. van der Veer’s particular focus here is on the campaign to demolish the mosque at Ayodhya, although in my reading his argument inflects his understanding of Hindu Nationalism in general.
Benjamin’s critique of historicism and the search for origins bears directly on our discussion of Hindu Nationalism and ideology, given that the narrative below does not subscribe to a notion of the Idea (Hindutva) which develops either through the domination and ideological indoctrination of Hindu Nationalist organizations, nor some autonomous realm of feelings and “passions” which, once repression was lifted, flowed naturally through the social imaginary of the Indian nation. By holding onto a notion of double articulation, a doubly-structured process of firstly, discourse produced and circulated by powerful groups, and secondly, structures of feeling which obtain historically in the quotidian psycho-biographical dimensions of people’s lives, I understand the ideology of Hindutva as operating through and in relation to this double structure. Thus, as we shall see below, particular feelings of loss, cynicism and fear felt by certain groups at particular historical conjunctures are articulated (connected) to particular discursive deployments of Hindutva by certain Hindu nationalist groups. The success of the movement ideologically operates at the level of this articulation, and cannot be consigned to either of the two. This double structuration of ideology that I subscribe to, is related to the work in political science, anthropology and cultural studies/sociology I have elaborated on above. Like Jaffrelot and van der Veer’s more explicit understanding of the ideological dimension of Hindu Nationalism, I signal a double structuration at two levels: firstly, a process of articulation between group-held belief systems, themselves often internally contradictory and in process, and elite ideologies propagated by social organisations (as we shall see, some organizations cannot be easily dubbed “elite”); secondly, there is a necessity for thinking the subject/agent of Hindu Nationalism, at an individual and group level, as functioning at the level of a psychoanalytical theory of the unconscious (as Hansen argues) and at a broader historical, societal level.

This approach would go past the antinomies of an excessive turn to universal explanations of social developments on the part of psychoanalytical theory, and a tendency to over-determinist arguments in social theory. As Paul Smith argues “psychoanalysis and social theory have flourished in isolation from each other during this century, each adopting its own somewhat dubious Weltanschauung by way of compensating for that estrangement. Psychoanalysis...has looked to a universalist schema for its theory of the social: psychoanalytical theory and its insights are more often than not merely inserted into an overarching and ahistorical conception of the social”, while “modern social theory...insofar as it has even attempted to look for a theory of subjectivity, has moved toward a mechanistic and pragmatic psychologism; the subject for modern social theory is often a rather too neat conjunction of powerful social determinants and a prosaic, nay, passive self-awareness.” By understanding Hindu Nationalism and its adherents as both subjects and agents, within a field of social relations and singular histories, I frame the discussion below outside overdeterministic understandings (such as “class conspiracy”) or ahistorical psychologistic explanations for its contemporary appeal. Psychological explanations for the success of Hindu Nationalism are often couched in terms of “Fear of the Self” by theorists like Ashis Nandy, and while these do provide an explanatory framework, they must be situated in a historical understanding of the particular conjuncture within which such support for Hindu Nationalism is secured.
An emphasis on articulation in a theory of ideology has particular relevance in the discussion of Hindu Nationalism for at least two, related reasons, that will bear on the narrative below. Firstly, a theory of articulation is central in understanding the attainment of hegemony for the Hindu Nationalist movement, because, firstly, as we have seen above, it eschews a simple top-down hypodermic model of ideology in explaining its success; rather, it calls attention to the connections established at particular historical conjunctures between elite organizational and ideological practices (discourses) and particular structures of feelings among specific groups in society. As we shall see below, this has particular bearing on the ways in which caste, class and gender appeals of the Hindu Nationalist movement have shifted over time. These shifts, further, are related to the specific levels of the “social formation” at a given historical moment, their internal development and relational affinity. Thus, the particular socialist ideals of India’s first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, when put into practice, such as land reform measures, resulted in the invocation of a retooled Gandhian rhetoric by the Hindu Right who stressed village autonomy. This discursive shift at the political level found its ideological oppositional legitimacy in a Gandhian idiom and connected itself to the widespread anxieties of the propertied rural classes who switched their allegiances from the Congress to Hindu parties like the Jana Sangh. This movement, on a multiply-layered terrain, political (land reform), ideological (Gandhianism), economic and psychological (class interests of peasant proprietors) illustrates an understanding of the complex production of hegemony of the Hindu Nationalist movement at different levels of the social formation.

In such a reading, Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar’s concept of the “social formation” provides a non-deterministic understanding of society as a complexly, overdetermined layered structure where each level of the social formation possesses its own specific logic yet can only be explained relationally with other levels at a particular historical conjuncture. The narrative as it unfolds below marks precisely such an understanding of the attainment of hegemony by the Hindu Nationalist movement. Hegemony, the assumed leadership position of a particular historical bloc over the rest of the social formation, must thus be understood as an ongoing process of struggle across different levels of the complexly structured and overdetermined social formation, with no particular guarantees of success or teleological finality.

This Gramscian understanding of hegemony, in its specific historical, materialist and conjunctural dimensions, has a particular bearing on our discussion below, since it traverses the levels of the social formation, and avoids an essentialist or reductionist mode of argumentation in tracing “causes” for Hindu Nationalism. Further, as Stuart Hall has attempted to argue, there is some relevance of Gramsci’s notion of hegemony and ideology for the study of politics around race and ethnicity. For example, the discursive construction of Hindu Nationalism, particularly in its racial and scriptural dimensions (in Vedic Hinduism for example), registers at the level of discourse and practice the need to shift strategies and occupy sometimes contradictory positions depending on the particular historical conjuncture in question. There is a production of a particular discourse on race and culture (sanskriti) that obtains at the intersection

18 Possibly the most influential understanding of hegemony can be found in Antonio Gramsci, Prison Notebooks.
of different levels of the social formation, religious, political, economic, socio-cultural and others, and is intimately tied to a historical moment. The invocation of racial pride at the present moment, for example, cannot be understood outside an acknowledgment of the global dimensions of Hindu nationalism, its linkage to diasporic communities, feelings of nostalgia and embattlement in the West, the need for greater material support for the Hindu Right in the form of funding, and the like. The discussion below calls attention to these different dimensions as they become pertinent at particular moments. Further, such an understanding of the process of hegemony at different levels of the social formation requires moving beyond notions of the nation-state as the sole determinant in the production of notions of identity. That is, its pedagogic role, while still present, must now be modulated across a transnational sphere of affective belonging, the movements of people, the global financial landscape and the like.

This complex relational understanding of the production of new racial, cultural and ethnic categories is better understood within the framework of a Gramscian understanding of hegemony as an ongoing, conflictual process of struggle, which will become apparent as we witness the ebb and flow of religious nationalist sentiment, below. Further, it also extends the inherent complexity and implied critique in the deployment of terms like “religious nationalism”, by tracing how the mode of defining religion is based largely on notions of culture, dharma, race, territory and the like, which are radically reworked at particular historical moments. In other words, the production of a “philosophy of religion” as a compass in negotiating national identity-formation is part of an antagonistic process. The dissemination of such a philosophy into the common-sensical discourse of Hindutva demands a recognition that at the level of elite formulations of religious nationalism, numerous contradictions had to be engaged with and resolved (such as a hierarchical construction of Brahminical Hinduism yet an inclusive definition of “race” that can accommodate difference in the form of subordinated groups). Further, the development of Hindutva as a doxa for certain groups need not imply a uniform, homogenous understanding of self or group identity.

I will briefly concretize the notion of hegemony, working at the level of discursive enunciation and political practice to sharpen my point, and signal an important theme that recurs in this and the following chapter: namely, a Gandhian form of nationalism that was and continues to be appropriated by both the adherents and opponents of Hindu Nationalism. In the process, an understanding of articulation, of the production and embodiment of linkages between elite discourses and group fears within a particular social and historical context becomes clear. Further, the Gandhian idiom neatly registers at one and the same time, the overlapping discourses of economic “development”, autonomy and a cultural discourse on India at the level of “civilization.” Ranajit Guha, in his “Dominance without Hegemony and its Historiography”, convincingly deployed a Gramscian notion of hegemony in his analysis of the process through which leadership over a group, or indeed a nation, is secured, through the twin frames of domination and subordination. In his long, complex and eloquent argument, Guha signposts the role of Gandhi in analyzing the “idioms of domination and subordination” which bear an uncanny relevance for our discussion of Hindu Nationalism. He first characterizes hegemony, in relation to domination and the pro-

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duction of consent, as offering "the double advantage of pre-empting a slide towards a liberal-utopian conceptualization of the state and representing power as a concrete historical relation informed necessarily and irreducibly by force and consent."

Hegemony is understood in the context of power relations that are concretely and historically understood within the twin frames of force and consent. For our present discussion, particularly with regard to the ideological dominance of the Hindu Right, the question of consent becomes central, and it is at this level, that Guha's reading of Gandhi's discourse is most revealing. He quotes Gandhi's famous words on government—"A just administration is Satyayuga (Age of Truth), Swaraj, Dharmaraj, Ramraj, people's government. In such a government, the ruler will be the protector, trustee and friend of the people." The maintenance of order through good governance based on moral leadership, the themes which we will encounter below as central to Hindu Nationalism, were deployed by Gandhi in the context of peasant uprisings in 1929 against landlords in Uttar Pradesh in the context of the Depression. As Guha argues, "it [Gandhi's theory of good governance] was formulated and avowed in opposition to socialist theory and in defence of landlordism." Gandhi had explicitly stated so, explaining that his theory of governance was articulated in the context of the growing importance of a socialist theory of land reform in favour of peasants.24 Guha goes on to argue that such a theory "testifies to the ingenuity with which the most advanced section of the bourgeoisie used the idiom of Dharma in order to promote class conciliation as well as to secure a place for its own interests in the developing ideology of elitist nationalism."

One identifies, through the lens of a theory of hegemony, how an ideology, discursively constructed, borrows strategically from certain conceptual resources and doxa with a specific history (Dharma, Ramrajya, Swaraj), in order to protect certain class interests at a particular historical conjuncture. The appropriation of Gandhi, particularly his notion of Ramrajya, Swaraj and moral leadership by the contemporary Hindu Nationalist movement evidences a similar yet different approach. Gandhi's Hindu idiom (in terms like Ramrajya) lends itself particularly well for the ideology of Hindutva. The redeployment of this symbolic and discursive resource (Gandhian ideals of governance) at the present conjuncture, further, enables a linkage, an articulation, between a borrowed, and well-known conceptual framework (doxa or common sense) on the one hand, and the particular interests of the Hindu Nationalist movement on the other. We will see below how particular class and caste as well as gender concerns, for example, get legitimated through notions of Swaraj and "people's government" particularly in relation to land reform, and the commercial interests of the petit-bourgeois class under globalization. The consensual production of hegemony, through the borrowing of established maps of meaning and their re-articulation to present concerns provide an accurate understanding of the success of the Hindu Nationalist movement at present. The crucial element of force in the production of this hegemony, as emphasized by Gramsci and in Guha's analysis, operates in the background of such an understanding, and as we shall see below, aggression and violence have played an important part as well in the success of Hindu Nationalist organisations. Guha's analysis broaches the concept of hegemony as a theoretical tool in understanding the production of consent and the exercise of force, and lends itself to an

21 Ibid., p. 232. Emphasis in original.
22 Ibid., p. 247.
23 Ibid., p. 247.
25 Guha, Dominance, p. 248.
understanding of the ideological and material practices through which Hindu Nationalism operates, at different levels of the social formation, through a process of articulation that is linked to both elite discourse and established maps of meaning, the particular doxic modalities through which different groups understand the social universe and their place within it. It needs emphasizing that this articulated relationship between Gandhi's discourse and Hindu Nationalism is not a recent phenomenon but obtained to differing degrees from the time of his ascension to power within civil society, particularly among the peasantry. For example, in his analysis of the phenomenon of Gandhi's popularity within peasant consciousness, Shahid Amin explicitly locates the latter's position as one which overlapped at times with Hindu nationalism, particularly in the campaign for the spread of Hindi and the cow protection movement.26

Such an understanding of hegemony as a process of attaining intellectual and moral leadership, articulation as a relational understanding of struggles over identity-formation across different levels of the social formation, and ideology as the articulatory force of discourses and practices in the construction of notions of religious and cultural identity, frames the narrative on Hindu Nationalism below. This framework eschews the notion of a unified subject ("the Hindu"); rather, it locates the subject/agent as the historically-specific point of intersection of different political, cultural, religious and economic discourses which have contradictory consequences. The subject of Hindu Nationalism, like the movement itself, must be understood as divided, as an ongoing construction.27 Their hybrid status is at the level of multiple-belonging along the different levels of historical analysis of the social formation, rather than in a to-be-identified, textually and deconstructively theorized non-space that is now termed "Third Space" and described as "liminal."28

**NARRATIVES OF EMERGENCE**

It is generally acknowledged that some of the ideological and doctrinal beginnings of Hindu nationalism can be traced to the founding of the Arya Samaj by Swami Dayananda. The context for the surge in Hindu Nationalism then was the increasing presence of Christian missionary activities, as well as the influence of colonial behaviour, values and codes in civil society. The response was to assert a certain internal spiritual character that was intrinsic to Hindus, while selectively emulating and respecting certain western values. Crucially, the term "Hinduism" was not operative; rather, the Samaj harked back to a Vedic age which had been besmirched by certain social evils under the name of "Hinduism" such as the *jati* (caste) system. Dayananda followed the English in critiquing the *jati* system for its social backwardness and agreed

26 Shahid Amin, "Gandhi as Mahatma", in R. Guha and G. C. Spivak, eds., Selected Subaltern Studies, esp. pp. 294-301

27 Hansen's invocation of Lacanian psychoanalysis in the construction of the subject is one attempt at theoretically delineating such an understanding. For a more thorough engagement with the question of subject-formation, that bears a closer relationship with my Gramscian framing of the Hindu Nationalist question, see Paul Smith, Discerning the Subject, in particular pp. 3-23 on Marxism, and pp. 70-82, on psychoanalysis. Žižek's Tarrying with the Negative, op cit., is a useful reminder that a psychoanalytical theory of the divided and desiring subject and ideology has its roots in those arch-modern philosophers Kant and Hegel, rather than Derrida or Lyotard. Hence, his argument would modulate Hansen's Lacanian/deconstructive reading of radical democracy, and I would argue, align itself more closely to my present concerns. Further, an understanding of the subject/agent as a divided subject-in-process emphasizes the historicity of subject-formation within a network of political-economic-ideological relations. It is only within this historical, and materialist understanding of the subject that I understand Hindu Nationalism and its adherent as hybrid.

28 Homi Bhabha, Location of Culture.
with the need for social reform while emphasizing the varna system as opposed to the jati system which valued individual initiative.

This dual strategy of what Jaffrelot calls emulation and stigmatization is a feature of Hindu nationalism till today, although what is to be emulated and what stigmatized shifts depending on particular historical circumstances. Thus, at that point a virulent anti-Muslim sentiment was not as prevalent as it is now (Christian missions being the main target then), and the construction of a hated Other was a process that developed historically. What is crucial to recognize is the strong Brahminical, upper-caste emphasis of Hindu nationalism from its inception, which while open to reform, and strategic emulation of its changing, perceived enemy, did not call into question a hierarchical notion of Hinduism based on scriptural authority and an upper-caste outlook. The reigning hegemony of the Indian National Congress, particularly under the leadership of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, is of particular importance in situating the development of Hindu Nationalism, given that the latter occupied a position of subordination to the Congress, even while many of the leaders of Hindu Nationalism such as S.P. Mookerjee, Sardar Vallabhai Patel and Dr. Rajendra Prasad played important supporting roles in the establishment of Hindu nationalism while still occupying positions of power within the Congress. As we will see, the unravelling of Congress hegemony, particularly after the death of Nehru, the disenchantment that set in after the 1970s following the increasingly authoritarian Indira Gandhi-led Congress (I) years and the accelerated economic liberalization under Rajiv Gandhi in the 1980s provided one of the crucial conditions of possibility for the popularity of the Hindu Nationalist movement, in particular in the 1980s.

In the early 19th century, the specific turn to Hindu nationalism, as opposed to the Vedic, Arya emphasis of Swami Dayananda can be identified with the formation of the Hindu Mahasabha in 1915, in the context of the British policy of introducing separate electorates for Muslims in Punjab. The importance of Muslims as a threatening other, and the perceived favouritism granted them by the colonial authorities led to a particular form of Hindu nationalism. As Jaffrelot points out, in the 1909 census, Arya samajists in Punjab declared themselves to be "Hindus" rather than "Aryas" as they had done previously. Further, the attitude of the Congress, which held in esteem the British parliamentary democratic ideal of the modern state, under social contract, as well as its antipathy (at times only skin-deep) to communalism and insistence on a secular notion of the Indian state, set the context for the particular reformulation of nationalism within a Hindu framework.

It is crucial to recall that the Hindu nationalism of the Mahasabha, particularly in Punjab, was specifically based on an ethnic German nationalism rather than that of the modern nation-state based on the social contract thinking prevalent in Britain. As Lala Lajpat Rai, a prominent Punjabi Arya samajist declared in 1909, "In fact, the German word 'Nation' did not necessarily signify a political nation or a State...it connoted what is generally conveyed by the English expression 'people' implying a community possessing a certain civilisation and culture. Using it in that sense, there can be no doubt that Hindus are a 'nation' in themselves because they represent a type of civilisation all their own." This understanding was in sharp contrast to that of the Indian National Congress which defined the Indian nation in terms of individuals according to social contract theory, and based on the territory of a projected nation-

29 Jaffrelot, HNM, pp.11-79 and passim.
30 Ibid., p.18.
31 Quoted in Jaffrelot, HNM, pp.18-19.
state rather than culture or civilization. It is at this level, that Bourdieu’s thoughts on the uses of the “people” become particularly relevant, given that in the field of politics, the construction of the people functions as a kind of ventriloquatory process, where political leaders claim to speak for those on whose support they legitimate themselves, while those “people” are not pre-existing, out there, but discursively constructed as the result of ongoing social, cultural and political processes.²² For example, van der Veer has convincingly argued that while the construction of communities in India in the colonial period was primarily a colonial epistemic project of knowing and classifying the “native”, (such as “Hindus”, “Muslims” etc.) it was further developed by those so named in the context of colonialism, orientalism and the evolving nationalist project.³³ The discursive displacement of “the people” from citizens (the Congress discourse) to bearers of certain civilizational/cultural traits of the Hindu nation thus operated on a complex playing field of borrowed colonial typologies, reworked Vedic and Brahminical Hinduism and a secularist emphasis of the Congress notion of the modern nation-state.

The increasingly aggressive attitude toward Muslims by the Hindu Mahasabha must also be understood in the context of the rise of the Khilafat movement by Muslims against the British in 1919 (in favour of the restoration of the Turkish Caliphate) and Hindu-Muslim riots particularly in North India. The increasing antagonism against Muslims coincided with an emulatory stance as well, such as the need for reformulating the caste system so as to unite Hindus, particularly given the rising anti-Brahmin sentiment growing in Maharashtra by “untouchables”, led by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar of the Indian National Congress, who went on to draft the Indian Constitution. This strategy of stigmatization and emulation has continued to the present, in the form of greater attention to the needs of lower-castes and tribals, the practice of reconversion of Muslims and Christians back into the “Hindu fold”, the semitization of Hinduism through appeals to scriptural legitimacy, etc.

The scriptural authority of the Vedas and the fuzzy notion of “civilization” and “culture” we just encountered enabled a certain semantic elasticity to the ideological basis of Hinduism given that despite appeals to Hinduism as a religion, it was “culture” (sanskriti) that was the guiding thread of what defined Hinduism through the ages. Thus, V.D. Savarkar, the president of the Hindu Mahasabha between 1937 and 1942, argued that Hindutva rested on geographical unity, racial features and a common culture.³⁴ The importance of religion was minimized given that the internal heterogeneity of Hindu groups militated against a strict adherence to central precepts of a particular holy book or a homogenized notion of Hinduism. Further, the appeal to territorial integrity was not based on citizenship but a common racial unity carried down through marriage and blood-lines, a “race jati.”³⁵

By minimizing the importance of religion, emphasizing culture and race, and defining territory in terms of racial unity, the Hindutva of Savarkar was both expansive and hierarchical. Christians and Muslims could be considered Hindus by the racial logic of his territorial understanding of the nation, while a common culture that was not laid out in preceptual form in particular scriptures enabled a certain flexibility, which was crucially linked to his racial emphasis, given that race was understood not in bio-

³³ See van der Veer, RN, pp. 21, and 25-77.
³⁵ Ibid. pp. 84-85. As we shall see, this racial understanding of marriage enables an expansive notion of Hindutva beyond the space of the nation-state.
logical terms but culturally, in the observance of certain rituals. As we will see later, this flexibility in terms of race, territory and culture continues to be deployed in the wake of recent developments like the attacks on Christians and recoversion campaigns.

The formation of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, or the RSS (Association of National Volunteers) in 1925 brought onto the Hindu nationalist scene, an important organization whose influence today is crucial in understanding the particular shifting contours of religious nationalism. Basing itself on certain structures and organizational features of terrorist groups, the RSS is strongly fascist in character, in terms of its stress on discipline, a hierarchical and non-democratic command system and an aggressively-toned discourse. However, it was not interested unlike German fascism, in the take-over of the state, but emphasized a grass-roots approach to mobilization within civil society and took a distance from active political work within existing political parties. The relationship between the RSS and Hindu nationalist political parties though, cannot be accurately described as one of clear separation, since many of the senior apparachiks of the RSS have gone on to hold significant positions of power in government, including the present Indian prime minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee. The RSS was further marked by a strong sense of ascetism, in terms of control over the body such as diet and sexual abstinence, as well as a distrust for the trappings of a western materialist lifestyle. This attitude has brought it into conflict at times with its political allies as we shall see below, and is one indicator, that given the contemporary flux of globalization in economic and cultural terms, for all the flexibility of the ideology of Hindutva, the different groups that form the Sangh Parivar are internally differentiated and occasionally come into conflict. The strong Brahminical ethic of the RSS in that period attracted mainly an upper caste constituency, though recently it has widened its scope of influence through watering down its caste ideology in certain places and at particular historical conjunctures. For example, the RSS now has an active Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram which works with tribals in addressing their everyday concerns.

The RSS formed the Rashtriya Swayamsevika Sangh, its women's wing in 1936, as a supporting arm that organizationally established the importance of women in the construction of Hindutva. While in the early period of the RSS, its women's wing stayed fairly behind the scenes, it did establish itself in civil society by working with women and addressing family issues, providing a space for associating with other women, although all of these activities were strongly influenced by a Hindu idiom of respect for family harmony, the role of women as daughters, mothers and wives. In the context of the growing hegemony of Hindu nationalism, swayamsevikas, along with their associates in the VHP's Mahila Sangh, and the Shiv Sena's Mahila Aghadi, have established an increasingly vociferous and public role. Their emergence was closely connected to the mosque-temple issue, and their role in agitations as well as mobilizing men (figures like Sadhvi Ritambara were crucial here) must be situated within the increasing suffusion of the ideology of Hindutva as it was concretized around this issue. Further, their prominence, particularly in Maharashtra and the city of Bombay, is also linked to what they see as the besmirchment of "Hindu culture" in the media. The exhibition of Deepa Mehta's film "Fire" led to violent agitations against it, while the increasing "westernisation" of Indian women as shown in mass media like TV, and

commercials, saw a greater prominence of women from the Hindu Right, in the definition of “culture.” It is necessary to signal here that this refashioning of women’s position in “Hindu society” is not primarily hegemonic and scriptural i.e. it does not simply vindicate a Hindu male fantasy of the “traditional woman” but also reworks, or recodes the meaning of tradition in specific ways.

For example, the VHP calls attention to programs like the Kesh, Kangam and Kumkum program in Gujarat which urges widows to shed the trappings of “traditional” widowhood (shaved head, austere clothes). At the very same time, Deepa Mehta’s film “Water” came under heavy attack by Hindu nationalist women’s organisations for depicting widows in inappropriate fashion. Such contradictory strategies exemplify the fashioning of “tradition” particularly as applied to women, as a continual process of negotiation, in keeping with the particular necessities of the movement, as the Hindu Nationalist seeks to broaden its appeal to other groups, and expresses its neo-traditionalism in the terms of a modern discourse on Hindutva. As indicated in my theoretical frame above, the changing position of women in the Hindu Nationalist movement must be understood historically, in relation to different levels of the social formation. Thus, the increasing visibility of the women’s wings of Hindu Nationalism must be situated in relation to the established hegemony of Hindutva as an ideology. Their visibility in public, and their particular violent agitational strategies could only be socially legitimated once a certain form of societal acceptance of Hindutva ideology had been at least provisionally established, while simultaneously tapping into the power of Goddess figures in Hindu mythology, for example. Particularly in relation to media, the visibility of Hindu nationalist women can be understood with some clarity when the globalized socio-economic landscape is recognised as an important contextual influence in the rise of their public militancy. With the sometimes dramatic shifts in the media representations of women in urban areas, as well as the real shifts in their positions in society, in terms of employment, consumption patterns, gender relations etc., the media have become a not-surprising target for Hindu nationalist women, who decry the “commercialization” of Indian women. This is not surprising given that the “woman question” has traditionally occupied a central place in the definition of “national culture”, and with the increasing globalization of televisual imagery, media become a convenient and socially legitimate site for criticism by Hindu nationalism’s women supporters. Thus, their public importance must be understood in the context of an already established, socially-sanctioned discourse of “protecting women.” The crucial shift of course, is that in this case it is not just men protecting women, but women protecting the “nation”, its women and its men. Yet, what is defended (“the traditional Hindu woman”) and the idiom it is defended in (Hindutva) make this increasing female empowerment a source of great concern for progressive feminist movements.37 At this point, it is simply worth signalling the role of women in the movement, their particular historically-specific emergence, and some of the contours through which this legitimacy is secured through the ideology of Hindutva, the powerful affective force of Goddess figures, and the cultural discourse around women’s representation.

Ideologically, the RSS was marked by an appeal to ethnic or cultural nationalism along the lines of German or Italian fascism, rather than that of English parliamentary

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democracy. However unlike the former, its approach stressed cultural unity rather than racial homogeneity and as Gyan Pandey has convincingly argued, the particular kind of “upper-caste racism” of the RSS was modelled on socio-cultural superiority rather than racial domination.\textsuperscript{38} The RSS’ eschewal of active political participation, and its emphasis on socio-cultural and psychological invigoration of Hindu culture came under pressure for rethinking, following the assassination of Gandhi on 31 January 1948 and the ban on the RSS and the arrests of thousands of volunteers. When the ban was lifted, a growing need was felt by certain sections of the RSS, particularly the young cadres who had not been imprisoned, to get involved in politics and after the formation of regional branches in Punjab, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh, in late 1951, the Jana Sangh held its founding convention in Delhi. The RSS played a crucial role in the Jana Sangh from the outside in policing the boundaries of what was considered acceptable, particularly in terms of a strong commitment to the promotion of Hindu culture, an anti-Muslim stance and the belief in \textit{Akhand Bharat}, or an undivided India prior to Partition.

In a sense, the Jana Sangh was very much tied down by the RSS even though there were tensions and rifts that emerged, particularly in relation to political alliances in contesting elections, and the necessity for compromising on certain ideological principles in the interest of garnering votes. In 1954, under the tutelage of Deendayal Upadhyaya, who had been closely involved with the RSS, a reshaped organisation and political programme of the Jana Sangh was launched, strengthening the hold of the RSS on the party. In his \textit{Integral Humanism} which became the ideological touchstone for the faithfulness of the party to Hindutva, Upadhyaya repeated Savarkar and Golwalkar’s insistence on ethnic nationalism as being the model for the Hindu nation as opposed to the social contract.\textsuperscript{39} His notion of the \textit{varna} system, like Dayananda’s, did not emphasize conflict and inequality; rather, it married an organic notion of the body politic (“Virat Purasha”) to the \textit{varna} system as the model of the Hindu nation. Upadhyaya emphasized decentralization and modelled his vision of Hindu society on that of the villages, which thus placed it in some relationship with that of Gandhi, although as we have seen above, and will investigate further, this seeming overlap was more apparent than substantive.

The RSS was meanwhile spreading its organizational presence throughout Indian society, forming the national student union, the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) in 1948 and the labour union, the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh in 1955. These were seen as counter-balances to the growth of the Congress-sponsored, and Communist student unions (such as the All India Students Federation, AISF) and labour unions (such as the Indian National Trade Union Congress, INTUC, and the Confederation of Indian Trade Unions, CITU). In 1964 the RSS went on to create the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council), particularly in the context of the need to focus on the invigoration of social, cultural and religious feelings for “Hindu culture”, given that the Jana Sangh had to tone down its strategies of ethno-religious mobilization within the normative framework of parliamentary politics. The VHP has now established a global presence, being particularly active among diasporic Indian communities in the West, primarily through the organization of cultural festivals (such as the Global Vision 2000 conference in Washington D.C. in 1993) and invita-


tions to speakers from the Hindu Right in India to address crowds in the U.S., U.K. and the continent. The organisation boasts at least 100,000 members in Britain, Canada, the US and continental Europe. In Britain it has its own newspaper and is alleged to have 40 branches and camps to train workers.

Given the hegemony of the Congress party since Independence in 1947, and the prestige accrued through its involvement in the freedom movement, the Jana Sangh found itself unable to aggressively mobilize on ethno-religious grounds in the 1950s, since secularism had become enshrined in the Constitution, and the threat of state power against the RSS had been demonstrated clearly after Gandhi's assassination. It was thus in the context of economic issues, and territorial questions that the Jana Sangh sought to distinguish itself from the Congress. Given the stress of Nehru, India's first prime minister, on state planning and centralization, the Jana Sangh launched a strong campaign in favour of decentralisation and the withdrawal of the state from the field of consumer goods. This was in keeping with its middle-class base which had been building up in the wake of the plans for radical re-allocation of land, and greater influence of the state in the economy by the Congress. After the 1959 resolution of the Congress to reallocate land above a certain limit to landless labourers, the Jana Sangh found a willing support base among the proprietary peasant classes who felt threatened by the Congress, and could support the village idiom of the Sangh and its ideologue, Upadhyaya, given its stress on decentralisation and autonomy for village units from state intervention. While the support base of the Jana Sangh's successor, the present Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which holds the reigns of power is mainly middle class, over time Hindu nationalists have had to widen their support base in keeping with the necessities of the field of politics, particularly in terms of caste, region and language.

The issue of territorial integrity, particularly in the wake of the highly emotive memories of the Partition, and the skirmishes with China in 1959, and the subsequent 1962 war, was another plank on which the Sangh mobilized that did not have a strongly ethno-religious flavour. Both these issues, that of economic decentralization and the withdrawal of the state from the economy, as well as territorial aggressivity towards India's neighbours are not just historical curiosities but have come into full-play in the present, in particular after the Kargil confrontation between India and Pakistan in 1999 and 2000, the nuclear explosions in Pokhran, and the Congress (I) led liberalisation of the economy and the BJP's response to it.

In the wake of the "JP" movement in 1974, initiated by the noted Gandhian and socialist-oriented Jayaprakash Narayan, the Jana Sangh could establish its strong grassroots activist programme in the sphere of "social justice" such as the reinvigoration of the whole of Indian society, particularly through political decentralization, following the collapse of the Indira Gandhi-led Congress party's legitimacy in the wake of a serious economic crisis. Agitations over price rises and the position of the Scheduled Castes for example, gave the Jana Sangh greater social legitimacy while riding along with allies within the JP movement such as the Socialists and Gandhians. The movement was a god-send of sorts in that it enabled the Sangh to mobilize and increase its visibility at the grassroots level, although it did find itself strongly critical of some of the socialist programmes propounded by JP while the latter distanced himself from the increasingly violent actions of the Sangh's student wing. The appeal to Gandhi was thus strategic at best, given that historically the RSS, in a sense the parent organisation of the Jana Sangh, had understood Gandhi as too soft on the Muslims and
responsible for the partition of India. Further, despite its involvement with socialists in the JP movement, the Sangh couched its “total revolution” within a discourse of spirituality and morality rather than class warfare. The Gandhian idiom of the Sangh, and now the BJP must thus be seen as a strategic borrowing of some of Gandhi’s ideals (such as the self-sufficient village economy) and a rejection of others (the virulent strand of anti-Muslim feeling of the Sangh Parivar cannot be easily mapped onto the views held by Gandhi, even though the latter’s notion of Ramrayja is one example of how his discourse did lend itself toward a Hindu notion of the nation).  

Further, this vexed relationship of intimacy and distrust between Hindu nationalism and Gandhian thought was at least partly initiated by the discursive openness of Gandhi’s own thought, his particular modes of mobilization and his recurrent grounding of nationalist sentiment in a Hindu idiom.

The proclamation of a state of Emergency in 1975 by Indira Gandhi and the suspension of the constitution was followed by the widespread arrests of opposition leaders including Jana Sangh officials. Jaffrelot argues that the imprisonment of leaders from different political parties led to a growing recognition on their part for greater unity in opposing the Congress (I), and after some hard thinking the Jana Sangh decided to amalgamate with the Bharatiya Lok Dal, the Congress (O) and the Socialist Party to form the Janata Party in 1977. This move was not welcomed by all, particularly the hard-line activist branch of the Sangh. However, following a string of crises, internal rifts, ideological divisions and the like, the Janata Party was torn inside out, and resulted in the formation of the Bharatiya Janata Party, or the BJP, as the true Jana Sangh core of the former Janata Party, with strong roots in its RSS background.

The BJP platform in 1981 was striking in its toning down of Hindu militancy given the need to garner wider political support, and its first president A.B. Vajpayee stressed Gandhian socialism and positive secularism as the planks of the party while setting Upadhyaya’s “Integral Humanism” as one of the five commitments of the party. On socio-economic issues, the BJP stressed its anti-corruption image and promised to implement the programmes of the Indira Gandhi regime with greater efficiency. Further, the organizational structure of the party remained strongly sanghatanist, drawing on a cadre of activist-politicians which had close ties to the Jana Sangh and the RSS. This aspect of the BJP has been both its strength and weakness, particularly after its failure in the mid-1980s to widen its support base and the increasing appeal to communalism by the Congress (I). The counter-vailing pressures of the RSS and other Hindu groups on the BJP must also be pointed out so as not to mistake the Sangh Parivar as being a homogenous unit that is completely in step with each of its constituents. This internal tension has historically been a cause of dispute yet also provided strength, in campaigns such as the Babri Masjid-Ramjanmabhoomi controversy elaborated on below. While their relationship is often marked by conflict, it might be useful not to collapse them all onto the RSS as prime hegemon such as Praful Bidwai’s assertion that the BJP is a “mere slave to the RSS”.

Given the growing reservations of the RSS to what it saw as the dilution of Hindutva by the pragmatic policies and penchant for alliances by the BJP, and the above mentioned dilution of secularism by the Congress(I), the possibility of increasing Hindu

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41 See the discussion by Ranajit Guha and my understanding of hegemony, op cit.

militancy seemed likely, in particular after the controversies aroused by the Shah Bano affair and the Mandal Commission report. In the former case, the willingness of the Rajiv Gandhi Congress(I) government to give in to pressure from a strong Muslim lobby resulted in the introduction of a law which basically preserved the status quo and the application of the Shariat. In the years after the fall of his government, and the National Front coalition coming to power under the tutelage of V. P. Singh, the latter’s Mandal Commission report instituted a 24% reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in central administration and public corporation posts. Both developments galvanized a strongly ethno-nationalist response from the BJP who saw these developments as the tearing of the social fabric of the nation, the first through the infamous “appeasement of minorities” critique (Muslims as pampered minorities) and the second through an attack on the divisive tendencies of reserving jobs for particular sections of society. The latter move in particular was based largely on political considerations given that the growing middle-class and upper-caste base of the BJP saw the Mandal report as a direct attack on its entrenched position of power, while the Shah Bano case resurrected calls for a Uniform Civil Code that would treat all Indian citizens equally before the law.

The concatenation of these issues with the growing communalism of the Congress (I) party laid the seeds for a resurgence of ethno-religious mobilization which saw its most infamous apogee in the demolition of the Babri Masjid mosque in Ayodhya in 1992. The mosque, which was built by the general Babar of the Muslim dynasty in 1528 has occupied something of an important role historically in the ethno-religious mobilization of Hindu nationalism. It was reputed that the mosque was built on the site of a temple commemorating the birthplace of Rama which had been demolished. In 1949 when an image of Rama was placed in the mosque, riots ensued and led to increasing tension between Hindus and Muslims with reverberations throughout the country. In the wake of ongoing legal disputes that continued over the years, the tensions received fresh impetus when the VHP demanded that the mosque be liberated and returned to its rightful position as the birthplace of the god, Rama. The decision of a Faizabad judge in 1986 to open the site to the public (which had hitherto been sequestered for Muslims, with Hindus allowed to offer prayers outside) led to massive Muslim demonstrations throughout the country against the ruling.

It was in this escalating atmosphere that the BJP and the VHP, along with the RSS stepped up their campaign for the “liberation” of the “Ram Janmabhoomi” site, and as van der Veer rightly points out, at this stage the actions of these three organizations were scarcely distinguishable, which was not surprising given that key members of the BJP had strong backgrounds in the RSS and the VHP. What this campaign marked was a shift in strategy of the BJP from a moderate line, focussing on pragmatic political issues such as alliance-building, to a hard-line ethno-religious campaign. The escalating tension around the disputed site resulted in the demolition of the mosque on December 2, 1992. The appeal of the campaign cannot be dissassociated from a number of factors: a growing sense of vulnerability in the wake of the Shah Bano affair, the Mandal report, escalating tension with Pakistan on the Kashmir border, the memories of Partition and the ensuing carnage. In other words, there was a certain tapping into an inventory of historical memories and contemporary concerns by political parties such as the BJP, and its non-electoral allies like the VHP and the RSS. It is this artic-

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43 see van der Veer, RN, pp. 2-11, for a succinct account of the Babri campaign.
ulated understanding of the issue that must be stressed, working on different levels of political expediency and mobilization, already-existing structures of feeling and a historical conjuncture marked by growing insecurity following the disenchantment with the Congress (I) and the short-lived experiments with coalition governments.

The power of symbolic politics, affective investment and material culture in periods of crisis are clearly evidenced in the Ramjanmabhumi controversy. They signal how the materials deployed during the discursive elaboration of Hindu culture are forged in the language of sentiment and culture, in an atmosphere of aggression and felt vulnerability, and the suffusion of the social imaginary through the force of metonymical displacements of meaning. Witness a speech by Sadhvi Rithambara, a low-caste religious icon who shot to fame under the aegis of the VHP during the temple-mosque campaign: “Ram’s birthplace is not a quarrel about a small piece of land. It is a question of national integrity. The Hindu is not fighting for a temple of brick and stone. He is fighting for the preservation of a civilization, for his Indianness, for national consciousness, for the recognition of his true nature.”43 This is not a piece of ideological doctrination, pure and simple. Rather, it taps into the growing vulnerability felt by Hindus in India. However, it metonymically links the material existence of certain objects (brick and stone) to the preservation of a nation (India) which thus simultaneously links Hindu culture with Indian culture. The resulting national consciousness, paradoxically, attempts to save its “integrity” through the expulsion of Muslims, themselves understood metaphorically through the religious symbol of the Babri Masjid mosque. The invocation of “integrity” here is paradoxical, or transferential, in that the term “national unity and integrity” was the slogan of the secularism of the Congress party, but here integrity is reworked as an ideal to mean the identification of Muslims as a threat rather than as an integral part of the modern Indian secular nation state. It is precisely this “coding of affective value”, its transference to the domain of religion, culture, civilization and “national consciousness” that Hindu Nationalism must be placed within, in its discursive modalities, rather than the expression of either an essential character or the indoctrination of a novel set of norms and values on a passive public.

In the present discussion, it is worth pointing out two elements which are of some importance in our ensuing discussion on the relationship between globalization, mass media and religious nationalism. In 1989, during the campaign, the VHP started a *ram shila puja* campaign all over the country, where holy bricks were brought to Ayodhya from all over the country, as well as from overseas, particularly the United States, Canada, South Africa and the Carribean. This transnational character of religious mobilisation is crucial to keep in mind, given that, as pointed above, Hindu nationalism did not limit itself to a territorial understanding of the modern nation in terms of citizenship but of culture. Thus, diasporic communities were actively wooed for the religious nationalist project, and the contours of this form of nationalism, paradoxically took on a transnational character, not dissimilar to the pan-Islamic *umma*. This global dimension, as we will see in the following chapter, comes to play an important part in the cultural discourse of the BJP with regard to foreign media and its relationship to the notion of “Bharatiya” culture. That is, merely being based abroad and having foreign citizenship, and even more radically, even being “racially” or ethnically


1990.

non-Indian, did not guarantee automatic opposition from Hindu groups or political parties (like the BJP).

Secondly, as van der Veer points out, a particular standardized version of Hinduism was propagated through the televising of the highly popular serial Ramayana in 1987 on Indian state television over 78 weeks. The popularity of the serial, and its imbrication into the social and political life of civil society cannot be dis-articulated from the success of the Ramjanmabhumi campaign, particularly given that many of the main characters in the TV epic went onto campaign for the BJP and hold political positions. The impact of the serial, and the Mahabharata which followed it over 91 weeks evidenced what Romila Thapar has called the “Ramayana syndrome”, which standardized a particular version of the epic and sidelined competing narratives. The formation of a religious consciousness here, through the mass media, must be thus situated firstly, in its articulation with other events in the social and political realm, as well as in its homogenizing impulse, thus aiding in the creation of a particular version of Hinduism that is Sanskritized. Further, the widespread circulation of these televised epics, both within the country and also abroad, led to an intensification of notions of religious belonging that transcended the role of the state in its pedagogic role of constructing a “citizenry” based on statist conceptions. Within the evolving transnational context, the mass-mediated transformation of notions of cultural identity such as “Hinduness” and its equation with “Indianness” escaped the control of the post-colonial state, though it is worth recalling that this does not imply the irrelevance of the state (it was state television, DD, after all, that broadcast and commissioned the epics) but its inability to harness particular modes of belonging within the statist idiom of territory and citizenship. The shifts in the strategies of Hindu Nationalist groups, the ebb and flow of their appeals to ethno-religious mobilization on the one hand and political pragmatism and moderation on the other must be situated within a complex, political field of manoeuvre, a historical understanding of the everyday lived experience of different groups, religious and otherwise, to events after and preceding Independence in 1947 and other socio-economic and political factors such as the Congress hegemony and collapse at the Centre, economic crises and territorial disputes.

In order to situate the spectacular rise of Hindu Nationalism in the last years of the 1980s, and its accession to power in the form of BJP-led coalition governments, one must move beyond specific political strategies of moderation and radicalization (such as the Ramjanmabhumi issue above) and situate them in the context of an increasing cynicism of politicians felt by the general electorate. The high-minded and respected politicians of the Nehru era had been supplanted by the image of the careerist, corrupt and opportunistic political bigwigs that gained ascendancy since the 1970s. As Blom Hansen has pointed out, the disruption in the Indian socius, which he understands as one of the principle destabilizing influences that gave rise to Hindu nationalism, must be situated within the after-effects which follow democratic processes. The principled discourse of India’s Independence leaders was followed by a disappointing execution of these ideals, resulting in inadequate land reforms, widening gaps between the rich and poor, regional tensions along the lines of language, religion, caste, etc, highly publicized corruption scandals, territorial disputes between states and a general failure of the state to deliver on its promises. Given the fact that the Congress had been identi-

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fied so closely with the Indian state, its failures implied a radical critique of the Indian state, which cannot be disassociated from social movements such as the JP movement, the rise of charismatic regional leaders, struggles by Dalits, women and others to redress grievances in the face of an antagonistic state at worst, or an indifferent one at best.

The proliferation of regional parties, movements by the poor and other marginalized groups, in a sense then, deepened both the democratic character of the Indian socius while also introducing destabilizing after-shocks on the stability of a centralized state dominated by the Congress. The response of Indira Gandhi to these threats was significant: her Congress (I) party upped the ante on wooing caste and religious vote-banks such as Hindus in Kashmir, Muslims and lower castes in Uttar Pradesh, Sikhs in Punjab while branding parties and movements not allied to her party at the regional level as “anti-national.” The “secularism” of the Indian state, personified in the strategies of the Congress (I) came to be seen as mere sham, and this disillusionment played an important part in changing the discursive legitimacy of secularism as the norm of political practice. Further, the increasingly publicized in-fighting, corruption scandals, favouritism and authoritarianism that marked the Congress (I) response to threats to its hegemony combined to produce a general malaise among the electorate. The 1991 and 1996 elections resulted in hung parliaments and no national party, and certainly not the Congress (I), could claim legitimacy as a hegemonic political force at the centre.

As Sunil Khilnani points out, given this increasing fragmentation of the political landscape, and the growing communalization of politics generally, Hindu nationalists found a fertile ground for making its presence felt nationally. In the wake of the liberalization of the Indian economy and the growing affluence in pockets of urban India, it was a particular westernized, and educated urban middle class which found itself attracted to Hindu nationalism. I am reminded of a long conversation in Bombay one afternoon with the mother of a close friend of mine about her changing notions of Indian identity, culture and politics during the summer of 1989. As an upper-caste, bourgeois Gujarati family, their material position seemed unthreatened, indeed it had progressively improved in recent years, yet what was marked was the growing sense of insecurity she felt about where India was going as a cultural unit – her longstanding and deep faith in Gandhianism seemed nowhere in sight as she informed me of the threat of Muslims, as an uneducated, violent group that would take over the country numerically (what van der Veer has described as the “politics of reproduction”), that was alien to traditional Indian values and mired deep in criminal activities. Her turn to the BJP, and her belief that it was the only hope in rescuing India from increasing internal strife, and restoring a degree of cleanliness and morality in politics was for me then, a puzzling switch of allegiance from the high idealism of the Gandhian era and the Congress hegemony of Indian politics.

The insecurity felt by these well-placed, affluent groups was not primarily economic, even though the resolutely pro-business policies of the BJP were most welcome to the middle-class elites. Rather, it registered an unease with the fragmentation of the Indian political scene, the rise of numerous competing political and public figures, a loss of belief in the ideals of a high-cultural, elite notion of Indian culture that was nurtured during the Nehru years. The turn to Hindu nationalism did signal a compensatory strategy of shoring up one’s sense of security in who one was, and where one

47 Khilnani, The Idea of India. 48 van der Veer, RN, p. 27.
belonged during a period of increasing disillusionment. Thus, the rise of Hindu nationalism in this period cannot simply be put down to ideological indoctrination, or the propagation of a “dominant ideology” thesis by a ruling class. Neither can it be described as the resurgence of the long-suppressed “natural” values of a country. As the narrative constructed above signals, the factors that contributed to its rise were numerous, historically-specific and ranged across the spectrum of political, religious, cultural, linguistic and economic relations. Further, the shifting strategies of Hindu organisations such as the RSS, Jana Sangh and BJP, moving between moderate and extremist strategies of mobilisation, must be located at the intersection of the above factors in their historical specificity.

A HISTORY OF THE PRESENT

After the May-June 1991 elections, which brought the Congress (I) into power, largely as a result of the sympathy vote following Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination, the BJP progressed from 80 to 120 seats and became the second largest party in parliament. Their increasing presence on the political scene must be situated in the context of the legacy of the Rajiv years. During his tenure, he introduced a strong degree of liberalization in the Indian economy, particularly in the field of consumer goods such as TV sets, automobiles, computers, electronic gadgets and other household items. This intensive integration of the Indian economy into the global marketplace, particularly at the level of conspicuous consumption, resulted in a stellar role for the urban middle-classes as the bearers of a vibrant and resurgent India making its presence felt on the world scene. The increasing presence of foreign TV sets, radios, videos, magazines and international satellite and TV networks, gave this middle-class a stronger feeling of belonging to a “world community” of consumers.

This awareness of the superiority of the West, through exposure to hi-tech gadgetry, media images and the like, resulted in a stronger notion of both belonging to a “global village” and a specific national tradition that read these scripts of lifestyle elaborated on above, in particular idioms. For example, at least initially, TV viewing remained a primarily family-affair, and was mediated through the structures of family life, moral values and notions of “Indianness.” A family in Bombay with whom I watched programmes like Santa Barbara and Bold and Beautiful, illustrate the complexity of the situation in their viewing habits and the normative frames through which they read such programming. While addicted to the “style” and “glamour” of the shows, and often using them to guide their decisions on interior decoration for example, they simultaneously criticised the “loose” behaviour of the characters, particularly the “modern” woman, emphasizing that “we in India would never have sex outside marriage”. The “materialism” of these shows was embraced, the fascination with high-technology, big cars and houses, glamourous clothes, yet the particular social norms represented, in relation to personal relationships with family members and friends, notions of moral rights and wrongs were identified as “modern” which in this particular context implied immorality, lack of respect for authority (such as parents) and a general moral malaise.

The crucial switch here is that while earlier (and to some degree even at present), material objects and consumerism were identified as both symptoms and causes of “western decadence”, in the period of the Rajiv Gandhi years, and the exposure to the West in terms of access to foreign consumer durables, the embrace of consumerism
was matched by a repudiation of the moral universe of the “West” (this is of course a discursive elaboration rather than a diagnosis of the “western condition”). Thus, the link between materialism and decadence was transformed through a selective engagement with the pleasures of consumerism enabled by liberalization, and a culturalist discourse which disavowed the traditional link made between decadence and materialism. Such an attitude could legitimate a wholesale embrace of consumerism by a fast-rising middle-class while rendering it immune from criticism that it is succumbing to the “West.” The discourse between materialism and western decadence is still unravelling in different directions under specific circumstances and depending on who is articulating them but the Gandhi years under Rajiv did set the stage for an all-embracing attitude towards consumption of foreign goods and a concomitant rearticulation of Indian identity, which as we shall see below, was related to the rise of Hindutva.49

It was in the above context, in the realm of economic liberalization, a transnational mode of belonging through consumption and exposure to mass media and evolving notions of identity that the BJP’s emergence on the national scene must also be situated. It had still not emerged as a truly national party, given weaknesses in the South and East. Further, the demolition of the mosque had partly destroyed one of the most effective symbols of mobilization for the RSS-VHP-BJP combine and also signalled the inability of the movement’s leaders from controlling the actions of the grassroots activist cadre including VHP activists, kar sevaks, Bajrang Dalis and sadhus. This latter deficiency is one which has continued to unravel as the BJP made successive bids for power at the centre, as we will see below. During the 1993 assembly elections, the BJP decided to distance itself from the VHP (which had been banned following the mosque demolition) and broadened its focus from ethno-nationalism to social and economic issues as well. Further, it launched a campaign of “social engineering” to include more lower castes into the party machinery, although this move came in for criticism from the RSS which evoked the traditional varna system as a justification for what it called maintenance of the “social equilibrium.” In the 1995 state elections, the BJP fared better capturing power in the two most economically developed states, Gujarat and Maharashtra, by focussing more on socio-economic issues and corruption scandals than on ethno-religious mobilization. The BJP first came to power at the centre in a coalition government under the leadership of Atal Behari Vajpayee in 1996 after it won 161 seats compared to 136 for the Congress (I). Given that it operates in tandem with regional parties such as the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra and an Akali Dal faction in Punjab, the BJP is able to broaden the appeal of Hindutva, although this must be seen as both an enabling and a disruptive factor. That is, if Hansen is right that the deepening of democratic tendencies and the rise of popular regional groups hastened the fall of the Congress party, a similar democratic expansion and differentiation does not bode well for the BJP, which must work through the power-structures and local groups that it needs in different states. The current dissension within the ruling alliance in Maharashtra, between the Shiv Sena and the BJP is one indication of the problems in coming to power through regional alliances.

Holding the reins of power puts the BJP in quite a different position than when it was in opposition, particularly on some of its claims of being a party above corruption and factionalism. Both have turned out to besmirch the party’s name now that it is in power, given the charge-sheeting of its president L.K. Advani in a hawala case, and the

49 See Hansen, “Ethics of Hindutva”, pp. 296-298 for a description of these changes under the Rajiv Gandhi years.
growing intra-party divisions in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. The question of internal division is most starkly observable, in terms of the BJP's Hindutva ideology, within the ongoing dissensions of the Sangh Parivar. As an opposition party, the BJP could have gone along with its allies like the BMS and the RSS in stressing resistance to foreign investment and globalization. However, as the dramatic turnaround in its approval of the Enron power project in Maharashtra (together with its ally the Shiv Sena), the opening up of the insurance sector and the increasing wooing of foreign investment has shown, once in power, the BJP has had to moderate its hardline “swadeshi” image. Part of this turn-around has to do with the middle-class constituency of the BJP which had supported the Congress (I) in its introduction of liberalization, as well as the pragmatic concern for shoring up the Indian economy in the context of global neo-liberalism, the collapse of the Second World and the increasing power of transnational agencies such as the WTO, WB and IMF.

However, this political pragmatism comes at a price: the real fear of seriously antagonising its allies, such as the Swadeshi Jagran Manch (which was formed by the BMS labour union in September 1992) which has campaigned vigorously against opening up the Indian economy to foreign investors. Issues such as the opening up of the insurance sector to foreigners, the relaxed exit policy of the government (as a result of pressure from the WB) and the adoption of patent laws drawn up by the WTO have all brought the BJP into conflict with its allies. The accession to power of the BJP thus sees an oscillation between ethno-religious mobilisation (the 1996 election manifesto argues “Hindutva or cultural nationalism, shall be the rainbow which will bridge our present to our glorious past and pave the way for an equally glorious future”) and pragmatic considerations around economic liberalization.  

The VHP-organized Dharma Sansads are one example of where the lines blur in quite spectacular fashion between the non-electoral, supposed “a-political”, religious organizations, and the political parties of the Hindu Right like the BJP. At the Fourth Dharma Sansad where sadhus and religious leaders from other groups met in Ahmedabad on February 7, 1999, there was a full-frontal attack on what was seen as the dilution of Hindutva by the BJP as a national government. Despite claims that the VHP is a “socio-religious” organisation without political overtones, the Sansad called on the BJP to implement a Hindu agenda that was couched in explicitly political and war-like tones – “India's Prime Minister should go to Pakistan but not in a bus, but on tanks, to hoist a flag of victory in Islamabad, Lahore and Rawalpindi”, argued Acharya Dharmendraji. The ongoing problems between the BJP and the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra are a further indication of the internal divisions of the Sangh Parivar.  

The onset of the BJP on the national stage then, must be seen as a process marked by increasing instability in the actual processes through which Hindu Nationalism is elaborated on in the sphere of culture, politics, economics and religion. This instability is a consequence of the specific fields of power within which the constituents of the Sangh Parivar operate, in particular the gap between political expediency (BJP) and a hard-core cultural nationalism (SJM, RSS, VHP). If the history of Hindu nationalism is marked by a certain in-built ideological flexibility through recourse to a discourse of “race” (jati), culture (sanskriti) and territory (Bharatvarsha), the actual con-
cretization of Hindu Nationalism by its political representative when in power is marked by a more ambivalent and strategically flexible modality of organisation, discourse and practice. This latter flexibility is not something new – we have seen it in the earlier post-1996 period above – yet it does bring to the fore in clearer terms how the vicissitudes of political power when gained, can become a hurdle in the actual implementation of an ideology that was formulated earlier outside the corridors of power.

THEORETICAL (RE)CONSIDERATIONS I: THE MODERNITY OF TRADITION

The above historical description of Hindu Nationalism implicitly calls into question a particular understanding of Modernity and Tradition, as the twin frames through which the east and the west are framed in terms of religion, state-formation and nationalism. The assumption that nationalism is a product of the Enlightenment discourse of modernization, secularism and scientific progress, and that religious attachments are a pre-modern structure of feeling belonging to societies which were untouched by capitalism, underwrites this Tradition/Modernity divide.

Such an understanding has come in for a great detail of sustained criticism, from a variety of angles, including theoretical critiques of the Enlightenment, historical analyses of the processes of nation-building and state-formation and the like. I will briefly set out some of the critiques of the Tradition/Modernity divide, as it manifests itself in relation to religious nationalism, particularly since it will come to bear on the ensuing discussion in the following chapter on television and the response of Hindu nationalists to it. The point then, in signalling the now established critique of modernization theory, is to link it to a particular field: that of global media expansion, seen as a prime signifier of modernity, and the religious discourse and practice of particular Hindu nationalist governments to it. This linkage or articulation will thus frame the analysis that follows in subsequent chapters to clear up any misunderstanding that might ensue from unexamined assumptions that what we are witnessing is some kind of clash between tradition and modernity. Further, what is at stake in re-emphasizing the critique of Tradition and Modernity is the need to situate globalization centrally in the understanding of cultural nationalism as a process that transcends boundaries of the nation-state, either territorially or within the symbolic imaginary of those that follow it. As will be argued later, such a transcendence of the nation-state, like the supposed transcendence of space by time under global capitalism must be seen as a utopian and failed encounter, similar to the dialectical understanding of the supersession of contradiction through its reproduction.

In the following section, I shall look in particular at how questions around secularism, the prime bête-noire of religious nationalism in India, becomes a crucial discourse for dealing with questions of cultural belonging. The task below is framed historically, and further developed through a look at some recent discourses which coincide with the period under study. By thus updating the place of secularism as a

point of entry into the Tradition/Modernity question, I argue that contemporary developments in the discourse around secularism illustrate the impact of globalization in the ongoing construction of religious nationalism. This is not intended as a thorough-going and exhaustive investigation of the politics of secularism, but an investigation of its contemporary figurations as they bear on our understanding of globalization, national-identity formation and Hindutva.

Peter van der Veer has argued through a historical and theoretical analysis, first, that nationalism cannot be understood unless it is placed within a discourse of modernity, and secondly and more importantly, that the forms of nationalism that arose in colonial and post-colonial India could not be assigned simplistically within an Enlightenment discourse of secularism, rationality and “modern” state-formation. In the specific case of India, both “secular” nationalist discourse and religious nationalism were premised on a particular engagement with the question of religion. Van der Veer argues that even though the former is premised on a “common ethnic culture that is imagined as such”, while the latter, dubbed “communalism” bases itself on a “common religion” it is crucial to recognise that even for secular nationalism, religion was not extraneous, or immaterial to modern state-formation. Rather, the state is considered above the particular interests of different religious groups, and must harmonise these religious differences in the name of “the commonality of spiritual pursuits.”

While particular sections of commentators and defenders of secular nationalism in postcolonial India still hold onto the view that religion should be completely excised from the modern nation-state, Amartya Sen has rightly pointed out, developing van der Veer’s point, that secularism “as a principle... in the political sense requires the separation of the state from any particular religious order” but such an understanding need not imply “that the state must stay clear of any association with any religious matter whatsoever. Rather, what is needed is to make sure that insofar as the state has to deal with different religions and members of different religious communities, there must be a basic symmetry of treatment.” Secular nationalism then is predicated on treating different religious groups equally or symmetrically, rather than favouring one over the other. In principle, this is all fine, but given that the democratic state can never simply “represent the common interest”, and given that the universalisation of the particular interests of civil society in the person of the state remains a practical impossibility, the question of unequal power relations becomes crucial to critiquing the claims to “modernity”, “secularism as equality” and the like which animate discourses of secular nationalism under modernisation theory. Parenthetically, it needs emphasizing that those who conceive of secularism as the absolute separation of religion from politics, are unable to recognize the basic fact that the term “politics” implies a polis or community which is not the modernist notion of a group of individuals but also a conglomerate of people bound by certain common, though historically shifting and contradictory, senses of belonging that is partly religious. To abstract these complex affective social and cultural dimensions of the national population, and posit a “people” devoid of any substance, appeals to this form of secularism predicated on an absolute division between statecraft and religion inevitably fail. Praful Bidwai for

54 van der Veer, RN.
55 [bid., p. 42.
56 ibid., p.43.
58 Karl Marx’s “On The Jewish Question” provides one of the first influential, and concrete historical analysis of the religion-state question.
example is one of the most enthusiastic supporters of such a view, who argues that "it is illegitimate to equate tolerance with secularism, or derive the basis of secularism from religion. Secularism means the basic separation of religion from politics... religion and politics should not be mixed so that each can retain its integrity."  

The perceived difference between secular and religious nationalism is thus not a contradictory one, where the absence or presence of religion determines their opposition, but rather one of degree, what van der Veer calls a "moderate" and a "radical" nationalism. This is an important point to keep in mind given that as long as "secularism" is understood in its nationalist dimension as the absence of religion, such a view fails to recognize that religion plays a crucial role in all forms of Indian nationalism, rather than only in that of the Hindu nationalists. Our review above makes clear that whether it was Gandhian nationalism, or Indira Gandhi's post 1986 explicit appeal to religious beliefs, nationalism and the "national interest" were related to an idiom and practice that was at least partially religious in orientation. Historically, the idiom of Hinduism underwrote Gandhi's particular brand of Congress nationalism, and as Sandra Freitag has convincingly argued, the deployment of communal symbolism was a benchmark in gauging the Congress party's success at an all-India level. G. Balachandran has similarly pointed out that in settling factional disputes in the 1920s and 1930s, the Congress frequently resorted to playing the Hindu card.

Further, it is now widely agreed upon that Marxists in India have tended to view religion as antithetical to the development of a secular society. This understanding is generally correct, yet requires some fine-tuning. For example, as one of the country's Communist stalwarts and former Chief Minister of Kerala remarks "dialogue and cooperation between the believers and the Marxists...require each of them to understand where the other stands, but without giving up one's own ideological position, to cooperate with the other in practical life and struggles." Thus, according to this view, Marxism sees religious believers as their dialogic interlocutors rather than as absolute enemies. While it would be heartening to see such statements as signs of a rapprochement, they are undercut by statements like "For the Marxists...religion was the ideological weapon in the armoury of the bourgeoisie in its struggle against the ideology and practices of the working class...religion consoles the masses by saying that bearing the difficulties of a bourgeois-landlord dominated society in this world would enable them to reach "heaven" in the "other world." The Marxists therefore, consider it their sacred duty to disseminate among the working people the ideology of Marxism-Leninism which is based on materialist philosophy." Thus, despite some equivocation, the inability to recognize that matters of faith have historically been part of Marxist struggles (Liberation theology for example), and that Marxism cannot afford to set itself up in opposition to religion, does bring this particular kind of Marxism within that school of thought which understands secularism as anti-religion, rather than the sarva dharma sambhava concept of secularism. This strain of thought is particularly widespread among certain sections of the Indian left intelligentsia, and unfortunately hamper their ability to combat communalism. For example, Bipin Chandra in an otherwise nuanced and convincing essay on the nature of communalism and

strategies to fight it, begins by making the correct assertion that “religion as such is not responsible for communalism, nor does secularism require struggle against religion.” However, he immediately follows this statement with the following caveat with “But the intrusion of religion into secular fields has to be opposed. In particular, religion has to be completely separated or detached from the state and political and economic fields.”

This view, held by Bidwai, Chandra and others, is paradoxical. If one recognizes that religious faith and secular beliefs can be intertwined, how can one argue for their absolute separation in statecraft, politics or economics? All these fields are populated by human agents, rather than impersonal, dehumanized subjects. They function and operate within a field of sociality that is indeed specifically political or economic, but no less social or cultural, and the perspectives of selfhood, social belonging and responsibility, self and group interest, etc. all mediate the functioning of the political, economic and governmental fields. This cordoning off process, whereby secularists on the left impoverish the complexity of human agents is one symptom of the dubious divide between Tradition (Religion) and Modernity (statecraft, economics) which does not hold on close scrutiny.

Within the contemporary scenario, the lines between secularism and religious nationalism are blurring even further, more often than not, not because of a basic ideological rift but because of political exigencies. In the wake of the frontal attack on Sonia Gandhi's chairmanship of the Congress Party, she responded in an infamous speech, now dubbed the Vivekananda speech, that the Congress party was the true representative of Hinduism and toleration, rather than the BJP. This “soft Hindutva” line adopted by the Congress party is interesting because it does not drop appeals to secularism but combines it with a strategic redeployment of Hindutva as a means of combatting the BJP discourse that the Congress party is soft on minorities and isolated from mainstream Hindu culture. “It is tragic that Vivekananda who admired, appreciated and swore by India's pluralistic and composite heritage has been over the years sought to be appropriated by certain sections of our society who spread the politics of hate and antagonism, who reject the secular foundations of our ancient civilisation – that of tolerance, harmony and understanding of different faiths”, Gandhi argued. One might well ask whether the Congress' own discourse on Vivekananda is not itself an appropriation, and even more crucially, it is worth noting how his views are mapped onto that of the BJP (“our ancient civilisation”) and yet separated (“the secular foundations”). Thus, while the BJP claims that secularism is alien to “Indian civilisation”, Gandhi claims it is the very basis of it, using the same source of inspiration (Vivekananda).

If such supposedly secular organisations like the Congress political party resorted to outright religious appeals, the Hindu nationalists have not been averse to playing the “secular card”, particularly after the traumatic events following the demolition of the mosque in Ayodhya led to widespread criticism of its religious fanaticism and the strategic re-orientation of the BJP once it found itself in power, at the state levels such as Maharashtra and now in the centre as indicated above. In a court case brought against the Maharashtra Chief Minister, M.M. Joshi in 1995, the Supreme Court exonerated him, arguing that his appeals for making Maharashtra the first “Hindu state”,

65 For a similar view, that fails to provide any evidence in claiming that Indian nationalism was without religious overtones, see Interview with S. Gopal, “Indian nationalism is not Hindu nationalism”, Frontline, January 29, 1993, p.108.
was only the expression of a “hope” and that “no precise meaning can be ascribed to the terms “Hindu”, “Hindutva” and “Hinduism”, and no meaning in the abstract can confine it to the narrow limits of religion alone, excluding the content of Indian culture and heritage.” The verdict was a landmark in that it concurred with the vagueness that the term “Hindutva” evokes, and given that the latter is based more on notions of culture and civilisation rather than religion (Savarkar and Upadhyaya’s notions elaborated on above), it rendered a Hindutva-based politics immune from legal restriction on secular grounds.

Following the verdict, views were put forth that since Hinduism is the most tolerant of all religions in India, and tolerance is the basis of secularism, Hinduism is the true secularism of the country. More importantly, appeals to the court were also based on the secular principle of equality reflecting what Amartya Sen terms the “symmetrical relationship of the state to religions: “All citizens are equal and there shall be no discrimination between one citizen and another, on grounds of his (sic) religion ,” argued the BJP president, L.K. Advani.68 This particular brand of secularism which Rajeev Bhargava has dubbed “positive secularism” is marked by a refusal to treat religious and non-religious matters on an equal footing, favours a particular religion over others and actively solicits the functions of the state for this goal. As Bhargava rightly argues, this form of secularism has almost no relation to secularism understood as either absolute separation of the state from religion, or the sarva dharma sambhava school of thought. Yet it parades itself precisely as the true secularism through the equation of tolerance with religion (Hinduism) and secularism.69 This strategy points out that to think in terms of secularism and religious nationalism as opposites, or to assume that the supporters of each can be assigned specific positions on either side of the divide is wholly inadequate in calibrating the political fluidity within which such discourses circulate.

The overlap between Hindu nationalism and so-called secular nationalisms is spread over many different discourses and practices and I will toward closing this retrospective look back at the critique of the Tradition/Modernity divide, briefly signal one last element of this overlap, an element which will be put into play in interesting fashion in the subsequent chapter. In a collection of evidence put forward to the government of India, as proof of the existence of the Ram Janmabhumi Mandir at Ayodhya, the VHP used a range of appeals to argue its case, which clearly do not fall within any neat divide between fact and fiction, history and mythology that a traditional view on modernisation theory assumes. Interestingly, mimicking the recent deployment of a discourse which claims Hinduism is the “true secularism” of the nation, the book begins with the following passage: “in the current political parlance Islamic imperialism masquerades as secularism while Indian nationalism gets branded as “Hindu communalism.”...Islam has never learnt to argue its case with facts or logic. All through its history, it has relied on the sword and street riots.”70 The quote evidences a number of discursive displacements. Indian nationalism now becomes Hindu nationalism, which as van der Veer has argued above, is not necessarily incorrect given that it was a radical nationalism that could be termed Indian nationalism. However, it sets itself against not just Islamic imperialism, but a few lines earlier, a “Stalinist sub-version of Indian nationalism.” Thus, Indian nationalism was only that Hindu nation-

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National Scripts in a Global Frame

alism based on a “common religious identity” while other models such as secular nationalisms are branded “Stalinist subversion”. Secondly, a clear equation is made between scientific rationality (“facts or logic”) and Hindu nationalism, while Muslim arguments for the mosque are branded as based on sheer physical force rather than reasoned argument. This saturation of the field of nationalism to Hindu nationalism, and the appeal to facticity, logic and reason enable Hindutva to be seen as a discourse and movement that cannot be easily circumscribed within the boundaries of tradition understood as illogical, anti-rational or anti-historical (the title of the book is *History versus Casuistry*). Rather, through an interested reading of history, it rewrites Hinduism on the “modern” side of the Tradition/Modernity divide, by framing it in strictly rationalist and scientific terms, while Islam is consigned to a violent, irrational frame of reference that falls into the domain of “tradition.”

The hierarchial structure of Hindutva does limit the claims to its flexibility and within the contemporary scenario, its simultaneous flexibility and hierarchism reproduces the features of early Hindu Nationalism we encountered in Upadhyaya and Savarkar. For example, M. S. Golwalkar, the co-founder of the RSS with S. P. Mookerjee in 1952 had argued “The non-Hindu peoples in Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but those of glorification of the Hindu race and culture...in a word, they must cease to be foreigners, or may stay in this country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment – not even citizen’s rights.”71 By linking nationhood to culture (*sanskriti*) and language, race, religion and territory, Hindutva seems expansive in its scope yet as the quote reveals, it demands a price to be paid by those who are not followers of Hinduism as defined in its semitic form. In case this passage is seen as a relic of the past, it is worth reminding that more than 50 years later, L. K. Advani, president of the BJP argued that “in India, nationalism and patriotism divested of its Hindu element do not have any meaning, any force, any dynamism.”72 Or M. M. Joshi of the BJP, in January 1991 – “I say that all Indian Muslims are Mohammadia Hindus, All Indian Christians are Christi Hindus. They are Hindus who have adopted Christianity and Islam as their religions.”73

This simultaneous inclusive and hierarchical structure enables a certain form of flexibility that is being used to great effect at the present moment. For example, in the wake of the ongoing controversy surrounding conversions to Christianity and the move toward reconversion by Hindu groups such as the VHP, BJP general secretary K N Govindcharya argued that given the accelerating antagonism between religions the solution was “Indianisation of all religions. An Indian kind of Protestantism will evolve in due course because sectarianism is not in the ethos of this country...because the urge is innate in the Indian ethos.” This form of inclusiveness is matched by an insistence on the primacy of Hinduism, however – “We are already a Hindu rashtra. If you accept that the nation and the state are not co-terminous, then, geo-culturally we are a Hindu nation. This is because a sense of belonging is embedded in the spirit of Hinduness, which, in turn, is the result of living together and sharing the same *sanskriti* for millennia.” The inclusiveness of Hinduism is based not on a recognition of the specificity of other religions but within a framework where it must adhere to Hinduism, under-

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73 Ibid.
stood in the vague terms of *sanskriti* and belonging. The crucial move is in subsuming Indianess to Hinduness – “Hindu Rashtra or Hinduness also means Bharatiyaness, Indianess. They are all synonymous.”

Since culture or *sanskriti* is the basis of this belonging and not religion per se (the appeals to religion are present everywhere as the quote above illustrates, yet is linked sometimes to *sanskriti* in ways which expand what Hinduness could mean), any critiques of religious nationalism can be brushed aside in the name of *sanskriti*. Thus the VHP general secretary can claim that culture and not religion is the basis of nationality and that religion “was between god and the individual.”

Even Govindacharya, whose strongly hierarchical subsumption of other religious groups to Hinduism we encountered above, is not hesitant to use secularist discourse. He justifies the recent attacks on Christian missionaries since their conversion techniques “vitiate the spirit of secularism” by taking recourse to “allurement and fraudulent means.”

Further, the simultaneous overlapping and contradictory discourse around secularism by both Hindu Nationalists and “secularists” like Sonia Gandhi, exemplifies what I would term a switching of codes in the discourse of nationalism, where each side takes shifting positions on an issue depending on the particular balance of power at a particular historical conjuncture, and the legitimate discursive resources at hand (“soft Hindutva” for the Congress-I, “positive secularism” for the BJP). The code through which meaning is produced around terms like “secularism” and “Hindutva” secures a certain, provisional discursive legitimacy for the agent of such an enunciation, and displaces the field of struggle as a consequence. For example, while prior to the rise of the BJP as a national force, the debate ranged along the lines of secularism and its opponents, as a result of the changes in the meaning of the term, the threat of force by the state and recent legal rulings, the debates now range between both “true secularists” and “pseudo- secularists”, and “true Hindus” and “false Hindus”.

This blurry line between the discursive strategies of opponents, ranged along the line of tradition and modernity call the latter into question, precisely because of the crosshatching of different discursive domains. Such manoeuvres have been accurately categorised by Partha Chatterjee, in his convincing reading of Marx and Gramsci, as “the development of a thesis by incorporating a part of the anti-thesis.”

Chatterjee offers a reading of such dialectical crosshatching of discursive resources as a crucial element in understanding how the consolidation of hegemony works. Like our reading of Guha and Gramsci above illustrated, hegemony works partly at the level of consensual production through the borrowing of resources between opponents and the switching of codes of their conceptual frameworks. In Guha’s analysis, this worked in favour of a re-orientation and passification of mass peasant unrest in the interests of the Indian bourgeois class. In the context of our present discussion on secularism, and the Tradition/Modernity divide, the shift in sign-systems through the equating of different discourses (Sonia Gandhi: Secularism=Hinduism=Congress ideology; BJP: Hinduism = Secularism=Hindutva) illustrates what Gayatri Spivak terms a “functional change in sign-systems.”

The discursive malleability of Hindu Nationalism, indeed all political movements, must thus be situated at the level of the production of meaning, not out of nowhere, as absolute novelty, but through the strategic borrowing of

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75 “Sansad won’t pose threat to minorities, says VHP leader”, TOI, February 5, 1999, p. 9.
76 “Saffron Tricolour”.
conceptual frameworks, and their redeployment toward different goals in the construction of hegemony. In the process, the possibility of maintaining a clean divide between Tradition and Modernity collapses. As Chatterjee succinctly puts it, this particular stage in the construction of hegemony, or "the moment of manoeuvre" is marked by the "historical consolidation of the 'national' by decrying the 'modern'."79 His focus at this point was on Gandhi, and like Guha he argues that Gandhi's passive revolution was predicated on "the preparation for expanded capitalist production by resort to an ideology of anti-capitalism."80 Our present concerns reproduce this familiar logic, although the struggle in our discussion at this specific point is around the production of different discourses on secularism and Hindutva, rather than anti-capitalism and capitalist expansion. The discursive modality of "a functional change in sign-systems" still obtains, and while our present discussion is not explicitly ranged at the level of class interest (Guha and Chatterjee's focus), it is not unrelated to capitalism and class. As we shall see, particularly in the discourse around Swaraj and Swadeshi, by the BMS, the SJM, and the BJP, similar conceptual redeployments and shifts in signification are effected, in the consolidation of the "national" by decrying the "modern" in relation to globalization and capitalist expansion. That is, like Gandhian thought in the mode of operation, yet different in historical substance, capitalist expansion is prepared for and welcomed yet discursively opposed in the name of "Indian Hindu culture", Swadeshi and Swaraj. The consequences for thinking Modernity and Tradition in their Manichean form becomes even harder to sustain with such an acknowledgement.

By analyzing the discourse of secularism, both in its historical development and in the contemporary moment, it becomes quite apparent that the notion of an age-old tradition, essentialist in character and rigid in its modality of existence, cannot be ranged against some kind of modernist notion of science, reason and secular statecraft. Further, the flexibility of defining "Hinduness" puts paid to any notion that such religious nationalism is therefore all-inclusive and non-hierarchical. This twin dimension of hierachical structure/ideology of Hindutva, and its mode of existence outside the narrowly-defined twin frames of Tradition and Modernity informs the concluding theoretical considerations of this chapter, through the specific discourse of globalization.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS II: GLOBAL IMAGINARIES, RELIGIOUS BELONGING AND HINDU NATIONALISM

Hansen rightly calls attention to the relationship between discourses of cultural difference and contemporary processes of globalization, and his words are particularly important for signalling the need for a networked understanding of Hindu Nationalism as it blurs rigid categories of modernity, tradition, the local and the global, culture and economics, and spirituality and materialism. "What Hindu nationalists desire", he argues, "is recognition of themselves and India by western powers, but a recognition through assertion of cultural difference and assertion of India's sovereignty and self-determination. The so-called "consumer-goods revolution" in India in the 1980s, the spread of satellite TV, and India's entanglement in global economic and cultural flows made the question of India's place in the global order one of crucial

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79 Chatterjee, Nationalist Thought, p. 51.
80 Ibid., p. 51.
importance." Hansen rightly situates religious nationalism within this network of relations, yet his understanding of Hindu nationalism as offering "ideological fantasies" to counter the threat of "hedonic excesses" in the wake of "western consumerism and modern technology" requires some modulation. There is no gainsaying that a part of Hindu nationalist discourse, particularly by groups like the BMS and the SJM fall within this category of defensive nationalism; yet, if one attends to the present strategies for consolidating and widening the appeal of Hindutva, particularly in its global dimensions, it becomes apparent that both consumerism and technology are integral to this process. One needs to thus move beyond the particular discursive terminology of Hindu Nationalism and articulate it to the shifting practices and modalities through which it constructs itself. This section will map out the particular global modalities of Hindu Nationalism, in order to show that Hansen's above understanding does indeed obtain, but it co-exists with an enthusiastic, and I would argue consumerist, high-tech engagement with the "fruits of globalization."

In the last few months of the year 2000, six hundred years after Christian missionaries landed on the shores of India, a group of Brahmin priests are being trained to depart for foreign shores, to carry the message of Hinduism to diasporic communities across the world, from Mauritius and Singapore, to the U.S and Great Britain. This classically "modern" strategy of conversion, which was never a "traditional" scripturally-legitimated practice of Hinduism illustrates the profound sea-change through which Hinduism under contemporary globalization is redrawing our understandings of the nation-state, territory, religious and cultural belonging, temporality and space. In the U.S., and Europe, the Overseas Friends of the BJP (OFBJP) are consolidating an energetic transnational Hindu community in the steps of the VHP, with a global proselytizing mission. At the eve of the millenium, Francois Gautier, writing in the Indian Express proclaimed: "But there is something infinitely more important, which India can bring to the West. And that is her spirituality. India is a vast and ancient land which alone has managed to keep within herself thanks to the stubborn will of her people and by the silent tapasaya of her yogis hidden in their Himalayan caves the immaculate truth, the ultimate knowledge, the secret of our destiny. At a time when the world has never been as disoriented as it is now; at a time when mankind is erring on the road to evolution; at a time when man has forgotten the 'why' and 'how' of his existence and all religions have failed, India holds the key to man's future. And what is this knowledge? It is not some mystical, faraway and smoky Utopia, but a pragmatic, down-to-earth, Cartesian knowledge which can be put immediately into practice. Take pranayama, for instance, the most exacting, precise, mathematical, powerful breathing discipline one can dream of. Its effects and results have been observed and categorised by Indian yogis for millennia and it brings in, very quickly, wonderful results in both the well-being of the body and the quietude of the mind." Recently, an agreement was signed between BR films, the makers of the highly popular Mahabharata series and Indiagames, a computer games company to create a computer game based on the TV serial that will be accessible worldwide through the Internet. The RSS now offers cybershakas on the Internet where one can sit in one's room anywhere in the globe and participate in the regular exercises and drills of the organization using one's computer. E-Prarthana, an Internet site provides the faithful with the

81 Hansen, Saffron Wave, p.12
83 Francois Gautier, "India as a teacher in a New Era", Indian Express, Jan. 3, 2000 (courtesy www.VHPorg)
daily opportunity to offer prayers ("click on a deity") to more than 450 temples in India "for all your personal and business needs and get the blessings shipped to you." (www.eparthana.com). For every archana performed, devotees are guaranteed two free gifts like a designer Ganesha clock, while its "shopping mall" provides instantaneous purchase of statues, books, cassettes and CDs. The dissemination of Hinduism throughout the globe, through the activities of the VHP, the OFBJP, the RSS calling itself the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS) outside India and several affiliate organizations and networks of support such as the American Hindu Students' Council and other "cultural heritage" organizations and numerous religious groups and foundations set up by diasporic Indian Hindu communities, particularly in the West, are clear evidence of the bankruptcy of a view that sees narrow, sectarian, national or sub-national, and pre-modern responses as the necessary outcome of globalization. From the above instances one can observe a startling and confusing array of discourses. Hindu missionaries that will be setting off abroad are trained in the ancient scriptures such as the Vedas, the performance of religious rituals such as naming ceremonies and marriages, and are also required to be proficient in English and knowledge of Christianity so that they can counter arguments against their faith. Further, such missionary work is highly lucrative, with the performance of ceremonies yielding dollars that could hardly be matched in India – "The Hindu Temple Society [in the U.S. and Canada] said the proliferation of Hindu temples overseas has proved to be a godsend for Indian priests eager to move to richer pastures, targetting Indians settled abroad. And although overseas Hindu religious organizations play a major role in importing priests, many manage to secure appointments through networking skills and personal contacts. At the end of it all, it is worth the trouble as priestly duties can have material benefits too. A name-giving ceremony, for instance, costs the patron $31 in Singapore. The sacred thread ceremony, essential for all traditional Brahmins costs $101 and a marriage ceremony, $251. Charges for all rituals and ceremonies double when conducted at home. Some temples allow their priests to freelance but take a percentage of the income earned. The younger priests have reportedly become more outgoing, convinced their earning capacity overseas is tremendous, especially for those with an appealing ecclesiastical manner."84

The Internet has become a crucial medium for redrawing the space of the "Hindu nation" and the Global Hindu Electronic Network, GHEN is one example of the marriage of hi-tech media and "traditional" values in the ongoing construction of Hindu Nationalism. The Nation of Hindutva group argues that "the primary weapon in the defense of the Hindu Rashtra has been identified as information and publicity. This is achieved by targetting all forms of media and promoting the cause of the Hindu Rashtra through the various media channels. With the incredible surge in popularity of the internet as one of the major forms of publication, it is essential that the Hindu community are able to keep up with things. The vast array of anti-Hindu and anti-Indian propaganda being spread around via the medium of the internet means that it is becoming increasingly necessary for this disinformation to be countered. It is here that the Nation of Hindutva website aims to strike, and by publishing information, as well as acting as a resource center to various other related sites on the WWW, the website aims to promote the cause of the Hindu Rashtra internationally."85

The historical transnational movement of particular middle-class Indian Hindu populations, and their evolving material prosperity provide one of the crucial condi-
tions of possibility for such a global re-orientation of Hindutva. While this global character of Hindutva is not novel (ideologically, it was presaged in the appeals to German ethnic nationalism we encountered above, while the “anthropology of blood” that marked Savarkar’s discourse on race (jati) provided a legitimate basis for thinking of a global Hindu community), under contemporary forms of globalization, in particular the entrenchment of power centres among Hindu diasporic communities, in terms of economic clout, increasing political and social presence (witness the power of the “Indian lobby” in Washington and the wooing of “model Indians” as mascots for a multiculturalist Conservative party in Great Britain), and the increasingly quick and efficient modes of communication and travel, Hindutva has indeed gone global in a big way.86 This combination of the movements of people, the entrenchment of economic power in the West (for example, the Hinduja NRI family in the U.K. were the first contributors to the religion section of the Millenium Dome in Greenwich), the ease of global travel and the development of instantaneous communication networks such as the Internet, fax and email, all provide for an understanding of Hindu nationalism that cannot be mapped easily in terms of the global and the local.87

In the process, the distinction between nation and state is being redrawn in different ways. While the hyphen between the nation-state is being dangerously collapsed within the nation, at a transnational level, the nation-state division is being expanded dramatically, where belonging is not being defined in terms of citizenship but religious and cultural belonging. In the former case, as we have seen in our discussion above, the collapse of the “Hindu nation” onto the “Indian nation” is being performed even more energetically, extending early Hindu nationalist understandings of race and culture in the discourse of secularism; in the latter case, religious/cultural belonging is linked both to state power (such as the active fundraising campaigns of the VHP and the BJP) as well as the formulation of a global religious community made possible through migration, economic well-being, nostalgia and high-tech communications and travel – the capture of the nation-state is only one of the objectives.

If capital now flows with greater agility and through faster and more complex channels across national territories, religious imaginaries and senses of belonging are not far behind. In certain ways, the strong emotive appeals fuelled by nostalgia and racism experienced by diasporic communities, and the feeling of vulnerability and aggression evidenced by Hindu nationalists within India connect in increasingly complex ways. In a recent article in the Times of India titled “Brand problems of a religious multinational”, Swaminathan Aiyar argues that most religions can “be explained in the language of marketing managers” and goes on to point out that present-day votaries of Hindutva, despite their claims to asceticism, swadeshi and anti-western values, enthusiastically solicit funds and support from Indians abroad.88 Further, Dominic Gautier reminds us in his enthusiasm for Hindutva as the panacea of the ills of contemporary life that “India is also a bastion of the pro-western, open-minded, English-speaking, highly cultured upper and middle classes...No western nation could wish a friendlier country than India, whose elite dreams of sending their sons and daughters to study in Harvard!”89

85 http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Lobby/9089/aims.html
86 I borrow the term “anthropology of blood” from Chetan Bhatt, Liberation and Purity, pp.190-1.
89 Gautier, “India as a teacher in a New Era.”
Hindutva's appeal to the world rests paradoxically on its age-old wisdom, its ancient culture, yet this same culture is highly "cartesian" and "mathematical". It has sages "hidden in their caves in the Himalayas" and it has westward-bound middle-class elites who dream of enjoying the pleasures of the affluent First World. It is within this matrix of nostalgia, unfulfilled dreams, rising economic prosperity for the middle-classes and a syncretic "mathematical" religious world that the globalization of Hindutva needs to be understood. As we will see later, the very contours of cultural nationalism in its engagement with global television are closely linked to these very dimensions. That is, if globalization is integrally related to transnational modes of belonging, cultural nationalism is similarly linked to such globalized imaginaries crystallised around television.

Let us look at one example in contemporary popular discourse on the relationship between satellite TV in its global modality and culture talk. In a BBC Newstalk radio programme on January 10, 1999, whose topic was the global satellite revolution, the programme got predictably framed within terms of "cultural homogenization." The BBC's Indian correspondent Andrew Whitehead reminded the host that most popular satellite programming in India was locally produced and highly culture-specific. Whitehead's reminder was most apposite and as we shall see in the following chapter it is cultural difference that underwrites global television and provides scripts of belonging which, while not univocal, do tap into, feed and re-articulate particular notions of belonging that are both national and trans-national. They are national in the sense that they feed into certain archetypal framings of the "Indian nation" as Hindu, while at the same time emphasize a trans-national sense of belonging that is both non-national, primarily through consumerism, yet this consumerism is understood through the particular cultural framings and understandings of specific audiences. A caller from Pakistan had to remind the show host that a "global urban culture" had resulted from global media and urban dwelling audiences possessed hybrid viewing tastes and lifestyles, who could move between watching English films on STAR TV and national TV, wearing jeans and salwar kameez. Such a global urban culture does not belong to a specific national population or audience (such a notion is itself out-dated and cannot acknowledge fragmented viewing groups); however, it does not mean it is hybrid in the sense of not-belonging anywhere, or belonging on the border, in liminal space.

The notion of hybridity as rootlessness as a necessary consequence of attending to globalization and cultural politics is hampered in many ways. This form of hybridity however, obtains adjacent to other forms of cultural identity-formation, particularly within such a globalized social imaginary. For example, in the same BBC programme, an irate caller from India condemned the BBC for portraying the Hindu nationalist-led BJP government in India as fascist and criticizing politicians like L. K. Advani. He couched his criticism by comparing Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Malaysia, where Muslims are a minority population yet their states are not labelled "fascist" by news reporters, who he claimed were victims of global "Muslim intimidation". This awareness of religious and state-formations on a global scale, their comparison to India and the consequent defence of Hindu nationalism is one marker of how both awareness of, and the vindication of Hindu nationalism is linked to increasing comprehension of the globe through media, and the targeting of the media for religious nationalist purposes. Even more significant was Whitehead's response, who promptly agreed with the caller
that the BJP was a democratic party, India was a vibrant democracy and the advent of the BJP “has been a landmark in the development of India’s democracy”. He refuted that it was “an anti-Muslim” party, even as the Indian caller branded “Muslim groups” as “violent”. The developing argument ended up praising the BJP for being a democratic party while Muslims were termed violent. The particular global circulation of such a discourse, that is also reproduced by international media which immediately pay obeisance to Indian culture, democracy and the like, when faced with criticism, requires a rethinking of our received understandings of religious nationalism as nation-bound and pre-modern, and global media as “imperialist”, homogenizing or disrespectful of difference. It is at this global, mediated level, that a great deal more rethinking needs to be done on how culture and religion is the site for a complex, transnational politics of nationalism.

If the kind of religious belonging we encounter above, in its global dimensions, is described as hybrid, this is a form of hybridity that can be accurately characterized as one of multiple-belongingness, rather than of “homelessness” or liminality. I would term it a hybridity that is multiply-grounded, belonging both here and there, where such a notion does not imply simply a binary sense of belongingness, but the possibility of placing oneself in different locations at once. The resurgence of Hindu Nationalism is not one which claims a “loss of home”; rather, it redraws what “home” means as a place of belonging, and maps it in ways which are highly complex, located at the national and sub-national level, while also at a transnational level. A “friend of the BJP” can easily straddle a position of belonging to the “Hindu nation” as well as being a model entrepreneur of post-Thatcherite New Labour Britain. This is not a position of “not-belonging” but of multiple-belonging. No necessary contradiction is felt in being a upper middle-class, suburban professional in the West and a “Hindu” national and faithful adherent to Brahminical authority. Hence, my argument for understanding the adherents of Hindu nationalism and the latter’s ideological and organizational strategies is not premised on an agonistic discourse of “homelessness”, “loss of identity” and confusion. This globalized, and diasporized movement asserts its self-confidence and moral legitimacy precisely because it can straddle different temporalities and spaces, and not inspite of the latter.

Such a “situated” notion of hybridity as multiple belonging understood in relation to the global dimensions of Hindutva would also respond to recent critiques of the complex geo-historical landscapes which go under terms like “globalization”, “globalization”, “hybridity” and “nomadism”. While this is not the place to go into a detailed genealogy of these terms, what they in different, and sometimes highly problematic ways signal, is the redundancy of thinking in the old anthropological terms of the “local” as a clearly demarcated space of opposition to something called “globalization” from the outside. This is an important reminder, yet it is not one that is universally accepted. For example, in a recent article, a fairly sophisticated defence of indigeneity is launched in the problematic terms of the “local”. In “Mapping the Glocal Village”, W.H. Thornton argues that the critique of the dividing line between “universalism and particularism, modernity and tradition” by theorists such as Roland Robertson, Mike Featherstone and Dorreen Massey is “abetting global commercial interests” since “the resulting hybrid demythologizes locality as an independent sphere of values”. This “locality” for Thornton, is exemplified by an “elemental particularism that... [just says no] to globalization.”

While there is no doubt that global capitalism does operate through a blurring of the “local”, such as the hybrid strategies of media networks, the intellectual endeavour to understand the contemporary geo-historical landscape cannot afford to resurrect a notion of “locality” that “says no” to globalization. Even the act of saying “no”, in whatever form that may take, does entail an engagement with globalization. In my estimation, only an absolute separation and non-knowledge of the processes of globalization and its effects could enable “an independent sphere of values.” It would be neither empirically accurate or politically effective to start defending the “local” as some privileged site from which to counter globalization. In the context of the present discussion, the particular global/local modalities of Hindu nationalism call into question both terms of the divide, not in the name of a pristine local landscape but through a radical interrogation of thinking globality as “Western”, “capitalist”, or homogenizing, and the “local” as pre-modern, archaic and static. Rather, it is precisely because Hindu nationalism can deploy media-savvy English speaking missionaries schooled in Brahminical scriptures across the globe, claim scientific authority and Cartesian rationality for practices like Yoga, involve diasporic communities in cyber-poojas at village temples in India and actively solicit funds from highly-educated diasporic communities in the East and West, that the “local” needs to be rethought. Further, such a recognition also calls into question a notion of globalization as a homogenizing, western-directed process, since it would not be able to acknowledge that the votaries of economic liberalization and Hindu nationalism in India are also found among well-placed diasporic communities and NRIs in the West. Aiyar probably hits the nail on the head when he argues that Hindu nationalism is a religious multinational, not dissimilar to TNMCS, and its operations require a profound rethink of the relationship between culture, senses of belonging, globalization, media and economics.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In his ground-breaking critical Marxist analysis of the discourse of Indian nationalism, Partha Chatterjee emphasized that the modes of enunciation of the discourse of Indian nationalism, and their modes of legitimation (the “thematic” and “problematic”) provide a relevant mode for analyzing the discursive construction of Indian nationalism. He signals that such a double approach separates “the claims of an ideology i.e. its identification of historical possibilities and the practical or programmatic forms of its realization, from its justificatory structures, i.e. the nature of the evidence it presents in support of those claims.”91 The above reading of Hindu Nationalism is predicated on an implicit double-structure, that situates the particular ideologies of Hindu Nationalism in its construction and shifting deployment. Further, it moves beyond the analysis of sentences, words and enunciations to situate them at the level of the “problematic”, to illuminate the successes and failures of this discourse in varying historical circumstances according to particular legitimatory regimes.

Thus, the above narrative of Hindu Nationalism articulates discursive enunciation to their practical conditions of possibility and failure, in the field of political practice and social relations. As elaborated on above, it combines an analysis of social relations, the concern of social theory, with the ideological construction of subjectivity, at the level of individual and group belonging. By thus locating itself within a network of different levels of the social formation, in the coming to hegemony of Hindu Nationalism,

91 Chatterjee, Nationalist Thought, p. 38.
the narrative above operates on the level of “historical possibilities” and “practical realization.”\textsuperscript{92} It is this understanding of hegemony as a process of struggle for intellectual and moral leadership, with the threat of force operating as a last resort, and ideology as a shifting articulation of elite discourse with group “consciousness” that structures my analysis.

Such a mode of analysis, that concretizes the vicissitudes of the Hindu nationalist movement at different levels of the social formation, including ideological analysis, historical context and political practice, has also necessitated a further rethinking of the established critique of Tradition and Modernity, and by updating this critique through an analysis of the contemporary debates around secularism, I have extended the applicability of the critique toward an understanding of Hindu Nationalism’s engagement with global television, which informs the concerns of the following chapter. That is, to the extent that the debate around secularism illustrates the strategic borrowing of different discourses at particular historical conjunctures, the same strategy of what Chatterjee calls the “movement of manoeuvre”, is deployed in the engagement with global television. As “race”, nation and “culture”, get rewritten beyond the frames of the nation-state as the unit of analysis, and given the globalizing dimensions of Hindu Nationalism, this transnational frame of reference for the construction of indigeneity enables the Hindu Nationalist movement to engage with such prime signifiers of modernity like satellite technology and global media in the construction of a pan-Indian notion of Hindutva and affective belonging.

The closing theoretical concern on globalization extended the explicit transnational construction of Hindutva ideology (such as in Upadhyaya’s “Integral Hinduism”) to the practical mobilization of Hindu Nationalism in a global frame, in relation to media like television and the internet, and the crucial role of diasporic communities in the construction of indigeneity. This focus results in a questioning of the nation and the state as the frames for understanding neo-traditional movements like Hindu Nationalism. It needs emphasizing here, that this complex development does not mean that the nation-state is irrelevant as a unit of analysis. Rather, it restitutes the relationship of the state, by linking it to diasporic communities abroad, the financialization of the globe and the transnational communication networks which link the nation-state to groups beyond its borders. Thus, the nation-state is still an important player in any sociological analysis of global religious movements like Hindu Nationalism. But it cannot be understood anymore, as a self-enclosed unit of analysis, or the sole basis for understanding nationalisms of all sorts. As Etienne Balibar has observed “borders have stopped marking the limits where politics ends because the community ends.”\textsuperscript{93} As we have seen, the “community of the faithful” for Hindu Nationalism obeys no logic of state-defined territoriality, and mapping the borders of nationalism remains a futile task if it sticks to such an emphasis. Balibar rightly argues that the complexity of thinking about borders does not entail the conclusion that we live in a “borderless world”. As we have seen, it is precisely through the global “borderlessness” of Hindu Nationalism, that borders are being drawn (the ideology of “true Hindus”, “true secularists”, etc.). The point rather, is that one must grasp contemporary religious nationalisms on a changing map where “borders are both multiplied and reduced in their localization and their function, they are being thinned out and dou-

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., p. 40

bled..."\textsuperscript{94} It is this dialectic of diss-attachment and re-attachment across an imaginary landscape where borders remain unfixable in time and space, through which Hindu Nationalism operates. As one can already see, the mass media, in particular satellite television lends itself to such an understanding, in terms of the “territory” of operation (at a planetary scale beyond state control), the problematic relation to the nation-state and the affective power of cultural belonging. It is precisely this relationship, between a globalized and “borderless” Hindu Nationalism that is busy drawing lines between friends and enemies, and global television that the following chapter addresses. In such a context, Arjun Appadurai’s characterisation of the relationship between belonging and global media is instructive: “it may be time to rethink monopatriotism, patriotism directed exclusively to the hyphen between nation and state... many of these new sovereignties are inherently postnational.”\textsuperscript{95}

The discursive and material rearticulation of nationalism in the idiom of Hindutva and “cultural belonging”, reorients our understandings of both nationalism and the galvanizing power of the nation-state in securing a notion of belonging among its subjects. Within the present global frame of reference, the consequent blurring of the dividing line between tradition and modernity, resituates nationalism within a cosmopolitical outlook where the construction of belonging and the imagination of community transcends the borders of the nation-state and is integrally linked to the mass-mediated integration of the globe.

\textsuperscript{94} Ibid, p. 220.  \textsuperscript{95} Appadurai, \\textit{Modernity at Large}, p. 176.
Blind Faith?

Tanishq Diamonds advertisement, 1999. (detail)
Sebastião Salgado, Rajasthan Canal Works, India 1989. (detail)