


# CONTESTING VISIONS OF NATIONALISM IN COLONIAL INDIA (1900-1930)

*Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru  
University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the award of the Degree of*  
**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**



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2001



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**CERTIFICATE**

This dissertation entitled “**CONTESTING VISIONS OF NATIONALISM IN COLONIAL INDIA (1900-30)**”, submitted in partial fulfillment of **Master of Philosophy** degree of the university, has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other university and is my original work.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I wish to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Bhagwan Josh, without whose constant guidance, suggestions and support this dissertation would not have been possible. The encouragement I got from my family also helped keep up my morale. Last but not the least, I thank my friends, particularly Ravi Kant, whose valuable suggestions went a long way in giving final shape to this work.

Finally, I thank the Indian Council for Historical Research for giving me financial assistance for this dissertation.

**Vikas Pathak**

# INTRODUCTION

## I

Existing historiography on Indian nationalism has generally tended to overlook the role played by the experiences of pan-Indian community identity formations in the complex process of the development of nationalist consciousness in India. Much scholarly work has gone into the construction of a paradigm which sees Indian nationalism as essentially 'secular' and 'anti-imperialist'; as an internally coherent monolith which relates antagonistically to notions of community (read 'communal') identity. This is not to suggest that alternative conceptualizations have not been attempted. In fact, recent researches have sought to extricate community identities from the pejorative confines of 'communalism' and study them independently as discourses on community-based nationalism. However, even such independent analyses, as attempted by Christopher Jaffrelot and John Zavos, have not been very illuminating from the stand-point of a broad conceptualization of the complexities of Indian nationalism; for they tantamount to studying specific parts of the Indian nationalist consciousness without clearly bringing out their relationships with the other parts as also with the whole.

The purpose of this dissertation is to capture the complexities of the development of nationalist consciousness in India by seeking to comprehend how various currents operating within the pan-Indian space constructed their own visions of nationalism and premised their politics on them. Not only does this entail a rejection of the ‘secular-communal’ dichotomy – which sees the ‘secular’ alone as nationalist and locates the ‘communal’ in an antagonistic relationship to nationalism – but also an appreciation of various currents of politics as contesting currents for the construction of specific visions of nationalism. It is noteworthy that these visions were meant by their respective ideologues to have an over-bearing impact on the ‘cultural complexion’<sup>1</sup> of the post-independence Indian nation.

This dissertation seeks to broaden the ambit as well as meaning of nationalism in the context of colonial India. In line with this expansion in the realm of ‘nationalism’, the meanings of ‘national movement’ and nationalist struggle also undergo a corresponding change. Having discarded the categories ‘communal’ and ‘secular’, Indian nationalism can now be sought to be conceptualized, for analytical convenience, in a heterogeneity constituted by three categories. These categories present themselves not as water-tight compartments, but as fluid entities engaged in constant dialogue with one another for appropriating the nationalist space in favour of their respective visions of nationalism.

## II

### THE THREE CATEGORIES OF NATIONALIST VISION

The ideologues of the first category of nationalist vision believed that nationalism should be free from cultural contamination. Not only did the people who held this vision not participate in communitarian politics, but they also viewed it as a negative force vis-à-vis nationalism. Theirs was a 'territorial nationalism' based on the complete negation of the community-centered discourse. To be placed in this category are men like Gokhale, Ranade, Pherozeshah Mehta, Surendra Nath Bannerjee and later, Jawahar Lal Nehru.

The second category of nationalist vision was almost the anti-thesis of the first. The ideologues of this kind of nationalist construction imagined<sup>2</sup> a nation with the 'cultural complexion' of their own religious community. They were cultural nationalists for whom the nation became identical with the community not by way of being peopled exclusively by members of that community, but in the sense that the cultural core of the nation would be reflective of the 'cultural internality'<sup>3</sup> of that community. The ideologues of this vision of nationalism were in a relationship of almost incessant contest and antagonism with those of the first category of nationalist vision. Men like Bhai Parmanand, Savarkar, Hedgewar and Golwalkar can be situated in the second category.

The individuals constituting the third enclosure of nationalist vision contended that there was no contradiction between community interests and the vision of a composite nation. They were spatially located between the

first two categories; for they accepted the nationalist vision of the first category alongwith an accommodation of the community consciousness of the second. They felt that the two kinds of interests could be harmonized, balanced and properly represented through participation in the Congress – led movement, on the one hand, and having negotiations between representatives of communities, on the other. Not only were the ideologues of this vision engaged, at different times, in acrimonious debates – on the desirability of a composite nation and the strategy to be employed for its realization – with those representing other categories of nationalist vision, but they were also involved in mutual contests on the question of how a truly composite nation was to be constructed. Great difference of opinion existed within this category on the strategies to be employed for the harmonization of community interests. Thus, while Tilak and Gandhi believed that Muslims should be won over to the vision of composite nationalism through concessions<sup>4</sup>, Lajpat Rai was averse to this idea. For him, the principles of fairness and justice were the bedrock of community negotiations. Some of the prominent representatives of the third vision of nationalism were Gandhi, Tilak, Lajpat Rai and Malaviya. Like the ideologues of the first category, their nationalism was ‘territorial’, but, unlike the former, they premised it on the harmonization of community interests rather than negation of the ‘community’ itself.

This dissertation seeks to make a conscious distinction between visions of nationalism and methods of nationalist struggle. While there were three contesting visions of nationalism in colonial India, the contesting methods for the construction of the desired nation – as will be brought out in detail in the first chapter – were those of opposition to the colonial state and



‘cooperation’ with it to achieve the desired goals. Such a distinction between ‘visions’ and ‘methods/strategies’ becomes important in the context of the reduction, in earlier studies, of ‘Indian nationalism’ to the Congress led ‘freedom struggle’. The latter has been projected, rather simplistically, as the only legitimate ‘national movement’. An attempt would be made in this dissertation to argue that there were contesting national movements of varying degrees of support among the people, as distinct from an uncontested, monolithic national movement.

### III

#### EARLIER APPROACHES AND THEIR LIMITATIONS

Scholarly attempts have been made, right from the 1920s and 30s, to study what have been popularly seen as the mutually antagonistic phenomena of ‘nationalism’ and ‘communalism’. Expositions of the dominant discourse on ‘communalism’ and ‘nationalism’ – the discourse of the ‘nationalist-communalist’ dichotomy – are found in the Kanpur Enquiry Committee Report (1931)<sup>5</sup> and the works of Tara Chand, Beni Prasad, Bipan Chandra and K.N. Panikkar. This discourse of ‘communalism’ has little history of its own; for its core argument has remained virtually unchanged and differences among its exponents are, at best, peripheral.

This discourse sees ‘communalism’ – the projected anti-thesis of nationalism – as an essentially modern phenomenon; as an off-spring of objective conditions – such as economic stagnation and recession, the differential progress of western education among Hindu and Muslim middle-classes, and the stiff competition for the shrinking, largely government-

sponsored jobs – created by colonialism. It then goes on to argue that British policy made a conscious attempt to further accentuate these differences by favouring one community against the other, the grant of separate electorates to Muslims being a case in point. The failure of the nationalists to arrest ‘communalism’ is attributed both to their reluctance to alienate their middle-class base (which was supposedly most susceptible to ‘communal’ rhetoric) and the presence of a ‘Hindu tinge’ in the Congress in the ‘extremist’ phase. That this discourse has scarcely evolved over the decades is evidenced by the use of not only common arguments, but also common expressions : the expression ‘Hindu tinge’ is used by the Kanpur Committee Report, Beni Prasad, and also by Bipan Chandra.<sup>6</sup>

There are, however, some internal differences, albeit peripheral, within this discourse. Thus, while Beni Prasad and Tara Chand accept the notion of ‘religious communities’, Bipan Chandra contests the idea. He argues that there were no separate Hindu and Muslim communities; for the followers of different faiths had neither internally common, nor externally divergent, secular interests. There being no separate religious communities, he contends that ‘communalism’ was a ‘false consciousness’<sup>7</sup> resulting from a flawed cognition of the ‘objective reality’. While he sees the Congress and Left movements alone as ‘secular’, he views the Hindu Mahasabha and Muslim League as ‘communal’; as middle and upper class organizations aimed at the manipulation of the people’s religious consciousness for political purposes. The main problem with Chandra’s argument is that it fails to explain convincingly the overlap between the Congress and the Mahasabha. He seeks to account for it by styling people like Lajpat Rai and Malaviya (who simultaneously participated in both the organizations) as

'liberal communalists', 'communal nationalists' and even 'semi-communalists'. This makes his argument untenable; for it is difficult to comprehend, in the light of the 'nationalist-communalist' dichotomy, how someone could be 'semi-communalist', or both 'communal' and 'nationalist' (as implied by the term 'communal nationalist') at the same time; how a 'false consciousness', i.e. 'communalism', could be reconciled with a 'correct' cognition of the objective reality, i.e. nationalism. In fact, Chandra's frame-work, by its very logic, entails an a priori exclusion from the realm of nationalism not only of the ideologues of the second category of nationalism, but also of some belonging to the third category. Another case of internal differentiation in this broad discourse of 'communalism' is provided by Panikkar's contention, mainly in the context of post-colonial India, that the ideology of 'communalism' is used not only by 'communal' organizations, but also by organizations like the Congress which use it "for political support and mobilization without necessarily adopting communalism as their political ideology."<sup>8</sup> This is perhaps Panikkar's explanation of the 'Hindu tinge'.

Gyan Pandey's 'The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India' can be seen as largely a replication of the arguments formulated by Bipan Chandra and his precursors, though these are expressed in the subalternist idiom. Likewise, his critique of nationalist historiography is not so much a critique of its constructions of 'nationalism' and 'communalism', as an indictment of it for stifling the voices of the subalterns by reducing all history to the history of the state.<sup>9</sup>

Pandey argues that the 19<sup>th</sup> century colonial ideology of 'civilizing mission' was based on notions of oriental 'irrationality' and 'barbarism' –

stereotypes created by the colonizers – which were contrasted with the notion of the ‘rational’ and ‘civilized’ Englishman. Thus, the native was the ‘other’ of the colonialist discourse. The natives, on account of their ‘irrationality’ and ‘barbarism’, were seen to be historically divided into well-structured, mutually antagonistic groups based on the primordial ties of religion. The history of these ‘communities’ was seen as a narrative of violence – a narrative which made indispensable, for the purpose of upholding law and order, the presence of the rational, civilized Englishman.

Bringing forth a critique of this colonialist knowledge, Pandey contends that communities in colonial India (and before) were fluid and ‘fuzzy’; that people could group and re-group in various ways to imagine communion on numerous grounds, viz. caste, locality, religion etc. He demonstrates these fuzzy collectivities by narrating what he sees to be people’s histories (as reflected in the different histories of the qasba of Mubarakpur<sup>10</sup>) – histories which contested the reduction, as attempted by colonialist history, ‘of all history to the history of the state.’

Till here, Pandey’s conclusions are very close to those of Chandra : that the notion of structured religious communities in India was a colonialist construct, and that there were no ‘religious communities’. He even shows that ‘communal riots’ often broke out for reasons other than religious – as a resentment against economic exploitation or as a violent expression of contest over the notion of ‘legitimate hierarchy’ in a locality. He further argues that, often, the response to the call of ‘religious community’ was channeled and filtered through caste, and that caste clashes attest to the importance of the community of caste.

What is unique in Pandey's book is an attempt to trace the beginning of the use of the term 'communalism' to revile the community centered discourse.<sup>11</sup> Pandey argues that prior to the 1920s, Indian nationalists – influenced by the colonialist construction of Indian history – saw the nation as a sum-total of structured religious communities. Thus nationalism, to them, implied both the promotion of unity among different religious communities and service to the 'community' per se – a service which "went together with, and indeed to a large extent implied, service to Country."<sup>12</sup> Pandey sees Malaviya, Bishan Narain Dar and R.C. Dutt as examples of this tendency. He then goes on to argue that the disharmony emanating from the large-scale riots of the 1920s, compounded with the aggressive propaganda attached to Shuddhi, Sangathan, Tabligh and Tanzim, led the 'nationalists' to consciously discourage the community centred discourse and promote the idea of the nation as a collection of 'individual citizens', as distinct from 'communities'.<sup>13</sup>

While Pandey is perhaps right in arguing that the pejorative use of the term 'communalism' began in the 1920s as a response to heightened sectarian tensions, and that early nationalists generally shared the colonialist view of the Indian society being historically divided on the primordial loyalties of religion, the argument that the 1920s marked a shift from a community-based nationalism to one which was premised on a negation of community identities is untenable. For a large number of the earliest nationalists, including Gokhale, Ranade, Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozeshah Mehta etc., belonged to the first category of nationalist vision; their vision of nationalism premised itself, despite a wide prevalence of the belief that Indian society was historically divided in structured religious communities,

on a conscious withdrawal from the community – based discourse. The examples of Bishan Narain Dar and R.C. Dutt, as cited by Pandey, cannot be generalized as representative of the entire range of early nationalist consciousness. These individuals were located in the third enclosure of nationalist vision at a time when the likes of Gokhale represented the first category of nationalism. The fallacy in Pandey's argument arises from his flawed assumption that nationalist consciousness presents itself as monolithic in given temporal contexts, only to change in a unilinear direction over time. Ideologues belonging to all the three categories of nationalist vision existed on the Indian political scene both before and after the 1920s. Thus, it would perhaps not be wrong to argue that the pejorative use of the term 'communal', as begun in the 1920s, was an attempt by other nationalist ideologues to deligitimize and marginalize the adherents of the second category of nationalism. The above analysis shows how Gyanendra Pandey, in his emphasis on a unilinear, monolithic nationalism, fails to capture the complex nature of Indian nationalism.

Though broadly agreeing with Bipan Chandra on the modern basis of 'communalism' and the causes of its rise, K.L. Tuteja widens the scope of nationalism by differentiating between nationalists who adhered to 'scientific secularism' and 'communitarian nationalists'. These two groups of nationalists, as identified by Tuteja, are respectively identical with the ideologues of the first and third categories of nationalism. His 'communitarian nationalists' recognized the 'religious community', albeit in the form of a subset of the nation; they "evolved a consciousness of communitarian nationalism positing active cooperation among different communities in their common struggle against the colonial rule, and

emphasizing the need for building up a unified nation as a collaborative formation among the distinctive religious communities. This perception was fully developed by Mahatma Gandhi as he actively tried to achieve effective linkage between communitarian loyalties and the commitment to a larger collectivity of nation.”<sup>14</sup>

Tuteja sees the individuals located in the second category of nationalism as ‘communal’. This is made clear by his following statement :

“... community consciousness in respect of different religions developed into communitarian nationalism on the one hand, and on the other took a turn and assumed a disturbing form in which the political phenomenon of communalism, both as an ideology and practice, took birth... Actually the meaning of communalism includes not only violent hatred and mistrust against the believers of the other faith but also the visualization of religious community as nation.”<sup>15</sup>

Tuteja’s notion of ‘communitarian nationalism’ successfully resolves the dichotomy, as seen in the activities of Lajpat Rai and Malaviya, of the Congress-Mahasabha overlap. But despite its internal coherence, his argument suffers from the grave limitation of studying the second category of nationalist vision through the parameters of the first, and to some extent the third, vision of nationalism. This viewing of cultural nationalism through the ideological prism of composite nationalism denies it a history of its own, thereby rejecting its claim to being a legitimate vision of nationalism.

As mentioned earlier, recent researches by Christopher Jaffrelot and John Zavos have sought to extricate community-based nationalism from the

pejorative label of 'communalism' in order to study it as an independent ideology. Though they provide novel explanations for the growth of 'Hindu nationalism' (identifiable with the second category of nationalist vision), they make no serious attempt to locate this ideology in the complex process of the development of nationalist consciousness in India. This makes them somewhat unconnected with the purpose of this dissertation.

In the 'Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics', Christopher Jaffrelot argues that what we understand as Hinduism was historically incapable of a collective consciousness of the kind found in Islamic or Christian communities. This was due to the reasons that it was less a single religion than a conglomeration of religions, and that it had no notion of the 'other'. Jaffrelot explains the latter assertion by arguing that the Brahmanical discourse saw Brahmanical social order in perfect harmony with the cosmos; it viewed this society as an image of the natural order. Thus, all humans or groups of humans were seen as not only acceptable to it, but as 'a priori' contained in it.

The notion of the 'other', Jaffrelot contends, began to grow with the arrival of groups which rejected this discourse in the act of not getting assimilated in the Brahmanical social order. Faced with a threat to its world-view, Brahmanism began, as a defence mechanism, to organize itself. This attempt at organizing into a more cohesive lot – resulting in the birth of the notion of a Hindu collectivity – was made through the simultaneous stigmatization and emulation of 'threatening others'. Jaffrelot argues that the emulation of the 'other' – manifested in attempts at cohesion – was sought to be presented as a revival of a golden past. Thus, Jaffrelot views 'Hindu



Nationalism' as a Brahmanical attempt at cohesion through the simultaneous stigmatization and emulation of the 'other'.

In the 'Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India', John Zavos argues that the colonial state's self-image of 'organization' – as against a disorganized society – led to 'organization' acquiring centrality in the middle-class Indians' scheme of things. The state, however, set the limits of political expression, confining it to 'symbolic expression'. Zavos sees the Arya Samaj, the Hindu Sabha and the RSS as attempts at organization of Hindus in different ways. The Congress is similarly seen as an attempt at organization, albeit with the major difference that its 'constituency' was that of Indians as a whole, and not Hindus alone. This difference brought about the long-term contestation between 'Indian Nationalism' and 'Hindu Nationalism'.

Zavos argues that in the early phase of its development, the Congress remained within the hegemony of the colonialist discourse of organization in as much as it sought to organize its 'constituency' through 'symbolic representation' alone. It was only at the turn of the century that Tilak and other 'extremists' sought to establish a counter-hegemony by going beyond 'symbolic representation' towards a more extended representation. Gandhian politics, which sought to take representation right to the heart of the 'constituency' it claimed to represent, marked the high-point of this process of counter-hegemony.

The Hindu Sabha, according to Zavos, throughout operated within the colonialist parameters of 'symbolic representation'. This made it one of the state's favoured counter-weights to the Congress policy of extended representation. It was for the RSS to break, in emulation of the nationalist

mode of organization as reflected in Gandhian Satyagraha, with ‘symbolic representation’ and attempt to take politics to the people, as it were, through the volunteer system of Swayamsevaks and Shakhas.

While reading what he calls Hindu Nationalism as an attempt at the organization of Hindus, Zavos makes a distinction between the vertical – entailing a radical re-structuring of society, particularly with reference to caste – and horizontal – entailing a symbolic Hindu unity through mutual respect and dignity, without disturbing the status quo – forms of organization. The former was manifested in the Shuddhi movement and the latter in the movement for cow-protection. Zavos then goes on to argue that the paramount need for organization of Hindus – rather than a re-structuring which could antagonize the orthodoxy – gradually made ‘horizontal organization’ triumphant. Though ‘horizontal organization’ generally meshed with ‘symbolic representation’, Zavos sees the RSS as a unique example of ‘horizontal organization’ with an attempted extension of representation. He accounts for this by arguing that though the RSS did not attempt a re-structuring of caste, it substituted the latter with the Sangh itself as the principle of organization of society. “At the ideal level, then, the RSS pursuit of Hindu Sangathan implies the rejection of caste, a view of Hindu society which is anti-thetical of horizontal organization.”<sup>16</sup>

Like Jaffrelot, John Zavos seeks to study the “discreet lines of development”<sup>17</sup> of ‘Hindu Nationalism’, instead of studying it as a part of the wider ambit of Indian nationalism. Such an analysis suffers from the limitation of seeing ‘Indian Nationalism’ and ‘Hindu Nationalism’ as separate, and even antagonistic, blocks. Instead of conceptualizing its complexities – as manifested in the spectacle of contesting visions

attempting to colour the nationalist space in their own brands of consciousness – this approach again reduces Indian nationalism to pre-given compartments.

In 'Religions Nationalism – Hindus and Muslims in India', Van der Veer argues that except in the case of a few 'secular nationalists' in the Congress and the Left organizations, most Indian nationalists imagined their nationalism in religious terms. The main difference between those labeled 'nationalists' and 'communalists' was that while the former had a pluralist conception of the nation, the latter had an exclusivist conception of it. Thus, "rather than utterly opposed ideological forces they should be seen as 'moderate' and 'radical' tendencies within nationalism. The moderates accept cultural pluralism and equality among different religious communities within the nation, while the radicals see the nation as the community of co-religionists."<sup>18</sup> Van der Veer sees Gandhi as a representative of the 'moderate' tendency and the ideologues of what is seen by us as the second category of nationalism as those of the 'radical' tendency. To quote him :

"This (Gandhian) political discourse is not secular, but it imagines a common ethnic culture of India in terms of religious pluralism... Thus, the state is not secular. Rather, it promotes a specific view of 'religion' as a universal characteristic of Indian ethnicity... The radical version of Indian nationalism takes one religion as the basis of national identity, thereby relegating adherents of other religions to a secondary, inferior status."<sup>19</sup>

Though this argument does seek to locate the community based discourse within the ambit of Indian nationalism, it has its own problems.

Firstly, by placing all exponents of cultural pluralism within the confines of the 'moderate' tendency of 'religious nationalism', it fails to explain the internal dynamism within this 'tendency'. The differences in the strategic responses of individuals like Lajpat Rai and Gandhi cannot be accounted for on this basis. Though such individuals shared a vision of composite nationalism, their modes of operating were often at odds with one another.

Secondly, in coalescing the 'cultural' and 'territorial' models of nationalism – as manifested in the second and third categories of nationalist vision – as 'radical' and 'moderate' versions of the same phenomenon, i.e. 'religious nationalism, it collapses both these visions; for their different notions of the role of 'community' in 'nation' are relatively obscured by this suggested categorization.

Thirdly, to argue that what this dissertation sees as the second category of nationalism was merely 'religious nationalism' of a 'radical' kind would be rather simplistic. Van der Veer fails to recognize that many ideologues of this 'tendency' saw their nationalism as cultural rather than merely religious, for religion was seen by them as only a part of culture. As will be brought out in the first chapter, Lal Chand saw religion as important only in the sense of its being the religion of the community.<sup>20</sup> Even Savarkar saw "geographical unity, racial features and a common culture"<sup>21</sup>, as distinct from religion, as the pillars of Hindutva (translated as Hinduness). Thus, the nationalist vision of such ideologues was cultural rather than merely religious.

#### IV

It is on the basis of the frame-work suggested earlier that the views of certain nationalist ideologues would be analysed in this dissertation. As the

first category of nationalism has already been heavily researched – albeit as an embodiment of the only legitimate nationalism – this dissertation would focus on the second and third enclosures of nationalist vision. Moreover, an attempt would be made to study Indian nationalism through the views of individual ideologues rather than through the activities of organizations like the Indian National Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha. This decision has been taken in the light of the realization that these organizations were amorphous bodies with a great deal of ideological heterogeneity within their ranks. Often, what came to be understood as the ideology of an organization was little more than the ideology of its hegemonic groups or individuals. The heterogeneity which characterized the Congress and the Mahasabha is evidenced by their overlap, at the level of leadership, at least till 1938 – an indication of the fact that they drew their leadership from more than one vision of nationalism. Thus, organization-centric analyses are, by their very nature, shorn of complexity and depth; they tend to equate the organization with its dominant group of members, and dish out their ideological beliefs as the ideology of the organization.

## NOTES

1. See Shashi Joshi and Bhagwan Josh, 'Struggle for Hegemony in India 1920-47, Culture, Community and Power, Vol. III, 1941-47', New Delhi, 1992, pp. 293-326.
2. Benedict Anderson argues that all communities are 'imagined'. (See Benedict Anderson, 'Imagined Communities' – Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism', London, 1983, 'Introduction').
3. See Shashi Joshi and Bhagwan Josh, 'Struggle for Hegemony in India Vol. III', p. 13, 48, 75, 77, 79, 121, 124, 297, 300, 339, 346, 354, 356, 357.
4. This is evidenced by the fact that while Tilak played a significant part in bringing about the Lucknow Pact (1916) which accepted separate electorates for Muslims, Gandhi offered a 'Blank Cheque' to Muslim leaders on the eve of the Second Round Table Conference.
5. This was an Enquiry Committee, constituted of three Hindus and three Muslims, set up by the Congress to look into the Kanpur riots of the year 1931. Its report has been published in N.G. Barrier, 'Roots of Communal Politics', Heinemann, New Delhi, 1976.
6. See N.G. Barrier, 'Roots of Communal Politics', New Delhi, 1976, p. 169; Beni Prasad, 'The Hindu Muslim Questions', Allahabad, 1941, p.42; and Bipan Chandra, 'Communalism in Modern India, New Delhi, 1984, pp. 141-51.
7. I contend that Chandra takes a simplistic stance in assuming, as is implicit in his argument, that 'real' communities and consciousness exist. In my view it would be more appropriate to state that all communities are imagined and all consciousness is constructed, as also subjective. For Chandra's notion of 'false consciousness', see Bipan Chandra, 'Communalism in Modern India', pp. 18-28.
8. K.N., Panikkar ed. 'Communalism in India', Delhi, 1991, pp. 8-9.
9. Pandey argues that in tracing the evolution of a composite culture from the reigns of Muslim kings, like Akbar, the nationalists reduce all history to the history of the state by giving all agency to the rulers. (see Gyanendra Pandey, 'The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India', Delhi, 1990, p. 253.)
10. He studies the histories of the qasba constructed by Sheikh Muhammad Ali Hasan, a representative of the Zamindar class, and the diary of Abdul Majid, a Muslim weaver.

11. See Gyan Pandey, 'Construction of Communalism', p. 210. He argues that the 'nationalists' began to use this term to condemn the community-based discourse, but says nothing about the usage of this term for the first time.
12. Ibid., p. 211.
13. Ibid. p. 234.
14. K.L. Tuteja's Presidential Address (Modern History section) in Indian History Congress, 1997 session, 'Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 58<sup>th</sup> Session, Bangalore, 1997', Aligarh, 1998, p. 435.
15. Ibid., pp. 435-36.
16. John Zavos, 'The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India', OUP, 2000, p. 215.
17. Ibid., p. 211.
18. Peter Van der Veer, 'Religious Nationalism – Hindus and Muslims in India', New Delhi, 1996, pp. 22-24.
19. Ibid.
20. Lal Chand, 'Self Abnegation in Politics, Lahore, 1938, p. 103.
21. Christophe Jaffrelot, 'The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India (1925 to the 1990s)', New Delhi, 1996, p. 26.

# **CHAPTER - I**

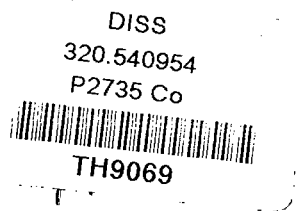


# THE VISION OF CULTURAL NATIONALISM I

## LAL CHAND AND HAR DAYAL

Having suggested an alternative framework for comprehending the complex phenomenon of nationalism in India, an attempt would now be made to capture the dynamics which informed both the internal structures and the inter-relations of the second and third enclosures of nationalist vision. That the first vision of nationalism has already been heavily researched and passed off as the 'true' nationalism by scholars, and that the other enclosures of nationalism constitute comparatively neglected areas of historical research, have led to the decision to concentrate on the aforementioned visions of nationalism. However, the first vision would also form a part of the content of this analysis, albeit only in the act of being interrogated by the other two categories.

Cultural Nationalism in India, which has been styled as 'Hindu Nationalism' by the likes of Christopher Jaffrelot and John Zavos, was far from monolithic. The views of its various ideologues were characterized by such heterogeneity that the shared vision of a nation pervaded by an over-bearing influence of 'Hinduism'<sup>1</sup> was one of the few common links which



held this category together. The following arguments seek to establish the amorphous nature of the second enclosure of nationalist vision.

Firstly, the meaning of the word 'Hindu' itself remained a bone of contention.<sup>2</sup> But despite their nuanced differences as regards the meanings of 'Hindu' and 'Hinduism', the ideologues of cultural nationalism showed an instinctive awareness, particularly at the level of practical politics, of what can be termed as the 'cultural internality'<sup>3</sup> of Hinduism. They had clear-cut notions of the 'others' and the 'insiders to be reformed'. When faced with a threat from the 'others', the 'insiders' would promptly underplay, and sometimes even bury, their differences and close ranks.<sup>4</sup>

Secondly, though the shared vision of a 'nation with 'Hindu complexion'<sup>5</sup> sustained itself, no singularity of approach as regards the method to be employed for the construction of such a nation was to be seen. Not only did different ideologues differ from one another on the strategy of nationalist struggle at given periods of time, but the approaches of a single ideologue could also undergo a sea change with the passage of time. A look at the content of the approaches constituting this flux would reveal the presence of contesting methods of nationalist struggle. Pitted against the strategy of anti-British struggle was that of co-operation with the government. The latter strategy entailed staying aloof from the Congress-led freedom struggle to win concessions from the government in order to be able to compete with the Muslims in terms of official patronage. This competition and contest with the 'other' community, even within the realm of state patronage, was an important element of this strategy. The proponents



of this approach seem to have thought that British control over Indian affairs would naturally fade away in course of time<sup>6</sup> and the community better represented in the representative institutions would eventually go on to dominate the pan-Indian political scene.

Thirdly, though there was a virtual consensus on the need for 'Hindu Sangathan' as a means to a nation with a Hindu complexion, there were differences on what steps were to be taken or could be taken for the purpose of such a consolidation. In other words, there were divergent opinions as to which ones among a multiplicity of proposed reforms were to be deemed acceptable and permissible for the purpose of consolidating and uniting Hindus into a more compact and organized group.<sup>7</sup> How such opinions could develop into serious differences becomes clear from the fact that Swami Shraddhanand, one of the prime movers of Sangathan and Shuddhi, broke with the Hindu Mahasabha in view of the latter's reluctance to grant full rights, including investiture with the sacred thread, to the Untouchables.

The argument formulated above provides an insight into the numerous complexities of the development of nationalist consciousness in India, thereby underlining the inadequacy of simplistic analyses which seek to place it in water-tight compartments. In reality, even a single enclosure of nationalist vision existed in a state of constant flux. The above formulation also enables us to argue that the theorization of Indian nationalism as 'secular' and 'anti-imperialist' provides little more than a simplistic understanding of Indian nationalism, for nationalism could not only have a religiously informed cultural basis, **but could also evolve through the**

**process of cooperation with the government.** The nationalism of the loyalist elements in the Hindu Sabha movement, on the one hand, and that of Iqbal and Jinnah on the other, grew hand-in-glove with the British government. Perhaps the only difference was that the Muslims being a minority community, Jinnah's vision could not possibly, in the context of a democratic society with representative institutions, establish itself in the pan-Indian space. This limitation of his vision of nationalism seems to have created conditions for the partition of India.

One of the great limitations of existing historiography is its interchangeable usage of the terms 'national movement' and 'freedom struggle'. It can be argued that there were a number of 'national movements' going on in British India, depending upon the specific vision of nationalism of the groups participating in them. Just as there were contesting visions of nationalism, so were there contesting national movements. The 'freedom struggle', as distinct from the national movements, is a term which specifically denotes the struggle for freedom from British rule. Those who did not see this as the ultimate goal also had national movements of their own – a fact which existing historiography fails to recognize. The outcome of this failure is that the strategy of national struggle employed by the congress in its 'extremist' and Gandhian phases has been internalized as the 'national movement'.

This chapter, as also the next, seeks to analyze the views of some ideologues of cultural nationalism, which is identical with what we have termed as the second category of nationalist vision. As this work proposes to

largely confine itself to the political currents operating in the Punjab in the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, four ideologues of that region and period, viz. Bhai Parmanand, Swami Shraddhanand, Lal Chand and Lala Har Dayal, have been chosen for this analysis. While the first three can be said to have a clear and sustained vision of nationalism, the fourth one, true to his erratic nature, kept shifting from nationalism to internationalism of various hues.<sup>8</sup> Thus, his views can, at best, be studied only in given phases of his life.

The analysis of the second category of nationalist vision has, for reasons of space, been divided into two chapters. The present chapter will study the ideas of Lal Chand and Har Dayal, leaving the analysis of the views of Swami Shraddhanand and Bhai Parmanand to the next.

## **LAL CHAND**

This analysis proposes to begin with Lal Chand, whose clarion call to the Punjab Hindus in the form of 'Self-Abnegation in Politics' created a stir in the intellectual world of the Punjab. Written for the 'Punjabee' in 1909 as a series of anonymous letters, 'Self-Abnegation in Politics', which became an inspiration for the foundation of the Hindu Sabha movement, was later published in the form of a pamphlet. Lal Chand can be said to be the ideological forerunner of the other ideologues of Cultural Nationalism in as much as he authored what was one of the first ideological expositions of the politics of religiously informed cultural nationalism.<sup>9</sup>

Born in 1852 and educated at Government College, Lahore, R.B. Lal Chand took to the legal profession. His success as a lawyer is attested by the facts that “he remained the leader of the Lahore Bar for many a year ... and officiated in a temporary vacancy as a judge of the Lahore High Court.”<sup>10</sup> An Arya Samajist by conviction, he became the first President of the DAV College and served in that capacity for no less than twenty years. In 1911, he was elected chairman of the Reception Committee of the first Hindu Conference “held under the auspices of the Punjab Hindu Sabha, at Amritsar.”<sup>11</sup> Having laid the foundations of religiously informed Cultural Nationalism among the Punjab Hindus, Lal Chand passed away in 1912.

Lal Chand’s argument involves at once a condemnation of the nationalist vision of a composite nation as upheld by the ideologues of the amorphous Congress platform, and an exhortation to the Hindus to conceptualize their nationalism within the confines of the frame-work of religiously informed cultural parameters. It also involves criticism of those government policies, which, in his opinion, were detrimental to Hindu communitarian interests. But, even in the act of criticizing the government, he shifts part of the blame on what he sees to be the flawed policies of the Congress and the ‘self-abnegation’ involved in the adoption of these by Hindus themselves. His attitude towards the British is, by and large, one of cooperation and conciliation; a sort of competitive loyalism based on demands. This is the method of struggle he calls upon the Hindus to adopt.

The greater part of Lal Chand’s letters deals with his account of how Hindus have suffered politically as a community due to their Congress craze

and preferential treatment given to Muslims by the government. He sees the Hindus as having speedily lost ground to the Muslims in appointments to various offices, representation in Councils etc. That the pan-Islamic sentiment assures them of outside support for their cause from Muslim countries and that they assert themselves in terms of communitarian, and not Indian, identity, are two factors which, according to Lal Chand, work to the advantage of Muslims.<sup>12</sup> As for the Hindus, he finds them inflicted not only with the natural misfortune of not having outside support, but also with a 'self-inflicted' misfortune in the form of the Congress – an organization which shies away from voicing a Hindu grievance even in the context of an official policy of granting concessions to Muslims<sup>13</sup>. In their obsession to identify and assert themselves as Indians alone or not at all, the Hindus, in Lal Chand's opinion, have forgotten their community identity and jeopardized purely Hindu interests.<sup>14</sup> The Hindu Congress craze and silence over preferential treatment to Muslims are labeled by him as 'Self-Abnegation in Politics'.

Lal Chand cites several instances of unjust and unfair treatment of the Hindus. Be it in appointment to the council of the secretary of state (one Hindu and one Muslim)<sup>15</sup>, appointment of judges in courts (ratio 5 : 4)<sup>16</sup> or recruitment in police<sup>17</sup> and other departments, the Hindus, in his eyes, have been given a raw deal. He states that the proportion of Muslims in all these offices is far in excess of their members and incongruous with their education and merit.

The separate electorates introduced by the Reforms of 1909 are also viewed in the same light by Lal Chand. He criticizes both the idea of ‘communal representation’ and the extra share given in it to the Muslim community.<sup>18</sup> His criticism of the idea of community-based representation makes his approach akin to the principle of the separation of politics and religion at the level of governance. In arguing that municipal boards and councils – the original purposes of which had little to do with religious and sectarian questions – have been made by the rulers and “the sectarian activity of the followers of Islam”<sup>19</sup> a field for denominational contests, Lal Chand makes an implicit plea for ‘secularism’ in the realm of governance. It is noteworthy that a number of ideologues of all the three visions of nationalism argued for ‘secularism’ at the level of the state, *i.e.* at the level of governance. It was only at the level of the nation, *i.e.*, in the realm of the people constituting the nation, that their arguments became divergent and characteristic of their specific visions. The latter arguments, when interrogated by the former plea for ‘secular’ governance, often create paradoxical situations for the ideologues of nationalism.

The second, and the most important, part of Lal Chand’s criticism of separate electorates, deals with the extra share given in the scheme to the Muslim community. Arguing that the principal employed in these matters has been neither merit nor numerical strength, he goes on to shed light on how the Muslims retain a lion’s share of the seats in provinces where they enjoy a majority, and get representation in excess of their numbers in Hindu majority provinces on the basis of an ambiguous notion of ‘importance’. Lal



Chand deconstructs the notion of 'importance' of the Muslim community,<sup>20</sup> particularly in the context of the Punjab, as follows. Stating influence, affluence and merit to be the criteria of importance, he goes on to argue that Hindus outdo Muslims in all these qualities. Not only do Hindus in his opinion, pay much more in terms of taxes which sustain the colonial state, but they (Rajputs, Gorkhas, Sikhs and Brahmans) have rendered much more than the Muslims in terms of military service. Lal Chand argues that if historical status be taken as a parameter of 'importance', Hindus would stand inferior to none, for the British had succeeded Hindu kingdoms like those of the Nepalis, Pindaris, Marathas and Sikhs. By that time, the Mughal Empire had already declined and been rendered a puppet in the hands of Hindu chieftains. In the context of the Punjab, the Hindu commercial castes like the Khatri had run the administration both in the Muslim and the Sikh times. So far as the historical importance of the Muslims goes, he states that only a small proportion of them had come from outside to invade and rule India or converted from Hindu upper castes, the rest having been converted from the lower castes. In other words, the ancestors of the majority of Indian Muslims were cobblers barbers, masons, carpenters, dhobis etc. and not rulers. Thus, the assumption that Muslims are historically more 'important' than Hindus, is, according to Lal Chand, flawed and far from what is borne out by the facts.

Referring to the Land Alienation Act<sup>21</sup>, Lal Chand argues that in allowing only the 'agricultural tribes' of the Punjab to purchase land and in leaving the definition of 'agricultural tribes' to the sweet will of the Local

government, the Act meets the eye as a measure intended to serve the interests of Muslims and restrict the Hindus from buying lands in their ancestral region. Citing examples of discrimination despite functional similarity, he states that while Sayyids are listed by the Act as an agricultural tribe, Brahmins are not; while the Pathans and Moghuls are to be deemed as agricultural tribes, the Khattris in rural areas are kept outside the ambit of this category. He finds the Sayyids and Brahmins functionally similar in as much as they, despite difference in denominational identity, perform priestly functions, and sees the rural Pathans, Moghuls and Khattris as functionally similar in the sense that they own large tracts of land without tilling them with their own hands. The above-mentioned policy of discrimination makes Lal Chand dismiss the Land Alienation Act as nothing but a concession to the Muslim community at the cost of Hindu interests.

Lal Chand is critical of the undue encouragement given by the British to Persian and Urdu at the cost of Sanskrit, Punjabi and Hindi. Arguing against the adoption of Urdu as the court language<sup>22</sup>, he states that Urdu rose to this position by accident, for when the British acquired the province, officials from the neighbouring province, all of whom were well-versed in Urdu, were brought to the Punjab to manage the administration. This made Urdu the court language inspite of the Punjabis' virtual ignorance of it. The court language, he goes on to argue, should always be the language of the litigant – a condition which Urdu does not fulfill. **This prompts Lal Chand to make an impassioned plea for the adoption of Punjabi as the court language.** He remarks that even when they find themselves at a loss to

dismiss Punjabi, the Muslims insist that the script should be Persian. This again is unacceptable to him, for Persian characters are, according to Lal Chand, alien to the genius of the province and Nagari characters alone are indigenous.

Launching a tirade against Persian, Lal Chand states that it is in the fitness of things that the language of the original inhabitants and the one imposed by the foreign rulers should go side by side.<sup>23</sup> While the former enjoys importance as the language of the people, the latter gains prominence as the language of official records. Persian enjoyed the latter position during the days of the Muslim conquerors. But, the advent and establishment of British rule makes Lal Chand contest the sustained importance of Persian. He argues that given the context of British rule, Persian can neither be considered the language of the rulers nor that of the ruled. While English occupies the former position, Sanskrit, Hindi and Punjabi are the languages of the Hindus, the original inhabitants of the land.

Lal Chand holds Hindu self-abnegation to be largely responsible for the continuation of Persian at the cost of Sanskrit, the language of the ancient texts.<sup>24</sup> He states that while not a single Muslim student in the Punjab studies Sanskrit as an optional subject, Hindus flock in hundreds to learn Persian. The latter also becomes for them the language of recreation, and they quench their poetic thirst by composing poems in Persian. Lal Chand feels that this becomes all the more pathetic as these men know little about their own ancient tradition. He urges the Hindus to discard what he

sees as the badge of medieval slavery and turn to the study of their own 'national' literature.

Picking up the thread of his earlier argument regarding the rejection by the state of the principles of merit and justice in favour of that of concessions on denominational considerations, Lal Chand calls attention to the British policy vis-a-vis the princely states.<sup>25</sup> He states that while in princely states with a Hindu king, the British have made the kings appoint a Muslim minister to safeguard the interests of Muslim subjects, there has been no corresponding compulsion by the government in the case of Muslim ruled states. Though Lal Chand welcomes the rise to prominence of a minister belonging to a faith other than that of the ruler by sheer dint of merit, he regards a position gained solely on denominational considerations as unwelcome. He argues that by formulating the above policy as regards the princely states, the British have not only created conditions for breeding religious antagonism in the administration of the princely states, but have also discriminated on purely communitarian grounds.

Criticizing the separation of the Frontier province from the Punjab<sup>26</sup>, Lal Chand argues that the consequent reduction of the Hindus to a small minority in a newly formed Muslim majority province have exposed them to untold oppression in the form of assaults, kidnapping etc. He points to the fact that while Hindus in the Frontier province have been appointed to the Provincial services strictly in proportion to their numerical strength (1 Hindu to 4 Muslims), Muslims in Madras (6% Muslim population) and UP (14% Muslim population) have been appointed to the services far in excess of their

numbers on account of their 'importance'. Lambasting the Congress, Lal Chand calls attention to the fact that though the Congress had passed resolutions to protect Indians, a majority of whom were Muslims, in Transvaal, resolutions on the plight of Frontier Hindus have been conspicuous by their absence.<sup>27</sup> Pointing out that the Congress, under the inspiration of Gokhale, had passed resolutions on Frontier Policy in 1897 and 1898 in which it had entreated that the British pay for the Frontier expeditions themselves and that they reduce the number of troops on the Frontier, he wonders why it did not occur to the Congress that the substitution of Frontier troops by tribal levies would make the Hindus sitting ducks to Muslim marauders.<sup>28</sup> He finds it deplorable that an organization which had been prompt at passing resolutions, albeit flawed ones, on Frontier Policy, did not deem it important to pass a single resolution on the plight of Frontier Hindus.

Some glimpses of Lal Chand's understanding of Indian history can be had from a careful study of 'Self Abnegation in Politics.' He considers Hindus alone as the indigenous inhabitants of the land. It is noteworthy in this context that while referring to the language question, he speaks of Persian and English respectively as the languages of the past and present 'conquerors'.<sup>29</sup> He even goes to the extent of considering Persian "the badge of past slavery."<sup>30</sup> His notions of 'national' language and knowledge revolve around the ancient Sanskrit texts like the Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita. Interestingly, Lal Chand does not regard Urdu as an outcome of a

‘composite culture’. That he sees Urdu as a foreign language becomes clear from the following statement :

“While we seek and insist upon our due share in the state patronage, it is equally our duty to see that no undue and unjust preference be given to foreign ideas, foreign letters and foreign language. We ought to protest emphatically against the position occupied by Urdu as Court language.”<sup>31</sup>

Though one could argue that he sees Urdu as alien in the specific context of the province because it had been brought by officials from the neighbouring province for administering the newly acquired territory, it has to be remembered that knowledge of Vedic and classical Sanskrit was equally alien to the Punjab in Lal Chand’s time. He himself regrets that he has no knowledge of Sanskrit.<sup>32</sup> This clearly shows that Lal Chand’s foremost consideration in rejecting Urdu was not the ignorance of the language among the masses of the Punjab, but his belief that Urdu was ‘foreign’ and Sanskrit ‘national’.

Perhaps his acceptance of English, another ‘foreign’ language, can be explained on the basis of the fact that his strategy of nationalist struggle entails, at least for the time being, cooperation with the British.

That the Hindu alone constitutes the ‘national’ is a recurrent theme in ‘Self-Abnegation in Politics’. This is evident from the fact that at several places in the text does Lal Chand use ‘Hindu’ as a synonym for ‘national’.

His Hindu-centric vision of nationalism is exposed in a more compact and condensed form in the last few letters where he brings forth a critique of the nationalist visions of the first and third categories of nationalism. Asserting the superiority of cultural nationalism over territorial nationalism as manifested in the vision of a composite nation, Lal Chand states that patriotism should be “communal and not merely geographical.”<sup>33</sup> It is to be noted that the nationalist vision of the second category alone was strictly cultural, the visions of the other two categories being akin to territorial nationalism. While the first category wished to premise its territorial nationalism on the negation of community, the third category sought to base its territorial nationalism on the balancing and harmonizing of community interests. Contesting the concept of territorial nationalism, Lal Chand argues that at the root of patriotism is the feeling of love for one’s community; the geographical space assumes importance only because the community in question happened to settle there.<sup>34</sup> Thus, community remains primary and territorial space is, at best, secondary. He further argues that even religion assumes importance for the majority of human beings only in as much as it is the religion of their ancestors and their community.<sup>35</sup> **Thus, the term ‘community’ is used by Lal Chand less in the religious and more in the cultural sense.**

Having made his plea for cultural nationalism, Lal Chand concedes that there are “instances ... where people who are not homogenous form compact states”<sup>36</sup>. But he asserts that in such cases, “only one community preponderates, the other forming a minority, important minority, influential

minority, but still and always a minority.”<sup>37</sup> In other words, only one community, in Lal Chand’s view, forms not only the numerical but also the cultural and political core of the nation, the other communities being at the periphery. In his aforementioned formulation of cultural nationalism, Lal Chand, in conceiving of a nation with Hindu complexion, upholds the parameters of the vision of the second category.

Lal Chand also deals at length with his approach vis-à-vis British rule – as distinct from his nationalist vision – towards the end of ‘Self-Abnegation in Politics’<sup>38</sup>. In a nutshell, his strategy of nationalist struggle is one of co-operation with British rule. Recognizing, albeit implicitly, that the British rule is a reality of the present and not of all times to come, Lal Chand calls upon the Hindus to participate in the task of governance in order to strengthen themselves as a community. He feels that by turning against the powerful alien regime, the Hindus would only jeopardize their position vis-à-vis the Muslims. He does concede that a strong community could have progressed independently, scorning at the powers that be, but argues that a weak and disunited community like the Hindus would end up harming itself by boycotting government and attempting to tread the path of independent action and growth.<sup>39</sup> The following statement explains succinctly Lal Chand’s method of nationalist struggle :

“... **Under the present circumstances** (emphasis added) ... the interests of the community necessitate maintenance of amicable relations, that certain portions of the community ought to take their proper act and that



the community as a whole ought to support such claims leaving the vision beyond, for future.”<sup>40</sup>

While laying down his method of nationalist struggle, Lal Chand also gives a critique of the method of anti-British struggle as employed by the ‘extremists’ within the Congress.<sup>41</sup> He argues that though discontent should never be suppressed, its expression is effective only when made in such a way that it reaches the powers that be. Passing resolutions but not sending them to the rulers in a bid to assert independence of activity and self-reliance is seen by Lal Chand as a vain exercise. In this, he is one with the ‘Moderates’ on the question of method of struggle. To quote him :

“It seems to me; incumbent that while dissatisfaction under injustice or oppression must be felt and not suppressed or white-washed, it must lead not to mere self-examination, self-amelioration and self-improvement, but also to a desire for appeal to the authorities that be to redress the wrong. This was the foundation of the Congress agitation as started originally, and indeed it has held sway and still holds sway with a large section of the community.”<sup>42</sup>

That despite broad agreement on the method of struggle, Lal Chand differs from the ‘Liberals’ in the Congress in his vision of nationalism is made clear by him when he continues the above statement as follows :

“My objections against Congress, however, are of a different hue. In the first place – and this is the strongest and the most serious objection – the Congress proceeded on a wrong assumption of a united nation. The result was that it entirely ignored the Hindu aspect of public and political questions. The Congress may possess very high ideas of a United India, admirable to look at from a distance, but **if the result be bitter I cannot conceive how a Hindu, who has the least spark in him of warmth of Hindu feeling and patriotism can help and join the movement...** Even apart from the question of political loss or gain, my objection against the Congress is that it makes the Hindu forget that he is a Hindu and tends to swamp his communal individuality into an Indian ideal, thus making him break with all his past traditions and past glory. I regard this as a very heavy price to pay. The conversion to the new ideal means worse than the effects of foreign invasions that have hitherto hammered the Hindu community. (emphasis added) During these times, inspite of very oppressive circumstances, the Hindus have maintained intact their communal organization, and why they should now

voluntarily surrender and abandon the same passes my comprehension.”<sup>43</sup>

Having argued in favour of cultural nationalism, Lal Chand ends his pamphlet by exhorting the Hindus to form a Hindu Sabha – an organization which would devote itself to the task of addressing purely Hindu concerns.<sup>44</sup> He ends his account by proposing, for the purpose of bringing different sections of Hindus on one platform, “the substitution of Hindu Sabhas for Congress Committees, of a Hindu Press for the Congress Press, organization of a Hindu Defence Fund with regular office and machinery for collecting information and seeking redress by self-help, self-ameliorations and petitions and memorials supplemented by agitation in the Press and advocacy through trusted leaders in matters both special and common but dominated primarily by regard for Hindu interests.”<sup>45</sup>

## **HAR DAYAL**

It would perhaps be no exaggeration to state that Har Dayal was one of the most complex personalities of his times. So erratic was his nature and so fluid his views that to find any long-term ideological trajectory in his thought is extremely difficult. One is finally led to conclude, albeit despairingly, that no such trajectory perhaps existed. Har Dayal was by all accounts a man of exceptionally keen intellect, but with disjointed, often contradictory, streams of consciousness. In short, he was not a great visionary. He had neither patience nor commitment to any idea to develop it to its logical conclusion and kept shifting from one idea to the other. As

mentioned earlier, his ideological leanings shifted from nationalism to internationalism of different hues at different times of his life. Our purpose here is to study his thought in those phases of his life in which he could be situated in the second vision of nationalism.

Born in 1884 in a Kayastha family, Har Dayal grew up to be an exceptionally brilliant student. Completing B.A. from St. Stephen's College, Delhi, and M.A. from Lahore, he went on a Government of India scholarship to Oxford in 1905 to study Modern History. It was in England that Har Dayal came in contact with Indian nationalists at Shyamaji Krishnavarma's India House.<sup>44</sup> These included V.D. Savarkar, the great revolutionary, who was later to become one of the foremost exponents of cultural nationalism. Har Dayal was also in close contact with Bhai Parmanand, another prominent ideologue of the above vision of nationalism.

Har Dayal's nationalist ideas seem to have begun to evolve in England. Identified in this phase with the 'extremist' brand of anti-British struggle, he had developed a vision of nationalism which drew inspiration from what he saw as the 'cultural enclosure'<sup>47</sup> of Hinduism. When he came to India for a brief span of time in 1906-07, he started a Ramayana recital group at St. Stephens, Delhi.<sup>48</sup> This symbolized his taking refuge in his religiously informed cultural tradition. On his return to England, he suggested to Shyamaji a scheme for the ouster of British rule from India. It entailed raising a band of political missionaries for leading a complete political movement in three stages for the emancipation of India. The three stages were to be those of moral and intellectual preparation, in which the

moral character of Indians would be elevated and vices rooted out; execution of war by garnering all resources – military, diplomatic and others; and finally the work of reconstruction.<sup>49</sup> The political missionaries were expected to be entirely dedicated to the cause. Har Dayal's idea of political missionaries seems to bear a strong resemblance to the traditional image of Hindu ascetics. They were expected to set a personal example of lofty moral character, preferably be ascetics and influence the masses through their moral force. Thus, Har Dayal's scheme involving political missionaries was marked by an implicit going back to Hindu cultural ethos, which were to be re-modeled for political and missionary purposes. He may, in fact, have borrowed the idea of organized missionaries from the Christian missionaries or the Arya Samaj.

Har Dayal resigned the Government of India scholarship to Oxford towards the end of 1907. He now began wearing dhoti and kurta even in the hostile cold of England and took to vegetarianism.<sup>50</sup> The Hindu ascetic ideal, which informed Har Dayal's idea of nationalism, was now beginning to make its way into his personal life also. There is evidence to suggest that this was more an expression of the growth of cultural, as distinct from merely religious, consciousness in him. Har Dayal's biographer, Emile C. Brown, remarks in this context, "Har Dayal rejected theology, but he emphasized on the cultural aspects of his religion and it was these aspects he was anxious to develop and exploit in India."<sup>51</sup>

On his return to India in 1908, Har Dayal stayed at Kanpur and Lahore, trying to recruit political missionaries through personal contact.

According to his brother-in-law, Govind Behari Lal, he had, by this time, developed a hatred for Muslims – whom he regarded as traitors – and Christians.<sup>52</sup> It is noteworthy that, during his stay in Lahore, he had put up a sign outside his house which read – ‘No admission to Europeans or Christians.’<sup>53</sup> He is also known to have “turned out his one-time friend and former master, the principal of St. Stephen’s College, and had his mat and the floor of the room thoroughly washed after the incident.”<sup>54</sup> Thus, Har Dayal’s falling back upon the idea of religiously informed cultural nationalism made him construct a notion of the ‘other’ – a category which was to be filled by all those who did not fall within the ambit of the ‘cultural internality’ of Hinduism.

During this phase, Har Dayal often used the terms ‘Hindu’ and ‘nation’ as synonymous. He exhorted the people to discard all Western institutions and values in favour of their indigenous counterparts. To quote him :

“What good are your degrees, your careers, those crumbs from your task masters, the British, when your land of noble ancient culture lies prostrate under alien yoke? Rise and liberate your motherland in chains like Prometheus bound.”<sup>55</sup>

Launching a tirade against the legal profession for its subservience to English knowledge, manners and values, Har Dayal stated that young men who took to law “would begin to look down upon their co-religionists and would become the slaves of the English not only from a political point of

view but from the moral and economic standpoint also.”<sup>56</sup> The British motive was “to disgust them with the Hindu nation and religion and make them associate with the English.”<sup>57</sup> Arguing that the study and practice of British law by Indians discredited the Hindu law, he claimed that no Hindu could become a barrister without going against his religion.<sup>58</sup>

Har Dayal also lambasted the British educational system and the Indian Civil Services in that they had no indigeneity and were based on the ideal of the foreigner.<sup>59</sup> It is to be noted that his notion of the ‘indigenous’ premised itself entirely on what he saw as the Hindu cultural ethos, as reflected in his emphasis on ancient Indian history and ideals, and his complete rejection of Medieval Indian history.<sup>60</sup> That the English educated Hindus and the native aspirants to the Civil Services were ready to become sub-ordinates of the conquerors came as a shock to Har Dayal. One gets a fair idea of his views during this phase of his life through a study of his two important works – ‘Our Educational Problem’ (1908) and ‘Social Conquest of the Hindu Race’ (1909).

### **‘Our Educational Problem’**

Initially written as a series of articles which appeared in Lajpat Rai’s ‘Punjabee’, ‘Our Educational Problem’ is at once a severe indictment of the British educational policy and an exposition of Har Dayal’s vision of nationalism and method of nationalist struggle. Arguing that “the primary object of ... education in a civilized country should be the awakening of a sense of duty to the nation”<sup>61</sup> – a social unit formed by ties of blood, religion

and common history – Har Dayal states that the education system should premise itself on the teaching of the “national historical tradition”.<sup>62</sup> Thus, he sees as the aim of education not the attainment of material comforts, but the ushering in of a spirit of social solidarity which characterizes a nation. Making an impassioned plea for the teaching of ‘national history’ (read ‘Hindu’ history), he argues that the specificities of a nation’s historical tradition – the badge of its nationality – distinguish it from other nations.<sup>63</sup> Referring to the question of choice of profession, Har Dayal states that it should be in conformity with ‘Dharm’.<sup>64</sup> In other words, he makes use of terminology derived from his ‘religio-cultural tradition’ to urge young men to choose those professions which would enable them to serve the nation to the best of their capabilities.

Spitting venom on the British educational policy, Har Dayal forcefully argues that its object has been to denationalize Indians and to strengthen the edifice of British rule.<sup>65</sup> Viewing it as an assault on the “soul of the nation”,<sup>66</sup> he states that “the (alien) education system weakens the feelings of aversion and contempt with which all conquered nations at first regard their foreign rulers, who are different from them in religion, manners and language.”<sup>67</sup> The above statement reveals this ideologue’s instinctive understanding of the hegemonic nature of foreign education. **He sees the British system of education as an attempt at Anglicizing Indians (read Hindus) in order to strip them of all attachment to their own values, religion, language etc.**



‘Our Educational Problem’ gives us an insight into Har Dayal’s understanding of India’s past. According to him, the Aryans established their sway over the sub-continent by following the dual policy of conquering the original inhabitants (tribes like Rakshasas and Vanaras) both politically and socially.<sup>68</sup> They appropriated all the institutions of the vanquished and Hinduized them, thus paving the way for the formation of a ‘Hindu nation’. The institutionalization, and consequent internalization, of the Brahmans’ power relegated the original inhabitants to an inferior position in the social hierarchy for all times to come. Interestingly, Har Dayal does not bemoan the establishment of the Hindu nation through the political and social subversion of the aborigines.<sup>69</sup>

An element of pathos enters his narrative when he refers to the two subsequent conquests of the ‘Hindu nation’ by the Muslims and the British. To quote him :

“Akbar laid the foundations of the Mughal Empire by teaching us Persian, which gave birth to Urdu. If Urdu had not been invented, how could the descendants of those who fought Babar read the poems of Zafar, a representative of his dynasty, with delight and appreciation? The study of Persian literature by some classes of the Hindus was a source of strength to the Mohammedan State. Those Hindus who thus abjured their ancestral speech must have lost something of that fine patriotic feeling that animated the heart of the

Brahman, to whom everything associated with Islam was an abomination.”<sup>70</sup>

Har Dayal sees the advent and establishment of British power in India as the second conquest – political as well as social – of the ‘Hindu nation’. Viewing the educational system as an instrument of the social conquest of the Hindu nation by the British, Har Dayal writes, “The British rulers of India established schools and colleges in order to consolidate their empire and weaken our Hindu institutions and polity.”<sup>71</sup>

Har Dayal’s vision of nationalism during this phase of his life becomes evident from his notion of what constitutes national life. He contends that “the essence of national life consists in the particular religion which we follow, the particular history which we cherish, the particular language that we love and speak, the particular social life which we appreciate. Language, social life, religion, literature, history – these form the living forces in a community which mould national character and aspirations”.<sup>72</sup> To his mind, the goal of Swaraj becomes important in that it is a means to the re-entrenchment of these national institutions.<sup>73</sup>

Having accorded to language, national history, national literature, social life and religion the status of national institutions, Har Dayal urges Hindus to premise their nationalism on them and protect them from the attack of the British educational system. He sees language as “a key to national history”;<sup>74</sup> as “the guardian of national literature, which voices the national spirit.”<sup>75</sup> Laying stress on the study of Sanskrit as the national language and any one vernacular as a regional language, he argues :

“We have two languages for every cultivated Hindu who wishes to discharge his duty towards his country. There is Sanskrit, the language of Empire and Religion, the imperial and sacred language of the Hindus; and then comes the vernacular, the tribal language of different provinces, Hindi, Bengali, Marathi etc. When a Hindu addresses the whole nation he uses Sanskrit; when he confines himself to his own particular province, he employs the vernacular. Sanskrit embodies the common imperial past of the nation.”<sup>76</sup>

Rejecting the claims of English being the lingua franca of India, Har Dayal states that “if English is to be the language of unified India, then it appears that a united India means a de-nationalized India.”<sup>77</sup> Continuing his attack on the votaries of English, he argues that “if India were to be partitioned among different European powers, a contingency which did not appear impossible in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Anglicized politicians would call several Congresses transacting business in various European languages. For, according to them, the language of the conquering race provides the principle of unity in this chaotic mass of languages and dialects. The plan would be fatal to the very existence of the Hindu nation”.<sup>78</sup>

Championing the cause of ‘national history’ and ‘Sanskrit literature’ as national institutions, Har Dayal laments that these have been portrayed in a poor light and pushed to the sidelines by the British educational system.<sup>79</sup> He argues that unless the above system is toppled, the decay of the Hindu

civilization would become inevitable. Har Dayal further contends that social life – a national institution constituted by certain specific norms and conventions – is also being weakened by the British educational policy. To quote him :

“The climax is reached in such instances as that of the man who said, on entering a temple, ‘Good-evening, Vishnu!’ Many young Hindus take to shaving their moustache even when they are not mourning for the loss of their parents. Others might insist on being buried after death. A few have married European wives without converting them to Hinduism. The national social life is thrown off its hinges. The Mohammedans gave it the first shock from which it has not been able to recover. The present educational system tends to disorganize and destroy it altogether.”<sup>80</sup>

Har Dayal argues that in as much as it aims merely at producing graduates, the British educational system fails to inculcate religious idealism – the highest goal of education – in young minds. In his own words, “Religion and patriotism are the two great forces which have made men great in different countries and ages. An educational system which does not value either of them must produce men without an ideal and without backbone.”<sup>81</sup> Continuing in the same vein, he argues that in diminishing “reverence and love for great heroes like Rama, Krishna and Guru

Govind”<sup>82</sup>, the educational system is doing incalculable harm to the sentiment of patriotism among the Hindus.

On the basis of the above arguments, Har Dayal can easily be situated in the second category of nationalism. For him, ‘Hindu past’ is synonymous with ‘national past’, Sanskrit is synonymous with ‘national language’, Hindu cultural ethos are synonymous with national social tradition and Hinduism is identical with the national religion. He places Islam, Medieval Indian history and even Urdu in the same category as Christianity, British rule and English as symbols of foreign invasion and rule. His nationalism is entirely inspired by what Shashi Joshi and Bhagwan Josh call the ‘Hindu religio-cultural enclosure’.

‘Our Educational Problem’ also reveals Har Dayal’s strategy of nationalist struggle, as distinct from his vision of nationalism. While his vision during this phase of his life was very similar to Lal Chand, his method of struggle was entirely at odds with that of the latter. He argues that by cooperating with the British and the institutions established by them, the Hindus are only serving to complete the social conquest of their community and nation.<sup>83</sup> He upholds the ideal of self-growth and exhorts Hindus to shun British values and institutions. His approach vis-à-vis British rule was, thus, very similar to that of the extremist wing of the Congress, but their respective visions of nationalism were divergent.

Har Dayal argues that every foreign government – be it that of Akbar in medieval times or that of the British in modern times – tries to give the influential sections among the natives some share, albeit on an inferior plane, in the administration. This institutionalizes and entrenches the foreign

rule, while at the same time completing the social conquest of the natives by making them accept an inferior and sub-ordinate position. Har Dayal, thus, urges young Hindus to discard English education, bureaucracy, legislative councils and all values associated with the English culture and civilization. The 'Moderates' in the Congress, who not only participated in the institutions set up by the British but were also quite anglicized in their personal life-style, also incur his wrath.<sup>84</sup> Thus, in 'Our Educational Problem', Har Dayal presents himself as a vehemently anti-British ideologue of Cultural Nationalism. In this, he is at odds with Lal Chand – a fact that attests the existence of heterogeneity in the second category of nationalist vision.

Har Dayal left for England in 1908 itself, for "repressive laws and spies were making further work impossible within the country."<sup>85</sup> Continuing his indictment of British rule through his writings, he called for cow protection by declaring the cow to be "the flag of the Hindu nation".<sup>86</sup> He further condemned English education for the added reason that beef-eating English teachers in government schools did not teach their Hindu students to respect the cow.<sup>87</sup>

### **'SOCIAL CONQUEST OF THE HINDU RACE'**

In 1909, Har Dayal left England for Paris. But, his anti-British propaganda did not stop. It was in France that he wrote 'Social Conquest of the Hindu Race', which is somewhat repetitive in the sense that it is an extension of the arguments formulated by him in 'Our Educational Problem'. Arguing that the 'social conquest' of a nation follows its political

subjugation, and defining 'social conquest' as "control over the hearts and minds of (the) subjects"<sup>88</sup>, Har Dayal furnishes the examples of the ancient Brahmans who conquered the aborigines of India, *i.e.* the pariahs, socially. The Brahmans appropriated all the important institutions and made the autochthonous people associate with them in a position of inferiority, thus destroying their moral fibre. "Knowledge is power and none realized the truth of this saying better than Brahmans. Thus they appropriated to themselves the functions of priest, teacher, physician, poet and philosopher."<sup>89</sup> This task having been accomplished, "the Brahman needed no force to rule the people. He himself had become the greatest force of all in that society – the intellect and the conscience of it. He received spontaneous homage from the children and grandchildren of those who had forgotten how he had come into the land and conquered their ancestors."<sup>90</sup>

Likening the British to the Brahmans of the times of yore, Har Dayal argues that they have acquired control of all activities by running schools, colleges, hospitals, post-offices etc.; provided a common platform for social intercourse on unequal terms in the form of Legislative Councils, schools and colleges, durbars, courts, municipalities, district boards etc.; and raised a class of men in the form of the landed gentry, the English educated classes etc., who are ready to socially interact with the rulers on terms of inequality.<sup>91</sup> He calls attention to the decline in the traditional 'national' system of education and the Ayurvedic system of medicine, and to the rise of the Briton to the status of 'Guru' and 'Vaidya' (physician).<sup>92</sup>

Har Dayal sees religion – the only institution free from foreign influence – as the “last refuge”<sup>86</sup> of the ‘Hindu nation’. But the British, according to him, have begun to sap the national institution of religion as well; for a dual policy of destroying Hindu religion from the outside, as also from the inside, has been embarked upon. In his opinion, Hindu religion is being attacked from the outside both by Christianity – a proselytizing religion – and the modern educational system, which, under the garb of rationality, is serving “to weaken the foundations of Hinduism.”<sup>94</sup> He sees the activities of “a number of Englishmen and Englishwomen, (who) have come forward as apostles of Hinduism, pure and undefiled,”<sup>95</sup> as an attack on the Hindu religion from within. Referring to Annie Besant’s Central Hindu College, Har Dayal remarks that the College, led by some “English friends of Hinduism,... has no Hindu occupying an important office on the executive committee”!<sup>96</sup> About the Board of Trustees to the College, he states with pungent sarcasm that “an Englishwoman is President of a body composed of the elite of Hinduism, influential land-owners and learned priests of Benares. And they voluntarily pay her homage.”<sup>97</sup>

That Har Dayal sees the Hindu religion as the last refuge of the nation is highly instructive for our purpose. This projection of Hinduism as the sentinel of the nation firmly places Har Dayal in the second category of nationalism.

Har Dayal sees the participation of Hindus in legislative councils and their joining government service as manifestations of their social conquest by the British.<sup>98</sup> In this argument lies both an exposition of his anti-British



method of nationalist struggle and an indictment of the act of co-operation with the government. Criticizing the Congress on these very lines, he argues that “even the august assembly which is supposed to represent the combined wisdom and patriotism of India, is so devoid of national self-respect that it has now and then invited Europeans, who do not know Sanskrit, who despise our shastras and eat beef, to preside over its deliberations... an assembly of Hindu patriots in British India under the leadership of an Englishman, a member of the conquering race. Could we imagine a meeting of Hindu patriots under the presidentship of Shahabuddin Ghorī in the year 1200 AD or a National Congress of Hindus held in the year 1660 under Shiasta Khan?”<sup>99</sup>

### **SHIFTING TERRAINS OF THOUGHT**

After 1909, Har Dayal’s views began to change. His arrival in America in 1911 saw him become an admirer of modern Western knowledge.<sup>100</sup> But traces of his earlier self could be detected in his approach of renunciation towards the modern world – an approach which was perhaps born of a subconscious influence of Hindu ascetic ideals. But he soon broke completely with Hindu cultural ethos to become a hard-core admirer of the West. Moralistic exhortations in ancient Indian philosophy were now seen by him as redundant and obsolete.<sup>101</sup>

Har Dayal’s life from this period onwards can be seen as consisting of short phases of nationalism alternating with internationalism of various hues, viz. Communism, Anarchism and Humanism.<sup>102</sup> His honeymoon with

Communism and Anarchism was also marked with criticism of the nation-state system and the sentiment of nationalism as divisive forces.<sup>103</sup> During the time of his involvement with the Ghadr movement and the Berlin India Committee (1913-14) his idea of nationalism became more accommodative of Muslims. He saw them as a latent source of Indian vitality<sup>104</sup> and wrote during his association with the Ghadr movement that they were joining it in large numbers.<sup>105</sup> During this brief phase, Har Dayal became a votary of the vision of a composite Indian nation.

As a representative of the Berlin India Committee in Constantinople, Har Dayal got embroiled in a controversy over 'Jehan-i-Islam', an anti-British, anti-Christian, pan-Islamic publication of the Government of Turkey, which was edited by a Punjabi Muslim.<sup>106</sup> When Har Dayal expressed the desire that it be taken over by the Indian nationalists, he faced opposition from Muslims – Turkish as well as Indian – and was accused of having a Hindu bias. His position vis-à-vis the 'Jehan-i-Islam' was perhaps inspired by a desire "to expunge its pan-Islamic aspects. He felt very strongly that each national group should fight for its own independence and that pan-Islamism was 'a fraud and a hoax' ".<sup>107</sup> This controversy made him form a very adverse opinion of the Turks and he soon left Constantinople.

Owing to his independent style of functioning, Har Dayal broke with the Berlin India Committee in 1915 – an event which made the Germans suspicious of him. All his correspondence began to be watched and he was not permitted to leave the country for a year and a half.<sup>108</sup> His experiences in Constantinople and Germany prejudiced him against these two nations. He

even came to the conclusion that British rule in India was essential to ward off perverted nations like Germany and Turkey.<sup>109</sup> Consequently, the period beginning from 1918 saw Hardayal as a great supporter of the British.<sup>110</sup>

Har Dayal's writings from Sweden in 1925-26, which got wide publicity in Indian newspapers, took up a strongly anti-Muslim line of argument and made a plea for Hindu Sangathan.<sup>111</sup> They also spoke of Home Rule and even 'Swaraj' but differed from his earlier nationalist writings in that they made an exhortation for 'self-purification', as distinct from activity aimed at the ouster of the British. In other words, this phase characterized a change in Har Dayal's favoured method of nationalist struggle.

In 1927, Har Dayal departed from Sweden to England, and engrossed himself in academic pursuits. He now underwent another gradual ideological transformation to become a humanist – a change which manifested itself in 'Hints for Self Culture', a humanist work authored by him in 1934.<sup>112</sup> However, Dharmvira, a biographer of Har Dayal who argues that the latter's paradoxical formulations in different phases of his life were nothing but a mask aimed at strategically concealing his burning passion for nationalism (read Hindu nationalism), claims that as a response to a request for writing a pamphlet on Hindu nationalism, Har Dayal wrote the following letter to him on August 17, 1933 :

"I am late in finishing that pamphlet. I will write the pamphlet and send it there. I want to write in a bit scholarly manner so that this pseudo-nationalism is washed off from the minds of Hindu youths and they feel

that what they term as communalism is according to the tenets of political science real nationalism.”<sup>113</sup> This pamphlet never saw the light of day, for Har Dayal died in 1939.

The ideas of the two ideologues discussed in this chapter clearly bring out not only the basic premises and broad assumptions of the vision of cultural nationalism, but also the heterogeneity of approach characteristic of many of its exponents. Continuing the thread of the arguments developed here, the next chapter would involve a discussion of the ideas of Swami Shraddhanand and Bhai Parmanand in the context of the second category of nationalism.

## NOTES

1. Though this point cannot be worked out here, it would be more appropriate to speak of 'Hinduisms' rather than one monolithic, internally coherent and homogenous Hinduism.
2. While Savarkar gave a very broad meaning, based on the pillars of geographical unity, racial features and a common culture, to the term 'Hindu', the orthodox would conceive of it in a much narrower sense.
3. See Shashi Joshi & Bhagwan Josh, 'Struggle for Hegemony in India-Vol. III' (Delhi, 1992, p. 13, 48, 75, 77, 79, 121, 124, 297, 300, 339, 346, 354, 356, 357).
4. When faced with Muslim opposition to the Shuddhi of the Malkanas (1923), the Arya Samaj and the Hindu orthodoxy came together.
5. See Shashi Joshi and Bhagwan Josh, 'Struggle for Hegemony Vol. III', Chapter on 'The Cultural Complexion of the Nation.'
6. While Lal Chand, on the one hand, saw British rule as the 'present', and not the perpetual, reality, Munshiram, on the other, believed even during his loyalist phase (1901-05) that "the time will come, be it two or three centuries hence, when the British will have to leave India." (JTF Jordens, 'Swami Shraddhanand – His Life and Causes', OUP, Delhi, 1981, p. 80).
7. While certain adherents of cultural nationalism were in favour of radical reforms like abolition of untouchability & child marriage, promotion of widow re-marriage, taking food with lower castes etc., others were averse to such an approach.
8. "One noticed in him a marked propensity for an equally fanatic advocacy of paradoxical notions on important issues of identity, solidarity, nature of organization and revolutionary strategy. Little attempt was made to seriously discuss and resolve the contradictions." (Harish. K. Puri, 'Ghadar Movement – Ideology, Organization and Strategy', Amritsar, 1983, pp. 105-06).
9. Though Col. U. Mukherjee's 'Hindus-A Dying Race' (1909) and Har Dayal's 'Our Educational Problem' (1908) were almost contemporary to 'Self-Abnegation in Politics', the latter was the first work to lay out a concrete plan for a Hindu political organization.
10. Lal Chand, 'Self-Abnegation in Politics', Lahore, 1938, Foreword, p. (iii).
11. Ibid., p. (iv.)

12. Ibid., pp. 1-6
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., p. 10.
16. Ibid., p. 11.
17. Ibid., p. 51.
18. Ibid., pp. 22-29
19. Ibid., p. 24.
20. Ibid., pp. 25-29
21. Ibid., pp. 30-34.
22. Ibid., pp. 35-45
23. Ibid., pp. 36-37.
24. Ibid., pp. 38-40.
25. Ibid., pp. 46-50.
26. Ibid., pp. 62-69.
27. "Resolutions are passed to protect the Indians in the Transvaal where the majority are Mohammadans, of course, because they are not merely Hindus; but the Hindus of the Frontier are left to stew in their own juice." (Ibid., p. 67).
28. Ibid., pp. 68-69.
29. "The Mohammedan conquerors naturally enforced the study of their own language as a means of communication between the rulers and the ruled, just in the same way as the British have now enforced the study of the English language." (Ibid., p. 36).
30. "Why we still cling to Persian, as if unwilling to part with the badge of past slavery, is a matter which passes my comprehension." (Ibid., p. 37).
31. Ibid., p. 42.
32. "The writer of these lines has often deplored his fate in not being able to read and understand Sanskrit works in original ...." (Ibid., p. 40).

~~??~~ Ibid., p. 101.

34. "In fact, it appears to me that the original idea was that of common descent as basis for the ideal, and as communities settled in different tracts, the tract absorbed their love and gave rise to the secondary sense." (Ibid., pp. 101-102).
35. "... for the majority, in fact the vast majority, the religion is the religion of their fore-fathers. This they love and die for, because it contains the tenets and practices of their ancestors. The idea is to love everything owned by the community." (Ibid., p. 103).
36. Ibid., p. 102.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid., pp. 103-115.
39. "A community may be powerful to bear down all opposition, but that surely is not practicable for a 'weak and disunited' community like ours." (Ibid., p. 100)
40. Ibid., pp. 103-104.
41. See Ibid., pp. 108-112.
42. Ibid. p. 111.
43. Ibid. pp. 111-113
44. See Ibid. pp. 121-126
45. Ibid. p. 125.
46. See Emile C. Brown, 'Har Dayal – Hindu Revolutionary and Rationalist', New Delhi, 1975, p. 27.
47. See Shashi Joshi and Bhagwan Josh, 'Struggle for Hegemony in India Vol. III', New Delhi, 1992, index.
48. Ibid., p. 20.
49. Ibid., pp. 30-31.
50. "He gave up English dress and wore a dhoti and Kurta (which) ... wore not suited to the English climate during the fall and winter months.... He did catch a severe cold and was to suffer from bronchial disorders periodically for the rest of his life... He also stopped eating of accepting food from English people and reverted to a strict vegetarian diet." (Ibid., p. 41).

51. Ibid.
52. Ibid. p. 49, 53.
53. Ibid. p. 53.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid., p. 51.
56. Ibid., p. 53.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid.
59. See Ibid., pp. 55-56.
60. This rejection would come across in the coming pages, through an analysis of his writings.
61. Har Dayal, 'Our Educational Problem', Madras, 1922, p. 8.
62. Ibid., p. 10. Har Dayal states that "education must begin with history of the race (read 'Hindu race')". For him, history implies the history of the 'Hindu nation'.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid., p. 13.
65. See Ibid., pp. 15-27.
66. "British educational policy is killing out the soul of the nation, (it) is sucking out the moral life-blood of the nation." (Ibid. p. 15).
67. Ibid., p. 27.
68. See Ibid., pp. 54-57.
69. Har Dayal seems to take pride in the establishment of the 'Hindu nation', and celebrates Sanskrit, the language of the Aryans, as the 'imperial language' of Hindus.
70. Ibid., p. 58.
71. Ibid., p. 63.
72. Ibid., p. 64.



73. Ibid.
74. Ibid., p. 66.
75. Ibid., p. 67.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid., p. 84.
78. Ibid., pp. 86-87.
79. Ibid., pp. 67-69
80. Ibid., p. 72.
81. Ibid., pp. 72-73.
82. Ibid., p. 73.
83. "The Briton, having acquired the power and glory which belonged to the Kshatriya, tries to step into the place held by the Brahman in order that he may complete the social conquest of India... Schools and colleges convert our Brahmans, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas into docile and respectful pupils of Christians and Anglo-Indian officials... Our boys learn to occupy a position of social inferiority to Europeans in everyday life, for the teacher must always sit before the pupil. Thus does Brahmanhood too pass from the Hindu Brahman to the Englishman." (Ibid., pp. 76-77).
84. "The ideal of association with the bureaucracy which has been proclaimed by the Congress in resolutions, and the agitation in favour of simultaneous examinations and the admission of Indians to high offices in the service of the British government, clearly represent a sad decay of national self-respect and the ethical standard of the nation... As to the methods of political work, the majority of the English educated classes shrink from self-help and national self-assertion. They believe in oratory and persuasion. They have degenerated into poltroons and wind bags... The idea of 'agitation' for political purposes was altogether unknown to our ancestors who lived before the era of schools and colleges, for they never suspected that a disarmed nation could work out its salvation by the use of its tongue and lungs. They never made any mistake on the nature of British rule, the character and aims of the British people, the need of maintaining social and political isolation from the rulers... But strange and absurd opinions have been manufactured in Government colleges under the guidance of clever anglo-Indians and are now held up to our admiration as tokens of a great 'political awakening', as symbols of a 'new spirit', of which Messrs. Surendranath Bannerjee, Ranade, Mehta, WC Bannerjee and others are the apostles... Let us examine what the awakening was like... Mr. Surendra Nath Bannerjee, the orator of the

'awakening', established a college for which he could not find the name of any Indian hero, and so had to fix on Ripon. He praises Alexander Duff, the Christian missionary. Then again he pleaded for simultaneous examinations, which should enable more Indians to ruin their country by joining an aristocratic service which holds itself aloof from the masses... Mr. Mehta is so great a friend of India that he called the British educational system 'a great boon' while at the same time he was convinced that this system would 'clear the way for Christianity'. He was the man who uttered that blasphemous sentence which makes every Hindu burn with shame – 'Lord Ripon, Lord Buddha styled on earth'. This champion of the 'awakening' compared a Christian viceroy to a Hindu avatara ... And we have Mr. Gokhale, one of the patriots who could not choose a better name for the college which was supported by their noble self-sacrifice than that of an English governor of Bombay." (Ibid. pp. 96-99).

85. Brown, 'Har Dayal ...', p. 59.
86. Ibid., p. 64.
87. Ibid.
88. Har Dayal, 'Social Conquest of the Hindu Race', Microfilm no. 2313, Proscribed documents, NMML, New Delhi, p. 1.
89. Ibid., p. 8.
90. Ibid., p. 9.
91. Ibid., p. 10.
92. Ibid., pp. 10-11.
93. Ibid., p. 11.
94. Ibid., p. 12.
95. Ibid., p. 13.
96. Ibid.
97. Ibid., p. 14.
98. Ibid., p. 16.
99. Ibid., p. 17.
100. See Brown, 'Har Dayal...', Chapter 3.
101. Ibid., p. 103.

102. See Ibid., Chapter 3.
103. He called patriotism a danger “because it was devised to divide the labourers into their various countries and thus into a false division of society.” (Ibid. p. 111).
104. Ibid., p. 118.
105. Ibid., p. 147.
106. Ibid., p. 190.
107. Ibid., p. 191.
108. See Ibid., pp. 213-220.
109. Ibid., p. 219.
110. Ibid., p. 223.
111. “I declare that the future of the Hindu race, of Hindustan and of the Punjab, rests on four pillars : (1) Hindu Sangathan, (2) Hindu Raj, (3) Shuddhi of Moslims, and (4) Conquest and Shuddhi of Afghanistan and the frontiers. So long as the Hindu nation does not accomplish these four things, the safety of our children and great-grand children will be ever in danger... The Hindu race has but one history and its institutions are homogenous. But the Mussalmans and Christians are far removed from the confines of Hinduism, for their religions are alien and they love Persian, Arab and European institutions.” (V.P. Varma, ‘Modern Indian Political Thought’, Agra, 1961, p. 388).
112. See, Brown, ‘Har Dayal...’, pp. 244-47.
113. Dharmavira, ‘Lala Har Dayal and the Revolutionary Movements of his times’, New Delhi, 1970, p. 282. Also see Dharmavira, ‘Letters of Lala Har Dayal’, Ambala Cantt. 1970, p. 128.

# **CHAPTER - II**

## **THE VISION OF CULTURAL NATIONALISM II**

### **SWAMI SHRADDHANAND AND BHAI PARMANAND**

The present chapter seeks to analyze the views of Swami Shraddhanand and Bhai Parmanand, two very prominent ideologues of Hindu Sangathan in the Punjab, on Cultural Nationalism. Both these ideologues were connected with the Arya Samaj, a movement which played a seminal role in providing the ideological basis for the construction of the vision of Cultural Nationalism among Punjab Hindus, and the Hindu Mahasabha, a pan-Indian political platform for the articulation of the idea of a nation with 'Hindu complexion'. That the Indian nationalists did not, for too long a span of time, operate in a single trajectory of thought, becomes evident from a study of these two personalities. Their thoughts, over a period of time, were marked with a good deal of dynamism and change, but, apart from temporary disjunctures, they can be broadly situated within the ambit of the second vision of nationalism.

### **SWAMI SHRADDHANAND**

A study of the nationalist vision of Munshiram, who came to be known as Swami Shraddhanand when he took 'Sanyas' in 1917, would

entail an analysis of his activities as well as his writings. The former kind of analysis calls for a short biographical sketch of the ideologue in question.

Munshiram, born in 1857 in a Khatri family, became actively involved with the Arya Samaj after a very average academic career which made him study law. His activities as an Arya Samajist were marked by an uncompromising radicalism which made theory and practice converge.<sup>1</sup> This radicalism made Munshiram, who had established himself as the leader of the Jullundhur Samaj, refuse to fall in line with the ideals of the Lahore Samaj, which was dominated by the DAV College group. Differences cropped up between the two parties not only because Munshiram asserted that the College, in as much as it was increasingly moving towards the Western model of education, was deviating from the Arya ideals, but also due to his emphasis on educating women, vegetarianism and propaganda (prachar)<sup>2</sup>. Inspired as it was by the 'Gurukul' ideal, Munshiram's notion of education was entirely indigenous and culturally oriented. And he could not but differ with the paradigm of a hybrid – as expressed in the term 'Anglo-Vedic' – system of education as championed by the College party. The 'College party', led by Hansraj, and the 'Mahatma party', led by Munshiram, formally broke with each other when the Arya Samaj split in 1893. After this, Munshiram directed his energies to the cause of 'prachar' and the development of a 'national' system of education.

In order to prepare ground for the practical establishment of 'Varnashrama Dharm', Munshiram decided to open a Gurukul modeled on the Vedic system of education. The aim of the institution, which became

functional in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, “was to produce a truly ‘national’ adult, who realized that the key to Arya greatness was to be found in the Vedas and in ancient Indian history, who was prepared to structure his life according to that Vedic ideal, and devote his formative years to its study.”<sup>3</sup> Munshiram’s vision of an ideal educational system was filtered by his vision of nationalism. This vision was informed by the notion of a golden Hindu past – a past he was attempting to revive in the Gurukul by training the minds of the young and impressionable.

Munshiram differed from the other ideologues of nationalism in as much as he had an aversion for politics.<sup>4</sup> He saw it as mere show; as a den of corruption and malpractices. Thus, he premised his vision of the nation not on practical politics, but on what he saw as the cultural and spiritual reserves of the nation. Material aspects of nationalism were not so important for him as the religious and spiritual ones. This was one of the reasons – the other perhaps being his faith in the efficacy of the method of cooperation with the government – of his being a critic of the Congress till 1919.

A witness to some of the Congress sessions from 1893 onwards, Munshiram saw the organization in poor light. Not only did he consider Congress activities as a farce in the name of nationalism,<sup>5</sup> but he also disapproved of what he saw as its policy of Muslim appeasement. His visits to its sessions of 1893 and 1899 convinced him that the Congress could stoop to any level to attract Muslims in a bid to defeat Sir Syed’s policy of keeping the Muslims away from the freedom struggle.<sup>6</sup> He wrote in 1907-08 that the work of Swaraj could progress only by treading the path of ‘Dharm’

and not committing any sinful deeds. To his mind, a sin did not become acceptable merely because it was 'Swadeshi'.<sup>7</sup> Claiming that a number of Congressmen were sinful and morally depraved, he argued that the Swaraj they would bring about would also be sinful.<sup>8</sup> He felt that the Congress programme needed to be led on Dharmic lines by a 'Mahatma'.<sup>9</sup>

Munshiram kept himself away from anti-British activities till 1919. Not only did he keep himself aloof from anti-British struggle, but he was also, by and large, critical of those who plunged themselves in that struggle. While he believed that the Congressmen "should first put their own houses in order before criticizing the power that be"<sup>10</sup>, his opinion about the revolutionaries was even worse.<sup>11</sup> During this phase of his life, he was scarcely critical of British rule. It was only in the aftermath of the partition of Bengal that Munshiram praised the Swadeshi policy, but he made it clear even then that it would be successful only if handled properly by the Congress.<sup>12</sup> He was also, at this time, temporarily critical of British rule, but only on lines of misgovernment and not on grounds of its being alien rule.<sup>13</sup>

When the loyalty of the Arya Samaj was called to question after Lajpat Rai's deportation, Munshiram took pains to emphasize that the Arya Samaj was loyal to the political dispensation of the day. Through his letters written in the 'Punjabee' from 1907 onwards and his book, "The Arya Samaj and Politics – a Vindication", published in 1910, he sought to argue that the Samaj was a purely religious body having nothing to do with politics. He also took a severely critical view of both revolutionary and extremist activities. Urging the government not to be misled by "police reports and



Mohammedans,”<sup>14</sup> he declared, “Loyalty with us is not merely for show. It constitutes the first condition of our existence in this country.”<sup>15</sup>

A study of Munshiram’s life upto this stage reveals a highly religious and spiritual vision of cultural nationalism, to the exclusion of all practical politics. Those who premised their nationalism on political activity were, by and large, seen by him as a depraved lot and he dismissed politics per se as immoral, manipulative and corrupt. The British rule was largely seen by him as beneficial and the Congress activity as retrograde and futile.

He identified nationalist activity as that activity which aimed at reviving the glorious past of the nation; at exploiting the nation’s spiritual and cultural preserves and at providing cultural education to young people. However, his notion of national culture was entirely based on what he saw as the Vedic ideal<sup>16</sup> – the truly glorious past tradition of Hindus.

The Rowlatt Satyagraha and the Non Cooperation movement saw Shradhanand, as he was by now known, take a plunge in politics. He joined the anti-British struggle, strove for Hindu-Muslim unity and created history by speaking from the pulpit of the Jama Masjid in Delhi<sup>17</sup>, thereby altering both his vision of nationalism and the method of struggle for its realization. During this brief phase, the Swami had practically shifted into the third category of nationalism in as much as he was championing the cause of a composite nation.

But the break with the past was far from complete. Though he entered the realm of anti-British politics, the Swami’s approach to politics remained premised on Hindu religio-cultural ethos. In Gandhi’s emphasis on sacrifice

and self-denial, he saw an assertion of the spiritual and 'Dharmic' element; of the intervention of religion in the sphere of politics. It is interesting to note that he called the Non Cooperation movement a 'Dharmyudh', seeing it more as a religious crusade than as a political campaign. He argued in his first public speech that "the movement was more Dharmic than political."<sup>18</sup> "When proclaiming the manifesto for the hartal of 30<sup>th</sup> March he inserted an extra condition among those contained in Gandhi's manifesto : 'Every person should on that day meditate for half an hour and pray to Parmatma that he may turn the hearts of our opponents'."<sup>19</sup>

His abrupt movement towards the third vision of nationalism can also be explained by the fact that he was convinced that the Gandhian politics of righteousness and Dharm was ushering in a 'Ram Rajya' in which Muslims would unite with the Hindus. To quote him :

"For full twenty days it appeared that Ramraj had set in... Goondas had ceased to exist; every Hindu woman was treated like his own mother, sister or daughter by every Musalman and vice versa."<sup>20</sup>

Thus, Shradhanand retained his past notion of animosity between the two communities but saw the differences dissolving away under the influence of 'Dharm'. This made him think seriously in terms of a composite nation and marked his slippage into the third category. However, it is to be noted that the influence of his old beliefs was still prevailing on him; for he conceptualized Hindu-Muslim unity too in purely Hindu terminology, viz. 'Ram Rajya' and 'Dharm'. Thus, though the nation envisioned by him

became more accommodative, it could not rid itself of its Hindu symbolism and imagery.

The shift towards the third vision of nationalism was, however, not to last long. The honeymoon with Gandhian politics was soon over and the Swami developed differences with the Congress and Gandhi on, among other things, the question of the Untouchables and Muslims.<sup>21</sup> The pan-Islamist tendencies of the Khilafat movement and what he saw as Gandhi's soft-corner for the followers of Islam were an anathema to Shradhanand. He was slowly, but surely, reverting to the second vision of nationalism. Not only could he not take kindly to the Ali brothers' call, in view of their belief that "Hindustan had ceased to be 'Dar-ul-Aman',"<sup>22</sup> for 'hijrat', but he also could not countenance allusions to the 'killing of Kafirs' in the verses of the Quran recited by Maulanas at the Nagpur Khilafat Conference.<sup>23</sup> That the Mahatma did not accede to his request for permitting the distribution of foreign cloth – which was meant to be burnt – among the Indian poor, though he allowed the Muslims to send the same cloth to their "Turkish brethren", came as a rude shock to Shradhanand.<sup>24</sup> The final blow came in the form of the Moplah riots and reports of large-scale forced conversions to Islam. The Swami noted with dismay that when, in the December 1921 session of the Congress held in Ahmedabad, a resolution was brought in the Working Committee to condemn the attacks on Hindus by the Moplahs, it could not be passed unanimously on account of the pro-Moplah position taken by 'Nationalist Muslims'.<sup>25</sup> Arguing that the Malabar Hindus were hand-in-glove with British rule, the latter wished to know what was wrong if

the Moplahs had converted them on the point of the sword? To them, one's conversion to another religion for fear of death symbolized voluntary, and not forced, conversion.<sup>26</sup> What he saw as Muslim intransigence on the question of the Moplah excesses made Shraddhanand write to his son Indra that "... the Muslims only want to make India and the Hindus a mere means of strengthening their own cause. For them Islam comes first and 'Mother India' second".<sup>27</sup>

The year 1923 witnessed large-scale Hindu-Muslim riots in different parts of the country. Shraddhanand was part of the Delhi Unity Conference held in the wake of these disturbances. It was decided by the two sides, amidst trading of charges, that the Shuddhi and Tabligh movements should be monitored.<sup>28</sup> The Swami, as the prime mover of the Shuddhi campaigns, naturally came in the eye of the storm.<sup>29</sup> It was at this time that 'Dai Islam', a pamphlet written in 1920 by Nizami, fell in his hands. This pamphlet not only made a case for the conversion of Hindus by hook or crook, but also called upon the Muslims to concentrate their efforts on the conversion of Untouchables for swelling the numbers of the followers of Islam.<sup>30</sup>

The Swami now became a vehement critic of Islam and gave a call for Hindu Sangathan, *i.e.* consolidation. It seemed to him that the cause of Hindu Sangathan, as also of nationalism, was inextricably linked with the uplift of Untouchables. He argued that the Untouchables, abandoned as they were by their co-religionists, not only became vulnerable to the pernicious propaganda of Islam and Christianity, but also became "anchor-sheets of the British government".<sup>31</sup> One of the prime reasons for his parting of ways with

the Congress was his failure to get from it a formal assurance on the abolition of Untouchability in all its forms.<sup>32</sup> One reason for his break with the Hindu Mahasabha – an organization of which he had been the elected Vice-President in the final sitting of the session held in Benares (1923) to discuss Hindu Sangathan, Shuddhi and Untouchability – was its policy of vacillation and lack of radicalism on the Untouchable question.<sup>33</sup>

Disillusioned with the Hindu Mahasabha, the Swami decided to serve the cause of Hindu consolidation through independent work and literary pursuits. He “appealed for a rallying point of unity. Whatever differences existed, all Hindus agreed on the issue of cow-protection. ‘Every untouchable, who becomes a Christian or a Muslim, becomes a beef-eater. Therefore, to save one single Hindu from the hands of non-Hindus, means to save in one year the life of one cow.’”<sup>34</sup> Cow-protection thus became, for him, a rallying point for the ‘Hindu nation’.

### **‘HINDU SANGATHAN – SAVIOR OF THE DYING RACE’**

Among Shradhdhanand’s writings of 1923-26, ‘Hindu Sangathan – Savior of the Dying Race’ is perhaps the most important. In as much as it was published as late as 1926, just a few months before his assassination by a Muslim, it is characteristic of the final phase of his ideological development. It is in this work that the Swami presents himself as a proponent of unalloyed cultural nationalism.

‘Hindu Sangathan – Savior of the Dying Race’ is a narrative of the decline of the ‘Hindu nation’ from a distant golden past. Not only does

Shraddhanand trace the history of this phased decline, but he also suggests remedies for the future revival of the nation. This book gives valuable insight into the historical reconstruction as well as the nationalist vision of the ideologue in question.

Swami Shraddhanand sees, as would any committed Arya Samajist, the Vedic period as the golden past of the 'Hindu nation'.<sup>35</sup> According to him, the civilization of the Vedic Aryans, with an ideal society structured on the functional caste system (Varna Dharm), was a flourishing one. The Aryans led a prosperous life and colonized lands far and near. But, there after gradually began a partial decline of the Vedic institutions. Monarchy got the better of the republican system of government, the caste system became hereditary and widow re marriage went out of practice. Shraddhanand argues that the Buddha attempted to reform the people who had fallen from the ancient pinnacle of glory, but his followers became sectarian bigots, thus dividing a single people, *i.e.* the 'Hindu nation', into two contending groups.

But, the decline was only partial. And it remained so until Harsha's time.<sup>36</sup> The Swami contends that upto the time of Harsha, there were no child marriages, inter-caste marriages were known and the Brahmans and Kshatriyas remained internally undivided castes. However, as a negative development, the fifth caste of Panchamas (Untouchables) had come into being. Though the status of women had begun to decline due to polygamy, the condition of widows was not as bad as it became in later times.

Shraddhanand now goes on to argue that the decline was made complete by the Muslim invasions. Taking recourse to force as well as fraud, the Muslims converted a large number of Hindus to Islam.<sup>37</sup> Dealing at length with the activities of Francis Xavier, the Jesuit missionary who was sent to Goa in 1542, he claims that similar oppressive and dubious methods were employed by Christianity to baptize Hindus.<sup>38</sup> Thus, Shraddhanand's historical construction sees both Islam and Christianity as the aggressors of the 'Hindu nation'.

While identifying the causes of the Hindu decline, Shraddhanand points both to external and internal ones. While the onslaughts of Islam and Christianity can be seen as the external cause of decline, the perversion of the Hindu social polity – as manifested in a hereditary caste system, the rise of Untouchability and dislocation of the Ashram system – can be considered as the internal cause of degradation. That the external causes are considered far more responsible for the decline than the internal ones is made obvious by Shraddhanand's contention that the Muslim invasions were responsible for internal decline too, in that they led to degradation in the status of Hindu women. Always in danger of being outraged, Hindu girls were married off early. And such child-marriages resulted not only in the birth of unhealthy off-springs, but also in an increase in the number of widows.

As a means for undoing the Hindu decline and reviving the glorious national past, Shraddhanand suggests social reforms meant at reviving Vedic institutions and way of life, reclamation of Hindus lost to Islam and Christianity (Shuddhi), and consolidation of all Hindus regardless of

differences of sect and creed. The reforms suggested by him include abolition of child marriages, untouchability<sup>40</sup>, polygamy and polyandry; and revival of the ancient Arya Varna Dharm and the practice of widow re marriage, albeit in the case of unconsummated widows only. In a bid to revive the 'Varna Dharm', he calls for the dismantling of the system of sub-castes in favour of the four-fold division. He also suggests that "there should be free marriage relations, to begin with, within the castes and Anuloma marriage should not be interfered with. Then gradually Pratiloma marriages ought to be introduced. And lastly character and conduct should become the determining factors in fixing the Varna of a Hindu. But interdining among all castes should commence at once – cooked and served by decent Sudras. This alone can solve the problem of untouchability and the exclusiveness among the Hindus."<sup>41</sup>

Stressing the need for consolidation among all Hindus, irrespective of differences of creed, Shradhdhanand declares that "the salvation of the community depends upon common action taken by the Hindu Samaj as a whole, but individual salvation is the look out of individuals. Theoretical Dharm is connected with individual salvation, and, therefore, there is room for theists, pantheists, henotheists and even atheists in the broad lap of the organized Hindu Samaj. But the code of practical Dharm has to do with the community as a whole and, therefore, here the plea of individual Dharm should not be allowed to prevail nor should it hamper the efforts of the organized Hindu Samaj towards national salvation."<sup>42</sup>



Aware that the Hindus have no spacious place like the Muslim ~~mosque~~ for community interaction and meetings, Shradddhanand concludes by proposing the setting up of a “Hindu Rashtra Mandir” as the first step towards Hindu organization. Interestingly, the very name of the proposed institution brings to one’s mind the image of a miniature model of a nation built on the vision of religiously informed cultural nationalism. In Shradddhanand’s own words :

“The first step which I propose is to build one Hindu Rashtra Mandir at least in every city and important town, with a compound which could contain an audience of 25 thousands and a hall in which Katha from Bhagawad Gita, the Upanishads and the great epics of Ramayana and Mahabharat could be daily recited. The Rashtra Mandir will be in charge of the local Hindu Sabha which will manage to have akharas for wréstling and gatka and plays in the same compound. While the sectarian Hindu temples are dominated by their own individual deities, the Catholic Hindu Mandir should be devoted to the worship of three mother spirits – the Gaumata, the Saraswati mata and the Bhumi-mata. Let some living cows be there to represent plenty, let ‘Savitri’ (Gayatri Mantra) be inscribed over the gate of the hall to remind every Hindu of his duty to expel all ignorance and let a life-like map of Mother-Bharat be constructed in a

prominent place, giving all its characteristics in vivid colours so that every child of the Matr Bhumi may daily bow before the mother and renew his pledges to restore her to the ancient pinnacle of glory from which she has fallen.”<sup>43</sup>

Shraddhanand’s proposed ‘Hindu Rashtra Mandir’ is, thus, a broad platform for the articulation of Hindu cultural nationalism. That he has woven Hindu religio-cultural symbols with the idea of motherland makes his vision of nationalism truly cultural.

### **SITUATING SHRADDHANAND’S NATIONALISM**

What distinguished Swami Shraddhanand from other ideologues of the second category of nationalist vision was his rejection of practical politics in favour of a ‘Dharmic’ approach to nationalism. It is interesting to note that his formal break with the Mahasabha occurred because the Mahasabhiites wished to contest the 1926 elections.<sup>44</sup> Far from being in any way associated with political activity, his notion of nationalist work revolved around social reform, consolidation of the community, construction of a culturally informed system of education etc. Aversion for politics, which he saw as nothing more than an exercise in manipulation, remained a central part of his personality throughout his life.

However, this ideologue’s approach towards British rule underwent a sea-change in the last decade of his life. From an admirer of British rule in India, he became a critic of it. Even after his withdrawal from Gandhian

politics, he did not revert back to his old position. One of his objections to the Hindu Mahasabha, as expressed in 'Hindu Sangathan', was that it had begun on a loyalist note. He states that though he had been invited to become a member of the Sabha, he did not do so because "... the All India Hindu Sabha was run by those Hindus in whose estimation every invader who snatched the government of a country from its people was God personified."<sup>45</sup> The Sabha, in its 1921 session, felt compelled, in order to keep pace with the spirit of the times, to modify, the object of "co-operation with government", to that of evolving "a united and self-governing Indian nation."<sup>46</sup> It had also to call for non cooperation with the government on the grounds that the latter was indulging in cow-slaughter and the export of beef.<sup>47</sup> Shraddhanand's poor evaluation of the Hindu Mahasabha can, at one level, be seen as the criticism of a cultural nationalist organization treading the loyalist path for the realization of a nation with Hindu complexion by a cultural nationalist whose nationalism does not approve of the pro-British approach. Here again, the second category's amorphous nature is effectively exposed. His other criticism of the Mahasabha deals, as mentioned before, with its vacillating approach to Hindu Sangathan, especially in the context of the abolition of Untouchability.

### **BHAI PARMANAND**

Bhai Parmanand, a Mohiyal Brahman from the Jhelum district of the Punjab, was one of the foremost ideologues of cultural nationalism in the Punjab. A devoted Arya Samajist who took part both in educational and missionary activities, Bhai Parmanand went on to become one of the

foremost leaders of the Hindu Mahasabha. His role as an ideologue is attested by his writings, which are both extensive and instructive.

Bhai Parmanand, who died in 1947, out lived the other ideologues studied in this dissertation by several years. Thus, an attempt would be made here, for the purpose of providing coherence to the analysis, to study his ideas and activities only upto 1930. This would enable us to pick up threads of common issues with which the ideologues in question dealt.

After studying in the DAV College at Lahore, Bhai Parmanand completed his post-graduation in History from Presidency College, Calcutta. On his return to Lahore, he “offered his services to the DAV College as its life-member.”<sup>48</sup> In 1905, he went to South Africa as a missionary of the Arya Samaj. During the next few years, he kept on shuffling from one place to another. This period witnessed his involvement in diverse activities, including studying, preaching and lecturing. His firm roots in the second vision of nationalism are attested by his notion of the Hindus and Muslims being “two divergent races” which could never evolve into an Indian nation.<sup>49</sup>

On his return to India in 1908, Bhai Parmanand “got published his well-known book, ‘History of India’, which was written from purely Hindu point of view, tracing the growth and decline of the Hindus as a nation.”<sup>50</sup> Due to its criticism of the British rule, “this book was ... proscribed by the Punjab government.”<sup>51</sup> The British always remained suspicious of Bhai Parmanand during the early phase of his activities, as is shown by the fact that he was arrested in 1909 after a close search of his house.<sup>52</sup> In 1915, he

was again arrested in connection with the Ghadr conspiracy case and was sentenced to death.<sup>53</sup> This sentence was commuted, on the intervention of Lord Hardinge, to a life-sentence in the Cellular Jail of the Andamans. Bhai Parmanand had, throughout the trial, pleaded not guilty of the charges levelled against him. It was the intervention of C.F. Andrews which secured his release from the Andamans in 1920.

When Bhai Parmanand returned to India, the Non Cooperation movement was in full swing. In order to assist the cause of 'national education' – one of the programmes on the Non Cooperation agenda – he agreed to teach at the National College, Lahore, without accepting any remuneration.<sup>54</sup> This he did for five years, till enthusiasm for the Congress programme waned and the college went out of function.

His efforts at running the National College at Lahore should not be taken to imply that Bhai Parmanand had brought himself round to the Congress ideology and programme. What seems likely is that this was for him a phase of uncertainty; a stage of life in which his ideas about nationalism were somewhat hazy. Thus, while on the one hand, he extolled Gandhi as an 'avatara' on account of the latter's love for Muslims,<sup>55</sup> he led a group of Hindu students, who had turned non cooperators, to Narnaul in Haryana for the purpose of religious propaganda among the Hindu Jats, on the other.<sup>56</sup> Thus, though the Arya Samajist element in him was still strong, his nationalism had become more accommodative. Yet, he made it clear that he agreed only with the educational programme of the Congress movement, and not with its political programme.<sup>57</sup>

The riots which broke out in different parts of the country after the failure of the movement for Non Cooperation made Bhai Parmanand revert back completely to the second category of nationalism. This was marked by his complete break with the Congress policy of Hindu-Muslim unity. While referring to his visit to riot-torn Saharanpur, he states in 'The Story of My Life' :

“When I learnt that the office-bearers of the local Khilafat Committee were responsible for the riots and the destruction of the lives and properties of the Hindus, I was forced to the conclusion that the Khilafat agitation was at the bottom of all Hindu-Muslim riots.”<sup>58</sup>

Bhai Parmanand argues in the aforementioned work that the Khilafat agitation fanned the feelings of fanaticism and religious bigotry among Indian Muslims<sup>59</sup>. Contending that the post-Khilafat riots were a manifestation of the continuing presence of these feelings, he dismisses the Congress argument that the riots were the handiwork of goondas in the two communities as a lame excuse.<sup>60</sup>

Bhai Parmanand now became an ardent supporter of Hindu Sangathan and joined the Hindu Mahasabha. He had come to “the conclusion, that the salvation of this country was possible through Hindus and Hindus alone, (and) that the way to this salvation, was to make the Hindu community, as a whole, strong and powerful. The stronger the Hindus would grow, the greater would be the chance of the other communities combining with them in working for the common good of the country.”<sup>61</sup> Thus, he came to regard

the Hindu Sangathan movement “as the only means of salvation of both (the) community and country.”<sup>62</sup>

Bhai Parmanand now became the foremost spokesman of the approach of council entry; he argued that the Hindu Mahasabha should field its own candidates, rather than supporting those fielded by the Swaraj Party, for the elections of 1926.<sup>63</sup> He regarded Swarajists like Motilal Nehru as pro-Muslim.<sup>64</sup> Bhai Parmanand’s call for council entry raised a storm in Mahasabha circles. This battle was contested by Bhai Parmanand and Malviya on the one side, and Lajpat Rai on the other. Swami Shraddhanand went to the extent of formally parting ways with the Mahasabha in protest against the proposal for council entry. It was finally decided that the Mahasabha would field its own candidates only in places where Hindu interests were deemed to be at stake.<sup>65</sup>

Differences cropped up between Lajpat Rai, who had vehemently opposed the proposal that the Mahasabha field its own candidates, and Motilal Nehru, making the former to field candidates in opposition to those of the Swaraj Party from the platform of the Independent Congress Party. Bhai Parmanand threw in his lot with Lajpat Rai’s candidates in their contest against the Congress-backed Swarajist candidates.<sup>66</sup> The outcome was the complete rout of the Swaraj Party. It is interesting that both Bhai Parmanand and Swami Shraddhanand campaigned for Birla, the Independent Party candidate from Gorakhpur, who won with a handsome margin.<sup>67</sup> The above account goes to show that Bhai Parmanand’s method of struggle was the

same as that of Lal Chand in that they both believed that Hindu grievances should be expressed through legislative councils.

When the government appointed the Simon Commission to prepare a constitution for India, the Swarajists, who were in a majority in the Central Assembly, boycotted it on the ground that the seven member commission had no Indian on it. The Independent Party also closed ranks with the Swarajists on the boycott of the Simon Commission. Lord Burkenhead challenged Indians to prepare a constitution acceptable to all sections of the country. And this challenge was accepted by the Swarajists, who applied themselves to the task of drawing up the new constitution.

The 'Nehru Report', which was published in August 1928, proposed the introduction of joint electorates with reservation of seats – though strictly in proportion to population – for small minorities like the Hindus in the Frontier Province and Muslims in certain provinces. That it entirely did away with reservation of seats in the Punjab made Bhai Parmanand view the report as detrimental to Hindu interests. He was also displeased with its acceptance of the Muslim demand of creating a new Muslim – majority province of Sindh from the province of Bombay. Fearing that joint electorates in the Punjab would naturally result in a majority of Muslims being returned to the council, he demanded safeguards for the Hindu minority. His vision being Hindu-centric, Bhai Parmanand could by no means countenance Muslim domination in Punjab politics.<sup>68</sup>

The discussions on the 'Nehru Report' made the Hindu Mahasabha a house divided : while Lajpat Rai pressed for the acceptance of the Report,



Bhai Parmanand rejected it as pro-Muslim. The latter saw it as an attempt to usher in a 'Muslim Raj'.<sup>69</sup> The disagreement between Lajpat Rai and Bhai Parmanand on the 'Nehru Report' was born, above everything else, of the divergences in their visions of nationalism. Dharmvira reports that according to Lajpat Rai's own claim, British rule had become so detestable to him that he would prefer Islamic rule to it.<sup>70</sup> "Here we part", he goes on to state, was the reply of Bhai Parmanand, who declared that he was not ready to substitute one slavery for another. And with this parting of ways came to an end a thirty five years old relationship. This controversy, as Dharmvira has narrated it, can best be seen as a conflict between the vision of a 'composite' nation and that of a 'Hindu' nation.

### **'HINDU SANGATHAN'**

A brief sketch of Bhai Parmanand's activities till about 1930 has hitherto been drawn. In it, he comes across as a proponent of the second vision of nationalism. Moving from his activities to his writings, an attempt would now be made to comprehend his vision of nationalism, as also his historical construction, through an analysis of his book, 'Hindu Sangathan'.

Asserting that the present phase is that of nation-states, Bhai Parmanand links Hindu Sangathan to nationalism; he argues that nationalism in India can grow to full bloom only when the majority community is organized and strengthened. He states common racial descent, a common language, a motherland to which people are deeply attached, and the bond of religion as the factors which weld a society into a nation.<sup>71</sup> He qualifies his

notion of religion as an ingredient of nationalism by stating that though religion can be a constituent of nationalism, it is per se different from nationalism. Thus, it is possible to have different nations with the same religion.<sup>72</sup>

Bhai Parmanand asserts the supremacy of Hinduism by arguing that while the particularistic beliefs of the Semitic religions make them quarrel over doctrinal differences, Hinduism accepts the legitimacy of different interpretations of truth and recognizes the efficacy of different ways of realizing it. As for the question of what constitutes Hindu identity, he is in broad agreement with Savarkar's definition that a "Hindu is one who regards India as his motherland and the most sacred spot on earth."<sup>73</sup>

Bhai Parmanand premises his historical construction on the notion of successive phases of Hindu decline and revival. As a true Arya Samajist, he sees the Vedic period, based as it was on the 'ideal' social institution of 'Varnashrama Dharm', as the golden past of the Hindus. He agrees with Swami Dayanand that this was an age characterized by great scientific and cultural achievements, immense wealth, equality of men and women, compulsory education in Vedas to both boys and girls and absence of child-marriages.<sup>74</sup> The caste system had a functional, as opposed to a hereditary, basis to it.

Too much wealth, Bhai Parmanand argues, soon led to depravity. Internal jealousy, vanity and greed led to the Mahabharat war, which resulted in great destruction. Parikshit, the lone survivor of the Pandava

family, was so ignorant of the Vedas that he encouraged false learning in the form of the Puranas.<sup>75</sup> The first Hindu decline had set in.

Perturbed by the depravity and false pretensions of the Brahmans – who had by now become a hereditary caste – the Buddha, according to Bhai Parmanand, tried to reform society and religion. But his emphasis on peace, instead of reversing the decline, intensified it further in that brave young men turned their backs on their duty as Kshatriyas and embraced non-violence.<sup>76</sup> The result was that foreign invasions of the Yuehchi and other tribes could not be resisted. The realization that the doctrines of Buddhism had jeopardized the nation's security led to the re-entrenchment of 'Vedic Dharm' under Shankar. In order to assert the superiority of 'Varnashrama Dharm' over Buddhist doctrines, Bhai Parmanand argues that while the former was based on the notion of one's duty towards society in the manner best suited to one's natural capabilities, the latter, in its emphasis on the individual's salvation, was self-centered and had no notion of social duty.<sup>77</sup> The ouster of Buddhism and the re-entrenchment of Vedic Hinduism are styled by him as the first Hindu revival. This revival was marked by the repulsion of invasions, the re-establishment of the caste system and the growth of Hindi as a language. Bhai Parmanand states that the accounts of Huein Tsang and Alberuni give a picture of Indian society during this revival.

Bhai Parmanand sees the Muslim invasions and the establishment of Muslim rule in India as the second phase of decline. This period is also referred to, by him, as the 'dead-alive' state of Hinduism, for though there

were signs of discontent against alien rule, most Hindu chieftains had surrendered their pride and honour to the rulers. What he views as the 'national struggle' against foreign rule – which was fought both at the military and the religious level – is identified in 'Hindu Sangathan' as the second Hindu revival.<sup>78</sup> This revival was marked by the assertion of Hindu identity. In his own words, "It was during this very struggle that all those who belonged to this nation began to call themselves Hindus; all other names having been thrown into the background... The enemy looked upon the whole Hindu nation with hatred and contempt. This ... brought the Hindus together and organized them as a nation; for, they too, began to hate the common enemy in return."<sup>79</sup> While the military struggle was carried on by men like Shivaji, Baji Rao, Maharana Pratap, Prithviraj, Ranjit Singh and Banda Bahadur, "the movement for religious revival (was) led by Ramanand, Kabir, Tulsidas, Ramdas etc." Bhai Parmanand sees the poetry of Ram Das and Bhushan as replete with Hindu nationalism.<sup>80</sup> He states that, referring to Guru Tegh Bahadur's sacrifice, Guru Gobind Singh said :

"Keeno Baro Kalu Mein saaka  
Tilak Janju Raakha Prabh taanka."<sup>81</sup>

(In the Kalyuga he has done the most glorious deed, for his holy self sacrificed his life for the protection of Tilak and the sacred thread).

The entire chapter on the second Hindu revival contains such references. Bhai Parmanand views the establishment of a Hindu kingdom under Shivaji as the fruit of this revival.

Bhai Parmanand contends that the establishment of British values, which manifest themselves in the spread of Western education and Christianity, represents the third phase of Hindu decline. To him, the Arya Samaj of Dayanand represents an attempt at Hindu revival in the altered context. That he finds Hindu revival and national revival to be synonymous is revealed by his following statement about the Arya Samaj :

“It is a movement for the protection of country and religion. In this respect the Arya Samaj and Hindu Sangathan, nay, even the Sanatana Dharma Sabha, have the same ideal.”<sup>82</sup>

He further argues that Dayanand “was actuated by a strong desire for the uplift of his country and nation. He did not found the Arya Samaj for the sake of starting a new religion, but used it as a means, among several others, of realising his noble object.”<sup>83</sup> Thus, Bhai Parmanand puts the Arya Samaj, the Sanatana Dharm Sabha, and the larger movement for Hindu Sangathan within the ‘cultural internality’ of Hinduism and argues that the protection and service of both nation and religion are following the same course. Moreover, his construction of history accepts Hindus alone as indigenous, and clubs the Muslims, along with the British, as ‘outsiders’.

Bhai Parmanand’s vision of nationalism is a logical conclusion of his historical reconstruction. What is important in this context is that Bhai Parmanand’s notion of cultural nationalism draws inspiration either from Ancient India, or from those episodes of Medieval Indian history which represent ‘anti-Muslim’ struggle. When dealing with the history of Modern

India, he recognizes as the true inheritors of the 'national tradition' only those movements which deal with Hindu communitarian interests. Thus, Bhai Parmanand locates his notion of 'national culture' within the confines of the 'cultural internality' of Hinduism. That the broad enclosure of Hinduism – which he sees as a religion containing within its fold a multiplicity of sects and creeds – provides the ideological foundation for his nationalism is further attested by his statement that “the nation which destroys its religion bargains for its own destruction. It is dharma alone which keeps a nation alive. It is the very soul of a nation. Hinduism is the name of a dharma and certainly not that of a creed.”<sup>84</sup>

Bhai Parmanand bemoans the lack of national spirit and 'corporate life'<sup>85</sup> among Hindus. The Buddhists of ancient times, as also the Kshatriyas of Medieval India, bear the brunt of his criticism. While he considers selfishness, as expressed in the doctrine of individual salvation, as inherent in Buddhism, he lambasts the Kshatriyas for having failed to perform their duty of protecting the nation from foreign invasions. Referring to the present, he argues that the lack of national spirit manifests itself in the spectacle of Brahmans spreading English education, Kshatriyas serving in the British army and Vaishyas promoting foreign trade. He likens the Hindus' obsession for English with their love for Persian during Medieval times.<sup>86</sup> Even the Arya Samaj, in its growing emphasis on English education in the DAV College, fails to escape criticism at his hands.<sup>87</sup>

In 'Hindu Sangathan', Bhai Parmanand is scathing in his criticism of Muslims.<sup>88</sup> Claiming that Indian Muslims see India as a 'Dar ul harab', he

argues that they are least desirous of unity. They do not take kindly to Hindu efforts at consolidation and internal unity, and have become the biggest enemies of the Hindu Sangathan movement. He further argues that while the Hindus supported the Khilafat agitation as a gesture of Hindu-Muslim unity, the followers of Islam were thinking in terms of 'pan-Islamism' alone. He contends that the latter sentiment has made the Muslims enemies of Hindu Sangathan; for they view any consolidation of Hindus as an obstacle in the path of pan-Islamism.

As a solution to the Hindu-Muslim problem, Bhai Parmanand suggests that the Hindus should assimilate the Muslims.<sup>89</sup> This is perhaps the consideration which makes him champion the cause of shuddhi – the vehicle for the assimilation and absorption of Muslims. His vision of nationalism is effectively reflected in his plea for the absorption of Muslims; for in this way alone does he see the establishment of a nation with Hindu complexion possible. In other words only through their absorption in Hinduism can the Muslims be accommodated in a nation with a Hindu cultural core. Interestingly, Bhai Parmanand does not wish to give the Muslims any other option. This is evident from the fact that he sees the formation of separate Hindu and Muslim nations<sup>90</sup> as the only alternative to the absorption of Muslims in Hinduism. Thus, this ideologue of cultural nationalism prefers partition to the acceptance of composite nationalism. To him, Hindu-Muslim unity is a possibility only when the Hindus are strengthened and the Muslims overwhelmed into submission; when Indian Islam, to put it differently, is virtually de-Islamised.

‘Hindu Sangathan’ also affords us a glimpse into Bhai Parmanand’s strategy of struggle. His approach to British rule is somewhere between those of Lal Chand and Har Dayal in the latter part of the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In other words, he proposes neither complete cooperation with, nor total boycott of, British institutions. While he is one with Har Dayal in arguing for an entirely indigenous system of education,<sup>91</sup> he comes close to Lal Chand in his belief that the Hindu Mahasabha field its own candidates for elections to councils. Thus, while he rejects English education, he is not averse to using the Councils as a platform for voicing Hindu grievances and furthering Hindu political interests.

His references to British rule do not betray the mendicant approach which formed an undercurrent of the writings of Lal Chand<sup>92</sup> and the Congress ‘Liberals’. Thus, his approach to British rule is perhaps closest to that of the ‘Responsivists’, though his vision as regards the ‘cultural complexion of the nation’ may differ from them. While he believes in inculcating nationalist feelings among the students through a ‘national’ system of education, he also supports council entry in order to secure the interests of Hindus vis-à-vis the Muslims.

Bhai Parmanand concludes ‘Hindu Sangathan’ with some suggestions for strengthening the Hindus and arousing the nationalist sentiment in them. He suggests that Hindus learn Hindi right from their childhood instead of studying Persian and English; that they work for the re-establishment of the Vedic ‘Varnashrama Dharm’; that they develop fondness of sport for gaining hardihood; that they work, in order to maintain their numerical



strength, for the reclamation of their co-religionists lost to Islam and Christianity; and that they shun practices like Untouchability<sup>93</sup> which pose hindrances in the work of Hindu Sangathan. He further suggests that the Hindu Sabhas take up the work of Sangathan, Shuddhi, cow-protection, promotion of Hindi, caring for widows and orphans etc.<sup>94</sup> Bhai Parmanand finally concludes his account with an impassioned plea for cultural nationalism :

“Let Hinduism be your flame. Learn to sacrifice yourself for it just as a moth burns itself on a candle ... learn to love the very name of ‘Hindu’ and in the fire of that love burn away all personal jealousies and quarrels ... Become true devotees of your nation. Only by bearing troubles will you succeed in infusing new life and spirit in your nation. This is true religion and worship.”<sup>95</sup>

## NOTES

1. See J.T.F. Jordens, 'Swami Shraddhananda : His Life and Causes', New Delhi, 1981, p. 20.
2. Ibid., p. 29.
3. Ibid., p. 55.
4. See Indra Vidyavachaspati, 'Mere Pita : Sansmaran,' Delhi, 1957, p. 199.
5. Jordens, 'Shraddhananda' in p. 63.
6. About the Lahore session (1893), Munshiram writes, "It was.... found that almost every Muslim delegate, who was brought to be enlisted, was a 'Waiz' (religious preacher). And when the time for issuing tickets to them arrived, the Muslim Mukhtar propagandist asked the gentleman in charge of the tickets to issue them to Muslims without payment of Rs. 10 as delegate's a fee... tickets were issued to every Muslim 'Waiz' free of charge .... It was in this way that, inspite of Sir Syed Ahmed's efforts to the contrary, Muslim sympathy with the Congress was bolstered up. And these 'Waiz' delegates stopped in the Pandala only a few minutes and were to be found enjoying creature comforts under the refreshment 'Shamianah' for the rest of the sitting." (Swami Shraddhanand, 'Inside Congress', Bombay, 1946, pp. 24-25).
- (ii) About the Lucknow Session (1899) he writes, "Sitting on the dias, the first thing that I noticed was that the number of Muslim delegates was proportionately fourfold of what it was at Lahore in 1893. The majority of Muslim delegates had donned gold, silver or silk embroidered chogas over their ordinary coarse suits of wearing apparel. It was rumoured that these 'chogas' had been lent by Hindu moneyed men for Congress Tamasha... Sir Syed Ahmed's anti-Congress League had tried in a public meeting to dissuade Muslims from joining the Congress as delegates. As a counter move the Congress people lighted the whole Congress camp some four months before the session and advertised that ingress that night would be free. The result was that all the 'Chandu Khanas' of Lucknow were emptied and a huge audience of some thirty thousand Hindus and Muslims was addressed from half a dozen platforms. It was there that the Muslim delegates were selected and elected. All this was admitted by the Lucknow Congress organizers to me in private." (Swami Shraddhanand, 'Inside Congress', pp. 30-31).
7. See Satyadeva Vidyalkar, 'Swami Shraddhanand', Delhi, 1933, pp. 470-74.
8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.
10. J.T.F. Jordens, 'Shraddhanand', p. 80.
11. Condemning them, he said that there were "given to work in the dark". (Ibid.)
12. Ibid. p. 81.
13. " 'The government of India was not living up to Queen Victoria's promises of justice for the natives...'. Notwithstanding this harsh criticism, Munshiram still believed that British rule could be good rule." (Ibid.)
14. Ibid. p. 85.
15. Ibid. p. 86.
16. This is evidenced by the fact that his notion of national education was based on the Vedic ideal of Varnashrama Dharm.
17. Jordens, 'Shraddhanand', p. 109.
18. Swami Shraddhanand, 'Inside Congress', p. 51.
19. Ibid., p. 54.
20. Jordens, 'Shraddhananda', p. 111.
21. Ibid., pp. 118-24, pp. 142-45.
22. See Swami Shraddhanand, 'Inside Congress', pp. 115-16. Alluding to what he saw as Gandhi's partiality to Muslims, Shraddhanand writes "I exhorted Mahatmaji to exert his great influence and restrain our Musalman brethren from Hijrat ... (but) Mahatmaji's reply was truly characteristic of him. He said that he had not advised Hijrat but when our Muslim brethren thought it to be a call of their religion what could he say; still he hoped to try and dissuade them from resorting to it."
23. Shraddhanand writes, "The Ayats (verses) of the Quran recited by Maulanas on that occasion contained frequent references to Jihad against and the killing of Kafirs. But when I drew his attention to this phase of the Khilafat movement Mahatmaji smiled and said – 'They are alluding to the British bureaucracy,' In reply I said that it was all subversive of the idea of non-violence and when a revulsion of feeling came, the Mohammedan Maulanas would not refrain from using these verses against the Hindus." (Ibid., p. 123).
24. See Ibid., pp. 139-41, "While Mahatmaji stood adamant and did not have the least regard for Hindu feeling when a question of principle was involved, for the Muslim dereliction of duty there was always a very soft corner in his heart."

25. Ibid., pp. 150-51.
26. Ibid.
27. J.T.F. Jordens, 'Swami Shraddhanand', p. 126.
28. Ibid., p. 139.
29. Ibid., pp. 138-40.
30. Ibid., p. 141.
31. Ibid., p. 130.
32. Ibid., pp. 123-24.
33. Ibid., pp. 154-56.
34. Ibid., p. 144.
35. Shraddhananda Sanyasi, 'Hindu Sangathan – Savior of the Dying Race', Delhi, 1926, pp. 1-13. 'Hindu' and 'nation' are used as synonymous. (see p. 13).
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid. See Chapters on conversions to Islam by force and fraud.
38. Ibid. See Chapters on conversion to Christianity by force and fraud.
39. Shraddhanand sees the growth of numerous sub-castes and sects as a sign of the perversion of Hindu social polity. To quote him – "Every sect and every sub-caste began to look down upon the other, and those who were politically downtrodden became abomination in the eyes of the so-called higher castes. Thus arose Untouchability in the north to which Unapproachability and Unseeability were added in the extreme south of India." (Ibid., p. 80).
40. See Ibid., pp. 84-92.
41. Ibid., p. 136.
42. Ibid., p. 139.
43. Ibid., pp. 140-41.
44. Jordens, 'Swami Shraddhanand', p. 156.
45. Shraddhananda Sanyasi, 'Hindu Sangathan', p. 114.
46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.
48. See Appendix A, p. II in \_\_\_\_\_, 'Bhai Parmananda', Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, Cl. No. W2, M74P H1; AC. No. 35754.
49. "While he was in England in 1907, in one of his notes on the political problem of India, written in the Kensington Garden, London, we found him making certain observations on Hindu-Muslim problem. He said that the evolution of an Indian Nation out of two divergent races was an impossibility. He suggested that river Indus should be made the frontier between the Hindu Raj and Muslim Raj and if necessary an exchange of population." (Indra Prakash, 'Prophet of Modern Times', New Delhi, 1975, p. 3).
50. See Appendix A, p. II, in \_\_\_\_\_, 'Bhai Parmananda', NMML, New Delhi.
51. Ibid.
52. See Dharmvira, 'Bhai Parmanand Aur Unka Yug', Delhi, 1981, pp. 93-105.
53. See Appendix A, p. III in \_\_\_\_\_, 'Bhai Parmananda', NMML, New Delhi.
54. See Ibid., p. V. Also see Bhai Parmanand, 'The Story of My Life', New Delhi, 1982, pp. 162-63.
55. "There is not the like of him even in the Avataras of the Hindus, and he may without hesitation be reckoned as a new Avatar; Hindus would perhaps be ready to receive him as Kalki – the tenth incarnation of Vishnu .... What is the secret of his phenomenal success? The secret is to be found, as I think, in the magnanimity of his heart, which has made him always love the Mussalmans." (Bhai Parmanand 'The Story of My Life', p. 154).
56. Ibid., p. 162.
57. Ibid., p. 164.
58. Ibid., p. 165.
59. Ibid., pp. 165-166.
60. "Instead of realising their error (support to the Khilafat agitation) and trying to neutralise its effects the Congress leaders took to voicing an absolutely wrong sentiment, that the presence of goondas among the two communities was at the bottom of Hindu-Muslim riots. Had not the goondas been there already? Then, why were there no communal riots before?" (Ibid., p. 166).
61. Ibid., p. 158.
62. Ibid., p. 159.

63. Ibid., p. 167.
64. See Dharmvira, 'Bhai Parmanand Aur Unka Yug', pp. 301-02.
65. See Ibid., p. 302.  
Also see Bhai Parmanand, 'The story of My Life', pp. 167-68.
66. See Dharmvira, 'Bhai Parmanand Aur Unka Yug', pp. 302-03.
67. See Ibid., p. 303.  
Also see Jordens, 'Swami Shraddhanand p. 166.
68. See Dharmvira, 'Bhai Parmanand, pp. 305-06.
69. Bhai Parmanand argued that it was desirable to have people's rule in the country, but to substitute one rule, (British rule) with another (Muslim rule) was undesirable. (See Ibid., pp. 305-06).
70. Ibid., p. 305.
71. See Bhai Parmanand, 'Hindu Sangathan', Lahore, 1936, pp. 1-10.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid., p. 10.
74. See Ibid., Chapter 6 – 'The Story of Our Land'.
75. Ibid.
76. See Ibid., pp. 18-23.
77. See Ibid., Chapter IX. Bhai Parmanand criticizes the Buddhist ideal of individual salvation in the following words – "Let society go to dogs; everyone should try to attam Nirvana." (Ibid., p. 145).
78. See Ibid., Chapter on 'Hindu Revival II'.
79. Ibid., pp. 30-32.
80. Bhai Parmanand quotes Ram Dass' poem in which he saw Aurangzeb dethroned and Hindustan once again made sacred by Ram. (see Ibid., pp. 45-46).
81. Ibid., p. 52.
82. Ibid., p. 79.

83. Ibid., p. 81.
84. Ibid., p. 115.
85. See Ibid., Chapter X
86. See Ibid., p. 178.
87. See Ibid., Chapter XI.
88. See Ibid., pp. 183-88.
89. See Ibid., pp. 187-88.
90. Ibid., p. 188.
91. Ibid., p. 147.
92. Disagreeing with Hindus who held that loyalism would enable the Hindus to compete with the Muslims, Bhai Parmanand writes, "Their mistake ... lies in their thinking that they can succeed in making Hindus powerful with the help of a third party. This has never happened before. The government wants to weaken the Hindus; for it is the Hindus alone who regard this country as their own. Naturally, therefore, true patriots can be found only among them. The country or its love does not find place in the hearts of Mohammedans." (Ibid., pp. 189-90).
93. See Ibid., p. 223.
94. Bhai Parmanand urges the Hindu Sabhas to take up this work; for according to him, the Arya Samaj, in terms of support base among Hindus, is not equal to the task. Ibid., p. 224.
95. Ibid., p. 231.

# **CHAPTER - III**



## LAJPAT RAI'S VISION OF COMPOSITE NATIONHOOD

This chapter seeks to undertake, through a study of the ideas of Lala Lajpat Rai, an analysis of the basic premises of the third vision of nationalism. Of the three categories constituting the alternative frame-work suggested in this dissertation, the third one was, in a way, the most accommodative, for it sought to reconcile the divergences, perceived or otherwise, of communitarian interests with the idea of a composite nationhood. It resorted neither to a negation of religious communities for the 'larger' cause of a composite nation nor to a contestation of the idea of a composite Indian nation for the purpose of constructing a community-centered discourse. It was different from the first vision of nationalism in that it premised its idea of composite nationhood not on a negation of religious communities, but on the harmonizing of different communitarian interests in order to weld them into a single nation. It also differed from the second enclosure of nationalist vision in that the cultural core of the nation it sought to construct was to be 'composite', as distinct from 'Hindu'.

The third category of nationalist vision was also, so far as internal structure is concerned, perhaps the most heterogeneous. That all the ideologues who fell within the ambit of this vision believed in the balancing and harmonizing of community interests, and that they were, by and large,

vocal critics of British rule, were perhaps the most conspicuous common points of this category. And the fact that these ideologues differed profoundly on how the desired harmony of community interests was to be achieved, imparted to this category a striking heterogeneity as well. Thus, while Tilak, who played an instrumental role in bringing about the Lucknow Pact of 1916, believed in giving concessions to the Muslims for balancing community interests through an endeavour aimed at winning over the Muslim League to the vision of a composite nationhood, Lajpat Rai was averse to the idea of granting concessions to the Muslim community. He saw such concessions as a negation of 'common nationhood' and was guided by the principles of fairness and justice in the balancing of community interests. Seen in the light of his notion of fairness, concessions to Muslims were tantamount to unfair treatment of the Hindus.

The accommodative nature of Lajpat Rai's idea of nationalism made him associate simultaneously with the Congress, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Arya Samaj. His great importance in both the Congress and the Mahasabha is attested by the fact that he occupied the post of President in both organizations at different times of his life.<sup>1</sup> The Congress was, for him, a platform for the articulation of the vision of a composite nation while the Hindu Sabha a communitarian body meant for voicing and, thus, balancing the Hindu interests with other community interests in a context of interest-based politics. This should not, however, be seen as the sole purpose of the Hindu Sabha. The Hindu Sabha was also, like the Congress, a heterogeneous body in which there were also people of the second category of nationalism

– a group which looked upon the Hindu Sabha politics as Hindu assertion alone with a view to further purely Hindu interests.<sup>2</sup> What these people had at the backs of their minds was the construction of a nation with an overbearing Hindu complexion. They differed from Lajpat Rai and other ideologues of the third category in their belief in the assertion, as distinct from the balancing, of community interests.

Lajpat Rai, an Aggarwal baniya by caste, was born in 1865, in the village of Dudhike in Ferozepur district of the Punjab.<sup>3</sup> His father, Radha Kishan, a teacher by profession, was deeply influenced by Islam and his mother, Gulab Devi, belonged to a family having faith in the Sikh gurus. It was his wife's influence which kept Radha Kishan from becoming a formal convert to Islam.<sup>4</sup> In his early childhood, Lajpat Rai too said the Namaz and read the Quran. But, the books he read in Mission High School, Ludhiana, made him believe that, in Medieval times, Muslims had tyrannized over Hindus.<sup>5</sup> His respect for Islam now began to decline. This trend continued in Lahore, where he studied at the Government College and qualified for Mukhtarship (1882). The turning point was his friendship with the Arya Samajists, Hansraj and Gurudutt, which made him "turn away from Islam, and, what is more important"<sup>6</sup>, become attached to Hinduism and Hindus. Lajpat Rai himself states that "this attachment was not so much theological or religious; it was nationalistic."<sup>7</sup> He formally joined the Arya Samaj in 1882.

Though Lajpat Rai cannot, even in this phase of his life, be completely situated in the second category of nationalism, it does seem that,

upto about 1905, he was rather close to it. During this period, his participation, albeit irregular, in the activities of the Congress was marked, perhaps due to Arya Samaj influence, by a dislike for the organization's plank of Hindu-Muslim unity. In the words of Purushottam Nagar, his biographer, "He was critical of the Congress policy regarding Hindu-Muslim unity and suggested that the Congress should secure its hold on Hindus... Lajpat Rai felt that attempts to unify various religious communities under the banner of the Congress would weaken the position of the Hindus."<sup>8</sup> His proximity to the second vision of nationalism is further evidenced by his article entitled 'A Study of Hindu Nationalism', which was published in 1902 in the 'Hindustan Review' and the 'Kayastha Samachar'. In this article, he sees Medieval Indian history as one of conflict between the Hindu nation and the Muslims, an invading nation.

It was from 1905 onwards that the 'ideas' of Lajpat Rai became entirely characteristic of the third vision of nationalism. On his return in 1905 from a trip to England and America, where he indulged in propaganda against the misrule of the British in India, he began to champion the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity. Speaking on the occasion of the Arya Samaj anniversary, he "called upon the Hindus and Muslims to form a united front against the common enemy."<sup>9</sup> This phase of his life was characterized by the belief that though Hindus and Muslims should be faithful to their respective religions, they should not be reluctant in making common cause against the British rule.<sup>10</sup> The extremist nature of his criticism of the government caused him to be deported to Mandalay in 1907. On his return the same year, he

endeavoured in vain to avert the Surat schism in the Congress.<sup>11</sup> Though temperamentally an extremist, he did not want the Congress to split.

Though Lajpat Rai had signed the 1907 pledge of agitating only through constitutional means,<sup>12</sup> he failed to get along with the 'Liberals' for too long. Not only were his extremist instincts incompatible with their mild, if not mendicant, methods, but he also developed differences with a number of them on separate electorates proposed in the Reforms of 1909.<sup>13</sup> His criticism of the idea of separate electorates on denominational grounds provides an insight into his central belief that the balancing of community interests had to be premised on the principle of fairness. One of the reasons for Lajpat Rai's declining the offer of the post of Congress president in 1914 was his perception that the Congress was indulging in Muslim appeasement.

Lajpat Rai departed on another trip to England, America and Japan in 1914. Even though this trip caused his absence from the Indian political scene for about six years, it gave him time to write extensively and meet people. It was during this interlude that he began work on his autobiography and wrote 'Young India'.

His return to India in February, 1920, saw Lajpat Rai take a plunge into the Gandhian movement of Non Co-operation. Upholding the parameters of the third vision of nationalism, he emphasized the value of Hindu-Muslim unity not as a temporary expedient, but "as a fundamental doctrine that will be a great asset to our political future."<sup>14</sup>

The failure of non co-operation made Lajpat Rai alter his strategy of anti-British struggle; from an avowed non co-operator, he became a votary of responsive co-operation.<sup>15</sup> Sympathetic to the Swarajist programme of Council-entry, he helped them register appreciable victories in Punjab in the elections of 1923. But he soon developed differences with Motilal Nehru on the Swarajist policy of continuous obstruction in the Councils. Interestingly, the grounds on which Lajpat Rai criticized the policy of obstruction were quite characteristic of his notion of the principle of justice as the bedrock in the realm of community negotiations. He argued that, in the light of the fact that Muslim leaders were co-operating with the government in the councils, obstruction by means of staging walk-outs would prove counter-productive for Hindu interests; for it would put Hindus as a community far behind the Muslims.<sup>16</sup> His break with Motilal Nehru made Lajpat Rai join hands with Madan Mohan Malviya to form the Independent Congress Party.<sup>17</sup> The candidates of the new party inflicted a number of crushing defeats on the Swarajists in the 1926 elections, Lajpat Rai himself being declared elected from the two seats where he had filed his nomination. In these elections, the Independent Party candidates received full support from the likes of Bhai Parmanand and Swami Shraddhanand, who adhered to the second vision of nationalism.

Lajpat Rai's firm positioning – despite his espousal of Hindu communitarian interests in the aforementioned context – in the third category of nationalist vision, is made evident by the fact that he had himself opposed Bhai Parmanand's proposal for fielding Hindu Mahasabha

candidates in opposition to those of the Swaraj Party in the elections of 1926.<sup>18</sup> His opposition to this proposal was based on his conviction that the Hindu communitarian interests – as voiced by the Mahasabha – must remain a subset of the ‘broader’ interests – as articulated by the Congress movement – of the composite Indian nation; that Hindu interests, though deserving protection vis-à-vis other communities, should by all means be reconciled with the larger Indian interests and prevented from standing in opposition to them.

The drafting of the ‘Nehru Report’ as a counter-move to the appointment of the all white Simon Commission, made Lajpat Rai bury his differences with Motilal Nehru and become one of the most enthusiastic supporters of the said report. Not only was he incensed by the complete exclusion of Indians from the Simon Commission, but he was also contented with the Nehru Report’s proposal for joint electorates, albeit with reservations – in proportion to population – for Muslims in some provinces. This, he felt, would lead to more ‘secular’ governance – an idea which had been, for long, close to Lajpat Rai’s heart.

His active opposition to the ‘Simon Commission’ brought an abrupt end to Lajpat Rai’s life. It was while leading a demonstration at Lahore against the Simon Commission that he became victim of a lathi-charge by the police. Failing to recover completely, Lajpat Rai died on November 17, 1928.

Having drawn a brief biographical sketch of Lajpat Rai, an attempt would now be made to comprehend his ideas on nationalism through a study

of his writings and speeches. This analysis would begin by discussing his historical reconstruction; for a person's understanding of the past often informs his conceptualization of the present and shapes his vision for the future.

### **LAJPAT RAI'S HISTORICAL CONSTRUCTION**

Lajpat Rai's construction of history – which can be studied through his writings like 'Shivaji the Great Patriot' (1896), 'A Study of Hindu Nationalism' (1902), 'Young India' (1917) 'The Teaching of Patriotism' (1919), 'The Indian Problem' (1924) and 'The Hindu-Muslim Problem' (1924) – underwent changes with the passage of time. While in the first two of the above mentioned writings, it is somewhat similar to that of the ideologues of the second category of nationalism, in the remaining ones, it is characteristic of the third vision of nationalism.

In 'Shivaji the Great Patriot', Lajpat Rai sees ancient Indian history as the golden past of the 'Hindu nation'. He states that, during this period, the "nation's knowledge was the highest, its language the most refined, its religion the most sacred, its philosophy the most perfect, its morality the purest, its progress the most advanced, its bravery unique and its politics free from selfish motives. So far as the testimony of history goes, this nation is the most ancient of all."<sup>19</sup> He then goes on to trace the nation's subsequent decline to Muslim invasions. But even during this decline, the nation produced a number of national heroes like Rana Pratap, Shivaji, Guru Govind Singh and Durga Das Rathore. This is seen by Lajpat Rai as a proof that the Hindu nation was never cowardly, as insinuated by 'biased' Muslim



writers who wrote to please their masters. He argues that even in the heyday of Muslim rule in India, a number of Hindu kingdoms – in different regions and at different times – managed to maintain their independence.

It is interesting to note that though Lajpat Rai praises Akbar for his tolerance towards Hindus,<sup>20</sup> he stops short of raising him to the status of a ‘national hero’. This places him somewhere between the second and third visions of nationalism at this time of his life. For while Har Dayal, an ideologue of the second vision of nationalism, saw Akbar’s ‘tolerance’ as a mask for the ‘social conquest’ of Hindus, the ideologues of the third category viewed Akbar,<sup>21</sup> alongwith the likes of Pratap and Nanak, as a ‘national hero’.

Lajpat Rai goes on to argue that Shah Jehan and Aurungzeb reverted to the policy of religious fanaticism and bigotry. This led a number of Hindus to rise in revolt. Extolling Hindu bravery, he states that “in no period of Muslim rule had the Hindus shown any inclination to give up their adherence to bravery and chivalry, nor abandoned their yearning for liberation. They had never faced oppression and suppression in silence. Had it not been so, it would not have been possible to find twenty crore Hindus in India today.”<sup>22</sup>

That Lajpat Rai was, at this time, unsure of what constitutes a nation, is made evident by the fact that while at all other places he calls the Marathas a part of the Hindu nation, he gives them the status of a distinct nation at one particular point in the narrative.<sup>23</sup> Here, he uses, as was often done in those days, the term ‘nation’ in the sense of ‘community’. But that

he generally conceives of different groups as parts of the 'Hindu nation', is suggested by his following statement :

“Our aim simply is that we should divert the attention of our countrymen towards the study of this history of our decline and explain to them that those who want to prove that our nation remained a slave of the Muslims for eight hundred or a thousand years are in the wrong. The Hindus should not be stigmatised as cowards ... As a nation, Hindus were never cowardly. The nation that has within its fold a larger number of militant peoples like Jats, Rajputs, Kshatriyas, Marathas and others can by no means be called cowardly.”<sup>24</sup>

In 'A Study of Hindu Nationalism', too, Lajpat Rai's construction of history comes across as one akin to that of the second category of nationalist vision. In this article, he contests the notion of nationalism being “an essentially European and modern idea”,<sup>25</sup> and argues that the Hindus constituted a nation right from the Vedic times. To quote him :

“Long before the Mohammedan invasion, and perhaps long before the advent of the Prophet of Islam, we were known to the people of other countries as Hindus. If so, what did this name signify? Was it a tribal distinction? I say, no, because the Hindus were of many tribes. Was it a racial name? I again say, no, because the Persians of Iran too, belonged to the same race. Was it then a religious designation? Yes, partly religious, no doubt, but mainly national and in evidence I can produce a

number of quotations from the productions of early Greek historians and Mohammedan writers.”<sup>26</sup>

The above extract shows that, in this article, Lajpat Rai’s conception of nation transcends the realm of ‘community’. This is further evidenced by the fact that he compares the Roman, Grecian and Mohammedan ‘nationalisms’ with those of modern European nations like England, Germany, America and France.<sup>27</sup>

Lajpat Rai’s historical construction in ‘A Study of Hindu Nationalism’ is inspired by the Arya Samaj to the extent that he sees the pre-Buddhist period as the most glorious epoch of Indian (read Hindu) history.<sup>28</sup> He views medieval Indian history as a narrative of Muslim invasions and the resistance, however disorganised, offered to them by the Hindu nation. To him, Hindu defeat in these conflicts points to lack of social spirit but not to the absence of nationalist sentiment.<sup>29</sup> He does not see internal differences and quarrels among Hindus as a sign of the absence of nationalism, for internal strife is bound to exist in all nations of the world.

By the time Lajpat Rai wrote ‘Young India’, he had become a firm adherent of the third vision of nationalism. And his construction of history had also undergone a corresponding change. Beginning the historical narrative of ‘Young India’ with a glorification of ancient Indian history, Lajpat Rai gives his account of the Muslim invasion. Despite conceding that the Muslim invaders were of foreign origin, and that many Hindu chiefs had struggled tooth and nail to regain their independence, he goes on to argue that the Muslim rule was not foreign. It is on this assertion of the indogeneity

of the Medieval Indian state that he constructs a history of composite nationhood – the bedrock of his vision of nationalism. In his own words :

“The Muslim invaders were no doubt foreign in their origin, but as soon as they had settled in India, they adopted the country, made it their home, married and raised children there, and became the sons of the soil. Akbar and Aurungzeb were as much Indians as are today the Moguls and Pathans in Delhi or elsewhere... When Timur and Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali attacked India, they attacked a kingdom which was ruled by Indian Muslims. They were as much the enemies of the Mohammedan rulers of India as of the Hindus.

The Muslims, who exercised political sovereignty in India from the thirteenth upto the middle of the nineteenth century AD, were Indians by birth, Indians by marriage and Indians by death. They were born in India, they married there, there they died and there they were buried. Every penny of the revenues they raised in India was spent in India. Their bias, if any, against the Hindus was religious, not political...

In the reign of rulers like Sher Shah, Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jehan the Hindus were eligible for the highest offices under the crown next after the princes of royal blood. They were governors of provinces, generals of armies, and rulers of districts and divisions. In short, the distinctions between the Hindus and Muslims were neither political nor social. Looked

at from the political and the economic point of view, the Government was as much indigenous as under Hindu rule. The Muslims ... had no Lancashire industries to protect, and were under no necessity of imposing excise duties on Indian-made goods. They brought their own language and literature with them. For a time, perhaps, they transacted all government business through that language, but eventually they evolved a language which is as much Indian as any other vernacular spoken in India today. The groundwork of this language, which is now called Urdu or Hindustani, is purely Indian... There was no India Office in Arabia or in Persia or in Kabul, to which the people of India looked for initiative in the affairs of their native land.”<sup>30</sup>

Having declared ‘Muslim rule’ as indigenous, Lajpat Rai goes on to indict British rule as both exploitative and foreign. He argues that “India today is not an empire by herself, but a part of the British Empire... For the first time in history she has been reduced to the position of a dependency. For the first time in her history she is ruled from the outside. For the first time the Indians have been reduced to the position of a subject people, governed by an alien race residing in a different and far-off country... For the first time in the political history of India it has become a political disqualification to be an Indian.”<sup>31</sup>

Lajpat Rai also sees the Hindu-Muslim problem as a creation of British rule. In 'The Indian Problem', an article written for the Tribune' on June 10, 1924, Lajpat Rai states :

“The Hindu-Muslim problem is a creation of the British Raj... In the Muslim period... the problem did not exist. The fact of the ruling dynasty being Muslim did give an advantage to the Muslims over the Hindus, a circumstance in which the latter had to acquiesce... yet there were periods of Muslim rule in which the country was prosperous and flourishing. There were few reigns only in which the Hindus were discriminated against or persecuted as such.

With English Rule in India came the Hindu-Muslim problem. Now it is extending. Never before was communal consciousness so keen, so assertive, nay so aggressive as within the last fifty years of British rule. The reasons are obvious. British rule has created, fostered and nourished (it). Communal rivalry between Hindus and Muslims for government favours was first brought into existence by Lord Dufferin and Sir Auckland Colvin.”<sup>32</sup>

The above account helps us in understanding how different notions of the past result in the construction of specific and distinct visions of nationalism, and vice versa. Thus, while the votaries of cultural nationalism saw Muslims, Urdu<sup>33</sup> and 'Muslim rule' as foreign, Lajpat Rai, an exponent of a vision of composite nationhood, saw all these as indigenous.

## LAJPAT RAI'S VISION OF NATIONALISM

Lajpat Rai believed, as would any adherent of the third vision of nationalism, in the idea of composite nationhood. He accepted the legitimacy of communitarian interests, but believed that such interests should be balanced and harmonized in the 'broader' interests of national unity. An in-depth analysis of Lajpat Rai's approach regarding the mechanism for the achievement of harmony between community interests would entail a distinction between the realms of 'state', i.e. the level of governance, and 'nation', i.e. the level of the people constituting the nation. At the level of governance, Lajpat Rai believed in the complete separation of politics and religion. And in the realm of relations among the people, he stood for the balancing of community interests through mutual accommodation.

Lajpat Rai was a strong votary of 'secularism' in the realm of governance. His writings and speeches stand as a testimony to the fact that till the very end of his life he stood steadfast in his plea for the complete separation of religion from the political functions of the state. It was only when he found that this was not acceptable to all parties that he stressed on the principle of fairness as the foundation of community negotiations. This approach of his is uniformly reflected in his articles and speeches on separate electorates and the Khilafat agitation, his presidential speech at the 1925 session of the Hindu Mahasabha, his differences with Swarajists like CR Das and Motilal Nehru, and his enthusiastic support to the 'Nehru Report' just months before his death.

Lajpat Rai, in his writings and speeches, persisted with a rejection of 'communal representation' in general and separate electorates in particular. His crusade against communal representation began as early as 1909, when the issue was being hotly discussed in various circles. In a letter written in February, 1909, to the 'Times', London, Lajpat Rai systematically dismantled the arguments being put forth by the Muslim league in favour of 'communal representation'.<sup>34</sup> Countering the claim that a minority, on account of its small numerical strength, requires safeguards, he argues in the said letter that given the past experience of the nature and scope of functioning of these councils, Muslims have no real reason to feel threatened of the numerical preponderance of Hindus in them. He asks "on how many occasions in the last forty seven years or so, ever since the Indian Councils Act of 1861 came into force, (did) the legislative councils of India deal with questions exclusively or specially affecting the Muslims of India as distinguished from their non Muslim countrymen? It might also be important to know how many times, if at all, there was a conflict of opinion between Hindu and Mohammedan members of these Councils... in all matters of inheritance, marriage, divorce etc., Hindus are governed by the Hindu law and Mohammedan by the Mohammedan law. The Legislative Councils are not supposed to meddle with or modify the provisions of any of these laws. Besides, even independently of this, there is little or no chance of any measure coming before these Councils by which the interests of one religious community may be more injuriously affected than those of the other."<sup>35</sup>



Lajpat Rai then goes on, in the same letter, to counter the claim that Muslims deserve separate representation in excess of their proportion in the population on account of their loyalty and the services rendered by them in defence of the empire. To quote him :

“Great stress has been laid ... on special consideration to be shown to Indian Mohammedans on the ground of their loyalty and military service. Are we to understand, then, that the extension of franchise in India is being granted as a reward for loyalty and military services to the Empire? If so how is it that no ex-Lieutenant Governor has as yet raised his voice for special representation being granted on that ground to the Sikhs, the Gurkhas, the Rajputs and the Jats? It might also be interesting to tabulate the services rendered by Mohammedans, the Sikhs, the Gurkhas, the Rajputs, and the Jats in military expeditions on the North-west Frontier, in Egypt, China and Abyssinia, and find out on which side there is a balance.”<sup>36</sup>

Apart from pointing out, as shown above, the incoherence of the claims put forth by the League, Lajpat Rai had his own sound reasoning as to why ‘communal representation’ was undesirable. The plea for divorcing politics from denominational issues of all kinds is a recurrent theme in his writings. In this, as he himself states, he was a proponent of the Western model of secularism. In a series of articles, entitled ‘The Hindu-Muslim problem’, written for the ‘Tribune’ in 1924,<sup>37</sup> Lajpat Rai refutes – by giving the example of European nations where, despite the presence of the

majority-minority equations, secularism was made an inviolable norm for the evolution of a non-sectarian polity – the notion of the necessity of ‘safeguards’ to the Muslim minority. To quote him :

“The Jews are perhaps the smallest religious community in Great Britain. They never claimed any special representation in Parliament or any specific share of government posts. In fact about 150 years ago the communal consciousness of the Roman Catholics and Protestants in Great Britain was as keen and exclusive as that of the Hindus and Mussalmans today. For a long time the Roman Catholics were excluded from Parliament and could not be employed in any government office, and still they never claimed any special representation. Now all these disabilities have been removed and Roman Catholics, equally with the Protestants, hold the highest positions in the state. In this matter, the example of Great Britain has been followed in all the great countries of Europe and the United States of America and the result is what we see... Does one expect India to be the only exception to the rule?<sup>38</sup>

Lajpat Rai saw ‘communal representation’ and separate electorates as a gross negation of the principle of ‘secularism’ at the level of governance; as an entry, even if through the backdoor, of religion into politics. He viewed the idea as pernicious to national unity, specially in a greatly multi-religious society like India. He believed that the vision of composite nationhood in India could be transformed into a tangible reality only through

adherence to the principle of 'secular' governance. And he saw the acceptance of the principle of communal representation as a "concession to religion and ... the negation of nationalism",<sup>39</sup> as the 'enthronement' of the supremacy of religion over state. In 'The Hindu-Muslim Problem', Lajpat Rai argues that separate electorates, in as much as they entail the provision of separate voting rights to Hindus and Muslims, are against the idea of a common nationhood,<sup>40</sup> and that having separate registers for 'general' and 'Muslim' voters would only lead to a widening of the gulf between the Hindu and Muslim communities. He further claims that 'communal representation' is the most powerful answer to the demand for Swaraj.<sup>41</sup> His opposition to separate electorates on the aforementioned ground is made clear by the following statement :

"The principle ... is both theoretically and practically a negation of united nationhood. It provides for a complete division of India, as it is, into two sections : a Muslim India and a non-Muslim India. I say deliberately non-Muslim India, because all that the Muslims are anxious for, is a guarantee of their own rights. All other communities they lump into one as non-Muslims."<sup>42</sup>

Faced with the prospect of purely communitarian interests entering the realm of governance, Lajpat Rai sought to balance these on the principle of fairness. Seeing the Hindu Sabha movement as a legitimate counterbalancing force to the Muslim-centric politics of the Muslim League, Lajpat Rai contended that if Muslims could organize on 'communal' lines to seek

concessions, it was perfectly natural for Hindus to organize 'communally' to defend their communitarian interests.<sup>43</sup> If mobilization by one community was to be met with concessions, there was no reason why mobilization by other communities should be condemned.<sup>44</sup> However, his association with the Hindu Mahasabha, far from being an expression of nationalism with a Hindu complexion, was a means to the balancing of community interests for the construction of a composite nation. It is noteworthy in this context that he vehemently opposed the idea of the Mahasabha becoming an organization antagonistic to the Congress movement. He wanted Hindus to associate both with the Congress – in their capacity as adherents of an anti-British, composite nationalism – and the Mahasabha, in the capacity of negotiators for the balancing – based on the notions of fairness and justice – of community interests.

Upholding the principle of fairness as the bedrock of community negotiations, Lajpat Rai points out in 'The Hindu-Muslim Problem' that Muslim leaders have no principled stand on separate electorates. He argues that while they demand proportionate representation in Muslim-majority provinces (Punjab and Bengal), they speak of 'effective' minority representation to Muslims, in excess of their numbers, in all other provinces.<sup>45</sup> Claiming such an argument to be untenable, Lajpat Rai contends that if proportionate representation is to be the norm, Muslims should advocate it in all provinces. If this be the case, they would have a majority of the seats in Punjab and Bengal – the only Muslim-majority provinces – while they would have to settle for a number of seats consistent

with their proportion in the population in all other provinces. If, however, they demand seats much in excess of their proportion in the latter provinces on grounds of 'effective' minority representation, they should be prepared to concede the same to minorities in the Punjab and Bengal. Countering Jinnah's argument that the Hindus of Punjab and Bengal – being an 'effective' minority already – need no excess representation, Lajpat Rai argues that, even if this be accepted, the Sikhs – another minority, and not an 'effective' one too – surely need 'effective' minority representation.<sup>46</sup> He feels that the Muslim leaders' refusal to concede the same to the Sikhs indicates their desire to maintain a majority in the Punjab; for proportionate representation to the Hindus, in addition to 'effective' minority representation to the Sikhs, would render the Muslims short of a majority.

Lajpat Rai goes on to argue that the only way of the Muslims maintaining their majority in the Punjab “without trampling on the sensitiveness of the Hindus and the Sikhs,”<sup>47</sup> is to partition it “into two provinces, the Western Punjab with a large Muslim majority, to be a Muslim governed province, and the eastern Punjab, with a large Hindu-Sikh majority, to be a non-Muslim governed province.”<sup>48</sup> He further states that given the insistence of the Muslim leaders on the aforesaid unprincipled stand of theirs, the only way out is to support Hasrat Mohani's scheme of having “separate Muslim States in India, united with the Hindu States under a National Federal Government.”<sup>49</sup> This scheme would mean the creation of “smaller states containing compact Hindu and Muslim populations.”<sup>50</sup> Lajpat Rai himself suggests “four Muslim States – (1) The Pathan province or the North-West Frontier, (2) Western Punjab, (3) Sindh, and (4) Eastern

Bengal”<sup>51</sup> and supports the similar constitution of any other compact Muslim communities that there might be, in any other part of India. It should be remembered, however, that this scheme is suggested by him only as a compromise formula in the face of the Muslim League’s adamant attitude. That he is personally opposed to all such ‘communal’ divisions is reiterated by him immediately after proposing the aforementioned scheme. In his own words, “But it should be distinctly understood that this is not a united India. It means a clear partition of India into a Muslim India and a non-Muslim India.”<sup>52</sup> The above account brings out, in no uncertain terms, Lajpat Rai’s notions of fairness and justice as the guiding principles in the balancing of community interests.

Lajpat Rai’s belief regarding the separation of politics and religion is further evidenced by his approach to the Khilafat question, as manifested in his Presidential speech at the special session of the Indian National Congress held at Calcutta on September 4, 1920. Apart from seeing in the Congress support to the Khilafat question a real possibility of Hindu-Muslim unity, he “concerned himself only with the political aspect of the question—leaving the religious aspect to the Muslims themselves. He sensed great danger in the extension of British influence as a result of the Turkish Peace Treaty.”<sup>53</sup> This was not only a novel, but also a decidedly ‘secular’ approach to the primarily religious question of Khilafat. To quote him :

“The question has two aspects; the religious and the political. We of the Indian National Congress have no jurisdiction to go into the merits of the Khilafat question from the religious point of view... But there are in my judgement other issues also

involved in the Turkish Peace Treaty which deserve consideration. I maintain that any further extension of the British Empire in Asia is detrimental to the interests of India and fatal to the liberation of the human race. The British have frequently used Indian troops to conquer various parts of Asia and Africa... African troops and Indian troops were used during and after the war by the Allies in Europe. Black troops were in occupation of Germany and possibly they may be still there... The British suzerainty in Arabia and the British occupation of Mesopotamia involves the practical absorption of Persia and Central Asia and, perhaps, later on of Afghanistan as well, into the British Empire. What has happened in India will happen in these countries too, i.e., the general population will be disarmed and a number of them enrolled and drilled in the army ... The prospect of having Arabian, Persian and Afghan regiments in India cannot be pleasant for those of us who are working for the freedom of this country... If the British Imperialist has no scruples in using Indian troops in Egypt, Persia, Arabia, Mesopotamia, Syria and Central Asia, why will he have any in using the troops he raises in these countries against us? The Hindu-Muslim problem will become ten times more troublesome and dangerous....

If the Muslim population of these countries continues to resist British attempts at occupation, which they are likely to do

for years, the Indian army will be in constant requisition to fight their battles in those regions, which means a constant and never-ending drain on our resources – both human and economic. The best interests of India, therefore, require that the Muslim countries in Western Asia should remain free and independent.”<sup>54</sup>

However, there is evidence to suggest that even during the days of Non Co-operation, Lajpat Rai feared that the Congress support to a primarily religious demand would make Muslims more fanatical.<sup>55</sup> The failure of the movement and the subsequent religious strife confirmed his fears; he argues in ‘The Hindu-Muslim problem’ that by supporting the religious aspect of the Khilafat agitation from the Congress platform, Gandhi had wrongly brought religion into politics. In his own words :

“It was ... unfortunate that Mahatma Gandhi and the leaders of the Khilafat Movement should have brought religion into such prominence in connection with a movement which was really and fundamentally more political than religions. The desire to seek religious sanction for the various items of the Non Co-operation programme was another great blunder. It led directly to the revival of a sectarian zeal and to the re-enthroning of influences and forces which were antagonistic to the idea of a united India. Non co-operation, which was based on the idea of Hindu-Muslim unity, thus became one of the forces favouring disunity.”<sup>56</sup>



Lajpat Rai's presidential address at the 1925 session of the Hindu Mahasabha<sup>57</sup> provides further illustration of his vision of nationalism. Lauding the efforts of Hindus to secure political independence for India, he argued that their policy had all along been 'national', and not 'communal'. While they voiced national concerns through the struggle for Swaraj, they gathered on the platform of the Mahasabha for voicing their legitimate communitarian interests vis a vis other communities. That Lajpat Rai saw the role of the Hindu Mahasabha as important only in the balancing of community interests is made clear by his assertion that the Hindus "are striving after... a National Government founded on justice to all communities, all classes and all interests."<sup>58</sup> He further argued that "so far as politics are concerned, the Hindu Mahasabha has no special political functions except to define the position of the community in relation to other communities"<sup>59</sup>, and that "real politics must be left to political associations like the Congress and the Liberal League. The Hindus must on no account give up the Congress. That would be prejudicial to the best interests of the country, and the Hindu Sabha should make no encroachment on the province of the Congress, except so far as purely communal questions are concerned."<sup>60</sup> Thus, the Congress was to be retained as a broad platform for the anti-British method of struggle for a composite Indian nation, and the Mahasabha was to fulfill the limited object of harmonizing Hindu relations with other communities on the principles of fairness and justice.

It was on the principle of fairness to the Hindus that Lajpat Rai broke with C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru. While he broke with the former due to his

(Lajpat Rai's) opposition to the Bengal Hindu-Muslim Pact of 1923,<sup>61</sup> he broke with the latter on account of differences on the Swarajist policy of 'obstruction'.<sup>62</sup> Lajpat Rai was opposed to the Swarajist policy of 'continuous obstruction' and argued in favour of responsive co-operation. He felt that the Swaraj Party's policy of obstruction would harm Hindu interests, for the Muslims were whole heartedly co-operating with the government in the Councils, and this policy was serving their 'communal' ends. Under such circumstances, unqualified obstruction would only serve to put the Hindus behind as a community.<sup>63</sup> Presiding over the Bombay Hindu Conference on December 3 and 4, 1925, Lajpat Rai said, "Non co-operation or wholesale obstruction has for the present been frustrated on account of the Muslim community. It could only be practicable if the country supported it unitedly. The Muslims never supported the movement whole heartedly, and whatever support these principles received from a section of the Muslim community has for the present vanished. In the circumstances the policy of non co-operation or obstruction by one community only has no chance of success."<sup>64</sup> In this context, Purushottam Nagar writes, "The Muslim community claimed certain rights for itself, the acceptance of which, in Lajpat Rai's views, would reduce the Hindu community to a position of subordination, if not immediately, at least in future."<sup>65</sup> Interestingly, this biographer of Lajpat Rai has come very close, albeit inadvertently, to capturing the complexities of Indian nationalism. This is revealed in his statement that "according to Lajpat Rai there were some good men among the Hindus who thought that the 'reconversion of the whole Muslim

community and the establishment of an all-prevailing, all-absorbing Hindu policy was not only desirable but feasible'. But this would be 'impossible' in his opinion. The Swaraj Party was likewise incapable of judging the communal question objectively. Lajpat Rai belonged to a third party which thought that nationalism was not inconsistent with justice to the Hindu community and that unity could not be purchased at the cost of Hindu rights."<sup>66</sup>

Labelled by Jawaharlal Nehru as "communal"<sup>67</sup>, Lajpat Rai's opposition to the Swarajist policy led to acrimonious correspondence between himself and Motilal Nehru.<sup>68</sup> But, these were not to continue for long. When the 'Nehru Report' came out in August, 1928, Lajpat Rai became one of its most enthusiastic supporters. The 'Nehru Report' touched his heart in that it proposed joint electorates in place of separate electorates. The Report suggested reservation of seats, albeit in strict proportion to numerical strength, for small minorities, like the Hindus in the frontier province and Muslims in certain specific provinces. It rejected any reservation of seats in the Punjab and Bengal.<sup>69</sup> Though Lajpat Rai argued that he would have preferred the complete abolition of 'communal representation',<sup>70</sup> he supported the Nehru Report for the reason that it was a major step ahead from the idea of 'separate electorates'; that it had proposed reservation of seats for small minorities for a period of ten years only, and that it had entirely done away with the principle of 'communal representation' in the Punjab. He saw it as a practical step towards the realization of truly 'secular' governance.

That, in addition to certain Muslims, some Hindu leaders of the Punjab were also opposed to the Report came as a shock to Lajpat Rai. Among those who bore the brunt of his criticism was Bhai Parmanand. Lajpat Rai felt that, in opposing the Nehru Report, these individuals were going back on their previous stand of uncompromising opposition to separate electorates. A report on his speech to a gathering of Punjab Hindus on October 6, 1928, appeared in the 'Tribune' of the following day. It reads as follows :

“Lalaji observed that the Hindu Mahasabha had at all its sessions vehemently opposed communal representation and reservation of seats for any community. In July 1928 the Provincial Hindu Sabha itself reiterated its past demands for the abolition of communal representation in every shape. In August, 1928, the Nehru Committee Report was published and though it was welcomed by all India and even the Punjab, some Hindus in this province, including Bhai Parmanand, raised their voice against it. It was said that by abolishing communal representation and reservation of seats, the Nehru scheme had placed Hindus at the mercy of the Muslim majority. Why this volte face...? The Hindu Mahasabha, in the beginning of 1928, had made its position clear that it was not at all prepared to agree to the perpetuation of the system of separate electorates and the reservation of seats, but that for the purpose of settlement it would accept reservation of seats for minorities

only. In view of the past demands of Hindus and the clear declaration of the Mahasabha, the present attitude of certain Hindus who are opposed to the Nehru scheme, seemed quite unreasonable to Lalaji. For what had the Nehru scheme done? It had completely abolished communal electorates from the constitution, though it had reserved seats for the minorities in certain provinces for a period of ten years.

Bhai Parmanand had, proceeded Lalaji, now stated that in view of the present Muslim mentality, the Hindus in the Punjab should be given separate electorates and reservation of seats. From this it was clear that there was no fixity in the demands of Hindus; and unless there was fixity in a community's demands, no settlement was at all possible...<sup>71</sup>

Thus, Lajpat Rai did not hesitate to criticize Hindu leaders when he found them working for the perpetuation of separate electorates. His clash with Bhai Parmanand on the 'Nehru Report', as also on the earlier question of fielding Hindu Mahasabha candidates for the 1926 elections, was that of contesting visions of nationalism. While Bhai Parmanand wished to make the Mahasabha a platform for Hindu-centric politics, Lajpat Rai wished to confine it to the balancing of community interests; while Bhai Parmanand demanded separate electorates for fear of domination, through joint electorates, of the Muslim element in the legislative Council of Muslim-majority Punjab, Lajpat Rai supported joint electorates as an expression of a common nationhood. For people like Bhai Parmanand, joint electorates were

desirable in the context of a Hindu majority; for they would return a majority of Hindus to the Councils. But in the context of a Hindu minority, they would rather press for separate electorates than countenance a majority of another community. This points to the fact that ideologues of the second vision of nationalism, whether Hindu or Muslim, thought about representative institutions in very similar terms.

At the level of mutual interaction among people belonging to different communities, as distinct from the level of governance, Lajpat Rai believed in the harmonization of interests through a spirit of accommodation. In 'The Teaching of Patriotism', an article written for the 'Modern Review' in June 1919,<sup>72</sup> he argues that the spirit of mutual accommodation among communities should be promoted through school text books carefully written to highlight the composite culture and tradition of India. In his own words :

“Text books of patriotism should ... insist upon the essential unity of Hindus and Mussalmans and of Christians and Buddhists, Parsees and Sikhs and Jains. They should take particular note of the best and most glorious achievements of the Hindus and Mohammedans, both ... The teaching of Hindu-Mohammedan unity can be much facilitated by the writing of special and carefully worded theses on the lives of our national heroes. Lives of Shivaji, Pratap and Govind Singh, as well as those of Akbar, Sher Shah and Shah Jehan must be carefully written. They should contain no untruths, but written from a broad, patriotic and national point of view. They should be a

composite production of patriotic and scientific history. Hindus should learn to take pride in the achievements of Mohammedan heroes, saints and writers, and the Mohammedans in those of the Hindus. If Mother India had on Ashoka, she had an Akbar too. If she had a Chaitanya, she had Kabir also... For every Hindu hero, she can cite a Mohammedan hero... She can as well be proud of her Khusroes, Faizis, Ghalibs, Zauks, Badonis, Ferishtas, as she can be of Valmiki, Kalidas, Tulsidas, Ram Das, Chand, Nasim and Gobind Singh. Even we modern Indians can be as well proud of a Hali, an Iqbal, a Mohani as of Tagore, Roy and Harish Chandra.”<sup>73</sup> Thus, Lajpat Rai had, by now, come to the point of regarding Muslims like Akbar as ‘national heroes’.

In ‘The Hindu-Muslim Problem’, Lajpat Rai makes certain suggestions for better relations between members of the two communities. Contesting the notion of ‘absolute’ rights of a community, he argues that an individual’s, as also a community’s, rights are restricted by the ‘rights’ of others.<sup>74</sup> In a multi-religious society, communities have also to make allowance for the sentiments of other communities, particularly in cases where their observances clash with one another. He states that Hindus and Muslims should, in the interests of peace and harmony, concentrate more on the notion of ‘duties’ than on that of ‘rights’.<sup>75</sup>

As a number of observances of the Hindus and Muslims clash with one another, Lajpat Rai suggests that, instead of indulging in excessive

formalism, people stick to the 'essentials' of their religions.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, the similarities, and not the points of departure, of different religions should be emphasized.<sup>77</sup> He calls upon Hindus and Muslims to mix more freely with each other. While Hindus should remove the barriers of inter-dining with Muslims, the latter should stop regarding the former as 'Kafirs'.<sup>78</sup> He urges the Muslims to begin thinking in terms of 'nationalism' and shun 'pan-Islamism', and takes pains to emphasize the latter to be a mere figment of imagination.<sup>79</sup> Finally, Lajpat Rai asks people not to look upon movements for inner consolidation among communities other than theirs, with suspicion and ill-will.<sup>80</sup>

Thus, Lajpat Rai's vision was that of a composite, accommodative nation. He wrote in the 'Tribune' of Jan 10, 1924, that "the Indian nation, such as it is or such as we intend to build neither is nor will be exclusively Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Christian. It will be each and all. This is my ideal of Swarajya. This is my goal of nationhood."<sup>81</sup>

In Lajpat Rai's writings and speeches, one finds a critique not only of the second vision of nationalism, but also of other ideologues located within the third vision of nationalism. Addressing the Hindus towards the end of 'The Hindu-Muslim Problem' he dismisses the idea of 'Hindu Raj', stating, "If there are any among you who still dream of a Hindu Raj in this country; who think that they can crush the Mussalmans and be the supreme power in this land, tell them that they are fools, or to be more accurate, that they are insane, and that their insanity will ruin their Hinduism along with their country."<sup>82</sup> Among the ideologues of the third category itself, he criticizes



Gandhi for his efforts to win over the Muslims in contravention to the principles of fairness and justice. Charging him with Muslim appeasement, Lajpat Rai states about Gandhi, "In one of his articles he says : 'I hold that we may not dignify every trifle into a matter of deep religious importance', and further : 'In all non-essential matters a Hindu should yield for the asking'. As an instance of non-essentials he remarks : 'One can easily appreciate the Mussalman sentiment of having solemn silence near a mosque the whole of 24 hours.' In the whole of his writings I have failed to come across one sentence where he administers similar admonition to the Muslims."<sup>83</sup> Criticizing what he sees as the Gandhian policy of giving concessions to Muslims, he adds, "Mahatmaji himself said that the average Mussalman was a bully and the average Hindu a coward, and also that cowardice was worse than death; and yet the remedy he suggested was that the Hindus must concede to the Mussalmans and other minorities all that they demanded in the political field. Applying that rule to the Punjab, the result will be Muslims 55, Sikhs 33, and non-Muslims and non-Sikhs 12. Is that the remedy?"<sup>84</sup>

The above account goes to show that though Lajpat Rai was a supporter of composite nationhood, he accepted no principle other than that of justice as the foundation of harmony between communities. What is more, he remained steadfast in his beliefs from 1905 to his death. Though somewhat close to the second category of nationalist vision in the beginning of his political career, he soon became a firm adherent of the third vision of nationalism. His strategy of struggle, though undergoing a slight change

overtime from total non co-operation to responsive co-operation, remained by and large anti-British. He was never enamoured of British rule, and till the very end of his life, never hesitated in openly criticizing the government as well as its loyalists. It is noteworthy in this context that his death was also hastened due to the lathi-blows he received in the course of an anti-government demonstration.

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## NOTES

1. While he was President of the Calcutta Congress in 1920, he presided over the Mahasabha at the 1925 Calcutta session.
2. Among others, Bhai Parmanand was one such prominent example.
3. Dhanpat Rai, 'Life Story of Lala Lajpat Rai' (Tr. By IDPuri and RCPuri), New Delhi, 1976, p. 9.
4. See Feroz Chand, 'Lajpat Rai – Life and Work', New Delhi, 1978, pp. 8-9.
5. Purushottam Nagar, 'Lala Lajpat Rai – The Man And His Ideas', New Delhi, 1977, p. 2.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid. p .15.
9. Ibid. p. 22.
10. Ibid. pp. 31-32.
11. See Feroz Chand, 'Lala Lajpat Rai..', pp. 202-15.
12. See Purushottam Nagar, 'Lala Lajpat Rai..' pp. 60-61.
13. Ibid. p. 65.
14. Ibid. p. 91.
15. See Ibid., pp. 125-129.
16. See Ibid., pp. 130-134.
17. Ibid., p. 130.
18. See Bhai Parmanand, 'The Story of My Life', Delhi, 1982, p. 167.
19. Lajpat Rai, 'Shivaji the Great Patriot', Lahore, 1896, p. 5.
20. Ibid., pp. 16-17.
21. Lajpat Rai was also to view Akbar in the same light in later years.

22. Ibid., p. 24.
  23. “There is another nation in the Deccan known by the name of Marathas...” (Ibid., p. 10.)
  24. Ibid., pp. 23-24.
  25. Lajpat Rai, ‘A study of Hindu Nationalism’, in V.C. Joshi, ed. ‘Lala Lajpat Rai – Writings and Speeches, Vol. I, Jullundhar, 1966, p. 37.
  26. Ibid., p. 39.
  27. “Surely, Roman, Grecian, and Mohammedan histories must be admitted to present splendid and noble types of nationality and nationalism and the present times cannot furnish better and nobler types of nationality than the English, German, and the American and French...” (Ibid. p. 42).
  28. See Ibid., pp. 40-41.
  29. Ibid., p. 41.
  30. Lajpat Rai, ‘Young India’, Delhi, 1965, pp. 77-79.
  31. Ibid. pp. 80-81.
  32. See ‘The Indian Problem’ in S.R. Bakshi ed. ‘Lala Lajpat Rai – Swaraj and Social Change (1923-28),’ Vol. III, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 27-28.
  33. Lal Chand and Har Dayal not accept Urdu as ‘national’.
  34. V.C. Joshi ed., ‘Lala Lajpat Rai – Writings and Speeches, Vol. I,’ pp. 163-165.
  35. Ibid., p. 163.
  36. Ibid. p. 163-64.
  37. See ‘The Hindu-Muslim Problem’, in Verinder Grover ed. ‘Lala Lajpat Rai’, New Delhi, 1993, pp. 176-228.
- Also see V.C. Joshi, ed. ‘Lala Lajpat Rai – Writings and Speeches, Vol. II’ and Ravinder Kumar ed. ‘Selected Documents of Lala Lajpat Rai’, 1992, Vol. III.
38. V.C. Joshi, ed. ‘Lala Lajpat Rai-Writing and Speeches’ Vol. II,p. 188.
  39. Ibid., p. 205.
  40. See Ibid., pp. 210-15.

41. "Communal representation with separate electorates is the most effective reply to the demand for Swaraj and the surest way of India never getting it." (Ibid.)
42. Ibid.
43. "The Hindus are prepared for a reasonable settlement, but not for political harakari. The hatred is bound to come when every post in government service and every political privilege is demanded on communal grounds." (Lajpat Rai's letter, dated Oct. 22, 1925, to the Editor, 'Tribune', reproduced in J.S. Dhanki, 'Perspectives on Indian' National Movement : Selected Correspondences of Lala Lajpat Rai, Delhi, 1998, p. 302).
44. "If the Hindu Saba does anything wrong, you will be perfectly justified to criticize it, but to condemn the movement in the face of so many other communal movements being fattened, is hardly fair and just. Either abolish all communal movements or try to keep them within proper limits." (Lajpat Rai's letter, dated Oct. 21, 1925, to Duni Chand Ambalvi, Ibid. p. 299).
45. V.C. Joshi, ed. 'Writings and Speeches' Vol. II, p. 212.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid., pp. 212-13.
48. Ibid., p. 213.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. Purushottam Nagar, 'Lala Lajpat Rai, The Man and His Ideas', p. 97.
54. V.C. Joshi, 'Lala Lajpat Rai – Writings and Speeches' Vol. II, pp. 38-40.
55. "Do you realise that in our effort to carry the Muslims with us we have adopted the Khilafat programme which, if successful, will make them more fanatical? I have this conflict in mind. We have to get rid of the British, we have to carry the Muslims with us. May be this gamble of the Mahatma will pay off." Purushottam Nagar, 'Lala Lajpat Rai', p. 104.
56. V.C. Joshi ed. 'Lala Lajpat Rai – Writings and Speeches,' Vol. II, p. 182.

57. See, S.R. Bakshi, 'Swaraj and Social change,' Vol. III, pp. 69-78.
58. Ibid., p. 70.
59. Ibid., p. 71.
60. Ibid., p. 75.
61. "The Pact had provided for – 1) Representation in Legislative Council on the basis of population with separate electorates, 2). Representation to local bodies to be in proportion of 60 to 40 in every district – 60 to the community which was in majority and 40 to the minority, 3) 55% of the government posts to be reserved for Muslims, 4) no music to be allowed before mosques, 5) no interference with cow killing for religious sacrifices but cows to be killed in such a manner as not to wound the religious feelings of the Hindus." (Ibid. p. 123).
62. Ibid., pp. 129-34.
63. "And then came his most pertinent query. 'The question that trouble me is this : What would be the position of the Hindus after 10 or 20 years hereafter if the present alliance of the government and the Muslims continues and the Hindus continue to allow themselves to be influenced by the mentality of co-operation and boycott? In my judgement there will be only one result of this policy, viz., that the Hindus will come to occupy a position of inferiority and subordination.'" (Ibid. pp. 132-33).
64. Ibid., p. 131.
65. Ibid.
66. Ibid., p. 132.
67. Nehru labelled Lajpat Rai and Malaviya's efforts at contesting elections under the banner of the Independent Congress Party as "communal" (See Ibid., pp. 138-39).
68. Ibid.
69. See 'Tribune', Lahore, Aug. 1928 for detailed articles on 'Nehru Report' and its contents.
70. See 'Tribune', Lahore, September 4, 1928.
71. 'Tribune', October 7, 1928.
72. See, S.R. Bakshi, 'Lajpat Rai – Swaraj & Social Change', Vol. II., pp. 54-60.
73. Ibid., pp. 57-60

74. See Verinder Grover, 'Lala Lajpat Rai', pp. 181-82.
75. Ibid., pp. 182-84.
76. Ibid., p. 185, p. 224.
77. Ibid., p. 185.
78. See Ibid., pp. 195-98.
79. See Ibid., pp. 206-09.
80. Referring to Muslim objection to Shuddhi, Lajpat Rai states, "The question raised by the movement is a fundamental one and although one can understand and appreciate the Muslim point of view, one can see no way of stopping the movement as long as non-Hindu agencies are free to carry on their proselytizing work. The movement has come to stay and this fact should be philosophically accepted." (Ibid. p. 215).
81. S.R. Bakshi, ed. 'Lajpat Rai - Swaraj and Social Change, Vol. III, p. 31.
82. Verinder, Grover ed., 'Lala Lajpat Rai...', p. 227.
83. Ibid., p. 190.
84. Ibid., p. 226.

## CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this dissertation has been to capture the complex phenomenon of the development of nationalist consciousness in colonial India. I have sought to argue that this can be done by viewing different political and ideological currents emanating in the pan-Indian space as contesting visions of nationalism; by allowing neglected and reviled discourses a history of their own. Cultural Nationalism – which has been kept outside the realm of ‘legitimate’ nationalism by most historians – is one such neglected discourse. ~~The analyses undertaken by the first two Chapters has attempted to formulate the basic premises and assumptions of this vision of nationalism; by allowing neglected and reviled discourses a history of their own. Cultural Nationalism – which has been kept outside the realm of ‘legitimate’ nationalism by most historians – is one such neglected discourse.~~ The analysis undertaken by the first two chapters has attempted to formulate the basic premises and assumptions of this vision of nationalism. This attempt has been premised on the deconstruction of the ‘nationalist-communalist’ dichotomy which has informed much of the past research on Indian nationalism. The third chapter has sought to study Lajpat Rai as an ideologue of the third vision of nationalism—a vision which saw the harmonization of community interests as a pre-requisite for the construction of a composite nation.



This dissertation has made a conscious attempt to separate ‘visions of nationalism’ from the strategic aspects of nationalist struggle. I have argued that the growth of nationalist consciousness did not necessarily imply opposition to British rule; nationalism could also manifest itself in a strategic cooperation with the colonial state. The exclusive identification of Indian nationalism with the ‘freedom struggle’ has thus been sought to be contested.

This work has laid special emphasis on the historical reconstructions of the ideologues in question, primarily out of the belief that historical constructions go a long way in shaping ideas about the present and future. Not only has the cultural nationalists’ use of history to legitimize their ideas been demonstrated, but a shift in historical construction with a change of vision has also been sought to be established through the example of Lajpat Rai.

In contestation of the above argument, it can be contended that most, if not all, early nationalists – irrespective of their visions of nationalism – accepted the colonialist view of Muslim invasion and oppression, and the inherent division of Indian society into structured religious communities.<sup>1</sup> Even Gokhale, who often incurred the wrath of Hindu cultural nationalists for what they saw as his pro-Muslim policies,<sup>2</sup> shared this notion of India’s past. Interestingly, when invited by the Muslim League to deliver a lecture in Lahore on Hindu-Muslim relations, Gokhale recalled, in a brief survey of history, “the coming of Islam to India, the confrontation between Hindus and Islam, the proselytizing zeal of the Muslim invaders....”<sup>3</sup> etc. Thus, in the case of Gokhale, the idea of the past did not inform the vision for the future. Though viewing Indian society as historically divided into well-defined

religious communities, he made a conscious attempt to premise his vision of nationalism on the modern western discourse of rationality and progress.

I contend that this paradox in Gokhale does not go against my argument on the close relationship between historical construction and vision of nationalism. The aforesaid dichotomy in Gokhale's thought can be explained on the basis of the fact that, till this time, no alternative to the colonialist discourse on Indian history had been formulated. Thus, constrained as he was to view this construct as the correct, objective picture of the past, Gokhale focussed his energies on building the future of the nation on the discourse of rationality rather than primordiality.

Once an alternative reading of Indian history – as a response (of the adherents of the first and third nationalist visions) both to the general context of the colonialist denigration of India's past, and the specific context of an increase in community consciousness and tensions among the middle classes – became current, people accepted only those histories which explained and legitimized their own specific visions. Thus, while the votaries of composite nationhood began seeing Indian history as a narrative of intercommunity cooperation and syncretism, the ideologues of cultural nationalism continued to view it, very much in line with the colonialist reading of Indian history, as a narrative of communitarian antagonism and competition.

It is important to note that some of the ideas of Lajpat Rai, as studied in this dissertation, expose the internal contradictions of the first category of nationalist vision. His criticism of the Congress acceptance of separate electorates, for instance, is also a critique of the first vision of nationalism. The acceptance by men like Gokhale – who had always professed an unalloyed, unadulterated kind of nationalism – of the Muslim League's

demand of separate electorates for Muslims, reflected their willingness to give concessions to leaders of the Muslim community in order to bring them within the Congress fold. Thus, 'liberal', 'secular' nationalism, even when it denied legitimacy to cultural nationalism by deliberately ignoring the community-centred discourse was willing to adjust and bargain with the Muslim community leaders. This bringing of religion into politics, even if through the backdoor, created a paradoxical situation which was seen as a pro-Muslim stance by the adherents of the second category of nationalism. The ideologues of the first vision of nationalism failed to work out this contradiction between ideas and actions.

Such a critique is not only a critique of the first vision of nationalism, but also of the paradigm which uses the suggested dichotomy between 'secular' and 'communal' organizations as a means to explain the dynamics of the history of colonial India. If the Congress was 'secular', why did it give in to the claims of religion when it came to considering the demands of the Muslim elite? Why is it that, at the time of the Lucknow Pact, the 'communal' Hindu Mahasabha opposed separate electorates on grounds of community while the 'secular' Congress ended up accepting them? It is such questions which constitute the main paradox within the model which sees 'secular nationalism' in contrast with 'religious communalism'.

In this dissertation, I have sought to argue that 'communalism' is nothing but an analysis of the second enclosure of nationalist vision not through its own categories but through the ideological tools of the first, and to some extent the third, vision of nationalism. In other words, this category was an expression of an attempt to denounce and delegitimize the vision of cultural nationalism.<sup>4</sup> What is more important, 'communalism' became

open to different interpretations overtime. Thus, while Lajpat Rai and Malaviya saw the leaders of the Muslim League as ‘communal’, Jawahar Lal Nehru– an ideologue of the first vision of nationalism – went even to the extent of viewing both Malaviya and Lajpat Rai as ‘communal’.<sup>5</sup> Bipan Chandra’s reading of Malaviya and Lajpat Rai as ‘liberal communalists’ is heavily influenced by the Nehruvian discourse on ‘communalism’. It is notable that this category soon acquired such acceptability that even the more exclusivist Hindu Mahasabhites were unconsciously drawn to it. This is evidenced by the fact that Indra Prakash, the chronicler of the Mahasabha, sees the Congress acceptance of separate electorates as a manifestation of ‘communalism’<sup>6</sup>. It is in this way that a category constructed sometime in the 1920s soon became – perhaps due to its wide, and somewhat uncritical, acceptance by scholars – a matter of common ‘knowledge’.

## NOTES

1. See Gyanendra Pandey, 'The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India', Delhi, 1990, pp. 210-11.
2. As has been shown in Chapter – I, Gokhale was severely criticized by the likes of Lal Chand and Har Dayal.
3. B.R. Nanda, 'Gokhale – The Indian Moderates and the British Raj', Delhi, 1977, pp. 339-40.
4. Though Gyan Pandey has argued that this delegitimization was begun by those whom we would view as nationalists of the first and third categories, he has failed to give concrete evidence for the same.
5. Nehru labelled Lajpat Rai and Malaviya's efforts at contesting elections under the banner of the Independent Congress Party as 'communal' (see Purushottam Nagar, 'Lala Lajpat Rai – The Man And His Ideas', New Delhi, 1977).
6. Indra Prakash, 'Hindu Mahasabha – Its Contribution to India's Politics', New Delhi, 1966, p. 11.

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