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*With one definition, two groups*

*Tracing the inception of Hindu nationalism and its inflexible exclusion of Muslims in*

*India*

## I

## Introduction

The 20th century is often seen as an 'age of extremes'[1], a century when competing ideologies were in a constant tussle, when the end of the colonial era meant that many nations came into being often through bloody conflicts, and when identity politics gained a firm foothold. It was also in the early decades of this century when a force of extremism, Hindu nationalism, emerged in the Indian subcontinent. In these years the subcontinent witnessed a fast paced rise in community feelings vested in religion, an emergence of communalized politics and above all, sharp and, as the future would prove, irreversible distinctions between Hindus and Muslims[2].

In the mid 1920s, the Britain-returned Vinayak Damodar Savarkar[3] penned his ideological treatise *Hindutva[4]* which promoted an exclusively Hindu brand of nationalism. What was interesting about this work was its expansive definition of 'Hindu'. Savarkar sought to include, amongst others, Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs into the Hindu fold. The religious groups that were explicitly excluded were Christianity and

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[1] See Eric Hobsbawm
[2] See Mushirul Hasan *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India* p. 231
[3] Deemed the "ideological father of Hindu nationalism", see Ashutosh Varshney, p.65
[4] Now a term equated with Hindu nationalism, and used as such in this paper.

Islam. The way this highly contrived definition accomplished this was in part by reference to India's 'sacred' geography and in part by allegiance to a particular narrative of its religio-cultural civilisational heritage. Savarkar's articulation of a Hindu is he who calls the land bounded by the Himalayas in the north and encircled by the Indian Ocean, both the land of his forefathers (*patrabhumi)* and the land where his religion was born *(punyabhumi*). In sociological terms this definition was essentially an exercise in creating an in-group and an out-group, leading to very negative associations for the out-group.

Savarkar's definition of a Hindu gave impetus to Hindu nationalism, and to its other ideologues, most specifically M.S Golwalkar and K.B Hedgewar. The enormous influence of this one text in theorizing nationalism is evident by the fact that it remains a cornerstone of the present day ideology of the Sangh Parivar[5]. The early Hindu nationalists, such as the three figures mentioned above, were part of a lineage of thinkers emphasizing Hindu cultural revivalism which had been promoted by groups such as the Arya Samaj and the Brahmo Samaj in the 1800s. In the face of colonial British domination, these groups essentially sought to revive the idea that Hindu culture had contributed greatly in various realms such as theology, philosophy, and culture. The 1920s, however, marked a definite shift from more or less positive, cultural movement, to the 'codification'[6] of an ideology that was, in its essence, propelled by a negative force. Namely, Hindu nationalism as reconfigured in the early 20th century was driven not by ideas of promoting 'Hinduism', but rather by forming a unity against Indian Muslims.

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[5] An umbrella term to denote the various Hindu nationalist organizations such as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the Rashtriya Sawayamsevak Sangh and the Bharatiya Janata Party amongst many others.
[6] See Christophe Jaffrelot *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*

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This paper seeks to explore how this shift to Hindu nationalism in the 1920s, whilst ostensibly cultural, functioned invidiously by a conscious slippage between culture and religion to render Indian Muslims as the threatening enemy, rather than the British – who were the colonial rulers and thus arguably warranted antagonism, at least more so than Muslims. The aim of the first part of the paper is to point out how Hindu nationalism as formulated in the 1920s was not driven primarily by a cultural or religious urge but rather by an anti-Islamic one. The three main points explored under the above overarching idea are: firstly, the definition of 'Hindu' mobilized by Hindu nationalists. This idea has two sides, firstly not only was the category of 'Hindu' itself a fairly recent invention[7], but furthermore the inclusion of groups such as Buddhists and the exclusion of, specifically, Muslims placed emphasis on seeing the latter as a homogenous group – a unity. First to render 'Hindus' a coherent category, Hindu nationalists espoused a very specific, Brahmanical and Sankritized Hinduism as *the* Hinduism. Secondly, to depict Muslims as antagonists, a particular view of Muslims as monolith[8] was used. This refused to see the dissensions and fragments amongst Indian Muslims, and did not quite acknowledge the contributions of Indian Islam to Indian culture - something which would certainly be noteworthy if Hindu nationalism had truly been a cultural movement as it claimed. The second part of the essay explores the situation on the ground, around the 1920s, to attempt an explanation at why some segments of Hindu leaders, those who are termed as Hindu nationalists, saw Indian Muslims as such threats. The main reasons explored to answer the question of why Muslims were 'othered' to the extent they were by advocates

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[7] See Amartya Sen and Pankaj Mishra
[8] Typical representations emphasised, and still do, the idea of Muslims as cruel and treacherous invaders.

of Hindu nationalism are: the Act of 1909; perceived Muslim unity and a level of crystallization of Muslim identity at local (through *tablighs* and *tanzims*), all-India (through the Muslim League) and international (through the Khilafat movment).

These are explorations that remain important since Hindu nationalism in post-Partition India has not only survived, but also flourished (especially in the last two decades). Whilst it has witnessed several shifts, one of the consistent characteristics has been an adherence to the ideology as originally formulated, especially to Savarkar's *Hindutva*. An examination of the conditions under which this was formulated thus has bearings on countering its malignant tendencies.

## *II*

### *Hindutva and Hindu nationalism – cultural, religious or simply anti-Islamic?*

*i Hindu nationalism and Muslims as a constant threat*

Hindu nationalism was codified in the 1920s, primarily with the publication of Savarkar's *Hindutva*. Tracing its origins to cultural revivalist movements of the 1800s, Hindu nationalism emerged as a politically charged phenomena in the early 1900s, first as a subsection of the Congress, then as the Hindu Mahasabha whose formation was spurred as partly a reaction against the Act of 1909[9] which gave Muslims separate electorates, and then to other more militant and superbly organised groups such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). The key ideologues in the Hindu nationalist movement

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[9] See Christophe Jaffrelot *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India,* p.18

were, and remain: V.D. Savarkar, K.B. Hedgewar, and M.S. Golwalkar. Whilst they often

emphasized different angles – Savarkar's focus was on a great Hindu civilizational past

whilst Golwalkar had more of a race-driven thrust, they also made no bones about seeing

Indian Muslims as *the* threat to the unity of an imaginary India. Golwalkar, for example,

saw Muslims as a foreign body lodged in society, which would necessarily be harmful to

the society[10].

Writing in the first decade of the 20th century, the sociologist Georg Simmel pointed out

that an element useful for group unity is not just the existence of an enemy or an 'other',

but rather the *constant threat* of an enemy / 'other'. He writes, "within certain groups, it

may even be a piece of political wisdom to see to it that there be some enemies in order

for the unity of the members to remain effective and for the group to remain conscious of

this unity as its vital interest."[11] As the subsequent argument illustrates, this is an

especially suitable concept for analyzing Hindu nationalism as it came into being in India

in the first few decades of the twentieth century.

Hindu nationalists at the time insisted that the Congress was fighting the wrong enemy,

that the Muslims, not the British were the real threat to Indian unity. The national

freedom struggle was essentially one intended to expedite British departure, which was

seen as immanent. The question, after a point, was not of *if* they would leave, but rather

*when*. Indian Muslims, however, constituted not only one fifth of the population, but

there were fears that they expected to be reinstated into power after British departure. A

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[10] See Francine Frankel
[11] See George Simmel, p.98

variety of factors combined to give some credence to this fear, which was seized upon by

Hindu nationalists. The reaction of Hindu nationalists to this 'threat' of an ostensibly

pending Muslim rule, meant that whilst leaders such as Gandhi and Maulana Azad were

emphasizing the need for Hindu-Muslim unity – for example by the formers' support of

the latter in the Khilafat movement – Savarkar and Hindu nationalists were busy creating

an exclusive Hindu-Indian identity, an identity contrived so as to exclude Indian

Muslims. It did this in a twofold manner: first, by creating a unity of so-called Hindus,

which was in fact primarily a unity of non-Muslims, and secondly by emphasizing the

alien nature of Islam, and willfully ignoring the uniqueness of Indian Islam as it had

developed on Indian soil.


*ii Culture and Religion*

This brings us to the ambiguous nature of Hindu nationalism. What was it exactly? Was it

primarily national, cultural, religious, a mix of these, or something else altogether? That

in trying to distinguish between culture and religion one is in tricky territory is evidenced

by the fact that even in his exemplary treatise on religion, the French sociologist Emile

Durkheim abstained from giving a clear-cut definition of religion, but rather directed his

readers to the core aspects necessary for something to be deemed 'religion' (such as: the

periodic repetition of rituals, the differentiation of the realm of the sacred from the

profane, sense of collectivity, collective effervescence experienced by individuals

through rituals and so on). This kind of conflation of culture and religion in a time of

national identity formation, when a common culture is being revived is not unusual, nor

is the fact that people turn to religion as a guiding point given that it is often religion

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which provides a rich cache of the kinds of rituals and history needed to produce and maintain group cohesion.

That said, there are a couple of ways to look at Hindu nationalism. One is how the fathers of Hindu nationalism portrayed their particular brand of nationalism as essentially cultural in invoking a glorious Hindu past under attack, first by Muslims and then by the British. Ritu Kohli, in her book which interprets Golwalkar's political ideas, writes about the centrality of culture on Golwalkar's imagining of a Hindu rashtra, pointing out that "he was, therefore, of the view that since Hindu *Rashtra* denotes continuity with the ancient past and also that this phase emphasizes continuity of cultural essence and unity, there is every justification of the phrase Hindu *Rashtra.*"[12] A second perspective is how those outside of the ambit of Hindutva tend to posit it first and foremost as a religious nationalism.[13] Tanika Sarkar doesn't mince words on her take of it, writing that "both religion and nationalism are fused into a single entity whose lifeblood is vindictiveness for alleged past wrongs committed by Muslim rulers...Hindu unity is based on its antagonism against other Indian religions."[14]

On contemplating Hindu nationalism, scholars are continually engaged in what the more dominant aspects of this specific kind of nationalism are. Interpreting it several decades after its inception, Varshney suggests that the two main aspects that are at its forefront are religion and territory. Savarkar and Golwalkar, not religious men themselves, insist rather that a quest to create a Hindu rashtra predicated on Hindu culture is the lynchpin of their

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[12] See Ritu Kohli, p. 36
[13] This point of view is supported by Peter van der Veer and Tanika Sarkar amongst others.
[14] See Tanika Sarkar, p. 5

agenda, and of Hindutva. The point that they are promoting a cultural nationalism can be gleaned from the following example when an "anonymous 'Savarkarite" points out to his Muslim contemporaries that "'most of you were Hindus once and just because you have changed your religion you cannot become foreigners – call yourself Kshatriyas and begin to act like Kshatriyas. […]I tell you once you call yourself Kshatriyas, that moment the Hindu-Moslems problem will vanish like mists before the powerful sun. Come on brothers, become Kshatriyas.'"[15]

Before Independence, this kind of a slippage between the cultural and the religious led to appeals by Hindu nationalist to Muslims to assimilate[16] in the Hindu culture (seen as necessarily and solely Indian). However, given this very conflation, the means of assimilating were implicitly and insidiously religious. Whilst the Kshatriya example above is supposed to exemplify a reversion to a Hindu social order – it could just as easily be a religious exhortation. Examples of Muslim in 19th century India conducting marriage by fire[17] as is done in Hindu ceremonies, points not just to this intertwining, or the presence of 'little traditions' of Islam which Hasan has elaborated upon, but rather the possible intervention into the arena of private practices indicates a larger, religious agenda. Perhaps this slippage between culture and religion and how this operated for Hindu nationalists is nowhere more apparent than in the ideology espoused by another ideologue, M.S Golwalkar. Greatly influenced by Savarkar's writings on Hindutva, Golwalkar nevertheless differed from Savarkar on several points. A pertinent one here is

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[15] See Christophe Jaffrelot *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India,* p. 29
[16] Asutosh Varshney points out that Savarkar, for instance, saw assimilation as the only way Muslims could be a part of the Hindu rashtra.
[17] See Mushirul Hasan *Living Together Separately*

the emphasis he placed on culture as a part of religion. In his 'We or Our nationhood Defined', Golwalkar writes: "'On the other hand, in Hindusthan, Religion is an all-absorbing entity….and so with us culture is but a product of our all-comprehensive Religion, a part of its body and not distinguishable from it.'"[18]

While the cultural and the religious are intertwined, one useful way of attempting to differentiate them in the Indian context can be seen in the rules that apply to conduct in public life versus rules that apply to conduct in private life (particularly, pertaining to family life, marriages, inheritance and so on). This is partly because both under colonial rule and in present day India, the Muslim personal law – which takes into account the above – has been distinct from Hindu/universal civil code. Whilst it is not in the scope of this paper to discuss the merits for this so-called 'minority appeasement' it will suffice to point out that this distinction between family laws is certainly where religion – rather than culture – plays a part, not least because Muslim personal law is based on *Sharia*[19] law. The suggestion, thus, that 'Hindu Muslims' should adopt 'Hindu' customs, including not just allegiance to Hindu symbols as Golwalkar demanded, but that the demands of this allegiance may slip into the realm of the private smacks not only of a cultural assimilation but rather to a religious assimilation. At times, Savarkar has no qualms about spelling this out: "Does not the blood in your veins, O brother of our common forefathers, cry aloud with recollections of the dear old scenes and ties from which they were so cruelly snatched away at the point of the sword? Then come ye back to the *fold* of your brothers and sisters who with arms extended are standing at the open gate to

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[18] See Christophe Jaffrelot *Hindu Nationalism: a Reader,* p. 103
[19] Derived from the Quran.

welcome you – their long lost kith and kin" [emphasis added]. [20] This, of course, belies the point of Hindutva being first and foremost a cultural form of nationalism. The pertinent question this raises: *why this entrenched fear of Muslims?* is addressed in the second part of the paper.

Secondly, the universality of Hinduism that Hindutva presumes to represent is also suspect. The British had started speaking of the Hindus as one group and Muslims as a separate group upon their advent into India.[21] Mishra suggests that "Perhaps, the urge to fix a single identity for such diverse communities as found in India come naturally to people in the highly organized and uniform societies of the West…[in India] religion very rarely demanded, as it did with many Muslims and Christians, adherence to a set of theological ideas prescribed by a single prophet, book, or ecclesiastical authority."[22] That Savarkar's 'Hindu' was a synthetically created category (arguably more than most categories are), is nowhere more apparent then when one looks at a significant trend in the first few decades of the 20th century when the Dalit leader Dr. Ambedkar was actually arguing for 'untouchables' as being non-Hindu. Eva-Maria Hardtman highlights this fact by writing that "the Dalit movement with its claim for an identity separate from the Hindus could be said to begin with Adi movements in the 1920s."[23]

That the unity which Hindu nationalists sought to create amongst Hindus' was politically motivated is further reinforced by the fact that Arya Samajists, who can be seen as

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[20] ibid p.96
[21] See David Lelyveld in Mushirul Hasan and Asim Roy *Living Together Separately*
[22] See Pankaj Mishra *The Invention of the Hindu*
[23] See Eva-Maria Hardtman *The Dalit movement in India: local practices, global connection,* p.71

precursors of the Hindu nationalist movement, did not see themselves as Hindus but rather as followers of the Vedas and in fact even refused to declare themselves as Hindus in the colonial census.[24] Additionally, the inclusion of adherents of Buddhism, Jainism and Sikkhism points not only to the fragility of the category that Savarkar was creating in his definition of 'Hindu', but also portrays how in including Sikkhism, Hindu nationalists were completely overlooking the cultural and religious role that Islam had played in India – since Sikkhism is often considered as an example of the syncretic product of Hinduism and Islam

Thirdly, the type of Hinduism promulgated by Savarkar and other Hindu nationalists was by no means universal to all Hindus. It was, instead, a very Brahmanical and Sanskritized Hinduism. Jaffrelot comments on Savarkar's insistence on Sanskrit culture as Hindu culture, writing that "Sanskrit is falsely cited by Savarkar as the common reference point for all Indian languages and, in accordance with classical Brahmanical texts, as "language pare excellence"[25]. Other scholars have also pointed out that what Hindutva ideologues take as universal to Hinduism is often not: "The identification of Rama with divinity is common in the north and west of India, but elsewhere (for example, in my native Bengal), Rama is mainly the hero of the epic *Ramayana*, rather than God incarnate."[26]

*iii. Hindu nationalism on Indian Islam*

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[24] See Christophe Jaffrelot *Hindu Nationalism: a Reader*
[25] See Christophe Jaffrelot *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India,* p.31
[26] See Amartya Sen, p.8

This brings us to the last point – the willful manner in which Hindu nationalists ignored the unique nature of Indian Islam as it had developed in India through the course of a millennia, expressed beautifully by Maulana Azad at an address in Ramgarh "It was India's historic destiny that many human faces and cultures and religions should flow into her, finding a home in her hospitable soil...one of these last caravans…was that of the followers of Islam…This led to a meeting of the culture-currents of two different races…We brought our treasures with us and India too was full of the riches of her own precious heritage…"[27] The type of Islam that Maulana Azad is hinting at is the syncretic Islam – an Islam extensively shaped by its presence on Indian soil. Mushirul Hasan refers to this uniquely Indian Islam when he mentions the traditions of 'Little Islam', or Islam as practiced by a multitude of its followers in India. Hasan points out the comingling of Islam and Hinduism in India, writing that "Charles Alfred Elliot reported the strong tendency among Muslims to assimilate with their Hindu neighbours. He found them wearing *dhotis* and using '*Ram-Ram*' as the mode of salutation….Both in urban and rural areas, most Hindus venerated Hussain, the grandson of the prophet Mohammed, and incorporated his cult into their ritual calendar as yet one more divinity in the pantheon."[28] In depicting "cultural synthesis" amongst Hindus and Muslims, Hasan also points out that in Lucknow, for example, Nawabs often adopted Hindu mores, participated in Hindu festivals and even contributed financially to building temples.[29]

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[27] See Barabara D. Metcalf, p.180
[28] See Mushirul Hasan, *Legacy of a Divided Nation* p.30
[29] See Mushirul Hasan *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India*

As opposed to the vision of Indian Islam which Azad spoke about and which Hasan recounts above, Hindu nationalists chose to focus on Islam as foreign and on Muslims in India as a tightly knit group who could threaten Indian unity. The "edge of the entire argument" propagated by Hindu nationalists, writes Sumit Sarkar "is clearly directed against Indian Muslims and Christians, and not against British rulers, who never claimed India to be either fatherland or holyland."[30] This brings us, however, to the question of *if Hindu nationalism was formulated primarily as an anti-Islamic ideology, why was it felt that there was a need to counter Indian Islam and Indian Muslims? What was happening on the ground, so to say, that encouraged the idea of Muslims as threats?*

### III

### *On the ground: the historical context of Hindus and Muslims in the first two decades of the 20th century*

Hasan has opined that the Hindu-Muslim riots that occurred in the mid-1920s were worse than had ever historically occurred until that point. He suggests that Shia-Sunni conflicts, not Hindu-Muslim, had been the norm between localized groups until this decade.[31] Ayesha Jalal has also referenced fragmentation between Shia and Sunni Muslims in India, as being more salient, writing that these differences came to be buried only around the time of the Khilafat movement.[32] What had happened in the past few decades to create such a deep and, for all intents and purposes, irreversible divide between the emergent Hindu and Muslim communities? How did localized rivalries of different

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[30] See Sumit Sarkar in Mushirul Hasan and Asim Roy *Living Together Separately*, p.274
[31] See Mushirul Hasan, *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India*
[32] See Ayesha Jalal *Self and Sovereignty: Individual and Community in South Asian Islam since 1850*

groupings become religious conflicts? And lastly, how did these propel Hindu nationalism?

In his book *Religious Nationalism* Peter van der Veer points out that scholars have indicated three main reasons for Hindu-Muslim cleavages in pre-Independence India. These are: Paul Brass – Muslim elites asked for preferential treatment in policies; Francis Robinson – There were long-standing essential differences between Hindus and Muslims which were seized upon by political entrepreneurs; a group of scholars who suggest that the hegemony of the British, especially their divide-and-rule policy created and/or worsened Hindu-Muslim relations. The argument in the subsequent part of the paper essentially stems from the first two lines of thought as delineated above to emphasize how the British-Muslim relation, and its practical fall-outs, as well as the dynamics of Muslim mobilization in a variety of political areas, left at least some Hindu leaders feeling threatened.

*An emerging Muslim community: local, all-India, and international crystallisations*

*i. The Act of 1909*

The deepening of Hindu-Muslim divisions is often traced to the Act of 1909 which had had given Muslims separate electorates. This is frequently seen as an instance of the British pro-Muslim stance, however deeper probing suggests that this was a way to allay Muslim insecurities. In sketching the history of 19th century Bengal and the socio-economic status of Muslims, Hasan writes that "the impact of colonial rule, though

unevenly felt in different parts of the country, affected Muslims of Bengal more than any

other section of society."[33]

Various policies of the 19th century, such as the Permanent Settlement Act and the

Resumption Proceedings had impoverished Muslims here whilst creating new classes of

Hindu landlords. Hasan adds that "the imbalance between the relative positions of the

Hindus and Muslims created the first stirrings of communal consciousness in Bengal,

enabling Muslim organizations to make use of the sense of deprivation…."[34] The

separate electorate for Muslims were first and foremost a way to allay minority fears.

These reforms, however, were also emerging in a context of a greater community feeling

from amongst Muslims. The colonial religious categories which had been seen as

inappropriate to the Indian context now started being appropriated by the indigents.

*ii. All-India level crystallizations*

In writing that "admittedly, a fragmented form of religious consciousness existed, but its

essential component was hardly ever derived from the notion of a unified

'community'…"[35] Hasan has pointed to the 'myth of Muslim unity'. Yet, it is undeniable

that in the first few decades of the 20th century Muslims were starting to form a

community in a sense that they had not before. This is perhaps nowhere more evident

than in the formation of the Muslims League in 1906, a self-consciously different

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[33] See Mushirul Hasan *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India*, p.13
[34] ibid p.15
[35] ibid p.9

political party in its aims and approaches to the British rulers than the Congress.[36] A

propelling factor for the formation of the Muslim League was the same kind of idea

which can be seen as affecting Hindu nationalists to such an extent that Savarkar felt

compelled to appeal for Muslims' reconversion to Hinduism – namely, who would rule

when the British left? The Muslims feared that as the majority, Hindus would rule over

them, and that this rule would be worse than British rule. Whist some Hindu elements

were worried that Muslims not Hindus would be handed over the powers to rule, since

they had been the ruling powers prior to British arrival. The concerns of the latter were

bolstered by circulations in British media from the late nineteenth century onwards, for

example this blunt editorial which was featured in the *Times:* "If we were to withdraw, it

would be in favour not of the most fluent tongue or of the most ready pen, but the

strongest arm and the sharpest sword. It would, therefore, be well for the members of the

late Congress to reconsider their position from this practical point of view."[37]


*iii. Local crystallisations*

Hindu-Muslims relations in this decade were thus continually shifting form in a crucible

much affected by the very tangible British rule. It wasn't only in the pinnacles of power

at an all-India level that a Muslim community was coming into being. At a very localized

level, the emergence and spread of *tablighs*[38] and *tanzims* were responsible for at once

creating a heightened Muslim solidarity, and adding fuel to the fire of more extremist

Hindu nationalists due to this fact of an emergent religious solidarity.  These two kinds of

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[36] The Muslim League professed loyalty to the British government, decided not to engage in agitational
politics of the Congress variety and so on. See Ram Gopal.
[37] See Ram Gopal, p.63
[38] Which means the "preaching, proselytizing" of religion. See Barbara D Metcalf, p.176.

groups were formed in the early to mid 1920s. A particular group which Barbara D. Metcalf has written about – the Tablighi Jama'at - for instance was "a part of a mutually aggressive communal reaction to the failure of the Khilafat and non-cooperation movements of the 1920s."[39] Hasan writes about these localized movements, saying that their main aim was to "[define] their identity in explicitly religious terms and [assert] their Muslimness through a neatly organized ideological campaign. They heightened the sense of community solidarity and religiosity by exhorting followers to imbibe the letter and spirit of the Quran…and work towards the realisation of an Islamic ideal."[40]

In writing about on one such *tablighi* movement, the Tablighi Jama'at, Metcalf has sketched out some of its features in accordance with its aims of "asserting […] Muslimness." These movements, which Metcalf terms as "revival and self-help"[41] movements, often functioned in conjunction with the decentralized *panchayats*. One of the central aspects was that the local people enter a pact to uphold a core set of actions, such as "adherence to canonical prayer", "performance of marriage in an Islamic style", "attestation of faith"[42] and so on. The stake that the locals had in these movements, however, is most evident in the fact that these movements were "notable for [their] generalization of leadership to lay participants,"[43] even though the structural, ideological and macro-level impetus was provided by leaders such as Maulana Mohammed Ilyas who essentially charted out the *modus operandi* of the groups.[44] A

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[39] See Barbara D Metcalf, p.174
[40] See Mushirul Hasan *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India,* p.232
[41] See Barbara D Metcalf, p.177
[42] ibid, p.175
[43] ibid.
[44] For details on this see Barbara D Metcalf

Muslim community identity was thus being fashioned from above, with the likes of the Muslims League, and from below, with the spread of these *tabligh* and *tanzim* organizations.

*iv. International crystallizations*

What was maybe even more fearsome to Hindu nationalists at this time was not just the Muslim identity as it was developing in India, but rather also the notion that Muslims, though a numerical minority, could easily bolster their numbers by getting backup from the larger Muslim brotherhood. The Khilafat movement lasting from 1919-1921 only served to sharpen these fears. The Khilafat movement was basically an upsurge in British India against the decision the British had taken to wage war against the Turkish. The "viceroyalty"[45] of the Prophet of Islam was seen as being located in the Turkish Khilafat, with the Turkish Sultan as being the 'Commander of the Faithful', Muslims in India revolted against this particular policy as it pitted them against one of the great symbols of Islam. The Khilafat movement, however, was not just comprised of Indian Muslims agitating, but political entrepreneurs like Gandhi seized upon it as a way to cement Hindu-Muslim harmony in the face of anti-colonial uprisings as well. Some of Gandhi's detractors (such Mohammed Ali Jinnah)[46] blamed him for bringing in an acutely religious element into politics. That the Khilafat movement was seen under a different, more insidious light by many is evinced by the "alarming rise in communal tensions in the remaining three years of the Khilafat agitation"[47], and also by the fact that Savarkar's

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[45] See Mushirul Hasan *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India*
[46] See Ayesha Jalal *The Sole Spokesman*
[47] ibid, p.9

*Hindutva* was in part a response to his disdain for the Khilafat movement and to this idea not just of Indian Muslims divided loyalty, but also that they had a potential, global source of allies they could easily tap into.

**IV**

**Conclusion**

The first two decades of the twentieth century were ones where, more than before, a Muslim identity emerged in a coherent fashion. The bottom-up and top-down crystallization of this identity, the former through the *tablighs* and *tanzims* and the latter through the Muslim League, deepened emerging Hindu-Muslim cleavages. The international and national context, replete with anxieties over who would wrest the governing powers upon British departure, as well as the background of the Khilafat movement created insecurities, especially amongst ideologues such as Savarkar and Golawalkar. Their chosen response was thus not merely a Hindu nationalism, limited to followers of the Vedic religions, but rather a synthetic definition of 'Hindu' whose primary purpose was to exclude Indian Muslims. The Hindu nationalist movement was thus not just a nationalist or cultural and religious revivalist, but at its core, it was anti-Muslim.

With the partition of the subcontinent in 1947 and the creation of Pakistan, Muslim nationalism[48] in India petered out: Muslims had created their nation. Since Hindu nationalism had not been able to realize its goal of a Hindu rashtra, however, it persists

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[48] Represented, at an all-India level, by the Muslim League, especially post the 1937 elections. See Ayesha Jalal *The Sole Spokesman*

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The three defining features of contemporary Hindu nationalism are: adherence to the ideology sketched out by Savarkar; its anti-Muslim nature which has become increasingly virulent over the years (as evidenced by the role of Hindu nationalist organizations and individuals as instigators in communal riots, such as the Godhra riots of 2002, which have witnessed an unsurpassed surge over the last twenty years); and lastly, the dream of a Hindu rashtra. Extreme forms of Hindu nationalism function in great part by forging a very particular narrative of not only of what it means to be Indian, but of Indian history itself – where Muslims are necessarily seen as nothing besides foreign invaders, and Hindus as only ever protecting their heritage. It is no surprising fact that the decades old Babri Masjid dispute is thus seen as one central to defining a modern Indian identity in religious terms.

What is interesting though is that whilst at its inception Hindu nationalism arose in a context of insecurity, it is now flourishing during a period when Muslims pose no credible threat, giving credence to the Simmelian idea of any Hindu unity or nationalism as predicated on finding a common enemy in the Indian Muslims. The current context is one characterized by a diminished Muslim population as a proportion of the whole population; a socio-economic context where Muslims are indisputably lagging behind the rest of the population, with the average socio-economic status of Muslims as at about the same level as Scheduled Castes and Tribes; where there are really no competing forms of Muslim nationalisms; and where, given the post 9/11 de-legitimacy which the global Muslim 'brotherhood' is facing means that there is imagining forthcoming support for Indian-Muslims from extra-Indian sources is ludicrous at best. In a context where the

original *raison d'etre* of Hindu nationalism is obsolete, that it should continue to operate

*and* thrive thus harkens to a shaky future of sharpened identities and social disharmony in

India.

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