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The Demonic and the Seductive in Religious Nationalism: Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and the Rites of Exorcism in Secularizing South Asia

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The Demonic and the Seductive in Religious Nationalism:
Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and the Rites of Exorcism in Secularizing South Asia[1]

Ashis Nandy[2]

Sections of urban, middle-class, modernizing Hindus of British India were reborn as fragments of a pan-Indian Hindu nation only in the 1940s, roughly hundred years after the idea itself was born. This process of nation-building is not yet complete and it may never be complete. However, it has gone far in urban, educated, middle- and upper-middle class India where individualism and social and occupational mobility have steadily grown since the nineteenth century. (The process has gone farther among diasporic Hindus, some of whom have begun to think of themselves as part of a Hindu *ummah*, but that is not our concern at the moment.) Both the individuation and the mobility have taken place in a relatively impersonal, contractual, anonymous, urban-industrial context, where mainstream Hinduism in all its diversity—its innumerable castes (some figures go as high as 70,000), tens of thousands of village gods and goddesses, hundreds of sects, thousands of vernacular religious epics and *jatipuranas*, family priests and personal and family deities, rituals and practices specific to castes, sects and regions—cannot be sustained. The demand for Hinduism as a religion that an ordinary, socially and geographically mobile householder—as opposed to a world-renouncer—could carry within him or her as a portable device was a direct product of colonial political economy and the growth of presidency towns. At the moment of its birth, this new Hinduism—also sometimes called reformed Hinduism, proudly by some, wryly by others—did not look like Hinduism at all to a vast majority of Indians, Hindus and non-Hindus. To them, such an 'essentialized', desiccated Hinduism, seeking to cover so many incompatible religious practices, lifestyles and theologies, seemed absurd.[3] This majority was to be surprised; it had not reckoned with the new psychological demands crystallizing in colonial India.

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[3] Years ago, I plotted the process of this reform along two axes—Semiticization and revaluation of Kshatriya virtues—mainly to supplement the socially more critical process

It was a slow and painful process of birth. Among Hindus, the first well known group to talk of the Hindus as an incipient national community were probably the Young Bengal Group in the 1840s at Calcutta, then the capital of British India. The group saw itself as a collection of reformers and talked of the Hindus and Hinduism critically, sometimes with a touch of contempt. The process was underwritten by the colonial tendency, reflected in the ruling culture of the Raj and in missionary tracts, to see Hindus as a community defined—and doomed—by their religion and the gradual institutionalization of this tendency in colonial law, education, administration and census. Partly as a reaction, within a decade or two, the idea of the Hindus as a nation found a different status and intellectual respectability in the writings of Bhudev Mukhopadhyay (1827-94), a social and political thinker, and Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay (1838-94), India's first important novelist. They too were critical of many things Hindu but were even more critical of the Anglicized Indians who thought Hinduism could not be retooled for modern times. [4] In another two decades had emerged Brahmabandhav Upadhyay (1861-1907), a Catholic theologian and Vedantic scholar, who ran into trouble with the church in his lifetime but was to be rediscovered towards the end of the twentieth century as a pioneer in indigenous Christian theology. In his other incarnation, Upadhyay was a Hindu nationalist scholar-activist and theorist of violence—so at least it seemed to his friend Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1940). As is well known, Tagore's novel *Chār Adhyāya* is built around Upadhyay and Upadhyay's guilty awareness of nationalism as a sanction for ruthless, mechanical violence that involves viewing human life and human emotions instrumentally.[5] One could argue that it was the desacralized, secular part of Upadhyay's political Hinduism that finally ended up as Savarkar's Hindutva.[6]

The idea that the Hindus were the carriers of an overly diverse religion called Hinduism by default—and, to that extent, were an ill-formed, sleep-walking crypto-nation that had not actualized its possibilities—was to later become a central assumption of Hindu nationalism. Naturally, a certain admiration for Christianity and Islam, as religions in better touch with the processes of state-formation and nation-building, was the obverse of such nationalism. All Hindu reform movements borrowed from these two faiths to correct the 'inadequacies' of Hinduism. Such a stance was then popular among the modernizing middle class, which endorsed the contempt and hostility that often tinged Hindu nationalist

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of Sanskritization that M.N. Srinivas has studied. Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983). A fourth axis was missing—the emergence of a generic, 'portable' Hinduism that would make sense not only to scholars and theologians but also to a socially and geographically mobile householder, cut off from his or her local, vernacular roots. To survive in the contemporary world, that new Hinduism had to be more open to Hindu nationalism.

[4] Sudipta Kaviraj, The Unhappy Consciousness: Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and the Formation of Nationalist Discourse in India (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[5] Upadhyay in many respects served as Tagore's double. All three explicitly political novels of Tagore—*Gorā* (1909)*, Ghare Bāire* (1916) and *Chār Adhyāya* (1934)—negotiate the personality and ideology of Upadhyay. For a while in his youth, Tagore himself was close to Hindu nationalism and, when he was moving out of that phase, he found Upadhyay moving towards such nationalism. Ashis Nandy, *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism: Rabindranath Tagore and the Politics of Self* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989).

[6] Ibid. For a detailed and insightful look at Upadhyay, see Julius Lipner, *Life and Thought of a Revolutionary* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999). Others elsewhere in India were moving towards Upadhyay's position, indicating that it was something more than an idiosyncratic, personal choice. Only a few years later, Har Dayal (1888-1939) in North India began articulating a similar idea of political Hinduism, though without an explicit theory of violence.

attitudes towards the Hindus. The overdone emphases on Hindu pride and masculinization of the Hindus was built on such self-hatred.

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in 1923 reinvented a term previously used by the likes of Brahmabandhab Upadhyay to describe this ideology: Hindutva.[7] Hindutva, Savarkar made clear, was not the same as Hinduism, despite what an unthinking Indian Supreme Court was to declare eighty years later.[8] Hindutva was a form of political Hinduism that sought to organize and militarize the Hindus as a nationality. Without such nationality, the argument went, there could be no basis for nationalism in a highly diverse society and, without nationalism, there could be no nation-state. From the beginning, Hindutva had a strong masculine content. Savarkar was probably the first and the last to call India a fatherland (*pitrubhu*) and not a motherland (*matrubhumi*). To introduce this Continental usage, he had to dredge Sanskrit grammar to shed the common term *bhumi* (land), which was feminine, and use the rarer *bhu*. To this *pitrubhu* you could not even sing one of the unofficial national anthems of the freedom fighters, *Bande Mataram.*

To this fatherland, by virtue of the sacred geography associated with it, the Hindus had an exclusive right, Savarkar believed. Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin defines the secular Zionist as the one who believes that there is no God but insists that He has given the land of Israel to the Jews nonetheless.[9] Savarkar, a hardboiled atheist who did not believe in sacred geographies, was even less embarrassed to claim the whole of India for the Hindus on the ground of sacred geography.

When Savarkar propounded his two-nation theory—the first to explicitly do so in South Asia—it was a clear sixteen years before the Muslim League embraced the idea of the Hindus and the Muslims as two distinctive nations and demanded the division of India. His pioneering efforts in this respect were recognized. R.C. Majumdar, who called Savarkar a 'great revolutionary leader', was clear about wherefrom the League got its inspiration: it 'took serious notice of the frank speeches of Savarkar.'[10] But the idea of nationhood as the marker of a people was not Savarkar's either; he borrowed it from European thinkers like Guiseppe Mazzini (1805-72). Mazzini was not unknown in India, thanks to the early Bengali Hindu nationalists such as Upadhyay. Only the likes of Upadhyay did not include in their repertoire an ideology of political and cultural exclusion, leavened with hatred, as Savarkar openly did. In a public speech in 1925, Savarkar said that Indians had to learn to eschew soft values like 'humility, self-surrender and forgiveness' and cultivate 'sturdy habits of hatred, retaliation, vindictiveness'.[11] Occasionally he went further. At one place in his writings, he seems miserable that his heroes, Shivaji and Chinaji Appu, did not rape Muslim women, 'because of

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[7] Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* (1923) (Bombay: Veer Savarkar, 1969).

[8] Justice J.S. Verma, who delivered the judgement, was to, however, later claim that politicians had misused his judgement, without admitting that the judgement gave a suspect political ideology the status of a religion, which even Savarkar and the RSS had not claimed. On Justice Verma's self-justification, see 'My Verdict was Misinterpreted', *Hindustan Times,* 7 February 2003.

[9] Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, Presentation in the session on 'Contemporary Debates in the West: Secular Norms, Multiculturalism, and Immigrant Incorporation', Conference on The Secular, Secularizations, and Secularisms at the Wissenschaftskolleg, Berlin, 7-10 June 2006.

[10] R.C. Majumdar quoted in A.G. Noorani, *Savarkar and Hindutva: The Godse Connection* (New Delhi: LeftWord, 2002).

[11] M.R. Jayakar, *Story of My Life*, Vol. 2, p. 541, quoted in Noorani, *Savarkar and Hindutva*, pp. 25-6.

then prevalent suicidal ideas about chivalry to women, which ultimately proved highly detrimental to the Hindu community.'[12] To spite admirers who might think this to be an aberration, in 1965 at the age of 82, Savarkar wrote in the wake of the India-Pakistan war that took place that year: 'Pakistan's barbaric acts such as kidnapping and raping Indian women would not be stopped unless Pakistan was given tit for tat.' One suspects that violence to Savarkar was not merely a revolutionary tool, but an end in itself, as if he was seeking legitimate targets to express the free-floating anger within him.[13]

Savarkar may not have been honest about many things but he had a Brahminic respect for ideas. When in the 1940s Mohammad Ali Jinnah began to go places with his two-nation theory, Savarkar was honest enough to say: 'I have no quarrel with Mr. Jinnah's two-nation theory. We Hindus are a nation by ourselves and it is a historical fact that Hindus and Muslims are two nations.'[14]

I

It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness ... this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of another, measuring one's soul by the type of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity ... two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

W.E.B. Dubois, quoted in Charles Long[15]

Savarkar's life became controversial only after independence, more so after his death. As details of his role in Gandhi's murder and his obsequious letters to British authorities, seeking forgiveness and promising loyalty, began to get better known, they led to all-round embarrassment. However, that does not fully explain the attempts to undervalue his anti-imperialist record in recent years, why even the fifty-year sentence passed on him is not considered a proof of his credentials as a freedom fighter. Nor does it explain why there has been so little acceptance that, after being sentenced to jail for fifty years in one's mid-twenties, one may have failure of nerve and collapse of self-esteem. True, the criticisms often come from those who have no direct or indirect link with the freedom struggle against the world's then-reigning superpower and have the luxury of demanding total

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[12] *V.D. Savarkar, The Six Golden Epochs of Indian History* (New Delhi: Rajdhani Granthanagar, 1970), p. 71. Quoted by Kavita Krishnan, 'Unveiling Savarkar: Picture Imperfect', www. Cpiml.org/liberation/year-2003/April.

[13] Even this may not be the whole story. Lloyd deMause has argued that the origins of war lie partly in the fantasy of war as righteous rape. Savarkar might have reversed the process, imagining rape as a form of war that allegedly makes nations. Lloyd deMause, *The Emotional Life of Nations* (New York: Karnac Books, 2002), Ch. 6. Suresh Sharma argues that Savarkar reneged on the inclusive nationalism of his earlier years 'not because Hindu rashtra represented a higher ideal' but because he came to the conclusion that his earlier project was not a feasible one, whereas a Hindu nation was a realizable goal. Sharma, 'Savarkar's Quest', p. 202. Sharma is not wrong but his interpretation does not fully explain the low rhetoric and passions of an otherwise Machiavellian politician who was proudly dispassionate and impersonal. For that one must take into account the inner demons that populated Savarkar's world.

[14] *Indian Annual Register*, 1943, 2, p.10. Quoted in Anil Nauriya, 'The Savarkarist Syntax', *The Hindu*, 18 September 2004.

[15] Charles Long, Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Imagesin the Interpretation of Religion (Aurora, Colorado: The Davies Group, 1995), p. 178.

constancy and persistent self-sacrifice. But it is also true that there has been no enquiry in depth into the inner drives that pushed Savarkar to his particularly petty version of xenophobia. Was his violence an unrealistic, adolescent search for a heroic stature, which collapsed the moment he confronted its 'natural', inevitable consequences under a colonial dispensation? Did the Muslims become for him a safer target, once he sensed the might of the British Empire? Did he represent or tap a political-psychological potentiality in urban, middle-class, educated India during the last hundred years? Is that potentiality a price India has paid for its modernization? Are the attempts to demonize Savarkar ultimately a form of exorcism?

The last two questions are especially important. The hostility Savarkar arouses is the hostility towards one who dares to remind us that the post-seventeenth-century idea of nation-state and secularism have both been complicit with ethnoreligious violence during the last two centuries. For Savarkar's hatred for Muslims came not from ideas of ritual purity and impurity or caste hierarchy but from his prognosis of communities that could or could not be integrated—assimilated or dissolved—within the framework of a modern Indian state. The standard conventions of a nation-state within the Westphalian model constituted his religion and he brought to it the fervour of a fundamentalist. He was not willing to wait for the decline of communities, the spread of literacy and urban-industrial values—individuation, secularization and instrumental rationality—to ensure nation-formation in a society organized around a different set of principles. Actually, he was searching for something more substantial than territoriality to give Indian nationalism a stable base. The search was not unknown to modern Indians; many had mounted it before Savarkar and many others were to do so after him. But most of them avoided facing the full implications of it. Savarkar was more open and honest about his goals. Hence the periodic obsessive concern in India with the life of a person who throughout life remained at the margin of Indian politics and whom mainstream India and Hinduism never knew well enough to forget.

The second part of the story is the record of secularism in genocides, even ethnonationalist genocides, in the last hundred years. Data on mass violence show that secular states, backed by secular ideologies, account for at least two-thirds of all the deaths in organized mass violence during the twentieth century.[16] Savarkar typifies the attitudes and the motivational structure—the genocidal mentality—that underlies politically engineered mass violence.[17] The conservative folk theory of secularism in many parts of the globe, particularly its South Asian variants cannot cope with this reality. G.P. Deshpande acknowledges this when he calls Savarkar a 'secular communalist' vending a 'supra-religious ideology', but does not sense how absurd these expressions sound in South Asian intellectual circles where secularism is seen as a magical cure of all communal passions.[18] Nor is Deshpande willing to take the next step and to read Savarkar as a pathological by-product of the modern idea of a secular nation-state rather than that of Hinduism.

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[16] See for example R.J. Rummel, *Death by Government: Genocide and Mass Murder Since 1900* (West Hanover, Mass.: Christopher Publishing, 1994).

[17] See for example Robert Jay Lifton and Eric Markusen, *The Genocidal Mentality: Nazi Holocaust and the Nuclear Threat* (New York: Basic, 1990).

[18] G.P. Deshpande, 'An Occasion for the RSS', *Economic and Political Weekly,* 25 March 2006. Deshpande also points out that Savarkar conceptualized Hindutva as some kind of Hegelian Geist. It is not clear from his brief but insightful comment whether Savarkar borrowed as directly from Hegel as he did from Mazzini.

This love-hate relationship with Savarkar in sections of India's urban middle class and the political identity he offered can be read, more aptly, as a lesson on the limits of nineteenth-century modernity, scientific rationality and political realism rather than as pathological ethnophobia. He is one person who had grasped the scope modern rationality offered to act out the hate within him and his attitudes to Hindutva and the Hindus were as instrumental as his attitude towards the Muslims. His rationalist, amoral, anti-religious self had paradoxically arrived at the conclusion that only religion could be an efficacious building block for nation- and state-formation in South Asia and he did not know where to stop. In his impersonal, reified, Brahminic ideas of statecraft and politics, there was not much place for emotions, certainly not for compassion. The aloof ruthlessness came packaged in an arrogant trust in his cleverness and strategizing skills.

Even Savarkar's atheism was not the philosophical atheism associated with Buddhism and Vedanta, but the anti-clerical, hard atheism of fin-de-siècle scientism, increasingly popular among sections of the European middle class and, through cultural osmosis, in parts of modern India.[19] His politics paralleled the way European racism in the 1940s drew upon modern science, particularly nineteenth-century biology and eugenics, and saw itself responsible for doing the dirty work of scientized history.[20] The sceptics might like to look up Savarkar's comments on the cow, worshipped as sacred by most Hindus, and compare it with the position of the organizations and parties that constitute the Hindu nationalist formation today. While the latter try to pander to the sentiments of the Hindus, Savarkar publicly supported cow slaughter when necessary and declared the cow to be a useless animal with no sacredness about it.[21] He also advised Hindus to give up vegetarianism and eat fish and eggs.[22] When Gandhi's assassin and Savarkar's protégé Godse complained in his last testament in court about Gandhi's 'superstitious' use of ideas like soul force and fasting in modern politics, it was not the accusation of a Hindu fundamentalist. It mirrored Savarkar's statism.

Over the last eighty years, most ideologues of Hindu nationalism have neither come from orthodox Hinduism nor have they flaunted their orthodoxy the way Gandhi did, by proclaiming himself a Sanatani Hindu. They have proudly affirmed

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[19] Nothing expressed Savarkar's tough-minded atheism better than his refusal to allow any Hindu religious ritual or rite when his wife died, notwithstanding public protests and *Satyagraha* by some of his followers. He did not want even her body to be brought home, saying that it was 'no use lamenting over the dead body.' Keer, *Veer Savarkar*, pp. 529-30.

[20] Aditya Nigam in a comment has differentiated between two styles of Hindu nationalism, one typified by Savarkar and the other by Golwalkar, the believing Hindu who came to head the RSS in the 1940s. He suggests that Golwalkar's is the more dangerous version. Aditya Nigam, 'Reading between the Chinks in Pariwar Armour', *Tehelka*, 25 June 2005, p. 20. Nigam may be right, because the likes of Golwalkar can take Hindu nationalism *into* Hinduism and reshape the culture of Indian politics and, at the end, Hinduism in a way that Savarkar could never do. On the other hand, Savarkar seems to conform more faithfully to the profile of the fascist personality as portrayed in post-World War II psychoanalysis and social and political psychology. Could it be that, despite the rhetoric of public debate in India, the 'classical' European fascism in India can be the ideology of only a conspiratorial political fringe and the more dangerous sources of political authoritarianism lie elsewhere?

[21] Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of Arya Samaj, also approved of eating beef in the first edition of *Satyārthaprakāsh* (1874) but the remark was dropped from the second edition in 1882. P.C. Ghosh, *The Development of Indian National Congress (1892-1909)* (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1960); quoted in Sharma, 'Savarkar's Quest for a Modern Hindu Consolidation', p.69. As is well known, similar comments are attributed to Vivekananda, too.

[22] Keer, *Veer Savarkar*, pp. 443-4.

their links with the nineteenth-century Hindu reform movements, which they see as analogues of a masculine Protestantism, cleaning up a degraded, distorted faith to make it fit the needs of a national state.

These ideologues borrowed from ideas that were in the air during their formative years. Not only among European fascists but also among the European intelligentsia in general and among westernized Indians trying desperately to cope with their feelings of inferiority and attain global respectability through tough-minded, secular rationality wedded to ideas of national interest, social evolutionism, political realism and progressivism. Savarkar's contempt for the likes of Gandhi came partly from that. Savarkar was not alone. The first head of the RSS, Keshav Baliram Hedgewar (1889-1940), too, could hardly be called a run-of-the-mill, believing Hindu. An urban, well-educated, modern doctor, with poor links with rural India and mainstream Hinduism, he like many pioneers of Hindu nationalism was an aggressive critic of Hinduism and was exposed to religious and social reform movements, especially the Ramakrishna Mission founded in 1897 by Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902). Hindu nationalism, on this plane, was popular European political theory and political history telescoped into South Asia as a form of toady Hinduism. In retrospect one realizes why Gandhi insisted that the nineteenth-century religious reform movements had done more harm than good to Hinduism in the long run.

The entire process has remarkable parallels with the experiences of Sri Lankan Buddhism and Indian Islam under colonialism and the dual impact of urbanization and industrialization. There is in them the same efforts to rationalize one's faith and to set up demonic others who seemed better equipped to handle the demands of modern world and its amoral ways; they too, consequently, initiated the same kind of self-engineering to be able to flirt with the Dionysian in human personality. [23] As if they were all caught in a larger, inescapable, evolutionary process that enjoyed intrinsic legitimacy even among those hostile to religious nationalism.[24] That partly explains why most conservative Muslim clerics in India opposed the idea of a separate country for South Asian Muslims as un-Islamic, whereas the leadership of the Pakistan movement sought a modern Muslim state, the way many secular, liberal Jews sought a Jewish state. Is the dream of a liberal, ethnonationalist, modern state sustainable in the long run? Or is it an oxymoron? No final answer has yet been given.

The founder of Pakistan, Mohammed Ali Jinnah—westernized, loyal to constitutionalism, staunchly secular in personal life—had as his avowed role model the classical liberal Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866-1915). Jinnah kept the *ulema* at a distance throughout life, but was perfectly willing to use them to advance the cause of a separate homeland for South Asian Muslims. Exactly as Savarkar,

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[23] See for instance, Stanley J. Tambiah, Buddhism Betrayed? Religion, Politics and Violence in Sri Lanka (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992); and T.N. Madan, Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998). The overall cultural psychological framework within which Savarkar worked has been discussed in Ashis Nandy, Shikha Trivedi, Achyut Yagnik and Shail Mayaram), Creating a Nationality: The Ramjanmabhumi Movement and Fear of the Self (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[24] For instance, the early Hindu nationalists were role models for Sri Lankan Buddhist nationalists. Anagarika Dhammapala (1864-1933) lived in Calcutta, the capital of British India till 1911 and was an admirer of Vivekananda. The Mahabodhi Society that Dhammapala established was directly inspired by the Ramakrishna Mission and less directly by the theosophical society.

despite all his anti-Muslim rhetoric and passion for united India, not only established coalitions in Sindh and Bengal with the Muslim League, fighting for Pakistan, but was proud of these alliances. He argued that the alliances were more nationalistic than the ministries formed by the 'pseudo-nationalist' Indian National Congress, led by Gandhi and Nehru.[25] There *are* parallels between the trajectories Savarkar and Jinnah traversed and the reason they chose religion as a vehicle of nation-building despite being nonbelievers or casual believers. Both had internalized contemporary European political categories and saw nationality as a crucial module of sovereign, modern republics. Both sought to replicate in South Asia existing wisdom in the global citadels of knowledge. Both represented the triumph in the South not so much of history as of European history. If they were fundamentalists, their fundamentals came from conventional European wisdom about nation-building and state-formation. Defying the warning of Rabindranath Tagore, they owned up the 'motive force' of western nationalism as their own.[26] Not surprisingly, the personal relationship between Savarkar and Jinnah never soured. Nor did Savarkar ever entirely lose the respect of the likes of Subhas Chandra Bose, M.N. Roy and B.R. Ambedkar.

II

I have used some scrappy biographical details on Savarkar to pose a series of questions: Has it become more or less inevitable for a social group—be it a religion, caste, denomination, sect or ethnic entity—to gradually acquire the features of a nationality because that seems the only way community grievances can be aggregated and effectively articulated in a culture of state based on a concept of citizenship enmeshed with the idea of nationality? Do claims made in the name of a nationality have more political impact than the same claims made in the name of other aggregates and, as a result, has there grown, in the last hundred years, a tendency in religion- or ethnicity-based political formations to act as nationalities to empower themselves? Does that allow more effective mobilization in modernizing societies, particularly among the newly modern, uprooted by social changes and seeking new communities, real or imaginary? Does it also mean that such nationalism has natural limits in a society that is not fully modern? Does Savarkar's marginalization in Hindu society have something to tell us?[27]

Everyone knows that the western history of state-formation and nation-building is simultaneously a story of how religions, denominations and ethnicities were bludgeoned into nationalities. For those entering the realm of history for the first time in Asia and Africa—and facing the hierarchies and exclusions of the global state-nation system for the first time—the temptation is not only to construct their own history, but also to read into Europe's history their own past, present and future. Even when they construct their own history, the categories and concerns that frame it are 'universal' or, it comes to the same thing, European. When that

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[25] Savarkar and Joshi, *Historical Statements by V.D. Savarkar*, pp. 96-105; see particularly pp. 99-101.

[26] Rabindranath Tagore, *Nationalism* (London: Macmillan, 1917), pp. 77-78.

[27] I should clarify at this point that I view nationalism as an ideology that is radically different from the sentiment called patriotism, though the first kind of territoriality may build upon or mobilize for its purposes the second kind. For a more extended discussion of the issue, see Ashis Nandy, 'Nationalism, Genuine and Spurious: A Very Late Obituary of Two Early Post-Nationalist Strains in India', Third Usha Mehta Memorial Lecture, delivered at the Nehru Centre, Mumbai, on 9 September 2005. Published in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 12 August 2006, pp. 3500-4.

reading is deployed as an evolutionary grid in an Asian or African society, there is a natural fear that unless one builds a nation, whatever its cost in human suffering, one will not get justice locally or globally.

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and Mohammed Ali Jinnah were not personally as culpable as many like to believe. The evil that many locate in them resided, at least partly, in the political ideas that dominated the world. Savarkar and Jinnah were, like most first-generation builders of South Asian states, faithful and obedient pupils of the Bismarckian state and post-medieval European republicanism, both vital parts of the dominant culture of commonsense in their times. Once they accepted that culture, they could not but try to duplicate Europe's history in South Asia, whatever the cost. Not surprisingly, neither of the two ever mourned seriously, in public, the unnecessary death of more than a million people in the bloodbath that came with the division of British India.[28] For both, human beings were means of implementing larger historical designs. The rationality they worshipped overlay deep emotional voids, created by personal losses that came almost like betrayals by fate. Both coped with the betrayal through uncompromising, dispassionate, ruthless pursuit of a form of political rationality that allowed and even glorified withdrawal from or avoidance of personal emotional involvements.[29] Both lived with fragile, perhaps anchorless self-definitions that pushed them to embrace aggressive, ideological postures that tallied with their deeper psychological needs. In politics if you wear a mask long enough, it becomes your face.

Jinnah's case was more tragic. In his famous speech of 11 August 1947, three days before the birth of Pakistan, he declared inclusive nationalism based on territoriality as his project and sought to distinguish between inclusive and sectoral nationalism exactly the way Jawaharlal Nehru did.[30] He wanted Pakistan not to exclude non-Muslims in principle and in practice. Himself a Shia, Jinnah included in Pakistan's first cabinet an Ahmadiya as the foreign minister and a Hindu Dalit as the minister of law.[31] Pakistan's first national anthem was written by a Hindu and, it is said, Jinnah had a hand in that choice. These did not help; it was too late or, perhaps, too early. Nor could Indian nationalism, despite the presence of leaders such as Jawaharlal Nehru, avoid full-scale militarization, nuclearism and intermittent religious and ethnonationalist violence. Nationalism, once let out of

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[28] I have already drawn attention to Savarkar's fascination with gratuitous violence in political matters. That fascination, though it came packaged in the rhetoric of revolution, preceded his ideological convictions. Many have found more disorienting the openness to violence of Jinnah, whom Eqbal Ahmad has called a liberal constitutionalist. Eqbal Ahmad, *Confronting Empire*, Interviews with David Barsamian (London: Pluto Press, 2000), p. 10. Kuldip Nayar, for instance, says that when Jinnah was asked in 1946, after the call for Direct Action given by the Muslim League, whether Direct Action would be violent or non-violent, Jinnah said, 'I am not going to discuss ethics.' Kuldip Nayar, *Scoop: Inside Stories from the Partition to the Present* (New Delhi: HaperCollins, 2006), p. 25.

[29] See the unpublished paper of psychoanalysts Salman Akhtar and Manasi Kumar, 'Destiny and Nationalism: Mohammad Ali Jinnah'. Also delivered as a lecture at the India International Centre, New Delhi, 2006.

[30] Mr. Jinnah's first Presidential Address to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, 11 August 1947, http://www.stanford.edu/group/pakistan/pakistan/legislation/constituent_address_ 11aug1947. html

[31] It is remarkable that the passage of modern, secular constitutions of both India and Pakistan were officially piloted by two Dalits, Babasaheb Ambedkar and Jogen Mandal. The former, who of course played a more significant role in shaping the constitution of his country, is virtually deified in India; the latter is forgotten in both countries.

the bag, becomes self-sustaining and acquires its own political-psychological agenda.

Many Southern scholars, blinded by nationalism's anti-imperialist role in the South, believe it can be tamed and used creatively. The experiences of South Asia in the last two centuries suggest that usually religions and cultures change to accommodate nationalism, not the other way round. Savarkar, whom many see as a minor pawn of South Asian history, did change not only South Asian Hinduism but also South Asian Islam and Buddhism. All three had to accommodate strains that have more in common with house-broken versions of Christianity in Europe and North America than with home-grown, South Asian Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism.[32]

Ultimately, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar is the name of a blown-up, grotesque temptation inherent in the Southern world's encounter with the global nation-state system and with religious traditions that facilitate the internalization of the motive force of western nationalism. That temptation is a part of everyone dreaming of working with tamed versions of nationalism and nation-states armed with ideas of rationality, secularism, progress and the so-called lessons of history, untouched by empathy, compassion and other such subjectivist traps.

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[32] For instance, E. Valentine Daniel, 'The Arrogation of Being by the Blind-Spot of Religion', *Hitotsubashi Journal of Social Studies*, July 2001, 33(1), pp. 83-102. True, surveys done in India suggest that only about 10 per cent of those who vote for Hindu nationalist parties do so on ideological grounds, but in absolute numbers that is a substantial presence. Data Unit of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, 1998 Survey of General Elections in India.