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Hindutva as a variant of right-wing extremism

EVIANE LEIDIG 

ABSTRACT Leidig's article addresses a theoretical and empirical lacuna by analysing Hindutva using the terminology of right-wing extremism. It situates the origins of Hindutva in colonial India where it emerged through sustained interaction with ideologues in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany who, in turn, engaged with Hindutva to further their own ideological developments. Following India's independence, Hindutva actors played a central role in the violence of nation-building and in creating a majoritarian identity. Yet Hindutva was not truly 'mainstreamed' until the election of the current prime minister, Narendra Modi, in 2014. In order to construct a narrative that furthered Hindu insecurity, Modi mobilized his campaign by appealing to recurring themes of a Muslim 'threat' to the Hindu majority. The result is that Hindutva has become synonymous with Indian nationalism. Leidig seeks to bridge the scholarly divide between, on the one hand, the study of right-wing extremism as a field dominated by western scholars and disciplines and, on the other, the study of Hindutva as a field that is of interest almost exclusively to scholars in South Asian studies. It provides an analytical contribution towards the conceptualization of right-wing extremism as a global phenomenon.

KEYWORDS Bharatiya Janata Party, Hindu, Hindutva, India, Muslim, nationalism, Rashtriya Swayamsevak, right-wing extremism, Sangh, violence

The mission of reorganizing the Hindu society on the lines of its unique national genius which the Sangh has taken up is not only a great process of true national regeneration of Bharat but also the inevitable precondition to realize the dream of world unity and human welfare. Our one supreme goal is to bring to life the all-round glory and greatness of our Hindu Rashtra.

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, 'Mission'¹

The only positive thing about the Hindu right wing is that they dominate the streets. They do not tolerate the current injustice and often riot and attack Muslims when things get out of control, usually after the Muslims disrespect and degrade Hinduism too much... India will continue to wither and die unless the Indian nationalists

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1 Quoted in Thomas A. Howard, 'Hindu nationalism against religious pluralism—or, the sacralization of religious identity and its discontents in present-day India', in Kaye V. Cook (ed.), *Faith in a Pluralist Age* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books 2018), 62–78 (67).

consolidate properly and strike to win. It is essential that the European and Indian resistance movements learn from each other and cooperate as much as possible. Our goals are more or less identical.

Anders Behring Breivik, '2083: A European Declaration of Independence'²

There is currently a right-wing extremist party governing the world's largest democracy, yet it is remarkably absent in the literature on right-wing extremism. To address this theoretical and empirical Eurocentrism, this article presents the first in-depth analysis of Hindutva using the terminology of right-wing extremism. Hindutva refers to the project of achieving a Hindu *rashtra*, or state, in India. Although Hindu nationalism or Hindu extremism may be used interchangeably to designate this sociopolitical phenomenon, this article posits 'Hindutva' as an ideology that encompasses a wide range of forms, from violent, paramilitary fringe groups, to organizations that advocate the restoration of Hindu 'culture', to mainstream political parties. By redefining Hindutva in this manner, we can create a framework for right-wing extremism with universal dimensions.

This article begins with the transnational interactions between South Asian and European intellectual spheres as Hindutva emerged in relation to Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. In pre-independence India, Hindutva sought to incorporate elements from European models into its own *modus operandi*. At the same time, intellectuals in Europe engaged with Hindutva ideologues. Since India's independence in 1947, Hindutva has been instrumental in nation-building and the construction of a majoritarian identity in India. Hindutva actors view violence as a legitimate means of achieving ethnonational territorial claims, and the state has, at times, resorted to violent means. Yet, Hindutva only truly succeeded as a mainstream phenomenon in 2014 with the election of the current Indian prime minister, Narendra Modi. By marking Hindus as 'insiders' and other religious groups, notably Muslims, as 'outsiders', Modi's government has constructed Hindutva as synonymous with Indian nationalism.

With the analysis of xenophobia and prejudice being generally limited to western examples, it leaves many other, diverse manifestations unscrutinized. This article shows right-wing extremism operating in a non-western, multicultural society in order to shed light on the paradigmatic resemblances between various exclusionary nationalisms.

Right-wing extremism beyond the West

Right-wing extremism in Europe emerges from philosophical exchanges in the nineteenth century that gave rise to the development and spread of fascist

2 Andrew Berwick [*pseud.*, i.e. Anders Behring Breivik], '2083: A European declaration of independence', 1475, available on the *Public Intelligence* website at <https://info.publicintelligence.net/AndersBehringBreivikManifesto.pdf> (viewed 28 May 2020).

thinking. This is best exemplified by the philosopher Jakob Fries who argued: 'When a nation is ruled by a common spirit, then from below, out of the people, will come life sufficient for the discharge of all public business.'³ Fries was involved with the *Burschenschaften*, German student organizations that called for antisemitic actions in the name of German nationalism, and that have been described as early formations of right-wing extremists: 'the anti-rationalism, xenophobia, anti-semitism, intolerance and terrorism of the *Burschenschaften* present the same syndrome which, under different circumstances, the Nazis were to institutionalize.'⁴

These ideological developments became mainstream when European fascism – having drawn on available radical and populist approaches, and been heavily influenced by the anarchist and socialist movements of the early twentieth century – came to fruition shortly before the Second World War. Fascism has been defined as 'a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism'.⁵ Populist ultra-nationalism refers to a conception of the nation as a 'racial, historical, spiritual or organic reality' with a distinct community of members who belong.⁶ Since 1945, fascism has split into several factions in response to various political circumstances.⁷ Scholars have thus shifted their attention to the various extreme-right movements, organizations and parties that developed across Europe in the decades following the Second World War. The rise of extreme-right organizations and paramilitary/vigilante groups, as well as political parties, is well documented.⁸ Influential academic scholarship on contemporary right-wing

3 Jakob Fries, quoted in G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. from the German by S. W. Dyde (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications 2012), xv.

4 Shlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press 1972), 119.

5 Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Routledge 1991), 26.

6 Ibid., 37.

7 Roger Eatwell, 'Introduction: the new extreme right challenge', in Roger Eatwell and Cas Mudde (eds), *Western Democracies and the New Extreme Right Challenge* (London and New York: Routledge 2004), 1–16.

8 Sabine von Mering and Timothy Wyman McCarty (eds), *Right-Wing Radicalism Today: Perspectives from Europe and the US* (London and New York: Routledge 2013); Uwe Backes and Patrick Moreau (eds), *The Extreme Right in Europe: Current Trends and Perspectives* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2012); David Art, *Inside the Radical Right: The Development of Anti-Immigrant Parties in Western Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2011); Antonis A. Ellinas, *The Media and the Far Right in Western Europe: Playing the Nationalist Card* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2010); Paul Hainsworth, *The Extreme Right in Western Europe* (London and New York: Routledge 2008); Bert Klandermans and Nonna Mayer (eds), *Extreme Right Activists in Europe: Through the Magnifying Glass* (London and New York: Routledge 2006); Elisabeth Carter, *The Extreme Right in Western Europe: Success or Failure?* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press 2005); Peter Davies and Derek Lynch (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Fascism and the Far Right* (London and New York: Routledge 2002); Cas Mudde, *The Ideology of the Extreme Right* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press 2000); Peter H. Merkl and

extremism as a field of study is thus primarily confined to a geographical focus on Europe and North America, building on the ideological and organizational frameworks in earlier studies of fascism and Nazism.

Despite the plethora of comparative literature on right-wing extremism in the western context, very little research has been conducted outside this terrain. The exceptions are case studies of Turkey,⁹ South Africa,¹⁰ Israel,¹¹ Japan,¹² and Indonesia,¹³ which often adopt the typology used to characterize right-wing extremism in the West as a springboard for comparison.¹⁴ This article employs a similar approach in the case of India, hoping to broaden the field of right-wing extremism as a global phenomenon.

When it comes to India, scholars of right-wing extremism in the West have misrepresented Hindutva as a type of nationalism that is primarily religious rather than ethnonationalist. The influential fascism scholar Robert Paxton, for instance, notes: 'For Hindu fundamentalists, their religion is the focus of an intense attachment that the secular and pluralist Indian state does not succeed in offering. In such communities, a religious-based fascism is conceivable.'¹⁵ Thus, while Paxton does acknowledge that 'no two fascisms need be alike in their symbols and rhetoric, employing, as they do, the local patriotic repertory',¹⁶ the notion that religious identity takes precedence over national

Leonard Weinberg (eds), *The Revival of Right-Wing Extremism in the Nineties* (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass 1997).

- 9 Stéphane de Tapia, 'Turkish extreme right-wing movements—between Turkism, Islamism, Eurasism, and pan-Turkism', in Backes and Moreau (eds), *The Extreme Right in Europe*, 297–320.
- 10 Adrian Guelke, 'The quiet dog: the extreme right and the South African transition', in Merkl and Weinberg (eds), *The Revival of Right-Wing Extremism in the Nineties*, 254–70.
- 11 Arie Perliger and Ami Pedahzur, 'The radical right in Israel', in Jens Rydgren (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press 2018), 667–80; Shai Bermanis, Daphna Canetti-Nisim and Ami Pedahzur, 'Religious fundamentalism and the extreme right-wing camp in Israel', *Patterns of Prejudice*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2004, 159–76; Ami Pedahzur, 'The transformation of Israel's extreme right', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2001, 25–42; Raphael Cohen-Almagor, 'Combating right-wing political extremism in Israel: critical appraisal', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 9, no. 4, 1997, 82–105; Ehud Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press 1991).
- 12 Naoto Higuchi, 'The radical right in Japan', in Rydgren (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, 681–97; Alan Tansman (ed.), *The Aesthetics of Japanese Fascism* (Berkeley: University of California Press 2009); Alan Tansman (ed.), *The Culture of Japanese Fascism* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press 2009); George Macklin Wilson, 'A new look at the problem of "Japanese fascism"', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 10, no. 4, 1968, 401–12.
- 13 Yannick Lengkeek, 'Staged glory: the impact of fascism on "cooperative" nationalist circles in late colonial Indonesia, 1935–1942', *Fascism*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2018, 109–31.
- 14 See Stein Ugelvik Larsen (ed.), *Fascism outside Europe: The European Impulse against Domestic Conditions in the Diffusion of Global Fascism* (Boulder, CO: Social Science Monographs 2001).
- 15 Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (London: Penguin 2005), 204.
- 16 Ibid.

identity is flawed when considering the evolution of Hindutva as an ideology seeking to create an ethnonationalist state.

Paxton's analysis indicates the need for critique in the way that religion is conceptualized among western scholars, and especially those who focus on right-wing extremism. Paxton, largely due to the lack of scholarly exchange between western and South Asian theorists, displays a fundamental misreading of secularism based on a common Eurocentric understanding of the term. Secularism on the Indian subcontinent does not denote a separation of church and state as has been conceived in the West. A contentious issue in scholarship about Hinduism is the argument that the idea of Hinduism as a world religion was created by colonial scholarship rather than being an indigenous category. Over the past few decades, a number of influential scholars of religion have claimed that it is a mistake to see Hinduism as a world religion on a par with Christianity; the tendency to make this false parallel, they argue, originated in theological arguments from within the Christian tradition as well from the need of the colonial power to map and control its Asian subjects.¹⁷ However, Indian intellectuals and leaders participated actively in a dialogue about the nature of religion in general and of Hinduism in particular during the colonial era,¹⁸ this laid the foundation for Hindu leaders to reinvent Hinduism as a modern, universal and missionary religion.¹⁹ Given the cultural complexity of South Asia and the long history of interaction between Hinduism and western political concepts and traditions, there is no reason to expect Indian concepts and practices of secularism to look familiar to a western observer.

Consequently, the Indian brand of secularism embraces the practice of religion in a state that affords religious plurality. India embodies a 'contextual secularism' in which the relationship between religion and state can be characterized not by 'a strict wall of separation' but a 'principled distance'.²⁰ Or, to put it succinctly, 'even when a State is tolerant of religions, it need not lead to religious tolerance in a society'.²¹ In this sense, India has never experienced a

17 Torkel Brekke, *Makers of Modern Indian Religions in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2002); Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton, NJ and Chichester, West Sussex: Princeton University Press 1996); Timothy Fitzgerald, 'Hinduism and the "world religion" fallacy', *Religion*, vol. 20, no. 2, 1990, 101–18; Ronald B. Inden, *Imagining India* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell 1990); Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and 'the Mythic East'* (London and New York: Routledge 1999).

18 Brian K. Pennington, *Was Hinduism Invented? Britons, Indians, and the Colonial Construction of Religion* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press 2005).

19 Torkel Brekke, 'The conceptual foundation of missionary Hinduism', *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1999, 203–14.

20 Rajeev Bhargava, 'The distinctiveness of Indian secularism', in Aakash Singh and Silika Mohapatra (eds), *Indian Political Thought: A Reader* (London and New York: Routledge 2010), 99–119.

21 Ashis Nandy, 'An anti-secularist manifesto', *India International Centre Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 1, 1995, 35–64 (36).

western form of secularism; its post-independence political landscape has witnessed continuous expressions of religiosity that are understood to be inherently egalitarian. Indeed, the problematic implementation of western concepts is precisely what Werner Menski means when he describes the 'serious methodological error ... to take everything "Hindu" or "Muslim" as religious, although it is a fact that since ancient times religious and cultural traditions have known the coexistence and connectedness of the religious and the secular.'²² Thus, the reaction of 'Hindu fundamentalists' (in Paxton's terminology) to the state as a 'secular' institution challenges religious coexistence rather than the practice of religion per se.

Furthermore, and on a related note, Paxton displays a misunderstanding of religion as 'an intense attachment' for 'Hindu fundamentalists'. As will be discussed throughout this article, Hindutva is not centred on religion (although Hinduism does play a significant role), but rather on how religion is *politicized* in such a way that being a Hindu generates belonging as an ethnonationalist identity. Indeed, the founder of Hindutva, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, stressed that religion was not even the most important element of Hindu identity; in his view, influenced by western theories of nationalism, identity was a combination of sacred territory, race and language.²³ Furthermore, we can interpret fundamentalism as a structure of authority in which lay people take on new religious roles in a power vacuum opened by modernity, rather than as a particular obsession with religiosity.²⁴ In this sense, fundamentalism can have local expressions based on contextual nuances, including, for example, Hindu, Islamic, Christian and Buddhist fundamentalisms, yet fundamentalism encompasses a universal appeal that lends itself to adoption in various exclusionary movements.

It is similarly important to clarify that, thus far, scholarship on Hindutva has largely been confined to the field of South Asian studies. This is due to the fact that Hindutva is viewed as unique to the subcontinent. Consequently, most scholars of Hindutva describe it as religious or as majoritarian nationalism (with the implication that it is a singular case) before detailing the intricacies of South Asian communal politics. Although such scholars do acknowledge the complexity of Hindutva as an ideology that deploys both cultural and ethnonational sentiments to develop its political agenda, their interventions are not situated within the broader scope of right-wing extremism as a global occurrence.

This article challenges the notion that Hindutva is an isolated ideological phenomenon. It does not disregard the circumstantial origin, evolution and adaptation of Hindutva, but it illustrates this development in relation to

22 Werner Menski, 'Assessing communal conflicts and Hindu fascism in India', *European Yearbook of Minority Issues*, vol. 8, 2009, 313–35 (313).

23 Christophe Jaffrelot, 'Introduction: The invention of an ethnic nationalism', in Christophe Jaffrelot (ed.), *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press 2007), 3–25 (15).

24 Torkel Brekke, *Fundamentalism: Prophecy and Protest in an Age of Globalization* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2012).

global ideological engagements, especially its early links with Italian Fascism and German Nazism. Despite the lack of any continuing relationships with European contemporaries following the Second World War and India's independence, this article argues that Hindutva in India parallels right-wing extremism in the West. While India's 'pluralism and diversity is [sic] not a postmodern phenomenon, it [sic] has ancient roots in the most distant layers of Indian cultures'²⁵ contemporary Hindutva actors express Muslim Otherness in a vocabulary similar to European right-wing extremists.

The following section details the historical evolution of Hindutva in relation to broader geopolitical dynamics. It demonstrates how its ideology and organization developed *vis-à-vis* European contemporaries such that these engagements were mutually significant at a fundamental level. Hindutva offers insights into alternative expressions of ethnonationalism, authoritarianism and chauvinism that can offer new perspectives on right-wing extremism as a global phenomenon.

Common origins

The intellectual journey of Hindutva began in the nineteenth century, emerging as an anti-colonial resistance movement against the British in India. Early ideologues— influenced by European scholars—claimed that Indian civilization was superior in its language (being the mother of Indo-European tongues) and its race (having Aryan origins).²⁶ In 1909, the British set up a system of separate electorates in which Hindus and Muslims could only vote for Hindu and Muslim candidates, respectively, in local elections. This divide-and-rule strategy helped to construct a polarized environment in which religiously framed identity politics would flourish throughout the century. Local Hindu elites across the country formed Hindu *sabhas* (associations) that culminated in the formation of the Hindu Mahasabha in 1914, which encouraged anti-British and anti-Muslim sentiment.²⁷ The idea of 'Hindu consciousness' was disseminated in printed materials that promoted a sense of national belonging based on Hindu symbols and practices.²⁸ Hindu identity was presented in sharp contrast to the spectre of the Muslim as a 'foreigner' and an 'invader', the internal enemy, who was complicit in the colonial project of the British, the external enemy.

From the movement's beginning, Hindutva ideologues sought connections with Fascist Italy. During the 1920s, Mussolini's regime had considerable

25 Menski, 'Assessing communal conflicts and Hindu fascism in India', 318.

26 Jaffrelot, 'Introduction', in Jaffrelot (ed.), *Hindu Nationalism*; Chetan Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism: Origin, Ideology, and Modern Myths* (Oxford and New York: Berg 2001).

27 Jaffrelot, 'Introduction', in Jaffrelot (ed.), *Hindu Nationalism*.

28 Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism*.

influence on them as regional newspapers in India spread news of the transformation of Italian society. The appeal of militarization in order to create order in society was seen as an attractive alternative to democracy, which was viewed as being too closely connected to British values.

Such ideas evolved through the growth of grassroots social movements, particularly the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS, National Patriotic Organization), established in 1925 by Keshav Baliram Hedgewar. Its founding ideological text by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, *Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu?*, first published in 1923, defines the nation according to categorically ethnic Hindu-ness and territorial belonging. Here, Savarkar 'assimilates territorial-cultural determinants into a concept of nationalism that stresses the ethnic and racial substance of the Hindu nation'.²⁹ Consequently, Hindus were united by 'a common heritage' that was bequeathed by a 'great civilization —our Hindu culture'.³⁰

In 1931, Hedgewar's mentor, Balakrishna Shivram Moonje, toured Europe and met with Mussolini during a long visit to Italy. Moonje observed how young Italian boys were recruited to attend weekly meetings that included participating in physical exercises and paramilitary drills, influencing what would later become the RSS's *modus operandi*. On his return to India, Moonje remarked how Hindus should emulate their Italian counterparts.³¹ To this day, the RSS runs *shakhas*, or cells, that volunteers join or are recruited into by their local chapters. Each *shakha* teaches physical drill exercises as well as education courses on (selective) ancient Hindu texts. Volunteers are indoctrinated into the Hindutva mission and are assigned responsibilities, such as assisting in social support services for the poor and needy who are the most vulnerable to Hindutva dogma.

By the end of the 1930s, Italian officials in India, such as the consulate in Bombay, established connections with Hindutva actors, including the recruitment of Indian students to learn Italian and imbibe Fascist propaganda.³² These transnational ideological and organizational links continued during the rise of Nazism in Germany. The Hindu Mahasabha openly supported the Third Reich, promoting an Aryan connection between Nazism and Hindutva.³³ Savarkar, then president of the Hindu Mahasabha and close affiliate of the RSS, made continuous reference in writings and speeches to Germany's treatment of the Jewish population as a model for India's

29 Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *Hitler's Priestess: Savitri Devi, the Hindu-Aryan Myth, and Neo-Nazism* (New York and London: New York University Press 1998), 50.

30 Veer Savarkar, quoted in Vinay Lal, 'Veer Savarkar: ideologue of Hindutva', available on the UCLA *Manas* website at www.southasia.ucla.edu/history-politics/hindu-rashtra/veer-savarkar-ideologue-hindutva (viewed 29 May 2020).

31 Casolari, 'Hindutva's foreign tie-up in the 1930s', 220.

32 Ibid., 222.

33 Goodrick-Clarke, *Hitler's Priestess*, 66; Eugene J. D'souza, 'Nazi propaganda in India', *Social Scientist*, vol. 28, no. 5/6, 2000, 77–90 (88).

Muslim 'problem'.³⁴ In response, the NSDAP (Nazi Party) paper, *Völkischer Beobachter*, featured Savarkar's approval of German occupation.³⁵

RSS leader Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar adopted a more extreme position, arguing that 'being a Hindu was a matter of race and blood, not only a matter of culture. In turn that was an idea which was strikingly similar to the racial myths elaborated in Germany, more than in Italy'.³⁶ Golwalkar's *We or Our Nationhood Defined* (1939) reflects this view:

The foreign races in Hindusthan [India] must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no ideas but those of the glorification of the Hindu race and culture, i.e., of the Hindu nation and must lose their separate existence to merge in the Hindu race, or may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu Nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment—not even citizen's rights. There is, at least should be, no other course for them to adopt.³⁷

Inspired by Hitler's actions in Austria and the annexation of the Sudetenland as embodying 'the true Nation concept', Golwalkar promoted race as being fundamental to the Hindu nation.³⁸ The vision of disciplined nationalism under a superior leader, whereby the nation is a collective unity, led to National Socialism being an attractive model for Hindutva ideologues who rejected British individualism.³⁹ Such racist attitudes led Golwalkar to withdraw his book from circulation in 1948, given the negative attention it had received—it was one of the most frequently quoted Hindutva texts—and the negative effect it had had on the RSS's reputation.

In Hindutva, representations of 'the people' are thus central to the relationship between belonging and the imagined community. Described as 'pure' and 'authentic', the idea of the *Volk*, with its Germanic origins, can be embraced in Hindutva, as can a focus on the Aryan past. Inspired by the emergence of race science as a field of enquiry in the colonial academy, as well as Orientalist philosophy, Aryanism developed as a 'racial theory of Indian civilization' based on primordialist and evolutionary conceptions of

34 Casolari, 'Hindutva's foreign tie-up in the 1930s', 224; D'souza, 'Nazi propaganda in India', 89.

35 Goodrick-Clarke, *Hitler's Priestess*, 59.

36 Casolari, 'Hindutva's foreign tie-up in the 1930s', 223–4.

37 Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar, *We or Our Nationhood Defined* (Nagpur: Bharat 1939), 62, quoted in Sangeeta Kamat and Biju Mathew, 'Mapping political violence in a globalized world: the case of Hindu nationalism', *Social Justice*, vol. 30, no. 3/93, 2000, 4–16 (9).

38 Golwalkar, *We or Our Nationhood Defined*, quoted in Goodrick-Clarke, *Hitler's Priestess*, 60.

39 Benjamin Zachariah, 'A voluntary *Gleichschaltung*? Perspectives from India towards a non-Eurocentric understanding of fascism', *Journal of Transcultural Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2014, 63–100 (82–3).

nationalism.⁴⁰ This did not result simply in a direct application of European nationalist thought, but in a process of sustained and complex intellectual engagement between colonial India and Europe.⁴¹ Indeed, 'the Third Reich embraced a range of pagan, esoteric, and Indo-Aryan religious doctrines that buttressed its racial, political, and ideological goals'; these included a 'belief in the ethno-religious connections between the lost Ario-Germanic civilization of the Thule (Atlantis) and an Indo-Aryan civilization centred in northern India'.⁴² Hindutva as a result maintains a continuing interest in connecting notions of *Arya dharma*, or the 'Hindu race', to European conceptualizations of the 'Aryan race' as a source of legitimization.⁴³ Its guiding premise advocates a civilizational superiority based on racial characteristics.

By extension, being a Hindu literally equates to *Blut und Boden*: 'a "natural" geography and sacred ties of blood'.⁴⁴ Hindutva depends on a territorial nation-state and the criterion for belonging is an ethnoreligious identity. Nostalgia for a mythic Vedic 'golden age' is a current running throughout the Hindutva narrative. By idolizing a golden past that existed prior to the Mughal Empire and the British Raj, Hindutva attempts to write a historiographical account that contradicts the 'shame' of foreign invasion. The grievances of the 'oppressed' stir up a wish for the restoration of the Hindu *rashtra*. Just as we might conceptualize the *Reich* as the site of authority and sovereignty emanating from the people, *rashtra* in Hindutva similarly connotes a sacred nation emerging from indigenous Hindu claims to a bounded geography.

Like the Italians, the German authorities engaged in a mutually beneficial relationship with Hindutva actors. Nazi agents translated *Mein Kampf* into Indian languages, conducted covert intelligence operations and radio broadcasts, and distributed pro-Nazi propaganda materials to sympathetic press agencies in India.⁴⁵ Hindutva writings circulated in German newspapers in exchange for articles favouring Germany's 'Jewish policy' in regional Indian newspapers.⁴⁶ Nazi propagandists and German businesses generously funded these newspapers, while others were owned by organizations, such as the Hindu Mahasabha, that openly advocated National Socialism for India and a 'Hindu Fuehrer'.⁴⁷

40 Thomas R. Trautmann, *Aryans and British India* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press 1997), xxiv.

41 Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism*, 3.

42 Eric Kurlander, *Hitler's Monsters: A Supernatural History of the Third Reich* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press 2017), 163, 184. See also Joanne Miyang Cho, Eric Kurlander and Douglas T. McGetchin (eds), *Transnational Encounters between Germany and India: Kindred Spirits in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London and New York: Routledge 2014).

43 Benjamin Zachariah, 'At the fuzzy edges of fascism: framing the Volk in India', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, vol. 38, no. 4, 2015, 639–55 (648).

44 Ibid., 653.

45 D'souza, 'Nazi propaganda in India', 78–9.

46 Casolari, 'Hindutva's foreign tie-up in the 1930s', 225.

47 D'souza, 'Nazi propaganda in India', 81–2.

At the institutional level, the Indisches Ausschuss (India Institute) was founded in Munich in 1928, under its parent organization, the Deutsche Akademie (German Academy). Between 1929 and 1938, the Indisches Ausschuss awarded scholarships to Indian students and funded *lektors* to teach German to students hoping to travel to Germany. The institute was incorporated into the NSDAP Auslands-Organisation and established Nazi cells in Calcutta that were active in promoting Nazi propaganda during the Third Reich.⁴⁸ Simultaneously, Indian exiles in Europe conspired with the German government by reporting to informants in India by means of private correspondence as well as in newspaper articles.⁴⁹

Although Italian Fascists attracted more recruits in India, Indo-German connections formed between Indian intellectuals and Nazi ideologues. Benoy Kumar Sarkar was one such figure who became a spokesman for a range of right-wing networks composed of scholars, ideologues and political activists, and who was an enthusiast of both Fascism and Nazism.⁵⁰ Intellectual and educator Taraknath Das also engaged in various ideological affiliations, including National Socialism for a brief period (although he favoured Italian Fascist policies as a model for India until the Second World War).⁵¹ Finally, Subhas Chandra Bose, a freedom fighter in India's independence movement, sought alliances with Nazi Germany,⁵² Italy and Japan during the war; he fled to Berlin in 1941 and founded the Indische Legion.⁵³

It is also worth describing in some detail the figure of Savitri Devi, who cultivated a Nazi-Aryan ideology during her time in India. Born Maximiani Portas in 1905, the French writer identified with her Greek ancestry early in life, idealizing its ancient civilization and Hellenism. Portas continued her intellectual journey towards Aryan racial philosophy in India, seeking 'truth' in the Hindu 'homeland' and adopting the name Savitri Devi. During the late 1930s, Devi encountered Hindutva individuals and groups, including Moonje, Hedgewar's RSS and Savarkar's Hindu Mahasabha, which greatly influencedr development of the Aryan myth.⁵⁴ Devi echoed Hindutva ideologues in the need to foster a Hindu consciousness in the wake of Muslim ascendancy and Hindu disadvantage. As such, she promoted Hindutva in

48 Zachariah, 'At the fuzzy edges of fascism', 647.

49 Zachariah, 'A voluntary *Gleichschaltung?*', 78.

50 Zachariah, 'At the fuzzy edges of fascism', 646.

51 Maria Framke, 'Shopping ideologies for independent India? Taraknath Das's engagement with Italian Fascism and German National Socialism', *Itinerario*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2016, 55–81.

52 Romain Hayes, *Subhas Chandra Bose in Nazi Germany: Politics, Intelligence and Propaganda 1941–43* (London: Hurst & Company 2011).

53 Bose had long held left-wing beliefs, having been involved in the radical politics of the Indian National Congress during his youth. He sought out Axis allies with the primary aim of overthrowing British rule on the subcontinent. Thus Bose's residence in Germany was fraught with strategic differences of opinion with the authorities.

54 Goodrick-Clarke, *Hitler's Priestess*, 45.

order to create 'a sense of shared history, culture, and an awareness of India as one's Holy Land'.⁵⁵ In *A Warning to the Hindus* (1939), Devi stressed the achievement of 'Hindudom' through a cultivated, unified nationalism rooted in Aryan civilization. Military resistance and self-defence, she argued, should be employed against the threat of 'Mohammedanization'.⁵⁶ In 1938, Devi met Asit Krishna Mukherji, editor of *The New Mercury*, a National Socialist magazine supported by the German consulate in Calcutta. The two married and carried out espionage on US and British officials for the Axis powers during the war.⁵⁷ Following the war, Hindutva did not feature in Devi's life. However, her writings, such as *The Lightning and the Sun* (1958), which claimed that Hitler was a reincarnation of the god Vishnu, have continued to inspire neo-Nazi supporters and circles.⁵⁸

Thus, European and South Asian political spheres were intertwined, so that 'the directionality of narratives of travel and absorption of fascist ideas ... [was] not from Europe to elsewhere, but multilinear and multilaterally invented.'⁵⁹ Fascism and Nazism were not European products available for export but continuous cycles of ideological and, at times, mobilized engagement.⁶⁰ Hindutva ideologues often incorporated elements of Italian and German models that were attractive but, to some extent, already present in India.⁶¹ At the same time, intellectuals in Europe engaged with Hindutva to further their ideological development.

Post-colonial Hindutva

The withdrawal of the British in 1947 marked the partition of the subcontinent into modern-day India and Pakistan (and later Bangladesh), a Hindu-majority nation and a Muslim-majority nation, respectively. Although the RSS avoided taking part in the independence movement struggle in the previous years—probably for fear of being banned by the British—activists played a major role in the ensuing Hindu-Muslim communal riots during the partition. While Hindu-Muslim communal violence is evident throughout India's

55 Ibid., 51.

56 Savitri Devi, *A Warning to the Hindus* (Calcutta 1939), available online at www.mourningtheancient.com/hindus.pdf (viewed 29 May 2020).

57 Goodrick-Clarke, *Hitler's Priestess*, 67–74.

58 An online archive collection of her writings is managed by Dr R. G. Fowler, a pseudonym for white nationalist and *Counter-Currents* editor Greg Johnson.

59 Zachariah, 'At the fuzzy edges of fascism', 641.

60 Similarly, we should look to broader global engagements with various ideologies of mobilization. The emergence of 'cosmopolitan thought zones' in colonial South Asia, for instance, looked to consolidate transnational intellectual configurations of anti-colonial resistance beyond the mimicry of western revolutionary concepts. For more, see Sugata Bose and Kris Manjapra (eds), *Cosmopolitan Thought Zones: South Asia and the Global Circulation of Ideas* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2010).

61 Zachariah, 'A voluntary *Gleichschaltung*?', 89–91.

history, it was central to the founding of the Indian nation-state, which witnessed its greatest levels of violence prior to, during and immediately following the partition. Hence:

What appears as Hindu fascism or fundamentalism to outsiders may have many other dimensions than simply religious traditionalism and deadly desires to exterminate the religious 'other'. It is certainly partly concerned with the protection of an imagined and actual motherland against neighbouring others that claimed their territory in the horrible struggles of 1947, a troubled memory that haunts India and Pakistan.⁶²

Hindutva's aim to restore *Akhand Bharat* (Undivided India) includes the recovery of lost territory from the past. Following the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi in 1948 by former RSS member Nathuram Godse, who detested Gandhi for his call for 'Hindu-Muslim unity' and for ceding territory that became Pakistan, the RSS was temporarily proscribed as an organization. Hindutva actors have justified Godse's act of violence as an expression of ethnonational hopes. The European extreme right has left behind a deep legacy of violence; in Italy, for example, 'the street violence that accompanied Fascism's rise to power served to reinforce the idea that it was about action, not words'.⁶³ Right-wing extremist movements have resorted to violent behaviour as an acceptable means of expressing a radical ideological message and realizing their vision of society. 'Saffron terror', the term used to designate the violence in India committed by Hindutva actors,⁶⁴ on the other hand, enacts a majoritarian nationalism that is inseparable from organized violence when public space is designated as Hindu space, both physically and in the national imagination.⁶⁵ Thus, while European right-wing extremism is arguably confined to a fringe phenomenon, Hindutva has been visible in nation-building and majoritarian identity in India.

The 1960s and 1970s witnessed a widespread growth in political activities as the RSS expanded its position as a parent organization that spawned the Sangh Parivar, or family of organizations in the Hindutva fold.⁶⁶ There are numerous affiliates of the Sangh, ranging from extreme and violent paramilitary groups, including youth wings (such as Bajrang Dal), to 'cultural'

62 Menski, 'Assessing communal conflicts and Hindu fascism in India', 316.

63 Davies and Lynch (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Fascism and the Far Right*, 106.

64 Guy Elecheroth and Stephen Reicher, *Identity, Violence and Power: Mobilising Hatred, Demobilising Dissent* (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2017).

65 Dibyesh Anand, 'The violence of security: Hindu nationalism and the politics of representing "the Muslim" as a danger', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 94, no. 379, 2005, 203–15; Rupal Oza, 'The geography of Hindu right-wing violence in India', in Derek Gregory and Allan Pred (eds), *Violent Geographies: Fear, Terror, and Political Violence* (London and New York: Routledge 2007), 153–73.

66 Suhas Palshikar, 'The BJP and Hindu nationalism: centrist politics and majoritarian impulses', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, vol. 38, no. 4, 2015, 719–35 (729); Oza, 'The geography of Hindu right-wing violence in India', 159–60.

organizations (such as Vishwa Hindu Parishad), charity-based non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (such as Sewa Bharati), trade unions (such as Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh), farmers' unions (such as Bharatiya Kisan Sangh) and student organizations (such as Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad). Female-only organizations (such as Rashtriya Sevika Samiti and Sadhvi Shakti Parishad) represent women as heroic mothers and wives/daughters of the nation. These affiliate organizations share the vision of Hindutva ideology, often creating local alliances and volunteer networks.

In the 1980s and 1990s, in an attempt to recruit mass support, the Sangh organized campaigns that disseminated merchandise featuring Hindu symbols, such as stickers and calendars, which were widely popular and visibly linked Hindu images with Hindutva.⁶⁷ The 1990s also witnessed Hindutva actors seeking formal political power in the electoral arena.⁶⁸ It is during this time that Hindutva first came to mainstream prominence as a movement that sought to institutionalize Hindi as the official language of government and push for the revival of Sanskrit.⁶⁹ Similarly, popular cultural productions, particularly films,⁷⁰ represented Muslims as an enemy of Hindu majoritarian identity, instilling into public consciousness the relevance of Hindutva tropes and narratives.⁷¹ The rise in lower-middle-class support for Hindutva in the 1990s helped to cultivate a space for Hindutva actors to tap into this sentiment decades later.⁷² Thus, in the 1990s, Hindutva slowly became mainstream, irrespective of the party in central government.

Throughout, the RSS consistently remains at the centre of the Hindutva family as its ideological nucleus.⁷³ Although officially non-political, it operates through a complex web of networks, each reproducing and sustaining Hindutva in two important ways: first, through an 'elaborate institutional edifice' in civil society; and, second, by operating a 'dual identity', either with a highly visible, political profile or through voluntary, grassroots services.⁷⁴ By embedding the concept of Hindutva across different sectors of society, the RSS uses its supervising influence in order to conflate the cultural, religious and political aspects of Hindu identity.⁷⁵

67 Oza, 'The geography of Hindu right-wing violence in India', 160.

68 Palshikar, 'The BJP and Hindu nationalism', 730.

69 Manisha Basu, *The Rhetoric of Hindu India: Language and Urban Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2016), 12.

70 Sanjeev Kumar HM, 'Constructing the nation's enemy: *Hindutva*, popular culture and the Muslim "other" in Bollywood cinema', *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 3, 2013, 458–69.

71 Madhavi Murthy, 'Representing *Hindutva*: nation, religion and masculinity in Indian popular cinema, 1990 to 2003', *Popular Communication*, vol. 7, no. 4, 2009, 267–81.

72 Palshikar, 'The BJP and Hindu nationalism', 730–1.

73 Chetan Bhatt and Parita Mukta, 'Hindutva in the West: mapping the antinomies of diaspora nationalism', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2000, 407–41 (414).

74 Kamat and Mathew, 'Mapping political violence in a globalized world', 11.

75 Arvind Rajagopal, *Politics after Television: Hindu Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Public in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2001).

Compared to European right-wing extremism, Hindutva in India proliferates its vision on a grander scale. Key to its success is the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party, a manifestation of how Hindutva operates in party politics. Although Sangh affiliates are a broad spectrum of grassroots movements, the BJP is the only organization that contests elections as a political party. Since its founding, the BJP first enjoyed success at the ballot box in local elections. In 2014, however, the party secured its largest electoral victory in India's political history with a majority coalition in the national parliament. The following details the evolution of the BJP and how it truly 'mainstreamed' Hindutva under Narendra Modi.

Mainstreaming Hindutva

An affiliate of the Sangh, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS, Indian People's Party) was founded shortly after independence in 1951 to counter the centre-left secularist Indian National Congress. The BJS rejected universalism as promoted by Gandhian ideals of pluralism and diversity, and advocated ethnic nationalism instead. From the late 1960s, the BJS campaigned on a xenophobic platform, calling for minorities to 'Indianize' and assimilate into a purportedly 'Hindian' nation. However, it had to compromise in order to survive elections either by adopting a moderate stance as a patriotic, populist party, or by appealing to a militant sense of aggressive Hindutva. The BJS faced an 'adaptation dilemma': accordingly, 'to become accepted by the mainstream, and prevent repression by the state, [extreme-right parties] need to moderate, but to satisfy their hard-core members, and to keep a clear profile, they need to stay extreme'.⁷⁶ This eventually led to the relaunch of the party as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party) in 1980, favouring the former, more moderate approach, but continuing to assert that India is a Hindu nation. The BJP today affirms 'Hindu identity and culture [as] being the mainstay of the Indian nation and of Indian society'.⁷⁷

Yet, the 'adaptation dilemma' has remained a key tension within BJP operations. In 2002, a significant event drew international attention to India, namely the Gujarat riots, in which Hindu-Muslim violence lasting several weeks resulted in thousands of (overwhelmingly Muslim) deaths in the state. International agencies such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have documented atrocious human rights violations, including rape and torture. These reports describe the violence as a pogrom and demonstrate the complicity of state officials, including then BJP Chief Minister Narendra

76 Cas Mudde, 'Conclusion: defending democracy and the extreme right', in Eatwell and Mudde (eds), *Western Democracies and the New Extreme Right*, 193–212 (193).

77 Bharatiya Janata Party, 'BJP history', available via the WayBackMachine at <https://web.archive.org/web/20190214065025/http://www.bjp.org/about-the-party> (last viewed live 14 February 2019).

Modi, who worked alongside Sangh affiliates to orchestrate and plan attacks well in advance. By framing Muslims as a threat to the Hindu collective, ‘the maintenance of communal tensions … is essential for the maintenance of militant Hindu nationalism, but also has uses for other political parties, organizations, and even the state and central governments’.⁷⁸ State-sponsored violence during the riots assisted in the construction of Hindutva majoritarian nationalism. Investigations by the Indian government have pardoned state officials despite evidence of complicity. Narendra Modi—a leading RSS activist in his youth—was subsequently banned from entering the United Kingdom, the United States and several European countries for his administration’s involvement in the riots.

Except for participating in the coalition national government of 1998–2004, the BJP only succeeded in local and state elections in post-independence India. In 2014, it once again entered government, this time securing a stunning outright majority. Its key ingredient for victory was the former Chief Minister of Gujarat. Throughout the election campaign, Modi exploited a populist narrative to secure mass support across Indian society. Positioning himself as an outsider with humble origins and a magnetic personality, Modi’s tactic of attacking the political and media establishment was a strategy to ‘present himself as an *aam admi*, a common man’,⁷⁹ often the “‘victim’ of an elite “news media conspiracy”’.⁸⁰ He constructed an image as the voice of the people, as the authentic India. Modi’s spectacular example of a ‘populist zeitgeist’ accused the incumbent Indian National Congress for decades of dynastic politics, promising a new democratic future of transparency, accountability and accessibility.⁸¹

At the same time, the BJP constructed a ‘civic zeitgeist’ by mobilizing along recurring themes of a Muslim ‘threat’ to the Hindu majority, creating a narrative to further Hindu insecurity.⁸² In Hinduism, the goddess Durga combats evils threatening the sanctity of good. Within Hindutva, Durga is personified as the nation in the form of *Bharat Mata* (Mother India). Islam is framed as a harbinger of evil to the Hindu nation. Muslim men are viewed as instinctively fanatic terrorists rooted in Islam as a violent religion.⁸³ There is likewise an

78 Paul R. Brass, *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India* (Seattle: University of Washington Press 2003), 9.

79 Christophe Jaffrelot, ‘The Modi-centric BJP 2014 election campaign: new techniques and old tactics’, *Contemporary South Asia*, vol. 23, no. 2, 2015, 151–66 (159).

80 Paula Chakravarty and Srirupa Roy, ‘Mr Modi goes to Delhi: mediated populism and the 2014 Indian elections’, *Television and New Media*, vol. 16, no. 4, 2015, 311–22 (316).

81 See Cas Mudde, ‘The populist zeitgeist’, *Government and Opposition*, vol. 39, no. 4, 2004, 541–63.

82 Daphne Halikiopoulou, Steven Mock and Sofia Vasilopoulou, ‘The civic zeitgeist: nationalism and liberal values in the European radical right’, *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2012, 107–27.

83 Rajagopal, *Politics after Television*; Anuj Nadadur, ‘The “Muslim threat” and the Bharatiya Janata Party’s rise to power’, *Peace and Democracy in South Asia*, vol. 2, no. 1/2, 2006, 88–110.

attempt to frame Muslim masculinity through hypersexualized and barbaric tropes (reinforcing Orientalist portrayals), especially against 'vulnerable' Hindu women. Claims of 'love jihad' (a familiar refrain among right-wing extremists in the West), whereby Muslim men falsely declare their love to Hindu women in order to convert them to Islam, is a constant anxiety.⁸⁴ The Hindu woman symbolizes daughters of *Bharat Mata* and consequently, an attack on a Hindu woman is an attack on the nation itself. Muslim men, according to this logic, are designated as instinctively anti-national. On the other hand, Hindutva promotes an image of Hindu masculinity as assertive, protective and patriarchal. Hindu deities, such as Rre transformed from pensive and peaceful figures to chauvinistic warriors. Such 'masculine Hinduism' stems from a reaction to the effeminate representation of Hindu men during the colonial era.⁸⁵ Hindutva's vision of men as proud warrior-like figures is embedded in a narrative of survival.

The BJP not only projects Muslims as an internal enemy but as an external enemy as well. It openly stokes fear of the 'illegal' migration of labourers from Muslim-majority Bangladesh—as encouraged by the Congress Party—to advance its agenda. Such rhetoric is far from unusual for right-wing extremist parties in the West that have combined anti-establishment populism with a deeply rooted ethnonationalist xenophobia.⁸⁶ The structural transformations in Europe that emerged from globalization following the Second World War have been cathartic in furthering right-wing extremism; changes in cultural, linguistic, economic and political spheres have resulted in a condition of insecurity and instability in a world of rampant change. By highlighting the loss of industries, employment, cultural lifestyle and political representation, European right-wing extremist parties respond to a perceived disappearing ethno-national identity. This manifests as opposition to immigration in order to preserve cultural homogeneity, as well as cultural protectionism.⁸⁷ The idea that minorities 'steal' jobs and disrupt 'values' capitalizes on an anxiety that

84 Charu Gupta, 'Hindu women, Muslim men: love jihad and conversions', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 44, no. 51, 2009, 13–15.

85 Sikata Banerjee, *Make Me a Man! Masculinity, Hinduism, and Nationalism in India* (Albany: State University of New York Press 2005).

86 Jens Rydgren, 'The sociology of the radical right', *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2007, 241–62.

87 Don Kalb, 'Introduction: headlines of nation, subtexts of class: working-class populism and the return of the repressed in neoliberal Europe', in Don Kalb and Gábor Halmai (eds), *Headlines of Nation, Subtexts of Class: Working-Class Populism and the Return of the Repressed in Neoliberal Europe* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books 2011), 1–36; Art, *Inside the Radical Right*; Ellinas, *The Media and the Far Right in Western Europe*; Mabel Berezin, *Illiberal Politics in Neoliberal Times: Culture, Security and Populism in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2009); Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007); Carter, *The Extreme Right in Western Europe*; Hans-Georg Betz, 'Contemporary right-wing radicalism in Europe', *Contemporary European History*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1999, 299–316.

views immigrants as a threat to ethnonationalist identity.⁸⁸ Just as right-wing extremist parties in Europe employ a reactionary discourse of 'us versus them', seizing on ethnonational identity as a shared defence against fear of the unknown (namely the foreigner), the BJP similarly advocates the defence of national values against the threat of foreign invasion, particularly Muslim migrants deemed a threat to these values. Importantly, such threats need not actually endanger ethnonational identity if they are perceived as doing so. In turn, the centre-left political elite, that is, the Congress Party, are targeted for neglecting the 'common' values of the people.

Throughout the 2014 campaign, Modi subtly linked Hindutva with citizenship. He maintained ties to Hindu socio-cultural practices and rituals by merging them with voting behaviour. According to Christophe Jaffrelot: 'He associated himself with Hindu symbols and personalities. Besides wearing saffron clothes in some of the most important occasions of the election campaign, Modi visited many Hindu sacred places before his meetings.'⁸⁹ By vernacularizing the language of Hindutva, 'nation' and 'citizenship' shifted meaning to include localized narratives conflating Hindu symbols with political demands through an everyday brand of 'saffron politics'.⁹⁰ Such expressions of Modi's ethno-religiosity constituted a basis for belonging, as opposed to the corrupt, secular political and media establishment.

Despite this newfound anti-establishment message, the BJP had historically attracted upper-caste white-collar workers, professionals, merchants and other middle- to upper-class groups by weaving an exclusionary narrative built on in-group differences:⁹¹

The political culture of the Hindu middle class is largely imbued with ethno-religious connotations. This development has resulted from the need to compensate with some religiosity for an increasingly pervasive form of materialism after years of double-digit growth rates. But it reflects also the influence of years of Hindutva politics and the fear of Islam(ism), especially after the terrorist attacks of the last decade. The middle class tend to use its new financial means to protect itself from the influence of outsiders ... [reflecting] the uneasy way in which the middle class relates to others, including religious minorities.⁹²

88 Rydgren, 'The sociology of the radical right'; Roger Eatwell, 'Ten theories of the extreme right', in Peter H. Merkl and Leonard Weinberg (eds), *Right-Wing Extremism in the Twenty-First Century* (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass 2003), 47–73.

89 Jaffrelot, 'The Modi-centric BJP 2014 election campaign', 160.

90 Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton, NJ and Chichester, West Sussex: Princeton University Press 1999); Rajagopal, *Politics after Television*.

91 This is likely due to the fact that the elite and the intelligentsia comprised the BJP's founding leadership.

92 Christophe Jaffrelot, 'The class element in the 2014 Indian election and the BJP's success with special reference to the Hindi belt', *Studies in Indian Politics*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2015, 19–38 (24).

With Modi's victory, however, one cannot simply situate BJP supporters as solely upper-caste and urban-based. The BJP's success can partly be attributed to the diversification of the party. In 2014 it reached beyond its traditional demographic to a group with rising socio-economic means in the wake of India's neoliberal globalization: the neo-middle class. For the neo-middle class, the BJP, and Modi in particular, represent an opportunity for upward mobility through simultaneous material achievement and communal identity.⁹³ This change in BJP support reflects how Hindutva can manifest as a fluid ideology that appeals to a wide audience in contemporary India: as a frame for economic neoliberalism, while also espousing a religio-mythic narrative. This multifaceted approach ensured a growing, sustainable collective identity that normalized Hindutva within Indian society.⁹⁴

The 'mainstreaming' of Hindutva⁹⁴ can be compared to the 'mainstreaming' in the West of right-wing extremist views that are initiated on the margin or fringe and spread to political parties through practices, discourses and frames.⁹⁵ This phenomenon in India has resulted in a strategic coalition of religious groups and the neo-middle classes, described as a new cultural identitarian political movement that emerged out of the neoliberal political economy.⁹⁶ Thus, even though Hindutva began to be mainstream in the 1990s, under Modi it is arguably more widely accepted across all socio-economic classes in Indian society. Yet the BJP may be far from consolidating its position as a mainstream party for two reasons. First, it cannot dissolve the Hindutva agenda that is salient to its core group of supporters eager for its implementation in government. Second, the BJP remains part of a larger network of Hindutva organizations operating in the political milieu.⁹⁷ Nonetheless, the mainstreaming of Hindutva in India today has allowed for expressions of an exclusionary nationalist discourse previously confined to the fringe.

What then are the implications of Hindutva dominating Indian party politics during the current Modi government as well as for the *longue durée* of Indian society? Since the 2014 election, a clear tension marks the BJP's strategy to appear inclusive in order to maintain its electoral success while continuing

93 Ibid.; Palshikar, 'The BJP and Hindu nationalism', 732.

94 Christophe Jaffrelot and Ingrid Therwath, 'The Sangh Parivar and the Hindu diaspora in the West: what kind of "long-distance nationalism"?' *International Political Sociology*, vol. 1, no. 3, 2007, 278–95.

95 Hainsworth, *The Extreme Right in Western Europe*; Aristotle Kallis, 'Far-right "contagion" or a failing "mainstream"? How dangerous ideas cross borders and blur boundaries', *Democracy and Security*, vol. 9, no. 3, 2013, 221–46; Tjitske Akkerman, Sarah L. de Lange and Matthijs Rooduijn, *Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties in Western Europe: Into the Mainstream?* (London and New York: Routledge 2016).

96 Pradeep Chhibber, 'Who voted for the Bharatiya Janata Party?', *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 27, no. 4, 1997, 631–39; Sebastian Schwecke, *New Cultural Identitarian Political Movements in Developing Societies: The Bharatiya Janata Party* (London and New York: Routledge 2011).

97 Palshikar, 'The BJP and Hindu nationalism'.

to promote Hindutva as its ideological legacy.⁹⁸ Despite an overt effort not to overemphasize Hindutva, however, the party has thus far failed to take a centrist approach.⁹⁹ In some states, the BJP has implemented a Hindutva agenda in the cultural and educational spheres (in school texts, for example),¹⁰⁰ as well as cow protection campaigns.¹⁰¹ Other acts include

attacks on places of worship, delegitimising of inter-faith marriages, privileging of Hindu symbols and identities, equating of Hindu identity with national identity and, perhaps most dramatically and contentiously, challenging the right to propagate religion by running a campaign that seeks to convert Muslim and Christian families 'back' to Hinduism.¹⁰²

Also widespread is the censorship of journalists and academics critical of the government, many of whom are subsequently branded as 'antinational'.¹⁰³ Furthermore, the BJP government has renamed cities, streets and airports after Hindu figures,¹⁰⁴ and controversy ensued when flight crew on Air India were asked to proclaim *Jai Hind* (Long Live India) at the end of every flight announcement in order to promote the 'mood of the nation'.¹⁰⁵

The BJP government has also faced controversies around ministerial appointments, first with Gajendra Chauhan and later Anupam Kher as chair of the Governing Council of the Film and Television Institute of India within the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. The appointments of Chauhan and Kher, both of whom lack the necessary professional experience for the role, were viewed as an attempt by the BJP to introduce an ideological agenda in official government cinema documentation and education.¹⁰⁶ But perhaps the most controversial figure in the Modi-led BJP is Yogi Adityanath,

98 Ibid., 721.

99 Ibid., 727.

100 Shruti Jain, 'Rajasthan textbooks revised to glorify Modi government', 16 June 2017, available on *The Wire* website at <https://thewire.in/education/rajasthan-textbooks-revised-glorify-modi-government> (viewed 22 May 2020).

101 Human Rights Watch, 'Violent cow protection in India', 18 February 2019, available on the *Human Rights Watch* website at www.hrw.org/report/2019/02/18/violent-cow-protection-india/vigilante-groups-attack-minorities (viewed 2 June 2020).

102 Palshikar, 'The BJP and Hindu nationalism', 728.

103 Maya Prabhu, 'Is free speech under threat in Modi's India?', 3 August 2017, available on the *Al Jazeera* website at www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/07/free-speech-threat-modi-india-170712131837718.html (viewed 2 June 2020).

104 Rizwan Ahmad, 'Renaming India: saffronisation of public spaces', 12 October 2018, available on the *Al Jazeera* website at www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/renaming-india-saffronisation-public-spaces-181012113039066.html (viewed 2 June 2020).

105 Vanessa Romo, 'Air India crew directed to "Hail the Motherland" after every announcement', 5 March 2019, available on the *NPR* website at www.npr.org/2019/03/05/700512781/air-india-crews-directed-to-hail-the-motherland-after-every-announcement (viewed 2 June 2020).

106 Not unwarranted considering parallels with the making of Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia*, her propaganda film glorifying the 1936 Berlin Olympics.

who was elected Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh in 2017. A Hindutva hardliner, Adityanath has at times criticized the BJP for diluting Hindutva ideology, while inciting violence against Muslims and making derogatory remarks about women and homosexuality.¹⁰⁷

The landslide re-election of Modi and the BJP in 2019, with an even greater majority than in 2014, signalled that Hindutva was no longer in the process of becoming but *had become* mainstream. In short, it has achieved a degree of normalcy and legitimacy that is not merely imposed but widely supported. Indeed, the government's recent action in revoking Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, which gives special status to the region of Jammu and Kashmir—an area disputed by India, Pakistan and China—represents the Modi administration's fulfilment of a Hindutva ambition to restore *Akhand Bharat*.¹⁰⁸ Hindutva is ultimately the outcome of a continuing trend in Indian society that will likely persist in the future.

A universal framework for right-wing extremism

This article fills a lacuna in the scholarship concerning right-wing extremism by situating within it the ideological, historical and organizational dimensions of Hindutva. It begins by highlighting a theoretical and empirical gap in studies of right-wing extremism as largely limited to European and North American case studies, and argues that western scholars have misrepresented Hindutva in India as a type of religious extremism. This interpretation stems from misunderstanding Hindutva as a religious phenomenon rather than as the politicization of religion in which being Hindu is equated with an ethno-nationalist identity. On the other hand, South Asian scholars tend to analyse Hindutva as an isolated case, rarely looking beyond regional studies for comparison.

On this basis, this article is an attempt to universalize the phenomenon of right-wing extremism. It does not disregard the circumstantial origin, evolution and adaptation of Hindutva, but illustrates this development as being mutually intertwined with Italian Fascism and German Nazism. While Hindutva ideologues incorporated elements of European extreme-right models for its *modus operandi*, intellectuals in Europe, in turn, engaged with Hindutva actors to further their own ideological development. By situating Hindutva in relation to the European context, transgressing a geographical boundary, its right-wing extremist ideology can be perceived as having a transnational

107 See Christophe Jaffrelot, 'India's democracy at 70: toward a Hindu state?', *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 28, no. 3, 2017, 52–63 (58–9).

108 Kapil Komireddi, 'The Kashmir crisis isn't about territory. It's about a Hindu victory over Islam', 16 August 2019, available on the *Washington Post* website at www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/the-kashmir-crisis-isnt-about-territory-its-about-a-hindu-victory-over-islam/2019/08/16/ab84ffe2-bf79-11e9-a5c6-1e74f7ec4a93_story.html (viewed 2 June 2020).

nature. Ideological and, at times, physical connections occurred within a continuous cycle of engagements between European and South Asian political milieux.

Following India's independence, the scale of communal riots that accompanied the founding of India as a Hindu-majority nation and Pakistan as a Muslim-majority nation led Hindutva actors to justify violence as furthering an ethnonational claim for *Akhand Bharat* (Undivided India), the restoration of lost territory. As such, violence against the threat of Otherness became a legitimate means of preserving the 'motherland'. The evolution of Hindutva in postcolonial India parallels European theories of ethnonationalism (that is, geography, race, religion, culture, language) for justifying ethnic superiority over 'foreigners', namely Muslims, who are viewed as 'invaders' of the 'pure' Hindu nation and must be eradicated or 'converted' back to Hinduism. In European countries, the evolution of right-wing extremism after the Second World War has similarly relied on defining an Other, primarily through the racialization of difference. By projecting individual fear of an unknown 'foreign' entity as a national fear, Hindutva and European right-wing extremism simultaneously formulate such threats, whether actual or perceived, as a danger to collective identity. Yet, whereas European right-wing extremism was confined to the political fringe, Hindutva has been visible in nation-building and majoritarian identity in India.

Lastly, this article highlights the 'mainstreaming' effect of right-wing extremism from the fringe to electoral politics by showcasing the emergence of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the only political party with Hindutva as its official ideology. The 'adaptation dilemma' of the BJP has not been without its pitfalls, however, as evident during the 2002 Gujarat riots that revealed how state-sponsored violence assisted in the construction of Hindutva majoritarian nationalism. Thereafter, the BJP only succeeded in local and state elections until 2014, when the party secured an outright majority in the national election with its candidate and now prime minister, Narendra Modi. Modi's campaign galvanized mass support among the Indian populace by projecting an image of the 'authentic' Indian nation. It importantly did so by positioning Muslims as a threat to the Hindu majority, eliciting a narrative of cultural protectionism against the threatening Other, similar to narratives employed by European right-wing extremist parties. Under Modi's government, the success of the BJP as a political party with an overt Hindutva agenda has not only mainstreamed exclusionary nationalism at the ballot box, but has also allowed for expressions of Otherness to become increasingly acceptable in a historically diverse society. The marking of Hindus as 'insiders' and other religious groups as 'outsiders' has constructed Hindutva as synonymous with Indian nationalism.

This article thus provides not only an overview of Hindutva, but also an analytical contribution towards how we might conceptualize right-wing extremism in its transnational manifestations. Such a theoretical intervention is timely given the current wave of global right-wing extremism in western

societies as well as its becoming a powerful force in the world's largest (postcolonial) democracy.

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Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh

BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO HSS

THE LONDON STORY

April 2020

This is a preliminary report curating publicly available sources on some of the flagged issues with HSS. Members of Foundation The London Story has taken utmost care in verifying the quality of the sources, however, we do not assume any liability towards claims made in the secondary literature that is quoted in the report. The report is freely available for further research and investigations.

You can reach us at info@thelondonstory.org

Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh

Introduction

The Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (**HSS**) describes itself as “a voluntary, non-profit, social and cultural organization [that] aims to organize the Hindu community in order to preserve, practice and promote Hindu ideals and values” [1]. It is currently active and receiving funds from 45 countries and boasts 750 branches [2]. Each national HSS is autonomous, though there are global coordinators [3]. HSS is very active in the English speaking world and problems have been flagged in UK, USA and Canada as summarized below. In Europe, in addition to UK, branches can be found in Germany (<http://hssgermany.org/>), Norway (<https://www.hssnorway.org/>), Denmark (<https://www.facebook.com/hssdenmark>), Finland (<https://www.facebook.com/HSSFinland/>) and so on. It is common knowledge that HSS is closely associated with Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (**RSS**), an extreme Hindu-nationalist group in India. While in India, RSS claims HSS as its international wing, HSS abroad usually ostentatiously distances itself from RSS.

While the far-right nature of RSS is well documented, HSS is usually careful to publicly maintain a veneer of moderation and to distance itself from RSS. Below, we first list the issues flagged concerning HSS, and then evidence of HSS-RSS equivalence, finishing with a brief note on presence of HSS in Germany.

Part-I: Flagged Problems

1. Hate speech

Hate speech has been flagged in multiple occasions, the most striking being those revealed by a sting operation by ITV in UK.

UK	2015	A sting operation footage showed a teacher on camera making anti-Muslim and Christian remarks to students at a camp organised HSS	4,5
Canada	2020	HSS member removed from school board for hate speech.	10,11
USA	2017	A general overview of hate-speech by extreme Hindu groups	12

From the UK sting operation, example of teacher’s words: *“To destroy the Hindu history is the secret conspiracy of the Christians.”* and *“You see, when it comes to Islam, they are the world’s worst religion and they don’t have common sense to find out what is humanity.”* [6,7]. In the aftermath of the same incidence, the UK Charity Commission warns “RSS must have no influence or control over the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS)” [8]. In the Canadian case, an uptick of general hate speech in the social media discourse was reported [10,11]. No specific report of flagged hate-speech in the USA could be located on the internet, but general reports on how far-right extreme Hindu groups generate hate in the USA is documented [12,13]. An important document comes from academic and historian of ancient Indian history, Prof. Audrey Truschke, who reports how she has been subject to anti-Semitic insults from the Hindu far-right, however this was not explicitly tied to HSS [14].

2. Interference in elections:

Right-wing and far-right Hindu groups have reportedly tried to influence elections in all three countries, with varying success.

UK	2019	HSS, through a sister organization called Overseas Friends of BJP UK, tried to influence the Indian diaspora to vote in a particular way in the last UK general elections.	15,16
Canada	2019	In July 2019 Canadian intelligence officials sounded the same alarm: India's ruling Hindu nationalist BJP was influencing the Canadian election through the diaspora.	16
USA	2019/ 2020	Tulsi Gabbard, the ex-aspiring democratic candidate and one-time potential running mate for democratic nominee Joe Biden, was openly supported by the right-wing Hindu diaspora.	17
		RSS/HSS financing Preston Kulkarni's campaign for US Congress in Houston, Texas RSS Funds Padma Kuppa for Michigan State House of Representatives (second term)	27,28

The interference of Hindu groups in the recent national elections in Canada and UK were reported. It typically consists of the Indian diaspora trying to persuade their compatriots to switch their traditional allegiance on the basis of perceived proximity of the different political parties to the ruling BJP party in India – the strategy was reportedly not very successful though it did diminish margins in some places [15]. The involvement in the US elections was more overt – with open support – vocal and financial - for a specific candidate [17]. Similar financing is going on for upcoming house elections [27,28]. Ref. [27] explains the quid-pro-quid nature of such funding, giving example of how RSS-funded politicians facilitated the rehabilitation of Modi in the USA after he was banned following the Gujarat riots.

3. Infiltration of institutions in the host country:

Canada	2018	Peel regional police department invited a HSS functionary to participate in a Hindu festival organised by them.	18
USA	2020	Carmen police department came under scrutiny after hosting HSS	19, 20

The two examples cited here shows how HSS tries to penetrate into institutions in the host country to gain legitimacy.

4. **Improper use of funds**

HSS and its sister organizations often collect funds, ostentatiously for charity. But misuse of such funds have been widely reported.

UK	2002	The Charity commission, UK began looking into complaints about HSS and its finances	21,22
USA	2002	Not only individual but also corporate funding was reported to have been used to incite hate and violence in India	23

The money raised in the wake of earthquake in Gujarat was reported to have been misused for far-right political activities, some reports going a far as to link it directly to the infamous Gujarat riots which took place right afterwards. One report says: “*The extremist RSS's front organizations have received millions of pounds raised from the British public. These funds were collected by the Leicester-based registered charity, Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS) and its fundraising arm Sewa International*” [22]. Very similar allegation emerged for funding from USA “... receiving millions of dollars from corporates in the United States to instigate communal violence and propagate the Hindutva ideology in Gujarat and other parts of the country. This was exposed by the Campaign to Stop Funding Hate (SFH) ... have identified the India Development and Relief Fund (IDRF) as the key fund-raiser for the Sangh Parivar in the U.S. SFH says that the IDRF, which was set up to provide funds for 'relief and development work', has been funding RSS-initiated projects all over India.” [23]

Indian minorities abroad have expressed concern about HSS (and RSS), specifically the growing links between Indian diplomats abroad and the HSS/RSS, that undermines their neutrality [24]. Similarly, the links between elected representatives of the host country and the local HSS was flagged [25,26].

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Part-II: HSS / RSS link

Though HSS claims that they have no formal ties with RSS, it is an open secret that they are in fact a RSS subsidiary as is clear from the following sources:

“A new report titled ‘**Hindu** Nationalism in the United States’ released by SACW (South Asia Citizens Web) states that US based charitable organizations are pumping billions of dollars to India’s Hindu nationalist **RSS & Company.**” [<https://www.worldbulletin.net/asia-pacific/report-shows-us-hindu-nationalists-funding-indias-rss-h140043.html>]

“This would seem like a promising recruitment pool for the RSS, though the regular attendance for US **HSS [Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh, the overseas counterpart of the RSS in the US]** shakhas as of 2017 is only between 5,000 and 7,000 (that number would increase several times if one counted occasional attendance or participation in HSS programmes and parivar-supported projects).” [<https://qz.com/india/1350285/rss-and-the-spread-of-hindu-nationalism-in-us/>]

“....may have neglected to mention that the **HSS is the international wing of India’s Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh.** A uniformed paramilitary with an estimated six million members, the RSS has been accused of violence against Indian minorities, an allegation repeatedly raised by hundreds of furious commenters on Facebook and Twitter.” [<https://www.sikh24.com/2020/02/14/rss-lecture-to-indiana-police-department-sparks-outrage/>]

“...support from RSS/ HSS/ BJP Hindutwa Extremists in USA” [<https://world-defense.com/threads/bjp-in-india-rss-in-the-us-the-american-sangh%E2%80%99s-affair-with-tulsi-gabbard.7083/>]

“ So RSS disowns HSS? "We don't call it Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) overseas as It is not Indian soil. So we can't use the word Rashtriya. We call it 'Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh' (HSS)" ”
[https://twitter.com/zoo_bear/status/1177913928950534144] (Tweet from [Mohammed Zubair](#), co-founder of respected fact-checkers @AltNews).

Part-III: HSS in Europe

Germany: Started in 2014. Currently chapters in Hamburg, Frankfurt, Darmstadt-dieburg, Munich, Mannheim, Berlin, Dresden, Düsseldorf. Activities include “Balagokulum” - children’s forum to “enable Hindu children in Germany to appreciate their cultural roots and learn Hindu values”. They raise funds through voluntary contributions [<http://hssgermany.org/faq>]. Ostentatiously a ‘cultural’ organization but admits “HSS is ideologically inspired by the RSS”.

HSS Munich chapter recently invited a member of the Bavarian parliament from the Green Party to give a speech. The concerned politician, who had been unaware of the far-right nature of HSS when she accepted the invitation, ultimately decided to cancel the appointment

<https://twitter.com/FriedrichPieter/status/1281301229759426560> This incidence underlines the growing confidence of HSS in Germany and its desire to gain legitimacy beyond the far-right circles.

Sweden: The face-book page of HSS-Sweden is unusually open in advertising its ideological leanings. It displays a short cartoon film on expansionist dreams of the RSS [<https://www.facebook.com/1592731247636319/videos/782574809226082/>]. It also features a video of the RSS chief [<https://www.facebook.com/HSS-Sweden-1592731247636319/>].

Norway: The Norway branch seems also very active and advertises its charity work and calls for donations [<https://hssnorway.org/categories/sewa-day-2012>] (See UK and USA examples above for potential for misuse of funds). They regularly organize camps to teach “organizational skills” and “about Hindu religion” (see example from UK above for use of such camps for indoctrination of very young children in anti-Christian and Islamophobic doctrine).

Denmark and Finland: The Danish and Finnish branches organize weekly meetings and cultural events and judging by its Facebook page, is less overtly active in propaganda and indoctrination than its other Scandinavian counterparts.

Hindu Nationalism in the United States: A Report on Nonprofit Groups

July 2014

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This report compiles publicly available tax records, newspaper articles, and other materials on non-profit groups in the United States affiliated with the Sangh Parivar (family of Hindu nationalist groups) from 2001-2014, documenting a segment of the projects and priorities of U.S.-based Hindu nationalism.

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Executive Summary

1. Over the last three decades, a movement toward Hinduizing India—advancing the status of Hindus toward political and social primacy in India—has continued to gain ground in South Asia and diasporic communities. The Sangh Parivar (the Sangh “family”), the network of groups at the forefront of this Hindu nationalist movement, has an estimated membership numbering in the millions, making the Sangh one of the largest voluntary associations in India. The major organizations in the Sangh include the **Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh** (RSS), **Vishwa Hindu Parishad** (VHP), **Bajrang Dal**, and **Bharatiya Janata Party** (BJP).
2. Hindu nationalism has intensified and multiplied forms of discrimination, exclusion, and gendered and sexualized violence against Muslims, Christians, other minorities, and those who oppose Sangh violations, as documented by Indian citizens and international tribunals, fact-finding groups, international human rights organizations, and U.S. governmental bodies.
3. India-based Sangh affiliates receive social and financial support from its U.S.-based wings, the latter of which exist largely as tax-exempt non-profit organizations in the United States: **Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh** (HSS), **Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America** (VHPA), **Sewa International USA**, **Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation-USA**. The **Overseas Friends of the Bharatiya Janata Party - USA** (OFBJP) is active as well, though it is not a tax-exempt group.

Youth and Family Programs

4. Sangh-affiliated youth and family programs, such as those held by the **Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh** and the **Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America**, have concentrated their classes, camps, events, and materials on Hindu cultural identity. As of May 2014, there were 140 HSS shakhas (chapters) in the United States listed on the HSS website. Between 2002 and 2012 the HSS and VHP have collectively spent more than \$2.5 million on youth and family programs. Literature used by such programs often prioritize a version of history and culture that highlights the Sangh Parivar leadership of India and Brahminical (upper-caste) narratives and practices, while diminishing the struggles and contributions of lower caste and non-Hindu communities.
5. In 2009, Sangh-affiliated Hindu Students Council (HSC) student groups were present on 78 U.S. and Canadian university and college campuses, including those of Duke University, Emory University, Johns Hopkins University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, McGill University, New York University, University of Wisconsin at Madison, Stanford University, Syracuse University, University of California at Berkeley, Irvine, and San Diego, University of Ottawa, and University of Texas at Austin and Houston.

Charitable Organizations

6. From 2001 and 2012, five Sangh-affiliated charitable groups (**India Development and Relief Fund**, **Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of America**, **Param Shakti Peeth**, **Sewa International**, and **Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America**) allocated over \$55 million dollars to their program services, funds which are largely sent to groups in India. Several of the recipient groups have affiliations with the India-based Sangh Parivar, and more investigation is needed into:
 - a) other funding channels from the United States;

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Hindu Nationalism in the United States: A Report on Nonprofit Groups

- b) whether the monies collected were allocated to the purposes reported to the Internal Revenue Service; and
- c) the effects of funding recipients' work.

Academic and associated sites

7. Hindu nationalist groups have increasingly inserted themselves into curricular, administrative, and financing arenas in academic and educational institutions, specifically in the disciplines of history, religious studies, Indology and other fields. Particular projects include the establishment and operation of a religious college, the **Hindu University of America**, at least one religious studies conference (**World Association for Vedic Studies**), and funding institutions, such as the **Infinity Foundation** and the **Vivek Welfare and Educational Foundation**. From 2001 to 2013, the Infinity Foundation gave more than \$1.9 million to researchers, academic associations, and academic departments around the world, including the Association for Asian Studies, California Institute of Integral Studies, the Center for the Study of Developing Societies, Columbia University, Harvard University, Melbourne University, National Institute of Advanced Studies, Rutgers University, University of Hawaii, and the University of Texas at Austin.

Sangh Leadership in Indo-American Communities

8. Over the last two decades, Sangh-affiliated organizations have emerged as leaders in Indo-American communities. Major events include:

- a) **Overseas Friends of the BJP (OFBJP)** co-hosted a luncheon on Capitol Hill in early March 2002 with two other major Indian-American organizations, while BJP-ruled Gujarat witnessed mass killings of Muslims.
- b) OFBJP members and the **Asian American Hotel Owners Association** (AAHOA) were among the leadership that sought to host Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi as an honored guest speaker in 2005.
- c) In the California textbook controversy of 2005-2006, the **Vedic Foundation** and **Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh**'s educational wing, the **Hindu Education Foundation**, led an effort to insert edits into California textbooks that foregrounded Hindu nationalist priorities and downplayed gender and caste oppression in Ancient India.
- d) Since the textbooks controversy, the **Hindu American Foundation** has become a voice for Hindu nationalist interests to U.S. politicians.

Further Steps

9. Further investigations are needed to explore:

- a) possible legal culpability of U.S.-based Sangh groups and members in Sangh-led violent acts in South Asia;
- b) possible violations of 501(c)(3) regulations and restrictions; and
- c) the involvement of other U.S.-based groups and individuals in supporting violence perpetrated by Hindu nationalist groups.

Figure 1. Four Areas of Hindu Nationalist Activities in the U.S. Indian Diaspora

Each tax-exempt organization is listed with its identification number as registered with the United States Internal Revenue Service

Youth / Family Programs

- Hindu Students Council (HSC, 72-1551978)
- Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS, 52-1647017)
- Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America (VHPA, 51-0156325)
- Vishwa Hindu Parishad Overseas (VHPO, 04-3576058)

Charitable Funding

- Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of USA (EVFA, 77-0554248)
- Hindu Charity Trust of Texas (51-0555401)
- India Development and Relief Fund (IDRF, 52-1555563)
- Param Shakti Peeth of America (71-0916422)
- Sewa International-USA (20-0638718)
- Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America (VHPA, 51-0156325)
- Vivek Welfare and Education Fund (VWEF, 59-3623323)

Circulation of Hindu Nationalist Discourse in Academic and Para-Academic Spaces

- Hindu University of America (HUA, 59-2977691)
- Infinity Foundation (22-3339826)
- Vivek Welfare and Education Fund (VWEF, 59-3623323)
- World Association for Vedic Studies Conferences (WAVES, 72-1350935)

Public Campaigns

- California Parents for the Equalization of Educational Materials (CAPEEM, 56-2565521)
- Educators' Society for the Heritage of India (ESHI, 20-1200065)
- Hindu American Foundation (HAF, 68-0551525)
- Hindu Education Foundation (a wing of the HSS)
- Hindu International Council Against Defamation (HICAD, 22-3810334)
- Overseas Friends of the BJP (OFBJP) (not tax-exempt)
- Vedic Foundation (affiliate of JKP Radha Madhav Dham, 74-2673063)

The Sangh Parivar in the United States

Historical and present violence in South Asia perpetrated by a network of militant Hindu nationalist groups, called the Sangh Parivar (the Sangh “family”), has prompted calls for research into its U.S.-based wings. These counterparts largely operate as cultural, educational, and charitable funding organizations, conducting social programs involving wealthy and middle-class Indo-American families. This report examines some of Hindu nationalism’s major projects in the U.S. from 2001 to 2014, their priorities in diaspora and connections to India. It discusses some of the key U.S.-based institutions, the targets of their influence and recipients of their funding, and the production of Sangh’s cultural, religious, and historical truths. This information has been compiled as a resource to better understand Hindu nationalism and to inform critical responses to the forms of violence it fuels.

The website of the U.S.-based Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS), a tax-exempt,¹ non-profit organization, states that it is “essential for Hindus living in America to develop unity and harmony in their community”; an overseas counterpart of a Hindu nationalist leadership wing, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS, National Volunteer Corps) of India, the HSS works toward this unity by “organiz[ing] the Hindu community... to preserve, practice and promote Hindu ideals and values” in the United States (HSS 2009a). Hindutva,² the ideology that underpins Sangh narratives and its forms of “Hindu values and culture,” advocates the establishment of India as a Hindu nation based on the political supremacy of Hindus, a social order organized by an “exclusionary canon whereby all non-Hindus, and dissenting Hindus, identified as traitors, are conceptualized as second-class citizens,” justifying their systematic mistreatment or heightened assimilation into the Hindu nation

(Chatterji 2009: 101; Narayan 2009; see also Jaffrelot 1996: 25-33).

The Sangh’s large-scale anti-Muslim and anti-Christian violence, including gendered and sexualized violence, and destruction of sites of spiritual importance—as in Gujarat 2002³ and Orissa 2007-2008—have received scrutiny from scholars, journalists, Indian and international human rights groups, as well as government reports.⁴ Sangh actions against its opponents⁵ have also received international attention, as with the harassment of human rights defenders in Gujarat (HRW 2004) and the intimidation and threats of rape and assault against women members of the Indian People’s Tribunal on Communalism⁶ in Orissa in 2005 (Williams and Pocha 2005). The Sangh’s political ascendency in India since the 1920s has fueled an “authoritarian, xenophobic and majoritarian religious nationalism,” polarizing culture and society against religious, ethnic, cultural, sexual and gender minorities,⁷ and the Sangh’s opponents (Bhatt 2001: 4). Hindu nationalist violence is further exacerbated by the ineffectiveness of Indian state agencies to deliver justice and accountability for its religious minorities, as noted by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, which placed India on its Watch List/Tier 2 status for the sixth year in a row in 2014 (USCIRF 2014: 121).

The RSS is known in India for its extensive network of chapters of martial and ideological training for men and boys (see Jaffrelot 1996: 33-35). While the RSS membership roster remains unavailable for public scrutiny, a 2008 article from The Times reported that the RSS claimed 8 million members at the time; its social-cultural wing, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP, World Hindu Council), claimed 6.8 million members, and membership in one does not preclude membership in another (Page and Blakely 2008). The Sangh’s decentralized network of affiliates includes women’s groups, student

organizations, workers' associations, political parties, educational institutions, disaster relief and development groups, police personnel, and government officials, making the Sangh one of the most widespread and influential voluntary associations in South Asia (see Berti, Jaoul, and Kanungo 2011; Hansen 1999; Human Rights Watch 2002; Jaffrelot 1996, 2007; Narayan 2009; Puniyani 2004).

The Sangh's social and charitable programs have energized the rise of Hindu nationalism. Sangh-run educational and development projects in India advance the "standardization and homogenization of Hinduism," circulating the "defense of the Hindu nation" discourse that justifies the destruction of certain minorities and the assimilation of others into a Brahmanical social order (Hansen 1999: 102; Sundar 2004). Sangh-affiliated groups in diaspora, some of them tax-exempt organizations, fund and bolster this infrastructure in India while building the Sangh's social capital among Indo-American communities. Diasporic charitable funding of Hindu nationalist relief and development work has been met with concern in diaspora as activists called for attentiveness to certain charitable groups and their links to the Sangh in India (Sabrang and South Asia Citizens Web 2002; Awaaz 2004).

While Hindutva operates in India often with state and police complicity⁸ and the support of Hindu cultural dominance⁹—the ordering of society in ways that benefit upper caste, upper class Hindus—Sangh groups must navigate different landscapes of strategies, social institutions, and hierarchies in the United States, where "Hindu" is one of many minority identities. Bhatt and Mukta observed in 2000 that diasporic Hindu nationalism in the U.S. and U.K. has been able to "translate" the experiences of "discrimination or minority status in the West [into] religious and ethnic terms to create new languages of majorities and minorities that are rearticulated as coherent ideologies of

religious or ethnic nationalism," consolidating political will in diaspora to support the Hindu nation (Bhatt and Mukta 2000: 409). Such cultural and political assertions, aided by the sharp rise of information technologies in the 1990s, are part of new forms of long-distance nationalism whose dialogues with the homeland have become more immediate and intimate (Appadurai 1996: 196).

The use of upper-caste cultural narratives and practices in alignment with Hindu dominance in India to respond to the realities of being a minority in the U.S. is cultivated through increasing numbers of Sangh social programs, including youth programs and family camps. The Sangh's expanding influence among Indo-American communities accompanies a current of approval or indifference to the Sangh's violent actions in India, as minorities continue to live in increasingly polarized and precarious conditions (Prakash 2009; U.S. State Department [Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor] 2009). This report is one response to the calls for an examination of diasporic Hindu nationalism, seeking to lay the groundwork for further investigations into what might constitute accountability and justice across political boundaries.

Methodology

This report discusses the strategies and activities of Hindu nationalist groups in the United States in four areas of mobilization.

The first section explores major youth programs run by the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (Balagokulam), the Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America (Bal Vihar), and the Hindu Students Council, offering reflections on how such programs might direct the youth toward support for Hindu nationalist narratives and acceptance of the Sangh figures and groups as authority figures and leaders in diaspora.

The second examines five Sangh-affiliated charitable organizations and the funds they have channeled to Indian-based Hindu nationalist groups. The information draws on the work of other researchers in the U.S. and U.K. and on tax documents filed by the Sangh-affiliated U.S. organizations to look at the amounts of monies that have been channeled over the last decade.

Section three covers some Sangh groups' attempts to insert Hindu nationalist discourse into academic institutions by scrutinizing the funding recipients of the Infinity Foundation and the types of work and the teachers and presenters prioritized at Hindu University of America and the conferences hosted by the World Association for Vedic Studies, as well as the intense pressure that have been directed at scholars and faculty of South Asia who do not align with Hindu nationalism.

The fourth section is on the emergence of Hindu nationalist figures and groups as leaders in Indo-American communities, focusing on the 2005-2006 California textbook controversy and other events.

This report uses information from the websites of Sangh groups and other affiliated organizations, including image galleries, previous versions of websites as archived by Google cache or online archives. Images and

website pages were downloaded manually or via offline-browsing software (e.g. wget). Much of the information in this report regarding finances and membership is self-reported by the groups themselves to the Internal Revenue Service or gathered from the organizations' websites, and requires further verification.

Each organization's IRS documents--tax returns (form 990, 990-EZ, or 990-PF) and applications for tax-exempt status (form 1023) and--were accessed via online services such as Guidestar or requested from the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. References to the line item locations of the figures in the tax documents are in the captions for each table.

Notes

¹ "Tax-exempt" in this research refers to organizations registered with the United States Internal Revenue Service (IRS) under U.S. Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3). Each tax-exempt group discussed in this report has a tax identification number, which has been included to disambiguate Sangh groups from others that share similar names. The qualifications for this status can be found on the IRS website (U.S. Department of the Treasury, Internal Revenue Service 2010).

² Hindutva: the ideology of Hindu nationalism, which is underpinned by the notions that India should be a Hindu nation, that there is a limited set of correct ways to be "Hindu". Hindutva poses minority interests and equitable social relations as contrary to its understanding of a strong Hindu nation, forming a social terrain of normalized, gendered mistreatment against religious and political minorities (Jaffrelot 1996; Sharma 2006; see Savarkar's text, Savarkar 1969).

³ In the spring of 2002, Sangh Parivar members led massacres against Muslims of Gujarat on a massive scale, killing, raping, and mutilating women and men, young and old, reportedly with state and police complicity and support. Official Indian government figures place the toll at 1,180 (Misra 2009), though human rights groups

reported estimates of approximately 2,000 dead (Citizens for Justice and Peace 2002, Volume II: 128; Human Rights Watch 2002: 4; International Initiative for Justice 2003: 2). As stated by Cedric Prakash, Gujarat-based human rights activist, as of 2009 many of the Muslims of Gujarat still live in “dehumanizing conditions” and “yearn for justice,” seeking rehabilitation and life in Gujarat “without fear of discrimination and / or ostracization... [and] illegal detention” (Prakash 2009).

⁴ See Amnesty International 2005; Citizens for Justice and Peace 2002; Human Rights Watch 2002; International Initiative for Justice 2003; Jaffrelot 1996: 458-468; Liberhan Ayodhya Commission 2009; Srikrishna Commission 1998; Tehelka 2007; The Times of India 2009; U.S. State Department’s International Religious Freedom Reports 2001-2011.

⁵ In India, the Sangh’s violence and its aftermath are confronted by numerous civil society groups and activists, including those that provide humanitarian aid and legal services, conduct communal harmony and community empowerment work, and undertake politically immersed scholarship, including: Prashant (A Center for Human Rights, Justice, and Peace), Act Now for Harmony and Democracy (ANHAD), Aman Biradari, Jan Vikas, People’s Union for Civil Liberties, and Sabrang Communications, among many others.

⁶ In the context of South Asia, “communalism” is understood as conflict between religious communities. The term is described more in-depth by Romila Thapar as “an intermeshing of ideology and power, where groups aspiring to power use a particular religious ideology to subvert a social order and replace it with an order that is based on sharp differentiations between those who accept the ideology and those who do not” (Thapar 2000c: 1099).

⁷ See Bacchetta 1999; Basu et al 1993; Bhatt 2001; Brass 2003; Shani 2007; IPT 2006; Nussbaum 2007; Puniyani 2004; Sarkar and Butalia 1995.

⁸ See HRW 2002; U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom 2010: 243-247.

⁹ Hindu cultural dominance: the arrangement of social and political life toward the benefit and ascendancy of particular Hindus, in which certain upper-caste values, texts, and practices provide the markers of the “only ‘right’ way to be human, citizen, patriot,” erasing the diversity of syncretic cultural practices in India, labeled as Hindu or otherwise (Chatterji 2009: 41).

The Sangh's Youth and Family Programs

Over the last two decades, Hindu nationalism has gained strength as a framework through which the diaspora engages with identity, homeland, culture, and history. The Sangh's project to bring about "Hindu unity" in the face of the diversity of Indo-American communities requires an infrastructure to privilege certain (upper-caste) cultural practices and narratives as "Hindu" and "syndicating" them as more important than others¹⁰ (Thapar 2000b). Aided in a U.S. landscape where South Asian social interactions are often divided along religious lines, the Sangh functions "as a reservoir of knowledge and skills... teaching families how they could retain their culture," and that this culture is "Hindu," with little emphasis of the legacies of "complex shared histor[ies] that [include] those who are not Hindus" (Mohammad-Arif 2002: 213; Rajagopal 2000: 474; Prashad 2000: 148).

The U.S. counterparts of the militant Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP)—the **Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh** (HSS, identification number 52-1647017) and the **VHP of America** (VHPA, identification number 51-0156325), respectively—both operate youth camps and education programs to promote "Hindu culture" and to encourage young Hindus to "develop pride in their Hindu identity" (HSS 2009a; VHPA 2014a). The **Vishwa Hindu Parishad Overseas (VHPO)**, or **World Hindu Council** (identification number 04-3576058), formed in 2002, focuses its funds on yoga classes and educational materials, and at one time hosted religious speakers and in 2003 devoted funds to the "Global Dharma Conference" in New Jersey. According to VHPO's tax returns from 2002-2008, it deals with significantly less funds than the VHPA.

There appears to be little difference between HSS and VHPA classes' descriptions

in the tax returns, aside from the HSS's use of English and the VHPA's emphasis on South Asian languages. The HSS registered as a tax-exempt organization in 1989 and listed 140 chapters in operation on its website as of May 2014, located largely in urban centers (HSS's IRS form 1023, HSS 2014a; see Figure 2). Its 2003 tax return states that it holds a weekly class, called **Balagokulam**, "to give children Hindu Universal Family values through Yoga and games," taking place in Hindu temples or community centers.¹¹ On the HSS website, Balagokulam chapters are referred to as *shakhas*, the term also used by the RSS for its chapters in India (Jaffrelot 1996: 35-40; HSS 2014b).

Another element of the Indian Sangh that appears in Balagokulam sessions is the inclusion of a prayer to a saffron flag, the *dhwaj*, regarded as "a symbol [of the Sangh's] Dharma and culture representing purity, knowledge and sacrifice" (Balagokulam 2009; HSS 2009b). Saffron flags carry a social and political charge in South Asia for those who do not align with Hindu nationalism; as witnessed during the mass violence of Gujarat 2002, such flags marked razed mosques as the threat and evidence of Sangh-led destruction, Hindu dominance, and Muslim subjugation (Mander 2002).

The VHP, the social-cultural wing of the Sangh Parivar, was formed in 1964 to "supply the pure spirit of the Hindu way of life" to Hindus of the world (Apte 1964). As a result of its activities, it has been called "extremist" in the U.S. State Department's International Religious Freedom Annual Reports, and has been mentioned in every International Religious Freedom Annual Report from 2001-2011 for violations of religious freedom against minorities (U.S. State Department [Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor] 2001-2011).

Biju Mathew and Vijay Prashad discussed the U.S. Sangh's cultural activities in 2000, placing them in context with immigrant desires to "re-invent their cultural environment to preserve themselves from the onslaught of what they see as an ahistorical and non-contradictory 'American culture,'" with emphasis on raising young people in diaspora (Mathew and Prashad 2000: 520-521). In VHPA-founder Mahesh Mehta's discussion of the VHPA's relation to family life, the cultural education of young people was understood also as a way to prevent the breakdown of domestic relations and the loss of traditional (understood as Brahmanical in many instances)¹² forms of control over the sexuality and obedience-- and in effect, labor and property-- of women and young people, with special concern placed on young women¹³ (Rajagopal 2000: 473-474; Mathew and Prashad 2000: 521). Rajagopal observed in 2000 that one of the Sangh's efforts in these spaces was to teach young people "why their families were different and... why this difference was a form of superiority, through stories from Hindu mythology" (Rajagopal 2000: 473; see also Mathew and Prashad 2000).

A 2005 Balagokulam Teacher Handbook provides illustrations of Rajagopal's observations, including:

1. Emphasis on the Vedas, which were historically restricted to upper-caste Hindus and reflect upper-caste cultural values. The Vedas, through complex histories in connection to Orientalism, have become foregrounded "as central and foundational to the 'essence' of Hinduism" (HSS 2005: 78-81; King 1999: 102);
2. Quotes and stories from Indian Sangh leaders K.B. Hedgewar and M.S. Golwalkar (see Jaffrelot 1996: 33-58 for Hedgewar and Golwalkar's politics; HSS 2005: 34, 84-97);
3. The life-story of Chhatrapati Shivaji, who symbolized "courage, heroism, love of the motherland and love of Dharma," demonstrated through battling and beheading Afzal Khan, described as a "Pathan general," coded as "Muslim" in Hindutva's lexicon (HSS 2005: 27; Chatterji 2009: 4); and
4. Linking the rise of forms of mistreatment of Hindu women with "Muslim rule": "Sati, Child-marriage, Ghunghat [wearing of the veil], etc were largely caused by the arbitrary tyrannical rule of the Sultans of Delhi" (HSS 2005: 175).

This cultural repertoire corroborates and reinforces the primacy of Brahmanical cultural forms in diaspora and provides a historical narrative that underpins a current of diasporic approval or apathy to the Sangh's anti-minority and violent politics in South Asia. The U.S. Sangh has continued to receive community support¹⁴ even in the aftermath of the mass killings of Gujarat 2002 and Orissa 2007-2008, with rising participation in its classes, camps, and public events (see Table 2).

Figure 2. U.S. Cities with HSS Shakhas/Balagokulams, 2014 (140 chapters)



*Data source: HSS website, Chapters (HSS 2014a); Map data ©2014 Google, INEGI, SK M&C, Tele Atlas, ZENRIN
The listing of city names can be found in Appendix B.*

On the Bajrang Dal

Of note in the U.S. is the absence of a tax-exempt counterpart for the Sangh's militant youth wing, the **Bajrang Dal**, characterized as “extremist” by the U.S. State Department annual reports on International Religious Freedom for its assaults on religious minorities (see U.S. State Department [Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor]: 2002, 2010). The Bajrang Dal’s website, Hinduunity.org, is registered to a New York post office box address.¹⁵ The website hosts Hindu supremacist materials and statements, including a “Black List/hitlist” that identifies various persons as having committed “crimes against the Hindu people,” ranging from Osama bin Laden to the Pope to journalists to academics and human rights activists; the list includes phone numbers and addresses of some of the latter professionals, such as Angana Chatterji and Biju Mathew (Hinduunity.org 2006). HinduUnity.org was one of the websites banned by the Government of India in the summer of 2006 (Biswas 2006).

The VHPA website states that its first chapter was established in New York in 1970, shortly after U.S. immigration law relaxed restrictions on immigrants from Asia in 1965 (VHPA 2008). Similar to the Balagokulams, VHPA's Bal Vihar program "provides an opportunity for... children to discover their cultural bond with Bharat [India] and develop pride in their Hindu identity," working with young people aged five and older toward developing leadership skills "for the Hindu community in Americas" (VHPA 2014a). Its key activities, as described on the VHPA website, are similar to those of the Balagokulam: yoga, chanting, stories, and prayer (VHPA 2014a). While the VHPA website does not list its Bal Vihar locations, it has contact information for nineteen VHPA chapters as of June 2014 (see below), and according to the VHPA website, each chapter is required to implement a Bal Vihar program (VHPA 2014b).

VHPA family camps, according to the group's website, prioritize "yoga, meditation, traditions, rituals, [and] scriptures" in the practice of "Hindu culture" to help participants "to lead their lives as confident, proud and assertive Hindus," combining Sangh-supported Hindu practices with notions of leadership and pride (VHPA 2014c). In U.S.-based classes and camps, unlike RSS schools in India (e.g. Vidya Bharti schools), there appears not to be the trainings on knife and stick fighting in combination with "the

repeated exhortation to 'defend' the 'nation'" (Sundar 2004: 1610-1611) or an overarching emphasis on the need to defend Hindu women from sexual predation by men of other communities (Ambikar 2008: 209). As well, the Sangh's programs are supplemental to U.S. schools rather than a key vehicle for social upward mobility as they often are in India (see Sundar 2004: 1608-1611). What remains, in India and the U.S., is that while attendees and their families may not be fully devoted to the Sangh's supremacist politics, they "end up with a strong sympathy for the Sangh" (Sundar 2004: 1608). This sympathy can be seen in the continued financial contributions to Sangh groups and the attendance of Indo-American communities in Sangh activities and campaigns, such as the HSS's family camps and Hindu Sangams of 2006— five large public gatherings, described as "grand [Hindu] cultural festival[s]," in different U.S. regions that witnessed more than 1000 participants each, with more than 16,000 attendees in Silicon Valley, according to HSS's press statements (HSS 2006a, b, c). Three of these gatherings featured then-RSS General Secretary Mohan Bhagwat as a keynote or special speaker, enabling the circulation of the Sangh's priorities and reinforcing the Sangh's authority as Hindu leaders in diaspora. Bhagwat became the new RSS Sarsanghchalak (chief) in early 2009 (Indian Express 2009).

Table 1. VHP-America Chapters, 2014

1. Hartford, CT	8. Pittsburgh, PA	15. Chicago, IL
2. Boston, MA	9. New York City, NY	16. Detroit, MI
3. Merrimack Valley, NH	10. Staten Island, NY	17. Cincinnati, OH
4. Washington, DC	11. Broward Palm Beach County, FL	18. Antioch, CA
5. Central & Northern NJ	12. Atlanta, GA	19. Orange County, CA
6. Southern NJ	13. Houston, TX	
7. Lehigh Valley, PA	14. North Houston, TX	

Source: VHPA website, *Chapters page* (VHPA 2014b).

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Table 2. Attendance and Monies Allocated toward HSS Shakhas and VHPA Bal Vihars, 2002-2012

Year	# of HSS Shakhas (# of attendees)	Shakha Allocations	VHPA Bal Vihar attendees	Bal Vihar Allocations
2002	30 (750-900)	\$15,000	300	\$17,613
2003	66 (Not specified)	\$42,105.36	300	\$21,046
2004	75 (2000)	\$30,000	300	\$23,045
2005	75 (3000)	\$145,000	300	\$19,028
2006	102 (1500)	\$90,558	Not specified	\$25,330
2007	102 (10,000)	\$132,841	Not specified	\$19,642
2008	102 (10,000)	\$156,051	Not specified	Combined with family camps: \$163,125
2009	140+ (Not specified)	\$140,000	Not specified	Combined with family camps: \$165,050
2010	150+	\$240,000	Not specified	Combined with family camps: \$192,703
2011	150+	\$200,000	Not specified	Combined with family camps: \$305,120
2012	140+ (5000)	\$256,920	Not specified	Combined with family camps: \$325,027
	Total	\$1,448,475	Total	\$1,084,026

For HSS, the figures are from IRS form 990, Part III, row a (2002); Part III, Statement 2 (2003-2004); Part III, Additional data, row d (2005, 2007); Part III, Additional data, row f (2006); Part III, row 4a (2008-2011); Part III, row 4c (2012).

For VHP-America, the figures are from IRS form 990, Part III, row d (2002), Part III, row c (2003-2007), Part III, row 4c (2008-2012)

Between 2002 and 2012, the HSS and VHPA organizations spent more than \$2.5 million on youth educational programs and family camps combined (see Table 2). How the classes impact student relations to the Sangh's versions of a proud Hindu-- how the Sangh's work intersects with class and race privilege, how it has affected family and gender relations, and interactions with Dalits (formerly “untouchable” peoples), Muslims, Christians and other groups-- is still in need of further research.

While the Balagokulam and Bal Vihar classes generally accommodate students up to 17-18 years of age, for youths that pursue higher education, the **Hindu Students Council** (HSC, identification number 72-1551978) organizes “Campus Study Groups, Classes and Symposia, Seminars, Lectures & Workshops, Celebration of Festivals, Conferences and Camps, Leadership Workshops, Sport & Travel Activities,

Publication & Distribution of Literature” on university and college campuses (HSC 2006). The HSC website in 2009 indicated its presence on 78 campuses in Canada and the United States, including those of Duke, Emory, Johns Hopkins, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, McGill, New York University, University of Wisconsin at Madison, Stanford University, Syracuse, University of California at Berkeley, Irvine, and San Diego, University of Ottawa, and University of Texas at Austin and Houston (HSC 2009).

According to Arvind Rajagopal, in 2000 the HSC was producing literature that “[offered] a sanitized version of Hindu culture for youth who express a sense of cultural difference” and disseminating revisionist histories that conceive “Hindu culture [in an] immaculate form... [and that] ‘feudal’ and ‘foreign’ influences... contaminated what was once ‘perfect’,” storying Muslims and

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Christians as unbelonging to the Hindu nation (Rajagopal 2000: 477).

The HSC's activities in more recent times have been scrutinized with concern as well. In April 2007 and January 2008, the community group Campaign to Stop Funding Hate (CSFH) released two reports on the HSC's Sangh Parivar connections, noting in a press statement that some chapters have "promoted divisive and sectarian speakers" and that Indo-American students sometimes may join without knowing of HSC's "'invisible' connections" to Sangh politics (CSFH 2007; 2008a; 2008b). The agenda of the HSC at the national level appears not to be enacted homogeneously by its campus chapters. With the release of the CSFH report in 2007, while the national HSC leadership released a press release stating report authors to be "controversial individuals" (HSC 2007), the Stanford campus chapter held a discussion on the report's content, producing two recommendations: 1) to ask the national HSC body to "retract its... rejoinder as it was of a personal nature" and 2) for the Stanford chapter to "recognize that organizations like CSFH can be valuable partners in helping us stay clear of fundamentalism, and thus, their activism is of great benefit and will act as our conscience" (Stanford HSC 2007).

Notes

¹⁰ E.g. non-Vedic, lower caste, syncretic.

¹¹ According to earlier versions of the HSS website; chapter street locations have subsequently been removed.

¹² The term "traditional" refers to something closer to "Brahmanical" in Hindu nationalist discourse, downplaying the diversity in South Asian traditions, a connection aided by histories of consolidations of Hindu identities in upper-caste terms-- e.g. see Agnes, Sudhir, and Basu 2004 for

a scholarly examination of legal processes impacting women and religious identities in colonial India and Richard King's 1999 discussion of the political and disciplinary coalescence of "Hindu" as referring to Advaita Vedanta.

¹³ "One Gujarati engineer and his family had packed up, sold their house and abruptly returned to India within a week of their daughter closeting herself in her room with her boyfriend one day for several hours... Telling me [Rajagopal] that story, Mehta drew the lesson. Without constant exposure to Hindu values, and a proper education in Hindu culture, youngsters were liable to go astray, and families would disintegrate. Here the VHP of America was able to step in..." (Rajagopal 2000: 474).

¹⁴ See the next section on donations to Sangh-affiliated charities.

¹⁵ According to Hinduunity.org's domain name registration.

Charities: Funding Sangh Projects

In 2002, Sabrang Communications and South Asia Citizens Web co-published a report, “The Foreign Exchange of Hate,” which linked the Maryland-based **India Development and Relief Fund** (IDRF, identification number 52-1555563) to Sangh projects and groups in India (Sabrang and SACW 2002). The document reported that between 1994-2000, 50% of IDRF disbursements went to Sangh Parivar groups in India, and more than 80% of the relief and development work supported by the disbursements were “clearly sectarian in nature”; as well, the report found that the IDRF-funded groups “in at least three states in India that are directly involved in large scale violence against Muslim and Christian minorities” (Sabrang and SACW 2002: 6). The report was supported by more than 250 U.S.-based faculty of South Asia and contributed to the halt of employee donation matching to the IDRF by Silicon Valley corporations Cisco and Oracle (Swapan 2002).

Since 2002, IDRF has continued to channel millions of dollars to India, much of it to undisputed Sangh-affiliated development and relief groups with projects in India, including Akhil Bharatiya Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram, Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of India, Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of USA, Param Shakti Peeth, Sewa Bharti, and Sewa International (see Table 3).

The group’s distribution of charitable funds to India has concentrated in development and relief work, with significant emphasis in Adivasi (“first inhabitants”/tribal/indigenous) communities. Since the 1960s, the Sangh has been expanding development projects into tribal and rural areas in India, cultivating allegiance to the Hindu nation among the communities in these regions (Hansen 1999: 103; Independent People’s Tribunal 2007: 11-12). Others have

On March 9, 2002, while news of the mass killings and attacks on Muslims in Gujarat by Sangh Parivar members were still in the Indian and international news media, the IDRF held a “Donor Appreciation” event at Sunnyvale Temple in California (Watson 2002). According to an India Post article covering the event, five hundred persons attended the dinner, and the event’s co-sponsors included the HSS, VHPA, and Ekal Vidyalaya. An HSS representative stated at the event that the “Rastriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), its counterpart in India was actively involved in building Gujarat back to its highest glory.” The same article states as well that Sewa Bharti, the RSS’s service wing, was the “main NGO selected by IDRF [to carry out relief work]” (India Post News Service 2002).

spoken out in concern regarding the Sangh’s reference to Adivasis (first inhabitants) as Vanvasis (forest dwellers) in the Hindu nation, seeing this maneuver as a “deliberate policy of the Sangh to deny the tribals the status they deserve” (Philip 1999). In 2002, newspapers and human rights reports pointed with concern to the participation of Adivasis, Dalits, and lower caste communities in the anti-Muslim violence in Gujarat, noting that the Sangh’s work to cast Muslims as enemy to Adivasis and Dalits “diverts attention from the basic economic, social and political issues haunting the oppressed” (Chenoy et al 2002; Illaiah 2002). Thus far, the poor brought into the Hindu nation’s social order, including Dalits and Adivasis, have appeared to serve as its foot soldiers in violent actions against Muslims (e.g. in the case of Gujarat 2002) and Christians (e.g. in the case of Orissa 2007-2008, see Chatterji 2008 and Independent People’s Tribunal 2007: 10-12). It is with this in mind that we examine the following chart of IDRF disbursements and fund recipients, to raise the necessity for clarifications and investigations into the effects of the following allocations.

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Table 3. IDRF Disbursements and Supported Organizations, 2002-2012

Year	Total Disbursement	Top 5 Recipients
2002	\$1,269,443 to 117 recipients	Manav Kalyan Trust - Kutch (Gujarat) - \$52,780 Vikas Bharati Bashunpur – Ranchi (Jharkhand) - \$49,550 Akhil Bharatiya Vanvsi Kalyan Ashram - Jashpurnagar (Chhattisgarh) - \$48,760 Sookruti - Bhabaneswar (Orissa) - \$48,165 Sarathi, Godhar Pashchim, Dahod (Guajrat) - \$42,800
2003	\$1,267,951 to 50+ recipients	Arya Samaj Gandhidham Charitable Trust, Gandhidham (Gujarat) - \$102,120 INDI Corps- Houston (Gujarat) - \$59,685 Shree Banaskantha Anjana Patel Kelawani Mandal - Palanpur (Gujarat) - \$43,295 Akhil Bharatiya Vanvsi Kalyan Ashram - Jashpurnagar (Chhattisgarh) - \$43,000 Sewa Bharti - Bhopal, (Madhya Pradesh) - \$42,270
2004	\$1,325,773 to 94 recipients	Shree Banaskantha Anjana Patel Kelawani Mandal - Palanpur (Gujarat) - \$104,876 Shree Ram Gram Vikas Samiti - Nagauri - Meerut (Uttar Pradesh) - \$104,333 Sevalia Arogya Mandal, Kheda (Gujarat) - \$81,721 Arya Samaj Gandhidham - Kutch (Gujarat) - \$78,000 Veeryantan Vidyapeeth - Bhuj (Gujarat) - \$55,000
2005	\$2,484,160 to 91 recipients	Sewa International - Delhi - \$298,301 Arya Samaj - Gandhidham (Gujarat) - \$290,000 Sukh Ram Gram Vikas Trust - Kaliravan (Haryana) \$150,000 Shiksha Bharati - Hapur, UP - \$120,000 UN Foundation, Washington D.C. USA - \$110,000
2006	\$1,759,319 to 58 recipients	Sewa International, Delhi - \$391,100 Akhil Bhartiya Vanvsi Kalyan Ashram - Jaspur Nagar (Chattisgarh) - \$142,300 Sukh Ram Gram Vikas Trust- Hisar (Haryana) - \$100,000 Vivekananda Kendra International - Kanyakumari (Tamil Nadu) - \$100,000 Vikas Bharati Bishanpur - Ranchi (Jharkhand) - \$76,450
2007	\$1,483,445 to 56 recipients	Maharaja Agrasen Shiksha Samiti - Agra (Uttar Pradesh) - \$123,000 Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana - Bangalore (Karnataka) - \$100,000 Akhil Bharatiya Vanvsi Kalyan Ashram - Jashpurnagar (Chhattisgarh) - \$87,200 Sahaj Seva Samsthan - Hyderabad (Andhra Pradesh) - \$79,500 Sewa Bharti Madhya Pradesh - Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh) - \$79,320
2008	\$1,255,960 to 43+ recipients	Sahaj Seva Samsthan (Hyderabad) - \$83,300 Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of India (New Delhi) - \$73,000 Rajesh Gangadhar Patel Charitable Trust (Gujarat) - \$60,000 Akhil Bharatiya Vanvsi Kalyan Ashram (Chhattisgarh) - \$55,000 Swami Vivekananda Rural Development Society (Chennai) - \$52,500
2009	\$2,473,252 to 41+ recipients	Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of India (New Delhi) - \$525,000 Bharat Kalyan Pratishtan (New Delhi) - \$209,000 Param Shakti Peeth (Delhi) – \$208,000 Jan Kalyan Shiksha Samiti (Delhi) - \$66,000 Akhil Bharatiya Vanvsi Kalyan Ashram (Chhattisgarh) - \$60,000
2010	\$1,864,075 to 50+ recipients	Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of India (New Delhi) - \$335,000 Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana (Bengluru) – \$199,000 Sewa International (New Delhi) - \$91,000 Param Shakti Peeth (Delhi) - \$85,000 L Muni Lal Bansal Charitable Trust (Jagroan, Panjab) - \$83,000
2011	\$1,039,780	No schedule of recipients. Indify (USA) - \$11,500
2012	\$1,086,600 to 33+ recipients	Maharaja Agrasen Technical Education Society (Himachal Pradesh) - \$245,000 Sahaj Seva Samsthan (Hyderabad) - \$92,000 Samerth Charitable Trust (Gujarat) - \$78,050 Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy (Karnataka) - \$75,000 Arpana Research and Charitable Trust (Harayana) - \$63,500

Source: IDRF tax returns, Form 990, Schedule of Grants, 2002-2012.

Figures for total amount disbursed for 2008-2012 were from Part I, line 13.

The figure for Indify in 2011 was from Schedule I, Part II, part (a).

Appendix "A" Page 49

Hindu Nationalism in the United States: A Report on Nonprofit Groups

The 2002 report on the IDRF encouraged further scrutiny on other financial channels to the Sangh of India. In the United States, four additional major development-related charities (organizations channeling more than \$100,000 annually to charitable projects) have connections to Sangh leaders in the U.S. or India: **Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of USA** (EVFA, tax identification number 77-0554248), **Param Shakti Peeth** (tax identification number 71-0916422, more information on page 20), **Sewa International-USA¹⁶** (tax identification number 20-0638718), and the **VHP of America**. From 2001-2012, these five Sangh-affiliated charities allocated more than \$55 million, largely to projects in India (see Table 4). These more-visible Sangh-affiliates, whose leadership overlaps with that of other U.S. Sangh groups (see Appendix A) do not

mention the major Indian wings of the Sangh (RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal) in their tax records, perhaps due to the intense critical scrutiny brought by the 2002 report on the IDRF. Attesting to the work that the Sangh has done for the last three decades among middle-class Indo-American communities, other charitable groups do clearly designate the Indian Sangh in their filings: for instance, according to respective tax returns, **Hindu Charity Trust of Texas** (identification number 51-0555401) donated \$7,000 each to “Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation” and “RSS village schools” in 2006, and \$14,000 to “VHP schools” in Gujarat in 2007, and **Vivek Welfare and Educational Foundation** (VWEF, identification number 59-3623323) allocated \$10,000 to the “Vishwa Hindu Parishad” in 2006 for “education, medical aid and relief to the poor *in India*” (emphasis added).

Table 4. Monies Allocated to Program Services by Sangh-affiliated Charitable Groups, 2001-2012*

Year	EVF-USA	IDRF	VHP – America†	Sewa Int'l	Param Shakti Peeth of America
2001	\$0	\$2,047,593	\$963,689		
2002	\$788,500	\$1,280,788	\$383,191		
2003	\$953,600	\$1,285,644	\$317,043		(Registered 2004)
2004	\$1,795,880	\$1,335,625	\$280,909	(Registered 2004)	\$186,461
2005	\$1,870,500	\$2,495,265	\$503,400	\$146,159	\$155,230
2006	\$2,032,780	\$1,759,319	\$255,423	\$293,930	\$202,000
2007	\$2,718,111	\$1,483,445	\$95,911	\$94,863	\$443,062
2008	\$3,081,505	\$1,255,960	\$343,404	\$305,002	\$80,000
2009	\$2,910,820	\$2,473,525	\$192,961	\$269,370	\$400,000
2010	\$3,029,485	\$1,864,075	\$213,952	\$303,079	\$256,000
2011	\$3,597,810	\$1,039,780	\$215,235	\$1,226,407	\$156,000
2012	\$4,264,915	\$1,086,600	\$205,732	\$759,785	\$25,000
Total	\$27,043,906	\$19,407,619	\$3,970,850	\$3,398,595	\$1,903,753

Source: Tax Returns, *Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation USA* (2001-2012), for *IDRF* (2001-2012), *VHP of America* (2001-2012), *Sewa International* (2005-2012), and *Param Shakti Peeth of America* (2004-2012).

*For EVF-USA and IDRF: the figures are from IRS form 990, Part III, row f (2001-2007) and Part III, row 4e (2008-2012).

†For VHP-America, the figures are from IRS form 990, Part III, row a + b (2001-2007) and Part III, row 4a + 4b (2008-2012), for charitable donations going to projects likely taking place in India.

For Sewa International: the figures were drawn from IRS form 990, Part II, row 22a (2005-2006), form 990-EZ, Part II, row 22b (2007), form 990-EZ, Part I, row 10 (2008-2009), and form 990, Part I, row 13 (2010-2012).

For Param Shakti Peeth: the figures are from IRS form 990, Part I, row 13 (2004-2007 and 2010-2012) and IRS form 990-EZ, Part I, row 10 (2008-2009).

**Figure 3. Percentage Breakdown of Total Program Expenditures
of 5 Sangh Charitable Groups, 2001-2012**
Total expenditure: \$55+ million

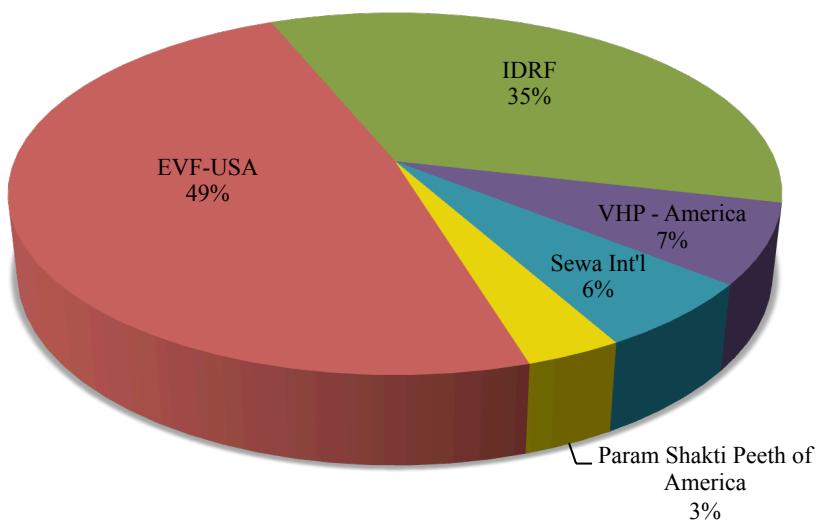
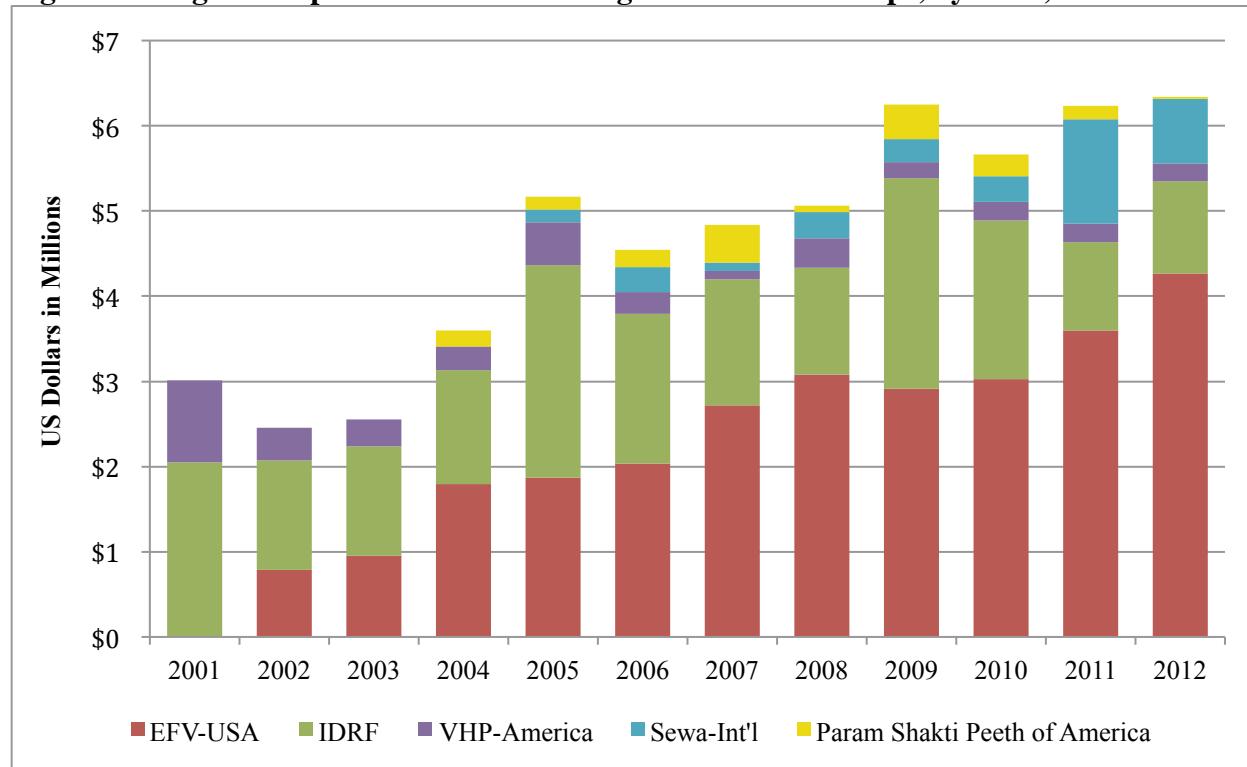


Figure 4. Program Expenditures of Five Sangh Charitable Groups, by Year, 2001-2012



Param Shakti Peeth is the U.S. wing of Vatsalya Gram, an Indian charity undertaken by VHP leader Sadhvi Rithambara (Vatsalya Gram 2010). Rithambara was among the defendants charged in 2005 by a Central Bureau of Investigation court for crimes of “provok[ing] people into rioting, arson and indulging in rioting with intent to create disorder” in relation to the mass violence against Muslims connected to the destruction of the Babri Mosque in 1992 (The Hindu 2005; Puniyani 2003: 137).

What happens to the monies allocated by Sangh charities to India? The 2004 Awaaz-South Asia Watch report on the U.K.-based HSS’s Sewa International found that the earthquake relief work funded and carried out by Sangh-affiliates in Gujarat included discrimination against Muslims and Dalits, threats against the workers from other relief groups, and the building of schools that propagate the Sangh’s ideology (Awaaz 2004: 17-32).

Two examples of projects funded in India by U.S.-based Sangh affiliates point to the need for further investigation: the Lodai project and the Ekal Vidyalayas (one teacher schools) in tribal and rural regions.

Lodai: While VHPA Executive Vice President Gaurang G. Vaishnav has claimed that the VHPA is “independent of any organization, whether in the US or anywhere else, legally, organizationally and fiscally,” VHPA-VHP cooperation is clear in the case of Lodai, an earthquake-struck village in Gujarat (Vaishnav 2008). According to a letter sent by VHPA President Jyotish Parekh to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom on June 12, 2002, the VHP of America’s Gujarat earthquake relief work included adopting the village of Lodai (Parekh 2002). Edward Simpson and Stuart Corbridge’s 2006 study, published in the Annals of the Association of American Geographers, found that the “VHP took care

to rebuild Lodai as Keshav Nagar, or Krishna’s city” where “Muslims and [scheduled caste persons] who previously lived in the village of Lodai had not been allowed to settle within the gates of the new community”; Lodai’s Muslim and lower caste communities were aided by another charitable group, receiving “plainly inferior accommodation... once it was clear that the VHP’s plans for Keshav Nagar were geared only to caste Hindus” (Simpson and Corbridge 2006: 579). India-based community groups and news media have corroborated reports of discrimination as well in the Sangh Parivar’s earthquake relief work.¹⁷

Ekal Vidyalayas: In addition to discriminatory distribution of relief resources in India, donations to Sangh development projects may also be used for purposes different from how they are framed in tax materials and donation appeals. For instance, the stated goal of the **Ekal Vidyalaya (“One Teacher School”) Foundation of USA** (EVFA, identification number 77-0554248) is to “eradicate illiteracy” and contribute to “self-development” in Adivasi and rural areas, according to its website; the discourse is one of development and poverty reduction (Ekal Vidyalaya 2014). In India, the VHP leadership has publicly stated that Ekal Vidyalayas train tribals to confront the (Hindu) nation’s internal and external enemies. In March 2008, VHP General Secretary Praveen Togadia, a Sangh leader at the national level, urged the Indian government “to involve tribals in the battle against Maoists,” stating that the VHP had implemented 23,000 Ekal Vidyalayas and that “the Maoist threat did not exist in villages where VHP’s schools were operating” (Press Trust of India 2008). Eight years earlier, Togadia was already stating that the VHP would establish Ekal Vidyalayas “to prevent conversions [from Hinduism] and to check subversive activities of the inter-services intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan [Pakistan’s

intelligence agency]" (The Times of India 2000).

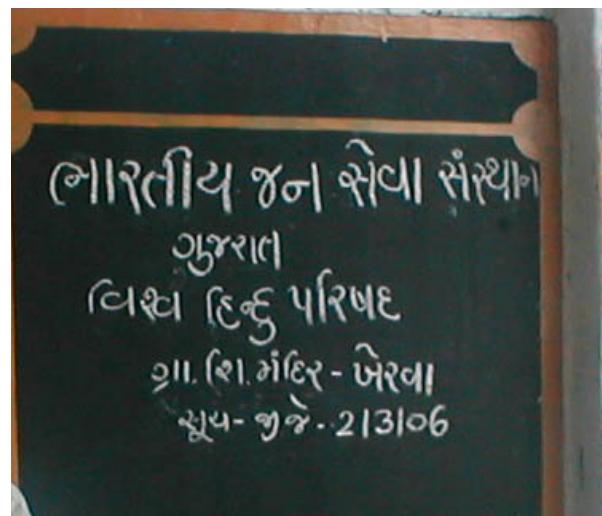
The Ekal Vidyalaya organization is also linked with sub-state institutions of national defense. According to a June 2010 Ekal Vidyalaya newsletter: the organization also supports the state-sanctioned paramilitary Village Defence Committees (VDCs)¹⁸ in the region of Kashmir by including VDCs of Jammu on the itinerary of its Ekal Global Learning tours. These tours bring Ekal Vidyalaya leadership and volunteers to India to meet and form relations with people there (Ekal Vidyalaya 2010). This national security and anti-conversion discourse is not strongly emphasized in the Ekal Vidyalaya's online materials.

The Sabrang-SACW and Awaaz reports both pointed to links between Sangh work in tribal areas and the increase in Adivasi participation in Sangh-led violence against minorities (Sabrang and SACW 2002: 18-24; Awaaz 2004: 33-34). In 2005, Avdhash Kaushal from the Government of India's Ministry of Human Resource Development released a report on the Ekal Vidyalayas and its partner organization, the Friends of Tribal Society (Vanbandhu Parishad), charging them with "misusing... funds, and using the [government] grants for creating disharmony amongst religious groups and creating a political cadre," resulting in the end of government funding to these schools (Joshua 2005; Kaushal 2005). Adivasi and other human rights activists have also reported that the Ekal Vidyalayas appear to function as a "vanguard" of Sangh expansion into tribal areas (Gopalakrishnan and Sreenivasa 2007; Independent People's Tribunal 2007: 85-89).

It is difficult to believe that the U.S. Ekal Vidyalaya leadership and its major donors can be unaware of the Sangh of India and its politics; according to publicly available tax returns, the EVFA board of directors at one time included Sangh-affiliated Ramesh Shah (a Vice President of Overseas Friends of

the Bharatiya Janata Party, see below and OFBJP 2009), Jyotish Parekh (VHPA President, according to VHPA's 2008 tax return) and VHPA Founder and former president Mahesh Mehta (Saigal 2004). A separate organization, **Ekal Vidyalaya Global, Inc.** (identification number 20-5356631) was registered in 2008; according to its application for tax-exempt status (form 1023), its founding board of directors included billionaire Bhupendra Kumar Modi as chairperson and member Mahesh Mehta. Modi and Mehta also served as founding board chairperson and vice-chairperson, respectively, of the U.S.-based VHP-Overseas, according to the VHPO's tax application for tax-exempt status.

Other signs of Sangh affiliation on the Ekal Vidyalaya website include its list of partners in India, such as the RSS's service wing Sewa Bharti (see Ekal Vidyalaya 2009) and photographs from its online gallery such as the one below, which clearly indicate a connection between Ekal Vidyalaya's Gujarat partner, Bharatiya Jan Sewa Sansthan, and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, in Gujarati:



*A fragment of a photograph from the Gujarat photo gallery on Ekal Vidyalaya's website.
Translation of the first three lines in Gujarati:*

"Bharatiya Jan Sewa Sansthan / Gujarat / Vishwa Hindu Parishad" (Ekal Vidyalaya 2007).

Figure 5. Donation Recipient Profiles: The Lodai Project and the Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of India

Recipient Profile: Relief and Rebuilding at Lodai, Gujarat	Recipient Profile: Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of India
<p>Recipient Profile: Relief and Rebuilding at Lodai, Gujarat</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Acknowledged as a VHPA project by VHPA President Jyotish Parekh. ◆ Noted as a VHP project by researchers. ◆ Same researchers documented that the VHP's aid was geared toward caste Hindus and Muslims and lower caste persons were not allowed to return to the rebuilt village. 	<p>Recipient Profile: Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of India</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Acknowledged by VHP General Secretary Praveen Togadia as a VHP project. ◆ In 2005, a report from the Government of India Ministry of Human Resource and Development on the Ekal Vidyalayas and their partner, the Friends of Tribal Society (Vanbandhu Parishad), charging them with “misusing... funds, and using the [government] grants for creating disharmony amongst religious groups and creating a political cadre.” The government ended funding to both organizations. ◆ Adivasi and other human rights researchers have also reported that the Ekal Vidyalayas appear to function as a “vanguard” of Sangh expansion into tribal areas. ◆ The Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of India received more than \$27 million dollars from the Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of USA between 2002 and 2012.

The need to clarify the Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of USA’s connections to the Sangh’s actions in India has been brought up by others, such as Priya Abraham of the Institute on Religion and Policy (Abraham 2009). As of June 2012, Ekal Vidyalaya of America continues to hold fundraisers and channel funds to India (Ekal Vidyalaya 2012).

Notes

¹⁶ In 2004, the U.K. community group Awaaz-South Asia Watch linked Sewa International’s U.K. chapter to Sangh projects in India in its report, “In Bad Faith?: British Charity and Hindu Extremism.”

¹⁷ The Indian People’s Tribunal report on the Gujarat earthquake aftermath, released August 2001, also refers to an investigation conducted by the Indian Social Action Forum, which stated: “The role of the RSS in getting relief to the upper castes among the Hindus in particular has been blatant. In Anjar, for example, the well-tended RSS camp which houses only Hindus and barring a handful of exceptions, only caste Hindus, sits cheek by jowl with another in which the far poorer population of the homeless Anjarites - Muslims mostly and a substantial number of lower caste Hindus - live. All of this is being accepted without question and rationalised on the basis that we

cannot expect anything other than that people will ‘naturally’ help ‘their own’” (IPT 2001). As of 2004, news media also circulated this understanding, as with this Frontline article: “Reports [in the aftermath of the Gujarat earthquake in 2001] allege that the RSS distributed relief selectively to upper-caste victims, neglecting Dalits and Muslims. The RSS also organised shakhas [local chapters] in relief camps. At Adhoi village, Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) preachers gave lectures every night on the need to be vigilant against Christians and Muslims. RSS volunteers allegedly threatened other relief workers with harm unless they left Kutch” (Bunsha 2004).

¹⁸ From the International People’s Tribunal on Human Rights and Justice in Kashmir report, *Buried Evidence*: “VDCs are made operational by security forces and supported by the state. VDC members are recruited by Hindu nationalist/militant groups, and are organized as civilian ‘self-defence’ campaigns and militias. In the understanding of local communities these campaigns are staged as retribution for anti-national activities. A network of VDCs has been instituted throughout the Jammu region and in certain parts of Kashmir. VDC personnel are predominantly of Hindu and Sikh descent, and in some instances include Muslim villagers deemed ‘trustworthy’ by VDC personnel” (IPTK 2009: 17).

Hindutva in Academic Arenas

Hindutva relies on notions of a “Hindu culture” that is “simplified, easily comprehensible, and commonly accessible,” a “set of common symbolic denominators acceptable across sects and castes... in consonance with ‘the Spirit of Hinduism and the Hindu Nation’” (Hansen 1999: 102; Thapar 2000b). In academic disciplines that focus on India and Hinduism, especially religious studies and history, Hindu nationalist discourses are aided by an already-prevalent “Western Orientalist tendency to establish [the upper-caste tradition of] Advaita [Vedanta] as the ‘central theology of Hinduism’... [helping] in the perpetuation of the view, both in India and abroad, that Hindu thought is Vedanta and little else” (King 1999: 135). Hindu nationalist investment in Brahmanical traditions and Vedic studies— including financial and social support for research into scripture, medicine, astrology and other fields connected to the Vedas— is supported by the Orientalist grain of “focusing upon [sacred texts] as the essential foundation for understanding the Hindu people as a whole,” resulting “inevitably... [in] the denigration of heterogeneous Hindu beliefs and practices as ‘distortions’ of the basic teachings of Vedanta” (King 1999: 101, 135). This maneuver downplays the complex histories of resistance to caste oppression and non-Vedic lives (Thapar 2000a); the cultural exchanges between India, Rome, China, and other parts of the world from the early centuries of the Common Era (Thapar 1966: 109-121); the non-conquest arrival of Zoroastrians (Thapar 1966: 172); and the ongoing disintegration of tribal cultural worlds (Devi 1995).

The Sangh’s efforts in higher education include the establishment and strengthening of academic and para-academic institutions and projects connected to Hinduism, religious studies, Indic studies, psychology, Ayurvedic medicine, yoga, and

technologies connected to the Vedic times. As Hindu nationalist histories and narratives are confronted and refuted by historians and scholars like Arjun Appadurai, Angana Chatterji, Steve Farmer, Dwijendra Narayan Jha,¹⁹ Romila Thapar,²⁰ Kamala Visweswaran, and Michael Witzel,²¹ Sangh-affiliated groups have bolstered their positions by funding institutions and projects in higher education, including a religious college, a biennial conference, and grantmaking foundations. These activities draw upon the experiences, resources and abilities of middle-class and professional segments of the diaspora, while continuing a trend of the Indian nationalist and upper-class elite to assert claims of a “Hindu” spiritual superiority in the context of political subordination (Chatterjee 1993: 121).

Hindu University of America (HUA, identification number 59-2977691) provides institutional support for persons in academic fields prioritized by the Sangh. The school is an educational wing of the VHPA, with its conceptualization in 1985 noted as a significant occurrence in VHPA history (VHPA 2008). The school was granted tax-exempt status in 1992, and its tax records included records of donations from “VHP”. According to its 2004 tax return, Hindu University board of directors includes:

1. Braham Aggarwal - Secretary and Treasurer of the Florida chapter of the VHPA 2000-2004 (Florida Secretary of State 2000-2004)
2. Ram P. Agarwal - President of the Florida chapter of the VHPA 2000-2004 (Florida Secretary of State 2000-2004)
3. Mahesh Mehta - Founder and former president of VHPA at the national level (Saigal 2004)

Hindu University’s July 2003 newsletter names two other Sangh leaders as members of the board:

4. Beth Kulkarni - at one time the President of the Texas Chapter of the VHPA (Kamath 2000)
5. Yash Pal Lakra - President of the national-level VHPA for five years, ending in 1999 (VHPA 1999)

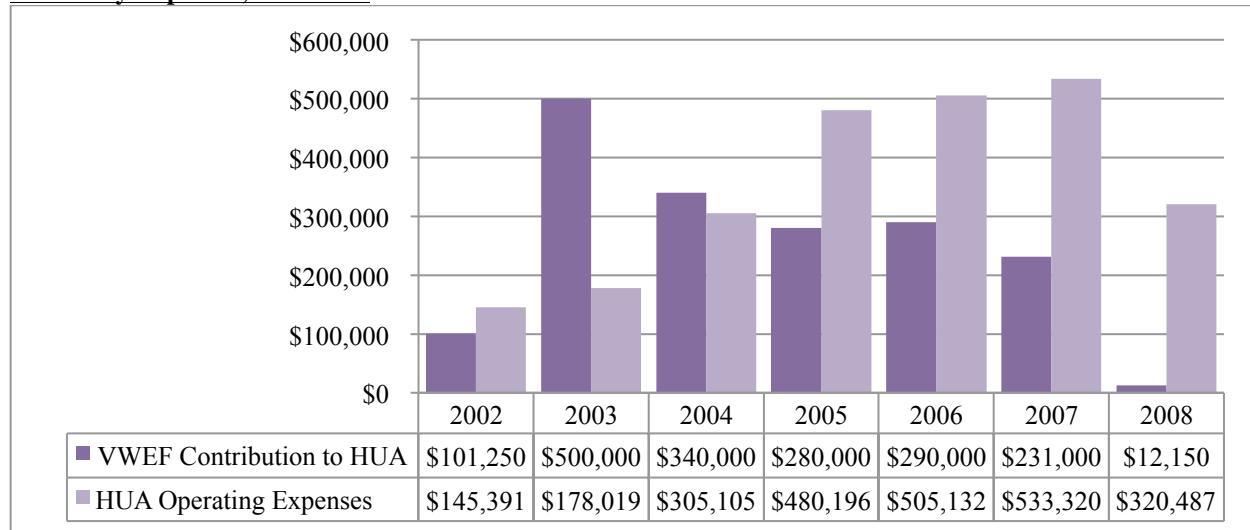
Through coursework and degrees offered, Hindu University of America focuses on the following areas: Hinduism, Hindu Philosophy, Yoga Philosophy and Meditation, Yoga Education, Sanskrit Studies, Vedic Astrology, Sri Aurobindo Studies, and Ayurveda, continuing to prioritize these cultural practices and forms as “Hindu” (Hindu University of America 2010b). The school was incorporated in Florida in 1989 and began providing correspondence courses in 1993, then implemented residential curricula in October of 2002 (Kolapen 2002: 312-313). The school awards graduate-level degrees, though it is not presently accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), the regional accreditation body for institutions of higher education in Florida (SASC 2013). In 2003, according to a March 2004 Hindu University newsletter, the school awarded its first master’s degree in Vedic Astrology, and its first doctorate of Hindu Studies in “Yoga Philosophy and Meditation” in 2005 (Hindu University of America 2005). According to its 2007 tax return, it received more than \$470,000 in contributions and a little more than \$50,000 in program revenue, while spending more than \$225,000 toward its operations. Of note are the donations of Sangh-affiliate **Vivek Welfare and Educational Foundation** to the Hindu University (see Figure 6).

The VWEF’s connections to the Sangh are clear; its donation recipients include: Hindu University of America, Param Shakti Peeth, Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America, Sewa Bharti (the RSS’s relief and social service wing in India) and HSS, as documented in the VWEF tax returns from

2000-2003. Per its 2004 tax return, its board of directors includes: IDRF founder Vinod Prakash, VHPA leader Mahesh Mehta, and Braham Aggarwal (of Hindu University of America and VHPA, see Appendix A). According to VWEF’s tax returns from 2006-2012, **Hindu American Foundation** leaders have served on the VWEF board as well: Suhag Shukla from 2006-2008 and Nikhil Joshi from 2009-2012 (see section below).

In contrast to VWEF, **Infinity Foundation** (identification number 22-3339826) supports Hindutva by distributing its monies in a more diffuse manner: through offering book grants and concentrating funding on university departments and other academic institutions. The Foundation has not claimed to be part of the Sangh Parivar, though the Foundation’s tax returns indicate that the organization has donated to U.S. Sangh affiliates **Hindu American Foundation** (2007), **World Association for Vedic Studies** (2007, 2008), **California Parents for the Equalization of Educational Materials** (2008), and the **Educator’s Society for the Heritage of India** (2008), each of which are discussed elsewhere in this report. Infinity Foundation’s other funding recipients include: Delhi-based Center for the Study of Developing Societies, the Sanskrit and Indian Studies Department at Harvard University, Columbia University’s Department of Religion, and Association for Asian Studies (see Table 5). In the case of Harvard, Infinity Foundation’s gift of \$50,000+ corresponded with a “visiting position in Indic Studies at Harvard University, in its Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies,” imbued with the social standing of an academic position in the Sanskrit and Indian Studies Department at Harvard University (Infinity Foundation 2003). More recent writings by Malhotra indicate that the Infinity Foundation is likely no longer giving monies to Harvard University’s humanities departments that focus on South Asia (Malhotra 2010).

Figure 6. Vivek Welfare and Educational Foundation Contributions to Hindu University and Hindu University Expenses, 2002-2008



For VWEF, the figures are from IRS form 990, Part III (2002-2007) and IRS form 990, Statement 5 (2008).

For HUA, the figures are from IRS form 990, Part I, row 17 (2002-2008).

The status of a grantmaking foundation can also serve as a launchpad in efforts to discredit and target academics. Infinity Foundation president Rajiv Malhotra has channeled considerable effort writing against scholars like Angana Chatterji and Wendy Doniger, attacks that Martha Nussbaum has characterized as “sarcastic and intemperate... [showing] little concern about factual accuracy,” and while Malhotra has not openly advocated violence, his “irresponsible characterizations of other people’s work have done much to foster a climate in which such threats can be made” (Malhotra and Neelakandan 2011: location 4327; Nussbaum 2007: 248, 257). There are several scholars, targets of Malhotra, who have functioned as a warning to others considering research connected to South Asia.

1. According to Infinity Foundation’s 2002 tax return, the foundation gave \$14,500 to California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS) that year, when Malhotra wrote an opinion piece against institute faculty Angana Chatterji, implying she is a “sepoy” and “Macaulayite” (Malhotra 2002). Reportedly,

the foundation was negotiating an endowment with the school that year as well, and the negotiations were unsuccessful.

2. Paul Courtright received multiple threats of violence from others after Malhotra wrote about him (Vedantam 2004).

3. Claremont McKenna professor Cynthia Humes reported that she received “a barrage of Internet venom by colleagues of Malhotra” after she delivered a paper on Malhotra’s use “of philanthropy to influence members of the academy” (Humes 2006).

4. Jeffery Kripal, after receiving death threats and becoming the target of a failed campaign to have Rice University rescind a job offer, now makes minimal reference to India in his work (Nussbaum 2007: 251).

Though it is uncertain how many times such strategies have been utilized at other schools, the chilling effect on scholarship and scholarly debate has been real, and further research is necessary to document the effects of Infinity

Foundation's grantmaking (see Table 5 a list of major allocations from 2001-2013).

While certain scholars and scholarship are targeted by the Infinity Foundation, others are given support. One of the Infinity Foundation's Sangh-affiliated donation recipients in 2006 is the **World Association for Vedic Studies** (WAVES, identification number 72-1350935), which holds a conference every two years to enable Hindu nationalist proponents to showcase and circulate their work. WAVES aims, as stated on its application for tax-exempt status (form 1023), "to conduct multidisciplinary activities for research and study of Vedic and ancient Indian traditions including its history, philosophy, science, psychology, literature, scriptures, linguistics, [and] archaeology..." According to the WAVES Articles of Incorporation, the founding board of directors consisted of: Bhu Dev Sharma, one-time president of Hindu University (Hindu University of America 2010a), Hindu University adjunct faculty members Subhash C. Kak, David Frawley, and Klaus Klostermaier (Hindu University of America 2004: 2), Shiva G. Bajpai of California (who played an important part in the Sangh's textbook campaign in 2005-2006, see Visweswaran et al 2009: 106-107 and Maira and Swamy 2006).

In July of 2006, WAVES's three-day conference took place at the University of Houston in Texas, hosting approximately 150 scholars and 1000 participants, according to a conference press release (Kulkarni 2006). Noted as the sixth in a series of international conferences, the gathering featured presentations in the fields of history, scripture analysis, politics, medicine, and spirituality, spheres where Hindu nationalism is, or is becoming, a major contending force. Despite the claim in WAVES's application for non-profit status (form 1023) that the organization "is and shall be a non-sectarian, multidisciplinary academic organization and

would not be governed by any ideology," the chairman of the local conference organizing committee, Subhash Gupta, is an HSS leader in Houston,²² and the gathering hosted several key Hindu nationalist figures (WAVES 2006a). Among the conference's supporting organizations are other Sangh affiliates: Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh, Param Shakti, and the VHP of America (WAVES 2006b). The themes of WAVES presenters requires further exploration, to examine the Sangh narratives energized through this para-academic space.

Notes

¹⁹ Dwijendra Narayan Jha stated before the Indian History Congress, which had just elected him as its General President for its 66th session: "Historians cannot be the custodians of religion: our task is to critically examine it" (Jha 2006: 47).

²⁰ A distinguished historian of Ancient India, Romila Thapar is a Professor Emerita of Jawaharlal Nehru University and was appointed the first holder of the Kluge Chair in Countries and Cultures of the South at U.S. Library of Congress (Library of Congress 2003). Thapar has written and spoken to debunk and critique Sangh narratives that support homogenized identities and justify Hindutva's violence (see Thapar 2000a, b, c, Thapar and Mukta 2000, Thapar and Witzel 2006).

²¹ Scholars and faculty of and from South Asia have often supported anti-Sangh campaigns, as with the case of the Campaign to Stop Funding Hate report on the IDRF in 2002 (Swapan 2002) and the California textbook controversy in 2005-2006 (Visweswaran et al 2009: 101).

²² In a July 2006 Indo-American News article on the WAVES conference, Subhash Gupta is identified as "the present Vice President of Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS) and a past President of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America (VHPA) Texas Chapter" (Giri 2006).

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Table 5. Infinity Foundation Allocations, 2001-2013 (Selected)

Year	Contributions, Gifts, and Grants Paid	Selected Recipients of \$10,000 or more
2001	\$345,945	Association for Asian Studies (\$10,000) Auroville International (\$27,500) Harvard University (\$51,200) Indian Institute for Forest Management (\$13,500) Tibet House (\$67,060) University of Hawaii (\$26,500)
2002	\$312,790	Association for Asian Studies (\$16,000) California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS) (\$14,500) Center for the Study of Developing Societies (\$10,000) Columbia University, American Institute of Buddhist Studies (\$15,000) Columbia University, Department of Religion (\$10,600) University of Hawaii, Department of Philosophy (\$41,000)
2003	\$390,054	Center for the Study of Developing Societies (\$10,000) Columbia University, Department of Religion (\$66,300) Harvard University- Sanskrit and Indian Studies (\$53,500) Malagiri Sri Aurobindo Center (\$15,000) Melbourne University and Sophia International affiliate [Name redacted] (\$16,600) National Institute of Advanced Studies- Bangalore, India (\$10,000) Rutgers University Foundation- Religion Department (\$10,000) Tibet House (\$33,990)
2004	\$208,193	Center for the Study of Developing Societies (\$22,650) Mahila Haat (\$14,600) Matagiri Sri Aurobindo Center - Auroville- New York (\$11,000) University of Hawaii, Department of Philosophy (\$10,000) Virginia Commonwealth University (\$32,500)
2005	\$107,310	All India Movement Aim for Seva (\$10,000) Center for the Study of Developing Societies (\$13,000) University of Hawaii, Department of Philosophy (\$12,500)
2006	\$55,600	Mahila Haat History Series/Seminar (\$34,350)
2007	\$74,013	Graduate of University of Texas, Austin [Name redacted] – Writing Grant – (\$17,500) Mahila Haat History Series/Seminar (\$33,000)
2008	\$109,076	Arsha Vidya Gurukulam (\$15,000) Mahila Haat (\$27,500) [Name redacted] – Research and Writing - U Turn Theory (\$13,938.75) [Names redacted] – Writing an Academic Book (\$15,000)
2009	\$106,356	Arsha Vidya Gurukulam (\$10,000) [Name redacted] – Research and Writing - U Turn Theory (\$17,849) [Name redacted] – U Turn Theory (\$15,459.93)
2010	\$88,633	[Name redacted] – Gent University Research Center – Research Grant (\$10,000) University of Mass – Dartmouth, Center for Indic Studies (\$10,000)
2011	\$100,999	Arsha Vidya Gurukulam (\$10,000) [Name redacted] – Research Scholar and Editor (\$14,880) [Name redacted] – Research Scholar and Editor (\$31,500)
2012	\$16,779	No grants \$10,000 or more.
2013	\$34,581	[Name redacted] – Research Scholar and Editor (\$17,083)
Total	\$1,950,329	

Source: Total disbursement figures are from IRS form 990-PF, Part I, row 25 (2001-2013). Recipient information is from grantee lists included with each tax return.

Leadership in Indo-American Communities

Though those who participate in the Sangh's service work in India have often sought to be "aloof from politics" (a phrase used by M.S. Golwalkar, quoted in Jaffrelot 1996: 62), Hindutva-supporting public relations and lobbying groups and Sangh public campaigns have made their presence felt with increasing intensity and widening scope over the last few years in the United States. With the escalation of Sangh violence in India over the last two decades, a network of U.S. Sangh groups has emerged to enable associations with the Sangh that are socially and politically acceptable and desirable, given that a powerful segment of its constituency are "well-to-do US-based professionals... likely to be wary of controversy" (Rajagopal 2000: 475). Below are some of such organizations and a few of the major activities and events that mark the Sangh's rise as leaders in Indo-American communities.

One of the key Hindu nationalist political parties at the national level in India, the **Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)**, receives support from the **Overseas Friends of the BJP (OFBJP)**, whose U.S. chapter's website states that it aims to "[project] a positive and correct image of India and its people in the in the U.S. and foreign media" (OFBJP 2012). The OFBJP, which is not a tax-exempt group, appears to be able to mobilize a significant level of resources from the upper-classes of the diaspora; when then-Indian Prime Minister A. B. Vajpayee visited New York in 2000--when the BJP led the coalition government that ruled India-- the OFBJP organized a "Hindutva fête" with a reported cost of approximately \$400,000 (Someshwar 2000). Since then, it has continued to raise the profile of the BJP and the Sangh with Indo-Americans and U.S. politicians. On March 21, 2002, three major Indo-American community groups— the Association of Indians in America (AIA), the Indian

American Forum for Political Education, and the National Federation of Indian Associations (NFIA)— worked with the OFBJP to sponsor a Congressional luncheon on Capitol Hill, even as anti-Muslim violence in BJP-ruled Gujarat were still filling Indian and international news, including reports of complicity on the parts of BJP leaders and police (Association of Indians in America 2002; Bedi 2002).

OFBJP figures were also among the group that planned to honor Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi at the Madison Square Garden Theater in 2005, the **Association of Indian Americans of North America** (Narendramodi.net 2005). Modi had also been invited by the **Asian American Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA)** to address its annual convention that year (Sen 2005). The news of his possible visit to the U.S. prompted vocal and widespread protests from community groups, scholars, and organizations supporting religious freedom and pluralism, who formed the Coalition Against Genocide (see CAG 2005; 2012). On March 18, 2005, the U.S. State Department denied Modi a diplomatic visa, as his visit did not qualify for one, and revoked his tourist and business visa under the Immigration and Nationality Act Section 212(a)(2)(g), as a government official who "was responsible for carrying out... severe violations of religious freedom" (Mulford 2005). The **Hindu American Foundation**²³ (HAF, identification number 68-0551525), among other groups, protested Narendra Modi's ban in a public demonstration (Joseph 2005).

Before 2005, Hindu nationalism's public campaigns included protesting the representations of Hindu gods in the TV show *Xena: Princess Warrior* and a campaign to remove the images of Hindu deities from toilet seats led by VHPA's **American Hindus Against Defamation (AHAD)** and **Indiacause** (Shankar 1999; Indiacause 2000). Such campaigns appeared to rally a wider

segment of middle-class diasporic communities and involved the distribution of public statements to the media and letter-writing campaigns, largely mobilized online, bolstering the Sangh's authority 1) to assess the accuracy of Hindu representations and 2) to speak for certain segments of Hindus. In 2005, this project of correct representations expanded as many of the groups named thus far were among the 80 that formed the **Hindu Council Initiative**, including HSS, VHPA, HSC, **Educators' Society for the Heritage of India (ESHI)**, identification number 20-1200065), **Hindu International Council Against Defamation** (HICAD, identification number 22-3810334), Hindu University, and **Barsana Dham** (now **JKP Radha Madhav Dham/Vedic Foundation** (identification number 74-2673063). One explicit goal of this council is to “[correct] biased and distorted views of the Hindu traditions in educational institutions and media” (Jha 2005).

In 2005-2006, many of these groups or their members were part of a campaign to insert Hindu nationalist histories into California textbooks, including the downplaying of certain gender and caste oppressions (more on the California textbook campaign see Visweswaran et al 2009, Maira and Swamy 2006 and Taneja 2006). This time the Sangh's mobilization was extensive: at the forefront were HSS-run **Hindu Education Foundation**, the **Vedic Foundation**, and **Hindu American Foundation**, backed by families, youth, other U.S.-based temple and community groups. The Vedic Foundation also hired a public relations firm, **Ruder Finn** (Burress 2006a).

After South Asia scholars, South Asian community groups, Dalit and tribal groups raised objections, the State Board of Education refused to accept most of the Sangh's proposed edits in California textbooks (see Thapar and Witzel 2006 and Visweswaran et al 2009). At this time, the

Hindu American Foundation retained the law firm **Olson, Hagel and Fishburn** to sue the California Board of Education at the state level while **California Parents for the Equalization of Educational Materials (CAPEEM)**, identification number 56-2565521)²⁴ was formed to sue the State Board of Education at the federal level (Burress 2006b; CAPEEM 2006). According to their 2007 tax returns, the HSS and the Infinity Foundation each donated \$5000 to CAPEEM, aligning with CAPEEM's goals. The HAF case ended in September 2006, with the court “dismiss[ing] Hindus’ claim of bias” (Burress 2006c). In February 2009, a court ruled against CAPEEM’s allegations of bias in relation to textbook content (Swapan 2009), and the federal case was closed officially in June 2009 (Joseph 2009).

With the HAF and CAPEEM cases fading from widespread attention after 2006 and both failing to establish bias against Hindus, the Sangh seems to be backing away from public legal strategies and investing more energy into building a public relations infrastructure— networks of information and resources to bolster the Sangh’s versions of culture and identity and its legitimacy to speak on behalf of Hindus to U.S. audiences. The HAF continues to serve in such a role (see Table 6).

The **Educators’ Society for the Heritage of India (ESHI)** is another. Like the Vedic Foundation and HSS’s education wing **Hindu Education Foundation**, ESHI is an organization that seeks to “[provide] authoritative information and resources related to India’s heritage, culture, history, Dharma, philosophy, theology and languages, to schools and colleges, teachers, curriculum developers, authors, publishers, education officials, policy-makers, media, interfaith organizations, non-profit organizations, leaders and the public in North America” (ESHI 2009). Its leadership, from its “About Us” webpage, includes VHPA and Hindu

University leaders: Mahesh Mehta (VHPA), Vice Presidents include Beth Kulkarni (VHPA, Hindu University), and Abhinav Dwivedi (Hindu University). ESHI leader, Ved Chaudhary, is also a contact for HICAD and the registrant for its website (HICAD 2011).

Despite the volume of evidence presented by politicized community groups connecting the U.S. groups to Hindu nationalist politics, faculty testimonies against the Sangh's textbook campaign,²⁵ and the objections of lower-caste communities²⁶—support of, and indifference to, the Sangh's politics continues to circulate in Indo-American communities.

California was among other South Asian groups that submitted an amicus curiae brief in opposition to the HAF lawsuit in 2006 (Ambedkar Center for Justice and Peace et al 2006).

Notes

²³ Despite the claim that the “Hindu American Foundation is not affiliated with any religious or political organizations or entities” on its website, HAF president Mihir Meghani was identified on the VHPA website as a former VHPA National Governing Council member and as a member of the HSS by the defenders of the IDRDF (HAF 2014c; Rao et al 2003; VHPA 2001). More of HAF’s Hindu nationalist connections can be found in Table 6.

²⁴ CAPEEM’s application for tax-exempt status (form 1023) states that HICAD “supports the objectives of CAPEEM and is raising funds for CAPEEM.”

²⁵ Testimonies and letters (one signed by 47 academics of ancient India and another signed by 109 South Asia faculty) were once hosted at Southasiafaculty.net. Some letters can still be found on Friends of South Asia’s California Textbook pages (Friends of South Asia 2012).

²⁶ During the 2005-2006 textbook controversy, members of a Guru Ravidass Gurudwara community in California testified before the California State Board of Education against the Sangh’s edits. The Guru Ravidass Gurdwaras of

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Table 6. Hindu American Foundation's Hindu Nationalist Connections

Date	Connections
2001	HAF co-founder Mihir Meghani was on the VHP of America Governing Council and a member of the HSS (VHPA 2001; Rao et al 2003).
2005	HAF supported the HSS 's educational wing Hindu Education Foundation and Vedic Foundation in the California textbooks controversy and brought a lawsuit against the California State Board of Education (Visweswaran et al 2009: 108).
2006-2012	According to Vivek Welfare and Educational Foundation 's tax records, HAF leaders have served on the VWEF board: Suhag Shukla from 2006-2008 and Nikhil Joshi from 2009-2012. During these years the VWEF contributed funds to Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation, HSS, Hindu University, Param Shakti Peeth, Sewa Bharti Bhopal, and Vishwa Hindu Parishad .
November 2009	Sheetal Shah, Development and Outreach Director of HAF, attended and spoke at the "Hindu Dharma Sabha" in New Jersey, organized by Forum for Hindu Awakening and self-identified Hindu nationalist group Hindu Janajagruti Samiti (News India-Times 2009).
2012	HAF and the VHPA 's Hindu Mandir Executive Council collaborated on a Hindu Chaplaincy Program (VHPA 2012).
December 2012	HAF co-founder Aseem Shukla wrote an opinion piece, "Absurd to deny Modi a US visa" in India Abroad (Shukla 2012).
February 2013	HAF was among the groups lobbying U.S. Representative Mike Honda to stop his support of the continued visa denial of Narendra Modi (Jha 2013).
December 2013-2014	HAF made public statements against House Resolution 417 (Sohrabji 2013; HAF 2014b).
2014	VHPA leaders Kavita Pallod and Rishi Bhutada are on the HAF Executive Council and Board of Directors, respectively (HAF 2014a). Both have served as directors of a VHPA youth camp in Texas (Chugh 2012; Giri 2005).

Further Steps

So far we have looked at four general areas where the U.S.-based Sangh Parivar and its allies have concentrated a significant amount of resources and labor among more affluent segments of diasporic communities. Though there is increasing availability of newspaper coverage, academic research, and human rights and government reports on the Sangh's violent actions in South Asia, support for the Sangh remains strong among elite and middle-class leaders and families in the diaspora. The available tax materials (charted in this report) indicate that participation in the Sangh's public programs and donations to its non-profit wings have continued.

Given the available information on the U.S.-based Sangh organizations and the continued discrimination, threat, and violence carried out by the India-based Sangh, some urgent questions that need investigation and clarification include:

1. Legal culpability of U.S.-based Sangh groups and members in Sangh-led violent acts in South Asia. Independent and transparent investigations are necessary to confirm or refute the U.S.-Sangh's responsibility in any crimes committed overseas. Relevant U.S. laws may include the Alien Tort Claims Act (28 U.S. Code 1330) and Conspiracy to Kill, Kidnap, Maim, or Injure Persons or Damage Property in a Foreign Country (18 U.S. Code 956). Further research is needed into the exact nature of the decision-making and forms of collaboration between U.S. and India-based Sangh groups. If further investigations find any of the above groups to be legally responsible for violence in South Asia, those culpable must be held accountable and answer to those that have been brutalized.

2. Possible violations of 501(c)(3) regulations and restrictions. As noted in the

above section on the Ekal Vidyalaya educational project, newspaper and testimonies from community activists indicate the possibility that the one-teacher schools function to recruit tribal youths into the Sangh's anti-conversion and anti-minority activities through this literacy campaign. Independent verification of U.S. Sangh's compliance with 501(c)(3) regulations is important, in order to a) end non-compliant activities connected to discrimination and violence; b) support transparency in charitable funding; c) document the exact flows and uses of resources and monies and their effects in the U.S. and South Asia; and d) enhance public understanding of where and how the U.S. Sangh operates. Should non-compliance with 501(c)(3) regulations be found, authorities will be notified for further verification and action as appropriate.

While there is no international consensus on standards of transparency for non-profit relief/development organizations, international projects such as the Global Reporting Initiative have developed guidelines that can provide a starting point in discussing possible standards and protocols for assessing and documenting an organization's human rights protections and violations (Global Reporting Initiative 2010).

3. The involvement of other U.S.-based actors in supporting Hindu nationalist extremism. The U.S. Sangh's work is linked to other individuals and organizations that may not explicitly identify themselves as members of Sangh family, as with Infinity Foundation. Research into Sangh actions are needed in the corporate business world (including corporate development projects and professional associations), in connection with foreign direct investments to South Asia, in temple²⁷ and regional-linguistic communities, and in lobbying U.S. and Indian politicians at all levels. Further investigations are needed

into the fundraising circuits that are enabled and provided for Indian Sangh leaders in the above areas. Various community groups have already produced reports, issued statements, and led efforts to raise public awareness about the U.S. Sangh's politics: Campaign to Stop Funding Hate, Coalition Against Genocide, Friends of South Asia, Federation of Tamil Sangams of North America, Indian American Muslim Council, South Asia Citizens Web and Wire, faculty of Southasiafaculty.net, and other activists and scholars (Sabrang and SACW 2002; CAG 2005; CSFH 2007). Raising public awareness and energizing discussion and debate on the Sangh's role in Indo-American communities may help to inform effective and timely responses on the part of communities and U.S.-based leaders, toward empowered collective reflections and actions toward justice and accountability in relation to this long-distance nationalism.

Notes

²⁷ In recent years, the VHPA has been holding annual conferences of temple leadership in the United States and Canada, the “Hindu Mandir (temple) Executives Conferences” (HMEC). In 2009 the conference was attended by representatives from 113 temples (VHPA 2009a).

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Appendix A: Leadership overlaps between Hindu nationalist affiliated organizations

	Sangh Affiliation	IDRF	Sewa International	EVFA	VWEF
Braham R. Aggarwal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VHPA-Secretary/Treasurer-FL chapter (Florida Secretary of State 2000-2004) • Hindu University of America - Board of Directors (HUA 2004 tax return) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairperson of Park Square Enterprises, which borrowed \$4 million from IDRF in 2004 (IDRF 2004 tax return) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donor of \$1.8 million in 2005 (India-West 2005) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board of Directors (VWEF 2004 tax return)
Gautam Desai	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HSS- Alameda (Uppal 2000) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President (Sewa International 2008 tax return) 		
Beth Kulkarni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VHPA-President-Houston Chapter (Kamath 2000) • Hindu University - Board of Directors (HUA 2003) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appeals Preparer (Kulkarni 2001) 			
Yash Pal Lakra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President of VHPA, 1994-1999 (VHPA 1999) 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact for Ekal Vidyalaya on the VHPA website (VHPA 2009b) 	
Mihir Meghani	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VHPA- Governing Council Member (VHPA 2001) • HSS Member (Rao et al 2003) • HAF Co-founder and on the Board of Directors (HAF 2010) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrote public letter in support of IDRF (Meghani 2003) 			
Mahesh Mehta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VHPA- Founder (Saigal 2004) • OFBJP-National Coordinator (OFBJP 2009) • Hindu University of America - Board of Directors (Saigal 2004) 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board of Directors (Saigal 2004) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board of Directors (VWEF 2004 tax return)
Vijay Pallod	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VHPA activist (Giri 2007) • Board of Hindu Students Council (Giri 2007) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Zone Vice President (IDRF 2009) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media assistance (Giri 2007) 		
Vinod Prakash		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President (IDRF 2010) 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board of Directors (VWEF 2004 tax return)
Ajay Shah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vhp-america.org, vhp.org, hssworld.org, rss.org, ofbjp.org websites-technical contact (DNS lookup) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • idrf.org and letindiadevelop.org technical contact (DNS lookup) 			
Ramesh Shah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OFBJP-Vice President (OFBJP 2009) 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secretary (EVFA 2002 tax return) 	
Sonal Shah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VHPA-Governing Council (VHPA 2001) 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donor of \$10,740 in 2005 (EVFA 2005 tax return) 	

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Appendix B: Listing of U.S. Cities with HSS Shakhas/Balagokulams, 2014

State	Shakha Locations	State	Shakha Locations
Alabama	No shakhas	Nevada	No shakhas
Alaska	No shakhas	New Hampshire	Durham, Nashua
Arizona	Chandler, Peoria, Phoenix (2)	New Jersey	Bordentown, Edison (2), Iselin, Jersey City, Kendall Park, Metuchen, Parsippany, Pomona, Rockaway
Arkansas	No shakhas	New Mexico	No shakhas
California	Campbell, Cupertino, Foster City, Fremont (3), Irvine (2), Milpitas, Norwalk, Orangevale, Pleasanton, Roseville, San Diego, San Jose (3), San Ramon, Santa Clara, Santa Clarita, Simi Valley, Sunnyvale (4), Temple City, Tracy	New York	Jamaica Queens, Pomona, Rochester, South Ozone Park, White Plains
Colorado	Colorado Springs, Lone Tree, Longmont	North Carolina	Chapel Hill, Charlotte, Greensboro, Morrisville
Connecticut	Stamford	North Dakota	No shakhas
Delaware	No shakhas	Ohio	Cincinnati, Columbus, Dublin, Marysville, Mason-Wester Chester, Willoughby Hills, Worthington
Florida	Jacksonville, Longwood, Orlando, South West Ranches, Tampa (3)	Oklahoma	No shakhas
Georgia	Atlanta (2), Cumming, Johns Creek (2), Riverdale, Smyrna	Oregon	Beaverton
Hawaii	No shakhas	Pennsylvania	Audubon, Exton, Philadelphia
Idaho	No shakhas	Rhode Island	No shakhas
Illinois	Aurora, Bloomington (2), Libertyville, Peoria, Schaumburg, Springfield	South Carolina	Columbia, Greenville
Iowa	Ames, Dubuque, Urbandale	South Dakota	Sioux Falls
Kansas	No shakhas	Texas	Austin (2), Coppell, Flower Mound, Houston (3), Irving, Keller, Kingwood, Pearland, Plano, San Antonio (2), Spring, Sugar Land
Louisiana	No shakhas	Utah	No shakhas
Maryland	Adelphi, Clarksburg	Vermont	No shakhas
Massachusetts	Billerica, Boston, Foxboro, Shrewsbury, Woburn	Virginia	Ashburn, Falls Church, Herndon
Michigan	Canton, Farmington, Midland, Novi, Troy	Washington	Bellevue, Kent, Olympia, Sammamish, Seattle, Spokane, Tukwila, West Richland
Minnesota	Eagan (2), Rochester	Washington DC	No shakhas
Mississippi	No shakhas	West Virginia	No shakhas
Missouri	No shakhas	Wisconsin	Kaukauna, Menasha, Pewaukee, Sun Prairie
Montana	No shakhas	Wyoming	No shakhas
Nebraska	No shakhas	TOTAL	140 (as of May 2014)

Source: HSS website, Chapters (HSS 2014a).

Acronyms

AAHOA	Asian American Hotel Owners Association
AHAD	American Hindus Against Defamation
AI	Amnesty International
ANHAD	Act Now for Harmony and Democracy
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
CAG	Coalition Against Genocide
CAPEEM	California Parents for the Equalization of Educational Materials
CSFH	Campaign to Stop Funding Hate
ESHI	Educators' Society for the Heritage of India
EVFA	Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation USA
FOSA	Friends of South Asia
HAF	Hindu American Foundation
HCI	Hindu Council Initiative
HICAD	Hindu International Council Against Defamation
HRW	Human Rights Watch
HSC	Hindu Students Council
HSS	Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh
HUA	Hindu University of America
IDRF	India Development and Relief Fund
IIJ	International Initiative for Justice
IPT	Indian People's Tribunal
IPTK	International People's Tribunal on Human Rights and Justice in Kashmir
IRS	Internal Revenue Service
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OFBJP	Overseas Friends of the BJP
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
SACS	Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
SACW	South Asia Citizens Web/Wire
USCIRF	United States Commission on International Religious Freedom
VDC	Village Defence Committees
VHP	Vishwa Hindu Parishad
VHPA	VHP of America
VHPO	VHP-Overseas
VWEF	Vivek Welfare and Educational Foundation
WAVES	World Association for Vedic Studies

Glossary

Adivasi	those of tribal/indigenous communities, literally, "first inhabitants"
Dalit	persons formerly known as "untouchable"
dhwaj	saffron flag
parivar	family
shakha	chapter

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Transnational Bio/Necropolitics: Hindutva and its Avatars (Australia/India)

Goldie Osuri

I would like to begin this paper with a comment on the title. In the theoretical itinerary within the Humanities, the term 'transnational' was used by Ulf Hannerz to move away from the concept of the national – to transcend the fixity and boundedness of the national (Grewal 2005: 22). Inderpal Grewal has extended the term to denote specific connectivities across national boundaries. For Grewal, these connectivities are not an encompassing theorising of the global nor can they be described as connections between forms of congealed locality for diasporas. Instead, the term 'transnational connectivities' is a theoretical tool to describe, to demonstrate, and to analyse how and why things, images, ideas, and peoples are able to move across national boundaries, what transpires in the process of that movement, and how that movement is informed through colonial and postcolonial histories (Grewal 2005: 23). Etymologically speaking, the term 'trans' comes from Latin and means to cross something; it has a commonality with a Sanskrit root – 'tara' which also means to cross. This is the root that forms the noun 'avatar' introduced to English by William Jones, the Orientalist philologist in 1784. The term *avatar* has to do with the crossing of deities – their descent to earth. In current gaming terminology, that meaning has been transfigured to signify virtual/visual representations of the self, a term popularised by Neal Stephenson in his novel *Snow Crash* (1992). This is the meaning that informs James Cameron's 3D film, *Avatar* (2010), which addresses

colonialism. This linguistic affinity has a significance which I will speak to a little later in the paper.

I use the term *avatar* here to think through the manifestations of Hindutva or Hindu nationalism, an ethno-religio-cultural nationalism within Indian diasporas across the world, located in a very specific transnational connectivity between India and Australia. Hindu nationalism is a flux of crossings of discursive beliefs, emotional and ideological investments, through the structures and strictures of organisations which include strategies, media networks, and community relationships. It is a political constituency which presumes to mediate a national but also a racial, cultural, and sometimes cricket-talk-charged border between India and Australia. In this sense, and for the purpose of this paper, it is appropriate that the terms ‘transnational’ and ‘avatar’ co-exist in the title qualifying the movements and manifestations of Hindutva. This paper is very much about these different avatars, the different manifestations of Hindutva, which I describe through the lens of a Foucauldian biopolitics (2003) and Mbembian necropolitics (2003) in the transnational route and connectivity, the crossing, between India and Australia. The questions I explore in this paper are: How does a Hindutva organisation like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) incite and conduct violence against Muslims and Christians in India while representing itself through discourses of diversity and multiculturalism in a liberal democracy like Australia? And conversely how do the structures and mechanisms of liberal multiculturalism enable and foster the activities of Hindutva organisations such as the VHP?

Hindutva: Avatars at Home and Abroad

Scholars have written extensively about the role of Hindutva organisations and campaigns and their alignment of a dominant Hindu identity and nationalism in the Indian context (Basu et al. 1993; Sarkar 1999; Jaffrelot 1999; Kamat and Matthews 2003). As Kamat and Matthews describe it, the ‘formal origins of the Hindutva movement can be traced to 1925 when the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS, literally National Volunteer Corps) was founded for “propagating Hindu culture”’ (2003: 8). The supreme leader of this organisation, M. S. Golwalkar, and its ideological inspiration, Vinayak Savarkar, drew on the writings of the Italian nationalist Mazzini, for whom masculinity, race, culture and nationalism were aligned and had to be asserted against perceived otherness or foreignness.¹ Hindutva or Hinduness, a term coined by Savarkar, racialises and nationalises religious

communities. As Aparna Devare comments, Savarkar made a distinction between Hinduism and Hindutva (2009: 168). Hindutva is ‘a history’ of the ‘Hindu race’ within the territory of the Indian nation (Devare 2009: 168). Kamat and Matthews cite Golwalkar’s argument that ‘foreign races must adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no ideas but those of the glorification of Hindu race and culture’ (2003: 9). The reference to ‘foreign races’ and the attempt to subordinate them to Hindu nationalism, as Kamat and Matthews point out, was not ‘to the British against whom Indians raged a fierce anti-colonial struggle’, instead ‘it stood above all (and continues to stand) for Muslims in the subcontinent, followed by the entire range of religious and cultural minorities such as Indian Christians, Zoroastrians, Jews, and Sikhs’ (Kamat and Matthews 2003: 9). While Hindu nationalism was largely sidelined in Indian politics until the 1990s, the electoral success of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) from 1998 to 2004 made it a national force. Despite the loss of Central government power in 2004 for the BJP, Hindu nationalism has further entrenched a violent vocabulary of religious identity politics in the Indian context. And as the BJP remains in power in some state governments (e.g. Gujarat and Rajasthan), Hindu nationalism is very much a force to be reckoned with in the Indian context.

The VHP, a Hindutva organisation, is a cultural wing of the Sangh Parivar or the family of Hindu nationalist organisations which include the Bajrang Dal (the paramilitary wing) and the BJP (the political wing). The organisation was founded in 1964; its objective has been to ‘organise-consolidate the Hindu society’ and to ‘serve-protect the Hindu Dharma’ (VHP 2010). As Basu et al. describe it, ‘twentieth century Hindutva had originated in middle class groups with a measure of modern education, and had little or no connection for long with the world of traditional religious specialists’ (1993: 50). Golwalkar organised ‘a meeting of Hindu religious leaders in Bombay in mid-1964 to discuss ways in which various Hindu sects and tendencies could sink their many differences, work together, and establish contacts with Hindus residing abroad’ (1993: 50). A diasporic network of Hindutva communities, therefore, was part of Golwalkar’s strategy in establishing the VHP.

Furthermore, while the RSS followed the organisational strategies of European fascism, the strategies of the VHP were quite different. As Basu et al. point out, the VHP asserts ‘an identity of interest with a broad range of Hindu organizations that are officially distinct from itself’ (1993: 56). These organisations ‘stand in for a pluralistic Hindu

society' and 'claims of identity with them gets [sic] easily translated into claims of full powers of representation over the entire Hindu world' (1993: 57). Prema Kurien (2006; 2007) has written extensively about the role of the VHP in promoting Hindu culture in the US. The appeal of Hindu nationalism, Kurien suggests, is that the 'Hindutva message, and its emphasis on the need for Hindu pride and assertiveness is particularly attractive to Hindus in the United States who become a racial, religious, and cultural minority upon immigration and have to deal with the largely negative perceptions of Hinduism in the wider society' (2006: 725). If for diasporic populations, as Kamat and Matthews point out, 'the discourse of Hindutva and pride in being Hindu provide the immigrant Indian community with a history that gives it value in and "social capital" within the ideology of liberal multiculturalism', the costs of this social capital of diasporic communities finance Hindutva operations in India, and are effectively paid by religious and cultural minorities in India through bloody violence (Kamat and Matthews 2003: 12–13).

Kamat and Matthews trace the movement of funds which arise from cultural projects conducted among diasporic communities to political projects in the Indian context. Within six years leading up to 2003, Hindutva organisations working among tribal communities in India received 250,000 dollars from the US alone (Kamat and Matthews 2003: 12). These tribal development activities include the activity of reconversion, a process whereby tribal communities in India are 'reconverted' to Hindutva's notion of Hinduism. These reconversion activities as well as anti-conversion campaigns have been at the core of violence against tribal Christians in the state of Orissa between 2007 and 2008. India's National Commission for Minorities reported in January 2008 that 'the role of the Sangh Parivar activists and the anti-conversion campaign in fomenting organised violence against the Christian community deserves close scrutiny' (2008). On the 2nd anniversary of this violence, 22–24 August 2010, the National People's Tribunal (organised by non-governmental organisations and held in Delhi) released its preliminary report. According to the report, government figures suggest that 'in Kandhamal district alone more than 600 villages were ransacked, 5,600 houses were looted and burnt, 54,000 people were left homeless, 38 people were murdered' (South Asian Citizens Web [SACW] 2010). Human rights groups 'estimate that over 100 people were killed, including women, disabled and aged persons and children; and an unestimated number suffered severe physical injuries and mental trauma' (SACW 2010). The tribunal also states that 'there are reports of four women being gang-raped, many

more victims of sexual assault are believed to have been intimidated into silence. 295 churches and other places of worship, big and small, were destroyed. 13 schools, colleges, and offices of 5 non-profit organisations damaged. About 30,000 people were uprooted and lived in relief camps and continue to be displaced' (SACW 2010). These findings show that 'thousands of dalits and tribals belonging to the Christian minorities in the Kandhamal region of Orissa were victims of organized violence starting in August 2007' (SACW 2010).² To date, one BJP member of the state legislative assembly has been sentenced to seven years in prison for the murder of a Christian resident of Barepanga village (*Times of India* 2010).

The VHP was also an active organising participant in the BJP state government's orchestrated violence against Muslims in Gujarat in 2002 – as an exposé by the Indian news magazine *Tehelka* demonstrated.³ As Kamat and Matthews state, 'the state of Gujarat witnessed unimaginable acts of cruelty and violence as large mobs of Hindu nationalist cadre roamed the streets and systematically massacred the Muslim community' (2003: 5). The Human Rights Watch report (2002) and the Citizens Tribunal report (2002) demonstrated that 'the organization and precision killing and burning of Muslims and the destruction of their property was anything but spontaneous and instead reflected months of careful planning' (Kamat and Matthews 2003: 6). On 19 July 2010, the Citizens for Justice and Peace NGO submitted a Survivors report to the United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women asking for intervention by the international community in order to aid vulnerable witnesses who are continuing to testify to state-sanctioned attempted genocide (2010). These accounts of systematic violence against Muslims and Christians, therefore, expose what is being paid for through the affective and financial investments in Hindutva's diasporic social capital.

In the Australian context, the VHP has recently begun consolidating and expanding its presence and operations. The VHP branch of Australia was founded in 1989 as a volunteer, not-for-profit organisation, and was incorporated by the NSW state in 1998. The VHP has been authorised by the New South Wales Department of Education 'to run religious and cultural classes in Public Schools' (VHP Australia 2010). The VHP is also 'developing syllabus and teaching materials to help volunteers who teach Hindu scripture in NSW schools' (VHP Australia 2010). It held its first national conference in April 2008 at the premises of the University of Western Sydney. I attended this conference and noted that a large poster of M. S. Golwalkar, the

Supreme leader of the RSS, hung on the walls of the lecture theatre. One of the introductory remarks made at this VHP conference referred to the idea that the 'limitless diversity of Hinduism' can be 'savouried beneath Australian skies' (Osuri 2008). Sitting at the table among the speakers in order to welcome the Hindu community were prominent members of the Labor and Liberal parties. Similarly the 2nd Australian Hindu Conference report, organised by the VHP in 2009, proudly mentioned the attendance of two Australian Federal parliamentarians, the Hon. Mr. Philip Ruddock (former Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs with the Howard Liberal government) and the Hon. Mr. Laurie Ferguson (Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs with the then Rudd Labor government).⁴ The report notes that Mr. Ruddock spoke of how Australia had benefited from its diversity even though diversity and multiculturalism have apparently been difficult to manage, while Mr. Ferguson spoke of the Rudd government's commitment to multiculturalism (VHP Australia 2009).

The mention of diversity and multiculturalism in relation to the VHP sound jarring to say the least. To make sense of this issue, Geeta Puri (2008) and Prema Kurien (2007) suggest that a transnational lens is needed in discussing Hindutva activities. Puri discusses VHP assertions of Hindu minority rights in diasporic contexts as a Hindutva strategy which should be placed alongside its record of violence against Muslim and Christian communities in the Indian context, thus illuminating its anti-minority stance (2008). Examining VHP activities through a transnational lens, therefore, is crucial. But it is also useful to ask how these differing manifestations of the same organisation across these transnational routes are enabled? On the one hand, the VHP is associated in diasporic contexts with a religious minority, expressing itself within the language of cultural diversity and multiculturalism. It presumes to speak for and on behalf of the Hindu community through discourses associated with progressive politics within the structure of western liberal multiculturalism. On the other hand, in the Indian context, the VHP is associated with orchestrated hate campaigns, rape and murder, and even attempted genocide in communal atrocities. Commenting on this seeming paradox, Kurien states that 'an ironic and unintended consequence of multiculturalist policies is that they could promote the development of religio-ethnic nationalism among immigrants and result in such groups taking a leadership position within the community' (Kurien 2006: 736). As I proceed to argue in this paper, it is precisely the conceptual structure of liberal multiculturalism, based as it is on

colonial essentialist forms of recognition, that enable Hindutva organisations to thrive. The avatars of empowerment for minoritised Hindu communities in diasporic contexts and the avatars of death and destruction for minoritised groups in the Indian context require a transnational lens which needs to be theorised through an analysis of multicultural forms of power and recognition. It is this framework which provides an explanation of how it is that Hindutva's avatars shuttle between their biopolitical multicultural and necropolitical anti-minority operations.

Biopolitical Multiculturalism

In order to theorise this transnational bio/necropolitics, it is important to examine the link between biopolitics and multiculturalism. Rewriting the relationship between sovereignty, politics and death, Foucault theorises biopower as that which exceeds the sovereign right to kill; hence, biopower assumes the power to foster life as well as the power to let die (2003: 254). In theorising biopolitics, Maurizio Lazzarato has suggested that Foucault was attempting to describe not a 'single source of sovereign power' but a 'multitude of forces that act and react amongst each other' (2002: 103). For Lazzarato, 'biopolitics, understood as government-population-political economy relationship, refers to a dynamic of forces that establishes a new relationship between ontology and politics' (2002: 12). The relations between these forces, as Foucault repeatedly emphasised, are characterised as relations of power. Biopower, in this sense, is a complex of power *dispositifs*, the exercise of power over life in the interests of regulating social life. Lazzarato suggests that 'biopolitics is the strategic coordination of these power relations in order to extract a surplus of power from living beings' (Lazzarato 2002: 103). This is an important theorisation to think through in relation to the conception of multiculturalism which was born out of, and has depended on, a European history of racism. Racial differentiation was crucial, Foucault suggests, for Nazism; it made possible the murderous function of the state (2003: 255). Keenly aware of the devastating consequences of racial differentiation through colonial discourse and Nazi utilisation of pseudo-scientific theorisations of racial difference, UNESCO 'first brought together its panel of "world experts" in 1950' to counter this racial differentiation of populations (Lentin 2005: 383). Anthropologists such as Claude Levi Strauss were instrumental in drafting an anti-racism strategy and statement for the United Nations. Attempting to move away from the category of

race altogether, these experts emphasised ‘ethnicity’ over race, and cultural difference over racial difference (Hannaford 1996). The experts presumed that a culturalist approach would be a non-hierarchical way of approaching differences between human communities (Lentin 2005: 383). Thus, in a biopolitical sense, one could say that in the attempt to counter the genocidal effects of racial classification, the experts were still left with a problem of accounting for and regulating difference. And the move to a culturalist approach was another exercise in biopower – the attempt to manage perceived differences of culture between human communities. However, this UNESCO attempt to shift racial difference to cultural difference was problematic for a number of reasons, as Lentin demonstrates.

In a broader sense, the shift ‘contributed to undermining the scientific credentials of the “race concept”, but it ‘did not address the political implications of racism in the history of the West’ (Lentin 2005: 385). It is this disavowal of the consequences of a racialised history of colonial states, Lentin argues, which attempts to make invisible the racial management of populations. Furthermore, the shift to cultural difference resulted in a further paradoxical attempt to manage populations based on the category of culture. In attempting to counter the belief in a hierarchy of race, Levi-Strauss advocated the notion that ‘each culture contributed “in its own way” to humanity as a whole’ (Lentin 2005: 386). Human progress, however, was attributed to ‘a result of the interaction between groups’ (Lentin 2005: 386). Simultaneously, this progress and contribution to a ‘world civilization’ could only be celebrated through the notion of ‘cultural diversity’, which in turn would be ‘worth pursuing if each culture were to retain its originality’ (2005: 387). And the only way to ‘ensure diversity was actually to enforce the stratification of human groups according to colonialism’s class hierarchies’ otherwise cultural diversity ‘would become a thing of the past’ (Lentin 2005: 387). ‘This extreme approach to the idea of cultural diversity’, Lentin argues, informed UNESCO’s concept of culture, ‘as something static within which cultural groups would ideally remain hermetically sealed despite the fact that they would increase their knowledge of each other’ (2005: 387). According to Lentin, while Levi-Strauss himself re-evaluated this approach in his later work, this UNESCO formulation of cultural diversity through the lens of cultural groups, ‘internally homogenous and static’, interacting with one another came to inform western state conceptions of multiculturalism (2005: 388).

In the Australian context, Jon Stratton (1998) has pointed out that multicultural policies came to replace a white Australia policy in

the mid-1970s specifically as a way of managing racial and cultural difference. In Europe, Lentini points out, contemporary right wing groups blame the advent of multicultural policies on ‘the outcome of the struggle of “minority communities” for greater recognition’ (2005: 380). Yet, Lentini’s tracing of the formulation of liberal multiculturalism through UNESCO’s attempt at anti-racism by shifting the focus away from race altogether demonstrates how state attention to ‘the importance of cultural identity … depoliticized the state-centred anti-racism of the racialized’ (2005: 380). This thesis certainly confirms Jon Stratton’s argument about multiculturalism as a technology of management. The theoretical formulation of cultural diversity and multiculturalism which emerged out of the UNESCO project, as Lentini points out, was an elite academic attempt to counter colonial legacies of racism. Yet its philosophical assumptions still lay rooted in the essentialist forms of colonial knowledge-production. It is these essentialisms, a colonial legacy, which inform state-based multicultural or cultural diversity policies and discourses. As a colonial legacy, the power to define and essentialise communities based on cultural difference still lies with the state. And those groups who need recognition often have to represent themselves within the discursive parameters of representation in its signification as portrait (*Darstellung*) as Simone Drichel argues.⁵ Drichel comments on the relationship between colonial representation and self-representation which acts as a complicity in the context of contemporary recognition of cultural communities. ‘A politics of recognition’, particularly one that is conceptualised by Charles Taylor with reference to multiculturalism, she suggests, ‘disregards that every political representation (“proxy”) also is discursive representation (“portrait”), and consequently falls back into the trap of essentialism which accompanies the “portrait”’ (2007).

Furthermore, the emphasis on ethnicity and cultural difference does not intervene in the biopolitical attempt to manage racial difference. In fact, the shift from race to culture enables a state-based biopolitical governmentality of racial difference through the category of cultural difference. The slippage between race, ethnicity, culture, and religious difference persists in stereotypes and attitudes, and is an ongoing phenomenon. As Lentini argues, ‘the shift from “race” to “culture” or “ethnicity” is little more than a cosmetic one in terms of the impact it has on the actual experience of racism’ (2005: 389). In the Australian context, critiques of racism and multiculturalism which focus on its essentialist formulations of cultural difference have been ongoing (Stratton and Ang 1994; Perera and Pugliese 1995; Vasta and

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Castles 1996; Hage 1998; Stratton 1998; Gunew 2003). So, Lentin's thesis is not new *per se*. However, in citing Lentin's historicising of multiculturalism through the UNESCO anti-racism project, I am interested in examining how this tracing of cultural essentialism within liberal multiculturalism enables Hindutva organisations to thrive in diasporic contexts. In recent years, there has been a 'desecularisation of Australian multiculturalism', as Christina Ho (2007) calls it. Thus there has been a state attempt to foster religio-cultural diversity within the conceptual structure of liberal multiculturalism. One could say that this is an example of certain kind of biopolitical fine-tuning in relation to contemporary political events which I will discuss a bit later in the paper. Before I go on to discuss this issue, I would like to trace how a Hindu religio-cultural identity, in historical terms, was made possible through an interplay between colonial Orientalist scholarship (colonial knowledge-production) and an upper-caste anti-colonial remaking of Hindu identity. This tracing will illuminate how Hindutva organisations are able to work within the schema of liberal multiculturalism.

Biopolitical Religious Diversity

Writing of a European struggle to come to terms with new Indological material at the turn of the eighteenth century, Arvind Mandair (2006) suggests that an ideological struggle in the interpretation of these materials ensued through the writings of philosophers Schelling and Hegel. Schelling, a pantheist, Mandair suggests, was less concerned with a love of India (even though he was labeled an Indomaniac) than by a desire to 'present a radically different way of perceiving Europe' (2006: 21). This different way of perceiving Europe could be made possible by the work of Orientalist philologists like William Jones, for example, who were proving verb root affinities between Sanskrit, Latin, and Greek (Mandair 2006: 19).⁶ For Hegel, the imperialist philosopher, these Indological materials threatened a 'civilizational' proximity to Europe, and 'India and pantheism needed to be kept intellectually and culturally at a safe distance from the west' (Mandair 2006: 21).⁷ In order to engage in this task, Mandair suggests that Hegel's strategy was to classify religious systems on the basis of a particular culture's capability of thinking about God's existence (Mandair 2006: 25). Such a move ensured that Hegel could define a proper way of thinking about God. In this schematic, 'Hindu thinking was limited to thinking nothingness. To think nothingness was to think improperly about God's existence. History could begin only when a

culture became capable of thinking properly about God' (Mandair 2006: 25). Such a strategy enabled, Mandair suggests, a diagram of power, of 'world-historical progress' (2006: 26). It is this diagram, Mandair argues, that is the antecedent for the taxonomy of a 'world religions discourse' (2006: 29). This discourse allowed Europeans to 'acknowledge the diversity and plurality of human cultures, but, crucially, on the other hand, to maintain the subject position in the unfolding of world history. It was a way to preserve European universalism in the language of pluralism' (Mandair 2006: 29). The seduction of the world religions discourse, as Mandair points out, is that the 'diagram seems to acknowledge the other's claims as constitutive to the large self-identical whole (the "world")' (2006: 30). Yet, even as other religions could be validated as different yet equal, the diagram of power, Mandair suggests, can only view the other's religion through a fixity of religious belief. And furthermore, the universalist subject position, in this economy, despite any other contender 'remains essentially Christian and no more so than when it calls itself atheistic, scientific, or secular' (Mandair 2006: 32). In a sense, what Mandair traces is a biopolitical diagram of religious diversity, an attempt to manage religious difference through a fixity of religious homogeneity that is also racialised and nationalised in Hegel's diagram of power. For in that diagram, the 'spatial boundaries of a nation/culture correspond to its level of spirituality-cum-historicity' (Mandair 2006: 26).

If Hegel's colonial diagram attempted to recognise Hinduism through a European lens as an irrational, improper way of thinking about God, upper-caste Hindu revivalists attempted to assert a Hinduism that was rational in an earlier state. Peter van der Veer (2001) has described how in the late 1800s a number of Hindu revivalist and reformist organisations emerged as a response to colonial Orientalist scholarship and Christian missionary attempts to denigrate Hinduism.⁸ In these revivalist renderings, a unified philosophy of Hinduism began to be formulated through selective rereading of Orientalist scholarship. This was a Hinduism which could compete with a Christianity that was represented as universalist and rational. Christophe Jaffrelot discusses how Swami Dayananda, a prominent Arya Samajist, articulated the argument that 'in the Vedic era Hinduism had been free from the blemishes for which it was now being condemned' (1999: 14). van der Veer argues that Dayananda drew on both Christian strategies as well as the 'monism of the Vedanta' in order to validate an earlier purer form of a monotheistic, rational Hinduism (2001: 51). Swami Vivekananda's articulation of

Hinduism as superior to Christianity, as a 'modern universal religion' based on the philosophical principle of Advaita Vedanta or a universalist conception of the world, has been much more conducive to the aims and strategies of contemporary Hindu nationalists (Basu et al. 1993: 7–8). Well-versed in European philosophy and fiercely anti-colonial, Vivekananda is a formidable figure. His address at the World Parliament of Religions hailed Hinduism as a tolerant and universalist religion. Swami Vivekananda is an inspiration for Hindu nationalism as his speeches have been appropriated by Hindutva organisations to present Hinduism as universalist and tolerant, yet muscular, much in the same way that a colonial Christianity was represented (Basu et al. 1993: 8).⁹ In this sense, the Hon. Laurie Ferguson's invocation of Swami Vivekananda's World Parliament of Religions 1893 speech at the 2nd VHP conference in 2009 is not coincidental. Ferguson acknowledged Vivekananda's representation of 'Hindu ethos and values' as universalist and tolerant, thus inadvertently paying homage to a colonial Christian discourse reworked by Vivekananda as an anti-colonial representation of Hinduism (VHP Australia 2009).

In representing Hinduism in this manner, Hindu revivalists were complicit with the colonial attempt to essentialise the multiplicity of myriad beliefs and practices which came to be known as Hinduism (Dube and Dube 2003; Pennington 2005). If Hinduism was constructed by the revivalists as rational and universalist, contemporary Hindutva works through two strategies. In discursive terms, contemporary Hindutva still represents Hinduism as a universal religion but associates itself with other Hindu organisations which 'stand in for a pluralistic Hindu society' (Basu et al. 1993: 56–7). Thus, 'the VHP can then present its own commands and injunctions as collective Hindu will' (Basu et al. 1993: 57). This strategy disavows the complex transformations in the histories of religiosities in the subcontinent (Robinson and Clark 2003). Secondly, this dual strategy of representation of Hinduism as an essentialist yet plural and tolerant religion enables it to participate in that diagram of 'world religions' and the world's religious diversity. This representation is also a claim, I would argue, in which Hindutva competes for the panoptical space from which all other religions can be measured, that space that Hegel created for the European, Christian subject. Hinduism, for example, is noted on the VHP website, as the world's 'oldest religion of immeasurable diversity and infinite adaptability' (VHP Australia 2010). Such a representation allows for a discursive anti-colonial reworking of Hinduism as tolerant and potentially universal, and enables it to compete with colonial Christian representations. But this

universalism can only be highlighted through a differentiation with other religious beliefs presented as antithetical and intolerant in relation to the tolerance of Hinduism. As Basu et al. point out, the strategy to 'establish a complex, constantly proliferating and sprawling kinship network' only stops 'at the Muslim, the Christian, and the secular' (1993: 59). Thus a post 9/11 governmental concern with a risk-management approach to religious diversity appears to have provided for a much more comfortable space for Hindutva organisations in diasporic contexts. In the next section, I trace how this space has been enabled.

Religio-Cultural Diversity and a Post 9/11 Risk Management

Governmental management of religious diversity in a post 9/11 era appears to have focused on the fostering of interfaith dialogue. The phenomenon of interfaith dialogue owes its popularity to the perception of religious violence as something that threatens the ideal of world peace.¹⁰ And as this popularity appears to have grown after the events of September 11, 2001, we can safely suggest that it is the threat of the use and interpretation of Islam as a political and violent force against what is considered the 'West' that appears to propel governmental inter-faith initiatives. The 'Islam' and the 'West' dichotomy made famous by the clash of civilisations thesis articulated by Samuel Huntington (1996) has been reworked in recent years by Francis Fukuyama (2002) in his 'Islamo-fascism' versus the West dichotomy. This dichotomy was articulated by President George Bush in his speech after the July 7 bombings in the UK, thus validating the notion that radical Islamist groups pose a threat to the 'West' (Recknagel 2006). It is this assumption that appears to have propelled the Australian government under the Howard regime to initiate a study into Australia's religious 'diversity', making the link between religion and the notion of 'safeguarding Australia'.¹¹ This link is evident in the name of the report, *Religion, Cultural Diversity, and Safeguarding Australia* (Australian Multicultural Foundation [AMF] 2004), produced by members of the Australian Multicultural Foundation (AMF) in partnership with the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs. Conducted in association with the World Conference of Religions for Peace, the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and Monash University, the report assumes that religion is a key factor in the context of possible future conflicts in a 'globalising world' and needs to be risk-managed by governmentally sanctioned initiatives at local and national levels.

The report summarises the context of contemporary politics, suggesting that ‘the events of September 11th were symptomatic of and brought to surface long-term trends that can be neatly summed up in two very complex words, “religion” and “globalisation”’: ‘The terrorist attacks also brought home to us that religion, whether transcendent religion or religion corrupted for political or economic purposes, is at the centre of world stage’ (AMF 2004: 6). Citing the fact that ‘86 percent of the world’s population claim a religious faith’, the report suggests that this religious world is a risk that needs to be managed (AMF 2004: 6). Or as the report states:

After September 11th, we can never again gaze upwards at skyscrapers in the same way as before – those steel and concrete cathedrals, those tall minarets reaching upwards to the sky, are now symbols of the risk and unpredictability of the future. And for Australia, both internally and externally, there are implications for its political and social leaders, which need to be reflected upon, in safeguarding Australia. For more than a decade, theorists have been writing of a backlash against the West; they have written about the link between risk, responsibility and trust, and of ‘organized irresponsibility’ and the ‘limited controllability’ of the dangers to be faced, the dangers from disorganized or corrupt commercial operations, from a polluted environment, from fanatical terrorist groups or from the destruction of tradition, scholarship and wisdom (Beck 1999). (AMF 2004: 6)

In the first instance, the description of the World Trade Centre towers as both cathedrals and minarets in a context where the authors of the report cite religion as a risk is puzzling. And, the so-called organised irresponsible use of religion (which does not refer to US support for the Mujahadeen in Afghanistan in the 1980s) is what the authors suggest needs to be managed.¹² Risk-management of an irresponsible use of religion would require ‘organized responsibility’ and ‘controllability of danger’; it would require the management of religious identity. Hence, governmental licensing and funding of interfaith initiatives as one strategy in the risk-management of religion has been represented as an excellent way for governments to intervene in and foster religious practices in the interest of ‘safeguarding Australia’ (AMF 2004).

The calculation of risk as an approach to fostering religious diversity can be seen as a further development in the biopolitics of religious identity operating through that Hegelian diagram of power. For example, in relation to the management of Muslim communities, Saba Mahmood (2006) speaks of the US attempt, in the global war on

terror, to foster what it considers a moderate Muslim identity which may be assimilable to US interests. This risk-management approach to religious diversity also fits in well with the VHP's politics of fostering Hindutva identity in diasporic contexts. At the 2008 VHP conference, Swami Vigyanand, coordinator of the VHP's international operations, embarked on a virulent hate speech directed primarily at Muslims during his talk. His speech consisted of making assertions that Hindus 'live and practice democracy' while Muslims are a threat to democracy around the world (Osuri 2008). Swami Vigyanand also stated that Hindus practice 'reason and rationalism' and are egalitarian unlike Muslims or Christians who have hierarchical belief systems and 'blindly believe in the Pope or the Caliph' (Osuri 2008). Such statements were an example of the VHP's strategy of producing a revisionist narrative of the power relations which have historically characterised upper-caste Hindu religio-cultural practices. This hate speech, it has to be noted, was produced in a diasporic context. In a political climate where Islam functions as a suspect religion linked to the war on terror, Swami Vigyanand's statements seemed to participate in the discourse of Islamo-fascism with a twist. The space of 'the West' comes to be replaced by a tolerant and universal Hindu nationalism. In this sense, in discursive terms, Hindu nationalism appears to aspire to the space of the imperial subject position within the Hegelian diagram of biopolitical religious diversity.

It is also important to address how this hate speech functions within a multicultural diagram of power. Sara Ahmed has pointed out how liberal multiculturalism's recognition can only occur if the other or difference can represent itself in the logic of the same. Tracing how sameness and difference function through the affective economy of idealisation and love, Ahmed suggests that within liberal multiculturalism, it is love for the nation as an idealised object that 'binds the multicultural nation together': 'It is "love" rather than history, culture or ethnicity that binds the multicultural nation together' (2004: 135). The migrant must display love for the idealised object of the white nation in order to belong. It is this love for Australia as good Hindu subjects contributing to the Australian community that is continually represented in the VHP's organisation of its conferences and events. The discourse of the good Hindu-Australian subject was very much pervasive in the 2008 VHP conference. One of the speakers introduced Australia as '*karmabhoomi*' (the land of deeds) to which the diasporic Hindu subject pledges loyalty while simultaneously espousing the Hindutva term '*pitrabhoomi*' (fatherland) as an assertion of the loyalty to Hindu

nationalism. Simultaneously, the extent of pledging this love is also representationally possible by differentiation from religious others who are bad migrant subjects. Swami Vigyanand's hate speech against Muslims, in particular, spoke of an innate link between terrorism and Islam (Osuri 2008). A post 9/11 climate and the discourse of Islamofascism (Fukuyama 2002) licenses such a link. In this climate, Hindutva organisations in the US have been at great pains to distinguish themselves from Muslims and, in fact, appear to have joined US right-wing anti-Muslim groups. Hindutva groups such as the US-based Indian American Intellectuals Forum have participated in the 'Stop the Islamization of America' movement as part of the 2010 protests against the building of an Islamic Cultural Centre, a couple of blocks away from ground zero in New York City (Stop the Islamization of America 2010). At the time of these protests, a New York Muslim cab driver was stabbed by the passenger on the basis of the driver's religious identity (*Al Jazeera* 2010). This stabbing speaks of a licensing of hatred against Muslims in a post 9/11 climate based on US patriotism. During the 2008 VHP Australia conference, the UK VHP leader discussed the UK strategy to consolidate an identity for British Hindus by disconnecting it from the historical term 'Asians' (Osuri 2008). While British Asian is a colonial, racial category, it nevertheless signifies an anti-racist history of solidarity among South Asians in Britain. The UK VHP strategy has included an emphasis on Hindu identity especially in communication with local police in times of racialised events where South Asian youth may be involved. In the UK VHP leader's representation, Hindu youth needed to assert themselves as separate from British Muslim youth who were represented as suspects in advance (Osuri 2008). So, how do these strategies of loving the diasporic nation, yet preaching hate in relation to others, work within a transnational context? How do the structures of liberal multiculturalism enable this?

A (Bio/Necro)politics of Recognition?

Prema Kurien suggests that the issue of 'how non-Christian religious groups should be politically recognised within Western multicultural societies has proved to be a knotty but pressing contemporary issue' (2006: 723). The problem, I would suggest, is not about the recognition of religion as such, but the structural mechanisms of recognition and their consequences for contemporary co-existence. Tracing the arguments that Lentin (2005) and Mandair (2006) make regarding cultural recognition and the Hegelian diagram of

religious difference, it is important to make two summary observations. Recognition of cultural and religious difference through the discursive and conceptual structures of multiculturalism hinge on a depoliticisation of the social justice struggles of anti-racism. Furthermore, essentialist cultural and religious communities are plotted within a colonial diagram of power. It is these two mechanisms, I would argue, that enable a complicity between Hindutva transnationalism and liberal multiculturalism. As a religio-cultural entity, the VHP represents itself as a depoliticised organisation: it is, after all, a non-profit charity organisation. Secondly, it fulfills the charter of diversity and pluralism conducive to the multicultural agenda. These assertions are enabled through a romanticist, Orientalist conception of Hinduism. In practice, this complicity enables a particular Hindu transnationalist will-to-power. A will-to-power in political terms means that through a non-threatening, depoliticised 'feel good' Hinduism, the VHP is first and foremost concerned with legitimisation of itself (gaining state recognition), and consolidating a speaking position that mediates for a Hindu community in the diasporic context of Australia. Working through educational and charitable activities also furthers the task of recognition and legitimisation. At this level, Hindutva functions in a biopolitical manner in the sense of fostering and even empowering a positive Hindu diasporic identity. Through these activities, diasporic Hindutva organisations work in tandem with a state-based vision of fostering different but assimilable multicultural identities.

But funds from these educational and charitable activities also flow through Hindutva's transnational networks to fund campaigns against Muslims and Christians in the Indian context (SACW 2002). Along that transnational connectivity between India and Australia, the land of deeds (*karmabhoomi*) funds the transfiguration of the Hindutva avatar in the *pitrabhoomi* (the fatherland). Here the resonance of militant European fascism in the term fatherland operates against those Muslim and Christian Indians regarded as pledging their religious, hence national, loyalties elsewhere. Here the plotting of religious difference in that Hegelian diagram of power attempts to subordinate and at times annihilate those deemed anti-national. It is here that biopolitics easily slides into necropolitics.

Biopower as a complex of power *dispositifs* is mainly concerned with making live and regulating life even as 'racism justifies the death-function in the economy of biopower' (Foucault 2003: 258). Achille Mbembe examines this death-function in the economy of power more closely. For Mbembe, colonial sovereignty introduces the break

of racial and colonial difference enabling it to exercise what he calls ‘necropower’ – or the power ‘to subjugate life to the point of death’ (2003: 39). Colonial legacies, based on the construction and enumeration of racial and religious identities, continue to be entrenched in postcolonial contexts. Arjun Appadurai has discussed how colonial census techniques mapped bodies linked by ‘bio-racial’ and/or religious commonalities and differences (1993: 333). Census readings also produced the norm of India as originally Hindu by assuming that Muslim and Hindu converts were originally Hindu (Vishwanathan 1998: 171). For Hindu nationalists, this assumption ‘of having once been an undivided community that had been violently torn asunder by foreign invasions, depredations and cultural violence’ enables their violence against Muslim and Christian communities (Vishwanathan 1998: 170). Such an essentialist assumption regarding an unchanging Hindu civilisational core is untenable as Dube and Dube have suggested (2003). These differentiations and enumerations of religious communities inform a distinction between native and non-native religious identities within the governmentality of the Indian postcolonial state – something which Hindu nationalism feeds on and pushes to its necropolitical limits. Of the violence in Orissa between 2007 and 2008, John Dayal (Human Rights activist and member of the Prime Minister’s National Integration Council) writes: ‘For the 54,000 persons . . . it will take years more before they can say they have fully recovered from the trauma of the pogrom and one of India’s largest internal displacement after Gujarat 2002’ (2010). Dayal rightly links the events in Orissa and Gujarat as both were Hindutva pogroms against Muslims and Christians. Operating through a transnational bio/necropolitics, Hindutva’s avatars play the patronising multicultural tolerance and assimilation game, empowering Hindu diasporic subjects, while turning their assimilative, murderous, necropolitical gaze on Muslim and Christian communities.

What lessons are to be learnt from this analysis of Hindutva’s neo-colonial bio/necropolitical operations? Hindutva’s biopolitical avatar which transfigures into a necropolitical one is enabled by the transnational connectivity of colonial discourse. This discourse informs the regulation of racial, cultural and religious difference through the essentialist mechanisms of liberal multiculturalism. Through this connectivity, Hindu nationalism also competes for an imperial subject position in a Hegelian diagram of religious difference. Alana Lentin has argued that in the European context, anti-racists have had not much of a choice but to adopt ‘the language of multiculturalism’ or cease ‘to be socially and politically engaged’ (2005: 390). In Australian

public life, I would suggest that anti-racists have found themselves in a similar bind. In a post 9/11 climate, multiculturalism itself has been proclaimed a failure since the Howard regime.¹³ Calls for integration and assimilation continually attack any form of progressive politics usually labeled under the rubric of multiculturalism. Andrew Jakubowicz has suggested that the more assimilative term, social inclusion has gained prominence over the last few years in Australia without a discussion of ‘cultural diversity’ (2008). Simultaneously, organisations like the VHP appropriate the space of ‘cultural diversity’ for their exclusionary agendas. In terms of a public lexicon, perhaps it is time *not* simply to name multiculturalism and cultural diversity as elite management projects, but also *not* to wage anti-racist and anti-fascist struggles squarely in the name of multiculturalism. A social justice ethic, one that is committed to examining how any organisation which claims recognition under the rubric of multiculturalism conducts its transnational matters may be more appropriate. In other words, simply doing away with the discourse of multiculturalism is perhaps too simplistic and dangerous in this climate. Yet emphasis on how organisations claim recognition within multicultural discourse pays attention to the essentialist ways in which the structure of multiculturalism itself functions whilst focusing on the organisation’s transnational politics. Simone Drichel argues that the prison of representation can be broken when ‘representation is neither embraced (as in Taylor’s politics of recognition) nor rejected (as in Levinas’s ethics of alterity) but rethought as iterability’ (2007). ‘Iterability’, she argues, ‘allows for the articulation of otherness within given representational structures while at the same time keeping the articulation of this otherness open for the “to come”’ (2007). The Derridean (2005) time ‘to come’ is that which is not represented in advance, but remains open and unforeseen against the pre-emptive horizon of western metaphysics and its panoptical diagram of power. It may be possible, then, even in articulating and exposing the unjust violent deeds, or bad karma, of the avatars of Hindu nationalism to iterate an ethics of transnational social justice against the conceptual and representational structures of liberal multiculturalism.

Notes

1. See Vinayak Chaturvedi’s ‘Vinayak & Me: Hindutva and the Politics of Naming’ (2003) for a brief history of Veer Savarkar’s masculinist nationalism.
2. The National People’s Tribunal’s objective in making these assessments has been to direct state and central government to fulfill their human rights obligations. See South Asia Citizens Web (2010).

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Transnational Bio/Necropolitics

3. As Kamat and Matthews explain it, on 27 February 2002, a train carrying Hindus returning from a 'controversial temple-building project' in Gujarat was attacked 'allegedly' by Muslim attackers (2003: 5). By February 2008, violence against Muslims was unleashed by Hindutva groups and 'over 2,000 Muslims were killed in 5 days' as per 'the Citizens Tribunal Report' (2003: 5). In October 2007, a journalist from an independent news magazine, *Tehelka*, conducted an investigation and found state collusion in the violence against Muslims. A *Tehelka* transcript specifically referring to the Chief Minister Narendra Modi's blessing on the violence is available at: http://www.tehelka.com/story_main35.asp?filename=Ne031107We_Were.asp
4. The conference was held on 11–12 April 2009 at the premises of the University of Western Sydney's Parramatta campus in Sydney, Australia.
5. See Drichel (2007) for a reading of Gayatri Spivak's differentiation between political representation (*Vertretung*) and discursive representation (*Darstellung*) and the ways in which these two meanings of representation are inextricable.
6. These language affinities were, in turn, as Mandair points out, material for conjecturing a common racial ancestry. See Romila Thapar for an account of the manner in which language affinities were racialised (2005: 28).
7. Early Jesuit travel narratives since the 16th century, as Geoffrey Oddie notes, assumed the notion that 'India had a unified religious system': Brahmanical Hinduism (2006: 65). Oddie suggests that these narratives were consolidated by later Orientalists who based their understanding of Hinduism on elite Brahmanical texts.
8. For a complex history of the revivalists and the traditionalists, see Jaffrelot (1999) and Zavos (1999).
9. Yet, as Basu et al. also state, 'the complacent, aestheticized contemplation of any number of oppressive practices as so many flowers in a garland, characteristic of Hindutva, would have been utterly foreign to Vivekananda and his capacity for self-criticism' which he directed against 'high caste domination' and 'gender oppression' (1993: 8).
10. The 2007 *Newsweek* statistic that the phrase 'interfaith dialogue' has appeared 173 times in major international headlines since 1977 – a 100 of these in the past five years – points to the growing popularity of interfaith initiatives (Miller 2007). Miller goes on to note that, 'if one sees the world's conflicts as religious in nature, then *interfaith dialogue* – a sincere, mutual effort by people of different faiths to see each other's point of view – is essential to world peace' (Miller 2007). This mutual understanding may be an excellent forum for communities to address prejudices and stereotypes which are injurious. However, the interfaith model also enables a shift in identity practice, validating religious identity as a primary marker of recognition. In effect, it may presume that religion is separable from other identity practices. In this sense, it transforms identity practice, engaging in a biopolitics of the soul, as Foucault would put it. The interfaith dialogue model may also presume that participation in 'dialogue' suggests openness rather than a consolidation of exclusionary interests, whilst in practice, organisations like the VHP may engage in exclusionary strategies.
11. John Howard was Australia's Liberal Prime Minister between 1996 and 2007.
12. For an account of the cold war and US support for the Mujahadeen, read Tariq Ali (2002).

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13. For example, Janet Albrechtsen, a commentator for *The Australian*, consistently attacked multiculturalism during the Howard years. An example of her tirade against multiculturalism is found in the 2007 article, 'Let people say when to give in to minorities' (2007). The title appears to indicate that minority groups are not part of the citizenry.

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VISHVA HINDU PARISHAD OF AUSTRALIA INCORPORATED

Charity is registered Charity reporting is up to date

Annual Information Statement 2020

Legal Name: Vishva Hindu Parishad Of Australia Incorporated
ABN: 78862155168

About the charity

Website:	www.vhp.org.au
Charity size:	Small
Is the charity an incorporated association?	Yes
Select the state/territory and enter the incorporated association number:	NSW incorporated association number: Y2898719
Does the charity intend to fundraise in the next reporting period?	No
Is the charity a Basic Religious Charity?	No

Charity programs

Program name:	VHP Sanskrit School
Program classification:	Community development
Program locations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New South Wales, Australia• Victoria, Australia• Queensland, Australia• South Australia, Australia
Program operated online:	Yes

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Program beneficiaries:

- Children - aged 6 to under 15
- Youth - 15 to under 25
- Adults - aged 25 to under 65
- People from a culturally and linguistically diverse background

Program website:

www.vhp.org.au

Program name:

Special Religious Education

Program classification:

Community development

Program locations:

- Sydney NSW, Australia
- Brisbane QLD, Australia
- Adelaide SA, Australia
- Melbourne VIC, Australia

Program beneficiaries:

- Children - aged 6 to under 15
- Youth - 15 to under 25

Description of the charities activities and outcomes:

We teach community languages like Sanskrit to our children and youth. We promote & spread Hindu culture & heritage which includes the Vedas which constitute a part of UNESCO's "Worlds Intangible Cultural Heritage". We do programs under our youth wing to promote the right cultural, health & community values among youth. We also conduct programs to help children, women & disabled sections of the community. Our activities have a positive outcome on a broad section of the community.

Human Resources

Employees and volunteers:

- Full time employees: 0
- Part time employees: 0
- Casual employees: 0
- Full-time equivalent staff (FTE): 0
- Estimated number of volunteers: 250

Financial Reporting

Charity's 2020 reporting period:

1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020

Accounting method used in the 2020 reporting period:

Cash

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Income and Expenses

Income Statement summary

Revenue/receipts

Donations and bequests:	\$14,587.00
Revenue from providing goods or services:	\$0.00
Revenue from government including grants:	\$105,161.00
Revenue from investments:	\$0.00
Other revenue/receipts:	\$52,650.00
Total revenue/receipts:	\$172,398.00
Other income (for example, gains):	\$0.00
Total income/receipts:	\$172,398.00

Expenses/Payments

Employee expenses/payments:	\$0.00
Grants and donations made for use in Australia:	\$1,450.00
Grants and donations made for use outside Australia:	\$0.00
Other expenses/payments:	\$176,064.00
Total expenses/payments:	\$177,514.00
Net surplus/(deficit):	\$-5,116.00

Balance Sheet Extract

Total assets:	\$144,799.00
Total liabilities:	\$0.00
Net assets/liabilities:	\$144,799.00

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EKAL VIDYALAYA FOUNDATION OF AUSTRALIA INCORPORATED

Charity is registered Charity reporting is up to date

Annual Information Statement 2020

Legal Name:	Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation Of Australia Incorporated
ABN:	89023106257

About the charity

Website:	http://ekal.org.au
Charity size:	Medium
Is the charity an incorporated association?	Yes
Select the state/territory and enter the incorporated association number:	NSW incorporated association number: INC9881322
Does the charity intend to fundraise in the next reporting period?	Yes
Select the state/territory where the charity intends to fundraise in the 2020 reporting period:	NSW fundraising number: CFN/18029
Is the charity a Basic Religious Charity?	No

Charity programs

Program name:	Sponsor Ekal School
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Program classification:	Primary and secondary education
Program locations:	India
Program overseas locations:	India
Program beneficiaries:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children - aged 6 to under 15 • People in rural/regional/remote communities • Financially disadvantaged people • Females • Males • Overseas communities or charities
Program website:	http://www.ekal.org/au
International activities undertaken:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transferring funds or goods overseas • Operating overseas including delivering programs
Description of the charities international activities:	Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of Australia is part of Ekal Global and we participate in decision making relating to operation of Ekal Schools in India through Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of India
Description of the charities activities and outcomes:	<p>Our charity sponsored 560 Ekal Schools in remote and tribal villages of India which will educate about 16000 poor children in remote villages. Our charity also provides hygiene and health education in most of these villages.</p>

Human Resources

Employees and volunteers:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full time employees: 0 • Part time employees: 0 • Casual employees: 0 • Full-time equivalent staff (FTE): 0 • Estimated number of volunteers: 20
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Financial Reporting

Charity's 2020 reporting period:	1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020
Type of financial statement:	General purpose financial statements – simplified disclosure
Financial report consolidated with more than one entity?	No
Did your charity have any related party transactions?	No
Does your charity have documented policies or processes about related party transactions?	Yes
Financial report submitted to a state/territory regulator?	No

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Income and Expenses

Comprehensive Income Statement summary

Gross Income

Donations and bequests:	\$252,285.00
Revenue from providing goods or services:	\$0.00
Revenue from government including grants:	\$0.00
Revenue from investments:	\$0.00
All other revenue:	\$0.00
Total revenue:	\$252,285.00
Other income (for example, gains):	\$0.00
Total gross income:	\$252,285.00

Expenses

Employee expenses:	\$0.00
Grants and donations made for use in Australia:	\$0.00
Grants and donations made for use outside Australia:	\$234,000.00
All other expenses:	\$989.00
Total expenses:	\$234,989.00
Net surplus/(deficit):	\$17,296.00
Other comprehensive income:	\$0.00
Total comprehensive income:	\$17,296.00

Balance Sheet extract

Assets

Total current assets:	\$212,301.00
Total non-current assets:	\$0.00
Total assets:	\$212,301.00

Liabilities

Total current liabilities:	\$0.00
Total non-current liabilities:	\$0.00
Total liabilities:	\$0.00
Net assets/liabilities:	\$212,301.00