Chapter I

Hindu Nationalism

The Creation of a Core Discourse of Nationhood

Introduction:

This chapter first sets out the competing perspectives of Indian nationhood within the larger framework of the debate on nationalism and its different trajectories of manifestation. To illustrate the particular historical context of the adoption by India of a secular and civic nationhood, this chapter explains the circumstances in which the impulses of Hindu cultural nationalism, which managed to constitute a core discourse of national identity, were set aside, making way for a new secular and democratic nation state. It is argued here that it was inevitable that the new Indian nation chose civic rather than cultural nationalism, because of its particular trajectory of evolution. The key difference in the trajectories of cultural nationalism and civic nationalism is the strongly non-voluntary aspect in the case of the former, and the voluntary element in the latter case. Civic nationalism has a strongly voluntary element, reflecting as it does, an openness to universal participation and is hence adopted by nations which have heterogeneous social bases, unlike cultural nationalism which usually reflects the national sentiment of a particular cultural or ethnic group. Historical
experience has shown that movements of national liberation involving the participation of masses of people with diverse social and cultural identities usually culminate in the adoption of a nationhood that would emphasise citizenship and civic identity rather than give preference to any cultural affiliation, underlining civic rather than cultural identity. But movements seeking national liberation in purely cultural or ethnic terms, based on their reflection of the aspirations of one cultural group, tend to seek their culmination in a nationhood, defined in cultural nationalist terms.

In the case of India, the nationalist movement that wrested freedom from British colonial rule had a mass base, reflecting the participation of people from different regions and different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The platform adopted by the Congress-led freedom movement acknowledged the heterogeneous nature of the mass support and consistently advocated nationhood based on civic, secular and democratic parameters. Consequently, after Independence, there was a strong sense among the members of the new Indian nation that in deference to the diverse identities of its new stakeholders who had won this freedom from colonial rule, the nation-state that was being conceived would necessarily have to be anchored to a vision of civic nationalism. It was also categorically made clear that citizenship rather than any other identity would have to be the primary identity in the new state. The point that is being underlined here and which underpins the entire thesis is that it was historically acknowledged and constitutionally enshrined that Indian nationhood was the natural birthright of people of different cultural identities who had fought long and hard for it. Hence at no time was there a historical moment that the leaders of independent India or its public considered adopting Hindu cultural nationalism as the official national identity. As historical accounts of the run-up to Independence indicate, the political campaign to make India a Hindu
state, a movement that partly fed on the momentum of Muslim separatism
which culminated in the birth of Pakistan, was completely marginalised.

This chapter also explores the context of the political experience that
resulted in the adoption of a Constitution categorically mandating that the
Indian nation-state would exist within a secular and pluralist framework. The
significant point to note is that there was a sharp political sense among the
leaders of the new state that there had been a bitter experience in the past with
extremism of both kinds, Hindu cultural nationalism and Muslim separatism.
Therefore it was thought that it was vital to insulate the new state from these
disintegrative forces by placing emphasis only on the factors of territory and
citizenship as the core elements of nationhood. If the complex circumstances
driving the Muslim League finally had events spiralling out of its control and
culminating in the birth of Pakistan¹, it was clear that those arguing for secular
and civic nationalism had won the day in India with the Hindu cultural
nationalists who had until then been exerting considerable pressure on the
political discourse right from the 1920s, finally being swept aside to the margins
of India’s political society.

As a precursor to the later discussion in this study of the challenge of
cultural nationalism to India’s secular national vision, the core elements of the
Hindu cultural nationalist discourse in the pre-Independence period are also laid
out in this chapter. It is necessary to identify these core components of the
Hindu nationalist discourse as they emerged in the pre-Independence period

¹ Scholars such as Ayesha Jalal and Mushirul Hasan have highlighted a view that Partition was more the
result of a complex set of circumstances than a deliberate political creation. Jalal argued in her study, *The Sole
Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan* (Cambridge, 1985, Reprint, Sang-e-Meel
Publications, Lahore, 1992) that “What Jinnah was clamouring for was a way of achieving an equal say for
Muslims in any all-India arrangements at the centre.” (p. 241). Similarly, historian Mushirul Hasan observed in
his study *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India: 1885-1930*, (Manohar Publishers, New Delhi, 1991) that “The
Muslim League’s success in the 1940s...does (not)indicate or legitimise the ideological underpinnings of
Jinnah’s two-nation theory, for the birth of Pakistan...was neither imminent nor historically inevitable. It was
more of an aberration, a historical accident, caused by a complex configuration of forces at a particular
juncture...” (p. 283).
because although cultural nationalism itself was marginalised for decades, these core themes reappeared as key postulates of the Hindu majoritarian campaign later in the '80s and the '90s which is the subject of this study.

Constructs of Nationalism

In order to properly situate the context and significance of the discussion that took place in pre-Independence India on the future shape of nationhood, it is necessary first to take a look at the wider academic debate on theories of nationalism. It is important to link to this wider discussion before examining the context of this conflict over the orientation of Indian nationhood because this tussle between the two visions of nationhood--civic and cultural-- was and is not unique to the Indian context, and in fact reflects a worldwide phenomenon. It must be noted that while the adoption of the Constitution, reflecting a nationwide consensus, had firmly settled the point that India’s national identity would be based only on territorial and civic parameters, this has not deterred cultural nationalist groups from periodically seeking to reopen this issue. This challenge which first surfaced in pre-Independence India, although subdued and relegated to the margins thereafter, has reared its head again with surprising intensity in recent years. Before embarking on a deeper scrutiny of the specifics of the debate over nationhood in the Indian context, here below is a brief survey of the academic discussion on what constitutes nationhood and the related issue of whether the mobilisation of ethnic or community fervour, however large-scale it may be, can pass for nationalism.
The wide-ranging debate on nationalism—a phenomenon described as “elusive, even protean in its manifestations”\(^2\) has highlighted the various prototypes of nationalism, cultural or ethno-symbolic or territorial and civic nationalism and more importantly, the fact that these prototypes have different trajectories of evolution. The key difference lies in the individual circumstances in which the particular type of nationalism manifests. This is an important political difference with implications for the orientation of the nation-state that embodies the national will as expressed in that particular set of circumstances. A nationalist movement such as a liberation movement or an anti-colonial struggle which relies on the support of masses of people from different communities and regions, given its emphasis on the redemption of territory from alien rule, would necessarily strive for a nation-state that would prioritise democracy and civic rights as key postulates of its framework. In contrast, a movement based on a religious, ethnic or cultural group seeking its own ‘homeland’ would necessarily privilege that particular cultural identity as the primary identity in its conception of a nation-state, vesting that identity with all the attendant rights, an inherently excluding exercise since other cultural groups would thereby be placed at a disadvantage in such a national framework.

As has been pointed out, there is a strongly non-voluntary element in ethno-cultural constructs of nationalism. Unlike in the case of campaigns based on territorial or civic nationalism which allow for “any group of people aspiring to a common political state-like organisation”, clearly, for the “ethno-cultural nationalist, it is one’s ethno-cultural background which determines one’s membership in the community.”\(^3\) One “cannot choose to be a member, instead


membership depends on the accident of origin and early socialisation." In contrast, when civic and territorial nationalist demands ultimately fructify in the formation of a nation-state, such a nation is self-evidently based on a broad degree of voluntarism and consent. In her study of nationalism, Liah Greenfeld has pointed out:

...Nationalism may be distinguished according to criteria of membership in the national collectivity, which may be either 'civic', that is identical with citizenship, or 'ethnic'. In the former case, nationality is at least in principle open and voluntaristic; it can and sometimes must be acquired. In the latter, it is believed to be inherent--one can neither acquire it if one does not have it or change it if one does; it has nothing to do with individual will but constitutes a genetic characteristic...

The first important conceptualisation of the idea of a nation is Benedict Anderson’s definition of a nation as an “imagined political community-- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign”. Anderson’s seminal definition of the nation provided ample space for different ways of visualising the concept of a nation. The key point Anderson underlined in his definition was that a nation was imagined as a community “...because regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep horizontal comradeship...” Anderson’s concept of the nation as an ‘imagined community’ had a strongly voluntaristic element in its

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4 Ibid.
7 Ibid, p.7. Anderson’s argument is that the possibility of imagining the nation arose only when cultural conceptions such as the belief in a particular script-language offering privileged access to ontological truth and the belief in societies being naturally organised around monarchs lost “their axiomatic grip on men’s minds.” The rise of print-capitalism which made it possible for people to relate themselves to others in profoundly new ways paved the way for the emergence of national consciousness and “created the possibility of a new form of imagined community which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation.” Thanks to print capitalism, “the fellow readers to whom they were connected through print formed in their secular, particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally imagined community.” (pp 36-46).
basis, acknowledging as it did that the primary impulse in making a nation is the recognition of a shared commitment to its existence on the part of its members. The idea of the nation as an ‘imagined community’ was not, as Anthony Smith has pointed out, “to gainsay its reality or consider it a fabrication”\(^8\) But what Anderson’s description of the nation did do was to ensure that the definition of nationalism was not tied to any particular or fixed prototype.

While it is axiomatic that nationalism as a full-fledged phenomenon can emerge only under specific conditions at a particular juncture in the historical process and is invariably tied to a set of social, political and economic factors\(^9\), all the leading theorists of nationalism more or less concur with Ernest Gellner’s definition of nationalism as “primarily a political principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent.”\(^10\) Endorsing Gellner’s definition, historian EJ Hobsbawm also pointed out that “this principle also implies that the political duty of Ruritarians to the polity which encompasses and represents the Ruritarian nation overrides all other public obligations and in extreme cases (such as wars) all other obligations of whatever kind.”\(^11\)

Most of the studies of the nationalism phenomenon recognise that for a particular nationalist project to succeed and to be seen as a viable and enduring proposition, it is essential that those subscribing to that particular framework have the sense, as described by Hobsbawm, of an overriding allegiance to that framework, subsuming all other political obligations. Gellner pointed out that “a mere category of persons (say, occupants of a given territory or speakers of a

\(^8\) Smith, op.cit.

\(^9\) Ernest Gellner theorised in his landmark work *Nations and Nationalism* (Blackwell, 1983, Reprinted 1992) that a “high culture” was required to be imposed on a society previously taken up by “low cultures” because “the economy needs both the new type of central culture and the central state; and the state probably needs the homogeneous cultural branding of its flock...the mutual relationship of a modern culture and state is something quite new and springs inevitably from the requirement of a modern economy.”, p.57, p.140.


given language, for example) becomes a nation if and when the members of the
category firmly recognise certain mutual rights and duties to each other in virtue
of their shared membership of it. It is their recognition of each other as fellows
of this kind which turns them into a nation, and not the other shared attributes,
whatever they might be, which separate that category from non-members.”

He also noted that “nations are not inscribed into the nature of things, they do
not constitute a political version of the doctrine of natural kinds. Nor were
national states the manifest ultimate destiny of ethnic or cultural groups.”

In what would be a broader catch-all definition, possibly allowing for the
different interpretations of nationalism—both civic/territorial and cultural—
Anthony Smith suggests:

...By ‘nationalism’ I shall mean an ideological movement for
the attainment and maintenance of autonomy, unity and
identity of a human population, some of whose members
conceive it to constitute an actual or potential ‘nation’. A
‘nation’ in turn I shall define as a named human population
sharing a historic territory, common myths and memories, a
mass, public culture, a single economy and common rights
and duties for all members.

This definition suggests that the concept of the nation refers
to a particular kind of social and cultural community, a
territorial community of shared history and culture. This is
the assumption of nationalists themselves for whom the
world is composed of unique historic culture-communities, to
which their citizens owe a primary loyalty and which are the
sole source of political power and inner freedom.

The one common strand running through all the prototypes of
nationalism and nation-formation is the acknowledgment that the primary
catalyst in the spread of nationalism is the shared willingness of a group of

12 Gellner, op.cit, p.7.
13 Ibid p.49
14 Smith, op.cit.
people, for whatever reason, to participate in a common political framework within which they visualise their aspirations being fulfilled. According to theorist David Miller, “when this question is posed, ‘nation’ must refer to a community of people with an aspiration to be politically self-determining and ‘state’ must refer to the set of political institutions that they may aspire to possess for themselves.”

Echoing Anderson’s and Gellner’s description of the nation as reflecting a shared acceptance of its existence by its participating members, Miller notes that “national communities are constituted by belief: nations exist when their members recognise one another as compatriots and believe that they share characteristics of the relevant kind…”

Miller’s exposition of nationalism, essentially a defence of the enduring validity of civic nationalism, has a particular relevance to the Indian context especially in its emphasis on the idea of obligations to co-nationals. Given that Indian nationhood was perceived to have been the prized result of the efforts of diverse sections and groups of the Indian people, the notion of enduring obligations to fellow nationals and the collective responsibility to uphold a legacy of rights would appear to apply aptly to the Indian situation. Miller observes that nationality is an “identity that embodies historical continuity…the historic national community is a community of obligation…Because our forebears have toiled and spilt their blood to build and defend the nation, we who are born into it inherit an obligation to continue their work which we discharge partly towards our contemporaries and partly towards our descendants.” Miller also suggests that those who share a national identity should have something in common, what he described as a ‘common public culture’. He also points out that “…there must be a sense that the people belong together by virtue of the characteristics they share…” But cautioning against

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16 Ibid, p.22
"certain elementary errors" such as the idea that the shared characteristics must be based on biological descent "that our fellow-nationals must be our 'kith and kin', a view that leads directly to racism...", Miller argues that if what matters to nationality is that people should share a common public culture "then, this is quite compatible with their belonging to a diversity of ethnic groups..." 17 In his definition of a common public culture, Miller notes that "another error is to suppose that the common public culture required for a national identity must be monolithic and embracing. A public culture may be seen as a set of understandings about how a group of people is to conduct its life together. This will include political principles such as a belief in democracy or the rule of law..."18

The sense that the pluralist legacy of the anti-colonial resistance would have to be upheld was well-marked in the responses of the leaders of newly independent India who were conscious that the new state had managed to steer clear of the pulls of cultural nationalism of both the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League. It was also understood that the new emphasis on civic identity being the primary identity in the new framework mandated the building of a public culture of a pluralist and secular orientation. It has been pointed out by historian Sumit Sarkar that the richness and the broad vision of the anti-colonial struggle in India went beyond mere nationalism. "Its value and significance lay...not primarily because it 'won us freedom', or because it had been an exceptionally heroic saga...What remains impressive was a progressive expansion in the meanings of 'freedom',...(it) came to include democracy, a federal polity, secularism, a measure of social justice..."19 He notes that "much of the true greatness of the anti-colonial era resides precisely in its exceptional openness to debate and self-questioning...Not many nationalist movements

17 Ibid, p.25.
have had such a rich history of seeking to go beyond the limits of mere nationalism.\textsuperscript{20}

It is particularly important to note that the legacy of that long-drawn and spirited anti-colonial struggle was a sense of a shared commitment to certain political values like democracy, pluralism and a secular view of nationhood. The nationalist sentiment was not confined to any particular ethnic or cultural community because of the fact that the nationalist movement had a multi-communal and multicultural support base. This ensured that the national sovereignty that was being sought from the platform of the anti-colonial movement was conceived of as purely civic and territorial in orientation. The second part of the historical legacy bequeathed to the inheritors of the new Indian nation was the painful experience of Partition, which revealed the high costs of displacement and bloodshed, which were the underpinnings of campaigns of cultural nationalism, both Muslim and Hindu. The post-Independence, post-Partition decision to acknowledge the heterogeneous base of the anti-colonial struggle and give equal primacy to all its stakeholders, regardless of their particular cultural or social identities, was therefore a conscious one, intended also to reflect a pointed contrast to the other trajectory in the very same subcontinent that culminated in Pakistan which opted for a state, anchored to Islamic cultural nationalism.

The Indian experiment is an example of the voluntaristic basis of civic nationalism which sees the state as being a necessary agency in nation-building and nation-building itself is conceived of as a proactive exercise, with the construction of a secular public culture being a particular responsibility. This is unlike the case of cultural nationalism which is traditionally more wary of the state’s jurisdiction. Explaining the difference between the political nationalists

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
and cultural nationalists in their conceptions of the nation and the state, John Hutchison observes:

...The cultural nationalist perceives the state as an accidental, for the essence of a nation is its distinctive civilisation, which is a product of its unique history, culture and geographical profile. Unlike the political nationalist, who is fundamentally a rationalist, a cultural nationalist like Herder affirms a cosmology according to which humanity, like nature, is infused with a creative force which endows all things with an individuality. Nations are primordial expressions of this spirit; like families, they are natural solidarities. Nations are then not just political units but organic beings, living personalities, whose individuality must be cherished by their members in all their manifestations. Unlike the political nationalist, the cultural nationalist founds the nation not on 'mere' consent or law but on the passions implanted by nature and history....

...Political nationalists have as their objective the achievement of a representative state that will guarantee to its members uniform citizenship rights...For a cultural nationalist such as Herder, however, the state is regarded with suspicion as a product of conquest and as imbued with an inherent bureaucratic drive that, exemplified in the cosmopolitan imperial state, seeks to impose a mechanical uniformity on living cultures. 21

It can be seen that this divergence in perception was true of the Indian situation too. The mainstream Congress-led nationalist movement attempted to seize the political momentum in a context wherein the primary enemy was British colonial rule by rallying its diverse mass base with the promise of an all-embracing secular and civic nationhood. Predictably there was the challenge to the Congress definition of nationhood from the Hindu cultural nationalists, primarily of the Hindu Mahasabha which questioned the assumptions underlying the Congress pitch for secular nationhood by insisting that Hindus

had a primordial presence in India and suggesting that there was always a Hindu nation in India from time immemorial. The struggle between the two views of nationhood in the run-up to Independence was marked by the Hindu cultural nationalists making a last-ditch stand to plead for a Hindu nation, in the context of a growing consensus behind secular nationalism in India, despite the movement for an Islamic State of Pakistan. The Hindu nationalists attempted to wean away Hindus by playing upon the issue of the emergence of Pakistan, suggesting that the new state would be a magnet for the loyalty of Muslims in India. As this study will demonstrate in the later chapters, the emphasis on the “extra-territorial loyalties” of Indian Muslims is an undercurrent which has persisted and become a cornerstone in the political project of Hindu majoritarianism of later decades. Thus there is in a sense an unbroken narrative of Hindu cultural nationalism, which although manifesting as Hindu majoritarianism in the later decades, drew from the same set of themes. Before proceeding to examine these core themes, it would be useful to recapitulate the essence of the two sharply divergent perceptions of nationhood as explained in an exposition by Ashutosh Varshney:

...Secular nationalism, the official doctrine of India’s national identity since independence, seeks to preserve the geographical integrity of India. In principle, it includes all ethnic and religious groups in its definition of the nation and respects their beliefs and cultures. Giving security to the various ethnic and religious groups is considered part of nation-building. One can be a good Muslim or a good Bengali and a good Indian at the same time.

That, to Hindu nationalists, is the opposite of nation-building. A salad bowl does not produce cohesion, a melting pot does. Hinduism, to Hindu nationalists, is the source of India’s identity. It alone can provide national cohesiveness...

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This is in essence at the heart of the conflict between the “two principal imaginations”, to use Varshney’s phrase. But of more significance to the future project of Hindu majoritarianism was the Hindu cultural nationalists’ understanding that it was strategically imperative to categorise Muslims and other non-Hindu groups as minorities, and even alien elements at that, thereby enabling a portrayal of these groups as with lesser stakes and consequently having a lesser claim on a Hindu nation. Gyanendra Pandey points out that “nations are established by constructing a core or mainstream—the essential, natural soul of the nation as it is claimed,” and simultaneously “minorities are constituted along with the nation—for they are the means of constituting national majorities or mainstreams.” Nations and nationalism “are established by defining boundaries.”23

The sleight of hand by which Muslims and other non-Hindus were deftly transformed overnight into minorities even as Hindus appeared to have become the mainstream or the core of the Indian nation, in the Hindu cultural nationalist imagination, as it was confronting the Congress-led campaign, is explained by Pandey:

…To have given greater political visibility to the category of Hindus at the moment of nationalist triumph in the 1940s would perhaps have meant running the risk of differentiating and problematising it, and having to recognise that history and culture and naturalness are not uncontested. This may also be the reason why the argument about whose country this is could not be acknowledged as a political argument. For to concede that the nation was a political project, first and foremost, would be to concede its historicity. To acknowledge that the nationalist struggle was a struggle for political power would be to open up the question of who should wield that power and to what end—for the progress

of the nation could not mean exactly the same thing to all parts of that imagined community... 24

It was evident from the writings of the early Hindu nationalist ideologues that their aim was to establish Hindu dominance of an Indian nationhood emerging from the restraints of British colonialism. The main gambits in the Hindu nationalist discourse of that period were intended to polarise the public debate which at that point in time was largely dominated by concerns relating to the strategy and tactics of the freedom struggle against British rule. The Hindu cultural nationalists had singled out the Muslim community as the principal enemy rather than the other minority groups, on the assumption that the presence of the other groups would not threaten the idea of a Hindu India.

Opening Gambits

There are a multitude of explanations for the emergence of Hindu nationalism in the earlier decades before Independence. Without retracing this ground, it would be useful to recall some of the main analytical conclusions of these writers that are relevant to this study. The historical context of the emergence of Hindu nationalism as set out by these scholars highlights the tactics and strategies that were used to propel forward the discourse of cultural nationalism in its early stages. Similar strategies and tactics have been employed in the mobilisation of Hindu majoritarianism in the present context. Christophe Jaffrelot's explanation of the strategies by which Hindu cultural nationalism sought to expand its influence is of importance to all further studies of Hindu nationalism because it illuminates the core approaches visible in the tactics at

24 Ibid.
work even in the 1980s and the 1990s. The primary strategy, Jaffrelot notes, was a paradoxical process of "stigmatisation" on the one hand and "emulation" on the other, of the "threatening Others". This strategy evolved in the 1920s, when "certain Hindu ideologues felt threatened by the mobilisation of Muslims in the Khilafat movement. The strategy of simultaneous stigmatisation and emulation of the 'Other' through reference to an invented tradition was revived notably by the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh." This description of the stages of the strategy of "stigmatisation and emulation" offers a perspective in a broader sense of the construction of Hindu nationalist ideology. The Hindu nationalist strategy of identity building, he argues, "derives its paradoxical character from the fact that it simultaneously stigmatises and emulates the Other and eventually produces a Hindu nationalist identity, which has little to do with Hinduism." 

What has also been pointed out by other historians of the period was the opening up of political space for such cultural nationalist ideologies, Hindu and Muslim, as a result of the flaws in the Congress strategy of mass mobilisation. Mushirul Hasan observes: "...Instead of emphasising the commonality of Hindu-Muslim interests, the Congress sought a following sometimes by exploiting religious issues and more often by concluding pacts for immediate political gains..." Hasan also notes that the Hindu-Muslim cleavages widened in the aftermath of the Khilafat and the Non-Cooperation agitations. Adding to the pressure from colonial policies that sought to emphasise communal identities with a view to diffusing the potential consolidation of anti-colonial sentiment, was the Congress party's inability to overcome its factional struggles.

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26 Ibid, p.76.
27 Ibid, p.76.
38 Mushirul Hasan, op.cit, p.277
and reconcile its diverse ideological positions, thereby opening up the space for the sharpening of communal identities.  

It has also been seen that as a consequence of the opening up of political space to the forces of cultural nationalism, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League had emerged as virtual counterpoints in the political discourse, in which the Congress placed itself at the centre. John Zavos describes the Hindu Mahasabha, by the mid-1920s, as a “fairly high profile organisation on the national political scene; it carried with it the weight of its self-image as the representative body of the Hindus, an image which was sustained...by reference to the colonial discourse of organisation. Within this framework, it could operate on the basis of a ‘template of polarisation’, through which it gained legitimacy as the obverse of the Muslim League.” Zavos also notes that the idea of a Hindu Sangathan had emerged by the 1930s, which became "the common denominator of a group of organisations...which operated in the name of Hindu nationalism" and "as representation became a key battlefield in the struggle between the state and Indian nationalism in the early 20th century, this constituency of Hindus gained prominence as a counterpoint to Indian nationalists' attempts to reify their own constituency."  

The Hindu cultural nationalists had understood that the real ideological battle was not against colonialism but against the Congress campaign for civic nationalism. It was evident as they recognised colonial rule was on the retreat, it would become important to assert dominance in the new political landscape. The contours of the conflict that was emerging between secular nationalism and cultural nationalism of both kinds--Muslim separatism and the quest for Hindu hegemony--were clearly emerging. But with the Congress-led nationalist

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movement fast gaining ground, both these forces were in different ways seeking new strategies that could optimize their options in the unfolding scenario. As for the Hindu nationalists, the main arguments advanced by their leading ideologues were intended to stake a claim to sole or superior proprietorship of the Indian nation. From their speeches and writings, it was evident that they were seeking to polarise the public discourse by singling out the Muslim community as the principal enemy, rather than other minority groups whose presence was not seen as threatening the idea of a Hindu nation.

Early on, the Hindu nationalist discourse had as its central theme, the “extra-territorial loyalties” of the Muslims, based on the premise that their “holy land” was elsewhere. Another charge laid at the door of the Muslim community was its supposedly less enthusiastic participation in the freedom struggle. The argument that the Hindu nationalists set the most store by, was its assertion that the Hindu community had prior antiquity in the Indian subcontinent. This argument was intended to make the case that Muslims were “foreigners” who had supposedly been resisted from the outset by a “Hindu” nation. As later chapters of this dissertation also highlight, the Hindu nationalist claim of "prior antiquity" was the bottom line of all the chauvinist campaigns that emerged in the later decades, including over the Ayodhya issue.

The discourse as it evolved in the pre-Independence period, with its emphasis on three core postulates reflected the pressure of the dominance of the Indian nationalist movement and its platform of composite and secular nationalism which was widely seen as indicating the way forward in the quest for national sovereignty. The Hindu nationalists were adopting what in retrospect seemed to be a defensive strategy in their articulation of the premises of the demand for Hindu nationhood. The first claim was that since India as a national entity had a preponderance of Hindu sacred geography, it indicated the 'naturalness' of the idea of a Hindu nation. What was evident in this emphasis
on sacred geography was a determination to devalue territory as a concept in nationality-formation, which would be the natural course of a movement emphasising civic nationalism. The second claim that Hindus had 'prior antiquity' in India was meant to preempt the claims of other groups to equal stakes in nationhood, suggesting that Hindus had a primordial presence in India. But the weakness of this claim— that it would be difficult to establish that there was a homogeneous cultural group labelling themselves 'Hindu' and that 'prior antiquity' as a concept could not necessarily command automatic deference in assigning political rights, restricted its conceptual appeal. The third postulate of numerical preponderance, the seed of the present-day political movement for Hindu majoritarianism was its most formidable argument, and one which was revived with particular vehemence in the later periods. Here below, the background and implications of these three postulates are examined.

**Linking territory to Hindu Sacred Geography:**

As noted earlier, there was at the outset, a determination to devalue territory as a concept to reckon with in the definition of nationality. One of the earliest attempts to consolidate a Hindu identity, in the colonial discourse was by the Punjabi lawyer, Lal Chand, an Arya Samajist. Insisting that patriotism could not be understood as merely pertaining to territory, Lal Chand maintained that it must have a communal correlation. He argued:

...But one thing is clear, although patriotism has come to be understood as meaning love for one's country, the origin of the word implies as much communal love as geographical...The ideal, the predominant factor, ought to be communal rather than geographical interest...
Instances are given where people who are not homogeneous form compact States. I do not for a moment say it is impossible. But in all these cases, it is only one community that preponderates, the other forming a minority, important minority, influential minority but still and always a minority. Therefore what is necessary and required, is to bear the communal interest always in mind and this will solve the many difficulties which now present themselves. A Hindu going to Patal would walk with his feet towards India but his head must gravitate towards the interest of his own community. The idea is to love everything owned by the community. It may be religion, it may be a tract of country, or it may be a phase of civilisation. But these are mere outward clothes of the inner feeling. This then is the fire I wish to rekindle. (italics as in original)

The Hindu cultural nationalist discourse, recognising that territory as a singular factor in nation-making would necessarily have to be de-emphasised, ensured that Hindu sacred geography was inevitably superimposed on any conceptualisation of the terrain of the future Indian nation. This was intended to underline that the proposed territory of India was seen as the holy land of Hindus, home as it was to several Hindu sacred and mythical sites. This of course was meant to be in pointed contrast to other groups which had holy lands elsewhere, outside India. Simultaneously claiming that the Hindu community had prior antiquity in this country and consequently, asserting a prior claim to possession of the territory of the future Indian nation, VD Savarkar set the tone in his well-known cogitation on Hindutva. He said:

At last the great mission which the Sindhus had undertaken of founding a nation and a country found and reached its geographical limit when the valorous Prince of Ayodhya made a triumphant entry in Ceylon and actually brought the whole land from the Himalayas to the seas under one sovereign sway. The day when the Horse of Victory returned to Ayodhya unchallenged and unchallengeable, the great

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white Umbrella of Sovereignty was unfurled over the Imperial throne of Ramachandra the brave, Ramachandra the good, and a loving allegiance to him was sworn, not only by the Princes of Aryan blood but Hanuman, Sugriva, Bibhishana from the south—that day was the real birthday of our Hindu people. It was truly our national day: for Aryans and Anaryans knitting themselves into a people were born as a nation. 32

Savarkar gave the sacred geography argument prominence in his construction of the claim that this country was primarily the land of the Hindus. In phrases replete with references to Hindu mythology, Savarkar declared: “Ah! Every hill and dell is instinct with memories of a Kapil or a Vyas, Shankar or Ramdas. Here Bhagirath rules, there Kurukshetra lies. Here Ramachandra made his first halt of an exile, there Janaki saw the golden deer and fondly pressed her lover to kill it. Here the divine Cowherd played on his flute that made every heart in Gokul dance in harmony...” 33 Another instance of his assertion that Hindu sacred geography made India Hindu was his claim that "Hindutva is a derivative word from Hindu." Further, "the earliest and most sacred records of our race show that the appellation, Saptasindhu or Hapt-Hindu was applied to a region in which the Vedic nation flourished. The geographical sense being the primary one has, now contracting, now expanding, but always persistently been associated with the words Hindu and Hindusthan till after the lapse of nearly 5000 years if not more, Hindusthan has come to mean the whole continental country from the Sindhu to the Sindhu from the Indus to the Seas. 34

Arguing that all the prerequisites for nationhood were present among the Hindu people, Savarkar said "The most important factor that contributes to the cohesion, strength and the sense of unity of a people is that they should possess an internally well-connected and externally well-demarcated ‘local habitation’,

32 V.D Savarkar, Hindutva (First Edn, 1923, Reprinted by Hindi Sahitya Sadan, New Delhi, 2003), p. 11.
33 Ibid, p.112.
34 Ibid, pp.81-82.
and a ‘name’ that could, by its very mention, rouse the cherished image of their
motherland as well as the loved memories of the past. We are happily blessed
with both these important requisites for a strong and united
nation.” On this basis, declared Savarkar, "Hindusthan meaning the land of the Hindus, the first
essential of Hindu tva must necessarily be this geographical one. A Hindu is
primarily a citizen either in himself or through his forefathers of ‘Hindusthan’
and claims the land as his motherland...35

Emphasis on Hindu Religious Culture:

Apparently recognising the inherent infirmity in the claim of Hindu
nationalists that the Hindu community had an exclusive claim to ownership of
the new nation, given that it did not constitute a monolithic group either in
ethnic or linguistic terms, the usual catalytic agents for the seeking of separate
nationhood, Savarkar sought to preempt a challenge to his arguments on ethnic
grounds, by privileging Hindu religious culture or Sanskriti as he called it, and
making it the hub of his nationhood construct. “...Hindu Dharma of all shades
and schools lives and grows and has its being in the atmosphere of Hindu
culture and the Dharma of a Hindu being so completely identified with the land
of the Hindus, this land to him is not only a Pitrubhu but a Punyabhu, not only a
fatherland but a holy land...Yes, this Bharatbhumi, this Sindhusthan, this land
of ours that stretches from Sindhu to Sindhu is our Punyabhumi for it was in
this land that the Founders of our faith and the Seers to whom ‘Veda’ the
Knowledge was revealed...So to every Hindu, from the Santal to the Sadhu, this
Bharat bhumi, this Sindusthan is at once a Pitrubhu and a Punyabhu—
fatherland and a holy land.”

35 Ibid, pp81-82
Therefore, a Hindu is one “…who looks upon the land that extends from Sindhu to Sindhu—from the Indus to the Seas—as the land of his forefathers—his Fatherland (Pitrubhu), who inherits the blood of that race whose first discernible source could be traced to the Vedic Saptasindhus and which on its onward march assimilating much that was incorporated and ennobling much that was assimilated has come to be known as the Hindu people who has inherited and claims as his own the culture of that race as expressed chiefly in their common classical language Sanskrit and represented by a common history, a common literature…rites and rituals, ceremonies and sacraments…and who above all addresses this land, this Sindhusthan as his Holy land (Punjabhu) as the land of his prophets and seers, of his godmen and gurus, the land of piety and pilgrimage. These are the essentials of Hindutva—a common nation (Rashtra) a common race (Jati) and a common civilisation (Sanskriti).”

The emphasis on Sanskriti and the unique definition of Jati as a “born brotherhood” of Hindus was intended to ward off challenges to his premises on ethnic or linguistic grounds. Preempting such challenges, Savarkar argued: “…And speaking relatively alone, no people in the world can more justly claim to get recognised as a racial unit than the Hindus and perhaps the Jews. A Hindu marrying a Hindu may lose his caste but not his Hindutva…” and more significantly for the political project of excluding Muslims from the proposed national framework, “…But can we who are concerned with investigating into facts as they are and not as they should be, recognise these Mohammedans as Hindus…it is clear that although their original blood is thus almost unaffected by an alien adulteration, yet they cannot be called Hindus in the sense in which the term is actually understood because we Hindus are bound together not only by the tie of love we bear to a common fatherland…but also by the tie of the

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common homage we pay to our great civilisation - our Hindu culture which could not be better rendered than by the word Sanskriti ... We are one because we are a nation, a race and own a common Sanskriti (civilisation)\textsuperscript{37}

The conceptual foundations of Hindu cultural nationalism were strengthened by the arguments advanced by M.S Golwalkar in his tract "\textit{We or Our Nationhood Defined}" in which, borrowing from Johann Gottfried Herder's idea of a \textit{Volk Geist}, and building on Savarkar's linking of religion and culture, he portrayed the Hindus as having a 'Race-Spirit'. Golwalkar's ideas closely mirror those of Nazism, the admiration for which he did not conceal. \textsuperscript{38} The Hindu Race, he said, "evolved a culture which despite the degenerating contact with the debased 'civilisations' of the Mussalmans and the Europeans for the last ten centuries" was "still the noblest in the world". Building on the base constructed by Savarkar, linking Hindu religion, the Sanskrit language-- 'the dialect of the gods' and Hindu culture, Golwalkar set out the Hindu cultural nationalist definition of Indian nationhood:

Thus applying the modern understanding of 'Nation' to our present conditions, the conclusion is unquestionably forced upon us that in this country, Hindusthan, the Hindu Race with its Hindu Religion, Hindu Culture and Hindu Language (the natural family of Sanskrit and her offspring) complete the Nation concept, that in fine, in Hindusthan exists and must needs exist the ancient Hindu nation and nought else but the Hindu nation... \textsuperscript{39}

Like Savarkar, it was clear that Golwalkar was mindful of the potential weakness in the description of Hindus as a separate ethnic community and

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid, pp.91-92.
\textsuperscript{38} MS Golwalkar, \textit{We or Our Nationhood Defined} (Bharat Publications, Nagpur, 1939). Golwalkar admiringly noted of Nazi Germany that by "purging" itself of the Jews, "Race pride at its highest has been manifested here." Germany, he said, "has shown how wellnigh impossible it is for Races and cultures, having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindusthan to learn and profit by..." pp.35-36.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid, p.43.
sought to get over this semantic hurdle by postulating a linkage between race and religious culture, asserting that it was in terms of this linkage that the Hindus constituted a nation in India. In his use of the concept of ‘Janapada’, it was evident that Golwalkar was seeking to preempt the presentation of any other criterion of nationhood that could rob the Hindu cultural nationalist claims of all validity. “The word Rashtra, which expresses the whole of the idea contained in the English word ‘Nation’ is as old as the Vedas... for the Rashtra concept to be complete, it should be composed of Desha (country), Jati (race) or Janapada (people),” Golwalkar argued. Further, “…the third word Janapada which means ‘people’ and may be taken to be a near synonym of the word Jati is more explicit. Janapada is a complex idea. It includes country and Race chiefly indeed but by definitely stating the nature of the Race it has given a prominent place to Religion and Culture also. Janapada means Janasya Varnashrama Lakshanasya Daryathpathehe Sitaanam Ithi”— The place where a people ‘characterised by Varnas and Ashramas’ enriches itself...that is, following the Hindu framework of society, obeying the Hindu codes, in short, subscribing to the Hindu Religion and Culture—that is important. The people in this country must be Hindus by Religion and Culture and consequently by Language, to be really included in the concept Janapada, a concept of the Rashtra idea of the ancient Hindus.”

The 'Prior Antiquity' Claim

The Hindu cultural nationalist assertion of the 'prior antiquity' of Hindus in the subcontinent is one of the most significant conceptual assumptions of Hindutva, and one which fuels most of the political arguments of Hindu

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nationalism in the present context, underpinning the extremist stances of Hindu nationalists in contests over sacred sites. The Hindu nationalists recognise that the idea that Hindus were the primary inhabitants of this nation is immensely appealing to its potential constituencies in the middle classes. The evident infirmities in the unproven claim that Hindus were a single homogeneous group and as such, had prior residence in this territory, do not deter the Hindu nationalist parties from reasserting this claim from time to time, as a basis for their political demands. In a recent interview for this study, one of the key architects of today's Hindu nationalist resurgence, L.K Advani referred to the legendary Hindu religious reformer "Adi" Shankara to make the argument that centuries ago, India was one single country in the eyes of Hindus. "...Centuries back, there used to be so many kingdoms, so many kings, yet a person born in Kaladi in Kerala, Adi Shankara, when he thought of propagating his concept of Vedanta, he did not think in terms of his own little area. He went right up to Jammu-Kashmir in the north, to Dwarka in the west...the concept of India being one cultural whole, one cultural nation has been since that time." 41

Scriptural authority is also invoked for this claim. For instance, Devendra Swarup, RSS ideologue, interviewed likewise for this particular study, quoted the *Vishnu Purana* to assert that ancient Hindu texts confirmed the existence of a single nation. Asserting that Hindu nationalism reflected a "group consciousness" evolving over a "long historical journey", he quoted a stanza of the *Vishnu Purana*, to this effect, --"*Uttaram Yat Samudraya Himadresh Caiva Dakshinam Varshham Tad Bharatam Nama Bharateehi Yatra Santathi*" (The land that stretches from the oceans to their north and from the Himalayas to their south is known as Bharatvarsha, the children of which are Bharatiya) 42. As these

41 Lal Krishna Advani, former Deputy Prime Minister, interview by author, tape recording, New Delhi, February 3, 2007.
assertions by Advani and Swarup show, latter-day Hindutva draws inspiration from the emphasis placed on this claim by early Hindu nationalist ideologues.

The argument that Hindus had a primordial presence in "Hindustan" was a critical one in the context of the pre-Independence battles for hegemony of the future Indian national project. Thus Golwalkar and Savarkar laid particular emphasis on highlighting this idea. It was a short step from this restrictive and potentially exclusionary definition of Nation to the unfolding of a full-fledged doctrine of Hindu majoritarian nationalism. Golwalkar's writings provide the key to understanding the core of the majoritarian inclinations of the Hindu cultural nationalists, who were clearly not merely philosophising or seeking a Hindu nation in the abstract but were mindful of their own present day political realities, particularly the need to wrest hegemony of the prospective Indian nation. Golwalkar argued:

If as indisputably proved, Hindusthan is the land of the Hindus and is the terra firma for the Hindu nation alone to flourish upon, what is to be the fate of all those who today happen to live upon the land, though not belonging to the Hindu Race, Religion, culture?...

...We must bear in mind that so far as ‘nation’ is concerned, all those who fall outside the five-fold limits of that idea can have no place in the national life unless they abandon their differences, adopt the religion, culture and language of the Nation and completely merge themselves in the National Race. So long, however, as they maintain their racial, religious and cultural differences, they cannot but be only foreigners who may be either friendly or inimical to the Nation....Culturally, linguistically they must become one with the National Race; they must adopt the past and entertain the aspirations for the future, of the National Race; in short they must be ‘Naturalised’ in the country by being assimilated in the Nation wholly. 43

43 Ibid, pp. 45-46. Clearly attempting to set the seal on his portrayal of non-Hindu groups as ‘foreigners’, Golwalkar took his argument so far as to make an implied comparison of these non-Hindu groups to what he called "emigrants", foreigners entering countries. He observed that "emigrants have to get themselves
In his declaration that the Hindus were the National Race, where he might have sensed that he was skating on thin ice, semantically speaking, Golwalkar evidently decided to buttress his assertion by borrowing from Savarkar’s definition of Jati as a “born brotherhood of Hindus”. Golwalkar’s ideological construct drew heavily from Savarkar’s assertions that Sanskriti and Hindu sacred geography were the defining parameters of the future Indian nation. He was also clearly drawing the battle lines, vis-à-vis the other communities. If these non-Hindu groups did not try to assimilate themselves, “they live merely as outsiders, bound by all the codes and conventions of the Nation, at the sufferance of the Nation and deserving of no special protection, far less any privilege or rights.”

He was unflinching in his assessment that there were only two courses open to the "foreign elements". They had "either to merge themselves in the national race and adopt its culture, or to live at its mercy so long as the national race may allow them to do so and to quit the country at the sweet will of the national race.doctrine" According to Golwalkar, that was the "only sound view of the minorities problem." That alone would keep "the national life healthy and undisturbed." He also demanded that "the foreign races in Hindusthan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but the glorification of the Hindu race and culture i.e 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"

naturally assimilated in the principal mass of population, the National Race by adopting its culture and language and sharing in its aspirations by losing all consciousness of their separate existence, forgetting their foreign origin." (p.47)

44 Jyotirmaya Sharma in his study, Terrifying Vision: M.S Golwalkar, the RSS and India, (Viking, New Delhi, 2007), notes that Golwalkar argued that dharma and sanskriti alone could fabricate a parampara or tradition and the nation, whether ancient or modern, was a practical manifestation of sanskriti and the cumulative product of customs, observances and collective cultural memories or samskaras. (p.53).

45 Golwalkar, op.cit, p.47.
Invoking the Hindu nationalist claim of prior antiquity, Golwalkar also declared "We are an old nation; let us deal, as old nations ought to and do deal, with foreign races who have chosen to live in our country."46

For the Hindu nationalist project aiming to wrest hegemony of the future nation, it was critical that the Hindus be depicted as the original inhabitants of this country and all other religious groups as outsiders who had come in later. As noted briefly earlier, this politically loaded premise that Hindus had prior antiquity was a difficult one to sustain on three counts. First, it would be impossible to prove that the original settlers were all Hindus, second, that those who had a different religious identity some centuries later, were not the original settlers who might have changed faiths and lastly the more contentious point that those supposedly original settlers had superior political rights over common territory. But the Hindu cultural nationalists built most of their arguments for the right to dominance on the basis of this claim. Golwalkar claimed “Whereas with the exception of China, all the chief Nations of the world can trace the history of their civilised life (I should say semi-barbaric life) and go back at best a couple of thousand years, we cannot say when, at what particular point of time, we in Hindusthan discarded the state of nature and started an ordered, civilised, national existence. It seems as if we were never uncivilised... Undoubtedly therefore, we- Hindus- have been in undisputed and undisturbed possession of the land for over 8 or even 10 thousand years before this land was invaded by any foreign race....Thus apart from any consideration of the Hindu i.e Aryan race being indigenous or otherwise, of one thing we are certain, that the very first page of history records our existence as a progressive and highly

civilised nation—the only nation in the then world, in this land, which therefore came to be known as Hindusthan, the land of the Hindus. ”

Savarkar had a similar sequence built into his polemic. “...After the expulsion of the Huns and Shakas, the valour of her arms left Sindhusthan in an undisturbed possession of independence for centuries on centuries to come and enabled her once more to be the land where peace and plenty reigned...But ...this very undisturbed enjoyment of peace and plenty lulled our Sindhusthan, in a sense of false security and bred a habit of living in the land of dreams. At last she was rudely awakened on the day when Mohammed of Ghazni crossed the Indus, the frontier line of Sindhusthan and invaded her...Nothing can weld peoples into a nation and nations into a state as the pressures of a common foe... Never had Sindhusthan a better chance and a more powerful stimulus to be herself, forged into an indivisible whole as on that dire day, when the great iconoclast crossed the Indus.....”

In what was an attempt to assert the prior presence of what he saw as a monolithic block of Hindus in this country, Savarkar claimed: “India alone had to face Arabs, Persians, Pathans, Baluchis, Tartars, Turks, Moguls – a veritable human Sahara whirling and columning up bodily in a furious world storm!..... Day after day, decade after decade, century after century, the ghastly conflict continued and India single-handedly kept up the fight morally and militarily....”

It should be noted that Savarkar’s vivid description inserts the word ‘India’, suggesting the existence of a cohesive national entity that was under siege from various invading groups. The invoking of the name India for a preexisting entity which at that time was not conceived of as a single nation, was not at all borne out by historical facts, especially as Savarkar’s imagery collapses several centuries and several discrete events into

48 Savarkar, op.cit, pp 42-43.
49 Ibid, pp. 43-44.
one single timeframe, sharply contradicting the historical reality that the quest for a nationhood in India was a modern one, born out of a colonial imagination.

Linking the word ‘India’ to Hindu, Savarkar asserted that a Hindu nationhood was in the making as a result. “In this prolonged furious conflict our people became intensely conscious of ourselves as Hindus and were welded into a nation to an extent unknown in our history...all those on this side of the Indus who claimed the land from Sindhu to Sindhu, from the Indus to the seas, as the land of their birth, felt that they were directly mentioned by that one single expression, Hindusthan. The enemies hated us as Hindus...for it was the one great issue to defend the honour and independence of Hindusthan and maintain the cultural unity and civic life of Hindutva and not Hinduism alone but Hindutva i.e. Hindu dharma that was being fought out on the hundred fields of battle as well as on the floor of the chambers of diplomacy. This one word, Hindutva, ran like a vital spinal cord through our whole body politic and made the Nayars of Malabar weep over the sufferings of the Brahmins of Kashmir.” 50

The articulations of Savarkar and Golwalkar borrowed heavily from the Romantic Nationalists of Europe, Herder and Fichte who argued that each nation would have to reflect its own Volksgeist (spirit of the people), in other words, its own national culture, which obviously according to Savarkar and Golwalkar was Hindu culture. The implication of the assertion that Hindu culture was the natural culture or volkgeist of the people living in India, was that all other religious groups thereby had only secondary rights in this country.

This theme became the kernel of Hindu cultural nationalism, echoing from every Hindu nationalist political platform, throughout the pre-Independence period and after. “Before the advent of any foreigner,” argued NB Khare, in his presidential address at a special session of the Hindu

50 Ibid, pp. 45-46.
Mahasabha in Jaipur in 1951, “the population of this country consisted only of Hindus. Although many foreigners, like Greeks, Scythians, Huns came to this country as invaders they were all gradually assimilated in the great Hindu Society and Pantheon, without leaving any trace behind. This homogeneity of the Hindu nation was broken by Muslim invaders who used their conquests to further the ends of their proselytising zeal, which resulted in their conversion of a large number of Hindus to Islam…”

Thus even against the background of the mass struggle against British colonial rule spearheaded by the Congress, the Hindu nationalist campaign sought to polarise the political context by attempting to shift the focus from what was the primary struggle in the political arena--between the Indian masses and the British imperialists--by segregating Muslims in their discourse and placing them in the category of the British, classing them all as ‘foreign invaders’, thereby staking a claim on behalf of the Hindus that they were the true repositories of sovereignty of the prospective Indian nation. Writing in the Organiser in August 1950, Khare insisted that “During the period of Muslim supremacy in Hindusthan the ideal of a Hindu Nation was the great driving force to fight the foreign Muslim invader…” Noting that “from ancient times, religion has been the most potent force in creating bonds of nationhood” and that “this was true in Europe as exemplified in crusades against Islam,” Khare asserted “In Hindusthan also, it played a great part in the fights against Muslim invaders for a thousand years…” In the same essay, Khare delineated a Herderian perspective of cultural nationalism:

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51 NB Khare, Presidential Address, Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha, Special Session, Jaipur, April 28, 1951, (Published by the Secretary, Reception Committee, Hindu Mahasabha, Special Session, Johari Bazaar, Jaipur).
53 Ibid.
...Practically speaking, if a people have a vivid consciousness of being one nation for generations their claim to nationhood should be recognised. Such a vivid consciousness is always based on historical traditions of common persecution undergone, common victories won, which create positive bonds of common way of life and common culture including broad ideas of religion and philosophy. This criterion of nationhood applies only to the Hindus in Hindusthan who constitute a vast majority of the population. The Hindus alone therefore are a nation in Hindusthan.54 (emphasis added)

This was the platform on which Hindu cultural nationalists starting with Lal Chand and Savarkar developed their critique of the Muslim community, building on the charge that since Muslims had their ‘holy land’ elsewhere, they were bound to have extra-territorial loyalties. As has been noted, the propaganda that Muslims had extra-territorial loyalties because of their religious affiliation was a critical ingredient of the stereotype built of the Muslim community by Hindu nationalist campaigners, seeking to portray Muslims as having lesser stakes than Hindus in the idea of an Indian nation. Savarkar, for instance, asserted “…The fortunes of the Hindus are more inextricably and more closely bound up with India than that of any other non-Hindu sections of our countrymen. After all, the Hindus are the bedrock on which an Indian independent state could be built.”55

54 Ibid.
The Seeds of A Stereotype

The theme of Muslims having extra-territorial loyalties on account of their sentimental attachment to Mecca and the Caliphate was raised frequently in early Hindu nationalist writings. In his tract, *Self Abnegation in Politics*, Lal Chand argued “Mohammedans have Constantinople behind their back, not to speak of other Mohammedan independent States... On the other hand, the Hindus have to fall back on their gullibility. They have no independent State to support their cause, not even to cheer them with sympathy for their grievances. They are circumscribed within the four walls of Hindustan and have no outside assistance to influence the attitude of their rulers.” This perception was a staple of Hindu nationalist discourse.

Savarkar and other Hindu nationalist ideologues hammered this theme home in every political meeting of the Hindu Mahasabha and other forums. In his presidential address at the Karnavati Session of the Hindu Mahasabha in 1937, Savarkar elaborated on this point:

...Whatever may happen some centuries hence, the solid fact of today cannot be ignored that religion wields mighty influence on the minds of men in Hindusthan and in the case of Mohammedans especially, their religious zeal more often than not borders on fanaticism! Their love towards India as their motherland is but a handmaid to their love for their Holy land outside India. Their faces are ever turned towards Mecca and Madina. But to the Hindus, Hindusthan being their Fatherland as well as their Holy land, the love they bear to Hindusthan is undivided and absolute. They not only form the overwhelming majority of Indian population but have on the whole been the trusted champions of Her cause. A

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56 Lal Chand, op.cit, pp1-2. His tract was one of the first to give voice to a favourite Hindu cultural nationalist complaint that because of a desire to please Turkey, British statesmen were anxious to conciliate Muslim opinion and that this was known to Indian Muslims who “have seized the opportunity to press their demands.” The attitude of “Indian Mohammedans”, according to Lal Chand, “under the circumstances, far from being suppliant, is dictatorial.”
Mohammedan is often found to cherish an extra-territorial allegiance, is moved more by events in Palestine than what concerns India as a Nation, worries himself more about the well-being of the Arabs than the well-being of his Hindu neighbours and countrymen in India. Thousands of Mohammedans could be found conspiring with the Turkish Khilaphatists and Afghans with an object to bring about a foreign invasion of India, if but a Mohammedan rule could thus be established in this land. But to a Hindu, India is all in all of his National being.\textsuperscript{57}

This theme was dominant in his other addresses to the Hindu Mahasabha in the following years. Addressing the Nagpur Session of the Hindu Mahasabha in 1938, Savarkar declared “…territorial patriotism is a word unknown to the Moslem—nay is tabooed, unless in connection with a Moslem territory. Afghans can be patriots, for Afghanistan is a Moslem territory today. But an Indian Moslem, if he is a real Moslem—and they are intensely religious as a people—cannot faithfully bear loyalty to India as a country, as a nation, as a State, because it is today “an Enemy Land” and doubly lost; for non-Moslems are in a majority here and to boot, it is not ruled by any Moslem power, Moslem sovereign.”\textsuperscript{58} Introducing a combative note in his description of Indian Muslims, Savarkar asked—“What wonder then that the Moslem League should openly declare its intention to join hands with non-Indian alien Moslem countries rather than with Indian Hindus, in forming a Moslem Federation? They could not be accused from their point of view of being traitors to Hindusthan. Their conscience was clear. They never looked upon today’s “Hindusthan” as their country, nation. It is to them already an alien land, an enemy land—as a ‘Dar-ul-Harb’ and not a ‘Dar-ul-Islam’…”\textsuperscript{59} Savarkar built upon this image to declare that Muslims and Hindus could not exist in India except as separate

\textsuperscript{57} Savarkar, \textit{Hindu Rathtra Darshan}, op.cit, p. 14
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid, p.60. Presidential Address at the 20\textsuperscript{th} Session of the Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Mahasabha, Nagpur, 1938.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid, pp.60-61.
nations, in essence endorsing the views of his cultural nationalist counterparts at the other end of the spectrum—the Muslim League. In his address to the Calcutta session of the Hindu Mahasabha in 1939, Savarkar argued:

...We Hindus in spite of thousand and one differences within our fold are bound by such religious, cultural, historical, racial, linguistic and other affinities in common as to stand out as a definitely homogeneous people as soon as we are placed in contrast with any other non-Hindu people—say the English or the Japanese or even the Indian Moslems. That is the reason why today we the Hindus from Kashmir to Madras and Sindh to Assam will to be a Nation (sic) by ourselves—while the Indian Moslems are on the whole more inclined to identify themselves and their interests with Moslems outside India than Hindus who live next door; like the Jews in Germany....

...Their (Moslem) religious and theocratic traditions join hands in impressing upon their mind that Hindusthan is not and cannot be a Dar-ul-Islam, their country which they may love, until and unless the Hindus—the Kafars—are either converted to a man to Islam or are reduced to helotage paying the Zizia to some would-be Moslem Sovereignty over this land. The very word ‘Hindusthan’ stinks in their nostrils...I am telling the simple fact which no Moslem can honestly contest that Islam as a whole wants on a deliberate design to assert itself in India as a Nation altogether heterogeneous with the Hindus and having nothing in common with them. Consequently it ought to be clear even to these well-meaning Hindu simpletons that this refusal of the Indian Moslems to merge in a common National unit leaves the Hindus, negatively, too as a Nation by themselves.

Swarajya to the Hindus must mean only that 'Rajya' in which their 'Swatwa', their 'Hindutva' can assert itself without being overloaded by any non-Hindu people, whether they be Indian territorials or extra-territorials....  

60 (italics as in original)

Fighting a Rearguard Battle

The Hindu nationalists recognised that to retain relevance and sharpness in a rapidly changing political context wherein the primary issue was the expulsion of the British imperial rule and regaining sovereignty of the prospective Indian nation, they would have to link their own particular discourse of Hindu cultural nationalism to the larger debate in the public arena on the shape of the emerging nation. The Hindu nationalists began to realise that their political campaigns were being put in the shade by the sweep of the Congress-led nationalist movement which was capturing the public imagination nationwide, by their promise of a nationhood that essentialise all the democratic aspirations of its diverse constituent groups.

It became critical for the Hindu nationalists to at least reach out to whom they saw as Hindu constituencies by kindling their insecurities against Muslims, claiming that the Hindus were the main protagonists in the freedom movement. The diatribes of Savarkar and Golwalkar were directed at painting Muslims as having extra-territorial loyalties and suggesting that their participation in the freedom struggle was less than whole-hearted. Thus Savarkar argued in the Karnavati session of the Hindu Mahasabha in 1937 that it was the Hindus who were taking the lead in the struggle for national independence. "It is the Hindus who went to the gallows, faced transportation to the Andamans by hundreds and got imprisoned by thousands in the fight for the liberation of Hindusthan. Even the Indian National Congress owes its inception to Hindu brain, its growth to Hindu sacrifice, its present position to Hindu labours in the main. In this sense the consolidation and the independence of the Hindu Nation is but another name for the independence of the Indian Nation as a whole."

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Gradually upping the ante in relation to the Indian National Congress and its civic nationalist approach of uniting the different communities under the banner of the freedom struggle against the British, Hindu Mahasabha leaders began criticising the Congress for this approach, simultaneously seeking to highlight what they saw as the untrustworthiness of the Muslim community in particular. Hindu Mahasabha leader, Syama Prasad Mookerjee addressing a Hindu Conference in Sylhet in April 1940 argued: “The Hindu Mahasabha has not adopted any hostile attitude towards the various communities living in this country, particularly to the Moslems who constitute the most powerful minority community in India today... The policy pursued by the Indian National Congress in trying to bring different communities under its banner and form the basis of an united Indian nation has not achieved that amount of success which would fill our hearts with cheerful hope and optimisim. Our experiences in recent years have proved that as much as we would be willing to surrender the rights and interests of the Hindus for the purpose of placating other communities, much as we would like to pursue the policy of delivering ‘blank cheques’, the response from the other side is slow and halting if not sometimes hostile in character...”

Noting that “...many are obsessed with the idea that Indian freedom can never be obtained until Hindus, Moslems and others unite and stand under the banner of one common political organisation”, Mookerjee posed the question “If this unity cannot be achieved, are the Hindus going to enter into pacts and compromises wholly inconsistent with the highest interests of our country and which also permanently weaken the strength and position of the Hindus?”

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62 SP Mookerjee, Address to Surma Valley and Shillong Hill District Hindu Conference, Sylhet, April 6-7, 1940, Collection of Speeches delivered in connection with the Hindu Mahasabha Movement from 1940-44 (Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi), pp. 3-4.

63 Ibid, pp.4-5.
Following in the footsteps of Savarkar and Golwalkar, Mookerjee consistently highlighted the Hindu nationalist characterisation of Muslims as being less patriotic than Hindus because of their perceived ‘extra-territorial’ loyalties. Speaking at the Ninth Behar Provincial Hindu Conference in April 1940, Mookerjee asserted:

The danger of the Moslems consolidating themselves into a separate entity drawing its inspiration from the Moslem countries abroad is obvious to the future of India and specially of Hindus. No one can tell what the future will be. But none can say today that it will be a fairy tale to assert that some future Moslem leaders of the Pakistan movement may dream of a possible alliance with some independent Moslem State for the preservation of Moslem interests or for the spread of Islam in India. The Hindus must be prepared for any contingency. The present cleavage between the Hindus and the Moslems is a matter of the deepest concern to every Hindu. We want to regain the freedom of our country and to retain it, not to lose it again to any other Power whether it masquerades as a friend or openly proclaims itself as an enemy of India. As Hindus our position is perfectly clear. We want communal harmony and amity. We fully recognise that this country must continue in future as it has been in the past, the home of many peoples other than Hindus. We beg of them to treat this country as their fatherland and identify themselves with the joys and sorrows of the people of India. The Hindus who are numerically the strongest must be true to their past traditions of tolerance and forbearance and allow the fullest liberty to all communities residing in India…

It was becoming clear in the 1940s that the fast pace of political developments was now leading to the transfer of sovereignty to Indian hands, and the public arena was largely dominated by the debate over the shape of the future nation, the Congress-led civic nationalists doing their best to keep at bay the forces of cultural nationalism of both kinds, the emergence of the Pakistan demand on the one hand and the Hindu nationalists’ constant war of attrition

64 Mookerjee, op.cit, pp.25-26. Address to Ninth Behar Provincial Conference, April 14, 1940.
on the other. Against this background, Mookerjee, like other Hindu nationalist leaders, began canvassing a view of a national framework that would reflect Hindu majoritarianism. In other words, the Hindu cultural nationalist yearnings, expressed more generally by Savarkar and Golwalkar were now being channelised into a clear-cut political movement placing the phenomenon of Muslim separatism, reflecting in the Pakistan demand at the heart of the campaign for a Hindu nation.

The two tracks of the Hindu cultural nationalist approach were now in full view. The first was the continuous assertion of the rights of the Hindus based on the elements discussed earlier—the claim that Hindu sacred geography was coterminous with Indian territory, the claim of prior antiquity and the argument that being in a numerical majority, the Hindus were imbued with greater rights. The second track was to consistently highlight and underline the stereotypes of Muslim separatist yearnings, extra-territorial loyalties and untrustworthiness. An argument made by Mookerjee when addressing the Madura All India Hindu Youth Conference in December 1940 illustrates this dual track approach—on the one hand, asserting prior and superior rights for the Hindus on account of the factors mentioned above, and on the other suggesting that Moslems and other communities had lesser stake in preserving the Indian nation. “...I am not against Hindu-Moslem unity. But this unity must be built on the fundamental concept that Hindusthan is indivisible, that Hindusthan is the fatherland of all communities claiming the citizenship of this country and that a free Hindusthan where minority rights will be scrupulously protected must always remain in the hands of the children of the soil themselves. The sacred duty of preserving and advancing the political, cultural and spiritual freedom of this land is vested by holy injunction in
the twenty eight crores of Hindus who will live for it as cheerfully as they will die for it.” 65 (emphasis added)

Again at the Bengal Provincial Hindu Conference in Burdwan in November 1941, Mookerjee argued that Muslims had been encouraged to be separatist and disloyal by the Congress support to the Khilafat movement. His argument:

...Pacts and compromises on fundamental issues always proved short lived and failed to pave the way to national solidarity. The Khilafat movement was allowed an equal status with that of Indian Swaraj in the political struggle that shook India a little over twenty years ago. This was one of the greatest blunders that the Congress could have committed. It was not only inimical to the interests of the Hindus as such, but to those of India as a whole...It was first rate political unwisdom to have participated in a movement which was clearly anti-Indian and which encouraged the Moslems of India, millions of whom belonged to the families of converts to be fired with a fanatical zeal in favour of pan-Islamism embracing Moslems in large tracts of country outside India. How could there be any oneness of thought and action between the non-Moslems, mainly the Hindus, on the one hand and the protagonists of the Moslem world on the other?

....The Moslems have proceeded in a determined manner and have placed their own communal considerations in the forefront in considering questions relating to India’s advance. While, on the other hand, like the celebrated astronomer, who in his anxiety to unravel the mysteries of the universe, overlooked dangerous pitfalls near his feet, and walked into the abyss, a section of Hindus are extremely fond of parading their ‘comradeship’ with the rest of the world and expressing their deepest interest in diverse ‘isms’ outside Hindusthan, little caring for the fate of their own fellow-brethren at home..

....What in these circumstances can possibly be the attitude of the Hindus who yet think of Bharatmata as their Divine

65 Ibid, pp.67-68. Address to the All India Hindu Youth Conference, Madura, December 29, 1940.
Mother? They have no country outside India from which they receive inspiration or support... 66

The carefully constructed imagery of India being the 'motherland' of Hindus served not only to stress the 'prior antiquity' claim but also to contrast sharply with other religious groups by suggesting that these could not possibly have the same sentiments to the Indian nation. The "motherland of Hindus' is an important foundational concept in the Hindu cultural nationalist discourse and it continues to have pride of place in the majoritarian narrative of the present times. This imagery which lent itself to anthropomorphic descriptions of Mother India, most often in the form of Durga was at the heart of the later controversy over the Vande Mataram song, consequently rejected by the secular Indian nation-state as too religious in its overtones to be the national anthem of a secular country.

The "motherland of Hindus" thesis allowed the Hindu nationalists to claim that they were most likely to adopt responsible positions as regards issues concerning the nation's security or integrity. It is this "motherland" thesis which is an underlying conceptual assumption in the discourse of the present-day campaigns of Hindu majoritarianism. Recent interviews by the author of this dissertation, with leading ideologues of Hindutva, Devendra Swarup, former editor of the RSS weekly Panchajanya, and the Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi brought home the point that the "motherland" concept is still seen as tactically useful in today's battles with secular nationalism and minority groups. Swarup argued that Hindus had a natural gratitude to the country because of the scriptural injunctions such as in the Atharva Veda which had a reference to the idea of a motherland in the phrase "Mata Bhumir Pratibhuvây" (This land is my mother and I am her son). 67 The Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi

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67 Devendra Swarup, interview.
even extended the logic of this suggestion that Hindus were the only true 'sons of this soil' thesis to defend the Bajrang Dal, which has been widely perceived as playing a major role in the majoritarian aggression. In an interview with the author, Modi maintained that Hindu communal organisations could not destabilise the country, unlike Islamic groups which could take refuge in Islamic countries. "If they (Hindu groups) do it, where will they go?" This is an indication of the unbroken link between the pre-Independence formulations and the conceptual assumptions of Hindu nationalist activity in the recent period.

Meanwhile, to return to the circumstances of the pre-Independence period, with the exit of Muslim separatism, reflecting in the birth of Pakistan, and the virtually simultaneous ascendancy of the Congress brand of secular nationalism, the Hindu nationalists realised they had their backs to the wall. The tone of their rhetoric became more confrontational vis-à-vis the Congress party, which they now recognized as the primary impediment in the expansion of Hindu cultural nationalism. The Hindu nationalist leaders began publicly excoriating the Congress for what they saw as its failure to recognise that the Hindus were already a nation in themselves. Golwalkar, for instance, lashed out:

...This "Educated" class of Hindus became in truth "Aangla Sudra", slaves of the English...They had cut their traces, lost their footing in the National past and become deculturised, denationalised people. But they also formed the bulk of the "Congress" and found no difficulty in eagerly gulping down the extraordinary absurdity that their country was not theirs but belonged to the strangers and enemies of their Race equally with them. These creatures took upon themselves the burden of "leading" the people, to what they considered, following the false start, as the National regeneration...

...To our mind, that is the genesis of the present day ignorance of true Nationality. The same ignorance, the same lack of National sentiment of the right sort is the root of our

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68 Interview with Narendra Modi, Chief Minister of Gujarat, by the author, tape recording, New Delhi, April 2, 2007.)
troubles. All through the centuries since the Moslems first
tread upon this land, it is this want of National Consciousness
which has been the cause of our ills...\textsuperscript{69}

Golwalkar’s argument highlighted the deep chasm that was now publicly
evident between the Congress vision of a secular and civic nationhood and the
Hindu nationalist view of a Hindu nationhood which was fast becoming an
isolated perspective. His lament indicated a realisation on his part that the
masses were not apparently drawn to the cultural nationalist perspective but
were enthused instead by the prospect of a new nation in which there would be
democratic participation based on civic identity. Golwalkar expressed his
exasperation that:

...Many of us are working our ruin by purposely calumniating
all those who have Hindu Nationhood at heart and dubbing
them as communal and anti-national. Does it not seem plain
that they believe that we are a Nation in the making and had
never enjoyed National life before? But as we have seen we
Hindus have been living, thousands of years, a full National
life in Hindusthan. How can we be ‘communal’, having as we
do, no other interests but those relating to our Country, our
Nation? And yet the masses are being duped into believing
that we, who stand (as we must rationally) for the Hindu
National renaissance are not ‘National’ and those others
who...disown their cultural heritage are the real ‘patriots’.
Such is the degeneration of these self-styled ‘regenerators of
the Nation’ who happen to have become the custodians of
the fate of this unhappy Nation...\textsuperscript{70}

A corollary of this analysis which was an implicit attack on the Congress
party for its alleged indifference to the stakes of Hindus, was the suggestion by
these leaders that without Hindus taking the leadership of the new nation, India
would only be “changing masters”. Savarkar raised this issue in 1939 in his
presidential address to the Hindu Mahasabha’s 21\textsuperscript{st} session in Calcutta. He said:

\textsuperscript{69} Golwalkar, op.cit, p.61.
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid, p.63.
...The Hindu majority will not encroach on the legitimate rights of any non-Hindu minority. But in no case can the Hindu majority resign its right which as a majority it is entitled to exercise under any Democratic and legitimate constitution. The Moslem minority in particular has not obliged the Hindus by remaining in minority and therefore they must remain satisfied with the status they occupy and with the legitimate share of civic and political rights that is their proportionate due. It would be simply preposterous to endow the Muslim minority with the right of exercising a practical veto on the legitimate rights and privileges of the majority and call it a "Swarajya". The Hindus do not want a change of masters, are not going to struggle and fight and die only to replace an Edward by an Aurangzeb simply because the latter happens to be born within Indian borders but they want henceforth to be masters themselves in their own house, in their own Land. 71

Mookerjee made the same argument a year later. "Our main strength lies in the justice of our cause—attainment of purna swaraj which is our birthright. But this swaraj does not mean the end of British Raj and its substitution by another Raj, eastern or western. Swaraj means that unfettered control must vest in the people of India." And making clear that by 'people of India', he meant the Hindus, Mookerjee said—" Before the Hindus, who constitute nearly 75 per cent of the population, join any movement for national independence, we must reasonably satisfy ourselves if the movement is intended to win for us a free place in the land of our birth and secure our rights and privileges, our culture, our religion and the noble heritage we have inherited. The dangers in front of us are many; the latest addition in the shape of a movement for Pakistan should not be lightly brushed aside. This preposterous claim must be nipped in the bud by all lovers of Hindusthan." 72


The demand for Pakistan became a major *casus belli* for the Hindu cultural nationalists who had until then only unveiled a theoretical framework with which they could canvass support for a Hindu nation. Savarkar had first raised the bogey of the Indian Muslim community’s “pan-Islamic” sympathies and its alleged preference for a Muslim nation, thereby questioning the community’s stake in the idea of a united Indian nation. In his address in Calcutta in 1939, Savarkar argued “…No realist can be blind to the probability that the extra-territorial designs and the secret urge goading on the Moslems to transform India into a Moslem State may at any time confront the Hindusthani State even under self-government, either with a Civil War or treacherous overtures to alien invaders by the Moslems…”73 Singling out the Muslim community among all the minority groups, he charged “…Only that minority will insist to have still more and yet more to the last pound of flesh which in fact cherishes secret designs to disintegrate the State, to create a State within a State or altogether to subvert the National State and hold all others under its subjection. Fortunately no section of our countrymen belonging to the non-Moslem minorities… harbours this treasonable design. It is only with regard to the Moslem minority that this cannot be asserted with confidence…*The anti-National and aggressive designs on the part of the Moslem minority constitute a danger to all non-Moslem Indians in India and not only to the Hindus alone...*(sic)” 74 Hindu cultural nationalism had signalled that the Muslim community was its principal ‘enemy’, and its discourse of nationhood would henceforth heavily rely on this theme.

Hindu Mahasabha leaders and other Hindu nationalist ideologues seemed to believe that they could get the attention of the Hindu community much quicker by painting a picture of the Hindus being endangered by Muslim separatism. Hindu nationalist N.C Chatterjee, in his presidential address to a

73 Savarkar, op.cit, pp.113-114. Presidential Address to 21st session of Hindu Mahasabha cited above.
74 Ibid, p.123.
Hindu Conference in Barisal District in February 1941 spoke of "The Menace of Pakistan". He said

For centuries Hinduism has sheltered, protected and absorbed the poor, the weak, the oppressed and the derelicts of all races and all countries. Hindu polity, in the context of its great historical past, is committed to the policy of integration, absorption and assimilation. The Pakistan Scheme is essentially anti-Hindu, anti-Indian, anti-national. It is meant to disrupt and disintegrate the essential unity and integrity of India. It will forever render impossible the building up of a homogeneous national life in India...

....The leading lights of the Muslim League have raised the false alarm of Islam in danger, they do not want a free India only because the Hindus happen to be in the majority in their own country...The Muslim League mentality will be instrumental in de-humanising its adherents in India. They will no longer be able to meet men as men, brothers as brothers, they can live in peace only with Muslims in sectarian and artificial environments uninfluenced by the ennobling influence of human contacts. The soil of India is to them na'pāk or impure, because the Hindus happen to be in a majority, even though this soil nurtured their ancestors and still nurtures them. You cannot expect reason or sanity from such a jaundiced mentality which cannot look at anything unless coloured by what they consider to be Islam and Islamic interests.  

Thus, on the eve of India's independence, the Hindu cultural nationalists had managed to create a core discourse of nationhood based on the three postulates of sacred geography, prior antiquity and numerical preponderance and had sought to link this discourse to a dynamic of confrontation with Muslims, playing on the theme of extra-territorial loyalties. But they were clearly outpaced and marginalised by the trajectory of mainstream Indian nationalism. Pioneered by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the Congress-led movements of

75 N.C. Chatterjee, Presidential Address, Barisal District Hindu Conference, February 1941, pp.1-2, p.13. (Nehru Memorial Museum and Library)
non-cooperation and civil disobedience were effective mass rallying strategies which enabled a consolidation of an anti-colonial resistance with nationwide participation, manifesting in the massive 'Quit India' agitation, giving a powerful impetus to ending British rule. This gave the Congress the edge in the public imagination as the natural successor to the British Raj in India. Besides, as has been pointed out by studies of the Indian nationalist movement, unlike the RSS or the Hindu Mahasabha which had essentially urban origins, the Congress had managed to put down deep and broad-spreading rural roots which gave it a national spread that ensured the influence of any communal pressure was easily eclipsed. Further, the assassination of Gandhi in 1948 by Nathuram Godse, an activist of the Hindu Mahasabha, and the consequent nationwide revulsion and anger against the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha ensured their early isolation.

Thus as has been highlighted in this chapter, it is clear that in this specific historical context of the emergence of a mass movement consciously privileging civic and secular nationalism, there was really very little possibility of cultural nationalism retaining a significant presence in the post-Independence political discourse. But, as will be expanded upon in the next chapter, the Hindu cultural nationalists did attempt to press on with their agenda. The formation of Pakistan was seen as an opportunity to reiterate the case that Muslims had extra-territorial loyalties, which were now, according to the Hindu nationalists, sharply put to test. They were quick to grasp the polarising potential of metaphors such as "Dar-ul-Harb" and "Dar-ul-Islam", which suggested that Muslims could never be reconciled to living in a non-Islamic state. Another idea that was canvassed and which became the basis for another critical assault on the national loyalties of Muslims was the charge that Indian Muslims who had not crossed

76 Judith M Brown in her study, Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy, (Oxford University Press, New York, 1985) noted that during the phase of the British preparing for an exit from India in the 1940s, and the prospect of partition of the country, "communal groups could not hope to challenge Congress as the legitimate successor of the Raj in most Indians’ eyes." (p.348)
over to Pakistan were the people who had overwhelmingly voted for the birth of Pakistan. 77

The entrenchment of the secular vision in post-Independence India and its evident irreversibility had a strong impact on the campaign of the Hindu nationalists who saw that they were fighting a rear-guard battle but were intent on retaining their political space in the new national scheme. The interplay between the discourse of secular nationalism and Hindu nationalism also saw the architects of the new secular consensus as becoming mindful of the dangers of fragmentation and divisiveness as a result of the pre-Independence political experience, leading to a resoluteness in the matter of enshrining a vision of civic and secular nationalism. The next chapter examines these developments.

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77 A favourite argument advanced by Hindu nationalists then and even today, which they regard as "clinching", was that in the 1946 general elections, perceived as a virtual referendum on whether India should be partitioned, 93 per cent of Muslim voters, especially in the then United Province, voted in favour of the Muslim League and Pakistan [As highlighted by Balraj Madhok in his book, Rationale of a Hindu State, (National Publications, Mumbai, 2002), p.47]