

# The Root of the Hindu Nationalist Movement

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## ABSTRACT

In “The Human Face of the Hindu Right,” Nussbaum interviews three leaders within the Hindu Nationalist movement<sup>[0]</sup>. This paper explores the motives behind the Hindu Nationalist movement, the perspective of the leader “K.K. Shrasti” who was interviewed by Nussbaum, and hopes to conclude whether this movement has moral and ethical justifications.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

“The Human Face Of The Hindu Right” begins with a quote by Rabindranath Tagore that can be paraphrased as “A large population of mankind acts as though they are zombies in a horror movie who lack the ability to question what they know, nor have been disciplined in the art of being sympathetic and imaginative which becomes detrimental to becoming mature individuals.”

## 2. THE INTERVIEW

Nussbaum introduces K.K. Shrasti who is the president of the VHP in Gujarat. The VHP can be described using the following quote: “In 1967, the Sangh Parivar—through the newly created Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and its party, the Jana Sangh—mobilized thousands of demonstrators in New Delhi to protest against the outrage to Hinduism that cow-slaughter represented—a practice still legal in a few states and which the Sangh Parivar accused the Muslims to indulge in at the time of Bakr Id<sup>[1]</sup>.”

While maintaining his position as President of the VHP, Shrasti is also ninety years and a respected scholar who is described as appearing similar to Gandhi but with a lifeless personality<sup>[0]</sup>.

Shrasti tells Nussbaum about the pure-form Aryan culture that spread all across the world that even Native

American Indians are descendants from. The Veda-period Aryans were nomadic northerners from central Asia around 3000 B.C.<sup>[2]</sup>. Shrasti says all people who believe that Muhammed is the messenger of God<sup>[3]</sup> are the violent ones and all people who follow Dharma<sup>[4]</sup> are nonviolent. Shrasti follows with the paraphrase: “Peace can not exist while practitioners of Islam or people who believe Jesus was the messiah (meaning literally ‘the Anointed King<sup>[5,6]</sup>’), occupy the same area.” “To anoint someone is to choose by or as if by divine intervention<sup>[7]</sup>”. Shrasti finishes the interview by talking about the “threat of demographic imbalances” but Nussbaum does not go into the details of this rant very much.

## 2. HINDU NATIONALISM

What exactly is Hindu Nationalism? “Hindu nationalism has been collectively referred to as the expression of social and political thought, based on the native spiritual and cultural traditions of the Indian subcontinent<sup>[8]</sup>.”

Historian Baij Nath Puri writes that the Vijayanagar empire (1336 - 1646) was “the result of the Hindu nationalist movement against Muslim intrusion and domination of the south<sup>[9]</sup>”.

## 3. VIJAYANAGAR EMPIRE

“The Vijayanagar Empire rose to prominence as a culmination of attempts by the southern powers to ward off Islamic invasions by the end of the 13th century<sup>[10]</sup>.” Are these invasions the reference for the “first strike” Shrasti mentions in his interview with Nussbaum?

The Vijayanagar Empire was founded by Harihara I in 1337. Harihara I, also with his successors, founded the Sangama dynasty<sup>[11,12]</sup>.” Harihara I and his brother, Bukka Raya I, were commanders in the army of the Kakatiya King of Warangal<sup>[13]</sup>. “The King of Warangal was defeated by

Muhammad bin Tughlaq<sup>[14]</sup>". One theory is that "the two brothers, Hariha I and Bukka Raya I, were taken prisoners and sent to Delhi. Both were forced to convert to Islam."<sup>[15]</sup>

Such a theory may require more supporting evidence. Manchester University's Funderburg Library has listed the possession of a digital copy of the 1961 Census of India. Given more time, one may wish to explore the 1961 Census of India for more supporting evidence for the theory that the brothers of the Vijayanagar Empire were forced to convert to Islam. If the theory is found to have more support, then converting captured enemies of war could be the root cause for the violence between Hindus and Muslims. The people who follow Muhammad could be the ones who initiated the violence and the followers of Dharma could have reasonable justifications to defend themselves and their land.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

We observed from the interview between Shrasti and Nussbaum that Shrasti claims the Hindu Nationalist Movement is an effort of defending followers of Dharma and their land from followers of Muhammad. One theory for the reason the Hindu Nationalist Movement exists is that in 1337, the rulers of the Vijayanagar Empire were forced to convert to Islam after being captured via war. It seems to be the assumption that the religion of the Vijayanagar Empire was Hinduism based on observing the temples the Vijayanagar people left behind.

#### 5. REFERENCES

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