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Princely States and the Hindu Imaginary: Exploring the Cartography of Hindu Nationalism in Colonial India

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In the early twentieth century, Hindutva, or Hindu nationalism, was a philosophy premised on exclusivist notions of "nation-ness" and "nation-state-ness." India, proponents claimed, had since the earliest times been the pitrabhumi and the punyabhumi of Hindus—their fatherland and holy land. This ideal realm was corrupted by Muslim and Christian "invaders," foreigners who defiled and split asunder "Akhand Hindustan," the one India of Hindus. In the context of British rule of the subcontinent, Hindu nationalists mirrored colonial claims and held up the native princely states as exemplars of "tradition," as territories unspoiled by foreign hands and thus representative of the "true India." The idea behind Akhand Hindustan came from a prominent member of the princely state bureaucracy, K. M. Munshi. Here the author explores how and why princely states were idealized in the Hindu imaginary and what role reformers, particularly Munshi, played in perpetuating this hard-line ideology. By exploring the regions on which early Hindu nationalism was mapped, the author illuminates the teleology of Hindutva while providing a better understanding of the place of princely states in the politics and society of colonial India.

Absolute monarchies had dishonored despotism; let us beware lest democratic republics should reinstate it, and render it less odious and degrading in the eyes of the many, by making it still more onerous to the few.

—Alexis de Tocqueville[1]

"LET US FIX our gaze steadfastly on our past, which was great, and the future, which is glorious, and above all, live in the present as men.... Let us, therefore, hold fast to [the] integrity [of Hindustan], and to the culture which is its splendors [*sic*] heritage." So proclaimed Kanialal M. Munshi in his presidential address to the Akhand Hindustan Conference in February 1942 (Bakshi 1997, 271). Munshi was the progenitor of the idea on which the conference was founded, that the subcontinent was "Akhand Hindustan" (or Akhand Bharat),

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[1]Alexis de Tocqueville (1984/1956, 118).

the one, undivided India of Hindus.[2] As the foregoing quotation makes clear, to Munshi and his disciples, the key to the future glory of India lay in its past, which itself was marked by the wealth of culture. This culture was presently under assault, and had been for the past few hundred years, but "Hindustan was not born to die. It did not live so long in order to be disrupted or destroyed" (271). The purity of Hindu cultural lineage was maintained throughout South Asia in small pockets that had in common but one thing: their local princely ruler. "Stand united," was the war cry of the polemical Hindu Mahasabha, "under the Hindu banner, assert the dignity and tradition of the age long Hindu culture and stand firmly behind the ancient … throne [of the princely state]" (B. Shankar Rao, address to the MSHM, April 1944, in Bakshi 1997, 547–48).

This paper seeks to explore the ways and means by which the princely states, semiautonomous regions that made up two-fifths of the subcontinent, were deployed by male Hindu nationalists in early twentieth-century India. Through an interrogation of the specificities of communitarian rhetoric, I intend the intervention of this work to be twofold. First, I wish to illuminate the place of princely India in the Hindu *imaginaire*, paying particular attention to the concepts of temporality and spatiality, so that we might revisit the role of princely India in subcontinental nationalism more broadly. Second, I hope in the course of detailing such ideas to draw attention to the problematic of the ecumene, to expose how uncritical political alliances forged for strategic considerations and short-term interests open opportunities for otherwise marginalized ideologies.

Munshi is the glue that binds this dual-pronged approach together. He was a figure who straddled both British and princely India, a Gujarati Brahmin educated at princely Baroda College under the guidance of Aurobindo Ghose, simultaneously a moderate Gokhale-style reformer, ally to Mahatma Gandhi and the maharaja of Baroda, Sir Sayaji Rao Gaekwad, and an underwriter of the exclusionary religious paradigms of the Hindu Mahasabha. During the 1940s, he served as an advisor in a range of capacities to various princely states. In his official capacities, Munshi was, on the one hand, an advocate at the Bombay High

[2]I use the term "progenitor" literally but loosely here, as Munshi originated both the Akhand Hindustan Conference and its name. However, it is worth recognizing that the idea of "Akhand Hindustan," one undivided Hindu-oriented India, fit into a discursive pattern dating back to the nineteenth century. Most notably, early advocates of the Hindu reformist Arya Samaj were enamored of "unity" and saw "other" religions in oppositional terms, while Bengali writers such as Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay vividly envisioned a postcolonial India free of British rule by locating it in a past of purity. Still, there remains a significant difference between late nineteenth-century literary works and those produced in the early twentieth century. The latter coincided with the reinvestment of the Hindu Mahasabha and the manifestation of Hindu nationalism as an outright, full-blown political movement (see n. 3, 4, 12 herein). Late nineteenth- and very early twentieth-century concepts, in this sense, were more in the realm of the fantastic (though, in the Foucauldian sense, still of tremendous political value), whereas those of Munshi and his contemporaries were more physically manifested in realpolitik. That said, Munshi and his compatriots nevertheless remain on the same trajectory as their predecessors (cf. Bhatt 2001, esp. 41–76).

Court, a fellow of Bombay University, president of the Sahitya Sansar, a leading member of the Baroda University Commission, and a member of the Congress Party; on the other hand, he was president of the Panchgani Hindu Education Society, creator of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, and, of course, as mentioned at the outset, president of the Akhand Hindustan Conference (Bhagavan 2003, 154 n. 65; see also Sen 1974, 175–77; Munshi papers, esp. reels 40–44 [R-7993–7997]). These many hats, among others he wore, I argue, made Munshi the intermediary among various nationalist camps. This partnering of camps created a dance with the devil (as it were) that co-opted the strategies of reformers and revolutionaries of various progressive stripes and brought them into allegiance with right-wing religious ideology.

The princely state of Baroda commission that sought to establish a new university, of which Munshi was a part, ran from 1926 to 1927. As I have argued elsewhere, Baroda's university movement represented the centerpiece of a comprehensive anticolonial resistance initiated by the state's ruler, Sayaji Rao Gaekwad. Relying on what Homi Bhabha has termed "colonial mimicry," the belief that anything created or run by native peoples in India was *almost but not quite* the equivalent of or better than parallel Western institutions, the Gaekwad and his administrators, among other princely regions such as Mysore trying the same tactic, slyly combined reform with an anticolonial agenda. In short, Baroda reformers strategically deployed "not-quite Western" reforms to advance the notion that successful, and particularly modern, native organizations and establishments, such as his proposed university, were inherently and essentially Indian. Without rehashing my old arguments here, the strength of such a challenge lay in a detailed engagement with the philosophical rationale and overt justifications for colonialism—what is loosely termed "colonial modernity" in today's academy (Bhagavan 2001, 2002, 2003).

This paper allows me to revisit the role of princely states in the nationalist redeployment of modernity from a different but altogether supportive angle. Two of Munshi's staunchest Akhand Hindustan allies were Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and Dr. B. S. Moonje, both leaders of the Hindu Mahasabha and the latter a founding member of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) (Bhatt 2001, 69–70).[3]

[3]Hindu nationalists in the early twentieth century were represented by two primary organizations: the Hindu Mahasabha (Great Hindu Organization, established in 1915 and reinvested in 1922 and again in 1951) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS, Association of National Volunteers, established in 1925). In the 1950s, they also collectivized as a political group, the Jana Sangh (People's Association). By the 1980s, the Jana Sangh had been succeeded by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian Peoples Party, established in 1980). Officially nonpolitical Hindu nationalist groups proliferated, including the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP, World Hindu Council, an offshoot of the RSS, established in 1964), Bajrang Dal (Army of Hanuman, a militant VHP youth wing, established in 1984), and the Shiv Sena (Army of Shivaji, established in 1966). Together with the RSS and the Mahasabha, all of these groups form the "family" of Hindu nationalist organizations known as the Sangh Parivar. There is high intergroup membership, though the details of their

The Mahasabha and the RSS were organizations that emerged in the early twentieth century to counter what they saw as a growing Muslim menace. In 1919, the Rowlatt Acts, the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, and the Jallianwalla Bagh (Amritsar) massacre all contributed to a perfect storm of Indian disaffection. Western machinations at the end of World War I also contributed to a particular anger on the subcontinent. The victorious Allies moved to break up under a mandate system the old Ottoman Empire, which had sided with the Central powers in the conflict. In India, many saw this as unwarranted Western imperial intervention, a threat to the Ottoman caliph, and thereby an assault on Islam as a whole. The brothers Muhammad and Shaukat Ali rallied in India and launched a campaign to "save the caliph" in India, called the Khilafat movement. Mahatma Gandhi supported this action and pitched it in the larger context of the other events as well, arguing that the time had come for a unified mass struggle against colonialism.

Gandhi's efforts coalesced into what became known as the Non-Cooperation Movement, which encompassed a series of activities that lasted until 1922. While the Non-Cooperation and Khilafat movements eventually fizzled out, they also produced long-term, unintended consequences.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the colonial state radically transformed various land and labor relationships throughout the subcontinent. On the southwestern Malabar coast, such intervention produced a highly oppressive landlord system delineated along religious and caste lines. Upper-caste Hindus served as British-controlled property managers, whereas Muslim peasants, Moplahs, toiled under ever-harsher conditions. In 1921, tensions boiled over in a massive Moplah uprising. In the context of larger subcontinental agitations, the Moplahs sought to establish their own "Khilafat king." The state responded with visceral force, and the entire rebellion resulted in bloody and brutal confrontations on both sides.

The Moplah challenge, like the larger Khilafat and Non-Cooperation movements, soon faded (for more on the Moplah rebellion, see Pannikar 1989; Dale 1980; for more on the Khilafat movement, see Minault 1982). But it stuck in the craw of many right-leaning self-proclaimed defenders of Hinduism. For them, the events on the Malabar coast and the Khilafat movement as a whole could and should be read only through a religious lens, as a manifestation of a Muslim "threat" that had to be militantly countered. Over the next several years, these "defenders of faith" organized and marshaled (martialed?) their forces,

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structure remain highly secretive. See Christophe Jaffrelot (1996) for further details. Not incidentally to the larger argument of this paper, Savarkar was also good friends with London-based Shyamaji Krishnavarma, at one point even leading Krishnavarma's famed "India House"; a member of Savarkar's group, Madanlal Dhingra, was also responsible for assassinating Sir Curzon Wyllie in London in 1909. Both India House and the murder of Wyllie figure prominently in the history of Sayaji Rao Gaekwad (see Sen 1974, 93; Bhagavan 2003, 56–59).

reinvesting a dormant religio-cultural organization—the Hindu Mahasabha—in 1922 as a first step. In 1923, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar published his polemic, *Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu?* and a few years later, in 1925, Keshav Baliram Hedgewar established the RSS. The Mahasabha and the RSS became sibling organizations, though it was the Mahasabha in the mid-twentieth century that stood at the forefront of the Hindu nationalist movement as a whole.

Savarkar's work became the seminal text of Hindu nationalism and the foundational ideology for much of the modern movement, from this point forward eponymously known by the title of Savarkar's work: the Hindutva movement. Hindutva took to the extreme—or, some would say, to its inevitable conclusion—the liberal idea of primordial "nations" (communities with essential, indivisible master identities) tied strictly to pieces of land, and therefore it was concerned with regenerating an "ancient," "pure" race by fulfilling its destiny—that is, by reclaiming the race's rightful homeland and purging it of all "impure" peoples. In this context, Savarkar called Muslims and Christians foreign invaders of a Hindu India. The relationship with Nazism and fascism apparent in this worldview is more than coincidental, as Savarkar and his colleagues were open admirers of Adolf Hitler.[4]

While Savarkar's book gave the Hindutva movement direction and charge, it was another matter altogether to make it manifest, as its claims and views often ran contrary to popular practices and to the region's complicated past of migration and interreligious and interethnic mixing. History and social formation thus became central concerns for Hindu nationalists. It was on these planes that they waged their most concerted campaigns, for the entire project's legitimacy rested on recidivist cultural production.

This article focuses on Hindutva's intellectual self-construction. The first part examines how, under the auspices of the Mahasabha and its related mission, Moonje, Savarkar, and a few others conjoined the issue of a united Hindu India with the question of the "princely state." What did it represent, and how did it fit into their larger picture? The second part concentrates on Munshi, arguing that this figure from princely India played a key role in making a certain kind of "scholarly" case for Hindutva, one that appeared moderate and rationale and thereby created a legitimate public space in which Hindu nationalism could operate. Savarkar and the others, too, contributed to the formation of this public space—this Hindu(tva) public sphere—and together they and Munshi created a powerful and effective front with which to affect the late colonial and early postcolonial state. The princely state, this article thus contends, was

[4]Bhai Parmanand, a leader of the Mahasabha, declared, "Make this address your Mein Kampf.... Make Savarkar your Fehurer [*sic*]" (*HOK*, January 11, 1939, 1). Comparing Hitler to God and conjoining the unification of Germany with that of India, he wrote in 1938, "He is Hitler.... The message that he sent on the annexation in which he described himself as a tool in the hands of the Lord of Destiny for the unification of Germany reminded me of the assurance of Lord Krishna that whenever the world has need of Him, He manifests himself.... Is the unity of India complete. I submit not" (*HOK*, April 27, 1938, 3).

a crucial plank in the platform of Hindutva and a critical, if vastly understated and little understood, element in the making of modern India.

The Muse of the Mahasabha

In the early and mid-twentieth century, there were two primary vehicles through which Hindu nationalists spread their message. The first of these was a newspaper called *Hindu Outlook* (hereafter *HOK*), the official mouthpiece of the Hindu Mahasabha and an organ through which a range of prominent Hindu nationalist voices could be heard.[5] The second medium consisted of conferences and regional meetings at which speeches were made by Mahasabha leaders to rally the faithful. As early as the late 1930s, princely states featured prominently in *HOK*. But as the 1940s dawned and progressed, as both independence and a possible partition began to gain traction as realistic near-future possibilities, the Mahasabha directed ever-greater attention to these regions. Ian Copland (2005), in his recent book exploring the political relationship between princely India and Hindu nationalists, provides ample explanation for this turn of events. The Hindu Mahasabha and princely states began to cozy up to one another beginning in the 1930s for a variety of strategic, political reasons. This process accelerated in the late 1930s after the Mahasabha performed poorly in the 1937 elections. A bit later, in 1941, the maharaja of Bikaner, Ganga Singh Rathor, organized a meeting between the Hindutva high command and a number of sympathetic princes. For the Mahasabha, this alliance was particularly significant, providing them with a set of geographic strongholds, not incidentally with military power, from which they could operate.[6] Intellectually integrating princely India into their worldview—their vision of the past, present, and future—was thus simply the prudent thing to do in order to consolidate their base.

[5]There was also a Hindi version of *HOK* known simply as *Hindu* (Copland 2005, 91; e-mail message to author from Copland, November 2, 2006).

[6]See Ian Copland (2005, 66–124, esp. 102–4). Another instance of the growing relationship between princely states and the Hindutva movement during the 1930s and 1940s may be seen in the princely states of Alwar and Bharatpur, which cozied up to the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS to target a small subcommunity within their provinces, the Meos, whom they branded a "Muslim menace" (see Mayaram 1997, esp. 170–75, 270–81). Copland's important work focuses primarily on the political relationship between princely states and various religious nationalists, most prominently those from the Hindu Mahasabha. His larger concern is with the idea of communal riots/violence, his analysis of which we shall return to later in this article. It is worth noting, though, that Copland, too, briefly touches on the importance of princely India to the Hindu nationalist imagination (see esp. 103–5), making arguments complementary to some of those presented here. He does not, however, focus on a nuanced deconstruction of the role of princely India in this imagination, his attention given instead to a much broader set of questions. This article, therefore, owes a considerable debt to Copland's earlier work but will, I hope, build on his foundation to further our understanding of the nature of the princely India–Hindu nationalist relationship.

In April 1944, the Mahasabha organized three major conferences to address the place of princely states in their idea of India,[7] all held, not coincidentally, in the princely realms of Mysore and Baroda, territories that, as I have pointed out in other work, were regarded by virtually all groups as the most "ideal and progressive" model states in South Asia. My claim has been that the aggressive reform packages pursued in each state brought them notice from colonists and nationalists alike, the former seeking to claim credit for such a trajectory by inscribing the reform measures onto the larger narrative of colonial modernity, and the latter, in line with the evidence provided by the state reformers, seeking to locate the source of change in a pre- and postcolonial worldview that, in toto, rejected the modernity of the colonial regime. Here we see the same method employed for similar but distinct purposes. It is within this point of alterity that the rub lies.

At the Mysore conference, the local president, Shankar Rao, "exhorted the Hindus of Mysore State to play [*sic*, pay] loyal allegiance to the Mysore Throne, and said that the allegiance must be based not only on the Ruler's possessing military and police to enforce his temporal authority, but on account of his being the protector and upholder of the ancient Hindu culture" (Bakshi 1997, 548).[8] Moonje, in his presidential address to the Baroda Hindu Sabha in April 1944, was more explicit: "[T]he Prince who is ruling the States is a representative of the Hindu Raj of the past and as such incorporates in himself all traditions of dignity, and is suffering and fighting for maintaining the Hindu Raj against foreign opponents who were opposing them during the past 500 years or so.... The Hindu Mahasabha, therefore calls upon all Hindus to respect and love their Hindu Princes as embodiments of Hindu pride and Hindu achievements in the political world of the past and as hopeful in the future" (Bakshi 1997, 562–63).

This speech focuses our lens, and we are able to see clearly how princely states and their rulers, at least those designated as "Hindu," became cultural repositories, *ethno-* and *ideoscapes*, to borrow terms from Arjun Appadurai (1996), in which all good things were dated to a past that preceded not just European colonial power but Mughal rule as well.[9] It was their Hindu essence, and the

[7]In some ways, the Mahasabha's actions picked up on earlier trends in princely politics, such as early twentieth-century princely participation in what Barbara Ramusack terms "religious revivalism" (1978, 49–60).

[8]Janaki Nair points out that the Mysore Wadiyar dynasty, which was (re)installed on the throne by the British following the defeat of Tipu Sultan in 1799, focused "obsessively" from the outset on establishing "a royal and 'unbroken' lineage" in order to shore up their legitimacy and strengthen their otherwise "precarious" hold on the throne (2006, 139–40 n. 51).

[9]Arjun Appadurai says, "The suffix–*scape* allows us to point to the fluid, irregular shapes of these landscapes.... [T]hese are not objectively given relations that look the same from every angle of vision but, rather, that they are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected by the historical, linguistic, and political situatedness of different sorts of actors.... These landscapes thus are the building blocks of what (extending Benedict Anderson) I would call *imagined worlds*.... By *ethnoscape*,

traditional values stemming from it, that served as the basis for resistance against "foreigners," a euphemism meant to incorporate Britons, Christians, and Muslims. A few years after Moonje's speech, *HOK* ran as its lead editorial a column from the maharaja of Alwar that noted,

> The present rulers of Indian States are the descendants of Rana Pratap, Chhatrapati Shivaji, Veer Chhatrasal, Mahadaji Scindia and other galaxy [*sic*] of heroes and patriots who have adorned the pages of Indian history. These are the dynasties which have fought the war of India's independence and ultimately succeeded in establishing Hindu Raj throughout the length and breadth of India before the British conquered this great nation.... As referred to above it is the forefathers of the present rulers who have saved India from Muslim domination. *The same task lies ahead* and we call upon the Hindu Princes to play their rightful role and save the Hindu nation from extinction. (*HOK*, March 11, 1947, 2; emphasis added)[10]

Princely states were the sites of India's imagined past of purity and the foundation on which the future nation must be built. This point was brought home by B. G. Khaparde in his presidential address to the All-India States' Hindu Mahasabha Conference, delivered in April 1944 in Mysore: "Those who live in the States have the most excellent opportunity to help the Mahasabha.... In States, you have the opportunity ... your brethren in British India have not" (Bakshi 1997, 544). Khaparde and Moonje thus deployed the construct of princely states as a "public sphere" of sorts to bond and shelter the community, to serve as the locus through and in which the community was to be imagined.

In the context here, however, the princely state was not just a "public" space but specifically a Hindu one, a defiantly constrictive bit of illogic that required svengali-like rationalizations to justify. Mysore, for example, was the location where "Tippo [Sultan] was killed and the ... State ... reinstated as Hindu Raj. It was the Marathas representing the Hindus ... who won the battle. Thus, Mysore State had been built by the power, skill, intelligence, and valor of leadership under the Marathas" (synopsis of Moonje's press interview at the MSHM, April 1944, in Bakshi 1997, 548). This, of course, flies in the face of the fact that the Marathas had fallen out of their alliance with the British and the nizam of Hyderabad before Tipu was defeated, as well as the fact that the

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I mean the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups and individuals constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of (and between) nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree.... *Ideoscapes* are also concatenations of images, but they are often directly political and frequently have to do with the ideologies of states and the counterideologies of movements explicitly oriented to capturing state power or a piece of it" (1996, 33, 36).

[10]For more on the relationship between Alwar and Hindu nationalism, see Shail Mayaram (1997).

restored Wadiyar dynasty immediately sought its legitimacy not through the Marathas or the British but through an association with Tipu himself (Bhagavan 2003, 32–39; see also Brittlebank 1997; Nair 2006, 137). Deft sleight of hand was required hence, and the tried-and-true weapon of scapegoating served the requisite purpose of misdirection.

If the Hindu-ness of princely spaces was difficult to prove in the affirmative, charges leveled against so-called Muslim spaces could, in categorizing the other, as a matter of negation, inversely define its posited opposite. "Zeal for social reform," specifically, "was a peculiarity more of the Hindus than of the Mussalmans" (Moonje, presidential address to the BHSC, in Bakshi 1997, 564).[11] Thus, any "progressive" space had to be necessarily Hindu, juxtaposed with more "regressive" Muslim ones. But it was precisely because of this that "progress" became a danger, for members of the Mahasabha wove a bizarre web of conspiracy that posited an international cabal composed of the British, Muslims, and some members of the Congress Party and led by Gandhi, the purpose of which was to destroy the Hindu nation. This was explained succinctly in the presidential address delivered at the 1944 All-India States' Hindu Mahasabha Conference:

> Gandhiji developed solicitude only for the subjects of the Hindu Princes. The subjects of the so-called Muslim States does [*sic*, do] not seem to be any of his concern. The harrowing tales of misrule, tyranny, murders, riots, and inequities that reach us from the Muslim States—Muslim because the ruler happens to be a Muslim and not because the majority of the subjects is Muslim—do not affect him.... His only anxiety is to weaken the Hindu Princes. Now if Gandhiji weakens the Hindu Princes and breaks their power and the British strengthens the Muslims [*sic*, Muslim] subjects and lends Muslim Princes their support, the trap will be complete. (Bakshi 1997, 541)[12]

Despite appearances, none of this was inflammatory, communitarian rhetoric, according to the Mahasabha, because Hindu princes and states were bastions of communal harmony. Compare this reference to Mysore: "Intense faith in Hindu religion and sympathy with all non-Hindu religions has been the great ideal and practice of the Mysore Royal Hindu Dynasty.... The attitude of the officials of Government of Mysore was inpartial [*sic*, impartial] in regard to religious

[11]This is, of course, entirely inaccurate. See Gail Minault (1998) for a discussion of Muslim social reform.

[12]See also pieces such as "Anti-Hindu and Mischievous Campaign of the Congress in Hindu States (Its Deliberate Overlooking of Mal-administration of Moslem States)," by Savarkar in *HOK*, March 8, 1939, 15. Here, Savarkar also points out that "Mysore ... and above all Baroda have introduced more progressive reforms, educational, social, economic, and political than British presidencies could do in cases even under the Congress Ministries." Nathuram Godse, Gandhi's assassin, also explicitly named Gandhi's "attitude towards Hindu and Muslim princes" (1977, 60) as one of his primary reasons for killing the Mahatma.

questions" (Bhoopalam Chandrasekhariah's welcoming remarks to the AISHMC, in Bakshi 1997, 538). In other words, true secularism and equality could only be found, ironically, in adherence to ancient Hindu ethics and governmental practice embodied in the "Hindu Princes and their States," and the Mahasabha thus called upon the subjects of these regions to "organise your lives, militarise your politics, establish your policy with Vedic Council, Arya Rajasabha, Arya Vidyasabha, and Arya Dharmasabha" (Rao, address to the MSHM, in Bakshi 1997, 547).

Reform of these ancient practices was worthwhile, but only vis-à-vis comparable progress in British and "Muslim" states. Savarkar "favored efforts at reforms in those [Hindu] states but was against democracy if it meant their subversion" (synopsis of appeal by Savarkar at the AISHMC, April 1944, in Bakshi 1997, 545). Democracy was the definitive wedge issue, for in the complexities of representation and rights, it was easy to shield simplistic majoritarianism in the cloak of fairness and to weld the challenges of reform with jingoistic preconditions emphasizing the Muslim other to reflexively demarcate a "Hindu essence." Moonje declared at the Mysore conference, "Democracy was a new thing being introduced into the administration of India. Democracy meant dispersion of power from the head of the State to various parts and as such Hindu Mahasabha approved and appreciated it. But it was to be looked at from a practical point of view.... Responsible Government should first be introduced into the premier state of Hyderabad and then into other States" (synopsis of Moonje's press interview at the MSHM, April 1944, in Bakshi 1997, 548). In his address at the Baroda conference, Moonje clarified,

> Though we like to have [democracy and responsible government] introduced in the administration of India, we must never forget that the largest community which is ... Hindu ... has got a caste system which being peculiar to itself ... is not very conducive to the western type of democracy.... In this connection, I should like to warn my Hindu brethren. They should study and try to know what the real motive is which inspires Mussalmans in the Hyderabad State, on one side, to oppose introduction of democracy and Responsible Government, and the same Mussalmans in the Kashmir State, on the other to agitate for democracy and Responsible Government. (presidential address at the BHSC, in Bakshi 1997, 563)

Leaving aside the peculiarities of provincial politics, it was the essentialized Muslim that, in not abiding by his or her assigned homogeneity, became "the problem." Although Moonje supported "democracy," he was not in support of the call for it in Kashmir, ostensibly because that was "of the western type," which was not conducive to Hindu social realities.[13]

[13]For a detailed analysis of the political situation in Kashmir from the early to mid-twentieth century, see Chitralekha Zutshi (2003, esp. 210–322). For more on Hyderabad, see Margrit

Such equation of Kashmir with "Hindu-ness" pre-dates the idea of Hindutva, though not by much. As Mridu Rai (2004) has shown, British misunderstandings and political calculations in the mid-nineteenth century helped convert princely states into the realms of "tradition" they came to be understood as in the twentieth century. This tradition, more precisely, involved and invoked "religion," marking all princely states, after Queen Victoria's November 1, 1858, proclamation, in practice as either "Hindu" or "Muslim." While precolonial rulers tended to give some preferences to those of the same faith, they did not conflate their personal religious practice with the state. This practice gradually ceased, for the most part, over the late nineteenth century as the overarching British model kicked in. With specific reference to Kashmir, British-induced transformations corresponded to the rule of Maharaja Ranbir Singh (1856–85). Rai incisively points out that the newly established Dogra dynasty had to determine not only its legitimacy but also the legitimacy of the newly created state of Jammu and Kashmir. Thus, Ranbir Singh went about intertwining the Dogra right to rule with Hinduism and with the state itself, linking all three (ruler, religion, and state) in a union inherently unable to incorporate or meet the needs of "others," such as the vast Muslim population of the region (Rai 2004, 80–127).

The main lesson here is that Hindutva's constructions of princely India, including their view of these regions as portals to a pure, ancient past, were built on the foundation provided by late nineteenth-century changes wrought by the colonial state.[14] More importantly, their religious renderings worked off a British device meant specifically to differentiate "Indian" India from modern, rational, and religiously neutral British India. That is, British administrators *invented* princely states as simplistic, religious backwaters out of necessity, to have them serve as a contrast to Western progressivism (Bhagavan 2003, 1–19; Rai 2004, 87–93).

In this context, Moonje's rejection of Western democracy in Kashmir, in favor of a democratic politics grounded in Hindu Indian-ness, takes on additional meaning. Making such a claim in Baroda and Mysore was no accident but rather a play on these famed "most progressive" states' strategies of reclamation,[15] in which ideas and institutions were repositioned as inherently Indian. But it was, at the same time, different. For Mysore and Baroda, as I have shown in other work, focused all their attention on resisting the British, in the process creating an ecumenical approach to nationalism that accommodated

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Pernau (2000), Dick Kooiman (2002), and Karen Leonard (2003). Hyderabad was a Hindu majority state with a Muslim ruler, the nizam; Kashmir was a Muslim majority state with a Hindu ruler.

[14]Cf. "Princes Are the Principle Custodians of Their Ancient and Illustrious Heritage," in *HOK*, March 22, 1939, 8. This is an excerpt from the viceroy's speech, in which he supported various elements of the Hindutva platform on princely India.

[15]*HOK* called Baroda "the most progressive of Indian States." See "Accession of the New Gaekwad," May 3, 1939, 5.

all shades and approaches. In Baroda, this meant that the Gaekwad employed or patronized figures ranging from Gokhale, Ranade, Ambedkar, and Romesh Chander Dutt to Bepin Chandra Pal, Aurobindo Ghose, and, of course, K. M. Munshi. Virtually all the activities described in this paper occurred following the Gaekwad's death in 1937 (and the death of his activist colleague, Krishnaraja Wadiyar, in 1940) and consequently can be seen as an attempt by tolerated marginal ideologies to seize the legacy of their benefactors.[16]

The success of the religious right in recentering the debate around their own parochialism can be seen in their audacious conclusion to the Baroda conference: "The Ruling Prince in Baroda is a Representative of the Hindu power which uprooted the foreign empire established and ruling in India for more than 500 years.... A law of monogamy only for the Hindus was passed in Baroda. I believe ... it was wrong to pass a law of monogamy which is clearly an interference with the Hindu sociology.... I have no hesitation to say, to ask a foreign Government for his dethronement" (Moonje, presidential address at the BHSC, in Bakshi 1997, 564). In other words, the princes of India, Hindu or not, were either with them or against them, and the Hindu-ness of the princes, their states, and their people was solely designated by their loyalty to the cause and views of the Mahasabha and its related organizations.[17] Progressive reform was reformulated to signify only the exclusionary essentialism of Hindutva.

Copland suggests that one of the major architects of Baroda's reforms, Dewan (Prime Minister) Sir Manubhai Mehta, led an effort to proselytize constitutional, democratic reforms throughout princely India through the organ of the Chamber of Princes beginning in the 1920s. This "Mehta strategy," as Copland terms it, was successful, so much so that by the late 1940s, virtually all major states had adopted some measure of reform (Copland 2005, 75–80). But in the meantime, Mehta himself had revealed surprising rightist tendencies, and as home minister of the state of Gwalior, he began advocating the use of princely India as a "buttress against pan-Islamism" (cited in Copland 2005, 110), and shortly thereafter, Gwalior joined several other northern states (Bikaner,

[16]Not incidentally, *HOK* devoted an entire page to an obituary for Sayaji Rao when he passed away. The subheading was "A Devout Hindu and an Enlightened Prince: All Round Progress During his 63 Years' Rule in Baroda" (February 8, 1939, 13).

[17]The maharaja of Baroda referenced here, Pratapsingh Rao Gaekwad, grandson of Sayaji Rao Gaekwad III, had only acceded to the throne in 1939 following his grandfather's death. Indeed, some of the major princes in power in the 1940s, including those of Mysore (Jayachamaraja Wadiyar, acceded 1940) and Bikaner (Sadul Singh Rathor, acceded 1943), had only come to power recently. Their legitimacy and overall hold on authority was therefore much more tentative. Various princes in the 1940s may have latched onto Hindutva as one of the only viable means to maintain their status, especially considering the failure to gain traction of the idea of "postcolonial federation." Similarly, Hindutva leaders may have been trying to take advantage of such rulers' inexperience as much as anything else. I thank an anonymous reviewer for bringing these points to my attention.

Kotah, Jaipur, Alwar, and Dholpur) in a meeting with Savarkar, Moonje, and another Hindu nationalist leader, Shyama Prasad Mookherjee (Copland 2005, 110). There are no records that indicate that the Mahasabha or other Hindu nationalist groups acted as a "hidden hand," secretly guiding the reforms of the earlier period. Nevertheless, Mehta's involvement here provides a link between princely progressivism and Hindu nationalism. The efforts of the Mahasabha in their speeches and writings throughout this period must be seen, therefore, as a coordinated effort to appropriate and define "progress," for, as we saw earlier, without such intervention, "untamed progress" was potentially detrimental to the imagined Hindu *socius*.

Kashmir and Hyderabad played an important role in informing this perceived threat. As Rai has shown, further late nineteenth-century colonial interventions impressed upon princely rulers an "obligation" to their subjects. This, in turn, created an expectation among said subjects of "rights" (Rai 2004, 133–82, esp. 133–44, 174–82). Religious differentiation tied to ruler and state, however, meant that Kashmiri Muslims were left out in the cold, eventually leading to mobilization against Dogra rule (Rai 2004, 174–82, 224–87). Hyderabad, inversely, did not suffer the same kinds of problems. But what Moonje, Savarkar, and others were doing in their writings and speeches throughout the late 1930s and 1940s was linking the Hindu populations of these states in particular, bringing them together to create a grand, Hindu public space. From 1938 until 1947, writers in *HOK*, the main intellectual forum for the organization, consistently lambasted Hyderabad as a dangerous, backward state, bent on attacking its Hindu population; inversely warned of Muslim doings against the state and culture of Kashmir; and held up Baroda, Mysore, and, unsurprisingly, Gwalior, as paragons of virtue. Travancore also received some passing attention, though its Christian population prevented it from holding the same place of prestige.[18] Several headlines are representative of the overall trend: "Hindus' Plight in Muslim States and Our Duties towards Them,"[19] "Terrible Communal Riots in Hyderabad,"[20] "Mysore Takes the Right Step,"[21] "Nizam Govt.'s Deliberate Policy to Intimidate Hindus,"[22] "Gwalior Reforms Hailed as Bliss,"[23] "Progress in Baroda,"[24] "Progressive Travancore,"[25] "New Muslim Agitation in Kashmir: A Virtual Invasion of the Hindu State."[26]

[18]See, for instance, Bhai Parmanand, "Whither Travancore? Real Nature of the Agitation—Is It to Be a Christian State?" *HOK*, December 7, 1938, 6.
[19]Ram Chandra Sharma, *HOK*, April 20, 1938, 10.
[20]Contributed, *HOK*, April 27, 1938, 6.
[21]Excerpt from a speech by S. P. Rajagopalachari (April 16, 1938), printed in *HOK*, April 27, 1938.
[22]*HOK*, June 21, 1939, 1.
[23]*HOK*, July 3, 1939, 9.
[24]*HOK*, February 1, 1940.
[25]*HOK*, February 11, 1941.
[26]*HOK*, August 21, 1945, 1.

Incorrectly ascribing an "ancient history"—for such time pre-dated Muslims and thus was deemed more "authentically Indian"—to Hindu princes (even though princely states and sovereignty were products of the mid-nineteenth century) completed the circle.[27] India = Hindu princes = privilege for a "Hindu majority." The constitutional reforms and representative government measures of the progressive princely states were seen as necessary, provided that the voice of the "majority community" was given preference. And this broader majority community *was* the nation, the basis of national identity. In the Mahasabha's scheme, the nizam of Hyderabad was merely in the way and there was *no* Muslim majority in Kashmir because both Hyderabad and Kashmir were part of a larger territory—Akhand Hindustan—a land in which there was only a "Hindu" majority (Hindu here meaning ascribing to the values of Hindutva, not the radically pluralist, federation of faiths that the term historically encompassed).[28] Witness this call in *HOK*: Hindus "are as willing and earnest to have responsible Government in the State [of Kashmir] as the majority community [the Muslims of the state], provided that the Muslims *are prepared to solve the problem on national lines*" (Dina Nath, secretary, Youth League, writing in *HOK*, March 8, 1939, 8; emphasis added).

It has long been assumed in contemporary scholarship that the "princely state" was the ugly step-sibling of colonial India, always brushed aside and kept out of sight, and that these regions really played minor roles in the larger drama, appearing at the start to stabilize colonial rule and again at the end to commiserate

[27]For analysis of princely states as nineteenth-century products, see Mridu Rai (2004, 80–93), Manu Bhagavan (2003, 1–19), Bernard S. Cohn (1887), and Nicholas Dirks (1987); cf. Nair (2006, 134–35 n. 48). This is not to imply that the various ruling houses did not trace their lineages and indeed their states back to a precolonial past, as Ramusack (2004, 12–47) illustrates they did. Rather, the claim here is that the entire architecture of "princely states," with their neo-Mughal trappings, imported European pageantry, "hollowed crowns" (Dirks 1987), and British-imposed hierarchies, stemmed from nineteenth-century colonial interventions. The Mahasabha was keenly aware of the charge that princely states were constructions of the British—in fact, it was a popular understanding of the states' nature at the time. The Mahasabha thus explicitly moved to deny the veracity of such a stance without, of course, offering proof. See, for instance, "Indian States are not the creation of the British but were in existence long before the establishment of British rule in India," "Some Facts about Indian States," *HOK*, April 3, 1945, 4.

[28]It is worth noting that Hyderabad and Kashmir featured prominently in Nathuram Godse's courtroom statement explaining his actions. Both areas come across as essentially Hindu ones, under threat from a Muslim menace encouraged by Gandhi (see Godse 1977, esp. 92–94). Vinayak Chaturvedi also details the way in which Hyderabad and Kashmir stuck in the craw of Hindu nationalists, especially Dattatrey S. Parchure, another of the co-conspirators accused in the murder of Gandhi. Parchure was responsible for giving Godse the automatic pistol he used in the assassination. Significantly, Parchure was from Gwalior, where, on account of his anger at the perceived treatment of Hindus in Hyderabad, he established the Hindu Rashtra Sena, a paramilitary force of some 3,000, the purpose of which was to attack Muslim areas within the princely state. Chaturvedi's article is also of interest for more generally revealing the central role Gwalior played in providing a physical base of operations for Hindutva (see Chaturvedi 2003, esp. 156–57, 162–64). For further analysis of Godse and the politics of Gandhi's assassination, see Ashis Nandy (1980), especially the chapter "Final Encounter: The Politics of the Assassination of Gandhi" (70–98).

tragicomically on their foredoomed lack of continuity in the postcolonial order.[29] But according to Khaparde, "In common parlance to-day we speak of 'Indian India' and 'British India.' … We all know that this is political and administrative division of Hindustan. It is by no means natural or geographical division…. Hindus inhabiting these artificial divisions—the States and British India—have a common heritage…. In spite of these artificial divisions, therefore, of Indian India and British India, this holy land of Bharat is one and indivisible" (presidential address at the AISHMC, in Bakshi 1997, 539). In fact, what we see here is the significant function played by princely India in providing succor and shelter to the *imagination* of pan-subcontinental religious nationalist ideology. Savarkar, in a confidential letter to the maharaja of Jaipur, made clear the overall policy of the Hindu right toward princely states in a lengthy passage worth quoting in full:

> Your Highness must have noted or heard personally from other princes that it was entirely due to my lead that the Hindu Mahasabha as an organisation has avowedly embraced a policy of standing by the Hindu states and defending their prestige, stability and power against the Congressites, the Communists, the Moslems and such other internal and external sections who openly declared that they aimed to uproot the Hindu states and encourage every effort to embarras [*sic*] them and create bad blood between their subjects and themselves. Every Hindu Sabha in a Hindu state is today the only body which takes its stand on the fundamental principle of protecting Hindu states as a part of their duty as Hindus. The Hindu Mahasabha had ["has"?—text unclear] declared that the Hindu states are centres of Hindu power. This policy carried into effect by my tours different states succeeded in creating in every Hindu State organised bodies of Hindu Sanghatanists whose loyalty to the State and the Prince was above question. (Savarkar to the maharaja of Jaipur, July 19, 1944, Hindu Mahasabha Papers, F. No. C-39, 51)

At the same time, the Mahasabha reclaimed and redeployed the British-imposed concept of "obligation," so that, as we saw in Khaparde's conclusion to the Baroda conference, the Hindu ruler merely *represented* a greater Hindu power—the "right" to manifest a Hindu social based on "ancient" Hindu laws and ethics. If any ruler got in the way, he or she would be dismissed. In this slick move, the Mahasabha thus positioned themselves as the true champions of "the rights of the Hindu social" (the Hindu right?), "progressives" who understood their "obligation" to represent the anachronistically conceived community. The princes themselves were merely a means to an end.

[29]For an assessment of the contemporary scholarship supporting this point, see Bhagavan (2003, 19–22). A number of scholars have been working for many years to counter such marginalization of princely states. Among the most notable examples, see Copland (1997), Robin Jeffrey (1978), John McLeod (1999), and Ramusack (1978; 2004; for a more exhaustive list, see 2004, 281–93).

This is perhaps why, after independence, the Hindu Mahasabha, largely discredited and tainted by the assassination of Gandhi by the Hindu extremist Nathuram Godse, managed to maintain a beachhead in central Indian regions that were formerly princely states in the colonial setting. In Gwalior, what had been one of the five premier princely states, Congress-initiated land reforms sent the local aristocracy into convulsions, and they rallied around the Mahasabha in an effort to protect their interests. As a result, the Mahasabha wielded considerable power and influence throughout the region, Madhya Bharat, through the early 1950s (Jaffrelot 1996, 108–13). Indeed, Copland (2005) concludes that the former princely states became endemic sites of communal violence in the postindependence era, largely because of drastic changes wrought to these former autocratic regions in the 1930s and 1940s. Specifically, Copland argues that political reforms in the states, migration from external communities, and "unholy alliances" with right-wing religio-political organizations such as the Mahasabha shattered the overall tranquility that had previously marked these regions. In Madhya Bharat, this continued until Jawaharlal Nehru, then prime minister of India, asked Maharani Vijaya Raje Scindia to run for a seat in Parliament on a Congress ticket. This strategy revived Congress fortunes and helped put an end to this phase of the Mahasabha's dominance in the area (Jaffrelot 1996, 108–13).

Biswamoy Pati has recently called for an "interrogating of stereotypes of princely India," arguing the antiquated notion that the princes were despots and that contemporary scholars have played down the "oppressive component" of these regimes (Pati 2005, 165–66). While it is absolutely true that the architecture of the princely states resulted in the exercise of dominance at many levels, Pati is oblivious to the gradations of power, to the reality that one who is powerful in one context may not be so in another, a point made clear in much of the literature on postcolonial and subaltern studies. The princes were hardly "subaltern," but the paradigm holds; against the paramount power of the colonial state, for instance, the princes and their administrations were in the far weaker position. As I have concluded elsewhere, princely states were therefore complex sites of competing agendas of resistance and domination (Bhagavan 2003, 181). The example of Vijaya Raje Scindia gives further proof of this assertion, indicating the way in which a princely ruler, through the dominating influence of her class and power, and her place in the collective imagination of "her people," could simultaneously serve as resistance to more virulent forms of oppression.[30] Copland's work exploring communal riots in princely states, I think, definitively supports this particular conclusion. Using an array of statistical and other

[30]Of course, it was the very oppressive architecture of princely India that created a base of support for the orthodoxies of Hindu nationalism to thrive. In this sense, Pati's assessment is an important one. Nevertheless, this did not mean that everyone who was part of this system, many not by choice, was intentionally or even directly despotic, as Pati implies (indirectly is another matter, however).

empirical data, Copland effectively illustrates that princely states were largely free of communal violence in the first three decades of the twentieth century. His argument is that princely states presented certain conditions—most notably, autocratic regimes of endogamous communities with certain religious and romantic relationships between ruler and ruled—that helped keep the lid on simmering communal tensions (Copland 2005).

Vijaya Raje Scindia herself, however, eventually deserted the Congress ship, representing a high point in the late 1950s and early 1960s when ex-princes made their homes primarily in right-wing political parties (Copland 2005, 192).[31] While this speaks of the princes more as political opportunists than anything else, desperate to hang on to power at any cost, it also leaves a lasting impression of the Hindutva–princely state nexus.

From *Akhadas* to Akhand Hindustan

This returns us at last to K. M. Munshi, the ambidextrous bureaucrat who moved easily between princely and British India and between left and right political camps. For what we have discussed thus far only brings into focus how the most prominent of Hindu nationalists interacted with and thought of the princely states. The case of Munshi allows us to approach the question of the relationship between princely India and the Hindu imaginary from the opposite angle, illustrating how an elite from princely India not only imagined Hindu nationalism but reconfigured it altogether, the frontiersman who "tamed the wilderness" and made a fringe agenda part of the everyday terrain of postcolonial Indian politics.

By early 1941, Munshi felt that he had come to a crossroads. For the past twenty-six years, Munshi had participated in "moderate" politics, actively supporting the campaigns of Sayaji Rao Gaekwad and Mahatma Gandhi and joining the Congress Party in time for the landmark Salt Satyagraha of 1930. Yet at the same time, Munshi had taken the lead in the "Akhada" movement in Bombay Presidency (Munshi to Gandhi, May 26, 1941, in Munshi 1942, 262),[32] an effort to build gymnasiums that by the 1930s was clearly associated with the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS.[33] The gyms were precision-based training camps for young men that focused on bodybuilding and wrestling, but

[31]William Richter (1975, esp. 26–32) has demonstrated how the Congress Party's electoral power declined in the 1950s and 1960s in the former princely territories thanks to the defection of many princes and the related rise of opposition parties, notably the Swatantra Party and the Jana Sangh, the former an anti-Congress alliance of princes and big business, the latter the home of more overt Hindu nationalists (and some princes). Jaffrelot (1996, 180–229) details how the alliance between Swatantra and the Jana Sangh helped the latter's rise in the 1960s, though with its ideological planks more muted.

[32]"Akhada" is also referred to as "Akhara."

[33]See, for instance, "The Hindu Maha Sabha urges upon the local Hindu Sabhas also the need of opening the Akharas for the improvement of their physique...," in *HOK*, January 11, 1939, 8. For

specifically in the context of the threat of the "violent" Muslim, seen most clearly in the Mahasabha's 1920s call for more *akhadas* to protect Hindus from the "Muslim uprising" of the Khilafat movement (Jaffrelot 1996, 35–37). Clarifying the logic underlying such a view, Ramesh Rao, one of Hindutva's most vocal and popular contemporary advocates, states,

> The failure of Gandhi to bring Muslims into the Congress fold despite his best attempts, and Gandhi's ignoring of the violence perpetrated by Muslims between 1920 and 1940 against Hindus, convinced leaders of various Hindu revivalist movements that the only way to protect Hindu interests was to adopt an assertive stance that would let the other side know an attack on the Hindu community and interests would be responded to with force. The Hindu leaders' thinking was especially sharpened after the Moplah rebellion in August 1921 when Muslims, under a variety of false pretexts, attacked Hindus, killing, raping and maiming thousands of them, and forcibly converting those that escaped with their lives. With the entry of the Muslim clergy into politics, the talk of *jihad* and holy wars, the pan-Islamic aims of Muslims leaders as reflected in their pursuit of *Khilafat*, and the weak-kneed response of the Congress to Muslim belligerence and violence stoked the dormant Hindu Mahasabha, formed in 1915, into action. (Rao 2000)

Finely carving out details with all the finesse of a hatchet job, Rao quickly conflates Moplahs with Khilafat and signals the danger of both by dropping the word *jihad* into the mix. Again, the essentialized Muslim is assigned the role of bogeyman, as no effort is made to understand or to distinguish between the peasant Moplahs of the Malabar Coast rising up against local landlords or the anti-Western imperialism nature of Khilafat or, for that matter, the complexities of the word *jihad*.[34] The Mahasabha's *akhadas* should, therefore, be seen as aggressive, offensive institutions meant to assert a strong Hindu hypermasculinity while simultaneously scapegoating "Muslims" for making such action necessary.

Gandhi railed against the *akhadas* in a letter to Bhogilal Lala, the secretary of the Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee, published in *The Hindu* on the morning of May 25, 1941, arguing that "Those who favour violent resistance [against an opponent in defense of oneself or others] must get out of the Congress and shape their conduct just as they think fit and guide the others

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a specific example of how physical activities such as wrestling contributed to Hindu nationalism, see Chaturvedi (2003, 158). For a broader discussion of wrestling, see Joseph S. Alter (1992).

[34] *Jihad* literally means "struggle." For an excellent discussion of the complexities of this concept in Islamic thought, see Syed Akbar Hyder (2006). For more on the Khilafat movement, see Minault (1982). For more on the Moplah (also known as Mappilla) community and the rebellion of 1921, see K. N. Pannikar (1989) and Stephen Dale (1980). For a shorter but excellent review of the uprising and academic analysis of it, cf. Parshotam Mehra, "The Moplah Rebellion (1921)" (1985, 462–64).

accordingly.... [Also,] a Congressman may not directly or indirectly associate himself with gymnasia where training in violent resistance is given" (Gandhi to Bhogilal Lala, May 21, 1941, in Gandhi 1941, 80:267). Munshi picked up on these comments and responded in a friendly letter to Gandhi on May 26. He quoted the foregoing passages and then, in a moment of genuine self-reflection and anguish, stated,

> Since Pakistan has been in action at Dacca, Ahmedabad, Bombay and other places, it is clear that ... riots are going to be a normal feature of our life for some years. If ... the British machinery of maintaining order weakens, they will perhaps grow more frequent and intense if a division of India is sought to be enforced by internal or external agencies through organized violence.... Do you include "akhadas" in the gymnasiums where training in violent resistance is given? I may inform you that for the last over fifteen years I have been associated with the "akhada" movement in the presidency both directly and indirectly. I have still unofficial connection with several "akhadas". I deem them an essential machinery for training our race in the art of self-defence. During the last many years they have played a great part in giving us some self-confidence to resist *goondaism*.... I can, of course, keep quiet or can acquiesce in what you say or can, for fear of losing my Congress association and your confidence, both precious possessions in my life, voice your sentiments and go my way or do nothing. But something in me rebels against such a course. You have been the embodiment of truth. (Munshi to Gandhi, May 26, 1941, in Munshi 1942, 262–63)

Hindus, blindly seen as one homogenous "race," are constructed as doe-eyed innocents who have been victimized by *goondas*, gangsters and thugs out to steal and pillage. The *goondas* to whom Munshi is referring are clearly Muslims, and what they are after is India itself, to take pieces of it for Pakistan. Munshi is thus quite candid with Gandhi regarding his rationale for the need for *akhadas*. In a public statement issued shortly thereafter, Gandhi responded,

> Shri. K. M. Munshi came to me as soon as it was possible after his return to Bombay. In the course of discussion, I discovered that whilst he accepted in abstract the principle of Ahimsa [nonviolence] with all its implications he felt the greatest difficulty in acting upon it, the more so as with his intimate knowledge of Bombay he was sure that he could not carry the Hindus with him, much less the Muslims and others.... I told him that there came a time in every Congressman's life when being a Congressman dragged him down. That was when there was conflict between thought and action; for the spring of non-violent action was non-violent thought. If the latter was absent, the former had subjectively little or no value. Therefore, it was good for him, the Congress and the country that he should resign and mould

> his action from moment to moment as he thought proper. And by this action, he would open the door for those Congressmen to resign whose practice could not accord with their thought. The Congress was conceived to be a non-violent and truthful organization in which there should be no place for those who could not honestly conform to these two conditions. (Munshi 1942, 265–67)

The passage seems to imply that Munshi believed nonviolence would not work because Muslims and other non-Hindu groups simply would not abide by it. As such, Hindus would not abide by it either, lest they be unfairly harmed. Munshi's estrangement from non-Hindus is apparent, as is Gandhi's awareness of this fact. But for Gandhi, the capital offense (!) lay in the rejection of nonviolence, which he saw as the cardinal virtue. Still, Gandhi, Munshi, and much of the Congress high command remained in close touch, and Munshi's estrangement from mainstream nationalism was more technical than real.[35]

While Munshi had participated in Hindu nationalist political activities prior to this technical estrangement, as illustrated by his engagement with *akhadas*, it is also true that his public face up to that point was rather more moderate. Indeed, his most famed novel, *Jaya Somnatha*, published in Gujarati in 1937, is remarkably restrained (for a religious nationalist) in presenting a fictionalized history of the destruction of the (Hindu) Somnath Temple in Gujarat by (the Muslim) Mahmud of Ghazni in 1026. Competing love interests between two Shaivite groups[36] lead a member of one to betray the temple and to reveal a secret entrance to Mahmud's army, which had encamped nearby. Mahmud appears more interested in the surrounding fortress than in the temple itself and is not depicted as virulently anti-Hindu. Of course, Mahmud specifically, and Muslims more generally, are still portrayed as outsiders and the engines of tragedy. But such portrayal is clearly controlled when contrasted with the more inflammatory rhetoric that Munshi spread on Mahmud and on Somnath by the late 1940s and early 1950s (Munshi 1976a; cf. Thapar 2004, 188–97).[37] For instance, after his successful effort to restore Somanth's temple by 1951, Munshi depicted a very different, if inadvertently equally fictional, history:

[35]Indeed, Munshi rejoined the Congress at the personal invitation of Gandhi in early 1946 (see Munshi 1967 vol. I, 99).

[36]Shaivities are worshippers of Shiva, who is for them the Lord of Existence. Other followers of Hindu traditions see Shiva as part of the Trinity: Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Shiva the Destroyer (see Ramanujan 1973).

[37]Romila Thapar notes that "[t]he depiction of Mahmud in this novel is not as negative as Munshi's later historical assessment of him, but that he was the anti-hero is evident. The segregation of Muslims was thought to be necessary to the purity of race and culture. Hence, the need to project a constant and visible distance between the Hindus and Muslims throughout history. It has been said that this novel brought together his [Munshi's] brahmanhood, family heritage, worship of Shiva, literary activity, and understanding of nationalism" (2004, 190–91). I concur with this reading and will follow up on this point shortly.

> The story of India's resistance to Mahmud's insatiable ambition is an epic of undying heroism.... The story of internal feuds in India is a myth.... Mahmud again [for a second time] invaded Jayapala's dominions, defeated him, and extracted tribute. Jayapala had the proud soul of a hero.... Then the generous culture of Aryavarta impelled Anandapala ["heroic Jayapala's equally heroic son"] to send a foolish message to his ruthless foe [Mahmud] offering assistance.... The tragedy of it was that Mahmud took the assistance ... and with his victorious army turned on the generous Shahi [Anandapala] in A.D. 1008. The conquest of India is the conquest of culture by those who lacked it.... [After reaching Somnath], a terrible battle ensued.... Mahmud captured the fort, entered the temple sanctified by centuries of devotion, broke the *Linga* to pieces, looted the temple and burnt it to the ground.... A sacred city like that of Somnatha armoured principally by the devotion and reverence of the whole country, fell a prey to an army pledged to a fanatic destruction of alien shrines. (Munshi 1976b, 33–40)[38]

The caricatures made here—benevolent, generous Hindus categorically juxtaposed with devious, fanatic Muslims—seem mundane in contemporary contexts, as it is this view that dominates the imagination of current-day Hindu nationalists.[39] But they are also a considerable departure from Munshi's earlier stands. In an analysis published around the time of his correspondence with Gandhi, Munshi claimed to be more historical in nature and noted that

> Mahmud, no doubt, looted temples and broke idols when on his raiding incursion. But iconoclastic zeal was not his principal motive as suggested by Muslim chroniclers; it was conquest. First, he did annex the Punjab where he could do so; secondly, he was not a fanatic and not anti-Hindu.... He allowed Hindus to observe their religious observances in Ghazni itself. Sewan Rai and Tilak were his trusted Hindu generals. Later annals written by enthusiasts to paint Mahmud 'the sword of Islam' evidently had to supply the motive of iconoclastic zeal to cover the basic fact that his raids, in spite of super-human efforts, did not result in conquests. (Munshi 1942, 135)[40]

[38]A *linga* is a symbolic icon representing Shiva.

[39]For example, "Gautier quotes Nehru's 'amazing eulogy' of the tyrant Mahmud of Ghazni, the destroyer of Mathura's great Hindu temples, Gujarat's Somnath, and numerous other Hindu and Buddhist temples. When Nehru, the arrant appeaser of Muslims...," http://www.indiastar.com/wallia10.htm. This review is posted on hinduunity.org, the online mouthpiece of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal, two leading members of the Sangh Parivar, the family of Hindu nationalist organizations.

[40]This comment was made in a volume entitled *Akhand Hindustan* published in 1942, the year after Munshi left the Congress. But in the preface to the volume, Munshi claims that the book only contained reprints of essays published, or speeches made, between 1938 and 1942. His correspondence with Gandhi concerning Munshi's departure from the Congress makes up the appendix.

Again, Munshi appears to have moved radically to the right only after leaving the Congress. Even in the immediate aftermath of his new political freedom, Munshi hewed to the center. It is perhaps for this reason that Christophe Jaffrelot, in his titanically meticulous, definitive study of the Hindu nationalist movement in India, considers K. M. Munshi a "Hindu traditionalist" who simply had "common ground" with Hindu nationalists (Jaffrelot 1996, 84). Closer examination of Munshi's work reveals the error in such a conclusion.

K. M. Munshi and the Transgressive *Ecumene*

C. A. Bayly refers to *the ecumene* as "the form of cultural and political debate which was typical of north India before the emergence of the newspaper and public association, yet persisted in conjunction with the press and new forms of publicity into the age of nationalism" (1996, 182). These debates constituted what was essentially a "critical public," one engaged with civic life, and one that expressed tremendous power over those with formal authority. Generally, this "ecumene was led by respectable men who could draw limits to the actions of government and also seek to impose their standards of belief and practice on the populace" (204). The learned Munshi, given the circles in which he moved and his history of literary contributions, fit this overall mold. Whereas Savarkar, Moonje, and the others concentrated their efforts on oral communication and on the mass medium of the newspaper, Munshi focused on a more scholarly production, creating, I argue, a tandem force with the others.

Bayly points out that the "technology of communications"—print—generated a "new public" that fractured along various lines, including that of religious community (1996, 351). This is, in many ways, what we see happening here. But in this case, those involved with this "new public," while appealing to a particular religious community, simultaneously sought to legitimize their agenda in two ways: first by locating their discourse in the narrative of the "old public," and second, in so doing, by claiming that their efforts represented a just course, one from which *every* community, ultimately, would benefit. That is, Munshi brought with him the credentials of a thoughtful moderate, a valid member of the older, acceptable intelligentsia whose ideas, importantly, were *reasoned* and *worth taking into account*. Through him, especially, the ideas of the Mahasabha could be made palatable. In this, his most significant contribution was to deny the communitarian nature of Hindutva politics. In other words, Munshi served to refute the very idea of a "new public" by being someone who maintained personal relations across ideological lines and camps. He represented very much the "old guard," a member of the historical *ecumene* with its attendant legitimacy in Indian society. Thus, this sphere, which had once been quite the cosmopolitan domain (Bayly 1996, 182), was now

co-opted to serve the narrower interests of the Hindu right. As Moonje, Khaparde, and the others advanced the idea that "true democracy" and "justice" for all communities could only be found through Hindu rulers, as we saw in the first section, Munshi provided a portfolio of "evidence" to support their case, through his writings from 1938 to 1942, while he was still a Congressman and in the immediate year after his departure.

Munshi formed the Akhand Hindustan Front shortly after he left the Congress, claiming that "Akhand Hindustan is the undivided India of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Europeans, and Parsis; of everyone who is born in India or who has his home in India" (Munshi 1942, 272). Then,

> The Jat Hindu, the Jat Sikh, and the Jat Muslim in the Punjab were more allied to one another than the Jat Hindu of the Punjab and the Tamil Hindu of Madras.... Religious tolerance and the exchange of religious thought and practice had left little trace of religious antagonism between the two sections. Chaitanya had Muslim followers. Kabir was the apostle of Hindu-Muslim unity.... In Gujerat [*sic*], the Hindu and the Muslim respected each other's shrines and sometimes took vows at them irrespective of the faith for which it was reared. (Munshi 1942, 54–55)

Moreover, in the same essay in which he praised Mahmud of Ghazni, Munshi claimed that

> [Qutb-ud-din] Aibak was no doubt a foreign general who conquered territories in the interests of a foreign master, but no sooner did he conquer them than he cast his lot with the country and became the ruler of a local kingdom. Iltutmish was not the agent of any foreign power.... He was for all purposes an Indian king.... [T]hese conquerors ... on the whole ... do not appear to have shown any anxiety to alloy military triumphs with religious fanaticism. On the contrary, there were constant attempts to enlist the sympathy of Hindu allies and armies, and to conciliate the Hindus.... The fact that Rajput chiefs, converted or otherwise, soon rose to the highest position in the army and the government shows that the Muslim rulers did not treat themselves as foreigners nor did they generally treat Hindus as infidels to be put to the sword. Even Allaudin Khilji to whom so many acts of fanatacism are attributed was an Indian ruler for all purposes. He was helped as well as hindered by rulers of both communities. The rule of Delhi was therefore not a foreign rule, nor did a whole race of foreigners come into India and establish the kingdom. The Muslim founders of the kingdom like those of Delhi, Bengal, Gujarata, or Sind were not, and did not treat themselves as aliens. That there was sympathetic intercourse between the Muslims and the Hindus is unquestioned. Amir Khusrau, at the Court of Allaudin, had already

> expressed the feeling, "you should look on Hindustan as Paradise." (Munshi 1942, 140–44)[41]

These propositions are in marked contrast to the more oppositional opinions made by the contemporary Akhand Bharat Foundation: "The discerning reader would be savvy enough to realize that the objective of Leftist scholarship is to prove, despite all available evidence, that the Islamic invasion was really India's age of Enlightenment.... This is why [a "leftist historian"] ... protests if medieval Muslim rulers[42] are described as 'foreign'" (see http://www.geocities.com/akhandbharat1947/ISLAM.html). As discussed earlier, this concept of the "foreign" is at the heart of Hindu nationalism, based largely on the work *Hindutva* published by Savarkar in 1923. Savarkar claimed that India/Hindustan was the *pitrabhoomi* and *punyabhoomi* of Hindus, their fatherland and holy land. Everyone whose spiritual origins were found elsewhere were, therefore, not "of the soil"—foreigners who were not truly Indian. Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs, as such, "belonged," whereas Muslims and Christians did not. Munshi's views seem to be at odds with such ideology, very much in tune with Gandhian philosophy. His appeal for Indian unity appears to be one of secular, nationalist construction. Yet the wolf hardly fit into the sheep's clothing, almost satirically appearing a true monster at the (costume) ball.

For one thing, Munshi located many of his musings on Muslim belonging in an essay titled "An Age of Resistance." But if every Muslim ruler from Qutb-ud-din Aibak forward was "local," and "not foreign," then who was resisting whom, and why? Munshi's answer: "The country [India] was one, the culture uniform, and the social organization tough and resilient.... Though equipped with a homogenous culture and a marvelous social organization, this country had no powerful centralized military organization to resist the hordes of Central Asia.... To these invaders, nothing was sacred" (Munshi 1942, 151). India—one, united, indivisible, and Hindu, in other words—existed prior to the coming of Muslims, clearly marked as "uncultured." To understand Akhand Hindustan and the location of communities within, therefore, was to understand history. Munshi elaborates in an essay on "'histories' of India":

> The time has arrived when India is entitled to have histories written afresh from an Indian point of view. A nation's evolution can rightly be understood only by those who can appreciate the genius behind its historical development. A history of India ... means the history of that country which we, in modern times know as India; not of a kingdom, a race, a community, or a conquering corporation; nor an India defined by fluctuating

[41]Aibak, Iltutmish, and Khilji (Khalji) were all "Muslim" rulers, though from different dynasties, of the Delhi sultanate, a political unit that controlled much of northern South Asia from 1206 to 1526. Amir Khusrau (1253–1325), a Sufi (Islamic mystic), is considered one of South Asia's greatest poets.
[42]This is a reference to the period of the Delhi sultanate.

> political boundaries.... The central purpose of a history must ... be to investigate and unfold the values which age after age have inspired the inhabitants of a country to develop their collective will.... Such a history of India is still to be written. (Munshi 1942, 109, 112)

If true understanding lay in an as yet unwritten history of India, Munshi ensures a short wait for enlightenment, as in another essay published during this period, he discusses the "organic periods of India's past," a move that consolidates the present article's argument that he served as a bridge to the older, more legitimate intelligentsia, as Bayly notes that "'history' and topography played an important role in maintaining the identity of the ecumene" (1996, 196). Munshi's breakdown and assessment of India's past is telling. The first four periods, which pre-date the arrival of "foreigners," include "the birth of Indian culture," "the age of organization," "the age of international contacts and cultural expansion," and "the golden age of India." The next two periods, from 650 CE to 1400, tracing the arrival of Muslim communities and the emergence of Sultans in Delhi, Munshi labels "the age of cultural stagnation" and "the age of resistance and cultural decadence." From 1399 to 1700, Munshi sees "the age of new adjustments" marked by "the renaissance." Finally, India from 1700 to 1940 was broken down first into "the age of cultural decadence," when there was a "struggle for imperial power between Hindus and the British," and second into "the age of foreign domination," which saw "the rise of nationalism" (Munshi 1942, 116–33).

The values that, "age after age," have inspired the people are solely and distinctly Hindu, a category wherein there lies no differentiation. They were, as we saw, "homogenous." This Hindu culture grew and grew until the coming of Muslims. Then everything fell apart and stagnated. Culture declined under Muslim influence, but all was not lost, as heroic Hindus resisted. Their resistance culminated when Muslims finally "adjusted" by accepting most of the principles of Hinduism during the early Mughal empire from Akbar to Shah Jahan.[43] Lest anyone be confused, however, neither Mughal administration nor "syncretism" represented the renaissance that followed. That centered around the emergence of Shivaji, the seventeenth-century (Hindu) Maratha king who fought the Mughals and who, by the twentieth century, was the central champion in the mythology of Hindu nationalism.[44] Thereafter, resurgent Hindus came into conflict with the British, who, in turn, conquered India, bringing another period of

[43]"The movement from Ramanand to Raidas is one and uniform, absorbing foreign elements and *reasserting the essential values of Indian Culture*" (Munshi 1942, 130; emphasis added).

[44]Munshi makes this assertion rather obliquely. After mentioning the rise of Shivaji following Aurangzeb's "sectarian bias," he comments on the Hindu-Muslim basis of Mughal military and political dominance, then points to "a new renaissance and the birth of new intellectual religious and cultural forces in the country" (1942, 130–31). Shivaji is the only post-Mughal intellectual, religious, or cultural force named. For more on the history and mythology of Shivaji, see James W. Laine (2003). This book itself generated a huge controversy. For details, see my brief critique (Bhagavan 2004).

cultural decline. But that decline terminated with the rise of nationalism, the "strengthening of collective will" for a "fresh struggle for independence." Tying this in to our earlier point, Munshi here provides the "scholarly" justification for the Hindu(tva) public sphere, the interpretation of history that binds ruler, religion, and state and legitimizes the politics of the Hindu right all at the same time. Thus Munshi adopts a stance that is both Hindu and nationalist, the latter unequivocally inflected by the former.

And this Hindu nationalism was not mere common ground with others who were more open about their preferences. His multicultural posturing notwithstanding, Munshi in truth hardly diverged from the Hindutva script. This is perhaps why Munshi's resignation from Congress received adulatory, front-page coverage from *HOK* (July 1, 1941, 1). And subsequently, Munshi's writings and doings began to be featured in this mouthpiece of the Mahasabha. This is unsurprising given some of the things he had been saying at that time. Witness the fear-mongering against a "Muslim threat": "Nationalism was thus to be destroyed; the Hindus were to be reduced to serfdom; and the Anglo-Muslim syndicate was to hold India in fee!" ("The Menace," in Munshi 1942, 63). Here an example of Hindu culture creating the unity of India, threatened now by "foreigners," and a weakened caste system: "The unity which the Sanskrit language, Puranic tradition and Indian culture gave to India is weakened by alien influence which has destroyed the old bonds without substituting new ones. In the name of toleration we have let the social system grow nerveless" ("Fear Complex," address to the RSS, August 6, 1941, in Munshi 1942, 40–41).

Moreover, this kind of language only reflected a more authoritarian bent. For instance, Munshi attended an RSS rally in 1942 and "was struck by the discipline, determination and the spirit of selflessness which characterized its members" (Munshi 1967, 86). He even met M. S. Golwalkar, the "Guruji of the R.S.S.," whom Jaffrelot links with Nazism and fascism, and though Munshi claimed "differences in political aims and methods," he "could not help admiring the dedicated life he [Golwalkar] lived, his great power of organization, and his skill in building up the R.S.S." (Munshi 1967, 86; Jaffrelot 1996, 52–64). That same year, Savarkar invited Munshi to address the Working Committee of the Hindu Mahasabha. There Munshi announced that "the Hindus were extremely agitated over the Pakistan riots; that many Congressmen felt that violent resistance should be offered; that Gandhiji and the Congress leadership were not going to support such a course; and that if the challenge of Muslim violence was to be accepted, a non-Gandhian leadership with a mass appeal had to be found" (Munshi 1967, 84). Thus, this "Gandhian" stood in the lion's den and stridently called for a violent challenge to Gandhi's leadership to make their dream a reality, a tragic irony considering the increasingly violent events that followed, culminating pointedly in Gandhi's assassination.

Years later, in a 1967 memoir recollecting his attitudes in the early 1940s, Munshi provided some rationale for his wildly bipolar political statements:

"Sorrowfully, I came to the conclusion, which I was ashamed to confess even to myself, that in a grim struggle involving violence, the Muslims had the advantage of a leadership which had a 'master-race' complex towards the Hindus" (1967, 86). In short, Munshi had been trying unsuccessfully to suppress his inner fears and rage; we may thus conclude that vis-à-vis his stands on the issues considered in this paper, his more venomous statements most accurately represent, by Munshi's own judgment, his true feelings.

Munshi ultimately even admitted that *akhadas* and self-defense belied the true reason for his split with the Congress: Akhand Hindustan. He initially noted in a commentary written shortly after he left the Congress that "[s]everal Congressmen, while expressing the same views as I hold on the right of self-defence, have been making enquiries of me whether they should leave the Congress" (1942, 270). But in his later recollections, speaking on the same subject, he stated that when he had left the Congress, he had "initiated the Akhand Hindustan (United India) Front. Great enthusiasm [then] greeted ... [his] venture" (1967, 77). Again, in his more candid memoirs, he drops all euphemism and openly admits that the issue on which he and several Congressmen shared a viewpoint was Akhand Hindustan.

> Sardar Patel, however, in a letter to Gandhiji, pointed out the danger of Congressmen leaving the Congress on this issue and organizing themselves as a separate party. Gandhiji got Mahadev Desai, his secretary, to issue an explanation to the effect that I had left the Congress because I had no faith in non-violence, but that those who had faith in non-violence, but only found it impossible to implement it, should remain in the Congress. Suddenly, those who had promised to come out with me, accepted this explanation and stayed with the Congress. That is how I began my lone campaign for Akhand Hindustan. (1967, 77)[45]

And, to make clear the relationship of all of this to that covered in the first section of this article, the primary champions of this Akhand Hindustan were to be none other than the Hindu princes:

> We are confident that Kashmere in the north with its Dogra Rajput Regiments if brought up-to-date can with the help of the war-like Sikhs and the Patiala State make the establishment of Pakistan in the North-Western Block an impossibility. The ambitions of the Nizam and Bhopal State to revive the Moghul Empire in India can be nipped in the bud by Mysore and Travancore in the South, Southern Maharatta States in the West and a chain of Maharatta and Rajput rulers in the

[45]Munshi is correct in pointing out that there were many Congressmen who agreed with him and would have left the party to join him, but for the efforts of Gandhi and Patel. See, for example, a letter from P. K. Deshmukh to K. M. Munshi, October 15, 1941, MPRN34R7987F59, 6.

> [*sic*] Central India. And Bengal surrounded by Hindu majority provinces as it is can never establish a sovereign Muslim State if the Independent kingdom of Nepal comes to the rescue of Bengal Hindus.... We are quite confident that the Hindu Princes also would read the writings on the wall and would rise to the occasion to fight to the finish the war for India's integrity and Hindu Raj. (lead editorial, *HOK*, March 11, 1947, 2)

This vision, that of the Mahasabha, was in sync with Munshi's own designs from the very outset of the Akhand Hindustan Front, as this letter to Munshi from late 1941 makes clear: "I wanted to visit Hyderabad also *but I will take your advice*. 'World's Darkest Autocracy' needs to be brought out in the light. I also feel we must give facts + figures how states like Mysore, Gwalior, Patiala, Kashmir etc treat Moslems" (Unknown author to Munshi, October 2, 1941, MPRN34R7987F57, 3; emphasis added). And the general secretary of the Bengal Hindu Students' Federation (the Students' Front of the Hindu Mahasabha in another letter) reveals that this support for Hindutva ideology and activity was quite broad: "I shall always try to keep you in touch with our activities. With regard to the aims and ideals of the Hindu Students Federation we had a long discussion with you and your sympathy and encouragement has also strengthened our activities.... The aim of the Hindu Students' Federation is ... promotion of ... Hindu culture and Hindu nationalism.... A great danger threatens the Hindu nation at present and that is the menace of Pakistan. You are doing an incalculable service to the country by rousing us to action in this time" (Amalendu Bagchi to Munshi, September 6, 1941, MPRN34R7987F59, 71–74).

Still, for all of this, Munshi never officially joined the Hindu Mahasabha or any other such organization, and in fact, he maintained that he disagreed with them on various issues. Indeed, as we saw at the outset of this section, Munshi voiced support in some writings for a much more inclusive idea of Akhand Hindustan than the one to which the Mahasabha subscribed. Bhai Parmanand, one of the Mahasabha's leaders, wrote several columns in *HOK* in the weeks immediately following Munshi's resignation, praising the former Congressman's actions and overall vision but questioning why he (Munshi) did not more forcefully condemn the Congress high command.[46] Munshi, to be sure, continued to hold great affection and admiration for the Mahatma throughout the 1940s.

Yet all of this, I argue, only helps to make the case that Munshi used his position of being *almost but not quite*—a Congressman, a member of the Mahasabha, a member of the "native states," a member of British India—to bring all of these bodies into a streamlined vision, that of the Hindutva imaginary. Straddling both princely and British India, he was "Akhand Hindustan" made manifest; straddling both Congress and the Hindu right, he helped make the

[46]See the brief editorial accompanying Munshi's essay "The Humiliation of It," *HOK*, July 15, 1941, 2. See also Bhai Parmanand, "Akhand Hindusthan," *HOK*, July 29, 1941, 3; and "Mr. Munshi's Self-Defence," *HOK*, September 16, 1941, 3.

positions of the latter acceptable to the larger mainstream. The mild criticism he received from Bhai Parmanand only reinforced the notion that Munshi was someone who stood above ideology and politics, who *could be trusted* as someone of principle.[47] Indeed, Munshi's overall comfort with the Mahasabha and its ideology and the esteem with which he was held, in turn, by the Mahasabha can be seen, as discussed earlier, in his relationship with *HOK* in the 1940s. In fact, in the same article in which he lightly criticized Munshi, Parmanand even noted that Munshi had once been told that "his ideas were just the same as that of the Mahasabha" (Bhai Parmananda, "Mr. Munshi's Self-Defence," *HOK*, September 16, 1941, 3).[48]

Somewhat as a postscript, we might note that K. M. Munshi was actually the postcolonial agent-general of Hyderabad from January 5 to September 21, 1948, and had a hand in the "police action" in which the government of India forcefully took control of the nizam's territory. That Munshi was central in this is made clear by this reported statement from a newspaper columnist early in Munshi's tenure: "Munshi has been chosen to be the Trojan Horse in the siege of Hyderabad" (Mukta 2002, 65). Another dispatch of a foreign correspondent noted, "If ever any blood is shed in Hyderabad, the first to be shed will be that of the bird-like Munshi" (Munshi 1998, 239). As always, Munshi justified his actions as a defense of "Hindus" from "Muslims," arguing that "[i]t is a curious commentary on the foreign outlook of India that it was more interested in Nizam's bid for independence based on communal fascism than in the sufferings of the people of Hyderabad ... "(Munshi 1998, 239). Not incidentally, the police action was widely considered essential to maintaining the "unity" of postcolonial India. While the takeover of Hyderabad is complex, and certainly one of compelling

[47]That such a maneuver was very much within the realm of Hindutva tactics is perhaps best documented by the fact that that a similar subterfuge was utilized in this very same period by Savarkar and his acolyte Nathuram Godse. According to Vinayak Chaturvedi, in 1942, Savarkar "required volunteers to take an oath of loyalty to him and perform underground activities that could not be sanctioned by the Mahasabha." The purpose of this group was to "protect Hindudom and render help to every Hindu institution in their attempt to oppose encroachment on their rights and religion" (Chaturvedi 2003, 163).

[48]True to form, Munshi denied this and claimed greater affinity for the Congress than for any other organization. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that many people saw an overall affinity in Munshi's work with the Hindutva movement. For instance, one admirer wrote, "Hindus want leaders like yourself to protect their nation and culture. I want to draw your attention towards the organization 'Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh'. I need not explain its ideology as you must be knowing about it as you once mentioned it in your lecture. Should I suggest you to join it ... ?" (Raj Kishore Mediratta to Munshi, September 6, 1941, MPRN34R7987F58, 352). Munshi responded, "I know the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh very well as also many of its organizers in Poona and Nagpur. Many thanks for your suggestion to join it. I am afraid that is not possible for me" (Munshi to Mediratta, September 13, 1941, MPRN34R7987F58, 351). Parmanand and Munshi were also somewhat closer than their public face would have it. Parmanand, for instance, wrote to Munshi in late 1941 to introduce a compatriot who had served a life sentence for "conspiring against the government." "Since his release he has been taking a great interest in public services. He is interested in the Hindu Cause these days" (Parmanand to Munshi, October 30, 1941, MPRN34R7987F58, 149).

interest for the Indian nation-state, even to so-called secular nationalists, we should not overlook the role of Hindu nationalists in this drama, nor their long-standing desire to see this result, as I illustrated to some degree earlier in this paper (see also Kooiman 2002, 165–215). To wit, the local Hindu Sabha in Hyderabad passed the following resolution shortly after the government action: "The Hyderabad state Hindusabha on behalf of all the oppressed in the state send its hearty thanks to the Indian Government for its 'police action'.... It pays special tributes to the State's Minister Hon'ble Sardar Patel and India's Agent General in Hyderabad Sjt. K. M. Munshiji who have acted wisely in coming to the rescue of the Hyderabadies before it was too late" (V. Ramachandra Rao to Munshi, October 4, 1948, MPRN47R8000F99, 70). And illustrating that Munshi did indeed distance himself from the Mahasabha and its ilk in public while embracing them in private, this representative of the Hindu right went on to note,

> [S]ome members of the Mahasabha had come ... with a view to see you [Munshi] and convey in person our hearty thanks and appreciation for your services in Hyderabad. But unfortunately your D.C. objected to our seeing you even though we had come there after informing him a day before of our intention. I hope you [Munshi] will not forget the services rendered by the military personnel in the state forces.... *You had also promised to reward them and give them promotions if they worked to your expectations*. They have done their best and I need not say how valuable their information was to our armed forces. (70–71; emphasis added)

The conspiratorial elements hinted at in this letter were not lost on everyone at that time. One foreign correspondent wrote, "Munshi is the most hated Hindu in Hyderabad.... Almost alone, he is responsible for the spread of exaggerated reports of chaos in Hyderabad. The stories of attacks on Hindus, eagerly and naively reported by the Indian Press, nearly all came from the big house in Bolarum. There ten miles from Hyderabad city, Munshi used to curl up on a water-cooled verandah to gather the tittle-tattle from his own political agitators" (Maurice Cheesewright, "He'll be Lucky to Get Out Alive ...," *Daily Express*, September 16, 1948, MPRN47R8000F98, 5).[49] Munshi's role in Hyderabad in

[49]Cheesewright appears to be the journalist Munshi quotes in the line cited earlier in this paragraph, referring to "the bird-like Munshi." The exact line from Cheesewright's column reads, "In the blood that will flow in the State of Hyderabad, it will be a miracle if there are no drops from the veins of birdlike little K.M. Munshi, India's Agent-General" (MPRN47R8000F98, 5). Cheesewright also provides a specific instance of Munshi fabricating a report of a murder of four Hindus on a train, a report that was then made much of in "every Hindu paper." Cheesewright claims to have investigated the incident personally and found that, in fact, "no one had been murdered, or even seriously injured." There was some kind of assault, but that, Cheesewright claims, was "a reprisal for the murder of three Moslems on the same line the previous day."

this context must be seen as part of Hindutva's historic effort to delegitimize the Muslim nizam and reclaim the state as their own.[50]

Conclusions

This article introduces yet another chapter in the history of nationalism in South Asia. For what stand freshly revealed are the roles of princes, members of their bureaucracy, the native states' people (at least some of them), as well as the princely territories in various nationalist dynamics that have until now appeared only the exclusive purview of British India.

Going beyond both nationalist history and the historiography of princely India per se, this paper also allows us to reconsider some presiding assumptions about agency. The privileged position of the princes vis-à-vis other South Asians and their simultaneous subordination to European paramount power has long upheld two contradictory but mutually supportive conclusions: first, that the princes, as monarchs, were the lone, or at least the primary political (here meant broadly) actors in their states, and second, that the princes, as collaborators, were slaves to British whim. This paper has provided an instance of a group of emerging elites, Hindu nationalists all, who sought to strip the princes of their agency, to emplot them as figurehead characters in their own (Grimm) fairy tale, and to dictate themselves what could and could not be said and what could and could not be done in these regions. Anyone who opposed them was immediately villainized in one frame or another. That the princes might be challenged for dominance within their states is, of course, nothing new: Orientalist mythologies have long spun yarns of the treachery and deceit rampant among the courts of the despots of the East. Moreover, some pieces of contemporary scholarship (Manor 1978; Dushkin 1974; Pernau 2000) have also posited the 1940s as a decade in which native states saw growing nationalist demonstrations for the abolishment of the "repressive regimes" of the princely order. In both these tales, however, the threat to the power and legitimacy of rajas and ranis comes either from their inner circle (their own weaknesses) or from an upswell of popular resentment. What we see happening in this paper is markedly different, even from a third trajectory that flows parallel to this one, that in considering the case of Hyderabad as unique, sees a "foreign hand" (meaning nonstate) at work in destabilizing the Nizam (Kooiman 2002, 165–215). In this case, we may note that the nonstate actors' campaign is far more widespread and premeditated than a narrow focus on the premier princely

[50]Nathuram Godse (1977), in his courtroom statement, rather extensively aired his resentment of the nizam's government and expressed great satisfaction that the Indian government had taken over the state. He also made clear the key place of Hyderabad in the Hindutva imaginary, and ends with the words, "Akhand Bharat Amar Rahe. Vande Mataram." (Akhand Hindustan/United India is eternal. Glory to the Motherland; see esp. 112–13, 117, but throughout as well).

state might suggest. That is, while seeking to strike down the Muslim ruler of Hyderabad with one hand, Hindu nationalists moved to embrace his Hinduized doppelgangers with the other while simultaneously holding a knife behind the saffron-soaked vestment with which they duplicitously draped their heroes.

In the broader context of the history of colonial South Asia, this paper has highlighted the central role that elites from princely India, here represented by K. M. Munshi in particular, played in the most important debates surrounding the formation of the modern, postcolonial state. From the role of *akhadas* and the antipartition movement to the effort to rebuild Somnath and the writing of "Indian" history—each one integral to the architecture of Hindu nationalism as a whole—all were not just supported by but, in fact, were led by this critical figure from the princely "margin." But Munshi's work was in concert with that of Moonje, Savarkar, Khaparde, and others, and together through speeches, conferences, and writings, these figures fashioned a Hindu(tva) public sphere by and through which the religious right could politically mobilize in the late colonial and early postcolonial period.

Princely India, therefore, must be seen as integral to the twin stories of colonialism and nationalism on the subcontinent. The marginalization of these territories, their absence from virtually all academic literature on the "colonial period" or, inversely, their treatment as unique spaces of indirect rule,[51] has left a huge blind spot in our historical field of vision. This paper has been an attempt at a corrective lens.

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List of Abbreviations

AISHMC,	All-India States' Hindu Mahasabha Conference
BHSC,	Baroda Hindu Sabha Conference

[51]Cf. n. 29 herein.

HOK, *Hindu Outlook*
MPRN#R#F#, Munshi Papers, Reel no. # (R-#), File #
MSHM, Mysore State Hindu Mahasabha

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