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ARTICLE

Glory and Humiliation in the Making of V. D. Savarkar's Hindu Nationalism

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Abstract

In the European tradition, political emotion in the form of individual and collective glory was usually constrained by norms of legitimate political conduct defined by public virtue. This article describes an alternative relationship between glory and political reason by reconstructing the political thought of V. D. Savarkar, the architect of Hindu nationalism. The article argues that the relational concepts of glory and humiliation were at the heart of actualizing 'Hindu-ness' or *Hindutva* as a sovereign political category. The genealogy and development of Hindu nationalism is traced from the formative space of the colonial prison during Savarkar's incarceration from 1911 to 1937, the ideology's subsequent refining and dissemination, to its final form after Partition in 1947. Supplementing Savarkar's political treatises and histories, this article is the first to analyse his poetry as political thought. Together, these writings show how scriptural Hindu concepts like the *gunas* and *prakriti* were appropriated to justify a fraught majoritarian unity defined against endogenous shame sanctions and exogenous humiliation. In order to achieve this, political reason was yoked to a perspectivist history enabling Hindu self-overcoming, which was personified by communal heroes who embodied a passionate Hindu will to power.

> Muslims…had no compulsion about killing people, while a Hindu would pause before killing and ask himself why he was doing it.[1]

European political thought has traditionally been suspicious of emotional excess. Where emotion has been tolerated as a constitutive element of political reason, it was usually in such a way that would reinforce the pre-existing social norms that undergirded public virtue. In particular, classical thinkers like

[1] Sunil, a Hindu nationalist, justifying violence against Muslims during the Bombay riots of 1992–3 in Suketu Mehta, *Maximum city: Bombay lost and found* (London, 2005), p. 47.

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Aristotle and Seneca regarded anger as being impervious to reason and potentially self-destructive to the individual and their polity.[2] And yet, some room was accorded to emotional exuberance in the name of communitarian self-love and self-respect, with dutiful male citizens pursuing personal achievement and honour as part of the general maintenance of public decency and civic benevolence. For example, the Greek epics recount how honourable and self-possessed men could pursue political revenge reasonably; whereas non-citizen women were painted as apolitical, impulsive, and socially destabilizing.[3] Plato accorded a particular premium to personal glory in Athens where masculine social norms lauded the upholding of civic traditions through individual expression and achievement and simultaneously shamed those who failed in these endeavours.[4] Despite some flexibility for masculine passions then, the Athenian ideal of public glory was paired with its diametric opposite – public shame – in order to reinforce existing social norms through personal guilt and the recognition of such by one's fellow citizens. Similarly, in the late Roman Republic, glory and honour were subjected to even greater communitarian oversight, decoupled as they were from individual glory and tied instead to a restrained moral uprightness associated narrowly with the pre-existing expectations of public office.[5]

Several major European thinkers from the Renaissance engaged with the classical tradition and also hitched the categories of glory, pride, and self-love to established norms of public virtue. In Machiavellian republicanism, the categories of pride and glory are clearly neo-Roman in their understanding of public virtue. Excessive individual pride or vainglory threatened the public liberty that maintained the free status of the state and so Machiavelli deemed the collective pursuit of glory through public office and reason of state as a safer outlet for these passions. Acting in his own interests, the prince maintains the order and status of the state in order that he might accomplish great deeds and win victories that bring the people glory indirectly.[6]

Thomas Hobbes's account of sovereignty inverts glory from a classical virtue into a potentially subversive vice that must be subordinated to sovereign authority in the name of security. Such impulses could lead to excessively passionate and irrational behaviour that invited civil war; and so, rational persons submitted to the protective embrace of the 'king of the proud' in the form of Hobbes's *Leviathan*. Unlike Machiavelli, Hobbes had no conception of the common good beyond that of security; indeed, people were free to pursue their

[2] Amia Srinivasan, 'The aptness of anger', *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 26 (2018), pp. 123–44.

[3] Fiona McHardy, *Revenge in Athenian culture* (London, 2008).

[4] Dan Lyons, 'Plato's attempt to moralise shame', *Philosophy*, 86 (2011), pp. 353–74.

[5] Marcus Tulius Cicero, *De officiis* (2.31), in M. T. Griffin and E. M. Atkins, eds., *Cicero on duties* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 63–100.

[6] J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian moment: Florentine political thought and the Atlantic republican tradition* (Princeton, NJ, 1975); Alan Cromartie, 'Hobbes, history, and non-domination', *Hobbes Studies*, 22 (2009), p. 173; Benjamin Straumann, *Crisis and constitutionalism: Roman political thought from the fall of the republic to the age of revolution* (Oxford, 2016), pp. 260–77; Quentin Skinner, 'Machiavelli on misunderstanding princely virtù', in Quentin Skinner, ed., *From humanism to Hobbes: studies in rhetoric and politics* (Cambridge, 2018), pp. 45–62.

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passions so long as that did not over-ride self-preservation and civil peace. With this restraining priority established, it was only the sovereign that was authorized to pass laws regulating social norms. Where personal glory was permissible, Hobbes recognized it as a relational category that required the recognition of those with less capacity for glorying than oneself.[7] This held out the very real possibility of one ambitious party dominating another but, in principle, individual equality reigned because everyone possessed the power to both dominate and be dominated. What is more, in the anarchic state of nature the weakest could opportunistically kill the strongest, while the latter was sleeping as the famous Hobbesian example suggests, and so all individuals were equally vulnerable.[8]

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's self-love or *amour-propre* also had to be made fit for public virtue through a process of education and socialization. This primordial human impulse had its origins in the state of nature's competition for sexual partners but it could go awry when it became 'inflamed' and sought relative standing or vainglory through domination in an increasingly emulative commercial society like eighteenth-century France.[9] Recent scholarship on Rousseau has also recovered a pre-Hegelian articulation of recognition in which *amour-propre* combines a comparatively better standing in society with the conscious acknowledgement of such from fellow citizens.[10] Like Hobbes, Rousseau establishes *amour-propre* as a relational category relying on the social acknowledgement of one's fellow citizen and it is this nexus of inter-psychic social norms that, when they are violated, pre-supposes public guilt and shame.

This article moves beyond the European account of glory and self-love and makes several interventions in the global history of political thought by examining the development of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's Hindu nationalism from 1911. The first contribution shows how Savarkar's Indian account of glory was consciously detached from the European model, which tied emotional exuberance and desire to a political reason restrained by prevailing social norms and shame sanctions. I propose that Savarkar regarded blatant *shamelessness* as essential to the making of a unitary Hindu political identity, wherein glory was not negated by shame but by supposedly intentional Muslim acts of humiliation mediated by a system of liberal bargaining.

The second contribution addresses the colonial prison as a space in which caste and religious boundaries came into relief for Savarkar and caused him to redevelop his earlier populist and anti-liberal but composite Hindu–Muslim republicanism into a more exclusionary ideology.[11] This article argues that

[7] Gabrielle Slomp, 'From genus to species: the unravelling of Hobbesian glory', *History of Political Thought*, 19 (1998), pp. 554–5; Cromartie, 'Hobbes, history, and non-domination', p. 173.

[8] Ibid., p. 562.

[9] N. J. H. Dent, *Rousseau: an introduction to his psychological, social and political theory* (Oxford, 1988).

[10] F. Neuhouser, *Rousseau's theodicy of self-love* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 32–3.

[11] Vikram Visana, 'Savarkar before Hindutva: sovereignty, republicanism, and populism in India, c. 1900–1920', *Modern Intellectual History*, 18 (2021), pp. 1106–29; for an alternative account of Savarkar's sovereign violence as a friend/enemy distinction, see Shruti Kapila, *Violent fraternity: Indian political thought in the global age* (Princeton, NJ, 2021); for other examples of the influence

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the imprisoned Savarkar systematized the relational concepts of glory and humiliation in treatises composed during his imprisonment, such as his highly ideological prison memoir, *My transportation for life* (hereafter *MT*) and his first clear outlining of Hindu nationalist ideology in *Essentials of Hindutva* (hereafter *EH*).[12] Subsequent treatises after his release in 1926, like *Hindu pad padsahi* (hereafter *HPP*) and *Six glorious epochs of Indian history* (hereafter *SGE*), drew on the relationship between glory and humiliation established in those earlier works.[13] Unlike the disciplining machine imagined by Foucault, and epitomized by Bentham's panopticon, Savarkar reimagined the prison as a laboratory of liberal bargaining in which he cast Muslims as a unitary religio-political interest group more adept at politics than their Hindu counterparts.[14] Since caste-based Hindu traditions and shame sanctions encouraged internal division, Savarkar circumvented Hindu social norms and turned to the ostensibly universal psychological impulses of passion and desire. These faculties could be aroused and given public expression through a new account of glory unfettered by shame and generative of a fraught Hindu general will.

I

From 1911 to 1937, Savarkar was imprisoned for his involvement in the assassination of district magistrate, A. M. T. Jackson.[15] Eventually, his pleas for clemency resulted in freedom but not before he composed *EH* and smuggled it out of the Ratnagiri Jail in 1921, whereupon it was published in 1923.[16] As Janaki Bakhle observes, the work established 'Hindu-ness' as an ascriptive national identity for those who regarded the subcontinent as their *pitrabhumi* (ancestral homeland) and *punyabhumi* (sacred land). In doing so, this definition forced Muslims to acknowledge their supposed civilizational 'Hindu-ness' and the extraterritoriality of their holy sites or risk forfeiting their membership of

of incarceration on Indian anti-colonial thinkers, see J. Daniel Elam, 'Commonplace anti-colonialism: Bhagat Singh's jail notebook and the politics of reading', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 39 (2016), pp. 592–607; Alex Wolfers, 'Born like Krishna in the prison-house: revolutionary ascetism in the political ashram of Aurobindo Ghose', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 39 (2016), pp. 525–45; Anand Vivek Taneja, 'Sharing a room with sparrows: Maulana Azad and Muslim ecological thought', Muslim Thought in South Asia Seminar, 11 May 2021, University of Cambridge.

[12] Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, *Essentials of Hindutva* (hereafter *EH*) (Bombay, 1969; orig. edn 1923); Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, *My transportation for life* (hereafter *MT*) (Bombay, 1984; orig. edn 1927).

[13] Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, *Hindu pad padsahi: or a review of the Hindu empire of Maharashtra* (hereafter *HPP*) (New Delhi, 1925); Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, *Six glorious epochs of Indian history* (hereafter *SGE*), trans. S. T. Godbole (Bombay, 1971; orig. edn 1963).

[14] David Arnold has written on the inability of the British to establish a normalizing disciplinary penal system in their colonial possessions in David Arnold, 'The colonial prison: power, knowledge and penology in nineteenth-century India', in Ranajit Guha, ed., *Subaltern studies VIII: essays in honour of Ranajit Guha* (New Delhi, 1994), pp. 148–84.

[15] D. Brückenhaus, *Policing transnational protest: liberal imperialism and surveillance of anticolonialists in Europe, 1905–1945* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 28–32.

[16] Savarkar, *EH*.

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the civitas.[17] The antagonistic posture developed in *EH* was an abrupt volte-face from Savarkar's earlier intellectual production before his arrest and trial, with his 1909 *Indian war of independence* promoting a hybrid Hindu–Muslim sovereignty in the face of the social fragmenting logic of colonial ethnography.[18]

Savarkar wrote up part of his prison experience in *MT* as a heroic revolutionary autobiography and published it in 1927 alongside his *Life of Barrister Savarkar*, which was written under the pseudonym Chitragupta.[19] Scholars have used *MT* to interpret Savarkar's incarceration as an Archimedean point from which he extrapolated his Hindu nationalism. For instance, Bakhle observed that in prison Savarkar was forced to confront the Indian National Congress's strategy of bargaining with the Muslim League as well as the persistence of Gandhian non-violence in the aftermath of Islamic violence against Hindus during the 1921 Malabar Rebellion.[20] These events no doubt rigidified Savarkar's Islamophobia but it is clear that he was already articulating a doctrine of militant Hindu nationalism through eugenicist metaphors as early as 1916.[21] Vikram Sampath, on the other hand, has left *MT*'s provenance completely un-historicized, taking Savarkar's claims of mistreatment at the hands of Muslim prison wardens at face value.[22] Sampath fails to contextualize this narrative alongside Savarkar's highly stylized and rhetorical history-writing, which employed epic heroism and myth-making to inspire a sovereign peoplehood through revolutionary violence.[23] Others have drawn a straight line from Savarkar's latent Islamophobia from childhood to his political thought in the 1920s.[24] This approach also fails to establish the historical contingency of Savarkar's political imagination and the institutional context of the prison. More than this, previous accounts do not explain why from the 1920s

[17] Janaki Bakhle, 'Country first? Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and the writing of essentials of Hindutva', *Public Culture*, 22 (2010), p. 154.

[18] An Indian Nationalist [Savarkar], *The Indian war of independence of 1857* (London, 1909); Visana, 'Savarkar before Hindutva', pp. 1106–49; for late colonial liberalism and the ethnographic state, see Karuna Mantena, *Alibis of empire: Henry Maine and the ends of liberal imperialism* (Princeton, NJ, 2010); Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of mind: colonialism and the making of modern India* (Princeton, NJ, 2001), pp. 125–228.

[19] Savarkar, *MT*; Vinayak Chaturvedi, 'A revolutionary's biography: the case of V. D. Savarkar', *Postcolonial Studies*, 16 (2013), p. 126.

[20] Bakhle, 'Country first?', p. 152.

[21] Tatya [Savarkar] to Bal, 6 July 1916, in V. D. Savarkar, *An echo from Andamans*, ed. V. V. Kelkar (Bombay, 1924), p. 33.

[22] Vikram Sampath, *Savarkar: echoes from a forgotten past, 1883–1924* (Gurgaon, 2019).

[23] Vinayak Chaturvedi, 'Rethinking knowledge with action: V. D. Savarkar, the Bhagavat Gita, and histories of warfare', *Modern Intellectual History*, 7 (2010), pp. 417–35; Ashis Nandy, 'A disowned father of the nation in India: Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and the demonic and the seductive in Indian nationalism', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 15 (2014), p. 93; Vinayak Chaturvedi, 'Violence as civility: V. D. Savarkar and the Mahatma's assassination', *South Asian History and Culture*, 11 (2020), pp. 241, 243–4; Vinayak Chaturvedi, 'The making of "Veer" Savarkar: methods for writing an intellectual history', South Asian Intellectual History Seminar, 1 Feb. 2021, University of Oxford; Visana, 'Savarkar before Hindutva'; Kapila, *Violent fraternity*.

[24] John Pincince, 'On the verge of Hindutva: V. D. Savarkar, revolutionary, convict, ideologue, c. 1905–1924' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Hawai'i, Honolulu, 2007).

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Savarkar's implicit Islamophobia gives way to an explicitly antagonistic ideology obsessed with Muslims not only as rivals for political sovereignty but also as an indispensable psychological component in the actualization of Hindu general will.

The remainder of this article demonstrates how Savarkar appropriated Hindu theological concepts to erase the shame sanctions associated with transgressing caste norms and substituted the idea of external political humiliation as the antithesis of glory. The end result was to reinvent glory into a collective experience actualizing Hindu general will, which took the form of desirous self-overcoming in the face of Muslim acts of political humiliation, whether real or imagined. I understand political humiliation as the *perception* that one has been intentionally demeaned by an external party in such a way as to lay bare and ridicule one's relative powerlessness.[25] The alleged humiliator may argue that their actions were not intended to humiliate; nevertheless, it is the *feeling* of humiliation from having asymmetries of power arbitrarily flaunted that angers the aggrieved.

II

Sentenced in February 1911, Savarkar was then shuttled between the Yerawada Central Jail in Pune and the Dongri, Byculla, and Thane Jails in Bombay before finally being transported to the Cellular Jail on the Andaman Islands on 4 July. In *MT*, Savarkar sketched where the potential for Hindu unity lay by observing the inmates at these intermediary jails and establishing the parameters under which they might recognize each other as equals in spite of their regional, linguistic, and caste distinctions. He proposed transforming a religion traditionally preoccupied with distinctions of spiritual virtue indexed through bodily purity by encouraging his co-religionists to collectively embrace and demystify bodily and behavioural taboos. Once these self-imposed gradations based on shame and superciliousness were lifted, a unified Hindu interest group might work to negate the forces of alleged external humiliation.

At Byculla and Thane, Savarkar – the upper-caste barrister – was interned with everyday lawbreakers and not political prisoners such as himself. He noted that social barriers between these criminals were unconsciously overcome in moments when prisoners 'overstepped the bounds of decency' and lost themselves in excess in order to distract from their pangs of conscience and cope with the bare life of prison existence.[26] Pointedly referring to their 'diverse tongues', Savarkar notes how those prisoners hailing from Sindh, Gujarat, and the Konkan coast 'scarcely understood' what the other said, much less what they felt. In spite of this, the impulsive and affective act of

[25] Alternative definitions of humiliation centred on human dignity and self-respect can be found in Avishai Margalit, *The decent society* (Cambridge, MA, 1998); Daniel Statman, 'Humiliation, dignity and self-respect', *Philosophical Psychology*, 13 (2000), pp. 523–40; Bhikhu Parekh, 'Logic of humiliation', in Gopal Guru, ed., *Humiliation: claims and context* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 23–40; Christian Neuhäuser, 'Humiliation: the collective dimension', in Paulus Kaufmann et al., eds., *Humiliation, degradation, dehumanization: human dignity violated* (New York, NY, 2011), pp. 21–36.

[26] Savarkar, *MT*, p. 39.

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revelling in 'the obscene' formed 'the common bond between them all' and Savarkar identified this process as generating a 'social union' and even a 'national language'.[27] Admiringly, Savarkar observed that the prison gangs that formed through affective exuberance tacitly developed ritualistic forms of 'solatium' to maintain solidarity. By using tobacco as currency or as a gift they enforced common values and duties that did not require verbalization or conscious consent.[28] This 'outrageous multitude' united by its 'brute instincts and sensual appetites' forged itself into an 'institution' before which even the jail superintendent was forced to 'eat humble pie' and make material concessions.[29]

Once on board the steamer to the Andaman Islands, Savarkar mulled the events witnessed in the mainland jails and questioned his instinctive Brahmin revulsion to inter-caste living, claiming that reason compelled him not to feel shame in sharing social space with fifty others from 'the dirtiest class of the Indian population'. Savarkar castigated himself and his imagined Hindu reader for not realizing that God may place the individual in such a space in order that their 'self-conceit', 'superiority', and 'separateness from the rest' might be overcome.[30] He recommended the strategic adoption of shamelessness in socially mixed spaces as an antidote to Hindu disunity but also regarded it as a shield against external humiliation and cultural domination. For instance, in the Andamans, groups of prisoners were forced to bathe naked, or covered only by a threadbare loin cloth, under the direction of the Muslim prison warden, or *jamadar*. Savarkar claimed that the *jamadars* usually 'delighted' in the humiliation of the other prisoners but they found Savarkar a thoroughly 'shameless' nude bather whom they found difficult to humiliate.[31]

As Savarkar's account develops, it becomes clear that he regards Muslims as the only prison cohort with an instinct for survival through organized political action engendered by collective self-love. In noticing this, he placed great stock in the morally untethered and almost reckless bravery of the collectively self-interested Indian *dacoit* (armed bandit or criminal) as a sort of misunderstood political virtue. Savarkar praised one of the Muslim wardens drawn from the inmates at Thane, a self-confessed *dacoit*, for re-evaluating his attitude towards Savarkar upon learning of the latter's own alleged 'daring and valour', even helping him to smuggle letters out of the prison.[32] Savarkar brags about how he lectured the warden on the ultimate pointlessness of banditry while simultaneously drawing attention to the fact that it was a sense of shared fearlessness and glorious self-aggrandizing violence that engendered this mutual respect.[33] Taken alone, this anecdote might suggest that Savarkar maintained his earlier commitment to a composite Hindu–Muslim politics defined by

[27] Ibid., pp. 39–40.

[28] Ibid., p. 40.

[29] Ibid., pp. 41–2.

[30] Ibid., p. 54.

[31] Ibid., p. 87.

[32] Ibid., p. 23.

[33] Ibid., p. 27.

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mutual recognition through revolutionary violence against the British.[34] This story notwithstanding, his later accounts of Muslim wardens on the Andamans definitively terminated that possibility. In *MT*, Savarkar identified the passionate excess of Muslim politics with praiseworthy courage and glory but one that was motivated by an excessive and innate cruelty when faced with the violation of Muslim social mores. He illustrated this with the example of a Muslim 'super dacoit' from Sindh who used his feared position among the Muslim inmates to curry favour with the prison authorities but also arbitrarily murdered a fellow inmate for being 'too intimate' with his enemy.[35] We are told that another young Muslim man in the same gang murdered his sister in a 'frenzy' when she was discovered in the company of 'moral rakes'. This misdirected 'fierceness' Savarkar attributes, without much reflection, exclusively to Islam. He regarded examples of Muslim 'cruelty' and acts of humiliation as evidence of a narrowly theological preoccupation even as these traits allegedly made Muslims superior practitioners of the politics of survival.[36]

To justify similar Hindu actions in the name of unity, Savarkar developed conceptual sleights of hand to discredit Muslim political assertion through essentialist arguments before constructing a Hindu equivalent legitimated by a new account of Indic political reason. Savarkar opined that Islam was incapable of legitimate political violence because it prioritized a priori theological imperatives that always demanded conversion and humiliation in any and every political context. The possibility of Hindu–Muslim unity and 'fraternity' that Savarkar claimed 'would have been a blessing' to nationalism was turned to 'fanatical' purposes in which the British authorities were politically courted to manipulate both material and theological interests. This manifested as unfair distribution of prison rations, preferential promotion among the wardens, turning a blind eye to conversion, and allowing Muslim inmates to leave their labour gangs to pray five times a day.[37] Savarkar dubbed this 'two-pronged' Muslim domination a 'religio-political offensive' in stark distinction to legitimate Hindu political assertion, his rationale for which follows below.[38]

Returning to the figure of the *dacoit*, Savarkar described this theological excess, claiming that the 'Hindu thief is less harmful to Hindu culture than a Mohamedan thief' because the 'former will only rob' but 'the latter will break the temple he has robbed, he will break the idle in it and will give a shattering blow on the head of a kaffir'.[39] Dubbing the Andamans, and all India, a 'jail masjid', Savarkar accused the colonial authorities of upholding a biased system that treated Hindus as fragmented and showed favouritism to Muslims as a single bloc.[40] Savarkar complained to the jail's superintendent, Mr Barrie, of the 'conversion by coercion and bribery' at the hands of

[34] Visana, 'Savarkar before Hindutva', pp. 19–21.
[35] Savarkar, *MT*, p. 35.
[36] Ibid., p. 36.
[37] Ibid., p. 92.
[38] Savarkar, *SGE*, p. 167.
[39] Savarkar, *MT*, pp. 284–5.
[40] Ibid., p. 278.

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Muslim wardens. When challenged in typically liberal terms as to why Hindus did not begin their own programme of conversions as a response, Savarkar is forced to concede that this was a 'valid charge' and that Hindus had to give up their passive attitude and organize a programme of 're-conversion' called 'shuddhi'.[41]

Savarkar regarded *shuddhi* as a pragmatic riposte to Muslim political designs in the prison. He set aside Hindu theological considerations and readily admitted that proselytizing was a 'game' and that Muslims and Christians openly invited the basest elements into their community whether they were 'a wicked man, a sinner or a drunkard'. Aware of his audience, Savarkar paid lip service to the spiritual commitment to redemption in all religions but quickly returned to sociological arguments about collective glory and self-love through religious categories as a means of 'social cohesion'.[42] *Shuddhi* was not driven by conversion for spiritual ends or a desire to allow the multitudes access to absolute truth but was motivated by the requirement for 'self-preservation' through shared 'love and pride'.[43] Hindus afflicted by 'self-righteousness' turned their noses up at the 'wretched' who had left their faith and in doing so had risked the haemorrhaging of a future Hindu progeny to other communities who would then claim Hindu heroes as their own. Using examples from Hindu antiquity, Savarkar asserted that Valmiki, the author of the epic *Ramayana*, was a criminal sinner turned glorious saint and that Hindus were forsaking such potential by being indifferent to apostasy. He pointed out – in somewhat of a caricature – that Aurangzeb, who was regarded as the most gloriously pro-Islamic Mughal emperor, was the son of a Hindu Rajput queen, yet his monumental deeds were claimed only for the glory of Islam.[44]

To reverse such thinking in the Andaman Jail, Savarkar claims that he recruited a Hindu 'goonda' (a violent criminal for hire), who was schooled in the monotheistic Hindu reformism of the Arya Samaj, to take Hindu boys under his protection, intimidate the Muslim wardens, and subdue the political strength of the Muslims through the principle of 'setting a thief to catch a thief'.[45] More than this, Savarkar believed that it was the inherently sinful traits of the violent criminal that were a boon to political community not those of the morally enlightened. It was the nature of base existence that 'by habit' made 'the goonda' both 'tenacious' and a 'dare-devil'. This 'tenacity and devilry' was a form of misdirected 'courage and will' that the wider Hindu multitude lacked and which Savarkar believed could easily be turned to 'manliness and virtue' if heroism was combined with the appropriate political instruction.[46] As such, passionate excess was intimately bound up with the fellow feeling at the heart of a cohesive political category. Taking the French Revolution as axiomatic, Savarkar acknowledged that the revolutionaries'

[41] Ibid., p. 294.
[42] Ibid., pp. 294–5.
[43] Ibid., p. 286.
[44] Ibid., pp. 284–6.
[45] Ibid., pp. 296–8.
[46] Ibid., p. 166.

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inexperience in government had unleashed a suicidal anarchy but that the traits of passionate exuberance exhibited by the Jacobins, and the 'ecstasy of their joy' when faced with the 'extremes' of life, were equivalent to the common language that enabled the transmutation of Indian prisoners into a political unit.[47] Indeed, Savarkar claimed that the passionate mimesis of organized Hindu gangsterism among the *goonda*'s followers meant that they came to see *shuddhi* not as an act of piety but as a programme of passionate self-preservation such that no other group could 'tempt' or 'hoodwink them'.[48]

Savarkar maintained that *shuddhi* was only necessary because Hinduism's own social mores and notions of spiritual purity connived with the 'fanatical' theological norms of Muslims to drive millions of low-caste converts to Islam. Since modern political categories depended on a visceral sense of common purpose, Savarkar's justification for 're-conversion' was about relative social strength both demographically and psychologically through the raw fellow feeling that underlay general will. Savarkar insisted that *shuddhi* was a reconfiguration of the Hindu–Muslim political relationship on the basis of 'right knowledge and right understanding'. In saying so, Savarkar sought to portray Hindus as perspectivist in their political reasoning – always tied together by a desirous and shameless will, but one that was adaptable to the changing requirements of communal self-preservation, whereas Muslims were portrayed as capable of little more than conversion for the sake of humiliating non-Muslims in all circumstances.[49]

Savarkar would turn to the Bhagavat Gita to legitimate Hindu schemes for conversion and domination of Muslims. While Hindu politics could enact collective desire at an appropriate historical juncture, he would insist that Muslim 'religio-political' norms were eternally static. The dilemma faced by the king in the Gita, Arjuna, wherein he is faced with the choice of kin-slaying as the only way to dutifully defend his kingdom at the Battle of Kurukshetra, was central to Savarkar's account of Hindu politics. Like Mohandas Gandhi, Savarkar viewed the Gita as a philosophical rather than a religious document – one that considered legitimate action for all without making a distinction between religion and non-religion. For Gandhi, the Gita's conversation between the god Krishna and Arjuna was instructive for inculcating an individual and pluralist ethics based on sacrifice and striving without attachment to the fruits of one's action.[50] Others, like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, read the Gita as more than a treatise on positive renunciation; instead, he regarded Krishna's advice as undergirding a de-historicized political subjectivity achievable only through violent action against a fraternal enemy.[51] While the importance of the Gita to Tilak was squarely within the realm of the temporal, Aurobindo Ghose regarded the Battle of Kurukshetra as an arena in which all temporal social values broke

[47] Ibid., p. 38.

[48] Ibid., pp. 304–6.

[49] Ibid., p. 236.

[50] Eijiro Hazama, 'The paradox of Gandhian secularism: the metaphysical implication behind Gandhi's "individualization of religion"', *Modern Asian Studies*, 51 (2017), pp. 1394–438; Faisal Devji, 'Morality in the shadow of politics', *Modern Intellectual History*, 7 (2010), pp. 373–90.

[51] Shruti Kapila, 'A history of violence', *Modern Intellectual History*, 7 (2010), pp. 437–57.

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down. As Arjuna is faced with his dilemma, Aurobindo recommends the abandonment of caste duty entirely so that man can transcend such considerations and live purely within the divine.[52]

Savarkar's interpretation of the Gita resiles from any deontological moral code or philosophy; rather, he offers a perspectivist conception of social and political truth where the qualities of social unity and model leadership varied with the shifting sands of history and the subjective demands that time and place enforced on different individuals and communities. It was Savarkar's idiosyncratic account of Hindu civilization's perspectivist political reason that allowed him to justify unrestrained passion and shamelessness in his particular epoch. For instance, Chaturvedi shows that Savarkar's Gita was a justification for warfare by ignoring ethics in the pursuit of political Hinduism. Savarkar explained this by claiming that Muslim and British invaders violated the ethics of war and consequently Hindus were entitled to recover their pride and liberty at any cost.[53] Yet warfare was only one part of Savarkar's engagement with the Gita. He also turned to the text's discussion of the tripartite *gunas* (modes or qualities) that constituted the personality of each individual: *sattva* (gentleness), *rajas* (passion), and *tamas* (docility). These qualities were present in different proportions in each individual and varied according to their context. Savarkar made no judgement on which quality was more virtuous, unlike Gandhi who favoured *sattvic* traits.[54] Savarkar suggests that the true message of the Gita, unlike its Islamic counterparts, was that totalizing religious injunctions to virtue and absolute truth are irrelevant when the qualities of people vary so much. Only a reasoned but 'not absolute' attitude to cultural pluralism would recapture the Gita's insistence on the 'fine distinction between man and man'.[55] Collectively, the *gunas* made up the essence of *prakriti* (the germinal source of nature) and their fluidity and contradictions made any eternal logic of nature a mystery. Returning to basic human impulses and bodily processes, Savarkar noted that Patanjali's classical *Yoga Sutras* had reflected on the contradiction in the repulsiveness of one's own body while finding identical features in another attractive. Such variance in human feeling was 'beyond human intelligence to grasp'.[56] Savarkar's final interpretation of *prakriti* was such that if 'a man wants to live in this world', he required an historically reflexive 'three-edged weapon' that did not treat the *gunas* and existence as a search for absolute truth and definitive action. One could 'successfully face these three-fold qualities' in their various combinations only if the 'weapon' was oriented towards a particular temporal goal and was adaptable in its pursuit.[57] If Savarkar's diagnosis was that Hindu political subjectivity

[52] Andrew Sartori, 'The transfiguration of duty in Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita*', *Modern Intellectual History*, 7 (2010), pp. 319–34.

[53] Chaturvedi, 'Rethinking knowledge with action', p. 433.

[54] M. K. Gandhi, *The Bhagavad Gita according to Gandhi*, trans. John Strohmeier (Berkeley, CA, 2010), pp. 37, 165–8.

[55] Savarkar, *SGE*, p. 168.

[56] Savarkar, *MT*, pp. 56, 123, 155.

[57] Savarkar, *SGE*, p. 168.

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was only possible through the universal pursuit of glory-seeking, then clearly the *guna* the Hindus needed to cultivate urgently was *rajas* – or passion.

III

Before his incarceration, Savarkar had already developed a unique insight on Indian history, seeking to selectively interpret the past in order to generate a new political consciousness in the present.[58] He was inspired by the early modern western Indian chronicles, the *bakhars*, that recounted the exploits of the Hindu king Shivaji and other leaders of the Maratha Empire. The *bakhars* combined a rationalistic empiricism, sociological commentary, and linear causality that offered a transposable analysis to future contexts while retaining the heroic will of its Maratha protagonists. Savarkar used this style to model his own revolutionary history on the origins of a composite Indian peoplehood in his 1909 rendering of the Indian 'Mutiny', *The Indian war of independence*.[59] Even as Savarkar turned to Hindu nationalism, this western Indian historiography remained a discernible influence on his historical prose from 1923. However, poetry also became an important vehicle for establishing how the *rajasaic* aspect of the *gunas* might be channelled to nudge Hindus into a new political consciousness. In a Nietzschean gesture, Savarkar collapsed philosophy and poetry into one another in an effort to strip away the ascetic rationalism that bifurcates the world into definitive truth and falsehood; instead, he sought to rediscover the life-affirming and dynamic relationship between beauty and truth.[60] It was only through the nuance of poetry that Savarkar felt he could best express the conflicting human impulses represented by the *gunas* and *prakriti*.[61] Interpreting the latter through the natural sciences and Vedantic philosophy, Savarkar mused upon the tensions between the scientific Epicureanism of his age and Hindu philosophy's preoccupation with self-overcoming through the positive renunciation of the material world. Juxtaposed to both of these was the lingering temptation of passionate and desirous collective action that Savarkar encountered in 'historical science' and it was in reading this that 'the will to power asserted itself with tremendous impact'. Only in composing poetry in a 'highly ornate and emotional style' did Savarkar feel he could resolve these tensions into a template of political action.[62] Poetic rather than rational truth

[58] For Savarkar's pre-Hindutva use of history, see Visana, 'Savarkar before Hindutva'; for Savarkar's use of history as a way into a specifically Hindu political consciousness, see Vinayak Chaturvedi, *Hindutva and violence: V. D. Savarkar and the politics of history* (New York, NY, 2022).

[59] For an overview of the *bakhar* genre, see Sumit Guha, *History and collective memory in South Asia, 1200–2000* (Seattle, WA, 2019), pp. 83–118; Visana, 'Savarkar before Hindutva', pp. 1112–14.

[60] The Andaman prison library contained the works of Nietzsche, see Savarkar, *MT*, p. 270; for Nietzsche's opinion on traditional philosophers, see Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Graham Parkes (Oxford, 2005), pp. 100–19.

[61] Janaki Bakhle has stressed the need to examine Savarkar's vernacular literary output if we are truly committed to a global approach to his ideas, see Janaki Bakhle, 'Putting global intellectual history in its place', in Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori, eds., *Global intellectual history* (New York, NY, 2013), pp. 228–53.

[62] Savarkar, *SGE*, p. 403.

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communicated 'the feeling of doubtless and deepest satisfaction above the conflicting suggestions of the senses, the emotions and the reasoning faculty of man'.[63]

Savarkar penned thousands of lines of poetry on the walls of his Andaman cell. He claimed that these verses were committed to heart by a devoted fellow inmate who, upon his release, relayed them to Savarkar's younger brother in Bombay who had the 882-verse epic published in 1921 under the pseudonym, Vijanavasi (exiled).[64] Titled *Kamala*, the poem is a romantic tragedy that lyricizes the interactions between the four protagonists, Kamala, her husband Mukund (also a word for a flower bud and another name for young Krishna), his friend Mukul (another word for a flower bud and also meaning 'liberated'), and Mukul's fiancée Premala. The poem compares two types of *rajasaic* passion: the erotic and the vengeful.[65] The erotic is concerned with the necessary sexual and kinship relations required to reproduce the race and is compared with the equally carnal desire for revenge in the poem's wider context, that of the Battle of Panipat, where politics is framed narrowly as a Hindu–Muslim rivalry, with the Hindu Marathas defeated in 1761.[66] Kamala is depicted in gendered terms and is trapped by the feminine biological imperative to bear children as she wanders around a garden of flowers, basking in their 'colours of love'. Savarkar adds to this erotic metaphor by noting the significance of 'rebirth' through flowers and their seeds.[67] The male characters are presented with the opportunity to contextually navigate their desires using the *gunas*. Mukhund has taken a vow of celibacy until Mukul has married but throughout the poem Mukul is the mouthpiece of biological determinism, urging Mukhund to attend to his husbandly duties and carnal desires in the name of Hindu reproduction.[68] Yet this encouragement is not born of Hindu tradition; in fact, so powerful is the universal sexual impulse that Savarkar even hints that Mukul is seeking to satisfy Kamala in the garden of flowers himself. The importance of sexual action is not simply that it reproduces the group but that it also propagates the heroes through which Hindu glory is made possible. Savarkar spells this out by listing heroic Hindu warrior-kings who fought campaigns against Muslim rulers and were born to a particular epoch in order to fulfil their glorious destiny. He even commends depictions of Hindu gods and goddesses having sexual intercourse because every Hindu parental union in sex is to be praised irrespective of marriage or the fetters of religious injunction.[69] Echoing his analogy between the common vulgarity of prisoners and political unity, Savarkar's licence allows common lust to

[63] Savarkar, *MT*, pp. 273–4.

[64] Savarkar, *EH*, p. ii.

[65] For an alternative perspective on Hindu nationalism's use of gender and violence to frame sovereignty, see Luna Sabastian, 'Women, violence, sovereignty: "rakshasa" marriage by capture in modern Indian political thought', *Modern Intellectual History* (online pre-print, 2021), 1–26.

[66] I am indebted to Arun Deshpande for the English translation of Kamala; the Marathi text can be found in V. D. Savarkar, *Samagra Sāvarakara*, VII (Bombay, 1993).

[67] Ibid., verses 111–42, 871–2.

[68] Ibid., verses 506–45.

[69] Ibid., verses 791–805.

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cut across social barriers and categorically redefine Hindu-ness from passive and endogamous castes into a category that was the product of human desire and will.[70] Sex was itself immanently glorious because, in a mutually reinforcing cycle, such passion literally reproduced the community's heroic will and thereby its unity in glory, tempering Hindus against potential humiliation and the neutering of their freedom to glory.

With the prospect of war, however, Savarkar also used the poem to explore when it would be appropriate for carnal desire – and so heroic potential – to be transmuted into martial glory. He signalled the adaptability and reflexivity of the *gunas* when, in the poem, there is a sudden and emphatic incursion into the bedroom at the point of Mukhund and Kamala's orgasm. Mukul the soldier bursts in determined to answer the spectral call to arms of the deceased Shivaji and avenge himself upon the Muslim armies. At this moment, Mukhund, in line with Savarkar's perspectivist reading of the Gita, adapts his desires to the situation and calculates which action best promoted social interests. He flatly tells Mukul that he can no longer promise to bed Kamala and stay by her side when the enemies of *Hindutva* were poised to destroy and humiliate them; asking rhetorically whether he and Mukul were not identical all along, and that one need not make absolute choices between sex and martial sacrifice. As Mukul had shown in the garden, one could and should pursue lust and a soldier's duty with equal vigour in order to vouchsafe the sovereign Hindu interest that was consummated through the collective psychological need for self-love through glory.[71] Savarkar's understanding of *guna*-mediated *prakriti* dispenses with any conception of absolute truth; sidestepping theology, he focused on shifting biological and psychological needs, which had to be navigated successfully in order to ensure the future glory, cohesion, and self-preservation of Hindus as an undifferentiated political category. In this perspectivist theory of self-overcoming, Hindu political sovereignty was the result of a contextually sensitive and historically sequenced will to power.

IV

In the years leading up to Savarkar's release in 1937, Indian anti-colonial politics forced him to adapt his prison philosophy to changed circumstances. Hindu–Muslim political divisions had become institutionalized and the Indian National Congress's Gandhian strategy seemed to offer no prospect of gloriously trumping Muslim political aspiration. The 1932 Communal Award and the 1935 Government of India Act deepened the colonial state's capacity to arbitrate between the separate electorates, which had been granted to discrete religious communities, by bifurcating Hindus into 'the forwards castes' and the 'depressed classes' (the scheduled castes). This was a fillip to the prospect of perpetual electoral competition in which organizations like the

[70] Similar injunctions against a static tradition can be read in other poems by Savarkar such as 'Bedi' or 'Shackles'.

[71] Savarkar, *Samagra Sāvarakara*, VII, verses 865–74.

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Muslim League demanded ever greater recognition of their demographic and cultural weight while the Hindus were doomed to eternal fragmentation. Savarkar was also given pause by the fantastical prospect of restored Islamic sovereignty during the 1921 Malabar Rebellion as well as Gandhi's attempt to spiritualize communal relations by allying with the pan-Islamic Khilafat Movement, when the Mahatma identified *jihad* as an equivalent of the desireless action found in Hindu *dharma*.[72] As he took up the leadership of the Hindu Mahasabha in 1937, Savarkar's political thought balked at Gandhi's philosophy and its negation of desire in the pursuit of self-sacrifice.[73]

In the Mahasabha, *Hindutva* was adopted as a popular definition of Hindu national selfhood for a number of different reasons, all of which engaged selectively with Savarkar's thought. For B. S. Moonje and M. R. Jayakar, the primary goal was Hindu militarization to check and contain Muslim political assertion such that Muslims had to 'so comport themselves that [they] may soon come to recognize that it does no longer pay them to attack [Hindus] wantonly'.[74] What Savarkar's definition of Hindu politics reinforced was, in Moonje's words, that 'victory alone at any cost and by any means counts, irrespective of Truth or general conception of Sin'.[75] However, glory as a prerequisite for rekindling self-love seemed to fade from Moonje and Jayakar's iteration of *Hindutva*. They took an integrative Hindu civilization as an historical given but lacking was military organization. The existing cultural distinctiveness of Hindus and their peaceful *sattavic* virtues were to be applauded but in the spectre of civil war these values would need a 'well and scientifically cultivated might to punish those who dare disturb…non-violence'.[76] Jayakar and Moonje may have regarded the Congress–Khilafat alliance as an 'artificial unity' but they had little to add beyond the clamour for military organization and greater capacity for self-defence.[77]

A more layered reading was undertaken by Hindu idealists like Lala Lajpat Rai and Mohan Madan Malaviya (the founder of the Hindu Mahasabha), and Swami Shraddhanand (a leader of the *shuddhi* movement in northern India). These individuals certainly recognized the need for Hindu military organization but they also acknowledged a wider programme of 'rekindling the… glory' of Hindu civilization through renewed self-love and the recognition this would force upon other communities through 'respect'.[78] Unlike

[72] V. D. Savarkar, *Hindu rashtra darshan: a collection of the presidential speeches delivered from the Hindu Mahasabha platform* (Bombay, 1949), p. 27; Bakhle, 'Country first?', p. 152; Faisal Devji, *The impossible Indian: Gandhi and the temptation of violence* (Cambridge, MA, 2012), pp. 75–83.

[73] Ian Copland, 'Crucibles of *Hindutva*: V. D. Savarkar, the Hindu Mahasabha, and the Indian princely states', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 25 (2002), p. 216.

[74] B. S. Moonje, 'The Hindu Mahasabha movement', *Hindu Outlook*, 9 Mar. 1938.

[75] Moonje's speech at the First Andrha Swarajist Conference, 24 Aug. 1935, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Moonje papers, subject files no. 44.

[76] Moonje to unknown, 24 May 1937, Moonje papers, subject files no. 50.

[77] M. R. Jayakar, *The story of my life, 1922–1925*, II (Bombay, 1959), pp. 130, 634; Moonje to Jayakar, 26 July 1929, National Archives of India, New Delhi, Jayakar papers, file 437.

[78] *Leader*, 2 Apr. 1923; cited in G. R. Thursby, *Hindu–Muslim relations in British India: a study of controversy, conflict and communal movements in northern India, 1923–1928* (Leiden, 1975), p. 164; for a

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Savarkar, Shraddhanand was a stalwart supporter of Gandhi and practised a spiritualized politics. He interpreted the Gita's Battle of Kurukshetra as a real and sinful event that ushered in the *Kali Yuga* – an age of 'mutual jealousies' and 'pride' after which Hindu cohesion was forever undermined. However, Shraddhanand did propose that Hindu self-respect could be rekindled through a programme of Muslim reconversion that ignored caste distinctions and actively encouraged the masses to 'return' to Hinduism.[79] The construction of Hindu temples capable of accommodating 5,000 worshippers from every caste in every major town would inculcate the same fellow feeling nurtured by the Islamic masjid.[80] Malaviya and Lajpat Rai also considered Savarkar's text the most important contribution to Hindu ideology because it offered a clear definition of a liberated, glorious, and ascriptive Hindu national Being. Shraddhanand even considered the writing of *EH* as a glorious step forward in the Hindu reawakening that matched the 'Vaidic [sic] dawns' that had inspired earlier Hindu sages.[81] While in Lajpat Rai's words, Hindu glory 'did not contemplate the exclusion of anyone who is prepared to sail under the Hindu flag and takes the credit or discredit that attaches hitherto'.[82]

This affective paradigm of Hindu Being posited by the idealists captured much of what Savarkar wished to disseminate through his writing. It was not enough to achieve security and political power through strength of arms; rather, one had to make a positive account of oneself as a 'social unit' through pride, glory, and self-respect in such a way that compelled inter-communal recognition because there could not 'be an honourable unity between a slave and his master'.[83] Savarkar, perhaps disingenuously, reassured Muslims in his 1925 work, *HPP*, that it was reasonable that they had their own heroic histories around which Islamic striving developed, just as it was reasonable that Hindu histories should position men of action like Shivaji against Muslim foes to kindle their own respective communal glory.[84] If in these stories the Hindu heroes were ultimately defeated, as they were at the Battle of Panipat, the record of glorious collective striving made the future rebirth of Hindu political identity possible.[85] And though, as discussed, carnal desire was among the more powerful tools used to bring about social unity, individual sexual competition and lust risked unsettling the social boundaries one was trying to maintain. As such, Savarkar admitted that eventually all humanity

granular reading of Lajpat Rai's earlier ideas on honour, respect, and trusteeship, and how these were extended to the Muslim community before 1923, see Vanya Vaidehi Bhargav, 'A Hindu champion of pan-Islamism: Lajpat Rai and the Khilafat Movement', *Journal of Asian Studies*, FirstView (2022), pp. 1–17.

[79] Swami Shraddhanand, *Hindu sangathan: saviour of the dying race* (New Delhi, 1926), pp. 85–9.

[80] Ibid., p. 140. For more on Swami Shraddanand's politics, see Neeti Nair, *Changing homelands: Hindu politics and the Partition of India* (Cambridge, MA, 2011), chs. 2–3.

[81] Savarkar, *EH*, p. vii.

[82] Cited in Sobhag Mathur, *Hindu revivalism and the Indian national movement: a documentary study of the ideals and policies of the Hindu Mahasabha, 1939–1945* (Jodhpur, 1996), p. 1.

[83] Savarkar, *HPP*, p. 21.

[84] Ibid., pp. 17–21.

[85] Ibid., pp. 40, 110.

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would have to be considered a single community.[86] At a more rudimentary stage of forming social bonds between fragmented peoples in India, however, passion would have to generate the largest social unity possible.[87] Why human desire had to be corralled into a Hindu political formation at this stage was justified as historically contingent. Certain social configurations maximized the potential will to power of a multitude at a particular historical moment. In twentieth-century India, Savarkar pointed to Hindu religious categories as the most appropriate sociological scaffolding upon which a large Indian social unity could be constructed.[88] Just as the *gunas* were interpreted as the means to achieve this unity, their biological and historically perspectivist rendering meant that the final goal of Hindu political identity was not a statically theocratic state. Savarkar endorsed non-belief and the creation of a variety of imagined polities so long as Hindus retained their general will and political unity.[89] This was epitomized by Shivaji who carved his Maratha empire out from under Mughal 'tyranny' but who never forced Hinduism upon his subjects. Savarkar refers to Shivaji by the German epithet for king – König (but he transliterates it to Koning) – and implies that the linguistic root of this term means 'the able man'.[90] Although this is not the correct etymology, Savarkar's error emphasizes the depth of his preoccupation with an embodied Hindu sovereignty. It was heroic supermen who expressed majoritarian glory by identifying and pursuing communal desire at any cost.[91]

As questions of Indian federation considered the permanent separation of Indian communities along majoritarian lines from the late 1930s, Savarkar's thinking became increasingly hard line. The Muslim League's separatism risked permanently subdividing both communities into smaller political units either within a federation or within two nation-states. Savarkar feared irreversible Hindu fragmentation since vestigial minorities from both religious groups would be left in various Hindu- or Muslim-dominated federal regions or in two new sovereign states. Speaking to the Hindu Mahasabha in Ahmedabad in 1937, Savarkar imputed this strategy to Islam's theological rigidity, which caused it to 'stand in the way of larger associations and aggregates of mankind'. Under such circumstances, this species of 'nationalism or communalism' became 'condemnable from the human point of view' and constituted Savarkar's 'acid test' for 'distinguishing a justifiable nationalism or communalism from an unjust and harmful one'.[92] Savarkar's politics from the 1930s would talk much more explicitly of forcing Muslims into dominated minority status in a Hindu state. His earlier composite account of Hindu–Muslim revolution in *The Indian war of independence* (1909) was possible because Hindus had reclaimed their pride through Shivaji's campaigns against the

[86] Tatya [Savarkar] to Bal, 6 July 1920, in Savarkar, *An echo from Andamans*, p. 87.
[87] Savarkar, *EH*, pp. 89–90, 130.
[88] Ibid., p. 127; Savarkar, *Hindu rashtra darshan*, p. 14.
[89] Ibid., pp. 114–15; Savarkar, *HPP*, pp. 203, 210; Savarkar, 'India's foreign policy', read at a meeting of the Hindu Mahasabha in Pune, 19 Nov. 1938, Jayakar papers, file 65.
[90] Savarkar, *HPP*, p. 209.
[91] Savarkar, *EH*, p. 101.
[92] Savarkar, *Hindu rashtra darshan*, pp. 13–14.

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Mughals.[93] Savarkar totally redefined the story of the 1857 rebellion with Hindus fighting a war of liberation from both the British and perfidious Muslim collaborators. Whereas in 1909 he hoped for a resurgence of vestigial revolutionary will from 1857 to overthrow the British and create a 'United States of India', by the 1938 session of the Hindu Mahasabha in Nagpur, he spoke of the rebellion as a largely Hindu-led affair analogous to the rise of Shivaji's so-called 'Hindu empire'.[94] When *SGE* was completed in 1963, Savarkar dreamt of Hindu imperialism avenging invasions from beyond the Khyber Pass by gloriously subjugating Afghanistan.[95] In his late thought, then, Savarkar endorsed an overweening imperial glory to counter Partition's externalization of the Muslim League's resolutely 'religio-political' ambition. Every South Asian Muslim was transformed into an 'everlasting enemy' because there were now 'small' Pakistans 'in every town' that risked perpetually undermining Hindu political sovereignty through 'the strength of their power'.[96] Even if Indian Muslims remained a numerical minority, Savarkar accused them of not accepting political minorityhood in the manner of the Parsis or Anglo-Indians and of retaining the desire and means to dominate and humiliate with external assistance.

The *gunas* remained central to navigating this increasingly polarized environment. Actualizing a Hindu political category relied on glory but was now far more open about the complete subordination of Muslims and their relegation to a depoliticized minority. Savarkar had always viewed the Gandhian renovation of the Jain concept of *ahimsa* (non-violence) as an absolutist perversion of the Vedic flexibility imbued in the *gunas*. After independence, Savarkar maintained his preference for *rajasaic* passion over Gandhian *sattva* but now additionally exhorted Hindus to supercharge the former into 'enraged intolerance'.[97] To be sure, it was still a vital pre-requisite for Hindus to overcome their supposed humiliation and Savarkar continued to critique those like the Dalit leader, B. R. Ambedkar, who characterized Hindu history as a chain of 'continuous defeat' in the fight for 'survival' of which every Hindu 'will feel ashamed'.[98] *Hindutva* was to move beyond humiliation and internalized shame by exceeding even the vengeful glory of *Kamala* and extracting an affective surplus through conversion, violence, and sexual warfare on Muslims. Drawing on the works of the Gujarati Brahmin and former member of the Indian National Congress, K. M. Munshi, Savarkar positions the reconstruction of Hindu temples pillaged by Muslim invaders as a key *Hindutva* platform. Munshi had written highly stylized histories of India and his native Gujarat, which embellished classical and medieval accounts of universal Hindu kingship and victories over Arabs, Persians, and Afghans between the eighth and

[93] Visana, 'Savarkar before Hindutva', pp. 21–3.

[94] [Savarkar], *The Indian war of independence*, p. 234; Savarkar, *Hindu rashtra darshan*, pp. 40–4.

[95] Savarkar, *SGE*, p. 132.

[96] Savarkar, *Hindu rashtra darshan*, p. 36; Savarkar, *SGE*, pp. 471–5; confidential report for week ending 26 Apr. 1946, Baroda Records Office, Vadodara, confidential documents bundle 6, file 140, p. 294.

[97] Savarkar, *SGE*, pp. 139, 158.

[98] Savarkar is quoting from Ambedkar's *Annihilation of caste* (1936) in Savarkar, *SGE*, p. 131.

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thirteenth centuries. Some of these dynasties had also rebuilt temples destroyed by Muslim invaders and it was in this spirit that Munshi campaigned to have the Somnath temple – looted by Mahmud of Gazni and Alauddin Khalji – resurrected in 1950–1.[99] However, Savarkar's engagement with Munshi's programme did not merely echo Swami Shraddhanand's suggestion that temples would facilitate inter-caste fellow feeling; instead, he called for enraged acts of humiliation against mosques as a way of eradicating any Muslim claim to glory and to buttress the affective unity of Hindu general will. Savarkar understood the wiping out of 'existence all the masjids without exception' as a sort of political catharsis that would restore *Hindutva* 'to its original glory' by liquidating all symbols of perceived 'religio-political' humiliation.[100]

Savarkar's conceptualization of carnal desire and sex also intensified from the examples in his poetry. *Kamala* had framed the tension between sexual and martial duty (as a form of civic virtue through communal glory-seeking) not dissimilarly from Hegel's identification of the need to resolve the tension between family values and civic duty in Greek tragedy, like Sophocles' *Antigone*. After 1925, however, Savarkar weaponized sex into an increasingly violent *rajasaic* action. As with temple politics, sex became a tool for dominating Muslims through 'enraged intolerance' and relegating them to a minority category. Luna Sabastian has rightly noted that this logic of gendered communal violence had little to do with communal purity and honour given the fact that miscegenation risked 'polluting' both the perpetrator and the victim.[101] Sabastian observes that abduction, rape, and forced marriage were designed to break the moral and sovereign order of the enemy's community, with Savarkar exhorting Hindus to emulate Quranic interpretations that justified the taking of women as war captives and concubines. The Hindu majority thus became sovereign by transforming themselves into their other.[102]

Savarkar also recommended the abduction, rape, and forced conversion of Muslim women because he regarded Muslims as religiously bound to convert and marry Hindu women *en masse* in order to increase the glory of Islam in South Asia.[103] By contrast, Hindu religious duty was typified by Brahmanical shame injunctions against impurity and, in Savarkar's estimation, this promoted chivalry in war time by encouraging Hindu soldiers to not violate

[99] In ch. 6 of *SGE*, Savarkar cites K. M. Munshi's *Imperial Gurjaras* (Bombay, 1944) and *The glory that was Gurjara Desa, 550–1300* (Bombay, 1957).

[100] Ibid., pp. 170–1.

[101] For a voluminous literature on gendered violence, caste, and social pollution in India, see Purushottam Agarwal, 'Surat, Savarkar and Draupadi: legitimising rape as a political weapon', in Tanika Sarkar and Urvashi Butalia, eds., *Women and the Hindu right: a collection of essays* (New Delhi, 1995), p. 38; Tanika Sarkar, 'Semiotics of terror: Muslim women and children in Hindu rashtra', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 37 (2002); Uma Chakravarti, *Gendering caste through a feminist lens* (Calcutta, 2003), pp. 26–33; Megha Kumar, *Communalism and sexual violence in India: the politics of ethnicity, gender and conflict* (London, 2016).

[102] Sabastian, 'Women, violence, sovereignty: "rakshasa" marriage by capture in modern Indian political thought', pp. 4–5.

[103] Savarkar, *SGE*, pp. 175–6.

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non-Hindu women, allowing them (and potential Hindu perpetrators of sexual violence) to return to their communities without the taint of miscegenation. In Savarkar's view, socially traditional and doctrinaire Muslim politics contrasted sharply with its perspectivist Hindu counterpart, with his only lament being that most Hindus of his day were in 'utter disregard of the proper place, time or person' when contemplating their 'virtue' and had 'fell as miserable victims' as a result.[104] Savarkar's modelling of the abduction and rape of 'enemy' women on the epic *Ramayana*'s demon-king, Ravan, encouraged Hindus to emulate 'shameless' Muslim practices driven by 'religio-political aggression' and 'sensuality'.[105] Savarkar deems Ravan's enemies, the chivalrous gods Ram and Laxman, worthy of imitation because their virtue was justly adapted to the context in which they were guarding their sovereignty. During war, when their womenfolk were abducted and taken to the Asur kingdom they responded by meting out 'military and political defeat' but also realized the necessity of 'social revenge' by killing the 'she-demons' of the enemy and rescuing their own 'polluted' women.[106] Hindu glory now subsisted on the absolute prevention of the future glory of the enemy by attacking their reproductive means and through this their capacity for producing the glorious heroes that embodied their collective will. These 'special weapons for special occasions' were justified until Muslims had 'dwindled into a negligible minority'.[107] In this perspectivist world-view, the *gunas* could certainly nurture 'religious tolerance' when appropriate but Savarkar decided that such liberality should only be permitted when the perennially 'tiger-faced' Muslim was no longer capable of enhancing 'the glory and scope of their own religion'.[108]

V

In the end, Muslims were to be retained as a dominated minority within the borders of a Hindu state because glory and humiliation – which is to say, the conceptual conditions of possibility for *Hindutva* – were dyadic and relational.[109] Departing profoundly from European analogues, Savarkarite glory consciously circumvented conceptions of public virtue restrained by prevailing social norms and posited instead a process of social dis-embedding through shamelessness. Hindu general will was then constituted by emphasizing the integrative power of unmitigated collective desire indexed through *rajasaic* acts of violence, rape, and iconoclasm intended to glory in the humiliation of an alleged former humiliator.

On the eve of independence, Ambedkar astutely noted the curious destination that Savarkar's thought had arrived at, asking why 'Mr. Savarkar, after sowing the seed of enmity between the Hindu nation and Muslim nation

[104] Ibid., p. 174.
[105] Ibid., pp. 175, 189.
[106] Ibid., pp. 182–3.
[107] Ibid., pp. 180–1, 189.
[108] Ibid., p. 186.
[109] Savarkar, *EH*, p. 90.

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should want that they should live under one constitution and occupy one country.'[110] Savarkar would justify this in the language of Hindu imperialism, citing the Catholic empire of Austria-Hungary and the Islamic empire of Ottoman Turkey as political models.[111] In both of these polities, the glory of the majority depended, in Savarkar's estimation, upon their dominance over a congeries of politically subordinated minorities. Even if a 'fanatical' Islam stood in the way of composite social aggregations, the type of Hindu politics Savarkar imagined rejoiced at the continued presence of an 'open enemy' that could be the object of Hindu glory and will to power through repeated acts of humiliation.[112] One cannot escape the conclusion that this article's account of the political emotion and historical perspectivism at the core of *Hindutva* offers some insight into how Hindu nationalist lynch-mobs in recent years could rationalize their violent acts of humiliation with the claim that Muslims 'had no compulsion about killing people, while a Hindu would pause before killing and ask himself why he was doing it'.[113]

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[110] B. R. Ambedkar, *Pakistan or Partition of India* (Bombay, 1945), pp. 133–4.
[111] Ibid., pp. 134–5.
[112] Savarkar, *Hindu rashtra darshan*, p. 19.
[113] Mehta, *Maximum city*, p. 47.

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