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ARTICLE

Savarkar before Hindutva: Sovereignty, Republicanism, and Populism in India, *c.*1900–1920

Vikram Visana*

Department of History, English, Linguistics and Music, University of Huddersfield
*Corresponding author. E-mail: V.Visana@hud.ac.uk

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar was the theorizer of Hindutva (1923)—the project to radically reconfigure India as a Hindu majoritarian state. Assessments of Savarkar's earlier The Indian War of Independence *(1909), a history of the 1857 Indian "Mutiny," have generally subsumed this tract into the logic of Hindutva. This article offers a reassessment of* The Indian War of Independence *and situates it within the political and intellectual context of* fin de siècle *western India. I suggest that this history of Indian rebellion propagated a novel iteration of Indian popular sovereignty predicated on Hindu–Muslim unity. I read Savarkar as adapting the ideas of Giuseppe Mazzini and Johann Kaspar Bluntschli to challenge what he regarded as the fissiparous logic of late colonial liberalism. Finally, this article argues that Savarkar's account of the mutual constitution of general will and the personalism of sovereignty must be read as a previously unacknowledged instance of Indian populism.*

> The preamble to the Constitution of India says that "We the people of India … adopt, enact and give unto ourselves this Constitution." Everyone knows that historically this is not a fact. The Constitution was framed by an assembly which was elected indirectly on a limited franchise and the assembly did not represent the vast majority of the people of the country. At best it could represent only 28.5 per cent of the adult population of the provinces, let alone the population of the Native States. And who would dare maintain that they alone constituted [the] "people" of the country at the time of the framing of the Constitution?[1]

I. India and the problem of sovereignty

In 1973, the Indian Supreme Court justice K. K. Mathew observed that the Indian Parliament was a "minor and lesser" sovereign, authorized by the fiction of the Indian Constitution, to institutionalize political "command." Mathew's judgment, quoted in the epigraph, reflected the underdetermined nature of popular will in

[1]*Kesavananda Bharati Sripadagalvaru and Others* v. *State of Kerala and Another*, AIR 1973 SC 1461, para. 1665, cited in Moiz Tundawala, "In the Shadow of *Swaraj*: Constituent Power and the Indian Political" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, 2018).

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postcolonial India. In his view, the people "exhaust[ed]" themselves in transferring authority to a "lesser sovereign, almost coextensive in power with itself," adding that "the real sovereign, the hundred per cent sovereign—the people—can come into existence … only by revolution."[2] This opinion paralleled the Jacobin distinction between constitutional and revolutionary popular sovereignty. According to Robespierre, constitutional sovereignty protected the established republic by policing transgressions of *imperium* and *dominium* (public and private power). Revolutionary sovereignty, however, located and named the general will of the people *ex nihilo* and vigilantly guarded it from internal dissolution. Constitutionalism's legal–institutional framework, preoccupied as it was with the appropriate exercise of power, was regarded as inadequate to the task of naming and preserving the original sovereign will.[3] This article explores the political thought of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883–1966) during the first decade of the twentieth century as one of the first attempts to address this challenge in colonial India.[4]

Before Mohandas Gandhi's rise to prominence, late nineteenth-century critics of empire aimed at limiting British sovereign power rather than overthrowing it entirely. Arguments for greater Indian representation were geared towards efficiency in public policy and economic sovereignty as a panacea to the traditionalism of late colonial liberalism.[5] This reformist agenda was accompanied by more impatient voices invoking an English rights-based theory of political privileges. For example, the anonymously authored 1895 Constitution of India Bill drew its historical and legal precedent from the traditional rights of natural-born Englishmen. Unlike America, India was not an English settler colony, and rupture with the British Crown would mean that these political rights, so intimately associated with English Whiggism, would ring hollow.[6]

By the turn of the century ideas of complete rupture with Britain were taking shape. Lord Curzon's plan to partition Bengal along communal lines in 1905 had unleashed a wave of mass protest through economic boycott and the mobilization of religious and cultural symbols. Bridging the divide between the material public realm and the spiritualized private sphere, the radicals of the Swadeshi ("own country") movement (1905–8) established the contours of an all-India cultural nationalism. The eventual failure of Swadeshi, detailed below, merely underlined the imminent need for the construction of a sustainable sovereign subject. It also emboldened the ambiguous demand for *swaraj* (self-rule) in the face of Britain's policy of deferral and the Indian liberal politics of petition.[7] One of the

[2]*Kesavananda Bharati Sripadagalvaru and Others* v. *State of Kerala and Another*, para. 1677.

[3]Pierre Rosanvallon, *Democracy Past and Future*, ed. Samuel Moyn (New York, 2006), 79–116.

[4]For a wider interdisciplinary discussion about the conundrum of sovereignty and the tension between the transcendent legitimation of political power and the messy reality of everyday politics and society in India see David Gilmartin, Pamela Price, and Arild Engelsen Ruud, eds., *South Asian Sovereignty: The Conundrum of Worldly Power* (London, 2019).

[5]Karuna Mantena, *Alibis of Empire: Henry Maine and the Ends of Liberalism Imperialism* (Princeton, 2010); Vikram Visana, "Vernacular Liberalism, Capitalism, and Anti-imperialism in the Political Thought of Dadabhai Naoroji," *Historical Journal* 59/3 (2016), 775–97.

[6]Theodore Koditschek, *Liberalism, Imperialism and the Historical Imagination: Nineteenth-Century Visions of a Greater Britain* (Cambridge, 2011).

[7]Shruti Kapila, "A History of Violence," *Modern Intellectual History* 7/2 (2010), 437–57, at 456.

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contests over the meaning of *swaraj* considered the European casting of India as a fissiparous ethnographic "museum" and how this might be overcome by constructing a sovereign Indian "peoplehood" capable of collectively authorizing self-rule.[8] Compounding the challenge was the fact that the colonial order in British India and the princely states rested upon the "creative legal posturing" of imperial officials to promote pragmatism, flexibility, and divisible sovereignty rather than templates of political or legal theory.[9]

Indian political thought contended with this conundrum of fragmented sovereignty through the first two decades of the twentieth century before the introduction of a new democratic calculus after the First World War. Various ancient and medieval models of Indian sovereignty could not offer answers about the future organization of popular national authority with a single sovereign will at its apex. In one view of unitary kingship, the Indian sovereign was above the people, abstractly representing their unity and so outside their political and social sectionalism. Simultaneously, the sovereign was usually drawn from the dominant local caste group (usually Kshatriya), and was also part of the social order, using violence in order to preserve the temporal status quo.[10] It fell to the priestly caste of Brahmins to invoke divine authority on behalf of a dutiful monarch who preserved Hindu dharma (caste-based religious duty and right way of living). This "dispersed" sovereignty was an unsuitable foundation for Indian modernizers who idealized the unitary sovereign personality of the nation-state.[11] Other accounts of Indian sovereignty stressed the decentered and rhizomatic nature of kingship itself. In Sharma's analysis the tripartite dependence of the joint family, caste, and property were the origin of state authority as a means of mutual protection.[12] Similarly, Stein identifies a model of "segmented kingship" in the Chola Empire of southern India, wherein local "ritual sovereignties" transmitted central authority to the margins but reflexively exercised collective legitimization of the Chola monarch from the periphery.[13] Religion, caste, and kinship came together in the "hollow crown" of Indian monarchy through "principles of honour, status, and order embodied by the king" but not governed through him.[14] The most recent studies of sovereignty

[8]Nasmul S. Sultan, "Self-Rule and the Problem of Peoplehood in Colonial India," *American Political Science Review* 114/1 (2020), 81–94, at 81.

[9]Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900* (Cambridge, 2009), 244–58, 290.

[10]J. C. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition: Essays in Indian Ritual, Kingship, and Society* (Chicago, 1985), 117–18.

[11]Ibid., 157; For a further exploration see David Gilmartin, "Towards a Global History of Voting: Sovereignty, the Diffusion of Ideas, and the Enchanted Individual," *Religions* 3 (2012), 407–23; for "dispersed sovereignty" see Shruti Kapila, "Ambedkar's Agonism: Sovereign Violence and Pakistan as Peace," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 39/1 (2019), 184–95.

[12]R. S. Sharma, *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India*, 4th edn (Delhi, 1996), 49–61.

[13]Burton Stein, "The Segmentary State in Southern Indian History," in Richard G. Fox, ed., *Realm and Region in Traditional India* (Durham, NC, 1977), 3–51, at 16; Burton Stein, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India* (Oxford, 1980); Stein, "State Formation and Economy Reconsidered," *Modern Asian Studies* 19/3 (1985), 387–413, at 394. For a critique of this viewpoint see Hermann Kulke, "Fragmentation and Segmentation versus Integration? Reflections on the Concepts of Indian Feudalism and the Segmentary State in Indian History," *Studies in History* 4/1 (1982), 237–63.

[14]Nicholas Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Cambridge, 1987), 284.

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in the Subcontinent reinforce the facts of dispersion and decentralization, describing fragmented loyalties between Indian rulers and subaltern myths of kingship and political community intended to challenge Brahmo-Kshatriyan, colonial, and even nationalist grammars of sovereignty.[15]

Given the fragmentary and dispersed history of sovereignty in India, this article examines Savarkar's reinscription of the European concept of revolutionary sovereignty as a means of realizing a unitary national sovereign will in South Asia. Borrowing Kapila's identification of the "afterlife" of European concepts, I argue that the precept of revolutionary sovereignty became enmeshed in unique west Indian political realities, was deployed in novel "ideological experiments," and was thereby radically transformed.[16] I further suggest that Savarkar's 1909 history of the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857, *The Indian War of Independence* (hereafter *IWI*), was a conceptual palimpsest proposing a revolutionary and populist theory of sovereign peoplehood derived from the history, culture, and politics of western India.[17]

II. Interpretations of Savarkar's thought

Savarkar was among the most influential political thinkers of the twentieth century. As the inventor of Hindutva (civilizational "Hinduness"—united by sacred geography and race rather than confessional orthodoxy), he was a major intellectual influence on Hindu nationalism. Laying out this theory in his 1923 manifesto, *Essentials of Hindutva* (hereafter *EH*), Savarkar established the spatial coordinates of the Indian nation as stretching from the river Indus (in modern-day Pakistan) down to the Indian Ocean.[18] All those who exclusively regarded this space as *pitrabhumi* (ancestral homeland) and *punyabhumi* (sacred land) constituted the nation. Hindus, Sikhs, and Jains met the qualification easily, while Muslims were forced reconsider their extraterritorial holy places.[19] With the predicted elimination of British sovereignty in India, Savarkar intended Indian peoplehood to constitute itself around these two "historical" markers of national and political unity.[20]

Savarkar's exclusionary politics developed in response to the mood of imperial reform and anticolonial agitation of the 1920s.[21] The Indian Councils Act (1909) and Government of India Act (1919) attempted to manufacture a competitive but discrete politics between religious groups by creating separate electorates (quotas for representatives elected only by members of their own religious community) in which some Muslims, championed by the Muslim League, clamoured for a

[15]Vinayak Chaturvedi, *Peasant Pasts: History and Memory in Western India* (Berkeley, 2007); Milinda Banerjee, *The Mortal God: Imagining the Sovereign in Colonial India* (Cambridge, 2018).

[16]Shruti Kapila, "Global Intellectual History and the Indian Political," in Darrin M. McMahon and Samuel Moyn, eds. *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History* (Oxford, 2014), 253–74, at 270.

[17]An Indian Nationalist [Savarkar], *The Indian War of Independence of 1857* (London, 1909).

[18]All references are taken from the 1938 edition. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, *Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu?* (New Delhi, 1938).

[19]Janaki Bakhle, "Country First? Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and the Writing of Essentials of Hindutva," *Public Culture* 22/1 (2010), 149–86, at 154.

[20]Shruti Kapila, "The Nation and Its Social: An Ambedkarian Reading of Indian Politics," Ambedkar Memorial Lecture, School of Oriental and African Studies, 19 April 2018; and Kapila, "Ambedkar's Agonism."

[21]Bakhle, "Country First?," 155.

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greater recognition of their numbers and cultural weight. This seeming division of the national will by Muslim political and economic interests irked Savarkar but he was equally disturbed by Gandhi's attempt to overcome nationally bounded Hindu–Muslim politics. The Mahatma's involvement with the Islamic Khilafat movement, which petitioned the British to preserve the Ottoman Sultan after the First World War, was predicated on the sacrificial duty of Hindus to aid Muslims in a foreign cause and vice versa. Since Hindus had no interest in preserving the caliph and Muslims had no interest in abjuring cow slaughter, Gandhi hoped that disinterested sacrifice would spiritualize communal relations and elevate both communities out of the politics of material interest.[22] Gazing towards the Middle East, this collaboration undermined the idea of a territorially bounded "homeland" and unsettled Savarkar as much as the politics of interest.[23]

Departing from this narrow focus on Savarkar's Hindu nationalism, the most sophisticated readings of his political thought identify a genealogy of sovereignty that develops over time. Chaturvedi correctly identifies "history writing" as the main genre through which Savarkar conceptualized revolutionary warfare.[24] However, Savarkar's conception of revolutionary violence as constitutive of a new political subjectivity remains unexplored. I contend that *IWI* promoted futurity and a Nietzschean rupture with history. The violent social upheaval modelled therein was intended to generate and propagate a populist conception of revolution by fabricating popular will through the command of heroic living sovereignty.[25] Finally, Savarkar's preference for the heroic personification and reification of popular will, rather than its institutional representation, is what distinguishes his thought on sovereignty as populist rather than simply popular. The key differentiator is Savarkar's preference for sovereign command *resembling* the people over that of the formal *representation* of general will.

Other nuanced readings, like those of Pincince and Kapila, recognize that the spectre of the "unpatriotic" Muslim, or the foreign invader, facilitated the role of the Schmittian "enemy"—transforming the political into a war formation or a space of ritualistic martial self-sacrifice on behalf of the nation.[26] The specter of the "enemy" served to patch over the social cleavages within the Hindu community. This was necessary, since popular sovereignty was predicated on a majoritarian plebiscitary mandate.[27] These scholars observe that Savarkar demonstrated

[22]Faisal Devji, *The Impossible Indian: Gandhi and the Temptation of Violence* (Cambridge, 2012), 75–83.

[23]Janaki Bakhle, "Putting Global Intellectual History in Its Place," in Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori, eds., *Global Intellectual History* (New York, 2013), 228–53, at 233.

[24]Vinayak Chaturvedi, "Rethinking Knowledge with Action: V. D. Savarkar, the Bhagavat Gita, and Histories of Warfare," *Modern Intellectual History* 7/2 (2010), 417–35; Vinayak Chaturvedi, "A Revolutionary's Biography: The Case of V. D. Savarkar," *Postcolonial Studies* 16/2 (2013), 124–39; 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* 15/1 (2014), 91–112.

[25]For the twentieth century as a Nietzschean moment in Indian political thought see Kapila, "A History of Violence," 445.

[26]John Pincince, "On the Verge of Hindutva: V. D. Savarkar, Revolutionary, Convict, Ideologue, *c.*1905–1924" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Hawai'i, Honolulu, 2007); Manisha Basu, *The Rhetoric of Hindu India: Language and Urban Nationalism* (Cambridge, 2017), 111. Kapila, "The Nation and Its Social"; Shruti Kapila, *Violent Fraternity: Global Political Thought in the Indian Age* (Princeton, forthcoming).

[27]Richard Tuck, *The Sleeping Sovereign: The Invention of Democracy* (Cambridge, 2016).

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Islamophobic tendencies common to his high-caste western Indian background but they also recognize that the specifics of his thought developed over time to make sense of a rapidly shifting political landscape. Competing visions of India's sovereign democratic future defined the period from the 1920s onwards, with the Congress's claim that it represented all Indians colliding with the Muslim League's counterclaim. It was in this environment that Savarkar's most trenchant anti-Muslim tracts were penned. Yet Pincince also projects this aspect of Savarkar's thought back into the 1910s when it is less convincing, not least because questions of universal suffrage had not yet arisen.[28]

Others have insisted on a latent and perpetual Islamophobia that motivated all of Savarkar's writings; otherwise, they claim that Savarkar was always committed to a social Darwinist's eternal and bloody competition between nations.[29] I temper the Darwinist perspective and contend that Savarkar's search for popular sovereignty was predicated not on a clash of civilizations but on his understanding of the colonial state's recurrent partnerships with one section of Indian society over another. These contracts ostensibly generated corruption and political disintegration throughout India and could be overturned only by banishing interest from politics. As I detail below, the republican dissolution of interest and the reorientation of Indian desire required a shared moral vector legitimated through populist violence in which heroic sovereigns and the people were indistinguishable.

At this stage, several methodological assumptions should be outlined. Accepting a view of political thought that suggests strategy cannot be neatly separated from normative prescriptions—which is to say that human actors cannot always distinguish ethics from interest—I analyse populism as an ideology rather than as a strategy used to further a separate theory.[30] What defines populism is the direct participation of a virtuous, untutored, and unitary people set against the institutional mediation of individual or group rights. A discussion of constitutional arrangements is secondary to directly actualizing the "authentic" voice of the masses through regenerative personal leadership arrayed against socially alienated "elites."[31] In this regard, populism can be ethnically and religiously inclusive so long as it sets up a moralized "peoplehood" against those deemed detrimental to its interests. Groups external to "the people" might be other cultures, but they could also be defined by their political, commercial, or class status.[32] Equally, the "people" need not be an arcane category derived from a pristine past.

[28]John Pincince, "V. D. Savarkar and the Indian War of Independence: Contrasting Perspectives on an Emergent Composite State," in Crispin Bates and Marina Carter, eds., *Mutiny at the Margins: New Perspectives on the Indian Uprising of 1857*, vol. 6 (London, 2014), 42–60.

[29]Amalendu Misra, "Savarkar and the Discourse of Islam in Pre-independent India," *Journal of Asian History* 33/2 (1999), 142–84; Shri Krishnan, "Discourses on Modernity: Gandhi and Savarkar," *Studies in History* 29/1 (2013), 61–85; Nicholas Owen, "The Soft Heart of the British Empire: Indian Radicals in Edwardian London," *Past and Present* 220 (2013), 143–84, at 149.

[30]Raymond Geuss, *Philosophy and Real Politics* (Princeton, NJ, 2008), 2–15; Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le siècle du populisme: Histoire, théorie, critique* (Paris, 2020).

[31]Isaiah Berlin, Richard Hofstadter, Donald MacRae, Leonard Schapiro, Hugh Seton-Watson, Alain Touraine, Franco Venturi, Andrzej Walicki, and Peter Worsley, "To Define Populism," *Government and Opposition* 3/2 (1968), 137–79, at 142, 172–4.

[32]Chantal Mouffe, *For a Left Populism* (London: 2018); Nadia Urbinati, *Me the People: How Populism Transforms Democracy* (Cambridge, MA, 2019), 33; Rosanvallon, *Le siecle du populisme*, Ch. 6.

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Nineteenth-century American populism was not backward-looking; on the contrary, economic reformers like William Jennings Bryan offered agriculturalists and laborers in search of an "alternative modernity" a rupture with the past through a more harmonious industrial capitalism even as they invoked the Jeffersonian ideal of the yeoman farmer.[33] Likewise, in my account, Savarkar relied upon history writing and religious categories to imagine Indian "modernity." But his thought was defined by its futurity and the secular objective of directly initiating a unitary Indian peoplehood in the midst of the indirect representation of religious and caste interests by the colonial state.

III. History writing in western India

The west Indian milieu in which the young Savarkar cut his political teeth was strikingly diverse in both theory and action. Born in 1883 to a Brahmin family near the Hindu holy city of Nasik, he was educated in English at the local government school and acquired an appetite for vernacular poetry, ancient Greek epics, and fragmented world histories.[34] Romantic regional histories of western India's heroic spiritual and political liberators in radical newspapers like *Kesari* also caught the young Savarkar's eyes.[35] Especially influential was a cofounder of *Kesari*, the nationalist V. K. Chiplunkar. His single-authored monthly journal *Nibandhamala* was one of Savarkar's favourite reads. Chiplunkar's analysis of Maratha history, poetry, and language drew on Sanskrit and the critical narrative style of Samuel Johnson and Macaulay. He also achieved notoriety through his Chitrashala press by disseminating martial images of Hindu deities and local heroes like the god Ram and King Shivaji.[36] One of his final essays in 1881, "Aamachya Deshachi Sthiti" (The State of Our Nation) insisted that cultural domination was the handmaiden of political subjugation and castigated Indians for allowing the British to colonize their minds by disregarding their own indigenous literature and art. He also condemned folkloric customs within Hinduism like astrology, ghosts, and omens, instead praising a religious faith based on reason.[37] While not challenging the fundamentals of the Hindu social order, this did nonetheless reflect the creeping rationalism within the west Indian intellectual tradition, rivaling the Bengal Renaissance in its ability to knit the political, social, and religious into a single sphere of nationalist action.[38] Chiplunkar's works were, therefore, intended to convert an indigenous local patriotism into an assertive nationalist narrative underpinned by common sense and individual reason. Here, the Whig historicism of Macaulay met with what Nietzsche would have termed "monumental history." This was the selective appropriation of epic protagonists and pivotal events from the past to inspire rupture with the historicist timetable and rationalize seemingly

[33]Charles Postel, *The Populist Vision* (Oxford, 2007), 4; for accounts which define populism as tending towards anti-pluralism, illiberal politics, and authoritarianism see Jan Werner-Mueller, *What Is Populism?* (Philadelphia, 2016); and Federico Finchelstein, *From Fascism to Populism in History* (Oakland, 2017).

[34]Vikram Sampath, *Savarkar: Echoes from a Forgotten Past 1883–1924* (Gurgaon, 2019), 10.

[35]Ibid., 10–11.

[36]Christopher Pinney, *Photos of the Gods: The Printed Image and Political Struggle in India* (London, 2004), 48.

[37]Y. D. Phadke, *V. K. Chiploonkar* (New Delhi, 1982), 27.

[38]Hulas Singh, *The Rise of Reason: Intellectual History of 19th-Century Maharashtra* (Abingdon, 2016).

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impossible political change in the present.[39] This appropriation of the past for the present with an eye on the future remained a constant hallmark of Savarkar's thought.

Contributions to western India's modern historiographical tradition also came from liberal reformers who were less conspicuous in their deployment of cultural symbols and had deferred discussions of political emancipation in favour of a socially and economically sequenced gradualism.[40] Founded in Pune in 1870, the Savarjanik Sabha was the predominant mouthpiece for this viewpoint. With the arrival of Justice M. G. Ranade from Bombay in 1871, the organization gave the radical nationalist politics of Pune a more liberal tenor. Ranade had long been a proponent of the dictum that social reform had to precede political emancipation if India was to cohere as an independent body politic of rational citizens. A "progressive" didactic history was essential to this project.

Writing in 1878 in the *Journal of the Poona Savarjanik Sabha*, Ranade promoted the seventeenth-century Maratha historical narrative called the *bakhar*. The genre was remarkable for carrying an unbroken vernacular historiographical tradition from the early modern into the modern era. It had developed within the diverse Marathi-speaking ecumene as a way of arriving at "commonsense" facts that cut across ethnographic divisions.[41] By the nineteenth century, Ranade touted it as a method for rescuing indigenous historiography from the obscurantist practices of Puranic accounts which represented time as cyclical and the past as an ancestral age far removed from the concerns and values of the present. For him the Puranas "did not contain much matter for real history. Mythologies, scraps of ancient and modern history, local geography, and morals are all jumbled together in these works in an extricable confusion" so that "the very rudiments of political history [were] missing."[42] Conversely, *bakhars* were written as extended letters recounting the lives of prominent families or individuals but had their narrative roots in early modern west Indian lawsuits and dynastic inquests by incoming Maratha monarchs.[43] Like the positivist historiography of the "West," events were presented sequentially, although the narrative was prone to hyperbole, extended scene setting, and partisan attachment. Yet this stylized way of writing was not seen as an affectation of the "real"; rather, the commitment to reconstructing "plausible situations," the "mood of personalities," and "credible and appropriate dialogue" was accepted as indispensable to historical understanding.[44] Above all, the past was conceptualized in such a way that the tribulations of the movers

[39]Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life" (1874), in Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations* (Cambridge, 1997), 57–124.

[40]C. A. Bayly, *Recovering Liberties: Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire* (Cambridge, 2011); Koditschek, *Liberalism, Imperialism and the Historical Imagination*; Visana, "Vernacular Liberalism."

[41]Sumit Guha, *History and Collective Memory in South Asia 1200–2000* (Seattle, 2019), 117.

[42]"Mahratta Bhakars [*sic*] or Chronicles and Grant Duff's History of the Marathas," *Journal of the Poona Savarjanik Sabha* 1/2 (1878), 12–23, at 14.

[43]Guha, *History and Collective Memory in South Asia*, 83–118.

[44]Prachi Deshpande, *Creative Pasts: Historical Memory and Identity in Western India, 1700–1960* (New York, 2007), 28.

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and shakers of history were seen as forming recurring patterns in recognizable contexts during successive epochs. This left open the possibility that such deeds could be replicated in the present and the future.

The *bakhar* genre dealt extensively with the history of the Maratha Empire and its founding Hindu monarch, Shivaji. The new state was carved out from Mughal lands in the late seventeenth century with Shivaji's dynasty becoming a cornerstone of regional patriotism and, later, martial Hindu nationalism. While many sought to eulogize the Marathas in communal terms (including Savarkar later in life), the *bakhars* themselves were ambiguous on this count. Some chroniclers denoted "Maratha" as simply a political marker referring to Shivaji's state and its military chiefs. Others imputed a caste-specific dharmic duty to local Brahmins to set up a realm in opposition to the Mughal Empire. A third usage referred to the entire military power right down to infantry and cavalry (including Muslims). What is clear is that a homogeneous Maratha identity is not defined and that the term was mostly deployed to delineate "administrative and political authority and … military leadership."[45] *Bakhar* narratives were as much about the process of establishing sovereignty anew through organized military power under conditions of political subjugation as they were about a perpetual hostility between Hindus and Muslims.

Savarkar demonstrated a command of *bakhar* historiography in 1925 (during his Hindutva phase) when he published a history of the Marathas called *Hindu Pad Padshahi* (Independent Hindu Empire). Furthermore, "Chitragupta," the pseudonym under which Savarkar penned his autobiography (*Life of Barrister Savarkar*) copied the nom de plume of Raghunath Yadav, a *bakhar* chronicler of the 1760s.[46] Savarkar used the *bakhars'* admixture of vivid storytelling, heroic history making, and the modularity of the past as a counternarrative to depoliticized colonial histories. Moreover, coupled with Chiplunkar's radical interventions, Savarkar used the *bakhar* to adopt a rationalistic and linear framework of causation whilst simultaneously leveraging "monumental history" to conjure the possibility of a historical acceleration. What follows below is an account of Savarkar's metaphysical and normative assumptions about national sovereignty and how he deployed history writing to delineate a unitary conception of Indian popular will and sovereign command.

IV. Interest versus virtue

Revolutionary thought in western India in the late nineteenth century developed a republican preference for a self-fashioned sovereign subject defined by individual virtue rather than liberal contract under the regulatory auspices of the colonial state.[47] Local revolutionaries like W. B. Phadke preached self-fashioning through acts of terrorism. An inspiration to Savarkar, Phadke believed that the murdering of British officials would precipitate a second rebellion and the establishing of an

[45]Ibid., 48.

[46]Chaturvedi, "A Revolutionary Biography," 126.

[47]Shruti Kapila, "Self, Spencer and Swaraj: Nationalist Thought and Critiques of Liberalism, 1890–1920," *Modern Intellectual History* 4/1 (2007), 109–27.

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American-style republic.[48] In 1904, another promoter of sovereign violence, B. G. Tilak, wrote to the most famous Indian liberal of the day, Dadabhai Naoroji. Tilak strategically refrained from mentioning violence to the former British parliamentarian but insisted that the time had come for a new "missionary spirit" of self-belief and self-reliance to animate anticolonial activities. This meant casting aside the leading strings of British allies to proceed in a more independent and republican vein.[49] Likewise, in 1907, the revolutionary anarcho-nationalist Har Dayal valorized the life of the "political missionary" who regarded revolutionary praxis as a better source of acquiring political knowledge than an "Oxford degree."[50] Both men advocated an ethical politics of the self that would challenge liberalism's institutional focus by transcending the state.[51] After Savarkar arrived at London's India House (a boarding house for Indian students and nursery of anticolonial insurrection run by Shyamji Krishnavarma) in 1905, he expressed a similar distrust of liberal interests and metropolitan networking with Europeans. When British anti-imperial insurrectionists like Henry Hyndman offered support to India House radicals, Savarkar retorted, "you can't get a piggy-back on persons like Hyndman," and exhorted India House lodgers, "You must learn to stand on your own two feet."[52]

Savarkar also challenged the agenda of "moderate" Indian agitators, and their alleged reliance upon bourgeois networks and the liberal institutions of education, civil society, and scholarly clubs. As the first Indian elected to the House of Commons in 1892, Naoroji seemed to exemplify this tendency and his celebrity made him a prime target for criticism. Shortly after Savarkar's arrival at India House, Krishnavarma published "Mr Dadabhai Naoroji and Indian Politics," criticizing Naoroji for hobnobbing with British parliamentarians.[53] More than this, Krishnavarma determined that Naoroji's "drain theory" of British colonialism was decidedly liberal in its assumptions. It was predicated on a labor theory of value which posited that the Indian peasant was responsible for creating the country's wealth *ex nihilio* by tilling and mining the fruits of nature. The colonial state expropriated this wealth through a punitive system of taxation used to pay the salaries of British bureaucrats which was additionally used to finance the export of Indian surplus value out of the country through the bills of exchange system. In Naoroji's estimation, poverty, fragmentation, and civil strife in South Asia were due to the "deeper cause" of Indians being robbed of their capacity to accumulate property and contract on the basis of commercial sociability.[54]

[48]Sampath, *Savarkar*, 15–24.

[49]B. G. Tilak to Dadabhai Naoroji, 6 Dec. 1904, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi (hereafter NMML), B. G. Tilak Papers Microfilm Reel 1, Serial Number 1.

[50]Letters from Har Dayal to Shyamji Krishnavarma, 28 Aug. 1907, and to S. Rana (undated) 1910, in *Letters of Har Dayal*, ed. Dharamvira (Ambala, 1970), 40, 91, cited in Kapila, "Self, Spencer and Swaraj," 122.

[51]Kapila, "Self, Spencer and Swaraj."

[52]Savarkar Newsletters, 20 Dec. 1906, 8 Feb. 1907, in V. D. Savarkar, *Samagra Savarakara Vanmaya*, vol. 4 (Pune, 1965), 19–23, 29–34.

[53]"Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji and Indian Politics," *Indian Sociologist*, Nov. 1906, 44.

[54]*Pall Mall Gazette*, 14. Aug. 1893; Vikram Visana, *The Political Thought of Dadabhai Naoroji: Liberalism, Capitalism, and Commercial Society in the Global Age* (forthcoming).

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This theory of imperial citizenship by gentrification sought to overcome colonial mediation in the property and contract-constituting powers of Indian subjects. For instance, two years after declaring bankruptcy, Naoroji sued the London-based Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China in 1868 to recover the amount of £3,248 in bills of exchange that had been appropriated by the bank to defray debts owed to a separate firm by Naoroji's import–export company. The court concluded that a contract of mutual credit existed implicitly when "merchants mutually have dealings together, and each gives credit to the other," and when a bankruptcy takes place the calculations of those credits would inevitably end in a debt that should be repaid. Naoroji challenged what he regarded as the inequity of this indirect and implicit contract. The incongruity was exemplified for him by the court's decision, that it was "clear that in order to constitute a mutual credit, it is not necessary that there should be credits connected with and dependent on one another."[55]

Naoroji and his business partner in the United Kingdom, K. R. Cama, also participated in a range of supra-imperial civil-society associations; the most notable was the Freemasons in Bombay and London.[56] One could become a Mason regardless of religion so long as it was monotheistic, since a Mason was "a brother to that extent for all the purposes of Freemasonry, although he may not be a brother by consanguinity, nationality, or religious profession."[57] To Cama's mind, this made the Masonic lodge conducive to the creation of a "kind and sympathetic and forbearing spirit" necessary for all modern liberal subjects.[58] If property was the prerequisite for an autonomous, "self-controlled and desiring" political subject then civil society became the incubator for this "human essence" and the "public performance" of sovereign peoplehood.[59]

Savarkar's *IWI* was a riposte to what he saw as an excessively liberal–imperial iteration of Indian peoplehood that tethered the latter too intimately to the Whig *telos* of Naoroji's "imperial firm."[60] This is not to suggest that Savarkar eschewed liberal categories entirely; in fact, he had stressed the influence of Bentham's *Utilitarianism* and Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* on his early thinking. Concerning the principles of utility and the greatest good of the greatest number, he avowed that he "began to acknowledge this principle of morality as the touchstone of all [his] pursuits, of [his] ethical stands, and of [his] behaviour."[61] Savarkar maintained,

[55]"Dadabhai Naoroji and Another *v.* the Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China, 4 May 1868," in *The Law Journal Reports for the Year 1868*, vol. 37 (London, 1868), 221–5.

[56]F. R. W. Hedges, secretary to the Royal Masonic Institution to Naoroji, April 1890, National Archives of India, New Delhi, Dadabhai Naoroji Papers (hereafter DNP), H-80; Crusaders' Lodge to Naoroji, 18 Jan. 1893, DNP, C-293; North London Masonic Benevolent Ball to Naoroji, 14 Nov. 1894, DNP, N-136.

[57]Dosabhai Framji Karaka, *The History of the Parsis*, vol. 1 (London, 1884), 149; K. R. Cama, "Zoroastrians and Freemasonry," in *The Collected Works of K. R. Cama*, vol. 1 (Bombay, 1968), 358–86, at 360.

[58]K. R. Cama, "Freemasonry among the Natives of Bombay," in *The Collected Works of K. R. Cama*, 387–406, at 387; Cama, "Zoroastrians and Freemasonry," 362.

[59]David Gilmartin, "Rethinking the Public through the Lens of Sovereignty," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 38/3 (2015), 371–86, at 381.

[60]Visana, "Vernacular Liberalism," 790–97; Koditschek, *Liberalism, Imperialism and the Historical Imagination*, 293–4.

[61]O. Wolf, "Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's 'Strategic Agnosticism': A Compilation of His Socio-political Philosophy and Worldview," *Heidelberg Papers in South Asian and Comparative Politics* 51 (2010), 1–27, at

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> We believe in a universal state embracing all mankind and wherein all men and women would be citizens working for and enjoying equally the fruits of this earth and this sun, this land and this light, which constitute the real Motherland and the Fatherland of man. All other divisions and distinctions are artificial though indispensable. Believing thus that the ideal of all political science and art is or ought to be [a] Human state in which all nations merge their political selves for their own fulfilment even as the cells in an organism, organisms in families and tribes, and tribes in nation-states have done; and believing therefore that humanity is [a] higher patriotism …[62]

Written in 1920 to his brother, the extract above was composed when Savarkar was incarcerated for sedition. The pacific tone may reflect attempts to appease his jailers but his evolutionism does also reflect the common belief among some Indian rationalists that national self-awakening was a prerequisite for habituating Indians to the sentiments of higher patriotism and collective duty that led to a universal world-state. Savarkar even scolded those who adopted an exclusionary stance in their revolutionary activities. When Har Dayal referred to a "Hindu India" in 1908, Savarkar was quick to reply that such remarks were "dangerous to the National movement."[63] This pluralist attitude notwithstanding, Savarkar had little faith in a reworked liberal nexus of commercial society and contract. Instead, in *IWI* he posited the love of *swaraj* and *swadharma* (love of one's country and religion) as the "real spirit of the Revolution" and the awakening of Indian peoplehood.[64] Savarkar considered these metaphysical categories indispensable for overcoming both the colonial liberalism of divide and rule and the constructive Indian liberalism of Naoroji's commercial society and its allies.

Throughout *IWI* Savarkar pours scorn on the British appeal to propertied and mercantile interests to govern India. He also identifies these as the same tactics used to maintain the loyalty of key groups during and after the 1857 uprising. Savarkar opined that certain Indian constituencies had succumbed to the "narcotic of slavery," to the point where violence could be instigated between different Indian interest groups through British offers of professional and economic patronage.[65] In his view, this was analogous to the dominion of the Mughals which had lacked popular authorization and was maintained by "native self-seekers."[66] Savarkar spun 1857 as a constructive episode of positive liberty in the face of such domination. It was a

5; V. D. Savarkar, "Majya Athvani," quoted and translated in Matthew Lederle, *Philosophical Trends in Modern Maharashtra* (Bombay, 1976), 280.

[62]Tatya [Savarkar] to Bal, 6 July 1920, in V. D. Savarkar, *An Echo from Andamans*, ed. V. V. Kelkar (Bombay, 1924), 87.

[63]Weekly report of the director of criminal intelligence, 10 Oct. 1908, British Library, London, India Office Records, quoted in Ole Birk Laursen, "Anarchist Anti-imperialism: Guy Aldred and the Indian Revolutionary Movement 1909–1914," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth Studies* 46/2 (2018), 286–303, at 303.

[64]Savarkar, *Indian War of Independence*, 7.

[65]Ibid., 51, 132.

[66]Ibid., 233.

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"test to see how far India had come towards unity, independence," and, revealingly, "popular power."[67] Lavishing praise on individuals who participated in the defence of *swaraj* and *swadharma* from a variety of religious and ethnic backgrounds, Savarkar dubbed them "equally glorious" while branding the "betrayers" as "idle, effeminate, selfish and treacherous." The Sikhs were singled out as having aided the British in putting down their countrymen in exchange for preferment in the ranks of the East India Company's army, the possibility of looting captured rebel cities, and a life of agricultural largesse.[68]

In stark relief to the Sikhs, Savarkar favourably compares those who understood liberty positively as a republican virtue rather than a means of pursuing their individual interests unmolested. "Patriots" appreciated that "[f]reedom is not coveted that the country might become wealthy but because in it alone consists the peace of the soul; honour is greater than loss or gain; the forest of independence is better than the cage though made of gold."[69] Taking a sideways swipe at Indian agitators who requested reductions in land taxes, Savarkar observes how some of 1857 rebels were "Rajas and Zemindars" of Lucknow who had "actually been benefitted" by colonial rule. They took up arms anyway to protect the land of their religion and did not "give up duty at any time through love of personal gain," realizing instead that "what cannot benefit the country cannot in the end benefit individuals."[70] A revolutionary zeal spontaneously overcoming "innumerable petty selves" was also echoed in a panegyric Savarkar sent to India in 1908 titled *Oh Martyrs!*. Here, the author revels in the fact that former Indian "hypocrite[s] threw off" their "friendly garb" and faced up to the "naked heinousness of a perfidious foe."[71]

British attempts to placate and subdue Indian revolutionaries in the wake of the conflict were also identified as a cheap liberal ploy by Savarkar. The Queen's Proclamation of 1858 promised religious liberty for every Indian community, an end to interference in the affairs of India's princely states, meritocratic access to administrative jobs, and social and material progress for the Subcontinent. In scoffing at the term "Magna Charta" for this new colonial dispensation, Savarkar was implicitly critiquing those Indian liberals like Naoroji and Surendranath Banerjea.[72] Both thinkers had dubbed the 1858 proclamation a "charta," linking it to the slow unfolding of English liberty in India and tracing its genealogy to Macaulay's 1833 Charter Act and the East India Company's initial acquisition of Bombay in 1669.[73] Banerjea went so far as to identify the proclamation as the fountainhead of Indian liberal–nationalist politics. It spurred all-India bourgeois petitioning for greater representation that characterized the pre-Gandhian era

[67]Ibid., 433.
[68]Ibid., 116, 254, 405.
[69]Ibid., 443.
[70]Ibid., 326.
[71]*Oh Martyrs*, Dec. 1908, National Archives of India, New Delhi, Home Political Department, Series A.
[72]Savarkar, *Indian War of Independence*, 420.
[73]"Grant of the first East India Company of the island of Bombay," from 27 March 1669, DNP, notes and jottings, Group 7: political, serial number 16; Naoroji's "Presidential Address," second Indian National Congress, Calcutta, 1886, in Dadabhai Naoroji, *The Grand Little Man of India: Dadabhai Naoroji, Speeches and Writings*, vol. 1, ed. Moin Zaidi (New Delhi, 1985), 9–19, at 13–14.

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Banerjea pined for.[74] Savarkar, however, saw only continuity from company rule. The British had always claimed to govern India as liberals. They had entered into binding contracts, pledged noninterference in princely states, promised education and prosperity. Even so, continued annexations and interference abounded and were justified on a liberal "pretence of distributing pay" to Britons and their Indian allies. So, Savarkar asked Indian liberals after 1858, "what is the difference between the former and present state of things?"[75]

V. Republicanism and popular will

Savarkar rejected a contractarian political emancipation on the grounds that the Raj already rested upon utility-maximizing bargains between sections of Indian and British society. In early twentieth-century India he was not alone in voicing these concerns. For instance, the indigenist critique emanating from the Swadeshi movement developed a political theology that lambasted Indians and Bengali high-castes in particular for mimicking British professional and public life. This was the worst type of inauthenticity given that British orientalist caricatures designated Bengali *bhadralok* high-castes as effeminate and ineffective *babus* when they tried to enter the professional or public sphere. The Swadeshi thinker and Hindu idealist Aurobindo Ghosh ridiculed middle-class aspirations to become "judges, clerks, deputies and lawyers." These "inessential" and "mendicant" private interests were devoid of cultural-, religious-, and public-spiritedness.[76] In general, British sovereignty in India was regarded as a hollow crown. As Rabindranath Tagore noted when the Prince of Wales visited India in 1905, his was no real kingship; instead, there was a commercial combine in which the machine-like rule of the Subcontinent reproduced the transactional relationships of the office or factory.[77] Swadeshi agitators responded by performing rituals of anticolonial sovereignty around precolonial Indian kingship. However, this was loaded with sectarian undertones as the glorified Hindu rulers had often vanquished Muslim counterparts.[78] Savarkar developed his thoughts on Indian republican liberty as his contemporaries were thus transfiguring popular sovereignty through divisive religious idealism. Swadeshi's eventual succumbing to communal, class, and gender divisions presented Savarkar with the challenge of formulating unitary sovereignty on a genuinely popular basis.

Savarkar before Hindutva responded with a trans-sectarian version of positive republican liberty as the antithesis of colonial interest that retained the collective moral imperatives of religious idealism. Akin to Swadeshi discourses, it was identifiably republican because of Savarkar's preference for the collective status of nondomination rather than a preoccupation with negative liberty or interference in the

[74]Surendranath Banerjea, *A Nation in the Making: Being Reminiscences of Fifty Years of Public Life* (Bombay, 1963; first published 1925), 61–2.

[75]Savarkar, *Indian War of Independence*, 420–21.

[76]Aurobindo Ghosh, *Bande Mataram: Early Political Writings* (Pondicherry, 1972), 18, cited in Andrew Sartori, "The Categorical Logic of Colonial Nationalism: Swadeshi Bengal, 1904–1908," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 23/1–2 (2003), 271–85, at 273–4.

[77]Banerjee, *The Mortal God*, 84–5.

[78]Ibid., 212.

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lives of individual Indians and their property or property-constituting capacities. Furthermore, Savarkar's distinction between those Indians who pursue their individual and sectional interest at the expense of the common weal reflects a standard republican concern with the polarizing categories of virtue and corruption. This contrasts with liberal conceptions of individualism which insist that each person pursuing their own personal projects unimpeded (or each discrete caste or religious group pursuing its own interests) will ultimately produce a utilitarian outcome.[79]

Antipathy to utility meant that Savarkar's thinking on how to popularly authorize an Indian republic did not invoke some of the best-known examples of early modern political obligation and contract (detailed below). Rather, for Savarkar, to live in a state of virtuous freedom required a positive and courageous spur to action, prompting him to note that "orientals" had never entertained "the idea that love of religion and love of freedom had no connection with each other." Careful to avoid naming a denomination, Savarkar insisted that religion in general guaranteed the afterlife and only through the spiritual injunction to virtue could one achieve freedom from domination. These concepts were united through the personal attribute of dharma which Savarkar substituted for virtue. Equally, *swaraj* alone could defend *swadharma* from withering since it was the "sword of material power." Thus the "mental science" of the Indian political was to "rise for *swadharma*" in order to "achieve *swaraj*," and once acquired it could be used to preserve civic virtue and unity.[80]

The political thought of the Italian republican Giuseppe Mazzini was one of the principle conduits through which Savarkar contemplated an Indian peoplehood resting upon a doctrine of positive republican liberty. Written conterminously with his *IWI* in London, Savarkar penned *The Life and Works of Joseph Mazzini* in Marathi (*Joseph Majhini, atmacharitra ni rajkaran* (1908)). Proscribed by the British, two thousand copies did make it to India via Savarkar's brother in Bombay.[81] In his *Duties of Man*, Mazzini emphasized spiritually divinized "duties" as the metaphysical basis of civic virtue. This had piqued Savarkar's interest. The Italian exhorted men to realize that they were "sons of one sole God" and that their duty was not to live for themselves but "for others," eschewing the life of the pursuit of happiness and embracing the collective project "of making ourselves and others more virtuous," which was "a duty which may not be neglected without sin."[82] Mazzini also reinforced Savarkar's conviction that nationalism was an initial step in the greater association of mankind. The natural human capacity for an ever-widening sphere of communication and empathy was, in Mazzini's words, "the sole and constant general law" of politics.[83] The imperative to follow this law came from

[79]Quentin Skinner, "The Republican Ideal of Political Liberty," in Gisela Bock, Quentin Skinner, and Maurizio Viroli, eds., *Machiavelli and Republicanism* (Cambridge, 1990), 293–309, at 304.

[80]Savarkar, *Indian War of Independence*, 9–11.

[81]Pincince, "On the Verge of Hindutva," 54; Robert Darnton, "Literary Surveillance in the British Raj: The Contradictions of Liberal Imperialism," *Book History* 4 (2001), 133–76.

[82]Joseph Mazzini, *An Essay on the Duties of Man: Addressed to Working Men* (New York, 1898; first published 1862), 14.

[83]Giuseppe Mazzini, "Humanity and Country" (1836), cited in *A Cosmopolitanism of Nations: Giuseppe Mazzini's Writings on Democracy, Nation Building, and International Relations*, ed. Stefano Recchia and Nadia Urbinati (Princeton, 2010), 53–6, at 55.

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its "providential design."[84] The moral regeneration of the masses through a keener awareness of their spiritual duty would facilitate the wider association of Italians in a popular and revolutionary nationalism that was not as liable to the chauvinism of top-down national projects initiated by jealous dynasties and despots. While Mazzini was sensitive to liberal–constitutional rights as a shield against state or popular tyranny, he also admitted that liberalism could not mobilize a people, nor sustain their association, in order to morally and practically authorize sovereignty.[85] Recognizing the limitations of the politics of interest, Mazzini insisted that nationalism, and the wider international association that followed, "could not be one of simple reaction, or of material well-being, or of mere rights to be recognized."[86] Savarkar endorsed this sentiment in the introductory remarks for his biography of Mazzini:

> Love, in fact, is the only link between man and God. But "love" needs liberty: "liberty to love." How can a man love in a state of slavery? Slavery can be best removed by will and determination. The day a man (or a race) determines to be free, freedom comes to him in no time. This is the gospel truth that all of us should understand and adopt. Mazzini understood it. He preached it and practiced it … Politics and religion are inter-dependent. A religion teaches tolerance but not surrender, similarly politics means freedom and not subservience. It is this freedom which has been hailed even in the Bible and sung by all poets. (Better to rule in Hell than serve in Heaven, sings Milton's Satan). A country in chains is a country in pains. It cannot contribute anything to the world['s] peace, progress and prosperity.[87]

Mazzini's ideas were a major inspiration for other Indian accounts of positive liberty. Positive liberty had a special appeal for Indians living in a state of cultural subordination but for whom the colonial state did not directly interfere in their day-to-day lives. Most Indian translations of "liberty" implied a constructive program of communitarian generosity rather than "noninterference."[88] The secret society was the key mechanism in Mazzini's model that furnished Savarkar with an institutional space to nurture positive liberty. Here, Indians might be emboldened to act according to their own wills, with meetings serving as zones of radical association intended to convert the multitude into a people. There was also another Indian afterlife of Mazzinian thought. Savarkar was initially introduced to the "liberal" Mazzini valorized by Surendranath Banerjea in the 1870s. In Bayly's words, Banerjea promoted the "bonds of common nationality and common institutions" through "moral regeneration" as a form of "constructive" liberalism. But

[84]Stefano Recchia and Nadia Urbinati, "Introduction: Giuseppe Mazzini's International Political Thought," in Mazzini, *A Cosmopolitanism of Nations*, 1–30, at 27–8.

[85]Ibid., 9.

[86]Giuseppe Mazzini, *Mazzini's Letters*, trans. A. De Roses Jervis (Westport, 1979), 76.

[87]Translated from Marathi by Harindra Srivastava, *Five Stormy Years: Savarkar in London* (New Delhi, 1983), 33–4.

[88]C. A. Bayly, "Liberalism at Large: Mazzini and Nineteenth-Century Indian Thought," in C. A. Bayly and Eugenio F. Biagini, eds., *Giuseppe Mazzini and the Globalisation of Democratic Nationalism 1830–1920* (Oxford, 2008), 355–74, at 355; Bayly, *Recovering Liberties*, 3.

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Banerjea could not endorse the pursuit of violent political revolution and continued to petition the British for greater representation in the colonial bureaucracy until his death in 1925. This was a world away from the revolution fermented in sleeper cells that Mazzini practiced through his Young Italy secret society.[89] Savarkar realized that secret societies had been established in the wake of Banerjea's lectures in Bengal between 1875 and 1878 but that they "had no plan or policy of political action to liberate their people from the British yoke. They only gave a philip [*sic*] to patriotism … and passed away like a fashion."[90]

The secret societies of the type Savarkar had set up in western India (Mitra Mela) and London (Abhinav Bharat), however, were nurseries of civic virtue, fraternal association, and revolutionary fervor.[91] Members swore clandestine oaths of initiation, sang patriotic songs, and prayed together. As is clarified below, Savarkar's secret society and the irrational conspiracies it propagated were intended to birth Indian political sociability through untutored action. This stood in stark contrast to the pedagogy of schools and civil society that underpinned liberal habits of sociability. Savarkar stressed that young men, if they could not bear the burden of desireless national service, ought to join the liberals as "patriots at the lower stage of our struggle for freedom."[92] Demonstrating how the conspiratorial aspects of 1857 were instructive for popular revolution in his own time, Savarkar narrates in *IWI* how revolutionary ideology was secretly transmitted by regimental mullahs and *sanyasis* and subsequently through indigenous festivals and theatre. So successful were they that "the dolls in the doll-theatres began to speak a strange language and dance a dangerous dance."[93]

Another "strange band of secret messengers" who facilitated the national unity of the uprising were those who spread insurrectionary zeal by distributing chapatis (Indian unleavened bread) from village to village.[94] The circulation of the flatbreads was reported by the British during and after the uprising, and while conspiratorial theories abounded, there was no causal link between the chapati movement and the rebellion.[95] Similarly, Savarkar recounts how rebel soldiers mutely exchanged red lotuses and imbued each other with revolutionary intentions, presenting the circulation of these talismans as a way of clandestinely knitting Hindus, Muslims, and disparate castes together so that they became "impressed with one opinion."[96] The inherent and untutored virtue of the people was evident in that "the *Chapatee* spoke only to those it meant to speak to … [i]t inspired the men who knew it with a strange Revolutionary energy at its very touch."[97] It was these

[89]Bayly, "Liberalism at Large," 360.

[90]V. D. Savarkar, *Inside the Enemy Camp*, trans. V. S. Godbole, at www.savarkarsmarak.com/activityimages/Inside%20the%20Enemy%20Camp.pdf, 60, accessed 30 April 2018.

[91]Ibid., 51.

[92]Ibid., 67.

[93]Savarkar, *Indian War of Independence*, 69.

[94]Ibid., 79.

[95]Troy Downs, "Host of Midian: The Chapati Circulation and the Indian Revolt of 1857–58," *Studies in History* 16 (2000), 75–107; Kim Wagner, *The Great Fear of 1857: Rumours, Conspiracies and the Making of the Indian Uprising* (Oxford, 2010), 61–79.

[96]Savarkar, *Indian War of Independence*, 77, 227.

[97]Ibid., 79–80.

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populist "tests" and informal institutions that ensured that the majority of Indians were true to their immanent virtue and performed it in acts of rustic solidarity. As I elaborate below, the absence of a theory of state or constituent authority, and the preoccupation with the exclusively affective dimensions of national peoplehood and leadership, confirm the populist character of Savarkar's republicanism.

Savarkar had to innovate a new theory of Indian political sociability since the major contractarian models were either predicated on individual utility (Hobbes and Locke) or unsuited to Indian diversity and history (Rousseau). Savarkar never invoked Hobbes, Locke, or Rousseau in his writings but we can infer from his understanding of Indian history why he might have regarded these authors as anachronistic. The Hobbesian model was predicated on the certainty that human nature rendered the exercise of the last appetite—the avoidance of fratricidal war—a condition for concord around a unitary "artificial" sovereign.[98] Hobbes's model contained obstacles for Savarkar's historical understanding of Indian sovereignty since the repeated dominance of one religious dynasty over another led to seemingly insurmountable long-term resentments. In a social landscape defined by a sense of perpetual injustice, Savarkar believed the desire to avoid civil strife was ignored in favour of "internecine quarrels," "warfare," and universal "slavery."[99] If Savarkar's solution to the material bargain of colonial rule was to inculcate a shared moral drive for positive liberty, then Locke's property-based social contract was also out of the question. Even Rousseau's iteration of the social contract fell afoul of India's internecine quarrels. For Rousseau, general will was possible only where a relative equality of lifestyles and wealth could be assumed. Without this, citizens could not rationally conclude that their private and public interests coincided.[100]

Instead, Savarkar's recourse to conspiratorial and spiritual appeals to a visceral sense of dharma were intended to circumvent India's utility-centered political order. This order was constituted by the self-interest of the public sphere/colonial state, the compromised market structured by these interests, and private households divided by the community interests of religion and caste.[101] It was left to vernacular assertion, hearsay, and myth to ride the crest of an anticolonial revolutionary wave and act as an inspirational "expression of the national soul" to "unite the hearts of the people with ease."[102] Savarkar distinguished this metaphysics of virtue from that of instrumental reason and private utility. These motivations differentiated acts of collective politics from individual or group interest. Even when the acts performed were identical, it was the motivation alone that defined the political:

> The term political can be distinguished from private only by the criterion of the motive of the act and not by the act itself. No act is or can be by itself political. For even a rebellion if that proceeds entirely for my own bread and butter is not political and ought not to create any sympathy in others, unless indeed my cause was only a case in hand and was fought out for establishing

[98]Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651), ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge, 1991), Ch. 16; Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, vol 3, *Hobbes and Civil Service* (Cambridge, 2002), Ch. 6.

[99]Savarkar, *Indian War of Independence*, 40–70, 442.

[100]Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Of the Social Contract* (1762), ed. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge, 1997), 60.

[101]Savarkar, *India the Enemy Camp*, 64–5.

[102]Savarkar, *Indian War of Independence*, 70–71.

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> a general privilege or in vindicating of a general right. The Thugs fought battles and were not political in the sense of sacrificing for the General Good. But even the arson cases of flogging the prime ministers [*sic*] by a suffragist in England had been recognised by the British Government itself as political because the motive was neither personal aggrandizement nor revenge but the advance of some social good. The means may be wrong, even criminal or not, the Motive counts so far as the moral value, and here national aspect, of the act is concerned.[103]

The revolutionary break with public action as self-interest or will to power was, Savarkar believed, "a complete rearrangement in the life of historic man."[104] He applied the same logic to the distinction between acts of physical coercion and public-spirited instances of "people who gave sacrifice." In and of itself, the surface-level act may appear to be "a violence" but a collective revolutionary will which "brought about a change" by such means was "not considered violent."[105]

In 1909, Savarkar discussed this positive account of sovereign violence in London with a fellow critic of liberalism and theorist of violence: Mohandas Gandhi.[106] The Mahatma was more thorough in his critique of the contractarian basis of modern liberal society. He critiqued the mediation of "Western" law, medicine, and technology in life and implicated them in India's subjugation as much as the interested bargains of colonial politics. For Gandhi, the transformation of this state of affairs was only possible through a conservative retreat to the life of the Indian village which had incubated and preserved ahimsa (nonviolence). The practice of ahimsa entailed nonviolent withdrawal from the violent coercion of "Western" modes of power—the state, economy, and civil society—ultimately leading to their collapse and moral realignment. Savarkar's suspicion of Gandhi arose from the fact that in rejecting violence the Mahatma forsook any chance of rupturing the life of "historical man" through monumental heroism. The incommensurability of their tactics was obvious given that nonviolent resistance sat at the apex of a hierarchy of courageous action for Gandhi. While 1857 represented the pinnacle of Indian bravery and politics for Savarkar, the Mahatma viewed it as a frenzied and degrading anarchy.[107]

VI. The apocalyptic dream and the hero

The final task of *IWI* was to suggest how Indian popular will might unite with a single sovereign personality without sacrificing a part of itself. Savarkar engaged idiosyncratically with the Swiss jurist Johann Kaspar Bluntschli's *Theory of the Modern State* (hereafter *TMS*) to consider the scaling up of popular sovereignty into an individual personality without the intercession of minor or lesser sovereigns. Bluntschli's work was sufficiently important to Savarkar that he kept a

[103]Tatya [Savarkar] to Bal, 4 Aug. 1918, in Savarkar, *An Echo from Andamans*, 65.

[104]Savarkar, *Indian War of Independence*, 4.

[105]Confidential report for week ending 26 April 1946, Baroda Records Office, Vadodara (hereafter BRO), Confidential Documents, Bundle 6, File 140, 294.

[106]Mohandas K. Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 20 (Ahmedabad, 1966), 104–5.

[107]Faisal Devji, *The Impossible Indian: Gandhi and the Temptations of Violence* (London, 2012), 11–12.

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copy in his prison library.[108] *TMS* was conceived as a "unified theory of the state" and was composed alongside Bluntschli's revisionist account of the so-called "civil war" to unify Germany (*Bürgerkrieg*). He had also lived through the short Swiss civil war (*Sonderbundskrieg*) of 1847. Overcoming civil strife in an age of popular politics forced him to consider how national will and sovereign command might be mutually and simultaneously constituted.[109] Consequently, Bluntschli rejected the natural-rights theories of Grotius and Kant in order to adopt a more scientific view of politics based on increasing sociability over the long arc of history. He was also committed to a cosmopolitan end of history culminating in a universal state with nations pooling their national sovereignty in a federal system.[110] Bluntschli understood the initial formation of the modern state as the coming together of a cultural nation into a political *Volk*. The popular state emerged only when that *Volk* was represented by a sovereign personality. Sovereignty did not inhere in the state or people as discrete entities but required a real individual to actualize it.[111] The "intention was to guide the majority by the rule of ideas," but Bluntschli realized that "personality was always stronger than fiction."[112] This drew on Hegel's insight in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* that republican arguments distinguishing between popular sovereignty and royal sovereignty were a "garbled notion of the people."[113] Bluntschli wanted to collapse popular will into state sovereignty by invoking political representation through the figurehead of the monarch.[114] To speak of sovereignty, therefore, was to speak of "the politically organised whole."[115]

Savarkar modified Bluntschli's account of sovereign personality, giving it a populist twist in the form of the heroic redeemer. To do this, he identified the puppet Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, as the personification of revolutionary popular will in 1857. Savarkar recounted how the rebellious sepoys marched on Delhi and offered to elevate Bahadur Shah to the sovereignty of all India.[116] For Savarkar, this represented a break with Islamic dynasties of old who were "not chosen by the people of the land" and so represented political domination and war "without a truce." It was only through the emperor's subsequent proclamation that "the whole nation" could be declared "free and liberated."[117] Savarkar also drew attention to the plurality of possibilities for national sovereignty through the rise of numerous heroic redeemers who could take up the burden. Recognizing his own age and frailty, the old emperor in his patriotism was described as scouring the "Rajas of Jeypore, Jodhpur, Bikaneer, Alwar, etc." for a more virile and dynamic leader to take the fight to the British. While the emperor

[108]V. D. Savarkar, *My Transportation for Life* (Bombay, 1984), 271–2.

[109]Duncan Kelly, "Popular Sovereignty as State Theory in the Nineteenth Century," in Richard Bourke and Quentin Skinner, eds., *Popular Sovereignty in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, 2016), 270–96, at 277–9.

[110]Johann Kaspar Bluntschli, *The Theory of the State* (Kitchener, 2000), 30–31.

[111]Kelly, "Popular Sovereignty," 278.

[112]Bluntschli, *Theory of the State*, 393.

[113]Quoted in Kelly, "Popular Sovereignty," 273.

[114]Ibid., 283.

[115]Bluntschli, *Theory of the State*, 393.

[116]Savarkar, *Indian War of Independence*, 243–5.

[117]Ibid., 233–5.

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was prepared to abdicate, Savarkar has him insist that a candidate must first emerge who can "organise and concentrate the different forces of the nation and will unify the whole people *in himself*."[118] Embodied popular will emerged conterminously with Savarkar's heroes whose virtuous violence simultaneously reconstituted the contours of Indian political community and sovereign authority. Redolent of populist personalism, Savarkar outlined the true political nature of each of their endeavors by recounting the purity of their intention on behalf of the people. Monarchs like the queen of Jhansi, rebel Brahmin soldiers like Mangal Pandey, and Islamic scholars like Moulavi Ahmadullah Shah were garlanded in turn.

The memory of reclaimed Hindu sovereignty from Mughal dominion during the late seventeenth century became a paradoxical antecedent in Savarkar's extolling of Hindu–Muslim unity in *IWI*. Savarkar repeatedly waxes lyrical about the reign of Shivaji who carved the Maratha Empire out from the faltering Mughal realm. In so doing, Savarkar erects Hindu national sovereignty as the appropriate antithesis to the perceived Islamic political and religious dominion of the preceding era.[119] Nana Saheb and the queen of Jhansi's prominence in *IWI* may, therefore, be said to evoke Hindu supremacy since the former was heir to the title of peshwa (the leaders of the Maratha Confederacy) and the latter's father was courtier to Peshwa Baji Rao II. Nevertheless, Savarkar stressed that the common experience of having their *swadharma* and *swaraj* attacked by the British instilled in both Hindus and Muslims a new concord and national sociability in 1857.[120] As he later explained to his brother, a liberal sociological evolution could take place once a "constitutional breach" was achieved by "revolution." This was how he envisaged the revolt against Britain and also how he regarded the overthrow of Mughal dominion by Shivaji. The rise of the Maratha kingdom forced a historical and political breach by establishing Hindu–Muslim parity. Following the restoration of their pride and virtue—so essential to Savarkar's republican notion of liberty—Hindus could set aside their resentments. This new equivalence provided the only basis on which both groups could collectively pursue political freedom in the future. Subsequently, 1857 demonstrated that this parity could foster the evolution of a new hybrid nationality in India.[121] Laxmibai, the queen of Jhansi, emerged in *IWI* as just such a postrevolutionary historical synthesis. She personified Hindu–Muslim peoplehood in a single sovereign will by riding into battle flanked by her Hindu and Muslim ladies in waiting.[122] Savarkar made this clear when he exclaimed, "In her are concentrated the powers of all the Sirdars, of all the Thakurs and of Rajas," and that she had become the "impersonation of Swaraj" and the "incarnation of Liberty."[123] Tellingly, Savarkar repeatedly dubs Laxmibai the "Kaustubha of Liberty," linking the mythic jewel representing universal pure consciousness with Laxmibai's transfiguration from feudal dynast to Mother India.[124]

[118]Ibid., 273, emphasis added.
[119]Savarkar, *Indian War of Independence*, vii–viii.
[120]Ibid., 7–8.
[121]Tatya [Savarkar] to Bal, 6 July 1920, in Savarkar, *An Echo from Andamans*, 90; Savarkar, *Indian War of Independence*, 233.
[122]Savarkar, *Indian War of Independence*, 398.
[123]Ibid., 378.
[124]Ibid., 380.

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For those heroes who could not claim a royal or political lineage, Savarkar imputed to them the attributes of the Kshatriya (warrior caste). The popularity of Shivaji and the Maratha Confederacy resurfaced again because of nostalgia for Hindu political resurgence, but also because of the power of personal leadership and the possibility of cross-caste mobilization which the example promised.[125] For instance, Savarkar drew particular attention to the patriotic war spirit of the dutiful, honourable, and proud *mawalas* in Shivaji's army (soldiers of the Kunbi nonelite agricultural caste).[126] Savarkar also identified the heroic leadership of the newly conscious people with Kshatriya attributes—particularly pride. Mangal Pandey was among the first to incite his company regiment, offended by their cartridges greased with animal fat, to violent defence of religious pride. Though Pandey was a Brahmin, Savarkar presents him as a model of Kshatriya pride and dutiful action.[127] The Brahmins that Savarkar did acknowledge in *IWI* only offer "prayers" like the liberals' strategy of "petitions"—which are welcome—but insufficient by way of enacting the popular will.[128] Pandey's dutiful acts and their memory, however, exemplify the common weal in action and enjoin the faithful to emulation. Savarkar presented Pandey's Kshatriya spirit as embodying the intercaste will of all Indians so that not "even a low-class man could be found … to act as [his] executioner." During the conflict, the "appellation of 'Panday'" was said to apply to everyone fighting for "religion and country."[129]

Savarkar did not reserve Kshatriya attributes for Hindus. An entire chapter is devoted to the exploits of Moulavi Ahmadullah Shah, a Muslim scholar who led the rebel forces in Awadh. Here, Savarkar is perfectly comfortable appropriating the language of jihad in order to illustrate the equivalence between Kshatriya martial pride and that of the Islamic martyr. The role of proud Hindu yeomanry was now played by the *ghazis*—Muslim soldiers emboldened with "martyr-spirits" whose suicidal bravery was, for Savarkar, unparalleled in human history.[130] Amadullah Shah represented an acceptable nationally bounded Islam no longer associated with a Hindu "defensive war against foreign encroachers" from "Arabistan." Shivaji's conquests were seen to have laid that question to rest and Maratha popular sovereignty had overcome the Hindu "self-seekers" who facilitated Mughal dominion.[131] In Savarkar's final estimation, the achievement of political parity meant that Hindus and Muslims were now a "vox populi" engaged in a common call to arms against a new foreign domination and constituency of corrupt native interests.[132] Divested of its political dominion, Amadullah Shah's religious piety could now demonstrate

> that a deep faith in the doctrines of Islam is in no way inconsistent with, or antagonistic to, a deep and all-powerful love of the Indian soil; that a

[125]Ibid., 356.
[126]Ibid., 381.
[127]For Savarkar's use of the Bhagavadgita to encourage dutiful action see Chaturvedi, "Rethinking Knowledge."
[128]Savarkar, *Indian War of Independence*, 29, 147, 156, 162, 192.
[129]Ibid., 88–9.
[130]Ibid., 366–9.
[131]Ibid., 233–4.
[132]Ibid., 395, 444.

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> Mahomedan, dominated by an uncommonly spiritual impulse, can, at the same time, nay, by the very fact of his being so dominated, be also a patriot of the highest excellence, offering his very life-blood on the altar of Mother India, so that she might hold her head as an independent and free country; and that the true believer in Islam will feel it a pride to belong to, and a privilege to die for, his mother-country![133]

The spontaneous mutual constitution of popular will and messianic leadership allowed Savarkar to give the 1857 rebellion the "I will" of a living and unitary sovereign personality. Collective "kshatriyahood" supposed that populist heroes in the periphery would scale up into a "freely chosen monarch" at the center representing a "United States of India."[134]

VII. From Hindu–Muslim brotherhood to Hindu *rashtra*

By 1923, Savarkar was preaching a Hindu majoritarian popular sovereignty developed in response to an increasingly democratic Indian politics. In such an environment, his paranoia about sectional interests focused disproportionately on instances of Muslim minority pleading. Internecine regional violence inspired by the Khilafat movement and Gandhian noncooperation in the 1920s also prompted Savarkar to reevaluate his ideas. The 1921 Malabar Rebellion drew upon pan-Islamic and Gandhian mobilization to attack mostly Hindu feudal privilege and violently restore Islamic kingship. Even as Savarkar's writings shifted to Hindu majoritarianism, he nevertheless refrained from fixating on a democratic basis for popular sovereignty; his insistence upon a unitary and living sovereignty achieved through meaningful acts of populist virtue continued to underpin his political theory.

This continuity is evident well into the 1940s. As president of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha (All-India Hindu Grand Assembly), Savarkar proclaimed in April 1944 that he supported social and political reform in Hindu-majority princely states so long as democracy did not mean the subversion of unity and sovereignty.[135] His concern was animated by the popularity of "secular" parties, electoral fragmentation due to class and caste, and the combination of these enabling a Muslim bloc to "take Pakistan on the strength of their power."[136] In response, Savarkar concocted a more homogeneous Hindu sovereignty bound by common blood. Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, and Christians were mere converts and had to admit their primordial "Hinduness." Heroic Hindu princes personifying "prestige, stability and power" continued to embody this reconfigured notion of the people in the face of a newly constituted politics of interest. Now, it was "the Congressites, the Communists, [and] the Moslems," who became the object of Savarkar's revolutionary violence.[137]

[133]Ibid., 370.

[134]Ibid., 62–3, 234; Tatya [Savarkar] to Bal, 15 Feb. 1914, in Savarkar, *An Echo from Andamans*, 23.

[135]S. R. Bakshi, *The Making of India and Pakistan: Selected Documents*, vol. 3, *Ideology of Hindu Mahasabha and Other Political Parties* (New Delhi, 1977), 545.

[136]Confidential report for week ending 26 April 1946, BRO, Confidential Documents, Bundle 6, File 140, 293.

[137]Savarkar to the maharaja of Jaipur, 19 July 1944, NMML, Hindu Mahasabha Papers, C-39, f. 51.

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Despite this turn to political Islamophobia, popular will actualized by a living sovereign personality remained at the heart of Savarkar's thought. This was obvious from his attitude towards princely states that already had Hindu sovereigns. In 1944, he urged native states like Jaipur to establish Hindu Mahasabha cells "whose loyalty was beyond question." Members had to demonstrate their commitment to his model of genuine politics outlined three decades earlier in *IWI* through personal "oaths of loyalties" and the performance of clandestine "underground activities," even though the Mahasabha was a legal public organization.[138] Savarkar clarified this obligation. The Mahasabha was not an organization of Hindu spirituality (*Hindu-Dharma-Sabha*) like the religious reform associations that had proliferated since the nineteenth century; rather, it was a revolutionary political organization aimed at "shaping the destiny" of the sovereign Hindu nation (*Hindu-Rashtra-Sabha*).[139]

Hindutva emerged as both rupture and continuity with Savarkar's earlier thought. Savarkar's turn to Hindu chauvinism redeployed the concepts of republican liberty, sovereignty, and populism that inspired *IWI*. No longer exclusively committed to Hindu–Muslim sovereignty arrayed against colonial interest, the new dispensation favored Hindu majoritarianism as the default sovereign category. The latest incarnation of an allegedly disintegrating politics of liberal interest—that of Muslim minority rights—was to be nullified by renewed appeals to republican virtue and violence.

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[138]Ibid.; Vinayak Chaturvedi, "Vinayak and Me: 'Hindutva' and the Politics of Naming," *Social History* 28/2 (2003), 155–73, at 163.

[139]V. D. Savarkar, "Presidential Address at the 19th Session of the All India Hindu Mahasabha," in V. D. Savarkar, *Hindu Sangathan: Its Ideology and Immediate Programme* (Bombay, 1940), 1–40, at 11.

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