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Vinayak Chaturvedi

## Vinayak & me: *Hindutva* and the politics of naming<sup>\*</sup>

During the spring of 1969, my grandmother Bai had taken me to Dr Dattatrey Sadashiv Parchure for a physical examination. Apparently, as an infant I had been quite ill and Bai had given up on standard remedies prescribed by my paediatrician. She had convinced my parents that a consultation with Dr Parchure might reveal alternative therapies for my illness, as he specialized in Ayurvedic medicine and had acquired a prominent reputation as a local healer in the central Indian city of Gwalior. After a brief examination, as I am told, Dr Parchure queried my grandmother about my name when he was filling out a prescription for some medication. Bai replied that the family had not given me an official first name as yet, but that I had an informal household name. Dr Parchure asked if it would be possible for him to give me the name Vinayak, and my grandmother accepted the doctor's request.

Unfortunately, Bai passed away before I could speak to her about the interaction with Dr Parchure. In a recent conversation, my mother stated that Bai was initially resistant to the idea of giving me any official name, Vinayak or otherwise, but she only agreed out of respect for Dr Parchure. It is common practice in India for families to wait several years before giving formal names to children: some argue this has to do with wanting to give a name that matches a child's personality; others say these are the cultural practices of a society that has high infant mortality rates.<sup>1</sup> In my case, I suspect that Bai was concerned about the latter, especially as I was regularly ill.

Throughout my childhood, aunts and uncles had often recounted the story of my name and I had grown accustomed to the idea that it had somewhat of an unusual origin. Relatives also had reminded me that Vinayak was another name of the elephant-headed god Ganesh, who

<sup>\*</sup> I would like to thank Dr Upendra Parchure for his generosity in narrating his father's life-story on two separate occasions in Gwalior, India, in April 2001 and May 2001. I have greatly benefited from advice and important comments from Tom Mertes, Bina Parekh and David Washbrook. Warm thanks are due to Geoff Eley and Gina Morantz-Sanchez for a valuable reading of an earlier draft, and especially for suggesting that I develop the ideas in the article within a wider social historical context.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents Yogeshwar and Kusum Chaturvedi for patiently answering my questions about the historical nature of family life and nationalist politics in central and western India: themes central to the arguments discussed in this paper.

<sup>1</sup> I thank Heidi Tinsman for reminding me of this point. Also, see Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, 2000), 242.

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was an auspicious deity celebrated as the remover of obstacles.<sup>2</sup> It was a common name among some communities in western and southern India, but certainly not within my clan in north India. I had long accepted that Dr Parchure, as a Marashtrian Deshastha brahmin, had probably favoured the popular Ganesh and felt the need to give the name Vinayak to sick children who needed many obstacles to be removed: after all, it had been an age-old practice to name children after Hindu deities. The story of my name could have ended here and I often wish it had. But those who are more familiar with the complexities of studying oral narratives will know that 'hidden transcripts' and silences often have a history of their own: this was especially true in the uncovering of the secret origins of my name. At some point in the mid-1980s, one of my aunts revealed a piece of information about Dr Parchure's past that had never been voiced to me before, even though it was clear that the entire family was well aware of its significance: Dr Parchure had been arrested and convicted as a conspirator in the 1948 murder of Mohandas K. Gandhi – the Mahatma.

From that day, I began to wonder if Dr Parchure's desire to name male children Vinayak had anything to do with his involvement in Gandhi's murder. I remember quickly searching through my books for any information about the murder and the trial. I was looking for a clue that would satisfy my curiosity, when I came across a copy of a book I had kept from my first undergraduate course in modern Indian history – *Freedom at Midnight* by Larry Collins and Dominique LaPierre. I recalled that somewhere within the text were the names of the men tried for killing Gandhi: Nathuram Vinayak Godse, Gopal Vinayak Godse, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Narayan Apte, Vishnu Karkare, Digamber Badge, Madan Lal, Shankar Kisayya and Dattatreya S. Parchure. As I read over the names of the accused, I began to see how the story of my name may have had less to do with the god Ganesh, and more to do with a legacy of the Mahatma's murder. Yet, at the same time, I also felt that my suspicion might have been unfounded; after all, Savarkar was the only one with the name Vinayak, and the Godse brothers had inherited their father's first name following a practice common in western India. Additional conversations with my parents and relatives about the links between Parchure, the accused and the naming issue left me dissatisfied, with no additional information. However, for reasons that continue to evade me, I had decided not to investigate further into this story.

In April 2001, I returned to Gwalior after a long interval. I cannot remember how Uma Bua – my father's sister – and I began speaking of Dr Parchure one afternoon, but it must have had something to do with recounting stories about Bai. Uma Bua, as a secular, lifelong supporter

<sup>2</sup> For an etymology of the name Vinayak, see A. K. Narain, 'Ganeśa: a protohistory of the idea and the icon' in Robert L. Brown (ed.), *Ganesh: Studies of an Asian God* (Albany, 1991), 21–5. Narain argues that by the fifth century A.D. Ganesh was popularly referred to as Vinayak, a name literally meaning 'a leader or guide for regulating, controlling, or implementing order and discipline' (21–2). Ganesh also acquired additional names in this period, some based on the physical characteristics of an elephant, others determined by his position as the lord or leader of deities. In all, the literature on this topic suggests that Ganesh has 108 names. For a list of the names and definitions in English, Gujarati and

Marathi, see <<http://www.rediff.com/gujarati/2002/feb/20ganesh.htm>>; <<http://www.esakal.com/ganeshutsav/names.htm>>; <<http://www.mantraonnet.com/108ganeshnames.html>>.

For a brief discussion on the significance of the number 108 within Hindu traditions, see <<http://www.zen-forum.com/a13/b2001/c12/d3/e783/z7>>.

For a collection of Ganesh images and forms, see <<http://www.eprarthana.com/html/iganesh.asp>>; <<http://astrology.indiainfo.com/festivals/ganesh/ganesh-names.html>>. Also, see Paul B. Courtright, *Ganeśa: Lord of Obstacles, Lord of Beginnings* (New York, 1985).

of the Congress Party, had regularly condemned the rise of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and for her the conspirators to Gandhi's assassination were some of the earlier 'trouble-makers' in a lineage leading up to today's right-wing leadership.<sup>3</sup> She argued that Dr Parchure's politics were fundamentally problematic, if not completely corrupt, especially as he had supplied the automatic pistol used by Nathuram Godse to kill Gandhi. As much as I had chosen to avoid the subject of my name, I now felt that it was impossible to do so. I wanted to meet Dr Parchure; I wanted to ask him about the significance of naming; I wanted to know why the name Vinayak was so important; I wanted to know who was Vinayak.

Unfortunately, I had waited too long: Dr Parchure was dead. In fact, he passed away in 1985, a couple of years before I first discovered his links to Gandhi's murder. Uma Bua suggested that I could speak to one of his two sons who still lived in Gwalior. I contacted Upendra Dattatreya Parchure: he was trained as an Ayurvedic doctor, like the senior Dr Parchure, and continued to practise in his father's office. I wanted to retrace Bai's steps and return to the location where the story of my name began. This seemed like the obvious place to start. Initially, I was apprehensive about how to introduce myself and explain why I was interested in speaking about Dr Parchure. There were important problems to be considered prior to the meeting: some intellectual, some political, some ethical and some personal. An interview to secure oral testimony about the past is generally a difficult, complex process in itself, but in this case, the nature of the problem was linked to some desire to come to terms with my own subjectivity: that is, not only a subjectivity of an oral historian, but also that I was somehow the passive subject of some historical and ideological processes intertwined with the life-story of Dr Parchure.<sup>4</sup>

My first meeting with Upendra Parchure was brief, barely lasting ten minutes. I introduced myself as someone whom his father had named Vinayak; I narrated how my grandmother had consulted his father when I was ill; I explained that I was hoping to have a conversation about his father. I also made clear that I was researching modern Indian history and that I was interested in writing about the intellectual development of Hindu nationalism. The doctor's first question was whether my parents had decided to keep the name Vinayak, or replace it with another. I assured him that my grandmother had promised his father back in 1969 that the family would not change the name, and that my formal first name was Vinayak. He was obviously pleased, but now wanted to know my surname. Those who are familiar with the legacies of India's multicultural politics will know that family names often reveal a great deal about one's background: caste, language, region and even class.<sup>5</sup> I was aware that my Chaturvedi kinship-affiliation would identify me as an educated, middle-class, local, Hindi-speaking brahmin, but I was also acutely cognizant of the fact that, in this situation, my position of social privilege would be welcomed by Upendra Parchure, who came from a similar, but Marashtrian background. After a few additional questions about my father and grandfather, establishing a patriarchal genealogy, the doctor asked if it would be possible for us to meet in his home where we could speak privately and at length; he stated that the kinds of things I

<sup>3</sup> See Bruce Graham, *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics: The Origins and Development of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh* (Cambridge, 1990).

<sup>4</sup> On a similar theme, see Amitav Ghosh, *In an Antique Land: History in the Guise of a Traveler's Tale* (New York, 1994).

<sup>5</sup> For a useful discussion on related themes, see James C. Scott, John Tehranian and Jeremy Mathias, 'The production of legal identities proper to states: the case of the permanent family surname', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, XLIV, 1 (2002), 4-44.

wanted to know were best discussed outside the purview of his patients and staff. We agreed to meet the following week.

From the onset of the second meeting, I realized that Upendra Parchure was uncertain about the nature of the interview. He repeated his questions from our first meeting, and wanted to know what I intended to do with the information about his father. I stated that I was interested in knowing more about his father for two primary reasons: first, I had long wondered about the origins of my name; and, second, I wanted to write about his father's political activities in the locality as part of a research study on Hindu nationalist intellectuals. Apparently satisfied with my explanation, Upendra Parchure pursued an in-depth conversation about his father's public and private life for the next three hours. It began with a narrative of some major events about the senior Dr Parchure's life.

Upendra Parchure wanted me to know that more than anything else, his father, who was born in 1902, was a strong man, a strong nationalist and a strong Hindu. He described his father with awe and pointed out that he was a big, powerful man with broad shoulders, thick thighs and large arms.<sup>6</sup> His physical strength and martial prowess were also illustrated by the fact that he was a skilled wrestler, winning the Gwalior State title in his late teens. Although specific details of Dr Parchure's training were not discussed, what can be inferred is that the process of becoming a local, or regional wrestling champion, would have involved years of regimented and disciplined training with a guru and a cohort throughout childhood.<sup>7</sup> The Indian wrestler is typically dedicated to a distinct ideology that is centred on somatic principles, and requires an acceptance of an ethos of wrestling as a way of life.<sup>8</sup> Initially, I was unclear why Upendra Parchure emphasized his father's masculinity, until later in the conversation it occurred to me this was a consistent theme of how Dr Parchure was remembered in his personal and public life. This point was further clarified when Upendra Parchure celebrated the values and ethics his father learned while training as a wrestler, linking them to the development of his politics as a nationalist. It is not clear whether Dr Parchure intended to make this connection himself, or this is how his son remembered him. However, recent scholarship suggests that central to Hindu nationalism from the 1920s has been the need to set political agendas which relied upon power, masculinity and strength, both discursively and institutionally.<sup>9</sup> Dr Parchure's political

<sup>6</sup> For a further physical description of Dr Parchure, see Manohar Malgonkar, *The Men Who Killed Gandhi* (Madras, 1978), 135.

<sup>7</sup> See Joseph S. Alter's, *The Wrestler's Body: Identity and Ideology in North India* (Berkeley, 1992), especially chap. 7 on 'Wrestling tournaments and the body's recreation'.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, 1. This point is also discussed in Nita Kumar, *The Artisans of Banaras: Popular Culture and Identity, 1880–1986* (Princeton, 1988), 111–24; John Rosselli, 'The self-image of effeteness: physical education and nationalism in nineteenth-century Bengal', *Past & Present*, LXXXVI (1980), 121–48; Phillip B. Zarrili, 'Repositioning the body, practice, power, and self in an Indian martial art' in Carol A. Breckenridge (ed.), *Consuming Modernity: Public Culture in a South Asian World* (Minneapolis,

1995), 183–215.

<sup>9</sup> See Tapan Basu, Pradip Datta, Sumit Sarkar, Tanika Sarkar and Sambuddha Sen, *Khaki Shorts Saffron Flags: A Critique of the Hindu Right* (New Delhi, 1993); Ashis Nandy, 'Final encounter: the politics of the assassination of Gandhi' in his *At the Edge of Psychology* (Delhi, 1980), 70–98; Alter, *op. cit.*, 237–55. Related themes outside the social context of India are also discussed in John Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan, and the Perfect Man: The White Male Body and the Challenge of Modernity in America* (New York, 2001); Peter Filene, *Him/Her/Self: Gender Identities in Modern America* (Baltimore, 1998, 3rd edn); Stephen Garton, 'The scales of suffering: love, death and Victorian masculinity', *Social History*, XXVII, 1 (2002), 40–58.

career may have had a beginning during his teens in ideologies of 'wrestling nationalism',<sup>10</sup> but according to his son, the application of some of these strategies later in his life translated into brutal forms of violence, at home and in the public sphere. At another level, as I was soon to discover, the assertion of masculinity was also at the centre of naming male children Vinayak.

In 1935, Dr Parchure founded the Gwalior Branch of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha (literally, the Great Hindu Association), an organization first established in 1915 to defend and protect Hindu interests. The idea of creating the national-level Hindu Mahasabha, however, emerged out of a regional collective known as the Punjab Hindu Sabha, which had originally incorporated a wide range of ideas of high-caste Hindu thinkers on the themes of nationalism and patriotism.<sup>11</sup> By the 1920s, the All-India Hindu Mahasabha had transformed its image to a 'hardline' organization, marginalizing the moderate Hindu leadership from within. This marked an important juncture in nationalist politics of the early twentieth century, as the development of Hindu nationalism was firmly established, incorporating the idea of creating a powerful and militant Hinduism that was both anti-British and anti-Muslim.<sup>12</sup> For Upendra Parchure, his father ranked among a group of elite Hindu nationalists in India during this period, with Dr Parchure establishing himself as President of the local branch of the organization for the purpose of promoting an independent Hindu nation. He led a grass-roots movement travelling to villages and small towns in central India – between Gwalior, Bhind, Sheopur and Guna – with the aim of 'injecting a pure Hindu spirit' and creating a pan-Hindu jati, including both high and low castes. It occurred to me during the conversation that the ideas expressed about Dr Parchure's politics appeared consistent with those articulated by Vinayak Savarkar, and it came as little surprise when Upendra Parchure described his father as a 'true Savarkarite', who had for many years followed Savarkar's writings on revolutionary politics, Hindutva and anti-colonial nationalism. I felt that the mystery of my name had finally been solved: Dr Parchure was evoking Vinayak Savarkar when naming male children. I wanted to know more about the naming issue, but Upendra Parchure continued on more important themes: his father's place within an emergent Hindu nationalism and his connections with Savarkar, Nathuram Godse and Gandhi's murder. I remained silent and listened.

Dr Parchure had trained as a medical student and received his M.B.B.S. from Grant Medical College in Bombay during the 1920s. According to Upendra Parchure, his father continued to practise medicine in Bombay until 1935, when he was dismissed for insubordination from the Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy Hospital. By 1937 he had become disillusioned with the methods of

<sup>10</sup> Alter, *op. cit.*, 261–3. For a comparative perspective on the related themes of military aspects of national character and the construction of manliness see, for example, Sam Pryke, 'The popularity of nationalism in the early British Boy Scout movement', *Social History*, xxiii, 3 (1998), 309–24; Robert Morell (ed.), *Changing Men in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg, 2001); Jonathan Rutherford, *Forever England: Reflections on Race, Masculinity and Empire* (London, 1997); Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America* (New York, 1996); Mrinali Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the*

*'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester, 1995).

<sup>11</sup> Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics 1925 to the 1990s* (London, 1996), 17–25; Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss, *Reinventing India: Liberalization, Hindu Nationalism and Popular Democracy* (Cambridge, 2000), 182–3.

<sup>12</sup> See Gyanendra Pandey, 'Which of us are Hindus?' in Gyanendra Pandey (ed.), *Hindus and Others – The Question of Identity in India Today* (New Delhi, 1993), 238–72.

'western' medicine and began a study of Ayurvedic medicine, specializing in paediatrics.<sup>13</sup> The narrative of Dr Parchure's professional life appeared rather fragmented, and little else was discussed about the significance of the events around being fired, or why Ayurveda acquired such an important role. However, it may be worth saying something about the relationship between the medical profession and nationalism as a way to further contextualize the development of Dr Parchure's politics in the mid-1930s.<sup>14</sup>

The decades of the late nineteenth century were marked by the 'return of Hindu science', especially in reviving the fields of 'indigenous' medicine, especially Ayurveda.<sup>15</sup> It has been argued that this revivalist movement in medicine was predominantly a 'corollary' to the emergence of Hindu nationalism in the 1890s.<sup>16</sup> At one level, Ayurveda represented a type of 'authentic' response to colonial intervention in medicine, especially in a period when state policies to control epidemic diseases, like the bubonic plague, were popularly considered coercive and draconian.<sup>17</sup> Ayurvedic medicine was viewed as a legitimate replacement to the western system which had come to dominate with British colonial expansion in India. At another level, though, Ayurveda also provided a complementary direction to the development of western medicine that could rely upon Indian contributions to the making of modern science.<sup>18</sup> Indian nationalists, like Bal Gangadhar Tilak and M. K. Gandhi, had engaged in public debates on the importance of the medical profession in India, but neither wholeheartedly accepted the claim of the 'revivalists' who sought to replace western medical practices with the 'indigenous' Ayurveda.<sup>19</sup> However, there were doctors trained in western medicine who were

<sup>13</sup> The specialization of Ayurvedic paediatrics is called Kaumarabhritya. Its origins date back to the ancient text Artharvaveda, defining the branch of Ayurveda as 'the management of infants and advises . . . to the means of rectifying the morbid conditions of milk of the wet-nurses and of curing various diseases caused by unwholesome milk and planetary influence'. Cited in Girindranath Mukhopadhyaya, *History of Indian Medicine: From the Earliest Ages to the Present Time*, vol. 1 (New Delhi, 1974, 2nd edn; original edition 1922), 3. Also, see Dr C. Chaturvedi, Dr Romesh Sharma and Prof. P. V. Tewari, *Advances in Ayurvedic Pediatrics* (Varanasi, 1988).

<sup>14</sup> See David Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-Century India* (Berkeley, 1993); Roger Jeffery, 'Doctors and Congress: the role of medical men and medical politics in Indian nationalism' in Mike Shepperdson and Colin Simmons (eds), *The Indian National Congress and the Political Economy of India 1885-1985* (Aldershot, 1988), 160-73.

<sup>15</sup> David Arnold, *Science, Technology and Medicine in Colonial India, The New Cambridge History of India*, III, 5 (Cambridge, 2000), 169-210. I thank Douglas Haynes for this reference.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, 176. For a related discussion on the shifts in the field of medicine in Britain during the nineteenth century, see Robert Gray, 'Medical men, industrial labour and the state in Britain, 1830-50', *Social History*, XVI, 1 (1991), 19-43.

<sup>17</sup> See Vinayak Chaturvedi, 'Colonial Power and Agrarian Politics in Kheda District (Gujarat), c.1890-1930' (Ph.D., University of Cambridge, 2001), 103-48; David Arnold, 'Touching the body: perspectives on the Indian plague, 1896-1900' in Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies V* (Delhi, 1985), 55-90.

<sup>18</sup> Gyan Prakash, *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India* (Princeton, 1999), 149-52; Arnold, *Science, Technology and Medicine*, *op. cit.*, 169-70, 176-7. Also, see Charles Leslie, 'The ambiguities of medical revivalism in modern India' in Charles Leslie (ed.), *Asian Medical Systems: A Comparative Study* (Berkeley, 1976), 356-67. On related themes, see Ashis Nandy, *Alternative Sciences: Creativity and Authenticity in Two Indian Scientists* (Delhi, 1995).

<sup>19</sup> In 1897, Tilak called for a 'judicious combination' of the two systems of medicine, while Gandhi remained altogether troubled with all fields of medicine. Arnold, *Colonizing the Body*, *op. cit.*, 321, n. 100. On the other hand, Gandhi condemned 'European medicine', arguing that 'the English have certainly effectively used the medical profession for holding us . . . [and] for political gain', and 'to study European medicine is to deepen our slavery'. M. K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule* (Ahmedabad, 1990, 8th edn), 52-4. Also, Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (Minneapolis, 1993), 93.

inspired by the Ayurvedic revivalism and sought to professionalize and modernize the 'indigenous' tradition by publishing textbooks, and opening colleges, hospitals and clinics, while also participating in the 'Freedom Movement'.<sup>20</sup> It has been suggested that the participation of these doctors in formal nationalist politics increased during the inter-war period.<sup>21</sup> According to Upendra Parchure, his father's decision to take up Ayurveda after abandoning western medicine occurred in this period, a time when medical politics became increasingly significant in public debates throughout India. Dr Parchure's decision to study Ayurvedic medicine was in consonance with the practices of other doctors throughout India, most of whom were also inspired by the ideology of Hindu revivalism, a key component of the emergent Hindu nationalism.

In 1939, Dr Parchure met Vinayak Savarkar for the first time at a Hindu Mahasabha conference. According to Upendra Parchure, the meeting was an important moment for his father, who, by this point, considered himself a 'disciple' of Savarkar. Dr Parchure, like many other Indian nationalists, had followed Savarkar's illustrious political career as a 'freedom-fighter' against the British raj. Biographical accounts of Savarkar posit that he had participated in underground revolutionary activities from a young age, in organizations like the Mitra Mela and the Abhinava Bharat Society (ABS), for the purpose of politicizing Hindus for nationalist aims.<sup>22</sup> Savarkar remained active in the ABS as a law student in Bombay, and became a prolific writer during his college years. In 1906, Savarkar arrived in London for an advanced law degree, but his collaboration with his patron Shyam Krishnavarma furthered Savarkar's involvement in underground activities against British rule.<sup>23</sup> Intellectually, Savarkar had developed an interest in the revolutionary ideas of the Italian thinker Giuseppe Mazzini, and published a Marathi translation of his autobiography in 1907. In fact, it has been suggested that the ABS was modelled after Mazzini's group Young Italy and underground organizations in Russia.<sup>24</sup> The following year, Savarkar completed his opus titled *Indian War of Independence, 1857*, a text with a polemical flair adopted from Mazzini's writings on Italy in the nineteenth century, and combined with claims of a universal Hindu identity for India's past in the form of swaraj and swadharma.<sup>25</sup> The British government banned the book but, nevertheless, it achieved wide circulation among revolutionaries in India.

Savarkar was finally arrested in London on 13 March 1910 on five separate charges, ranging from 'delivering seditious speeches', 'procuring and distributing arms', to 'waging war against the King Emperor of India'.<sup>26</sup> Savarkar was extradited to India, and convicted of seditious

<sup>20</sup> Leslie, *op. cit.*, 363.

<sup>21</sup> Jeffery, *op. cit.*, 166.

<sup>22</sup> Dhanajay Keer, *Veer Savarkar* (Bombay, 1988), 23, 28–51. Also, see Lise McKean, *Divine Enterprise: Gurus and the Hindu Nationalist Movement* (Chicago, 1996), 71–96; Pandey, *op. cit.*, 239–72; Jaffrelot, *op. cit.*, 19–33; Amalendu Misra, 'Savarkar and the discourse on Islam in pre-independent India', *Journal of Asian History*, xxxiii, 2 (1999), 142–84; Vidya Sagar Anand, *Savarkar: A Study in the Evolution of Indian Nationalism* (London, 1967); Jyoti Trehan, *Veer Savarkar: Thought and Action of*

*Vinayak Damodar Savarkar* (New Delhi, 1991); Chitra Gupta, *The Life of Barrister Savarkar* (New Delhi, 1939); Harindra Srivastava, *The Epic Sweep of V. D. Savarkar* (New Delhi, 1993).

<sup>23</sup> See Harindra Srivastava, *Five Stormy Years: Savarkar in London, June 1906–June 1911* (New Delhi, 1983).

<sup>24</sup> Keer, *op. cit.*, 23.

<sup>25</sup> See Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, *Indian War of Independence, 1857* (Delhi, 1986, 10th edn).

<sup>26</sup> Keer, *op. cit.*, 73.



activities for which he was sentenced to fifty years in the infamous penal settlement in Port Blair located in the Andaman Islands.<sup>27</sup> In 1922, Savarkar was transferred to a prison in Ratnagiri due to ill health, and in 1937 he was finally released, after twenty-seven years' imprisonment. However, during his term of incarceration, Savarkar had continued to write extensively on the issues which had initially landed him in trouble with the British authorities.<sup>28</sup> Savarkar's prison writings were centrally informed by debates in European social theory, especially the literature on German ethnic nationalism.<sup>29</sup> Yet his claim for independence from colonial rule was at the centre of his work, as was the articulation of resurrecting a powerful Hindu nationalism that had lain dormant for centuries. Savarkar had acquired an important public reputation throughout India, especially within the Hindu Mahasabha, for his nationalist and anti-Muslim writings, for his patriotic actions in India and Britain, and for having spent the bulk of his adult life as a political prisoner. Shortly after Savarkar's release from prison, he officially joined the All-India Hindu Mahasabha and served as its President between 1937 and 1944.<sup>30</sup> Savarkar came to power on a platform that had certainly appealed to Dr Parchure and the entire Hindu Mahasabha: 'Hinduize Politics and Militarize Hindudom'.<sup>31</sup>

Although Upendra Parchure emphasized his father's dedication to Savarkar's principles, there was very little discussion about the specific details of these ideas. He may have believed that the intellectual connections with Savarkar were too obvious to discuss with me, or perhaps simply chose not to explain them. However, for me, this point marked an important transition in the interview. Upendra Parchure had thus far celebrated his father's accomplishments, but now the nature and tone of the conversation changed as it moved towards the topic of violence. In 1939, Dr Parchure formed a paramilitary-style organization in Gwalior known as the Hindu Rashtra Sena (literally, Hindu National Army), which boasted a cadre of three thousand volunteers.<sup>32</sup> The development of this organization probably had something to do with the meeting with Savarkar in the same year but, according to Upendra Parchure, his father had specifically grown tired of what he believed to be Muslim persecution of Hindus in Hyderabad State, and felt that local retaliation was necessary. In fact, the Hindu Mahasabha, under Savarkar's leadership, had been agitating against the Nizam of Hyderabad in southern India between October 1938 and July 1939 to secure demands for Hindus, arguing that a Muslim ruler was suppressing their 'civil liberties' and 'culture'.<sup>33</sup> Dr Parchure, as the President of the

<sup>27</sup> See Satradru Sen, *Disciplining Punishment: Colonialism and Convict Society in the Andaman Islands* (Delhi, 2000).

<sup>28</sup> S. S. Savarkar, 'Preface by the publisher of the second edition' in Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* (Bombay, 1989, 6th edn), v-vi. Also, see *An Echo from Andamans: Letters Written by Br. Savarkar to his Brother Dr Savarkar* (Nagpur, n.d.).

<sup>29</sup> Jaffrelot., *op. cit.*, 32. Jaffrelot cites Savarkar's *My Transportation for Life* (Bombay, 1984), 271-2, where he argues that Johann Casper Bluntschli's *The Theory of the State* (Oxford, 1885) was influen-

tial in developing ideas of a Hindu nationalism.

<sup>30</sup> See A. S. Bhide (ed.), *Veer Savarkar's 'Whirl-Wind Propaganda': Statements, Messages and Extracts from the President's Diary of his Propagandistic Tours, Interviews from December 1937 to October 1941* (Bombay, 1941); Keer, *op. cit.*, 225, 230, 360.

<sup>31</sup> Bhide, *op. cit.*, v.

<sup>32</sup> The size of the Sena is given in Manohar Malgonkar, *The Men Who Killed Gandhi* (Madras, 1978), 136.

<sup>33</sup> Nathuram Godse, *May It Please Your Honour* (Pune, 1977), 23, 93, 100; Bhide, *op. cit.*, 57-88, 101-14, 180-1; Keer, *op. cit.*, 240-5.

Hindu Rashtra Sena, subsequently began organizing Hindu attacks on Muslim localities,<sup>34</sup> and, in the process, acquired the notoriety of being 'the most controversial political figure in Gwalior'.<sup>35</sup>

Nathuram Godse was a frequent visitor to the Parchure family home in Gwalior. They may have had long-standing ties, but during the interview I was unable to establish the origins of Dr Parchure's relationship with Godse. However, a brief examination of Godse's activities reveals important parallels relevant to the discussion here. Some time during the early 1930s, Nathuram Godse joined the Poona branch of the Hindu Mahasabha and a paramilitary unit known as the National Volunteer Association, or Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).<sup>36</sup> It has been suggested that for Godse – and the argument can be expanded to include Dr Parchure – participation in these organizations represented a 'Hindu search for self-esteem' and 'political potency' through the use of power and violence.<sup>37</sup> Godse abandoned the RSS after some years, claiming that it lacked proper levels of militancy, and co-founded the Hindu Rashtra Dal (Hindu National Party), an organization whose name and objectives closely matched Dr Parchure's Hindu Rashtra Sena.<sup>38</sup> In 1942, Savarkar had promoted the idea of establishing the Dal as a secret volunteer organization among a small group of disciples in the Poona Hindu Mahasabha, who, like Godse, shared similar opinions about the RSS.<sup>39</sup> Savarkar required volunteers to take an oath of loyalty to him and perform underground activities that could not be sanctioned by the Mahasabha.<sup>40</sup> The group's primary objective was to propagate 'Savarkarism' as a way to 'protect Hindudom and render help to every Hindu institution in their attempt to oppose encroachment on their rights and religion'.<sup>41</sup> Training camps were set up throughout western and central India, advocating villagers to take up arms, teaching individuals 'Indian games, physical exercises, [and] shooting exercises', in addition to spreading Savarkar's ideology.<sup>42</sup>

Dr Parchure and Nathuram Godse are said to have met on several occasions to discuss the activities of the Hindu Mahasabha.<sup>43</sup> In fact, it has been argued that Dr Parchure, while on a political lecture tour in Poona, approached Godse with the aim of merging the Sena and the Dal. The deliberations failed, but both agreed to proceed with their respective, yet intimately connected projects. Further links between Dr Parchure's Hindu Rastra Sena and the Dal remain unclear, especially in understanding the exact nature of the collaboration between Dr Parchure, Savarkar and Godse. I asked Upendra Parchure if his father had kept any personal

<sup>34</sup> Gopal Godse, 'Events and accused' in Godse, *op. cit.*, xv. M. K. Gandhi is reported to have received a telegram from 'some Muslims in the Gwalior State' stating, 'The Hindus attacked our village and beat us, destroying our houses and crops and the State authorities take no notice in spite of requests.' The date of the telegram is not given, but the incident appears to correspond with the activities of the Hindu Rashtra Sena. Full details are given in Government of India, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Conspiracy to Murder Mahatma Gandhi*, part II, vol. IV, 72 (henceforth, *RCI*).

<sup>35</sup> Malgonkar, *op. cit.*, 135.

<sup>36</sup> Godse, *op. cit.*, 15–16; Nandy, 'Final encounter', *op. cit.*, 81. On the development of the RSS's politics, see Basu, Datta, Sarkar, Sarkar and Sen,

*op. cit.*; Jaffrelot, *op. cit.*; Sumit Sarkar, 'Fascism of the Sangh Parivar', *Economic and Political Weekly*, xxviii, 5 (1993), 163–7; Sumit Sarkar, 'Indian nationalism and the politics of Hindutva' in David Ludden (ed.), *Contesting the Nation: Religion, Community, and the Politics of Democracy in India* (Philadelphia, 1996), 270–93.

<sup>37</sup> Nandy, 'Final encounter', *op. cit.*, 81.

<sup>38</sup> Godse, *op. cit.*, 18, 37.

<sup>39</sup> *RCI*, part II, vol. IV, 66–7.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, 67.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, 67.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, 67; *RCI*, part I, vol. III, 263.

<sup>43</sup> The discussion of the interaction between Dr Parchure and Nathuram Godse is given in Malgonkar, *op. cit.*, 135–6.

letters, diaries or writings about the activities in this period, especially related to his interactions with Godse and Savarkar; he argued that Dr Parchure did not believe in keeping any evidence that could potentially incriminate him, and, more importantly, the government had confiscated all the documents in the house when his father was arrested in 1948. However, it might still be suggested that there were important intellectual and personal ties that were forged in this period. An individual by the name of Panna Lal Chaube told government officials that Dr Parchure and Nathuram Godse were travelling companions, who arrived in Alwar, located in Rajasthan, around October 1947 for the specific purpose of acquiring a handgun from comrades in the local Hindu Mahasabha.<sup>44</sup> Chaube claimed to have met Dr Parchure and Godse, and discussed the plan to murder Gandhi with them. According to Chaube, Dr Parchure argued that it 'was not in the interest of the country that the Mahatma should live and that Godse alone could assassinate Gandhi'.<sup>45</sup> The two left Alwar dissatisfied with the quality of pistols offered to them.

On 2 December 1947, Dr Parchure returned to Poona as the main speaker at a Hindu Mahasabha meeting in the Tilak Samarak Mandir,<sup>46</sup> where Godse and Savarkar were certainly present. An official report of Dr Parchure's speech provides further insight into his position:

He was described as a second Savarkar and that so great was his influence that on every mosque in Gwalior flew the Bhagwa flag. In his speech Dr Parchure, after referring to the state of affairs in Gwalior, advocated the use of force to achieve whatever they wanted. He also said that Gwalior Army was full of Muslims who were in a majority and that the State was increasing the Muslim elements. . . . The trend of speech was anti-Congress and extremely anti-Muslim. He criticized Pandit Nehru's policy as regards Kashmir and pointed out the quiescence of Hindus in the face of Mohammedan aggressiveness. In the end he made a significant remark, the importance of which was perhaps not then appreciated, that *Gandhiji and Nehru would surely reap the fruits of their sins in a short time*.<sup>47</sup>

Dr Parchure appears to have achieved a prominent status within the inner circle of the organization by this point, especially as he was now being compared with Savarkar. His anti-Muslim and anti-Congress positions were consistent with those advocated by Savarkar and the Hindu Mahasabha, even though Savarkar had by then resigned from the presidency of the organization. However, Dr Parchure's other intellectual and political connections with the Mahasabha, Sena or Dal are not as apparent in this period. Nevertheless, Dr Parchure's public profile increased enormously when he was convicted for helping Nathuram Godse to arrange for the handgun that was used to assassinate Gandhi.

Upendra Parchure shifted the discussion away from his father's public life at this point in the conversation and began talking about some personal details. The separation between the public/private sphere, or the spiritual/material domain, has been a topic of much scholarly debate, especially with regard to thinking about Indian politics within this framework.<sup>48</sup> At the time the debates had little to offer as I was faced with a dilemma of interpreting the private details within the context of Dr Parchure's public life, as President of the Gwalior Hindu

<sup>44</sup> Evidence of Panna Lal Chaube, Witness Number 47, *RCI*, part I, vol. II, 239–41.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, 239.

<sup>46</sup> *RCI*, part I, vol. III, 265.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*, 265 (italics in original).

<sup>48</sup> Here I am thinking of Partha Chatterjee's argument in *The Nation and Its Fragments* (Princeton, 1993).

Mahasabha and Hindu Rashtra Sena. Moreover, as my questions never even broached the subject of Dr Parchure's private life, I was surprised when Upendra Parchure openly narrated an incident about family abuse. Dr Parchure spent three-quarters of his income from his medical practice on funding his two organizations. One day Upendra Parchure's mother Sushilabai required some money to purchase items for the family.<sup>49</sup> Dr Parchure was apparently unavailable, and the mother decided to take a few rupees from his organizational fund. Upon realizing that Sushilabai had taken the money, Dr Parchure proceeded to beat his wife till she was unconscious. Upendra Parchure stated: 'It is only by the grace of god that my mother did not die that day.'

This was the only time his mother was mentioned in the conversation, but it was clear that this was not an isolated incident. The conversation appeared to have triggered a son's memory about his parents' conflictual relationship that often resulted in violence against the mother. I asked myself why Upendra Parchure wanted to ensure that his father's abuse was included in the narrative of Dr Parchure's politics. There are at least two ideas which can be offered as explanations. First, Upendra Parchure wanted to establish a continuity between his father's activities in the public sphere and his violence at home; and, second, the discussion of attacks against innocent Muslims and against his mother was one way to prevent the construction of a hagiographical account of his father's life, especially as he knew I was conducting the interview for the purpose of writing about Dr Parchure. At another level, Hindu nationalists in western India had already developed discourses on the themes of domesticity, 'the home' and family life by the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>50</sup> Inscribed within the debates was a view that the 'domestic sphere' was central for the preservation of Hindu spiritual values, and a necessary space for 'respectable women' to serve their duty as 'devoted wives' and 'enlightened mothers' in the making of the nation.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> For a brief discussion about Sushilabai Parchure, see P. L. Inamdar, *The Story of the Red Fort Trial 1948-49* (Bombay, 1979).

<sup>50</sup> See Rosalind O'Hanlon, *A Comparison between Women and Men: Tarabai Shinde and the Critique of Gender Relations in Colonial India* (Delhi, 1994). The literature on this theme is extensive for India, especially in the context of Bengal: see Antoinette Burton, 'House/Daughter/Nation: interiority, architecture, and historical imagination in Janaki Majumdar's "Family History"', *Journal of Asian Studies*, LVI, 4 (1997), 921-46; Antoinette Burton, 'Thinking beyond the boundaries: empire, feminism and the domains of history', *Social History*, XXVI, 1 (2001), 60-71; Tanika Sarkar, 'The Hindu wife and the Hindu nation: domesticity and nationalism in nineteenth century Bengal', *Studies in History*, VIII, 2 (1992), 213-34; Judith E. Walsh, 'What women learned when men gave them advice: rewriting patriarchy in late nineteenth-century Bengal', *Journal of Asian Studies*, LVI, 2 (1997), 371-90; Mary Hancock, 'Home science and the nationalization of domesticity in colonial

India', *Modern Asian Studies*, XXXV, 4 (2001), 871-903; Pradip Kumar Bose, 'Sons of the nation: child rearing in the new family' in Partha Chatterjee (ed.), *Texts of Power: Emerging Disciplines in Colonial Bengal* (Calcutta, 1996), 118-44; Uma Chakravarti, 'Whatever happened to the Vedic Dasi? Orientalism, nationalism, and a script for the past' and Partha Chatterjee, 'The nationalist resolution of the woman's question' in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (eds), *Recasting Women: Essays in Indian Colonial History* (New Brunswick, 1990), 27-87, 233-53. Also, see Kamala Visweswaran, 'Small speeches, subaltern gender: nationalist ideology and its historiography' in Shahid Amin and Dipesh Chakrabarty (eds), *Subaltern Studies IX* (Delhi, 1996), 83-125; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'The new subaltern: a silent interview' in Vinayak Chaturvedi (ed.), *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial* (London, 2000), 324-8; Partha Chatterjee and Pradeep Jeganathan (eds), *Subaltern Studies XI: Community, Gender and Violence* (Delhi, 2000); and Pandey, *op. cit.*, 260-2.

<sup>51</sup> O'Hanlon, *op. cit.*, 51.

It has been suggested that these processes were corollaries to the re-emergence of Maharashtrian brahmins in the nineteenth century, when forms of brahmanic Hinduism became important determinants for social behaviour, especially on the 'woman's question'.<sup>52</sup> Tilak and other conservatives writing in the 1880s argued against the education of Hindu women on the grounds that reading was likely to encourage 'immorality' and 'insubordination' and, thereby, challenge Hindu traditions and religion.<sup>53</sup> Savarkar later contributed to these debates in an essay titled 'Woman's beauty and duty', arguing that 'the primary duty of a woman is to the home, children, and the nation'.<sup>54</sup> Although Savarkar was not against formal education for women, he felt that they should be trained in areas suited to their 'temperament': that is, women primarily needed to be educated as mothers to create a new generation of patriots for the betterment of the nation.<sup>55</sup> For example, in a speech given in 1937, he encouraged women 'to be mothers of fine, healthy progeny', while the 'kitchen and children were the main duties of women'.<sup>56</sup> However, any woman who digressed from her duty in the domestic sphere, as prescribed by Savarkar, was declared 'morally guilty of a breach of trust'.<sup>57</sup> Public debates on the topic of female improprieties that violated the emergent Hindu norms within the domestic sphere often concluded with harsh resolutions, like advocating the use of violence against 'weak' and 'wicked' women.<sup>58</sup> Were Sushilabai's actions of taking a few rupees from Dr Parchure's organizational fund an immoral act and a transgression from her duty as a devoted wife? Unfortunately, Upendra Parchure did not have an answer to this question.

The conversation next turned to Mahatma Gandhi's murder. The leadership of the Hindu Mahasabha and its affiliates had declared the partition of India and the creation of Pakistan a failure. It had been condemned by Savarkar, for example, on the grounds that the 'vivisection of the Motherland' was an insult to all Hindus, and the idea of Pakistan was a threat to the making of a Hindu nation in the aftermath of the British raj.<sup>59</sup> For Savarkar's followers, like Godse and Dr Parchure, Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress Party were to blame for the turn in political developments leading up to the partition in 1947, a period in which it was argued that the rights of Hindus were not being protected. Godse echoed Savarkar's claims by arguing:

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*, 10.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*, 16.

<sup>54</sup> Keer, *op. cit.*, 210, 213.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*, 213–14. For examples of comparative perspectives on related debates outside the Indian case, see the discussion on the relationship between nationalist politics and motherhood in Argentina in Daniel James, *Doña María's Story: Life, History, Memory, and Political Identity* (Durham, NC, 2000), 241. I thank Heidi Tinsman for this reference. On the themes of nationalism and the female body, Marcelo Bergman and Mónica Szurmuk, 'Gender, citizenship, and social protest: the new social movements in Argentina' in Ileana Rodríguez (ed.), *The Latin American Subaltern Studies Reader* (Durham, NC, 2001), 383–401; Elsa Barkley Brown, 'Negotiating and transforming the public sphere: African American political life in the transition from slavery to freedom' in *The Black Public Sphere Collective* (ed.), *The Black Public Sphere*

(Chicago, 1995), 111–50. Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, 1988) is also relevant for a discussion of the above themes. I thank Sharon Block for this reference. Also, see the following contributions in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, 1996): Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the public sphere: a contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy', 109–42; Mary P. Ryan, 'Gender and public access: women's politics in nineteenth century America', 259–88; and Geoff Eley, 'Nations, publics, and political cultures: placing Habermas in the nineteenth century', 289–339.

<sup>56</sup> Keer, *op. cit.*, 230. Also, see Lise, *op. cit.*, 86–7; Pandey, *op. cit.*, 260–1.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*, 214.

<sup>58</sup> O'Hanlon, *op. cit.*, 36–8.

<sup>59</sup> Keer, *op. cit.*, 386–7.

Gandhiji failed in his duty as the Father of the Nation. He has proved to be the Father of Pakistan. It was for this reason alone that I as a dutiful son of Mother India thought it my duty to put an end to the life of the so-called Father of the Nation who had played a very prominent part in bringing about vivisection of the country – our Motherland.<sup>60</sup>

According to Upendra Parchure, Nathuram Godse and Narayan Apte travelled from Delhi to Gwalior by train on 28 January 1948.<sup>61</sup> They arrived at the Parchure family home for the purpose of securing a gun, which was to be used to assassinate Gandhi. Godse was unhappy about the gun he already had in his possession because it was not an automatic and it frequently locked up without firing a round. Upendra Parchure remembers his father showing a pistol to Godse, and says that he even saw Godse firing it outside. The pistol was said to have originated in Europe, and only came to Gwalior when a Mr Deshmukh, a military officer in the Gwalior State Army, acquired it while on a training exercise in Germany.<sup>62</sup> The connection between Dr Parchure and Deshmukh remains unclear in this narrative. Upendra Parchure's only other comment about Godse was that he was someone who was shy and afraid of being in the presence of women. Although this point has been made by scholars studying Godse's life, it is unclear why the comment was inserted at this point in the conversation, except as a way of highlighting some seeming tension or paradox within Godse's personality.<sup>63</sup> On 29 January Godse and Apte left Gwalior for Delhi, and on the following evening Nathuram Godse walked up to Mahatma Gandhi and fired three rounds from the automatic pistol into his body.

Dr Parchure reportedly celebrated Gandhi's death by distributing sweets in Gwalior.<sup>64</sup> On 3 February Dr Parchure was detained by the police, and then formally arrested for conspiracy to commit murder two weeks later.<sup>65</sup> He confessed to his role in Gandhi's murder on 18 February while being interrogated by R. B. Atal, the First Class Magistrate of Gwalior,<sup>66</sup> but later retracted his confession arguing that it was 'untrue' and forcefully extracted.<sup>67</sup> Dr Parchure, along with five others, was found guilty of the conspiracy to murder Mahatma Gandhi and sentenced to 'transportation for life'.<sup>68</sup> Nathuram Godse and Narayan Apte were determined to be the primary perpetrators, and were ordered to be executed, while Savarkar was acquitted of all charges with no direct evidence linking him to the murder. Digamber Badge became the official 'approver' in the case and was released after the trial. Dr Parchure filed an appeal in the Punjab High Court, arguing that he had no role in the conspiracy, even though he had met Godse and Apte prior to the murder.<sup>69</sup> He stated that the two had arrived in Gwalior to recruit volunteers from the Hindu Rashtra Sena for some demonstrations in Delhi. Apte and Godse corroborated with Dr Parchure's testimony during the trial, and

<sup>60</sup> Gopal Godse, *Gandhikatya ani Mee* (Poona, 1967), 306. Originally cited in Nandy, 'Final encounter', *op. cit.*, 83.

<sup>61</sup> For the official narrative of events relevant to Gandhi's assassination, see *RCI*, part 1, vol. 1. Also, see Inamdar, *op. cit.*; Malgaonkar, *op. cit.*; Ghosh, *op. cit.*

<sup>62</sup> Malgaonkar suggests that the gun was manufactured in Italy in 1934, and was in the possession of an officer in Mussolini's army. An officer in the 4th Gwalior State Infantry, fighting in Abyssinia, acquired the gun when his Italian counterpart had

surrendered. Malgaonkar, *op. cit.*, 137.

<sup>63</sup> See Nandy, 'Final encounter', *op. cit.*, for further development on this theme.

<sup>64</sup> Tapan Ghosh, *The Gandhi Murder Trial* (New York, 1973), 100.

<sup>65</sup> *RCI*, part 1, vol. 1, 57.

<sup>66</sup> Ghosh, *op. cit.*, 115.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*, 119.

<sup>68</sup> *RCI*, part 1, vol. 1, 60.

<sup>69</sup> For a full discussion on Dr Parchure's case and subsequent appeal, see the reflections on the trial by his lawyer in Inamdar, *op. cit.*

Nathuram argued that the automatic pistol used to kill Gandhi was purchased through an arms dealer in a Delhi refugee camp.<sup>70</sup> The High Court accepted Dr Parchure's claim that coercion was used to extract his initial confession, and that there was enough doubt about the exact nature of his interactions with Godse and Apte to warrant an acquittal of all charges.<sup>71</sup> According to Upendra Parchure, his father was banned from Gwalior for two years following his release from prison, but he finally returned in 1952 on the condition that he would no longer participate in public politics.<sup>72</sup> He re-established his medical practice and continued to live in Gwalior until his death in 1985.

Upendra Parchure did not mention that there was a controversy about his father's involvement in Gandhi's murder. Officially, Dr Parchure was acquitted of all charges, but within the family he has continued to be celebrated as one of the conspirators. Dr Parchure's original confession described how he had instructed an individual by the name of Dandavate to purchase a gun from one Jagdishprasad Goel.<sup>73</sup> Dandavate returned to Dr Parchure's house with a 9-mm Beretta automatic and about ten rounds of ammunition. Nathuram Godse tested the weapon in Dr Parchure's yard, and agreed to purchase it for 300 rupees. Upendra Parchure's narrative of events generally appears to be consistent with his father's original confession, except that there is no discussion of Dandavate and Goel, but there is an addition of a Mr Deshmukh (who was not mentioned by Dr Parchure). Yet Dr Parchure's exact role remains unresolved today, although it is popularly accepted that he assisted Godse with the purchase of the gun. 'The Official Mahatma Gandhi eArchive' even has a brief history of the murder weapon entitled 'The gun: a 9-mm Beretta automatic' and states that Dr Parchure had organized Godse's acquisition of the weapon.<sup>74</sup> In a recent interview, Gopal Godse claims that Dr Parchure did help his brother, but was not part of the inner circle who plotted Gandhi's murder: 'Nathuram managed to get an automatic pistol from Dr Dattatrey Parchure from Gwalior, though he was not a part of the conspiracy, and was later released by the High Court.'<sup>75</sup>

Upendra Parchure finally turned to the question of naming children. He argued that his father had probably named 'dozen upon dozens of children Vinayak' if not 'hundreds upon hundreds'. He stated he personally knew seven Vinayaks presently living in Gwalior who had acquired the name while patients in his father's clinic; I happened to be number eight. Upendra Parchure was very clear that his father's desire to name boys Vinayak was in honour of Savarkar. Dr Parchure had spent his adult life promoting the ideologies of his guru, initially through the Hindu Mahasabha and the Hindu Rashtra Sena, and then later in his life, when forced out of public politics, he adopted alternative strategies to promote Savarkarism. Upendra Parchure argued that I should feel very proud to have been named after such a strong, powerful nationalist who spent his entire life fighting for Hindu rights, and stated that 'the spirit of Savarkar now lives through you'.

After that moment in the interview, I began questioning why my family decided to keep the name Vinayak, especially as they knew Dr Parchure's background. Were they aware of his

<sup>70</sup> Godse, *op. cit.*, 7, 13–14.

<sup>71</sup> See Inamdar, *op. cit.*

<sup>72</sup> Inamdar suggests that Dr Parchure's period of absence was set at six months through an 'order of Extermment from the Gwalior division of the state of Madhya Bharat'. *ibid.*, 220.

<sup>73</sup> See *RCI*, part 1, vol. 1.

<sup>74</sup> See 'Dr Dattatraya Sadashiv Parchure' and 'The gun' at <<http://www.mahatma.org.in/conspirators>>.

<sup>75</sup> 'The men who killed Gandhi', *Asian Age Online* (18 August 2001) at <<http://www.hclinfinet.com/2001/AUG/WEEK3/7/AOSCS2frame.jsp>>.

hidden agenda which was directly tied to Savarkar? I have repeatedly asked my parents about this topic over the past few months, but the answers fail to explain the intricate details that interest me. My mother states that I was named after Ganesh, the decision was not political and she was unaware that Dr Parchure had an agenda. She reminds me that Bai was not interested in giving me any name; I was too ill. In one conversation, she stated that Dr Parchure told Bai that my health would improve, and because it did, the family decided to keep the name. My father repeats my mother's explanation, but reminds me that he was not even living in Gwalior when I was named. I find it difficult to probe my parents any further about my name, not least because they have grown frustrated with my questions. I certainly get a sense that my illness was very serious, my recovery was a tremendous relief for a family that had already lost one child through ill-health, and Dr Parchure was thanked for his medical advice and honoured by naming me Vinayak. Needless to say, Savarkar does not emerge anywhere in their narratives.

Dr Parchure's strategy of naming children as a way of promoting Savarkarism initially appeared rather innocuous, especially for someone who had achieved national-level notoriety for his public politics. It is not clear when Dr Parchure began giving the name Vinayak, but it may be suggested that the process began after Savarkar's death in 1966. However, it is important to note that Dr Parchure was not the first to take up the idea of using the name Vinayak for political purposes. In fact, he may have been following a pattern set by other disciples of Savarkar, namely, Nathuram Godse and the conspirators to Gandhi's murder. In the months leading up to the assassination these individuals regularly used half a dozen or so aliases when travelling, mostly centring on the name Vinayak in honour of Savarkar.<sup>76</sup> Dr Parchure, who in 1947 was described as a 'second Savarkar', would have been well versed in his guru's writings, especially the seminal text *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?*. Since its first publication in 1923, *Hindutva* has acquired a reputation as a defining treatise for the development of Hindu nationalism in the twentieth century. The editor's introduction to the fifth edition of *Hindutva* furthers this point by arguing that 'the concept of Hindutva is Savarkar's own . . . [that] the Hindus are tied together by bonds of a common fatherland, ties of blood, a common culture and civilization, common heroes, common history and above all, the will to remain united as a nation'.<sup>77</sup> Savarkar intended to use the text to clarify divergent opinions on how to define 'Hindu', 'Hinduism' and 'Hindutva' by establishing a history of the term 'Hindu', demonstrating links between territoriality and Hindu identity, and answering the question 'Who is a Hindu?'. His main focus in the text, nevertheless, was to argue that the conceptualization of Indian national identity must, at its foundation, be based within the political philosophy of Hindutva.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Nandy, 'Final encounter', *op. cit.*, 96–7, n. 36. For example, Nathuram Godse used the aliases Vinayakrao and N. Vinayak Rao. *RCI*, part 1, vol. 1, 59, 78. Also, see Malgonkar, *op. cit.*, 115; Ghosh, *op. cit.*, 90.

<sup>77</sup> G. M. Joshi, 'Introduction' in Savarkar, *Hindutva*, *op. cit.*, xi.

<sup>78</sup> Savarkar articulates this point in *Hindutva*, *op. cit.*, 3. He states: 'The ideas and ideals, the systems and societies, the thoughts and sentiments which

have centered round this name are so varied and rich, so powerful and so subtle, so elusive and yet so vivid that the term Hindutva defies all attempts at analysis. . . . Hindutva is not a word but a history. Not only the spiritual or religious history of our people as at times it is mistaken to be by being confounded with the other cognate term Hinduism, but a history in full. Hinduism is only a derivative, a fraction, a part of Hindutva.'



I would suggest that Dr Parchure's desire to give names was a return to the basic principles outlined by Savarkar in *Hindutva*, especially when considering that the first section of the book begins with the title 'What is in a name?' and others following include 'Name older still', 'Other names' and 'How names are given'.<sup>79</sup> In *Hindutva*, there does not appear to be a specific prescription for naming individuals; instead, the focus is on the importance of naming a society and a nation.<sup>80</sup> Savarkar, of course, was focusing on these issues as a way of identifying the etymology of 'Hindu' and 'Hindustan', and in order to establish a genealogy of names connecting Hindus and Hindustan with India and Indians. However, an examination of Savarkar's argument for 'what is in a name' provides a clue to Dr Parchure's tactics:

For, things do matter more than their names, especially when you have to choose one only of the two, or when the association between them is either new or simple. The very fact that a thing is indicated by a dozen names in a dozen human tongues disarms the suspicion that there is an invariable connection or natural concomitance between sound and the meaning it conveys. Yet, as the association of the word with the thing it signifies grows stronger and lasts long, so does the channel which connects the two states of consciousness then allow an easy flow of thoughts from one to the other, till at last it seems almost impossible to separate them. And when in addition to this a number of secondary thoughts or feelings that are generally roused by the thing get mystically entwined with the word that signifies it, *the name seems to matter as much as the thing itself*.<sup>81</sup>

Upon reading this passage, I was reminded of Upendra Parchure's vivid declaration that 'the spirit of Savarkar' was now living through me and, by extension, through the dozens or hundreds of other Vinayaks. It certainly might be argued that Dr Parchure held the belief that inscribed within the name Vinayak was a signifying system tied to Savarkar and the principles of *Hindutva*. Those versed in semiotics would suggest that Dr Parchure was aware of the power of the name-sign, so by naming children he had hoped to evoke a mental image of Savarkar as an icon in everyday life.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, the name Vinayak has become more popular in India over the past generation than in previous ones, although, at the same time, it would be incorrect to assume that all links go back to Savarkar. My own parents say that they had no clue about Dr Parchure's interest in naming boys, and I wonder if other parents whose sons are named Vinayak have also remained oblivious to this information over the years and think that the origins of the name are only tied to Ganesh. But here too there is a 'hidden transcript', with a history intertwined with the ideological development of Hindu nationalism.

It may be worth saying something more about the long-term significance of Ganesh, as

<sup>79</sup> Savarkar, *Hindutva*, *op. cit.*, 1–16.

<sup>80</sup> See Lise, *op. cit.*, 79–80; Pandey, *op. cit.*, 247–9. The literature on the politics of naming is extensive; for a comparative perspective, see Dietz Bering, *The Stigma of Names: Antisemitism in German Daily Life*, trans. Neville Plaice (Cambridge, 1992); bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston, 1990); and Malcolm X,

*The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, with the assistance of Alex Haley (New York, 1988 edn).

<sup>81</sup> Savarkar, *op. cit.*, *Hindutva*, 1–2 (emphasis mine).

<sup>82</sup> For example, see Anna Makolkin, *Name, Hero, Icon: Semiotics of Nationalism through Heroic Biography* (Berlin, 1992).

every conversation about the name Vinayak usually begins here. The worship of Ganesh in western India began as early as the sixth or seventh century, although primarily limited to Maharashtrian Brahmins, the Deshastha and Konkanastha.<sup>83</sup> By the eighteenth century Ganesh was popularized in temples and festivals around Pune through the patronage of the Maratha Peshwas, but there was a significant decline with the subsidence of Peshwa power after 1818 and the arrival of the British in the area.<sup>84</sup> In the 1890s, Ganesh's popularity had a resurgence under the leadership of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who began mobilizing large numbers of Hindus from upper and lower castes around an annual Ganesh festival.<sup>85</sup> Tilak was concerned about harnessing mass support against colonial rule, while simultaneously using the symbol of Ganesh to articulate a political agenda linking 'Hindu revivalism' with Indian nationalism. It was considered an 'extremist' form of nationalism for its celebration of Maharashtrian 'martial prowess'<sup>86</sup> and for its militant anti-Muslim character.<sup>87</sup> In fact, it has been argued that Tilak's invention of a Ganesh tradition was primarily in response to, and corresponded with, the annual Muslim festival of Muhharam.<sup>88</sup> This point is generally obscured in today's popular memory of the Ganesh festival's origins, especially as it has achieved national appeal throughout India, moving beyond the local and regional centres in Maharashtra. Tilak's role is also important in this discussion for another reason: namely, that Dr Parchure, Savarkar and the others in the Hindu Mahasabha and its affiliated organizations were heavily influenced by his nationalist politics.<sup>89</sup>

The fact that over the years neither my parents nor I were cognizant of Dr Parchure's naming practice is irrelevant for the politics of Hindutva. It may be argued that, for Dr Parchure, the celebration of Vinayak as Ganesh, or as Savarkar, was equally powerful because inscribed in both were the legacies and inspirations of Hindu nationalism. As I write this article, I sit in a room with a dozen or so idols of Ganesh – recent gifts I have received from friends and family, each of whom stated that they purchased the idol because of my name. I often wonder how many other Vinayaks are out there who share a similar story, but part of me simply does not want to meet a Vinayak who actually embodies the myriad characteristics which would make

<sup>83</sup> Paul B. Courtright, 'The Ganesh Festival in Maharashtra: some observations' in Eleanor Zelliott and Maxine Berntsen (eds), *The Experience of Hinduism* (Albany, 1988), 76–7.

<sup>84</sup> Courtright, *Ganeśa*, *op. cit.*, 226.

<sup>85</sup> See Richard Cashman, 'The political recruitment of God Ganapati', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vii (1970), 347–73.

<sup>86</sup> C. A. Bayly, *Origins of Nationality in South Asia: Patriotism and Ethical Governance in the Making of Modern India* (Delhi, 1998), 108–9.

<sup>87</sup> S. Tejani, 'A Pre-History of Indian Secularism: Categories of Nationalism and Communalism in Emerging Definitions of India, Bombay Presidency, c.1893–1932' (Ph.D., Columbia University, 2002), especially chap. 1, 'Cow protection and Tilak's Ganpati'; Thomas Blom Hansen, *Wages of Violence: Naming and Identity in Postcolonial Bombay* (Princeton, 2001), 29–30.

<sup>88</sup> Tejani, *op. cit.*, 113–26.

<sup>89</sup> Gopal Godse, 'Events and accused' in Godse, *op. cit.*, xii. Also, see Richard Cashman, *The Myth of the Lokamanya: Tilak and Mass Politics in Maharashtra* (Berkeley, 1975); Dhananjay Keer, *Lokamanya Tilak, Father of the Indian Freedom Struggle* (Bombay, 1969); Ram Gopal, *Lokamanya Tilak: A Biography* (New York, 1965); T. V. Parvate, *Bal Gangadhar Tilak: A Narrative and Interpretive Review of his Life, Career and Contemporary Events* (Ahmedabad, 1958); Dattatraya Parashuram Karmarkar, *Bal Gangadhar Tilak: A Study* (Bombay, 1956); Theodore Shay, *The Legacy of the Lokamanya: The Political Philosophy of Bal Gangadhar Tilak* (Bombay, 1956); D. V. Tahmankar, *Lokamanya Tilak: Father of Indian Unrest and Maker of Modern India* (London, 1956); Stanley Wolpert, *Tilak and Gokhale: Revolution and Reform in the Making of Modern India* (Berkeley, 1961).

Dr Parchure proud.<sup>90</sup> For Savarkar and his contemporary disciples, the creation of a Hindu nation was a long, multi-generational process which could not be achieved in their lifetime. Savarkar was keenly aware of the risks and limitations of his political strategies, but advocated that his followers promote the ideals of a Hindu nation, even in minute ways, for the benefit of future generations:

The seed of the banyan tree is so trivial as to be smaller than the mustard seed. But it holds within itself the rich promise of a luxuriant expanse. If we are to live with honour and dignity as a Hindu Nation . . . that nation must emerge under the Hindu flag. This my dream shall come true – if not in this generation, at least in the next. If it remains an empty dream, I shall prove a fool. If it comes true, I shall prove a prophet.<sup>91</sup>

Savarkar's principles of *Hindutva* are very much alive today, and the new generation of Hindu nationalists have been openly working towards the goal of creating a Hindu fatherland by following Savarkar's prescription:

The nation that has no consciousness of its past has no future. Equally true it is that a nation must develop its capacity not only for claiming a past but also for knowing how to use it for the furtherance of its future.<sup>92</sup>

In India, there are many who have been inspired by the writings and activities of Savarkar and his disciples, and one does not need to look very hard to find these individuals and groups, especially as their public presence cannot be avoided in everyday life. The discursive project of *Hindutva*, led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its subsidiaries, for example, promotes the changing of names in consonance with Savarkar's ideals.<sup>93</sup> In November 1995 the Maharashtrian state government led by the Shiv Sena (Shivaji's Army) changed the official name of Bombay to Mumbai.<sup>94</sup> The Shiv Sena as a nativist organization had been demanding the vernacularization of the city's name since its founding in 1966, but could only change it once it had secured the

<sup>90</sup> Savarkar develops this idea in *Hindutva* under the heading 'How names are given'. He states:

A name by its nature is determined not so much by what one likes to call oneself but generally by what others like to do. In fact a name is called into existence for this purpose. Self is known to itself immutable and without a name or even without a form. But when it comes in contact or conflict with a non-self then alone it stands in need of a name if it wants to communicate with others or if others persist in communicating with it. It is a game that requires two to play at. If the name chosen by the world for us is not directly against our liking then it is yet more likely to shadow all other names. But if the world hits upon the world by which they would know us as one redolent of our glory or our early love then that word is certain not only to

shadow but to survive every other name we may have.

(Savarkar, *Hindutva*, *op. cit.*, 15–16)

<sup>91</sup> Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, 'This my legacy' cited in *Savarkar Darshan Pratishthan, Savarkar: Commemoration Volume* (26 February 1989), 3.

<sup>92</sup> Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, *Samagra Savarkar Vangmaya*, vol. v (Poona, 1987), 1. Originally cited in Misra, *op. cit.*, 142.

<sup>93</sup> On the theme of 'naming like a state', see Scott, Tehranian and Mathias, *op. cit.*

<sup>94</sup> Hansen, *op. cit.*, 1. Also, see Pauline Rohatgi, Pheroza Godrej and Rahul Mehrotra (eds), *Bombay to Mumbai: Changing Perspectives* (Mumbai, 1997); Meera Kosambi, 'British Bombay and Marathi Mumbai: some nineteenth century perceptions' in Sujata Patel and Alice Thorner (eds), *Bombay: Mosaic of Modern Culture* (Bombay, 1995), 3–24.

patronage of the BJP government at the centre.<sup>95</sup> The process was extended to replacing the names of streets, buildings, railway stations, neighbourhoods and anything deemed necessary to rid the city of its Portuguese and British titles, and as a way to reinscribe a Hindu identity into the city. Institutionally, the project has played an important role in targeting Muslims, Christians and other minorities: the incarnations of the Hindu Rashtra Sena and the Hindu Rashtra Dal frequently make their presence felt, as in the case of the Bombay riots in 1992–3,<sup>96</sup> and most recently leading to the killing of an estimated 2000 Muslims in Gujarat.<sup>97</sup>

I asked Upendra Parchure about his views on the direction of today's Hindu nationalism, BJP style. To my surprise, he was dissatisfied with the current leadership and their national programme. He argued that today's politicians were corrupt, and consequently they did not live up to the ideals of creating a 'Hindu Nation' as articulated by Savarkar, his father and the others involved in the Gandhi murder case. Upendra Parchure reiterated that the assassination was necessary for the betterment of the nation, to ensure that India could develop into a strong, powerful homeland for Hindus. For Upendra Parchure, I was part of the future generation his father and Savarkar had hoped would serve as the messengers of *Hindutva*. As Vinayak, I could embody the characteristics of power, strength and masculinity inscribed in my name, and participate in the making of a Hindu nation. As I stated from the outset, I wish the story of my name had ended many years ago and did not require such a long, unsettling journey.

I thanked Upendra Parchure for his time and for sharing memories of his father's life-story. My last request, however, was to see a photograph of Dr Parchure, whose image was the only one conspicuously missing among the numerous photographs of the group arrested for Gandhi's murder. Upendra Parchure stated that he only had two photographs of his father in his house. I was taken into his bedroom where they were hanging: the first was a picture of Dr Parchure as a young wrestler, flexing his chest and arms; the second showed Dr Parchure with his wife, probably taken shortly after their wedding. As I was leaving, Upendra Parchure asked if I had noticed the third photograph in the room which had been carefully positioned above the door. I imagined that this was a reference to a picture of Ganesh, who is often placed in such a location as an auspicious symbol for all those who pass through the doorway. Instead, it was a large image of the assassin Nathuram Godse, who was being celebrated as an incarnation of Vinayak and the remover of obstacles.

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<sup>95</sup> See Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, Uday Singh Mehta and Usha Thakker, 'The rebirth of the Shiv Sena: the symbiosis of discursive and organizational power', *Journal of Asian Studies*, LVI, 2 (1997), 371–90; Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, *Ethnicity and Equality: The Shiv Sena Party and Preferential Policies in Bombay* (Ithaca, 1979); Vaibhav Purandare, *The Sena Story* (Mumbai, 1999); Sikata Banerjee, *Warriors in Politics: Hindu Nationalism, Violence, and the Shiv Sena in India* (Boulder, 2000); Shripad Amrit Dange, *Shiv Sena and the Bombay Riots* (New Delhi, 1969); Dipankar Gupta, *Nativism in a Metropolis: The Shiv Sena in Bombay* (New Delhi, 1982). Also, see Arjun Appadurai, 'Spectral housing and urban cleansing: notes on millennial Mumbai', *Public Culture*, XII, 3 (2000); Satish Deshpande, 'Communalizing the nation-space: notes on spatial

strategies of Hindutva', *Economic and Political Weekly*, XXX, 50 (1995), 3220–7.

<sup>96</sup> See the Indian People's Human Rights Commission, *The People's Verdict. An inquiry into the December 1992 & January 1993 riots in Bombay by the Indian People's Human Rights Tribunal Conducted by Justice S. M. Daud and Justice H. Suresh* (Bombay, 1993).

<sup>97</sup> A large number of journals in India have devoted special issues to the Gujarat riots of 2002. For example, see 'Genocide. Gujarat 2002', *Communalism Combat*, VIII, 77–8 (2002); and 'In bad faith', *The Little Magazine*, III, 2 (2002). Also, see *A Joint Fact Finding Team Report. A Continuing Crime: The relief and rehabilitation measures, the attitude of the judiciary and police investigation and arrests with regard to the genocide in Gujarat* (Mumbai, 2002).