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## Lala Lajpat Rai's Classification of Nationalism: Can It Help Us to Understand Contemporary Nationalist Movements?

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### Abstract

India has been independent for 70 years now, and it is a good time to reflect on the political philosophy that underwrote the movement that gained that independence. When we do so, we discover the origins of a political vocabulary that is still in use today, although sadly not used with the same rigor and precision with which it was used then. We also find that those who recur to Indian political thought from the pre-independence period tend to return to a single strand of that thought—the theorization of *ahimsa* by Mohandas K. Gandhi, as for instance in the recent essay on Indian political thought in *The New York Times* by Gopalkrishna Gandhi (Gandhi won't leave India 2017). In this discussion, we hope to draw attention to some of the less well-known resources offered by pre-independence Indian philosophy and in particular the political thought of the Arya samaji Congressman, philosopher and political activist, Lajpat Rai. His political philosophy is important for understanding the theorization of and debates within the Indian independence movement; we think that it also suggests ways to think about contemporary political and revolutionary movements and merits consideration in current debates in political philosophy.

**Keywords** Nationalism · Lajpat Rai · Terrorism · Colonialism · Indian independence

### The Fixation on Gandhi-Tagore and Why It May Be Less than Helpful

We are surely not the first to turn to the pre-independence Indian philosophical corpus for insight into political philosophy. But most who do so turn either only to the work of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi or, if to anyone else, to the important writings on

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nationalism by Rabindranath Tagore, including the famous correspondence between them on *swaraj* and *swadeshi*.

There are good reasons for attention to Gandhi's and Tagore's political philosophy, and we do not gainsay their historical and philosophical importance. Their iconic status is well-deserved: Tagore was one of the great philosophers of cosmopolitanism in the twentieth century; Gandhi led the fight for independence, and his creative synthesis of ideas from the *Gītā* with ideas drawn from Theosophy, Tolstoy, and Ruskin led to one of the deepest critiques of modernity, of technocracy, and of violence in that century and was an important inspiration for movements such as the American civil rights movement and the Engaged Buddhist movement.

Nonetheless, we think that Gandhi's and Tagore's theoretical reflections on nationalism, important as they were in the context of the independence movement, are for the most part irrelevant to contemporary thought about nationalism. Tagore was a staunch critic of the very idea of the nation state; Gandhi advocated a state grounded on the authority of independent *panchayats* and on the principle of *ahimsa*. Neither of these possibilities is taken seriously in the contemporary political context. It is time to consider other sources of Indian political thought if colonial Indian voices are to be heard today.

## Lajpat Rai and Young India

We think that Lajpat Rai (1865–1928) might be a better source for ideas relevant to the contemporary scene. He thought more extensively about the varieties of nationalism and about the political theory underlying them than did Gandhi and Tagore, and he thought more explicitly about the structure of nationalist thought.

Lajpat Rai was not only a theoretician, a pragmatist, and an activist; he was also a great narrator of the Indian nation. Decades before Nehru was to write *Discovery of India* (1946), Rai grounded an argument for the national identity of India in its continuity with an ancient civilization. He tells the story of these civilizational roots of modern India in his *magnum opus*, *Young India* (Rai 1917). Rai's political thought fused Arya Samaji ideas with Marxist political economy; while he was committed to Gandhi's *satyagraha* campaign and the Quit India movement, his theoretical foundation for that movement was very different, and was sharply critical of Gandhi's political philosophy.

Rai's political philosophy matured while he was in exile in the USA, where he associated with members of the Young Ireland movement, who were also in exile. In that context, he developed a view of the struggle against British colonial power as a global struggle against colonialism per se. This view of the Indian nationalist struggle as an instance of a broader revolutionary movement enabled Rai to put it into perspective. This perspective inspired his taxonomy of the varieties of nationalisms that were in play in India during British rule, and it is this taxonomy, we will argue, that allows us to better understand contemporary varieties of nationalism and nationalist struggles. Lala Lajpat Rai died at the peak of his influence from a beating he received at a protest against the Simon Commission, a committee composed entirely of Britishers that had been assigned the task of drafting the plan for the governance of India (Bhushan and Garfield 2011, p. 75).

Of all the narratives written about Indian identity and nationalism at the time, it was Lajpat Rai's book, along with *Hind Swaraj*, that drew the censor's ire. We discovered this when, a few years ago, we found ourselves in the library of Cambridge University seeking rare books from the period of the Indian renaissance. The rare book room held a copy of *Young India*, one of a very few that were permitted to be printed when the book was banned from distribution upon publication. We requested the volume and were informed that we would not be permitted to see it as it was seditious. Surprised, we remonstrated that surely now, after over 60 years of Indian independence, the book must be safe to read! An hour or two later, a librarian agreed that it might not be so dangerous now, and we were allowed to read it. We relate this episode not just for its humor but to illustrate just how dangerous it was in 1917 even to discuss nationalism or to reflect publicly on its structure or varieties, and especially to write on the role of the British in India.

### Nationalism as Essentially Political

As any student of the Indian independence movement is aware, nationalism was often seen in terms other than the strictly political. Gandhi and Aurobindo, for instance, in their very different ways, each saw nationalism as a spiritual struggle. The nationalist art historian Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy saw nationalism as the assertion of cultural identity and in the recognition of geographical integrity (Bhushan and Garfield 2011, p. 67). Nehru was to characterize it in essentially historical terms. Rai would have none of this. In his view, nationalism does not require religious, cultural, or geographical foundations. Nationalism is instead the demand for recognition by a people that recognizes itself—for whatever reason—as an independent political entity and the refusal of domination by those it does not recognize as co-nationalists. Nationalism, moreover, is not an individual phenomenon, unique, for instance, to India, or to Ireland, but is rather an element of a global structure against colonial domination and oppression.

While it might then appear that in his historicism, Rai is in harmony with Nehru, or that in his globalism, he is in harmony with Tagore, Rai's own view is very different from either of theirs. (Indeed, if there is any other figure in the Indian independence scene with whom Rai might be usefully grouped, it may be his fellow Congress activist Annie Besant, but this is a topic for another day.) For unlike Nehru, he is not arguing that India ought to be regarded as a nation and deserves independence *because of its peculiar history*, but instead mines that intellectual history for early theories of democracy (appealing to the *artha śāstras*) and argues on more Marxist grounds that the march of global history is the story of the dismantling of colonial oppression. Unlike Tagore, whose globalism leads him to reject the idea of the nation state, Rai argues that the only way to become a member of the global community is to achieve the status of the nation states who are its full members.

### Rai's Classification of Nationalisms

We now turn to the taxonomy of nationalisms that constitutes the heart of Rai's analysis in *Young India*. Rai's project is not to pick one nationalist theory over others as the



uniquely correct, or the most fundamental theoretical position; he is genuinely committed to the empirical reality of a variety of forms of nationalism in history and eager to explore the intellectual foundations of each. He is also not just a historian: his project, even when he focuses on Indian nationalism as it is prosecuted in the early twentieth century, is not to write a purely descriptive history of Indian nationalism. The subtitle of *Young India* is important: “An *interpretation* and a history of the nationalist movement from within” (Rai 1917). Rai writes as a political philosopher, concerned to limn the genus that is nationalism and to understand the varying theoretical perspectives and motivations that engender its many species. He takes as his domain Indian nationalism, but he is always clear that he takes his account to be perfectly general, a point made by frequent references to other nationalist movements.

Nonetheless, this is no armchair philosophical speculation on the kinds of nationalism one might imagine in an abstract space of possibilities. Rai is, in good Marxist fashion, interpreting nationalism, as he puts it, “from within,” and is conscious of his own standpoint and the epistemological leverage it provides. He therefore proposes his taxonomy of nationalisms in the context of the political reality of British colonialism. In addition to being a philosopher, his perspective includes his experience as an actor in and political commentator on Indian affairs, and of course, as a Marxist, as a person struggling against global capitalist oppression. Rai constructs his taxonomy from the bottom up, categorizing and naming the plurality of opinions and visions he observes in actual discussions and debates that were taking place during the drive for independence.

Rai distinguishes four forms of nationalism: extremism, terrorism, constructivism, and moderation. This taxonomy may strike the contemporary reader as strange, and indeed, it carves up the conceptual territory in an unfamiliar way. This vocabulary, despite its unfamiliarity now, was standard in Indian nationalist discourse in the early twentieth century. But it was Rai who made explicit the distinctions along with their theoretical and methodological commitments. All of these nationalisms, according to Rai, share in the Indian context an unwillingness to accept British rule in any form as part of what it means to be a recognized Indian nation. More broadly, each of these nationalisms represents an attitude towards colonial power and towards the emerging nation; the distinctions between them have to do with method and timing, but most of all, with the theorization of the relation between colonizer and colonized and the conditions of national identity.

The most radical form of nationalism Rai identifies is *extremism*. According to Rai, extremism consists in the refusal to recognize the fact of legal colonial rule, or to recognize the colonizer as a government against which international struggle is possible. In the Indian context, the extremists were those who refused to recognize even the apparent fact of British rule in India. That is, they refused to recognize the fact of British authority even as a target of resistance. Rai presents Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Har Dayal as examples of this type of nationalist. On their view, the status of the British in India was roughly that of illegal aliens, or that of pirates on the high seas. Nationalist struggle, on this view, is always a police action against illegal residents, not a struggle of one nation against another. Extremists refuse to dignify colonial powers by recognizing them as genuine national adversaries.

As Rai notes, the moral credentials of this political argument are powerful. To the extent that nationalist struggle is legitimate, colonial power is illegitimate. If it is

illegitimate, it has no legislative or judicial force. If it has none, it is not a state actor. Nonetheless, the political credentials of extremism do not always match its moral credentials. In particular, in the case of the British occupation of India, it was a political fact—however morally indefensible it might have been—that the British administration was a government under the authority of the Crown. (This contrasts with the state of affairs prior to the war of 1857, when the East India Company acted as a government, but was not recognized as a government *de jure* either by the Crown, who regarded it as a privateer, or by the Moghul emperor and other Indian authorities, who regarded it as exercising a *diwani*—a dispensation to administer a territory and to collect revenue from it.) For this reason, the extremist position had relatively little traction in the independence movement; nonetheless, as an account of a particular theorization of nationalist struggle, it is not without merit.

The second variety of nationalism Rai considers is *terrorism*. In the present geopolitical environment, and according to contemporary usage of that term, terrorism might seem to be further out on the nationalist spectrum than extremism. But, if we pay attention to the theoretical principles guiding Rai's taxonomy, we will see that it is not, and the insight that lies behind this construction of the spectrum is important. While extremists withhold recognition as government actors from colonial powers, terrorists recognize that status and take that status as a ground for action, seeing nationalist struggle not as police action, but as war.

In the Indian colonial context, terrorists were nationalists who recognized the British as a governing force, albeit an unwelcome and illegitimate one. They therefore saw that their enemy was a government and took their struggle to be war waged by one nation against another, by a colonized nation against an illegitimate colonial government, as opposed to an operation to remove from their shores individuals who were in the country illegally. According to Rai, Aurobindo, in his early incarnation, was just such a nationalist. Terrorism, then, regardless of the connotations of the term, when seen within the framework of Rai's taxonomy, is a more moderate form of nationalism than extremism. While each warrants violent struggle, and while each regards colonial domination as illegitimate, terrorists at least concede that they are at war and see political reality and not merely moral considerations, as driving their efforts.

The third variety of nationalism, as we move towards the moderate end of the scale is *constructivism*. The clearest examples of constructive nationalists, according to Rai, were those who belonged to the Arya and Brahma Samaj movements. The goal of constructivists was to construct a nation worth having, to have a vision of an India to be achieved, one not recognizable in the colonial context. The constructivists therefore focused primarily on changing the social and material conditions for the people who would then inhabit that nation state. For this reason, this form of nationalist was conservative at its core, eschewing the political goal of independence in favor of economic and social advancements for the time being.

Practically, this means that constructivists forego armed struggle against colonial power in favor of institution-building within the colonial structure. Theoretically, it means that constructivists recognize not only the political reality of colonial domination, but also the legitimacy, at least *pro tempore*, of colonial rule. After all, if construction is a precondition of nationhood, the colonized nation is not yet ready for it, and if it is not, colonial rule is a legitimate stopgap, even if one should strive to end its necessity and reality. Rai writes of the constructivists that they are: "... those who

want independence, but not at *once*.” (Bhushan and Garfield 2017, p. 119). He included among the constructivists prominent Muslim leaders like Abdul Kalam Azad, at one point president of the Indian National Congress.

The final category of nationalism in Rai’s taxonomy is *moderation*. Moderates wished for national status not for its own sake, but because it is instrumental in the pursuit of another, putatively higher, value, such as pacifism, or egalitarianism—*swaraj, swadeshi, global harmony*, etc... It was this category of nationalist, interestingly, that Rai saw as most conceptually problematic; indeed, he was skeptical of its very cogency as a form of nationalism. This skepticism arose from his observation that the moderates’ commitments were to ideals so distanced from nationalism per se that they hardly seemed nationalist at all.

That is, while moderates pursue what looks like a nationalist agenda, were they to come to believe that their other goals could be achieved as well or better without the success of nationalist struggle, they would forego it. So, extremists refuse to recognize a colonizing government at all; terrorists, while recognizing the colonizing power as a government, do not recognize its legitimacy; and constructivists recognize its legitimacy only as a temporary step on the way to the nation. But moderation is consistent with recognizing colonial domination as a fully legitimate power structure. For this reason, Rai doubted that moderation is even a genuine nationalism, despite its role in nationalist struggle. Rai put Gandhi and most Congress leaders into this category (Tagore, on the other hand, rejected nationalism entirely), with their commitment to pacifism and egalitarianism as their principal values, which, while not incompatible with being nationalist, seemed accidental rather than essential to it.

In the sections that follow, we will explore whether this classification of nationalisms helps us understand contemporary nationalist movements. Nationalism, for better or for worse, is a significant force in contemporary politics and international relations. Whether we endorse it or not, it is important to understand its structure, motivation, and the various forms in which it manifests. If Rai’s theoretical framework can help us to do that, this is one more reason to take early twentieth century Indian philosophy seriously.

## The Importance of Understanding Extremism and Terrorism

Rai’s theorization of extremism is an important contribution to contemporary thought about nationalism. The extremists, more than any other nationalists, raise the question of the moral legitimacy of colonial or oppressive governments and so offer (whether correctly or not) a moral justification for nationalistic activity. This kind of justification is different from a straightforward political justification and any response to extremist nationalism must recognize this justificatory strategy (again, whether or not one thinks that it is correct in any particular case).

Extremist nationalist movements, Rai argues, have at their core the denial of legitimacy to the governments against which they struggle. Many nationalist movements today and in the recent past are delegitimization movements in just this sense. Examples might include the Chechen war, or Kurdish separatist movements. The resolution of conflicts like this is notoriously difficult and that difficulty may derive in part from the fact that the parties to these conflicts see them so differently: one sees a



rebellion, the other a refusal to acknowledge an illegitimate actor claiming political authority. To resolve these conflicts, then, the appropriate strategy is first to open a discussion about the legitimacy of the relevant authorities. These discussions may be difficult, but without them, no resolution is possible. Recognizing that a nationalist movement is extremist in this sense may, however, be the necessary first step to any kind of resolution.

Today, it has become customary to think of terrorism in terms of concrete actions. That is, we think of terrorists as those who commit acts of violence aimed at causing widespread fear for political purposes. That definition has a kind of forensic justification and makes it possible to justify particular prosecutions or a global “war on terror,” but if Rai is right, that is the wrong way to think about terrorism as an ideology, and so it may be the wrong way to combat terrorism as an ideology, as opposed to a set of practices.

Recall that Rai argued that Aurobindo was a terrorist and did so not in virtue of Aurobindo's involvement in violence, but in virtue of his editorials in *Bande Mataram*, none of which explicitly advocated violence. Instead, Aurobindo was a terrorist in Rai's view because he regarded the independence movement as a war between two state entities and was therefore governed by the conventions and laws of war. These days, we often see law enforcement or the media define the violent acts of individuals as terrorism, even when they are not in any sense associated with an ideology of state warfare. In some countries, attending a domestic demonstration against state policy is regarded as terrorism. In each case, the identification of an act—whether peaceful or violent—as terrorist directs our attention only to the act itself, not to the ideology that underlies terrorism. Terrorist ideology in Rai's sense essentially involves the view that one is engaged in armed struggle against a state actor. This is the ideology Rai aims to clarify and which in fact underlies many, but not all, of the acts regarded today as terrorist. Keeping this distinction between ideology and action in view can help to formulate more precisely directed policy towards terrorist groups.

Since terrorism is a nationalist ideology, one that uses the language and theory of just war as its foundation, and is not simply a set of techniques, or a level of threat to public order, the way to combat terrorism is not to engage in war. That only reinforces the underlying ideology. Instead, if Rai is correct, one should work to refute the view that the conflict in question is in fact a conflict between states, or that the war in question is in fact just. It is not the actions, but the rhetoric of legitimate warfare that requires confrontation, and this is a lesson we learn from Rai's analysis.

## Constructive Nationalism

Other nationalist projects in the present world order are constructive in Rai's sense. We think that the European project might be an example. Europe is emerging—with some contestation—as a nation as nations are generally recognized, with the evolution and strengthening of the European Union. Its nationalism is a constructive nationalism in Rai's sense; the Union is developing the conditions for national identity rather than claiming them as an initial right. The anti-European sentiment in places like Great Britain or perhaps Hungary can be misplaced if it sees European unification in terms of a conflict between states, as a terrorist would have it, or as a refusal to recognize the legitimacy of existing sovereignty, as an extremist might see it. It is better to discuss

these matters in terms of the construction of a state entity that might be fit for full sovereignty one day than in terms of one that claims it now. This is not to say that the conversations will then be easier, but they will be clearer.

Another example of constructive nationalism in the recent past is the independence movement of Timor-Leste. While the initial brutal suppression of this independence movement by the Indonesian government suggests that this movement was seen otherwise, one of the reasons for its success both in garnering international support and in establishing a reasonably successful nation state after independence was the careful preparation for independence through the construction of the institutions of civil society undertaken prior to independence.

Constructivism in Rai's sense may now be the dominant model of nationalism in the developed world, though to be sure not the only model. In liberal democracies, we tend to think of nationhood as something to be achieved through the development of civil society rather than something to be demanded without adequate preparation. (See South Sudan in the early twenty-first century for an apposite warning on that count.) Constructivism was Rai's preferred approach as well. This forces us to face certain questions regarding the advancement of a constructivist agenda, questions we do not pursue here. Chief among them is the question of when it is appropriate to advance a constructive nationalist project. Nationalism is, after all, not always a good thing, and can be highly disruptive and damaging to civil society. The advantage of extremism and terrorism is that they offer clear—if sometimes highly problematic—answers to this question. That is, extremists and terrorists are convinced that foreign domination is itself bad and that that is enough to justify the nationalist reaction. The constructivist, on the other hand, must seek independent justification for her nationalistic project.

### **Is There Room for Moderation?**

Moderation always sounds good: the term itself conveys a sense of reasonableness, and as Rai characterizes the moderate ideology, it appears to be even more reasonable. After all, if there are goals that justify a nationalist project, then it is those goals that should matter, not the nationalism that is instrumental to their achievement; if there are better ways to achieve them, nationalism should be off the table. So, for instance, if the Karen in Myanmar are fighting for an independent nation because they wish to be free from oppression by a Burman majority, or the Kurds in Iraq strive for independence in order to control and benefit from their oil wealth (whether or not these are the actual reasons), then an agreement that lifted the oppression or that guaranteed control over the oil should obviate the need for a new nation.

Nonetheless, as Rai points out, to the extent that a claim to national identity is justified at all, moderation is intellectually dishonest. National identity is not, that is, simply a means to other ends; if it has any meaning, it is an end in itself. Consider what Rai has to say about the moderates, the variety of nationalists for which he has very little sympathy in the colonial period, and a position that he takes to be the least nationalist from his perspective:

A great many Congress leaders are true patriots, but they have such an abnormal love of peace and luxury, that they cannot even think of methods which might

even remotely result in disturbances of peace, in riots, and in disasters. Hence their detestation of the extremists' methods and their distrust of carrying on a propaganda among the masses. They would proceed very, very slowly. (Rai 1917, pp. 178–179; reprinted in Bhushan and Garfield [2017, p. 120]).

Rai's critique of moderate nationalism in the Indian context rests on the fact it treats the nation as a mere instrument, not as a value. Consider in this connection Martha Nussbaum's account of patriotism: "Patriotism is a strong emotion taking the nation as its object. It is a form of love, and thus distinct from simple approval, or commitment, or embrace of principles. This love involves the feeling that the nation is *one's own*, and its rituals usually make reference to that idea." (Nussbaum 2013, p. 208). First and foremost, patriotism—or nationalism—is an affection for one's own land. This reflects Rai's insight that what all varieties of nationalism explicitly share is that the land is *one's own*, which is the reason that the true nationalist cannot tolerate rule by another. Nussbaum continues: "In patriotic emotion, citizens embrace one another as a family, sharing common purposes; thus stigma is overcome (for a time at least) by imagination and love." (2013, p. 211). That is, nationalism is as a distinctly *political* feeling, albeit a feeling of affection; as an affection, it is naturally extended most powerfully to those one recognizes as one's compatriots; as political, it demands the conditions for its cultivation and flourishing.

Rai's construction of nationalism as reflecting patriotism in this sense shares this intuitive understanding of what is at stake. Rai's critique of the moderate position (whether justified or not) lies in the fact that their choice of method is tainted by their "abnormal love of peace ..." (Bhushan and Garfield 2017, p. 120). Rai's indictment of the moderate position is not that it is unpatriotic, but that its version of nationalism—overly colored by images of peaceableness or unity—may lead it not to consider methods that would be conducive to the achievement of its goal.

The connection between unreflective patriotism and unmotivated nationalism, however, can itself be toxic. For instance, at present in the USA, right wing political rhetoric aligns a clannish hostility to immigrants with patriotism/nationalism on the one hand and a welcoming approach to immigrants with unpatriotism/antinationalism on the other. A great virtue of Rai's analysis is that it reveals the confusion in this approach, as nationalism, properly speaking, has nothing whatsoever to do with isolationism, but is rather a vehicle for active participation in the community of nations.

### **Miscellaneous Nationalisms from the Colonial Period: the Esthetic and the Spiritual: Coomaraswamy, Besant, and ISIS**

We should not think that Rai's taxonomy exhausts the varieties of nationalism to be found in the Indian colonial period, and examination of that range of positions might also be a useful way to glean lessons from that history for our own time. To be sure, the esthetic nationalism espoused by Coomaraswamy seems a bit quaint now; it is hard to imagine anyone mounting a serious nationalist argument grounded in art history. But in Annie Besant's work—and to an extent in some of that of Aurobindo and Gandhi—we find a different strain of nationalism, one that might appear benign in the context in which it arose, but which has the potential to turn malignant. We might call this

spiritual nationalism. While Rai did not recognize it as a legitimate form of nationalism, perhaps he should have considered it. Besant, following Aurobindo and Gandhi, saw Indian national identity in essentially religious or spiritual terms, as constituted by a civilization grounded in the Vedas and in the insights of the *rishis* who interpreted them.

Gandhi mined this ideological vein for his account of *satyagraha*, *ahimsa*, and *swaraj*. And as we know, strategy, while it led to the salutary ideology of nonviolence, self-cultivation, and spirit of intellectual honesty and rectitude for which Gandhi and his followers are justly famous, also—by establishing a religious dimension to national identity—led to partition, the horrors that it brought, and the creation of a fundamentalist state in Pakistan. In fact Nehru, criticizing this strain in Gandhian thought in *Discovery of India* (Nehru 1946), correctly noted that if religious identity is the criterion of nationhood, the most fundamentalist factions will always have the greatest claim to legitimacy, and democracy and secularism are doomed.

We can recognize this spiritual nationalism in its present form not only in countries like Pakistan, Turkey, and Israel, in which religious ideology undermines secular democracy, but also in such nationalist movements as the Islamic State, as well as in the religious fundamentalism of the right wing of the Republican Party in the USA. So, while Gandhian thought, as refracted and developed by his followers such as Besant, may be conducive to nonviolent struggle, inspiring such religiously inspired political leaders as the Rev. Martin Luther King, Bishop Desmond Tutu, and the Dalai Lama XIV, Rai may have been correct to eschew this foundation for legitimate nationalism, and this hesitancy—perhaps deriving from his own Arya Samaj roots—may have been at the base of his critique of Gandhi. This may be one more reason for us to seek sources other than Gandhi as the best Indian contributions to contemporary discourse regarding national liberation.

### **Why We Pay Attention to Rai, to the Arya Samaj, and Its Roots in the Indian Renaissance**

In exploring Lajpat Rai's contributions to the theoretical understanding of nationalism, we have commented several times on his roots in the Arya Samaj, and it is worth reflecting more broadly on the role of the Arya Samaj as an institution in the Indian independence movement and as a source of nationalist thought. Dayanand Saraswati, in *Satyarth Prakash* (1875), sets out the ten fundamental principles of this rationalist religion. The sixth principle enjoins "action on behalf of the good of the entire world," the seventh advocated action on behalf of social justice, and the ninth advocated collective progress rather than individualism. This explicitly social and political edge meant that the Arya Samaj and its members such as Rai were much more of a threat to the British than were either the Brahma Samaj and its pillars, the Tagores, or even the more orthodox anti-modernist MK Gandhi. This is because the explicitly egalitarian Arya Samaj was actively building social and educational institutions, constituting the beginnings of alternative civil society to that established by the Raj. Moreover, the Arya Samaj, unlike the Brahma Samaj, had broad appeal across class, caste, and language boundaries, suggesting that it could become a truly national movement. Rai's own writings show an awareness of the political threat the Arya Samaj posed to the British.

The *Vedas* teach us all about the ideals of individual and social conduct, of social governance, and of political philosophy. If professors in Government Colleges [that is, the British colonial universities] who teach or recommend to their boys books like Mill's *Liberty* or *Representative Government*, Bentham's *Theory of Legislation*, Bagehot's *Physics and Politics*, Spencer's *Man Versus the State*, are not regarded as political agitators, there is no reason why the Arya Samaj, which preaches the Vedic ideals of social reconstruction and modes of social governance, should be regarded as a political body [and therefore subject to censure]. (*History of the Arya Samaj*; reprinted in Bhushan and Garfield [2017, p. 85])

The Arya Samaj thus urged that the *Vedas* were to be read as political philosophy rather than as simply religious injunction. Nonetheless, Rai argued that as a political movement, the Arya Samaj was constructive, not seditious, as an extreme or terrorist movement might be. Ironically, it is for this very reason that the British correctly saw the most serious threat to the continuity of their rule as deriving from this restrained political rhetoric and not from the more radical wings of the independence movement.

There is one more reason to think with Lajpat Rai about nationalism: we might wonder how to theorize the wave of Hindu nationalism that has swept over India in recent years under the leadership of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The BJP espouses a vision of the Indian nation grounded squarely in Hindutva and so in a very particular religious tradition understood in a very particular way. This is very different from any of the forms of nationalism taxonomized by Rai, none of which appeals to a specific religious identity.

On the other hand, one might wonder whether, even though it does not fit into Rai's taxonomy, BJP nationalism should be thought of as a version of what we have called the *spiritual nationalism* of theorists such as Annie Besant, or Aurobindo Ghosh discussed above. It should not. These theorists acknowledged the plurality of spiritual roots of Indian civilization in a Congress that joined Hindu and Muslim leadership; Narendra Modi, on the other hand, emphasizes a single and exclusive religious identity. Even Mohandas Gandhi, an orthodox Hindu, regarded Indian Muslims as carrying part of India's spiritual heritage and argued that Muslims are every bit as Indian as Hindus. This was part of his argument against partition.

But more to the point, Modi—ironically like Muhammad Ali Jinnah—emphasizes religious purity and orthodoxy as the index of legitimacy. The only real difference between their respective constructions of national identity is the particular orthodoxy they choose. And, as Pandit Nehru advised in his opposition of the creation of Pakistan, the moment one uses religious identification as the marker for national identity, the most fundamentalist among us become the most legitimate exponents of that identity, and that way lays communalism, violence, and the decline of civil society. Nehru has been proven correct with regard to Pakistan. It would be tragic if India repeated that error. Perhaps attention to Rai's nuanced account of the varieties of legitimate nationalism can help to inoculate true nationalists against this rabid populism.

In this study, we come to the philosophy of the Indian renaissance not simply as an exercise in the history of philosophy, fascinating though that is. Instead, we are interested in the philosophy of that period as a source of philosophical insight that can enrich contemporary discourse. While many turn to this period for insight into metaphysics and epistemology, and properly so, we urge that it is also a fecund source



of political philosophy. And while many who agree with us about that turn to the great icons of Mohandas Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore as the wellspring of Indian political thought, we suggest that in Lajpat Rai and the Arya Samaj, we might find more useful political thought. The tapestry of Indian philosophical thought during the Indian Renaissance is complex, and it is always worthwhile to explore new threads.

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