

Decolonizing Anarchism

Maia Ramnath

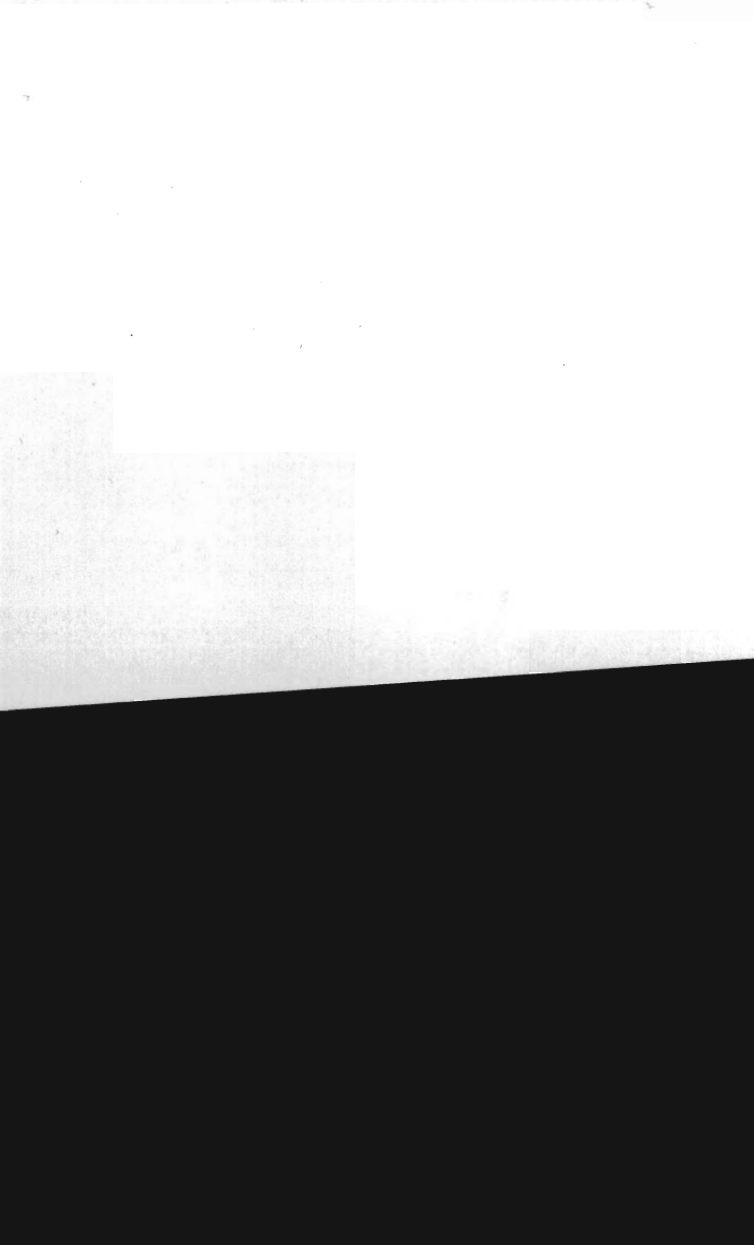
Praise for *Decolonizing Anarchism*

Maia Ramnath offers a refreshingly different perspective on anticolonial movements in India, not only by focusing on little-remembered anarchist exiles such as Har Dayal, Mukerji and Acharya but more important, highlighting the persistent trend that sought to strengthen autonomous local communities against the modern nation-state. While Gandhi, the self-proclaimed philosophical anarchist, becomes a key figure in this antiauthoritarian history, there are other more surprising cases that Ramnath brings to light. A superbly original book.

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—Dylan Rodríguez, author of *Suspended Apocalypse: White Supremacy, Genocide, and the Filipino Condition*



DECOLONIZING ANARCHISM

AN ANTIAUTHORITARIAN HISTORY OF INDIA'S LIBERATION STRUGGLE

*Decolonizing Anarchism: An Antiauthoritarian History of India's
Liberation Struggle* by Maia Ramnath

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Maia Ramnath

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Anarchist Interventions: An IAS/AK Press Book Series

Radical ideas can open up spaces for radical actions, by illuminating hierarchical power relations and drawing out possibilities for liberatory social transformations. The Anarchist Intervention series—a collaborative project between the Institute for Anarchist Studies (IAS) and AK Press—strives to contribute to the development of relevant, vital anarchist theory and analysis by intervening in contemporary discussions. Works in this series will look at twenty-first-century social conditions—including social structures and oppression, their historical trajectories, and new forms of domination, to name a few—as well as reveal opportunities for different tomorrows premised on horizontal, egalitarian forms of self-organization.

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Introduction

The impulse for this intervention was twofold: to bring an anarchist approach to anticolonialism, and an anticolonial approach to anarchism. I tackle the first by addressing practices of historiography and active solidarity. Both interventions are linked through the need to know other histories besides the familiar European/North American one. Furthermore, recognizing those other histories as relevant to the anarchist tradition means seeing anarchism as *one* instance of a polymorphous engagement with certain key questions and issues, as *one* manifestation of a larger family of egalitarian and emancipatory principles.

The seeds for this writing were planted over a decade of involvement with global economic justice, antiwar, and Palestine solidarity work, all framed as part of an anti-imperialist analysis, and then fertilized during the better part of a year spent studying in India, 2006–7. It wasn't my first trip to my father's country of origin, and it wouldn't be my last, as I hoped eventually to spend a significant amount of time there each year. With this in

mind I set out to try to find my closest political counterparts and get a sense of where I might someday fit in the terrain of social movement activity. It quickly became clear that there was no simple one-to-one correspondence with the radical spectrum familiar to me in the United States. The histories and contexts were too different; the trajectories of the vocabulary too weighted with mutually illegible baggage. Sub- and countercultures as well as oppositional movements only have meaning when embedded in and against their respective hegemonic mainstreams, which are in turn deeply embedded in history, geography, and global political economy. This renders direct translation impossible.

Thus there was no group or formation that would be a perfect match for my U.S. political profile, and in any case it would be misguided—colonialist, you could say—to expect one. So the question shifted from “Where/who are my political counterparts?” to “What political niche makes sense for me here (as the half-breed, rootless-cosmopolitan, déclassé-intelligentsia, self-described anarchist daughter of a thoroughly acculturated, diasporic professional)?” My relationship to this context was that of a peculiar traveling cousin, neither an outsider nor a native, enjoying access but not total belonging. Based on the questions being asked and analysis made, issues raised and stances taken, organizing principles espoused and critiques rendered of the mainline Left party (or parties), I found some aspects of affinity with some sectors, and other aspects with others. These sectors would never see eye to eye with each other, however, and indeed are often positioned as radical

opponents, never the twain to meet. Yet the seeming polarity was in reality masking a range of critical variants being voiced within each category. To me the synthesis seemed perfectly logical because of my idiosyncratic angle of vision, free of entanglement in the intermovement dynamics that seemed to overdetermine any statement so that a critique of entity X would by implication align you with entity Y, within a fixed arrangement of alternatives.

In India, when I hear people use terms like anarchism, anarchist, and anarchistic, they are usually referring either to violent, nihilistic chaos or competitive, free market individualism. It stands to reason, then, that the terminology is used disapprovingly by leftists and Left-liberal progressive types, and approvingly by postmodern academics and self-indulgent, capitalist entrepreneurs. The implied opposite is top-down centralized state planning of the sort that was instituted through the Nehruvian social democracy that officially dominated Indian society until the liberalization of the early 1990s (though already undermined by the Emergency period of authoritarian crackdown in the mid-1970s). Despite its stated goals of redistributive justice, this system became in practice a byword for inefficiency and unwieldy bureaucracy.

If engaged in an appropriately complex yet amicable political discussion, I might point out that the contrary of top-down organization and concentrated power is not the absence of organization but rather a different form of decentralized, participatory organization in which power is dispersed. I might suggest that the alternatives to a state-controlled economy include not just neoliberal free market

capitalism (which far from representing an escape from the state, actually depends on favorable state policies) but also some form of nonstate socialism built on an overlapping network of self-run syndicates and collectives.

Most often, though, there doesn't seem to be much point in quibbling. Why force my vocabulary into a place where it doesn't make sense, using words that will inevitably trigger referents and associations that are far from what I am trying to communicate? Even in explaining this project to people in Indian social movement and scholarly contexts I've hesitated to use the words, because whenever I did, due to an accepted sediment of meanings and associations, it led directly into miscomprehension of what I was trying to do. If the concern is with content and meaning rather than with labels, it is better to scrap any attachment I have to a terminology from another context and seek a different shared vocabulary for the principles to be discussed, the problems to be solved.

And what are these principles, these problems? My political, ethical, and intellectual worlds have long orbited a binary star of anarchism and anticolonialism. The attempt to explain their relationship has a double implication: in how an anarchist perspective affects our understanding of a history of anticolonialism, and in how an anticolonial perspective affects our understanding of a history of anarchism.

Regarding the first, standard nationalist history tells one story of decolonization. There are others, and they are still unfolding. In these stories, the achievement of a national state was not the endpoint of liberation, and its inherited institutions not the proper vehicle. The elimination

of the British government left incomplete the task of ending injustice and inequity. The postcolonial state, insufficient at best, at its worst actually perpetuated the same kinds of oppression and exploitation carried out by colonial rule, but now in the name of the nation.

I should emphasize that what I am *not* doing here is looking for anarchism in South Asia (although I do sometimes find it), staking out territorial claims with a red-and-black flag. Rather, I am exploring a slice of South Asian history through the lens of an anarchist analysis. In doing so, what becomes visible or legible, what is foregrounded or emphasized, that may otherwise seem to defy logic or simply be overlooked? What in India's counterhistory does this shed light on—what forgotten but not lost possibilities? Where and in what form do I recognize certain questions being asked, certain concerns being addressed, that I as an anarchist share—for example, regarding the role of the state, the nature of industrial development, or attitudes toward modern rationalism? How and in what terms do people embedded in *this* particular history generate theory and praxis regarding those questions and concerns? Where do I see intersections, articulations, or direct points of contact with the Western anarchist tradition? Why is there a recurring linkage made (in praise and condemnation alike) between anarchism and certain elements of an Indian social movement history, such as the militant wing of the freedom struggle from 1905 to the 1930s, or the postindependence offshoots of Gandhism? Without either taking the equation at face value (given the questionable usage of the word) or dismissing it as groundless (given its persistence),

can we identify just what affinities and analogies are being sensed whenever the linkage is made?

This leads to the second implication, which has to do not just with anarchism's role in decolonization but also with decolonizing our concept of anarchism itself. That means that instead of always trying to construct a strongly anarchy-centric cosmology—conceptually appropriating movements and voices from elsewhere in the world as part of “our” tradition, and then measuring them against how much or little we think they resemble our notion of our own values—we could locate the Western anarchist tradition as one contextually specific manifestation among a larger—indeed global—tradition of antiauthoritarian, egalitarian thought/praxis, of a universal human urge (if I dare say such a thing) toward emancipation, which also occurs in many other forms in many other contexts. Something else is then the reference point for us, instead of us being the reference point for everything else. This is a deeply decolonizing move.

This is perhaps where I need to make a distinction between the concept of anarchism and the Circle-A brand. The big *A* covers a specific part of the Western Left tradition dating from key ideological debates in the mid-nineteenth century and factional rivalries in the International Working Men's Association. It peaked worldwide in the early twentieth century among radical networks that consciously embraced the label while nevertheless encompassing multiple interpretations and emphases within it. Genealogically related to both democratic republicanism and utopian socialism, the big *A* opposed not only capitalism but

also the centralized state along with all other systems of concentrated power and hierarchy. It bore echoes of earlier radical egalitarian, libertarian, and millenarian movements as well, with their carnivalesque upendings of rank and social norms, and upholding of a pre- or noncapitalist moral economy. These in turn resonated through later Romantic reactions against an excess of Enlightenment positivism, bemoaning the psychic disenchantment as much as the material exploitation wrought by industrial capitalism.

With a small *a*, the word anarchism implies a set of assumptions and principles, a recurrent tendency or orientation—with the stress on movement in a direction, not a perfected condition—toward more dispersed and less concentrated power; less top-down hierarchy and more self-determination through bottom-up participation; liberty and equality seen as directly rather than inversely proportional; the nurturance of individuality and diversity within a matrix of interconnectivity, mutuality, and accountability; and an expansive recognition of the various forms that power relations can take, and correspondingly, the various dimensions of emancipation. This tendency, when it becomes conscious, motivates people to oppose or subvert the structures that generate and sustain inequity, unfreedom, and injustice, and to promote or prefigure the structures that generate and sustain equity, freedom, and justice.

These tendencies, culturally inflected, are certainly present within South Asian history. There is a long tradition, for instance, of radical egalitarianism and subversion of authority, celebrated in the (Muslim) sufi and (Hindu)

bhakti movements immortalized through mystical poetry since the thirteenth century. Sikhism was originally founded as an attempt to counter caste hierarchy and religious division through synthesis and egalitarian social relations. The birth and evolution of Buddhism too (along with certain branches of Vedanta) placed a rational and antihierarchical philosophy at the heart of India's intellectual heritage, countering the Orientalist portrait of Indian culture as *essentially* defined by hierarchy, autocracy, and unreason.¹

In this case, those seeking counterparts or solidarities might be guided not by Anarchism but instead by that broader principle, tendency, or orientation of which Western anarchism is one derivation or subset. The Liberty Tree is a great banyan, whose branches cross and weave, touching earth in many places to form a horizontal, interconnected grove of new trunks.

Some of the touchdown points are in the mutually informing three sections that organize this book. The first section further explores some of these theoretical issues at the nexus of anarchism and anticolonialism. The second is a series of historical chapters focusing on intersections between the Western anarchist tradition and the tapestry of Indian anticolonialism. Such crisscrossings occurred during the peak of propaganda of the deed, a popular tactic for anarchists, nihilists, and radical nationalists alike; at the international high point of syndicalism, linking issues of immigrant labor to an analysis of colonial relationships; and in the presence of critical voices within the development of organized world Communism until defined out by schism or purge. My hope is that the specifics of

this history may be one point of access to more generally applicable questions.

The sketches I offer of an alternate history of anti-colonialism aren't complete and certainly don't solve all problems. This narrative is still dominated by the overwhelming presence of male, upper-caste voices, whereas any truly antiauthoritarian, antihierarchical history of India—whether writing or enacting it—has to confront the malignant realities of caste and patriarchy. Yet this is not a history of caste or patriarchy, or the movements to dismantle the structures of oppression based on them. So for the purposes of this project, it seemed better to offer what is actually there rather than to simply condemn or discard the record on account of what isn't there—and then continue the efforts it chronicles to broaden and deepen liberation, *in practice*. (It is crucial to remember that no would-be emancipatory movement, regardless of its primary focus, can afford *not* to take ubiquitous caste inequities into consideration in its own goals and process, in much the same way that North American movements have to maintain their awareness of race.)

The third section's intervention is an attempt to contribute to the conversation on how we go about practices of solidarity. This section also changed considerably during the writing process. As I said, one motivation for this book was the quest for counterparts, for affinity. This means asking, even if the form of anarchism I practice and speak doesn't necessarily translate. Who is addressing the issues that anarchists address, identifying the structures of power that anarchists identify, utilizing methods and

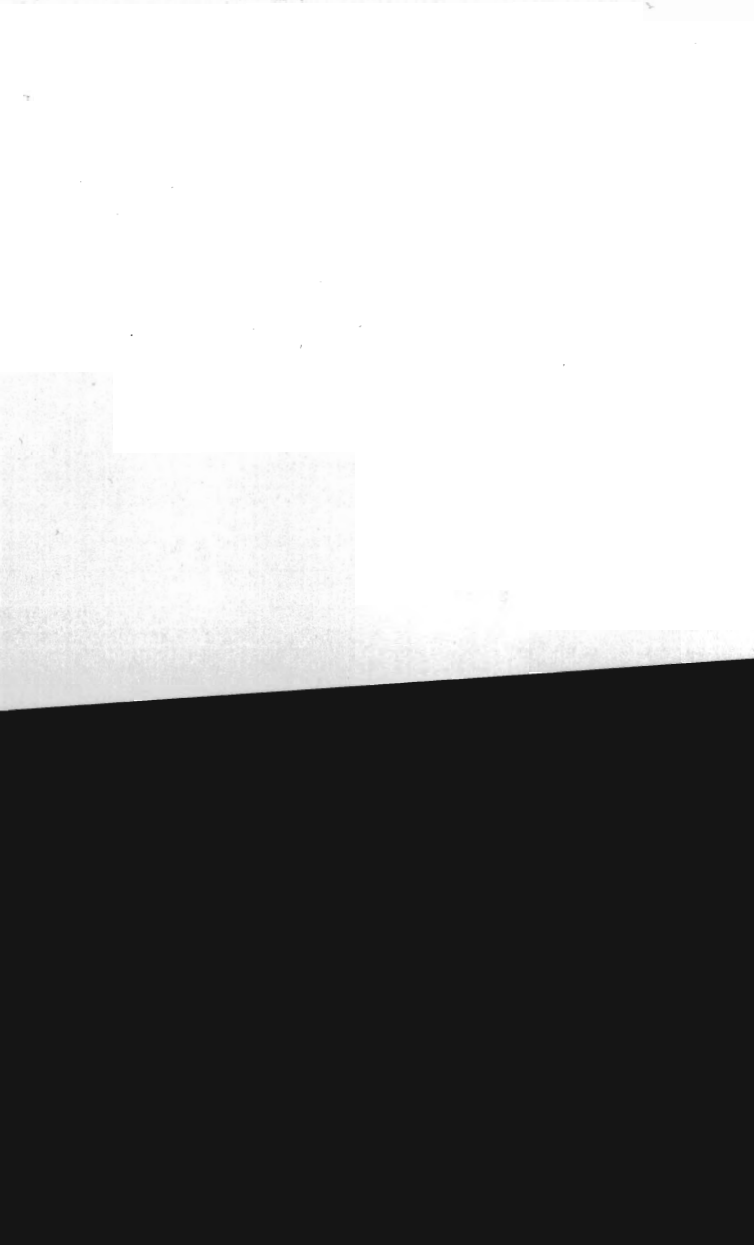
processes that anarchists recognize? How does one behave toward them? How does one participate in global anticolonial struggles? In this sense, the third section is a series of proposals, and an invitation to others to elaborate on them.

Finally, I need to offer a note on geographic limits. I originally meant to define this project as South Asian rather than merely Indian. But as most of the material I was working with pertained to India, it seemed better to call it what it was than to subsume the whole region within an unacknowledged Indian hegemony—which often happens, a primary example of postcolonial neocolonialism. It would be ideal to expand my exploration to a truly South Asian scope, but that effort will take a lot longer. In the meantime, I focus here on India. When I'm speaking of India during the colonial period, however, this also includes areas that later became part of Pakistan and Bangladesh. Nevertheless, I continue to use the term India when referring to the independence struggle before the partition, as both efficient and period appropriate.

Acknowledgments

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6



DECOLONIZATION





The Highest Form of Anarchism

Given that colonization is one of the most concentrated forms of power in history, incorporating extreme modes of domination, dispossession, and racial hierarchy, the categorical imperative of resisting it or acting in solidarity with those doing so should require no justification to any anarchist. Yet anarchists in the global North often feel conflicted by the sense that opposing colonialism requires supporting national liberation struggles. This in turn implies compromising their own principles to allow for a provisional alignment with nationalism, with all its distasteful corollaries of statism, chauvinism, and patriarchy. This is precisely why an anarchist approach to anticolonialism is needed: to sketch out a more comprehensive emancipatory alternative to the limited nationalist version of liberation.

It begins, perhaps, with distinguishing between the negative (much simpler) and positive aspects of liberation.

Resistance is by definition a negative project, aimed at the removal of that which obstructs equity and emancipation. Such a goal may be held in common—even if for

different reasons—among many who share nothing else. The positive counterpart is the prefigurative project of creating the conditions that generate equity and emancipation. Many anarchists emphasize this as a distinguishing feature of their praxis; here limitless variation is possible among divergent visions of an idealized future. Of course we insist that even in the midst of struggle, the visions can't be postponed, since the route we choose determines where we end up. But since resistance is the common denominator, clarifying the nature of the enemy is a logical place to start. In redefining what we're for, it always helps to understand what we're against.

Anticolonialism ≠ Nationalism

The words colonialism and imperialism are often used interchangeably, although there are some nuances. Imperialism is the projection of power by a political entity beyond its territorial jurisdiction, whether through economic or military means, hard power or soft, or some combination thereof. It may take the form of direct occupation along with some degree of administrative control, though strategically located bases or concessions are cheaper, easier, and demand less responsibility for the residents. Colonization, which originally denoted settlement within metastasizing enclaves, has more recently come to imply hegemony through the export of culture.

In the national liberation context, using the terminology of imperialism as opposed to colonialism suggested an

analysis of global capitalism, which was thus more radical than simply opposing foreign rule or presence per se. In the corresponding metropolitan context, anti-imperialism was a term used on the Left to add an anticolonial component to a domestic anticapitalism focused solely on localized (and ethnically bounded) class struggle.

The goal of modern imperial power projection is the accumulation of capital, considered necessary for the strengthening of the colonizing state relative to other states. Capitalism in the north, particularly in its industrial form, required “underdeveloped” areas in order to continue expanding and stave off periodic crises in its wealth-generating system, constantly renewing the founding act of primitive accumulation along new frontiers of dispossession. By seizing resource-rich areas, enlisting the resident populations as cheap labor and a captive market, a “great power” could externalize its costs on to its colonies while enabling a massive extraction of surplus. In this way, colonialism embodied the symbiosis of global capital with the interstate system, underpinned by the crucial legitimizing ideologies of cultural and racial supremacy. Colonialism was in fact instrumental in generating the logics and structures of capitalism, nationalism, and racism during their formative periods.

Nationalism developed in tandem with the period of high imperialism in the second half of the nineteenth century, leading to what’s often termed the first round of globalization at the turn of the twentieth. The logic was that a great nation needed a strong state, and a strong state needed a colonial empire in order to secure an advantageous

balance of financial and military power against its rivals. Furthermore, in the escalating paranoia of realpolitik, maintaining autonomy became equivalent to achieving supremacy. World War I was the inevitable result of imperial competition running up against its material limits, combined with the increasingly vehement and organized objections of these empires' subject peoples.

A restive or insurgent colony was even better than a pacified one as a laboratory for states to develop their military, bureaucratic, disciplinary, policing, and surveillance capabilities. Here administrators tested new techniques for future application to domestic security in the metropole. In the later stages, coercion came to the fore as sporadic revolt swelled into irrepressible resistance, but earlier—initial conquests aside—colonizers attempted to consolidate their control (and claim moral legitimacy) by training the racialized “primitive” through the ideological apparatus of both liberal and religious civilizing missions. The “white man’s burden” was the onus of enlightening the ungrateful savage, the heathen, the eugenically challenged—while doomed never to be appreciated for this selfless effort. Hence, some of the most pernicious and persistent aspects of colonization involved not just military occupation, political domination, and economic superexploitation but also the systematic assault on cultural integrity, languages, lifeways, and ethnic identities. But are these always defined as *national* identities?

So far I’ve been referring to the nationalism of the colonizers, not the colonized. Is the widespread instinct that one is good and the other bad as simple as the difference between

overlords and underdogs? While nationalism lies at the root of many evils, its emotional force and historical significance for freedom fighters cannot be ignored, and so the notion of national liberation struggle requires some attention.

Indian Marxist literary theorist Aijaz Ahmad took Perry Anderson to task in an essay for stating that “all third world literature is nationalist literature.”¹ The same objection could be made regarding the historiography, not just the literature, of the global South. Periodized in terms of precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial, a nationalist narrative moves from primordial purity to unjust enslavement to destined redemption. A cycle of restoration and rebirth, combined with a linear progression toward teleological fulfillment, results in a triumphal spiral toward statehood: the destination for the nation’s journey, sign of its legitimacy, and guarantor of its autonomy and well-being.

The fundamental assumption of nationalism is that in order for a people to be recognized as holders of collective rights and freedoms, it must be constituted as a nation duly manifested in a state: an exclusive institution defined by its monopoly on sanctioned force and revenue extraction. A state is, in the starkest terms, a mechanism designed to accumulate wealth in order to make war, to make war in order to protect its wealth, and to make laws to facilitate its functioning, meaning to protect its own stability. This includes the maintenance of a reasonable degree of contentment among its members; the liberal or social democratic state adds the requirement of legitimation either by formal mechanisms of consent for its members or its claim to serve the members’ common welfare. Therefore, the only

anticolonial militance retroactively recognized as a legitimate freedom struggle (violence by an anticipated future state) rather than a crime (nonsanctioned violence within a state) or terrorism (as extrastate violence) must be nationalist. The nationalist fairy tale culminates in the marriage of (spiritual) nation and (physical) state, where the people live happily ever after.

By this circular logic, without a state a group is merely a marginalized minority, hoping at best to exist on sufferance as outsiders within someone else's jurisdiction where safety and success cannot be guaranteed. This logic became particularly important in South Asia, where the movement for a separate Pakistani state emerging from the Indian national liberation movement depended on the argument that the Muslims of the subcontinent constituted an ethnically distinct nation defined against the numerically dominant Hindus, correspondingly framed as the quintessence of a more monocultural Indian state—never mind the immense variety of regional and linguistic identities that crosscut either religious identity, or their centuries-old coexistence and cultural cross-fertilization.

The same fractal pattern has been repeated many times since independence from British rule, by separatist movements objecting to the domestic practices of postcolonial national states, exercising forms of “internal colonialism” on border areas and hinterlands (for whom internality was exactly the question) and deploying the same forms of governmentality. In seeking to replicate the techniques of colonial rule by institutionalizing states rather than abolishing them, the nationalist goal diverged from that of substantive

decolonization. If the colonial regime's structures of oppression were not simply to be reopened for business under new local management, yielding a new generation of authoritarian dictatorships and cultural chauvinists, a different logic of anticolonial struggle was imperative.

But should we object to a group's self-identifying as a nation per se?

Where ethnicity is brutalized and culture decimated, it is callous to discount the value of ethnic pride, asserting the right to exist as such—not forgetting that cultural expression must include the right to redefine the practices of one's own culture over time, in dialogue with multiple internal and external influences, rather than sanctifying a fixed tradition. In the colonial context, the defense of ethnic identity and cultural divergence from the dominant is a key component of resistance, with the caveat that it's equally crucial to pay attention to who's dictating the “correct” expression of culture and ethnicity. No culture is as homogeneous or static as the invented traditions of nationalism. Precolonial reality was dynamic, multifarious, and also horrible for some people. The decolonization of culture shouldn't mean rewinding to a “pure” original condition but instead restoring the artificially stunted capacity freely to grow and evolve without forcible outside interference to constrict the space of potential.

In any case it's possible to concede a strategic identity politics, evoked by the context of resistance, where the assertion of collective existence and demand for recognition functions as a stand against genocide, apartheid, systemic discrimination, or forced assimilation to a dominant norm.

Of course, defining any group as a nation is not without its own risks as the political stakes of identification rise, even if a community is culturally, linguistically, and genealogically distinct, with shared historical experience and aspirations. But here too it's the specter of stateness—the pressure to establish your own, or to resist the aggression of someone else's—that calls forth the enforcement of internal conformity, elimination of elements who fail or refuse to conform, and relentless policing of boundaries, including those of hereditary membership, for which task the control of female bodies, sexuality, and reproduction is essential.

What about the geographic boundaries? Aside from the unambiguous wrong of dispossession, indigenous land claims constitute an argument for a way of relating to place and biosphere that counteracts the ecologically destructive logic of late capitalist consumer society. Statehood aside, calls for sovereignty in this sense can amount to a way of securing spaces in which other logics can prevail and other modes of existence can be protected. Even if we hypothetically establish a connection between territory and ethnic identity, establishing a qualitative relationship of people to places, and places to identities, does not by definition require enforcing the separation of homogeneous categories of people assigned to fixed, exclusive plots of land.

Could collective demands for self-determination then be distinguished from the demand for a state? Nation-statehood was only one possible form that shared memories, visions, and social/place relations could take. In practice, “nation” has also been used as a blazon of symbolic solidarity, a committed choice of ethical affiliation. That it's

such a freighted word attests to the overriding force of nationalism, conceptually locking nation to state. The devil's in the hyphen.

Is it possible then to conceptualize the liberation of nation from state, along with the liberation of people from occupation and exploitation? This is what classical anarchist thinkers such as Mikhail Bakunin and Gustav Landauer attempted to do during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, respectively. It's also something contemporary solidarity activists may need to think about.

Bakunin saw Pan-Slavism as a vehicle of liberation against dynastic autocracy, imbuing a transnational identity with certain values that could resist tyranny and subjugation. Poland was then the democratic-republican battleground, and Russia's village terrain the spiritual heartland. In the same way, radical democrats and antiauthoritarians were Francophiles in the 1790s and 1871, and Hispanophiles in the 1930s. In all these cases devotees of a principle embraced the people who were fighting for that principle, acknowledging their location on the shifting front line of an ongoing global struggle, while also imputing to them inherent ethnocultural traits that made them fit bearers of the struggle. But this would be to miss the moon for the finger pointing at the moon: a people could betray an ideal as well as defend it, and others, when their turn came, would then become the defenders.

For Bakunin, while rejecting the state, nationality remained an essential trait, both a "natural and social fact," given that "every people and the smallest folk-unit has its own character, its own specific mode of existence, its own

way of speaking, feeling, thinking, and acting; and it is this idiosyncrasy that constitutes the essence of nationality.”² In contrast, Rudolf Rocker argued that it was positional and contingent: “nation is not the cause, but the result of the state. It is the state that creates the nation, not the nation the state.” Moreover, he warned, in any talk of nationalism,

we must not forget that we are always dealing with the organised selfishness of privileged minorities which hide behind the skirts of the nation, hide behind the credulity of the masses. We speak of national interests, national capital, national spheres of interest, national honour, and national spirit; but we forget that behind all this there are hidden merely the selfish interests of power-loving politicians and money-loving business men for whom the nation is a convenient cover to hide their personal greed and their schemes for political power from the eyes of the world.

What he described was the state hijacking the credulous masses through the method of nationalism.³

Later Landauer tried to differentiate the folk or people, viewed in an almost spiritual sense, from the institutional mechanisms of the state.⁴ The dangers here (as Rocker surely guessed) are obvious: it’s a slippery slope from the praise of a *völkisch* spirit to a mysticism of blood and soil, to chauvinism and fascism—especially when the state to be distinguished from the organic soul of the people was identified with modern bureaucracy and a liberal

intelligentsia—likewise anathema for today’s populist right wing. But to transmute into fascism, a folk idea such as Landauer portrayed would have to augment its integral sense of connection to place and community with racial exceptionalism, supremacism, and xenophobia, and moreover to lure its nation back around to the cult of the state, to be embodied in its virile leader, its military strength, and the order and discipline through which its people were taught to find honor in serving it—all of which Landauer detested.

In the 1930s, anticolonial activists drew explicit parallels between the fascism on the rise within Europe and the imperialism that had long been exercised outside Europe’s borders. Both used the same authoritarian methods of supremacy, racializing a population in order to classify it as outside and below the paragon of the human. Elaborate hierarchies of being were necessary to justify systematically excluding groups from full status as rational agents, thereby protecting the principles of liberalism or Christianity from being forced into revealing their apparent contradiction with the imperial enterprise. Racist logic provided the final, crucial ingredient in the toxic assemblage of capitalism plus state; without racism, the imperial project would have been insupportable according to the logic of the empires’ own domestic populations. But the dehumanization could remain far away, unobjectionable until carried out on internal populations.

If colonization—to be dehumanized and forcibly incorporated into a global cycle of accumulation, by subjection to a parasitic regime of surplus extraction under the control of a hypertrophied state mechanism unmistakably external to

society—is a neat paradigm of everything anarchists abhor, does that mean that the most fully developed form of anticolonialism should be something that resembles anarchism?

Anarchism ≈ Decolonization

Indian anticolonial radicals overseas after the turn of the twentieth century sought out active collaborations in cosmopolitan cities with anarchist networks whose tactics and principles they saw as applicable to the needs of their cause.

In fact until the mid-1930s, the traits that differentiated anarchism from other sectors of the Left were also those that gave it affinities with contemporary anticolonial struggles—for example, the perception of the government itself as an evil and the state as clearly extraneous to society, so that the primary sites of resistance were the defining mechanisms of state function, including both disciplinary and ideological apparatuses. In British India, military installations, infrastructure, legal and educational systems: all were targeted for raids, sabotage, boycotts, or noncooperation. For some, this externality implied that the problem could be solved through decapitation, sidestepping the need for deep systemic change, and stoking a taste for propaganda of the deed.

Furthermore, classical anarchism was often associated with primary resistance to the onset of industrialization, as opposed to the Marxian and syndicalist assumption that the transition had already occurred, and that revolution would be organized from within industrial society. For

many anarchists and anticolonialists (and later for India's Maoists), agrarian peasants rather than industrial proletarians represented the leading edge of struggle. Therefore it was more than just a matter of co-opting an already-existing mode of production, changing its relations while retaining its means and instruments; it meant challenging the establishment of capitalism and modern governmentality, sometimes even opposing the structures of thought on which they were based. Either way, the result was that the ground of struggle, conditioning the modality of resistance, was primarily non- or preindustrial. Given the enforced role of nonindustrial dependency within the classical colonial relationship, the structural comparison to the situation faced by Britain's South Asian subjects at that time was clear.

Finally, cultural practices, language, education, and everyday life in the colonial context constituted a major dimension of oppression, and therefore a major field on which resistance played out. Here there was no question of base and superstructure. Colonization functioned on multiple levels, through several interlocking modalities of hard and soft power, from the structural to the psychological. Economically it was accumulation by dispossession; politically it was authoritarian state control; militarily it was occupation and counterinsurgency; ideologically it was cultural hegemony leaving its stamp through linguistic retraining and epistemic violence. Striving for total decolonization would mean working on all these levels in addition to (but not instead of) tackling capitalism and the state, without reducing the struggle to either the material or ideological/discursive plane.

Thus some of the differences between the Left antisystemic movements of a colonized agrarian region and those of a heavily industrialized one were analogous to those between classical anarchism and early Marxism—for example, critiques of the latter's (real or perceived) overemphases on developmentalist teleology, instrumental reason, class reductivism, and analysis of political economy without a comparable analysis of power. This resonance arose because anarchist and anticolonialist traditions were responding to analogous conditions: a collision with the leading edge of capitalism and the state at a crucial transition point into their modern forms.

Modernity = Coloniality?

Historians identify several processes definitive of the modern condition:

- The expansion of the rationalized state, functioning through mechanisms of surveillance, policing, discipline; governmentality exercised through bureaucratic enumeration and management of populations, resources, and so on; and the recognition of such a state as one unit among a mutually reinforcing system of units
- The incorporation of more and more goods, commons, natural resources, land, water, labor, time, space, minerals, crops, genetic information, cultural materials, raw materials, manufactured/processed products into the logic of a global capitalist economy, subject to quantification as alienable and

exchangeable commodities on the world market rather than local use values

- An exponential increase in technology, industrialization, scientificity—especially with regard to communication and transport—and the fossil-fuel-based energy regime

The processes entailed in colonization are recognizable as a particularly traumatic, violent acceleration of the frontier of modernization, here experienced as an assaultive external force that shredded the existing sociocultural fabric rather than incrementally modifying it. This is not to paint the inhabitants of such a region as identical, passive victims; many participated in these projects, and some significantly benefited. This is one reason why resistance always entails internal conflict as well as a defensive front; many an anticolonial effort has segued into civil war.

Moreover, without colonial incursion, modernization may well have emerged on its own; some argue that colonization itself is what prevented this from happening. But Asian, African, and Latin American modernities unaffected by European intervention are a counterfactual speculation in our historical reality. The fact is that every dimension of modernity as we know it was built on colonial history. Modern European and North American material prosperity along with cultural consumption and production at every level owed an immense debt to its colonial relationships with Asia, Africa, and elsewhere, from the plantation slave labor driving the Industrial Revolution, to the silver and gold mines financing military might, whereas

modernization in India and elsewhere was experienced through the medium of colonization. The Latin American subalternists, inspired by but diverging from the South Asian Subaltern Studies Collective, actually theorize coloniality as the other face of modernity.⁵

Despite their close interrelation, however, colonization and modernization are not interchangeable terms. What distinguished the process of colonization from any other instance of coercive modernization, legitimating and masking it, was the dimension of racism in all of its iterations (including Orientalism), whether as a religious and cultural myth, or a scientific and biological one. This is also what makes antiracism such an important component of mobilizations in solidarity with anticolonial movements.

The key to manifesting an anarchist anticolonialism (a point shared with third world feminism as well as what Chela Sandoval calls the methodology of the oppressed, among other analogous terms) lies in the intersectionality of those dimensions.⁶ This is exactly where twentieth-century antisystemic movements in decolonizing regions—the “tricontinental” of Asia, Africa, and Latin America—had critiques to offer their counterparts in the Western, northern, and/or colonizing world: isolating class struggle in practice and rhetoric did not sufficiently address the fundamental global structures of imperialism, nor the realities of racism and colonization.

Meanwhile, systemic analysis allowed for the relating of Left internationalism to national liberation struggles and other transnational anticolonialisms. The power grid of race both reinforces and complicates that of capitalism,

especially when we add the dimension of spatiality at the global scale—and there we have imperial geopolitics. But as is still true today, the counterpart of a globalization of power systems is a globalization of antisystemic resistance.

The question of orientation to modernity underlies both the anarchist and anticolonial discourses. This question fuels the perennial debate on the nature of anarchism, the genealogy of its intellectual tradition, and its relationship to other radicalisms on both the Left and Right. It also refracts the spectrum of intellectual and political differences within Indian anticolonialism.

If the processes of colonization correlate to those of modernization, then does anticolonialism have to be anti-modern? No, and this largely has to do with sloppy language use. Modernity, modernization, and modernism are all words too often used in confusing, contradictory ways. There are the material processes associated with modernization, a project never fully realized and never proceeding evenly without frictions and obstructions; there are also shifts in perception and consciousness that make up our experience of these new conditions—of which multiple effects and affects, interpretations and evaluations, are possible—all of which are modern, but not all modernist. Modernism reveals a third level, which is a conscious aesthetic, philosophical, political, epistemological stance manifested in art, literature, architecture, and so on. But the description of modernity as an existential condition consists of the full package of contradictions and contradictory vectors on all these levels, a complex agglomeration of causes, effects, and responses to them.

Under the harsh stamp of racialization it became difficult (on both the material and epistemological levels) for Indians to develop without conflict an alternate, indigenous modernity out of the materials already available, or freely exchanged through their transnational contacts with other activists and intellectuals. Yet even within the given circumstances, responses to the projects and conditions of modernity ranged from complete rejection to complete embrace, with all variants of critical and selective adaptation in between. For example, liberal reformers such as Rammohan Roy, Dwarkanath Tagore, or Sir Syed Ahmad Khan objected to their exclusion from the liberal Enlightenment paradigm of republican democracy and humanist rationalism, but not to that paradigm itself.⁷ They saw it as a universal that was theirs by right, no less than anyone else's (not Westernness masquerading as universalism but rather universalism only masquerading as Westernness).⁸ Others rejected the whole paradigm as antithetical to their particular ethnocultural natures, embracing with pride an Orientalist binary logic that had been jointly formalized by Western scholars and Asian clerical elites.

Both the universal and binary were false, of course. The existential condition of colonialism facilitated a flattening out or repression of the range of internal variation on both sides. A state of war tends toward extreme polarization; colonialism is a permanent state of war, whether in the low-intensity register of prolonged occupation, or the hotter moments of conquest, reconquest, pacification, and counterinsurgency. Accordingly, coloniality tends to generate Manichaean binaries, as Frantz Fanon and Albert Memmi observed.

Non-Western, Oriental, or so-called primitive cultures, including the Celtic, were portrayed as the polar opposite of the modern, occupying the space of the spiritual, the not-yet-disenchanted, the unilluminated—whether that was seen as a sign of danger and backwardness (as for the Utilitarian reformers, who tried to make India over with railroads and Shakespeare in the 1820s–30s) or salvation for the world (as for the theosophists, who took dictation from Buddhist “hidden masters” and added their force to the Indian nationalist movement in the 1900s–1910s). Whether the Enlightenment logic was evaluated as good or bad, or a little of each, depended on how you felt about mechanization, rationalization, and so forth, or whether you lived in England, Ireland, India, or the Ottoman Empire.

It bears mentioning that the words progressive and reactionary—in their most literal sense—entail relative direction, not necessarily political content or ideological value. One means to go forward in the direction of change, and the other means to generate friction, stoppage, or reversal. But what is the particular change we’re talking about, and what was the status quo? It seems more pertinent to ask what a specific vision of utopia looks like—what its content is—than which direction we need to move in to reach it from where we are now—whether we envision it as having existed in a prelapsarian past or as the destination of future redemption. The legacy of utopian thought contains both kinds of narrative.

Neither an across-the-board improvement nor unmitigated ruin, modernization was rather a radically destabilizing rearrangement in the status quo, which benefited

some and harmed others. A critique of modernism (or colonialism) or any of the phenomena of modernity (or coloniality) is not necessarily a bid to “go back” but instead an attempt to seek a different way forward that doesn’t destroy beneficial aspects of an existing fabric, while improving on those aspects that were detrimental to the expansion of freedom and equality. Far from being reactionary, as an orthodox Marxist teleology would deem it, anticolonial critique of modernity was not necessarily an attempt to halt progress—as if the only options were to go forward or backward along a narrow track—but rather to choose a different direction—oblique, perpendicular, or spreading in a skewed delta of potential alternatives. In other universes, with other histories, maybe they are what modernity looks like. Resistance thus contains a range of adaptive, subversive, redirectional, or dialectically synthetic responses not just to halt or reverse modernity but also to generate alternate modernities or countermodernities.

Anarchism = Modernity?

And what about anarchism? In its attempt to solve the problems of oppression and exploitation, is it inherently modernist or antimodernist? Rationalist or Romanticist? This debate has implicitly structured much of the past and current terrain of Western anarchism. It also underlies a pervasive confusion among those who, in the effort to define anarchism historically, give up and dismiss it as incoherent and contradictory.

The crux is this: if by asking “Is anarchism modern or antimodern?” we mean “Is anarchism really part of the rationalist or Romanticist tradition? Is it a child of the Enlightenment or its counterrevolution? Does it do the work of Dionysus or Apollo?” then we fail to grasp that the cultural profile of modernity itself is not wholly identifiable with either side. Rather, its very fabric is woven from the dialogic counterpoint of both, as a play of energies that exists within the field of material conditions symptomatic of modernization. Generated in response to these conditions, anarchism is part of modernity, and like the rest of modernity, partakes in the same interplay of energies.

What’s unique about the anarchist tradition among Western political discourses is its continuous struggle for a synthesis between the two polarities, rejecting neither. Taken as a whole, it’s a cumulative attempt to find a balance by making contextually appropriate adjustments along the spectrum. Nowhere is it a reduction to one or the other, and indeed a quest for balance implies a critique of such a reduction at either end. True, even within the broadly drawn boundaries of anarchism, there are those who have staked out positions near to one or the other. But to argue over which pole truly represents the tradition is to hear only half the conversation. We might ask, for example, whether in a specific context the source of oppression is an excess of either instrumental reason or superstition, whereas the existence of rationality itself is neither disease nor cure. I like to use a lemonade metaphor: depending on the circumstances and what’s already been mixed, you might need to increase or decrease your ratio of lemon juice

to sugar to reach the perfect balance. Without both, your lemonade is going to suck.

Is it meaningless—or unanarchistic—to try to identify boundaries? I don't think so; on the contrary, refusing to do so makes the conversation meaningless. Maybe a more relevant way of putting this is that the anarchist tradition is a discursive field in which the boundaries are defined by a thematic, not a problematic, as Partha Chatterjee puts it in a famous essay on the conceptual difficulties of an Indian nationalist historiography. According to this formulation, it is necessary to distinguish two parts of a social ideology: "the thematic . . . refers to an epistemological as well as ethical system which provides a framework of elements and rules for establishing relationships between elements; the problematic, on the other hand, consists of concrete statements about possibilities justified by reference to the thematic." The problematic includes an ideology's "identification of historical possibilities and the practical or programmatic forms of its realization," and the thematic "its justificatory structures, i.e., the nature of the evidence it presents in support of those claims, the rules of inference it relies on to logically relate a statement of the evidence to a structure of arguments, the set of epistemological principles it uses to demonstrate the existence of its claims as historical possibilities, and finally, the set of ethical principles it appeals to in order to assert that those claims are morally justified."⁹

Anarchism is a thematic larger than any of its myriad manifestations, all of which can be considered anarchism if they refer to that thematic—if they are part of the anarchist conversation. This is also analogous to contrasting

langue as “a language system shared by a given community of speakers”—that is, anarchists—with *parole*, “a concrete speech act of individual speakers”—that is, what’s said or done by any type of anarchist.¹⁰ The totality of the conversation generated by a particular set of ethical questions and concerns can’t be identified solely with any one utterance, or any one answer to its defining questions.

The anarchist tradition is a continuously unfolding discourse—meaning not just the writings and rhetoric of anarchism but also its body of practices and history of performative acts. And the content of this discourse—the thematic that defines its boundaries—is the quest for collective liberation in its most meaningful sense, by maximizing the conditions for autonomy and egalitarian social relationships, sustainable production and reproduction. The tradition consists at the same time in the argument over what anarchism is, and the argument over the proper balance between a whole constellation of key pairs: freedom and equality, liberty and justice, the individual and the collective, the head and the heart, the verbal and the sensual, power relations and economic relations. India’s anticolonial history represented a similar conversation. Here too the totality of the discourse is characterized by a shared thematic of defining and attaining liberation, through a dialogic counterpoint of the modernist/rationalist lineage (exemplified in the twentieth century by Jawaharlal Nehru, B. R. Ambedkar, and the People’s Science Movement) and its variously positioned critics.

It is a crucial and delicate issue, however, to recognize that some of these critical positions have included fascism

and fundamentalism. Furthermore, wherever the terminology of anarchism appears in the Indian context, right-wing elements frequently crop up as a menacing shadow not far away. This does not mean that there is any inherent affinity between anarchism and the reactionary Right, contrary to the conflation sometimes made by sectors of the mainline Indian Left. What it does indicate is that certain situations create common openings for both.

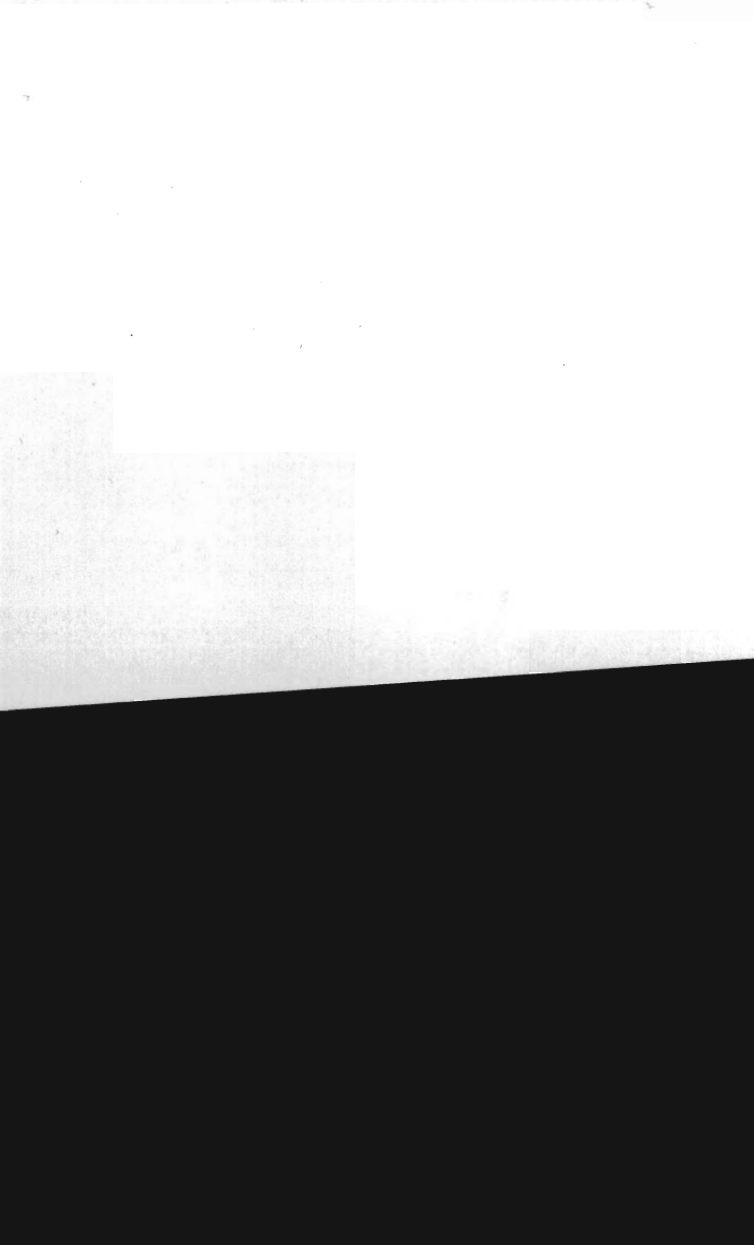
The same could be said in general of the worldwide radical ferment in the *fin de siècle* moment before World War I—a moment of equal significance for the rise of anarchism and the emergence of radical anticolonialism—when multiple potentialities were held in combustible suspension. Georges Sorel offers some clues here, in his writings about revolutionary syndicalism during the same period, when anticolonialists were meeting anarchists in Paris and London. Sorel was a French civil servant born in 1842, an engineer by training and a disciple of philosopher Henri-Louis Bergson. He produced the bulk of his difficult-to-categorize work on social theory in the last decade of the nineteenth and first of the twentieth centuries, after his professional retirement. As an advocate of labor syndicalism, he abhorred bureaucracy and parliamentary armchair socialism, favored total revolution over piecemeal reform, and touted worker militance and direct action to seize control of production. He also despised the state, particularly in its bourgeois capitalist incarnation. Yet the premises of his analysis were quite different from those of the socialist branch of the Enlightenment project. Antirationalist and antiliberal, his top imperative was seeking a workable, living

revolutionary myth capable of revitalizing and reinspiring an alienated, moribund modern society.

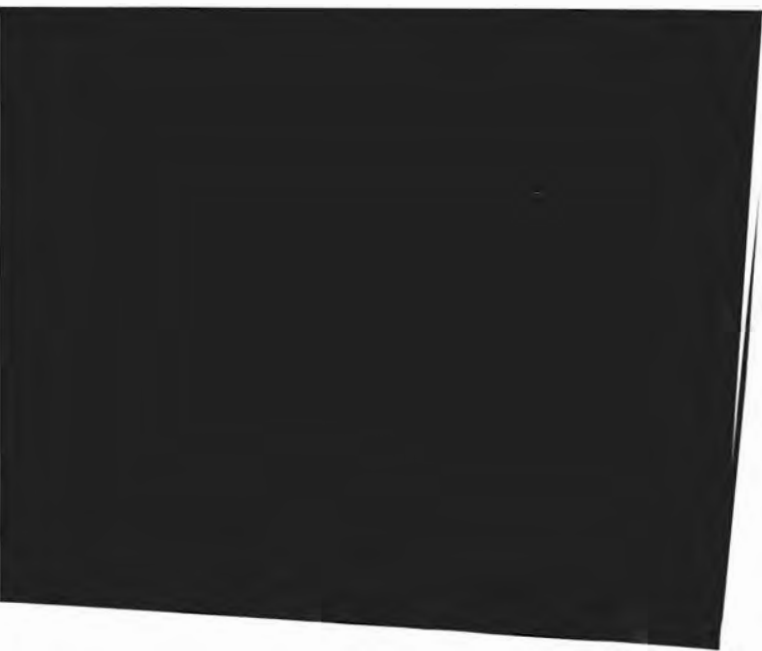
As the bearer of libidinal energy or Bergsonian *élan vital*, the myth, in Sorel's view, must recharge the potency of the heroic revolutionary class through militant struggle. Sorel had no doubt that the needed revitalization must come about through violence, which he differentiated from force, meaning the physical dominance of the state that was inherent in its foundation and the institutions of its preservation. Either class struggle or external threat would do the trick, though the latter would more sharply stimulate the national myth and the former the social, in which case the mythic icon of the general strike would serve to motivate the working class, while icons of the counterrevolution for which the workers' opening move was the stimulus would rouse the bourgeoisie from its decadent stupor. Regardless of who won, the struggle would have done its work. This is why the Sorelian logic of prewar revolutionary syndicalism bore within it the seeds of both the Right and Left radical movements of the 1920s. It didn't really matter what that myth might be; it only mattered that it did the job.

But of course, it does matter quite a lot to the outcome. From this perspective the significance of these moments of dual potentiality is not that anarchism converges with the Right but precisely that it does *not*. At a crossroads, choices matter most; here is where ethical orientation and content make the difference. What determined whether the myth of right-wing populist rhetoric or libertarian socialism would prevail? The key distinction is in the prefigurative content of the emancipatory vision, not in the

simple fact of opposition to the state. It's not enough to call for small government or the elimination of a foreign regime without also articulating a critique of capitalism, race, and power. This is equally true of the difference between national supremacism and radical (and potentially nonstatist) anticolonialism.



ECHOES AND INTERSECTIONS





The Propagandists of the Deed

By the first decade of the twentieth century, Indian revolutionists had established a worldwide presence through labor diasporas and educational circuits, often converging on the same cosmopolitan cities as their radical counterparts from East and Southeast Asia, Egypt, Turkey, and Ireland. Their tasks overseas were twofold: to organize insurrectionary activities, and to spread information and propaganda.

The Swadeshi (autonomy; literally “one’s own country”) movement was a flash point of unrest sparked in 1905 by the administrative partition of Bengal. It took heart from the Japanese victory over Russia in the same year, setting the rapturous precedent of an Asian nation defeating a European power. From the moment of the movement’s emergence, police intelligence reports and newspaper accounts anointed its militant wing as anarchists. Accurate or not, the label dogged them at home and abroad.

In a 1916 newspaper article Ram Chandra, one of the leaders of the Ghadar Party founded by Indian anticolonial

militants in the United States, objected to a remark in the London *Times* that “just as Ireland still has her Sinn Fein extremists, so has India still her anarchists and her fanatical bombthrowers.” Chandra retorted, “The truth in this statement is that India has her Sinn Feiners. The falsehood lies in the implication that the Hindu revolutionists are a forlorn hope of intransigents. They are not ‘anarchists’; they are nationalists; and hence the whole nation is and is growing to be, with them.”¹

Such disclaimers were meant to defend the revolutionaries’ legitimacy. To be called an anarchist in the rhetoric of the day meant being seen as a purveyor of meaningless violence; to be dubbed a nationalist meant being seen to serve a just cause—democratic self-determination in the face of imperial tyranny and the looting of one’s country. Precisely because of their claim to the justice of their cause, they objected far more to the label of anarchist than terrorist, a term then used matter-of-factly without any particular moral condemnation to describe a tactic of extralegal, conspiratorial deployment of propaganda of the deed.

The most obvious factor in the pinning of the anarchist tag on the Swadeshi militants was their willingness to express their hatred of the British colonial government through violent means. The Indian radicals’ penchant for dramatic, symbolic bombings and assassinations linked them in the public eye to an international spate of attacks on establishment figures, applying to them the caricature of the bearded desperado cradling a sphere with a guttering fuse under his coat.

Ideological anarchism, of course, is not to be equated with violence and irrationality. But the traits that made the link plausible went deeper than that. Besides the philosophical and tactical orientation toward propaganda of the deed (not to mention a quasi-mystical fascination with the bomb), they shared with certain contemporary strands of the Western anarchist tradition a voluntarist ethic of individual action, militant romanticism, disregard for conventional standards of law and propriety in the face of what they saw as greater truths, a frictional relationship with bourgeois materialist society, and a marked antigovernment stance. Although in this context the objection was to the British colonial government specifically, by the simple dropping of an article many of their statements were virtually indistinguishable from anarchist ones regarding government in general.

In the end the question we need to ask, in examining the praxis of the Swadeshi militants as they became links in a wider nexus stretching from Calcutta to London and Paris, is not “Were the Swadeshi extremists anarchists?” or even “What kind of anarchists were they?” An even better question is, “Where do they fit into the revolutionary family tree of which anarchism and its various cousins are also scions?”

Bengal

Since the 1870s there had been a proliferation of social and religious reform societies (*samitis*), athletic or “physical culture” clubs (*akharas*), and cultural nationalist

groups, including both open and secret “student organizations inspired by the Carbonari and [Giuseppe] Mazzini’s Young Italy,” which is to say by the form of mid-nineteenth-century romantic republicanism that played such a prominent role in the development of international revolution. The newly politicized Anusilan Samiti emerged around 1902 or 1903 from a consolidation of several akharas, with Aurobindo Ghose as one of the key movers. Born and educated in England, Ghose idolized figures like Mazzini and Charles Stewart Parnell, the hero of Irish home rule. Philosophically, he morphed over the years from agnosticism to spiritual leadership as a Hindu mystic.

After the Bengal partition, he along with his younger brother Barindra Kumar Ghose and a few of their friends began energetically recruiting and training young men in *lathi* (wooden staff) and martial arts, swimming, and horseback and bicycle riding. Students also received lectures on political and military history including such topics as the Sikh Khalsa, the French Revolution, and the Italian Resorgimento. Anglo-Irish transplant Sister Nivedita (born Margaret Noble) lectured on “patriotic feelings and a sense of duty to the country,” and donated her library, including a well-known Mazzini biography, whose chapter on guerrilla warfare was extensively copied and circulated.²

Nivedita also introduced a conscious connection with ideological anarchism. She had followed the famous sage Swami Vivekananda to India intending to work at the Ramakrishna Mission, but once there threw herself into the cause of Indian national liberation, eventually separating herself from the mission in order to pursue her political

commitments without compromise. But Vivekananda was not her only philosophical inspiration; she had also discovered Peter Kropotkin en route, becoming fiercely excited about his ideas, which she claimed “confirm[ed] me in my determination toward Anarchy.” When she met Kropotkin in London in 1902 after some correspondence, she decided that he knew “more than any other man of what India needs.”³ Given her close association with Aurobindo’s circle, it seems likely that Kropotkin’s ideas entered the mix.

The group’s militancy soon intensified in a program of targeted assassinations, bombings, sabotage, and political *dacoity* (social banditry) to obtain weapons and funds. There were raids on police stations, armories, British treasuries, tax collections, and even expropriations of wealthy Indians, some of whom were presented with certificates declaring them holders of a debt to be repaid after the revolution by the treasurers of a Free India. Besides arms and ammunition, funding went toward printing costs and legal expenses. *Bande Mataram* was founded in 1906 as an English-language daily paper targeting the educated elite, as companion to the *Yugantar*, “the paper for the masses” in colloquial Bengali.⁴

The revolutionary headquarters was an empty house and grounds on Calcutta’s outskirts, known as Maniktola Garden. There in idyllic seclusion, they set up bomb-making and arms-storage facilities along with a library, on the principle of revolutionizing minds in order to achieve revolutionary goals. Bullets and bombs, they knew, were only a quick fix; deeper, lasting change would require the education of consciousness through integrated physical, political, and spiritual training.

The curriculum included economics, history, geography, and the philosophy of revolution. There was also technical training in departments such as that “referred to in Upen’s notebooks as ‘Ex+Mech+An,’” which historian Peter Heehs interprets as “explosives, mechanics and anarchism.” Heehs reports that one fifteen-year-old recruit recalled, “In the garden Upen Babu used to teach us Upanishads and politics and Barindra Babu [taught Bhagavad] Gita and History of Russo-Japanese war and Ullas Babu delivered lectures on explosives.’ Indu Bhusan Roy spent his time ‘studying Gita and preparing shells.’”⁵

What they took from this text, Krishna’s prebattle advice to the warrior Arjuna, was that one should act in accordance with dharma without overly worrying about the results. If the actions themselves were righteous, then the results could not be otherwise. Karma yoga—the way of action in the world of material causality—was one of the recognized paths to liberation, as much as the ways of meditation or devotion.

Among the other incendiary texts that the Criminal Investigation Department found when it raided the Maniktola Garden library were *Ananda Math*, Bankimchandra Chatterjee’s famous novel of warrior monks that later became part of the Hindu nationalist canon; Aurobindo’s *Bhawani Mandir* (“temple of the goddess,” or Kali, manifest as pure *shakti*, force, or power), a blueprint for a utopian community; *Sikher Balidan*, extolling Sikh martyrdom; and *Raja ke*, questioning the institution of monarchy.⁶ Many of these texts expressed the pursuit of national liberation in the idiom of intense religiosity.

Others combined pragmatic how-to instructions with philosophical justifications for militant activity.

Mukti Kon Pathe (“which way lies salvation?”) mainly contained excerpts from the *Yugantar* on topics such as “Battalion Drill Made Easy” and “Field Exercises.” Its author noted that particularly for Bengalis, cultivating muscular development was important, referring to the British colonial taxonomy that classified them as a feeble “non-martial race.” Yet even if they were not able to achieve the requisite physical training by the time action became imperative, they nevertheless might find “consolation in the thought that not much muscle is required to kill a European with a revolver or a rifle, or to kill many Europeans with a Maxim gun. It does not take much strength to pull a trigger; even a Bengali can do that.”⁷

The author also systematically outlined the other items required for organizing insurrection. Under the heading “Revolution” were subtopics such as “Building Up Public Opinion,” which listed newspapers, music, literature, and “secret meetings and associations.” On the matter of clandestinity, he observed: “Secret societies are necessary since it is impossible to talk of freedom openly because of bayonets and guns. If one wants to talk of freedom publicly, he must necessarily do so in a roundabout way. It is precisely for this reason that a secret place is necessary where people may discuss ‘What is truth?’ without having recourse to hypocrisy. But it must be a place that the tyrant cannot see.” As examples of models for good covert practice, the author pointed to the Russian revolutionists and the militant ascetics of *Ananda Math*.⁸

The text listed three ways to obtain arms:

1. By preparing weapons silently in some secret place. In this way, the Russian nihilists prepare the bombs. Indians will be sent to foreign countries to learn the art of making weapons. On their return to India they will manufacture cannon, guns, etc., with the help of enthusiastic youths.
2. By importing weapons of all kinds from foreign countries.
3. Through the assistance of native soldiers.

In August 1907, the *Yugantar* suggested that “much work can be done by the revolutionists very cautiously spreading the gospel of independence among the native troops,” thereby at once gaining both weapons and mutineers. The textbook assured the revolutionist that soldiers too were human beings, despite their role as mercenaries to a tyrant, and would therefore surely join their arms with the revolution once the situation was fully explained to them by “the clever Bengali.”⁹

The *Yugantar* often published on the justification and need for violence in resisting the systemic violence of colonial oppression. In other words, it was not the revolutionists who had introduced force into the dialogue. “The laws of the English are based on brute force. If we want to liberate ourselves from those laws, it is brute force that is necessary. . . . There is no other door of admission into life but death.”¹⁰ An article headed “Away with Fear” declared that British supremacy was an illusion, which if once

challenged, must crumble away. If Indians would conquer their own fear and take initiative, victory and liberation would be easy.

What we want now is a number of men who will take the lead in giving a push and thus encourage the masses and infuse hope in the minds of those who are almost dead with fear and dread. . . . They must be shown by deeds done before their eyes that the work is not impossible exactly to the extent that they think it to be.¹¹

Hence, the *Yugantar* strengthened the perception of anarchism by its emphasis on taking a complete antigovernment stance, as opposed to collaboration or participation of any kind. *Bande Mataram* too came under frequent attack for its “seditious” content as well as plain “intention of bringing the Government into hatred and contempt.”¹² This was a misreading, though, of such statements as this one:

[Indian secretary of state] Mr. Morley has said that we [Indians] cannot work the machinery of our Government for a week if England generously walks out of our country. . . . [But] did it not strike Mr. Morley that if, instead of walking out the English were by force driven out of India, the Government will go on perhaps better than before, for the simple reason that the exercise of power and organisation necessary to drive out so organised an

enemy will in the struggle that would ensue teach us to arrange our own affairs sufficiently well.¹³

This passage called for the takeover, not the abolition, of government, while suggesting that it was in the crucible of revolutionary action that people learned autonomy—a foreshadowing of Fanon.

The other “principle revolutionary textbook” was *Bartaman Rananiti* (“modern art of war”), a 1907 Bengali version of Jan S. Bloch’s *Modern Weapons and Modern War*.¹⁴ The book contained information on weapons, army organization, and guerrilla tactics, recommended as “the mode of fighting adopted by a nation which is weak, disarmed and oppressed by conquerors, but resolved to break the bondage of slavery.” In such a war, the author predicted that the native troops and mountain tribes would be sure to join in; irregular warfare would forge the country’s youths into heroes, leading ultimately to popular uprising on a much larger scale; and a protracted conflict could only benefit the people while wearing down the enemy.¹⁵

But *Bartaman Rananiti* also drew on the concept of karma yoga. An early chapter was a reprint of an October 1906 *Yugantar* article that stated, “‘War is the order of creation.’ After explaining that destruction is creation in another form”—a rather Bakuninesque sentiment—“the writer proceeds, ‘Destruction is natural and war is, therefore, also natural.’” Gangrenous body parts, he pointed out, must be removed to save the whole. Therefore “war is inevitable when oppression cannot be stopped by any other means whatsoever, when the leprosy of slavery corrupts the

blood of the body of the nation and robs it of its vitality.”¹⁶ The article went on to invoke Krishna, Rama, and Kali as exemplars of divine sanction for an avenging (and purifying) destruction—making this too a potential seed text for both anarchist- and Hindu nationalist–inflected radical rhetorics.

Significantly, in the process of a dedicated practice by which the vanguard’s hearts were to be forged and tested, while rousing and inspiring the people, conventional morality became irrelevant: for “A nation yearning for freedom . . . the power of discriminating between right and wrong is gone. Everything is sacrificed at the feet of the goddess of liberty.”¹⁷

The author of *Mukti Kon Pathe* claimed that if the revolution was being brought about for the welfare of society, then it was perfectly just to collect money from society for the purpose. Admittedly theft and dacoity are crimes because they violate the principle of the good of society. But the “political dacoit” is aiming at the social good: “so no sin but rather virtue attaches to the destruction of this small good for the sake of some higher good. Therefore if revolutionists extort money from the miserly or luxurious wealthy members of society by the application of force, their conduct is perfectly just.”¹⁸

Beyond levying “donations” from the rich, the final stage of the funding plan called for robbing government treasuries. “This also is justified because, from the moment the kingly power tramples upon the welfare of the subjects, the king may be regarded as a robber from whom it is perfectly right to snatch away his stolen money.” For the social bandit, apparently, property was theft, and redistribution

a function of a moral economy—although in this case, the text somewhat mysteriously added, “to defray the expenses of establishing the future kingly power.”¹⁹ Again two tendencies coexist. Which would prevail? Or would they diverge?

Thus prepared, the Maniktola Garden gang launched a series of bombings, dacoities, and assassination attempts between 1906 and 1908.²⁰ Harsh punitive reaction then enforced a lull in militant activities, effectively muzzling the radical press, preventing meetings, and accelerating convictions and deportations. All of this, by making open dissent so difficult within British India, simply increased clandestine activity and injected fresh blood into the radical community overseas.

London

Oxford lecturer and sometime-theosophist Shyamaji Krishnavarma had founded the Indian Home Rule Society in London a mere six months before the partition of Bengal.²¹ He stated three official objectives for the organization: to secure Indian home rule (obviously), carry on propaganda in the United Kingdom for this purpose, and spread among the people of India greater knowledge of the advantages of freedom and national unity.²² An important element of this enterprise was the notoriously “seditious . . . penny monthly”²³ the *Indian Sociologist*, which Krishnavarma founded and edited with the aid of long-term ally Henry Mayers Hyndman, a “high-minded English gentleman” and prominent socialist. Printed in English as

“an organ of freedom, and of political, social, and religious reforms,” the periodical’s intent was “to plead the cause of India and its unrepresented millions before the Bar of Public Opinion in Great Britain and Ireland,” striving “to inculcate the great sociological truth that ‘it is impossible to join injustice and brutality abroad with justice and humanity at home.’” It was also meant as a tool for developing the revolutionary student movement, on the presumption that the well-educated young rebels would likely hold prominent and influential positions on their return home.²⁴

In Highgate, Krishnavarma also set up a headquarters dubbed India House to serve as a boardinghouse and training center for neophyte revolutionaries. With financial help from wealthy patriot Sardar Singh Revabhai Rana, a Paris-based pearl merchant, he made several attempts at funding fellowships to bring Indian students to London for a political awakening. Fellows were required to spend a minimum of two years in Europe or the United States studying a profession of their choice, living at a home or hostel on an allowance of sixteen shillings per week. On returning to India, each was to “solemnly declare” that he would never accept any “post, office of emoluments, or service under the British Government.”²⁵ Scholarship recipients began arriving in 1906, just as Swadeshi activities were picking up in Bengal.

In contrast to the fervid Swadeshi papers, the *Indian Sociologist* had a plain affinity with the progressive libertarian thinking of the time. Quotations from Herbert Spencer crowned the masthead: “Every man is free to do that which he wills, provided he infringes not the equal freedom of any other man”; “Resistance to aggression is not simply

justifiable but imperative. Non-resistance hurts both altruism and egoism.”²⁶ Eschewing links with any political party, Krishnavarma expanded on these ideas in an introduction to the first issue: “The British people . . . can never succeed in being a nation of freemen and lovers of freedom so long as they continue to send out members of the dominating classes to exercise despotisms in Britain’s name upon the various conquered races that constitute Britain’s military Empire.” Spencer, he said, had proven that “all despotisms, whether political or religious, whether of sex, caste, or of custom, may be generalized as limitations to individuality, which it is the nature of civilization to remove.”²⁷ Hyndman stated in the same issue that “Indians must learn to rely upon themselves alone for their political salvation, i.e., the forcible expulsion of the British rule from India and not hope for anything from the changes of governors and governments.”²⁸

Every Sunday, meetings and discussions open to all Indians took place, focusing on issues of independence, and often featuring patriotic speeches, lectures, songs, and magic lantern projections of martyred resistance heroes. Scholarship winner Vinayak Damodar Savarkar read weekly excerpts from his historical work “The Indian War of Independence of 1857,” and a commemoration was held on May 10, 1907, the fiftieth anniversary of the uprising.

Meanwhile, more serious activities were unfolding in the shadows. Since August 1906, arms trafficking occurred under cover of Nitisen Dwarkadas and Gyanchand Varma’s Eastern Export and Import Company in Gray’s Inn Place.²⁹ In June, a Dr. Desai who was studying at London University “gave a lecture at the India House on the making

of bombs, justifying their use and explaining what ingredients were required. He reportedly said, ‘When one of you is prepared to use a bomb at the risk of his life, come to me and I will give full particulars.’”³⁰

By then the India House community also functioned as a recruiting ground for a more exclusive inner circle dominated by Savarkar, the Abhinava Bharat. Although one of the young militants recalled that “under [Savarkar’s] direction we were training ourselves as propagandists of revolutionary nationalism,” the special intelligence branch assigned to them described them yet again as “the anarchist gang.” The young men were also under constant surveillance from Scotland Yard. A pair of detectives followed each one, and some even grew to be on friendly terms with their escorts.³¹ By spring 1908, informants were reporting that “the policy of assassinations was advocated at regular Sunday meetings.” Some of the Abhinava Bharat inner core had taken up target practice at a shooting range on Tottenham Court Road. On July 1, 1909, one of the budding sharpshooters, a student called Madan Lal Dhingra, successfully targeted William Curzon-Wyllie, aide to the secretary of state for India. Dhingra was hanged, then lauded as a revolutionary martyr with the aid of a much-republished courtroom speech, in which he expressed regret not for his deed but rather for having just one life to lose for his country.³²

Meanwhile back home, Savarkar’s brother Ganesh had been prosecuted for sedition and sentenced to transportation for life. Documents found at Ganesh’s home and in the hands of accomplices during the proceedings

“indicate[d] that the association aimed at some sort of organisation founded upon the model of revolutionary societies in Russia,” including Thomas Frost’s *The Secret Societies of the European Revolution, 1776–1876*, a book “in which is described the secret organisation of the Russian Nihilists, consisting of small circles or groups affiliated into sections, each member knowing only the members of the circle to which he belonged. This may explain the existence of various small groups of young men who are found in this case to have been working for the same objects and drawing weapons from the same source without personal acquaintance with the members of other groups.”³³

Enraged at his brother’s conviction, Savarkar called for the murder of English people in India as reprisal. He sent a consignment of twenty Browning pistols and ammunition back to India concealed in a false-bottom box in the luggage of Govind Amin, India House’s resident chef and ammunition buyer. These pistols were then used in the assassination of a district magistrate in Maharashtra. Savarkar was quickly implicated in the killing, thought to be a dual act of revenge for Dhingra’s death and Ganesh’s imprisonment. Demonstrating its transnational perspective, the *Indian Sociologist* commented, “Allowing for the difference in the longitudes of Paris and Nasik the time of our writing to sympathise with the members of the family of Mr. Savarkar synchronized almost to a minute with that of the assassination avenging the sentence of transportation passed on him. There is a sort ‘poetic justice’ in all this which will, we doubt not, strike the imagination of our readers.”³⁴

Savarkar fled to Paris in 1910. Heedless of warnings not to return to London, he did so anyway and was arrested on arrival at Victoria Station under the Fugitive Offenders Act, then deported by ship to India with a stopover in Marseilles. There he attempted to escape by leaping from a porthole into the harbor and swimming to shore, only to be snatched by police waiting on the pier. (One account has it that the comrades who were supposed to meet him and spirit him into concealment had lingered at a café and arrived too late.)

To no avail, high-profile supporters among the British and French Left took up the case. London anarchist Guy Aldred formed a Savarkar Release Committee as soon as he himself got out of jail. He also featured the case in his own fiery paper *Herald of Revolt* and produced an appeal on the matter in August 1910 addressed “To the English proletariat.”³⁵

When the *Indian Sociologist* was proscribed and its publisher, Arthur Horsley, convicted for printing seditious material, Aldred offered his own shoestring Bakunin Press to continue publication. He made it clear that while he did not agree fully with the paper’s content, being an advocate neither of political violence and assassination nor “nationalism, and . . . the Statism it implied,” he did believe in free speech, freedom as a general principle, and resistance to imperial rule.³⁶ His meager combined office and living quarters were searched, and when three hundred copies of the paper (though no trace of a press) were found, he too was convicted for seditious material and sentenced to a year in prison.³⁷ Printing then shifted to Paris, and the paper continued to appear until 1914, despite several more enforced relocations.

Paris

After the Dhingra incident, London abruptly became too hot for Indian radicals to function freely, though a few did try to maintain an active presence. Now the primary center of Indian overseas radicalism moved to Paris. The political expatriate community there was already well established, centered around Rana and Madame Bhikaji Rustomji Cama, both of whom maintained close ties with the London community.

Besides carrying the cachet of its revolutionary history, France had the advantage of lying outside British jurisdiction. Ironically, France's own colonial outposts inside India offered them this functional free zone: French Pondicherry became a key location for moving weaponry and literature into the country, and "the great importance of both Pondicherry and Chandernagore from the point of view of the anarchists," said the officiating director of Criminal Intelligence Department, lay in their independent postal connections with European countries.³⁸

Paris was also an unparalleled hub for cross-fertilization among Chinese, Japanese, Turkish, Egyptian, Lebanese, and Filipino modernist, liberal and Left, anarchist, nationalist, and internationalist movements, hosting exiles from countries throughout East Asia and the Ottoman Empire. The Indians formed particularly strong bonds with the Egyptians.

It was the large population of Russian political exiles, though, whom the Bengali revolutionists looked to as their most significant source of inspiration as well as technical and organizational mentorship. They admired the

efficacy of their fellow revolutionists, whose uncompromising calls for emancipation from imperial autocracy they understood to be analogous to their own. These particular Russians were of the maximalist faction of Socialists-Revolutionaries, bearing the mantle of the late nineteenth-century People's Will Party (*Narodnaya Volya*). The group was associated with Bakunin's hyperviolent protégé Sergey Nechayev. It also had been linked to the assassination of Czar Alexander II in 1881—an act that the Swadeshi militants warmly approved. The most recent wave of exiles had arrived after the postrevolutionary crackdown in 1905; by 1907, the Paris police reported “some 1500 Russian ‘terrorists’” resident there, among them Vera Figner, Vera Zasulich, Vladimir Burtsev, Victor Serge, and Nikolai Safranski, who was regarded as the ringleader and remained under heavy surveillance.

Back in November 1907, Har Dayal had written in the *Indian Sociologist*, “Every Indian must be convinced that if Russian methods are carried on in our country rigorously by our oppressors, the so-called British rulers, we must meet it with measure for measure.”³⁹ He repeated the argument for learning “the art of organising secret societies and insurrections” from the Russians in the next issue, December 1907: “It seems that any agitation in India now must be carried on secretly, and that the only methods which can bring the English Government to its sense are the Russian methods vigorously and incessantly applied until the English relax their tyranny and are driven out of the country.”⁴⁰ In August 1908, he added, “As to the ethics of dynamite, it may be laid down in a general way that

where the people have political power there is no need for the use of explosives. It only promotes reaction. But where the people are utterly defenceless, both politically and militarily, then one may look on the bomb or any other weapon as legitimate. Its employment then becomes merely a question of expediency. We hope to discuss this question, particularly with reference to India, in an early issue.”⁴¹

Back in Maniktola Garden, Hem Chandra Das (Kanungo) had grown impatient with a string of botched bombing and assassination operations followed by a year of relative inactivity. So he took the initiative to seek more advanced revolutionary techniques through an apprenticeship with the Russians in Paris.⁴² Funded by Rana ostensibly to study chemistry—often a convenient route to the science of explosives, it would appear—Kanungo was joined by his Maharashtrian friend Pandurang Mahadev Bapat.⁴³ Das and Bapat were reported to be in contact with a female anarchist from the United States in Paris who Heehs suggests (rather implausibly, I think) could have been Emma Goldman. Whoever she was, she introduced them to a mysterious figure known as PhD, identified only as a leading figure in a French socialist organization. PhD and one of his comrades, “a former officer belonging to his party,” offered them instruction in “history, geography and economics, along with socialism, communism, etc.,” along with notes on the organization of secret societies, and after some initial hesitation, “got a member of their party to instruct Hem and Bapat in explosive chemistry and demolition.” French police reports are vague on which of these was Safranski, since he was

both a former “brilliant” officer in the Russian army, and enrolled in l’Ecole des Langues Orientales.⁴⁴

Another student was Miss Perin Naoroji, granddaughter of the renowned parliamentarian Dadabhai Naoroji, best known for his book on the economic drain theory of British colonial rule. The “Grand Old Man” had her educated in Europe along with her three sisters. Since Perin’s boardinghouse was on Cama’s street, the Boulevard Montparnasse, intelligence surmised the girl had “learned politics from her.” Crossing the English Channel to visit one of her sisters in London, she was with Savarkar at the time of his arrest. She followed his case with interest, visiting him in jail and then returning to Paris after it was over. Thereafter she could be found “working hard in the Extremist ranks,” and within a few months she was reportedly being tutored in bomb making by W. Bromjevski, described as “a young Polish engineer, believed to be an anarchist, who visited her and her sister constantly at their flat for months.” The sisters returned to India at the end of the year, yet remained in communication with Cama, “with whom [Perin] had arranged a simple but effective cipher before she left Paris.”⁴⁵

What of the local French anarchists? Soon after arriving in Paris, Kanungo had been introduced to Albert (Joseph) Libertad, founder of the journal *L’anarchie*, as someone who might be able to provide expertise in explosives and clandestine organization. According to Kanungo’s memoir, when Libertad invited him to attend anarchist meetings, Kanungo went, under the impression that “anarchism was just another word for revolution.”⁴⁶ But once

he realized what they were talking about, he withdrew. Libertad was an exponent of illegalism, an amoral and extreme individualist school of thought. *L'anarchie's* rhetoric favored criminality as an antinomian lifestyle and expressed antipathy to all forms of organization. None of this interested Kanungo, dedicated as he was to a militant cause with a focused goal. The reason he had become so frustrated with his Swadeshi comrades in the first place was what he saw as their aimless ineffectuality; this was not the remedy he sought. Ironically, the fabled rampage of the Libertad-inspired outlaw Bonnot gang in 1911–12 may have borne some resemblance to the Samiti's dacoities, albeit more purely nihilist in their hatred of the bourgeoisie, lacking the additional motive of funding an anticolonial struggle.⁴⁷

When French law enforcement officials got wind of the rumor that the notorious “Russian anarchist [Safranski was] instructing natives of India . . . in manufacture of explosives,” they were quick to inform their British counterparts.⁴⁸ But the detectives arrived too late; the suspect was gone, and the information successfully transmitted to India and the United States. Their prize was “a single cyclostyled copy of a manual of explosives” whose opening sentence declared, “The aim of the present work is to place in the hands of a revolutionary people such a powerful weapon as explosive matter is.”⁴⁹

Full Circle

In late 1907 or early 1908, with their training complete, Kanungo and Bapat left to bear their new skills

and information back to India. Thereafter the Criminal Investigation Department recorded, “Special emissaries . . . moved from time to time between India and Europe for arms and bomb manuals.”⁵⁰ Kanungo’s manual contained three sections: preparation of explosive substances, fabrication of shells, and use of the finished products. In the estimation of James Campbell Ker, assistant to the director of Criminal Intelligence,

The subject is exhaustively and scientifically treated; the amount of attention given to detail may be gathered from the fact that the composition and manufacture of thirty different explosives of one class only, namely those containing salts of chloric and chlorous acids, are described. The reason why it is necessary to be able to make explosives of various substances is given as follows: “In revolutionary practice we have often to use not the explosives we should like to use, but those which we can prepare with the materials at hand. . . . Again in the time of armed conflict the expenditure of explosives is considerable, and it is necessary to expropriate pharmaceutical shops (just as armouries are expropriated) and out of useful substances to prepare what is needed.”⁵¹

The remainder of the manual, Ker explained, gave specialized instructions for making percussion and fuse bombs, with fuses ranging from instantaneous detonation through lengths of seconds or minutes, up to eight

or nine hours. Possible uses for the results of such handiwork included street fighting, assassination, and destroying bridges or buildings. Heehs too goes into some detail about the explosives used (picric acid, sulfuric acid, fulminate of mercury, and nitroglycerine) and construction of bombs: shells made of forged spheres, or cleverly concealed in hollowed-out bedposts or books, as in the instance of the deadly but maddeningly unexploded Cadbury cocoa tin packed with detonators and explosive material, all encased in a copy of Herbert Broom's *Commentary on the Common Law*, intended to kill Chief Presidency Magistrate Douglas Kingsford in 1908.⁵²

Above all else, it was the use of the bomb that drew the Bengalis into focus as anarchists in the colonial government's eyes. More than just a tactical instrument, at times it manifested for them as the focus of a viscerally intense cult of devotion to annihilation that shaded imperceptibly into sacrificial devotion to the mother goddess-as-nation. The bomb was also personified as the "benefactor of the poor . . . [which] has been brought across the seas. Worship it, sing its praises, bow to it. Bande Mataram."⁵³

The quotation is from Har Dayal's "Shabash! In Praise of the Bomb," a pamphlet written from San Francisco on the occasion of a grenade blast heard by Indian expatriates around the world—namely, the attempt on Viceroy Lord Hardinge's life during his elephant-borne ceremonial entrance into Delhi to reinaugurate the city as the seat of empire in December 1912.⁵⁴ Maniktola Garden veteran Rash Behari Bose had masterminded the attack. But the actual bomber was a young man named Basanta Kumar Biswas,

to whom Bose had imparted both the “political indoctrination and practical training he would need to carry out his mission.”⁵⁵ Disguised as a woman with the significant alias of Lakshmibai (the rani of Jhansi, heroine of the 1857 mutiny), Biswas flung the bomb from a balcony overlooking the parade route. Although the blast seriously wounded the viceroy, it did not kill him; the Indian attendant riding behind him was less fortunate.

Cama commented in the *Bande Mataram* of January 1913, “The enemy entered formally Delhi on the 23rd December 1912, but under what an omen? . . . This bomb-throwing was just to announce to the whole world that the English Government is discarded, and verily, whenever there is an opportunity the Revolutionaries are sure to show their mind, spirit and principle in Hindustan!”⁵⁶ Cama’s comments made it clear that whether or not the target had been killed or injured was irrelevant; its message exceeded the bomb’s immediate effect. The catalyzing act to rouse the laggard and latent to action was at the heart of the ideal. Sure enough, the spectacular deed ignited a new series of murders and attempted murders carried out by both the major groups in Bengal.

Many socialists and nationalists considered the adoption of this kind of action a sign of impatience—the voluntaristic belief that a single autonomous will could jump-start the change rather than waiting for its conditions to ripen through the slower processes of parliamentary modification, mass education, molecular shifts, or structural impasse. It also indicated an analysis that saw oppression as stemming from an external source, relatively easy to

excise, rather than from internal and systemic contradictions, which would require a more profound transformation to correct. Such an externalization of oppression was particularly easy to adopt under conditions of colonial rule.

Anarchism?

A special police unit had tagged Shridar Vyankatesh Ketkar (later sociologist and historian) as a member of the Savarkar brothers' old group, which had "carried out experiments in explosives, and entered into correspondence with the anarchists of Bengal." He later traveled to the United States to study, and wrote a letter from there in June 1909 "to a high official in India suggesting that Government should deal with the anarchist youths through the extremist leaders" to whom he claimed to have access. He said he had "discussed the subject of nihilism" with nationalist firebrand Bal Gangadhar Tilak, "nearly two years before the first bomb outrage. I had advocated nihilism while Mr. Tilak condemned it outright as *injurious* to the interest of the country."⁵⁷

What did he mean by nihilism? What uses would he have associated it with? In one sense it was reminiscent of the French illegalists' utter rejection of social norms and institutions. But in Russia, nihilism was associated primarily with urban students and intellectuals. While they likewise rejected the governmental, educational, legal, and disciplinary institutions then existing in their society, they also proposed a more positive alternative vision for what might

come after or alongside the ecstasy of destruction. The nihilists' Narodnik or populist outgrowth began to idealize the peasantry as not only the revolutionary class but also the bearer of the true spiritual essence of the Russian people and maintainer of its preindustrial organic social and economic formations. As the argument ran, there was no need to pass through the prescribed stages of capitalism only to end up, after much suffering, back where they had started, with some form of romanticized stateless socialism based on the village commune or mir. Furthermore, to the Narodnik Slavophile, the true soul of Russia was in effect an *Asian* village soul, and many of the same mystical stereotypes that Indians bore were attributed to it. Such a true Russian felt the czar's enforced modernization as an alien Western encroachment no less than the Indian villagers did their modernization at British hands. In this too the urban intellectual Swadeshists resembled the Russian Slavophiles.

In the meantime, Criminal Investigation Department director William Cleveland had another, more menacing take on the true nature of the Indian soul. In his introductory remarks on "anarchism," written for his assistant Ker's 1919 documentary compilation *Political Trouble in India*, he diagnosed the "psychology of the politico-criminal activities of Indians" as none other than a fervidly intense religious nationalism.⁵⁸ To characterize this, he enlisted the aid of an extended quotation from John Nicol Farquhar's *Religious Nationalism*, published in 1912.⁵⁹

Farquhar identified this new trend (in contrast to the thin, bloodless old politicized) as a species of religious nationalism indicating the maturation of "racial" confidence,

which produced greater independence of thought as well as greater demands for full political independence. Marked by its commitment to a comprehensive revitalization of national life, it was “fired” by deep devotion and self-consecration “to God and India.” And he claimed that “finally, whether in anarchists or men of peace, the new nationalism is willing to serve and suffer. The deluded boys who believed they could bring in India’s millennium by murdering a few white men were quite prepared to give their lives for their country; and the healthy movements which incarnate the new spirit at its best spend themselves in unselfish service.” Here he pointed to a divergence between anarchists and Hindu revivalists, for whom, given their possession of such a plainly superior civilization, it was “a religious duty to get rid of the Europeans and all the evils that attend him.”⁶⁰

But Farquhar nevertheless identified “a general attitude . . . common to the revivalists and the anarchists. It is clear as noonday that the religious aspect of anarchism was merely an extension of that revival of Hinduism which is the work of Dayananda, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and the Theosophists.” Farquhar was thus setting up an unproblematic equivalence between anarchism and the religious nationalism that would later spawn a noxious Indian variant of fascism, while actually misrepresenting both sides of the equation.

This distorted characterization of Hinduism was not new. Cleveland’s descriptions of a cult of “furious devotion to some divinity of hate and blood” recall in nearly identical terms those of the Thuggee and Dacoity Department’s

sensationalized obsession with Kali-worshipping bandits dating from nearly a century earlier—an obsession enshrined as a timeless trope from William Sleeman's books in 1815 to *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* in 1984. The Thuggee and Dacoity Department was reconstituted in 1903 as the Criminal Investigation Department with a new focus on seditious activity. Granted, the revolutionists did not help matters with passages such as this one from the *Yugantar* of May 2, 1908:

The Mother is thirsty and is pointing out to her sons the only thing that can quench that thirst. Nothing less than human blood and decapitated human heads will satisfy her. Let her sons, therefore, worship her with these offerings, and let them not shrink even from sacrificing their lives to procure them. On the day on which the Mother is worshipped in this way in every village, on that day will the people of India be inspired with a divine spirit and the crown of independence will fall into their hands.⁶¹

Like many Orientalist fantasies, this was a cocreated myth.

Times editor Valentine Chirol, by extolling the civilizing effect of British rule as the best thing that ever happened to a benighted, squalid land, could then argue that the causes of Indian unrest were not really political or economic grievances. Such would be rational. Indian resistance was not rational, since despite an understandable tendency to become irritated or vexed by the presence of a foreign

power, which Chirol did somewhat indulgently acknowledge, British rule was on the whole, he repeated, beneficial and salubrious for India. The true root of the unrest must therefore be the perverse, bloodthirsty nature of Brahminic religion itself.

Nevertheless, despite their obtuse misreading, Farquhar, Cleveland, and Chirol—whether or not they knew it—were responding to an undeniable antirationalist element common to a certain strand of religious politics and a certain strand within the anarchist tradition, to whom an erotically charged millenarian sensibility was mutually legible in ways that escaped rationalist liberals and socialists. The political significance came whenever millennial escape was transposed into the impulse to create a rupture not between this world and a transcendent one somewhere else, but rather between the existing society and a future one based on an ethical or moral order enacted in this world.⁶²

Furthermore, what in mid-nineteenth- to early twentieth-century Europe took the form of a rejection of certain (rational, industrial, or disciplinary) elements of modernity, became for Indian extremists and Russian populists a proudly self-essentializing rejection of Western elements. For both, a hatred of the modernizing/colonizing state was paramount and class analysis was minimal. This affinity continued to echo in the mutually reinforcing statements of European Romanticist and cultural Pan-Asianist antiliberal critics of modernity.

This was a crucial evolutionary node, from which Right and Left branchings were possible. Already within

the Swadeshi movement distinctions could be made between the Calcutta-based *Yugantar* group and the Anusilan Samiti in Dhaka. The former had more international connections with activists who would later move into Left formations. By cultural default strongly Hindu, upper caste, and educated, the *Yugantar* group did not make any of this foundational to its ideological identity. But the less socially progressive Dhaka group actively recruited its leadership based on distinctions of class, caste, and English education, and explicitly excluded Muslims from membership.⁶³

One way leans toward dangerous cultural chauvinism, while the other uses the cultural materials at hand to reach conclusions compatible with, but not derivative of, something else. Where is the line between these shadings?

Let's take the path of karma yoga as expounded in the Bhagavad Gita and central to the applied Swadeshi philosophy, since its emphasis on the value and meaning of action is an explicit point of affinity with turn-of-the-century propagandists of the deed. On the occasion of Khudiram Bose's execution for the Muzaffarpur bombing, the *Bande Mataram* commented that "he not only read the Gita but also acted on it."⁶⁴ Such a focus on action as its own justification was still not the same as the reveling in destruction that was liable to be associated with nihilism, however—or with the similar characterization of Bengali shaktism. Among the Bengali militants, it was typical to fixate on the climactic moment of sacrifice itself rather than on the tactical outcome or mode of social organization to come afterward. But there was nevertheless a tactical goal: to use the symbolic violence to rouse quiescent popular

consciousness, by punching a hole in the complacent functioning of an intolerable system.

The *Indian Sociologist* wrote of the “Indian propagandists and the physical force party, with whose implacable hostility, it admits, the English will probably always have to reckon.”⁶⁵ This physical force partly alluded to precisely that tendency the British identified as anarchist. A chain of correspondence had been activated by which physical force equaled shakti equaled power equaled energy equaled the bomb—that is, the pure manifestation of such energy; or by an alternate route, physical force equaled karma yoga equaled action in the world equaled direct action equaled propaganda of the deed . . . equaled the bomb.

Another passage read, “An immense and incalculable revolution is at hand, and its instruments must be themselves immense in their aspiration, uncalculating in the self-immolation.” Following further calls to self-sacrifice for the greater good, the author concluded that “the fair hope of an orderly and peaceful evolution of self-government, which the first energies of the new movement had fostered, are gone forever. Revolution, bare and grim, is preparing her battlefield, mowing down the centres of order which were evolving a new cosmos, and building up the materials of a gigantic downfall and a mighty new creation. We could have wished it otherwise, but God’s will be done.”⁶⁶

Here is the aesthetic of apocalyptic rupture, blasting a gateway to the new world. This association of anarchism with insurrectionary nihilism would prove a lasting one, overshadowing later points of contact with other strands within the anarchist tradition, even though this was a

definition originally elaborated by hostile colonial police, who arguably misunderstood both Hindu karma yoga and anarchism.

Savarkar became a founding hero of the Hindu far Right, while other Abhinava Bharat members like Har Dayal, Mandayam Parthasarathi Tirumal Acharya, and Virendranath Chattopadhyaya (aka Chatto) became leaders of the dissident Left. From that crossroads, this is the path that we take now.

The Anarcho-syndicalists

In the years between two seismic events—geologic in 1906, geopolitical in 1914—the San Francisco Bay Area rivaled Paris in its plenitude of international revolutionaries and progressives of all sorts. It was a milieu suffused by various aspects of individual as well as social anarchism that brought together bohemian counterculture, artistic and spiritualistic experimentation, efforts toward women’s suffrage, reproductive rights and sexual freedom, and militant labor activity. This was the headquarters of the Indian expatriate Ghadar movement, which bonded migrant laborers and radical students—including some Swadeshi and India House veterans—into a revolutionary anticolonial force from 1913 onward.

In “What Hindus Want” (in the contemporary U.S. context, “Hindus” referred generically to Indians of all faiths), Chandra, editor of the Ghadar’s eponymous news and propaganda organ from 1914–17, divided the anti-colonial mobilization into three parties: moderates who wanted self-rule within the empire like the Canadians and

Australians; extremists who “want[ed] independence and separation through passive resistance,” who didn’t “believe the promises of the Government. They want[ed] their own Government and [didn’t] care what kind whether Monarchical or Democratic”; and Ghadar, which wanted “total autonomy and absolute freedom through revolution (nothing can be achieved by begging the Government, or passive resistance.) They [sought] to establish the free Republic of the United States of India” as a decentralized, subcontinental federation.¹

Among the proponents of that vision were two young scholars: Dhan Gopal Mukerji and Har Dayal, theorist and propagandist of the early Ghadar movement.² Mukerji was the cousin and brother of prominent anticolonial activists in India and the United States.³ While a student at the University of California in Berkeley, he gravitated to socialist, anarchist, and Wobbly friends. He later formed long-term close associations with radical writers like Will and Ariel Durant, Roger Nash Baldwin, and Romain Rolland. Through his encounters with a succession of mentor/informants (an ultra-individualist voluntary hobo, a syndicalist labor veteran, and an extremist Indian nationalist), Mukerji’s picaresque autobiography can be viewed as both an allegory of persistent debates within the anarchist discourse—between social and individual, rationalist and antirationalist, and insurrectionary and organizational strains—and a microcosm of the Indian movement in that context. There is no evidence that he knew Har Dayal personally, although given their shared context, it seems improbable that they didn’t at least know one another by

reputation.⁴ Then again, circa 1912, there were few people in Bay Area political circles who would not have known Har Dayal by reputation.

Har Dayal

Har Dayal was born in Delhi in 1884 or 1885. A gifted student from an early age, he embarked on a stellar academic career that took him to the National College in Lahore and then to Oxford on scholarship in 1905. Both Indian and English mentors predicted a great role for him in the affairs of his country as a lawyer or civil servant. All were equally shocked when just months short of completing his degree, Har Dayal wrote a letter to the British secretary of state for India renouncing his scholarship and leaving the university on the grounds that he could no longer in good conscience accept aid from a government whose presence in India was illegitimate. In an abrupt shift from “young Englishman” to homespun patriot, he threw himself into “the study of the history of the free, parliamentary institutions, the tenacity with which the British people fought for and defended their individual liberties.” Why, he charged, should the desire for national and individual freedom, considered “the supreme social virtue” among the English, be called “madness and sedition” when evinced by an Indian? His mind, “always an enormous and readily absorbing sponge, became filled with the unrest of the New Century,” that encompassed “nationalisms of all subject peoples (Irish, Polish and what not), revolutionism against native despots

(Russian, Turkish, etc.), the movement for votes for women, labour and socialistic developments.”⁵ In between India House meetings and Abhinava Bharat activities, Har Dayal also met Kropotkin and George Bernard Shaw.⁶

When Har Dayal returned to India in early 1908, his personal life was overtaken by the vocation of ascetic revolutionary sage, at the expense of his relationship to his wife, Sundar, who had married him at seventeen and accompanied him to England against the wishes of her family.⁷ Setting up a house in Kanpur, he gathered a clique of “disciples,” who studied “revolutionary books . . . from Europe: on the Russian revolution (against the Czar), Irish Nationalist Movement, the Italian movement of Mazzini, [Giuseppe] Garibaldi, [Conte] Cavour, the German Nationalist Movement and the making of the German Empire by Bismark [*sic*], Egyptian Nationalism, Young Turkism, the Rise of Japan, Polish Nationalism, the French Revolution.” In short, Har Dayal had worked his way through the Enlightenment and the democratic republicanism of the “Long Nineteenth Century.” “Sometimes he would recite and act out passages from some book on the French Revolution, concerning [Georges-Jacques] Danton or Napoleon or some other fighting revolutionist. He would discuss the teachings of [Jean-Jacques] Rousseau, whose ‘Social Contract’ he carried around, or of Voltaire.”⁸ As this curriculum illustrated, he had no objection to Europe or modernity; but his rejection of Britain and its institutions was unequivocal—a distinction he noted in an essay.

His cohort of “nationalists and revolutionaries of all ages” spent their evenings enjoying the cool breezes along

the sands of the Jumna, swathed in khaddar and carrying lathis, talking about ways to fight their colonial rulers or how to set up a national state. By this time Har Dayal had also come to admire Buddha, whose biography *Light of Asia* by Edwin Arnold he often recited from beginning to end. After a while he moved to Lahore, where he published articles in English and Urdu urging complete noncooperation and disengagement from British educational and governmental institutions. But he was no less scathing about the weaknesses of his own people. In one piece for Calcutta's *Modern Times*, titled "Social Conquest of the Hindu Race," he argued that by placing its victims in a constant position of existential inferiority, psychological colonization led a people in effect to collaborate in its own subordination.

Har Dayal seemed poised to emerge as a rival to other nationalist leaders within the country, until he was targeted in the vicious police crackdown unleashed by the Maniktola bomb case in 1908. Tipped off about a warrant for his arrest, he managed to get a train south, sail from Ceylon to Italy and from there to Paris to join Cama, Rana, and company. His daughter was born only a few days before he left the country. He never saw her; nor did he ever see Sundar again.

Once more he predictably grew "engrossed in the study of the philosophies and methods of great revolutionary and reform movements of history."⁹ Almost immediately, Cama tapped him as editor of the new *Bande Mataram*, which she and Rana had intended as a more overtly revolutionary alternative to the increasingly cautious *Indian Sociologist*. It was in these pages that Har

Dayal began systematically to articulate the principles of “Hardayalism,” a program for change based on the idea of three successive stages through which “an enslaved people must pass . . . before it can again establish itself as a member of the community of nations”: education, revolution, and reconstruction (shorthanded in the phrase “after Mazzini, Garibaldi; after Garibaldi, Cavour,” alluding to key figures in the Italian unification). The first was “moral and intellectual preparation. During this period the workers must elevate the character of the people and instruct them in the principles that govern an efficient social organization.” The people must be purged of all cowardice, selfishness, and greed; “the spirit of the slave must disappear before slavery can be ended.” He continued, “The second stage is that of war. The way must be declared for the establishment of a free and sovereign state managed by the people. The debris of the old regime must be removed. And the only agent that can accomplish this work is the sword. No subject nation can bring freedom without war . . . with its alien rulers.” And finally, “After the war the work of reconstruction and consolidation commences.”¹⁰ It’s clear that he was still thinking in classically nationalist terms. Yet even here he was starting to suggest that not just a transfer of political power but also a comprehensive social, psychological, and cultural transformation was the goal.

Less than a year later, in July 1910, Har Dayal decided to leave Paris. He tapered off his writing for the *Bande Mataram*, ceasing after 1911. Various writers have speculated about his motivations: despair at Savarkar’s arrest perhaps, mingled with general philosophical/political

malaise. Biographer Emily Brown suggests that Har Dayal was having trouble squaring his more overtly Hindu ideals with Cama and Rana's focus on international socialism.¹¹ Based on his writings of the time, though, it appears he was himself struggling with what content he wished to express through a spiritual idiom, and doubting whether that idiom could be a vehicle for what he found himself wanting to say. Aldred's evaluation of Har Dayal's ideological development was that

he now proclaimed his belief in the coming republic, which was to be a church, a religious confraternity, based on an ideal, on freewill and mutual cooperation. Its motto was to be: Atheism, cosmopolitanism and moral law. This republic would not be a state, because the latter represented force and persecution. No modification of its activity, no tinkering with parliaments and senates and parties, could bring up the republic. The latter must grow up by the side of the state, which it would undermine finally.

Aldred added that Har Dayal "also asserted the superiority of woman, declared for anti-patriotism and repudiated the race idea as a relic of barbarism."¹² If this is an accurate reflection and not simply Aldred's own projection, Har Dayal's new "religion" was a self-consciously modernist and unmistakably anarchistic utopian vision.

Har Dayal first relocated to Algiers, where he planned to live ascetically in a climate kinder to his fragile health, but was no more contented there than in France. His next

choice was Martinique, another French colony. This is where Bhai Parmanand, an old comrade from London and Lahore who was then working as an Arya Samaj missionary to the Indian indentured laborers of British Guiana and elsewhere in the Caribbean, found him absorbed in a bare-bones routine of study and meditation, sleeping on the floor, and subsisting on boiled grain and potatoes. Har Dayal explained that he intended to offer the world a new philosophy. Parmanand tried to dissuade him. Surely the world didn't need another creed. Why not go to the United States and teach people about one of the existing schools of Hindu philosophy—some of which were atheistic and rationalistic, if that's what he was after?

Har Dayal agreed to give it a try. He went first to Harvard University, where he met the Sikh priest and scholar Teja Singh. This West Coast community leader invited him to come to California, where he said there were “thousands of Sikhs and other Punjabi laborers working in fields or factories . . . who lacked leadership in their struggle for social acceptance and economic equality.”¹³ Har Dayal accepted, but only after a stint in Hawaii living in a cave on Waikiki Beach, “where Japanese Buddhist fishermen, who regarded him as a Buddhist sage, fed him and lent him their ears.” He was reportedly capable of discussing many aspects of this philosophy at great length, but at the same time he was also studying Kant, Hegel, and Marx.

He arrived in Berkeley early in 1911, and then was hired at Stanford as a lecturer in Indian philosophy for academic year 1912–13. After only a few months, however, he resigned over his public stances on controversial topics

such as British rule, anticapitalism, and most scandalous of all, free love. But as he continued to lecture in Oakland, Berkeley, and Palo Alto, he and his cause began to attract prominent progressives in the area, including Jack London, Clarence Darrow, and literary critic Van Wyck Brooks.¹⁴ He also drew the attention of the *San Francisco Bulletin's* editor Fremont Older, who introduced him to a wider circle of “reformers, labour leaders, intellectuals,” and “fighters for social justice and so forth.” Soon Har Dayal was regarded as a leader among the “free thinkers called ‘radicals’ of San Francisco, the Bay Cities, Palo Alto, and the whole region.”¹⁵

Overall, the radical energy and intellectual dynamism of the Bay Area was a refreshing stimulant for Har Dayal, whose political convictions had flagged amid the lull in the nationalist movement that followed Savarkar’s arrest. In fact, between his return to California in 1911 and the end of 1912, he was more engaged in the city’s radical milieu than with the Indian community, with whom he had relatively little direct involvement during this period.¹⁶

Har Dayal spent summer 1912 making plans for a propaganda magazine and a lecture series on sociology. He continued a series of articles for *Modern Review* between 1911 and 1913 on the condition of the Indian community in North America, in which it was plain that his ideas for a total social and cultural transformation went far beyond simply eliminating foreign rule.¹⁷ Attacking the caste system and archaic educational approaches, and discounting both nation and religion as meaningful categories of affiliation, he argued that Indian progressives ought to be concerned with “the great ideas of social equality and personal

dignity, of scientific research and rationalism, of economic freedom and organisation, of public spirit and political principle, of popular government and social progress.”¹⁸

Instead of their preoccupation with “transcendental nonsense,” Indian intellectuals should concentrate on the fact that in the face of famine and pestilence, “there is not a single decent representative institution, technical institute, laboratory or library in the whole country.” It was imperative, Har Dayal said, for young people to read Rousseau, Voltaire, Plato, Aristotle, Ernst Haeckel, Spencer, Marx, Leo Tolstoy, John Ruskin, and Auguste Comte as well as to study ethics, science, sociology, economics, and politics rather than the Vedas.¹⁹

In “Barabari da Arth” (The Meaning of Equality), he noted that since the Vedic Aryan conquest, Hindu philosophy and society had been based on inequality, although things were different in pre-Vedic times, and he would like them to be different again. But equality had to be practiced, not just lauded, in its full and true meaning, which included first economic equality, then equality of opportunity, and then equal distribution of wealth by the people working on the land and in the factories. Wealth could not exist except by depriving or exploiting someone else. All people must have autonomy, which was also a form of equality.

In another piece on the Indian peasant, written in May 1913, Har Dayal argued that the caste system had it upside down; the laboring classes—in his scheme comprised not of an industrial proletariat but instead of peasants, artisans, and menial workers—were the source of all value, wealth, and life, and the true masters of society. In order to achieve

this, society as a whole along with each individual within it would require a psychological change. India's existing national literature exalted materially unproductive parasites: ancient epics glorified nobles and warriors, while the medieval literature featured spiritual ascetics. Now, even the nationalist "Extremists" gave no thought to the peasant or artisan, aiming for a hierarchical government with princes and parliamentary houses. Others, "if they are wiser and more democratic, they talk of a Republic, with representative government, which would mean the rule of the educated classes and the landowners, bankers and manufacturers," while the Indian people were still left out. "Our imagination stops at the border-line that separates the clean and literate classes from the dirty and illiterate masses. Where we stop, there humanity begins. We waste our lives in the service of false gods."²⁰

Meanwhile to his U.S. audience, he advised renunciation and asceticism as the path to humanity's salvation, recommending a holistic amalgam of the theories of Saint Rose, Saint Francis, Rousseau, Voltaire, Marx, Bakunin, Mazzini, and Haeckel as the ideal.²¹ In other words, he did not fully jettison spiritual concerns but rather transposed them into the sphere of concrete ethical action in society.

His *Modern Review* article "Marx: A Modern Rishi" in March 1912 was thought (by first Communist Party of India [CPI] General Secretary Puran Chand Joshi no less) to have been the first Indian article on Marx. But the author's interpretation of Marx's significance was far from orthodox. Like other Indian readers, Har Dayal respected Marx first and foremost as a moral exemplar of dedication

and personal sacrifice, ranking him with Christ and Buddha as a “benefactor of humanity.” He approved of the ideas of equal economic distribution and abolition of money, yet also insisted that materialism alone was insufficient. Choice and volition must not be disregarded; civilization did not proceed mechanically through inevitable teleology but was also affected by “a product of personal influences.” Finally, Har Dayal wanted to modify the notion of class struggle by rejecting what he called “class-selfishness” in favor of “social cooperation based on the appreciation of a higher ideal.”²²

Despite the degree to which he had “[become] very busy with Americans” during this period, he also managed to earn the loyalty of many Indian students at Berkeley and Stanford. But his rival as charismatic mentor was Jatindra Nath Lahiri, a veteran of the Bengali movement best known for carrying out an assassination in 1905, who provided a direct conduit for the philosophy and training methods of the Bengali akhara.²³ The basis for the ideological conflict between Lahiri and Dayal, said Darisi Chenchiah, one of the Berkeley students and later a Ghadar activist, was the role of religion in political revolution. Was it a distraction, substitute, or inspiration? Another point of contention was Lahiri’s claim that Har Dayal was a coward and hypocrite for having left India when the political situation grew precarious in 1908, and instead speaking out from the safety of twelve thousand miles’ distance. Har Dayal’s retort was that he was following in the footsteps of luminaries such as Mazzini and Sun Yat Sen, who worked from peripatetic exile. Lahiri further charged that Har

Dayal was damaging the freedom movement by “wasting his eminent revolutionary qualities in lecturing on anarchism, free love and comparative philosophy in USA,” when all around him, going to seed, was the best of “human material [available] for you to inspire them with patriotism.”²⁴ In a nutshell, the friction between the two leaders was indicative of the transfer from Swadeshi to Ghadar. Lahiri was attempting to replicate or continue the previous movement, imported intact from a political context specific to Bengal. Har Dayal was participating in the construction of a new, more expansive one, rooted in the oppositional communities of the West Coast.

Moreover, he had begun making overtures to the more than five thousand “young Sikhs” around Stockton who worked “in field, factory and small shop [workshop] operations.”²⁵ Despite their habitual distrust of educated elites, these workers responded well. Perhaps this was because of Har Dayal’s evident integrity, through a consistent effort “to live what he preached,” suggested Chenchiah. By now a self-avowed anarchist, Har Dayal didn’t believe in money, Chenchiah asserted, and so gave away whatever his wife still sent him while maintaining a “proverbial” simplicity of lifestyle. As he had done in Martinique and Hawaii, Har Dayal was “living like a saint or fakir” in a bare room, sleeping on the floor, eating bread and milk. The *San Francisco Examiner’s* version of his living arrangements were that he ate only fruit and slept on a board, claiming that “by denying himself all things in life but the satisfaction of his anti-social ideas he would concentrate all his physical and mental powers” toward the ultimate goal of “overthrow[ing] society.”²⁶

Meanwhile, he continued voraciously to process additional material into the mix of what he both practiced and preached, having “developed a great respect for and sympathy with the teachings of Count Tolstoy, then known as one of the world’s leading ‘philosophic anarchists.’”²⁷ Har Dayal declared himself a supporter of Ricardo Flores Magón and his anarcho-syndicalist Partido Liberal Mexicano, and quietly assisted in the cross-border mobilization to liberate Mexico from the clutches of northern capitalists and rival comprador warlords. Ghadar’s designated military coordinator, Pandurang Khankhoje, also became friends with Magón and even for a time contemplated sending Indians from California to train with Mexican revolutionaries. Khankhoje later spent many years in Mexico, and made significant contributions as an agricultural scientist through the strains of high-yield corn he developed. His friend Diego Rivera depicted him in a famous mural, distributing bread with a benevolent smile.²⁸

Brooks recalled that Har Dayal had held a gathering at Brooks’s home in 1912 during which he “boldly affirmed that the international social revolution was his only interest.”²⁹ Brooks later described his friend in light of

Bakunin’s definition of a revolutionist as one who “has no interests, no affairs, no feelings, no attachments of his own, no property, not even a name,” having broken with the codes and conventions that govern other people and having only “one thought, one passion: revolution.” . . . For, whether as an Indian nationalist or an anarchist internationalist,

he was a revolutionist at every moment with a shrewd psychological knowledge of the value of the martyr's role for attracting and retaining disciples to carry out his work. . . . [His mind] seemed to combine in a curious way the opposite types of the "yogi" and the "commissar."³⁰

According to Chenchiah, Har Dayal was well known "among the numerous foreign revolutionary societies which were then functioning in . . . San Francisco which was the headquarters of many of these organizations." Russian, Irish, Japanese, Turkish, and Chinese groups regarded Har Dayal as a "great friend, philosopher and guide," and sought him out "as a political revolutionary [who] worked for the liberation of many countries, from the clutches of feudalism and imperialism." He in turn invited foreign leaders to lecture and teach. As in France, "the most spectacular [were] the Russians who used to escape from their exile in Siberia and manage to arrive in USA," wrote Chenchiah. From them "we learnt many lessons not only about printing, publishing and distributing secret revolutionary literature, but also the method of recruiting, training and organizing youths."³¹

Har Dayal continued to lecture to progressive intellectual gatherings and labor organizations, at venues including the monthly William Morris Circle, International Radical Club (as the founder and secretary), and Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) (as the secretary for the Oakland branch). The Radical Club (or as Har Dayal's former Stanford boss called it, the

“International-Radical-Communist Anarchist Club,” and the intelligence officers keeping an eye on it, “an assemblage of ‘Russians, Poles, and Socialists’”) met monthly for dinner—often at one of San Francisco’s many excellent Italian restaurants, noted Govind Behari Lal—and to discuss a variety of subjects, led by distinguished experts on topics in the natural or social sciences. Here was a platform for “dissenters from the establishment in any social, political, or intellectual area” to “work off steam” or “vent [their] feelings.”³² The club had no formal political affiliation or party line, but each week Har Dayal produced some notable speaker (on one occasion, John Reed), after which “there were questions and discussions, and everybody ate and drank and called each other ‘comrade’ [as the] burning themes of the changing human relationships and ideologies of the first decade of the 20th century were tossed about,” from the “equality of women, equality of races, equality of nations, equality of labour etc.” to free love, or the desirability of political bombings and assassinations.³³

Har Dayal’s other enterprise as entrepreneur of radicalism and inventor of religion was the Fraternity of the Red Flag. A month after resigning from Stanford, he published an invitation to “all Radical Comrades” over the age of twenty to join this group, whose stated object was “the service of the Radical ideal of life.” The rules for achieving this required that aspirants sign up for a one-year “novitiate” of “moral and intellectual preparation” under the guidance of an existing member, after which they would vow poverty and homelessness, humility, “purity (but not celibacy),” service and propaganda. The vow meant specifically that the

member “renounces all wealth, promises not to earn money or be a parent at any time, repudiates all other social ties and obligations, and live[s] a life of simplicity and hardship. (Since neither celibacy nor parenthood was recommended, presumably Har Dayal was familiar with the work of Margaret Sanger, perhaps through mutual colleague Agnes Smedley.) Anyone was free to leave the fraternity at any time.³⁴

Finally, initiates would pledge to uphold “the eight principles of Radicalism,” of which the first three concerned personal development, and the last five a revolution in social institutions, the latter of which suggest a combination of anarcho-syndicalism, rationalist secularism, and contemporary fads. These were:

1. Personal moral development through love and self-discipline
2. Personal intellectual development through education and self-culture
3. Personal physical development through hygiene and eugenics
4. The establishment of communism, and the abolition of private property in land and capital through industrial organization and the General Strike
5. The establishment of free fraternal cooperation, and the ultimate abolition of the coercive organization of Government
6. The promotion of science and sociology, and the abolition of religion and metaphysics

7. The establishment of Universal Brotherhood, and the abolition of patriotism and race feeling

8. The establishment of the complete economic, moral, intellectual, and sexual freedom of woman, and the abolition of prostitution, marriage, and other institutions based on the enslavement of woman³⁵

Echoing his nod to Francisco Ferrer above, Har Dayal stated that the fraternity in the United States, Europe, and Australia would “devote its effort chiefly to the establishment of Modern Schools, and the promotion of industrial organization and strikes (in cooperation with the I.W.W. and Syndicalist movements). In Asia and Africa, it will further the movements of progress and revolt in various countries.” He signed and dated the document “Ferrer’s Day, October 13, 41 P.C., 1912 A.D.”³⁶

Shortly afterward, he received a “windfall” in the form of a real estate parcel: a house on six acres of farmland near Oakland that he described as having a lovely view from a hill sloping down to the sea. It was donated by a woman who had volunteered to teach gratis in the “modern school and training institute for anarchist propagandists” to be founded there. Har Dayal named it the Bakunin Institute and envisioned it as the order’s first “monastery.” He wanted it to have a good library and serve as a place of hospitality for all wandering lecturers regardless of their party. Described by the *San Francisco Chronicle* of May 12, 1914 as a “socialistic affair,” it functioned for about two years but lost cohesion after Har Dayal’s departure.³⁷

British-born Magónist William Owen was another project participant. A close collaborator of the Magón brothers, from 1910 he was in charge of the English-language page of the Los Angeles edition of their organ *Regeneración*.³⁸ Described as an “American anarchist,” Owen was mentioned addressing an enthusiastic crowd at a Ghadar meeting in early 1914.

At the time, Har Dayal seems to have been indifferent to invitations to lead the local Indian community in its struggles with anti-immigrant legislation, explaining later that he had been too “caught up in the labor movement and the social revolution” to think much about Indian nationalist politics.³⁹ By this he presumably meant the particularity of eliminating British colonial rule; but in a larger sense, with hindsight, what could be more key to the U.S. labor movement and social revolution than the condition of a racialized, low-income workforce in the United States?

All this changed with the news of the Hardinge bomb. Lal remembered Har Dayal as being “tremendously excited” on hearing about it.⁴⁰ Speaking vehemently about it at an Indian students’ meeting Har Dayal insisted on the right to struggle for independence and equality by any means possible. He dashed off a circular saluting the bomber, under the title “Yugantar.” Then the news arrived from India that some of his “closest friends had been drawn into the net of the ‘bomb conspiracy,’” and that according to the Indian newspapers, British authorities believed that Har Dayal was connected in some way to the attack on the viceroy. At this point he “knew that he could never go back to India. Now he must do everything from abroad.”⁴¹

On the first anniversary of the event, he published the notorious “Shabash!” pamphlet exhorting, “Don’t sit there. Death hovers near—kill or be killed, do a great deed before you pass on.” In other words, why not die for a cause, since one dies anyhow: “Blessed is the death of the man who suffers martyrdom for the sake of freedom.”⁴²

The bomb, he rhapsodized, had several advantages. It got immediate results, flashing an unmistakable signal for the enemy, as well as a beacon by night for the lost traveler. Dawn would follow darkness; clouds were gathering toward the impending downpour. In short, violence was a universal language. “Punishing” nondemocratic rulers by killing and wounding them was a surefire, direct remedy for ending oppression. Only violence goaded the powerful into reform, concession, or amelioration. The bomb would apply the “whip of fear” to induce the government to reform itself, if only to stave off a mutiny that would annihilate it.

He continued to switch between registers and pull eclectic themes together, while also betraying the lingering inconsistencies in his awareness of gender politics. The only civilized and free nations with a measure of honor, he insisted, were those that could demonstrate a “warlike, bold and manly spirit.” Belying a glorious past, Indians now were mistreated as slaves in all nations because of their own cowardice. So then regain some courage, he declared: throw a bomb! And thereby refuse to accept the “ignoble and contemptible” existence of a slave.

For comparison, he pointed to Sun Yat Sen’s successful republican overthrow of an empire from a diasporic base just a year earlier; the West Coast Indians could do

the same. As for the Russians, they “daily shoot Governors, police commissioners, spies, etc., like little birds of prey and the people applaud. . . . [T]he Indians should become disciples of the Russians.” He reserved special praise for women like Sophia Perovskaya and Vera Zasulich, “who were worshiped like goddesses by the people.” Har Dayal also drew eclectically on Hyndman, Kropotkin, and sacred poet Matthew Arnold to legitimate the distinction between an act of murder and one of justice, and offered a litany of regicidal heroes, including the anarchist assassins of King Umberto of Italy, President William McKinley, and Czar Alexander II.¹³

Indian revolutionaries could not afford to wait around for Germany and Britain to come to blows, as they were bound to do eventually, he insisted. In the meantime, “in Asiatic countries the appearance of the bomb is the advance guard of complete liberty.”

Ghadar member Rattan Singh and Ghadar historian Harish Puri (among many other Left critics of propaganda of the deed) later called this vanguardist approach a symptom of the “desperation” that springs from the yawning absence of a mass revolutionary movement. What changed circa 1912 was precisely the emergence of an opportunity to organize such a movement. The several thousand Indian agricultural and lumber workers on the West Coast were dry tinder ready for a spark, as they began to articulate the links between the racial discrimination they faced in California, and the colonial status of their country of origin. Har Dayal wrote to Aldred in December 1913, reporting on “his work on the Coast, especially among the

Hindu working men there,” among whom he was gaining three to four hundred new “converts” each week to “the economic ideals of the Revolutionary Party of India—the Ghadr Party,” and also asked Brooks to forward Aldred some of the Ghadar literature.⁴⁴ The movement’s takeoff was meteoric; but that story must be told elsewhere.

On March 25, 1914, just as it was picking up steam, a warrant went out for Har Dayal’s arrest and deportation. After Leon Czolgosz killed President McKinley in 1901, a law had been passed allowing deportation within three years of entry to the United States, of any anarchist alien for whom there was “local evidence of belonging to any revolutionary society.”⁴⁵ The Ghadarites’ nemesis William Hopkinson, a Canadian undercover agent with police experience in Calcutta—allegedly he could pass as a Sikh—suggested this strategem, since Har Dayal’s views and associations were well known.

The evidence for his deportation case included letters written in his hand, purportedly discovered among Alexander Berkman’s and Goldman’s personal effects. Any real connection is apocryphal, although Har Dayal did at least attempt to make contact. Later, two letters he posted from Netherlands in 1916 to Berkman were used as proof in the wartime Hindu-German conspiracy case, even though these had been deployed less to link Har Dayal to anarchists than to link Goldman and Berkman to Germany. Goldman herself dismissed the letters, and when confronted, claimed to remember Har Dayal vaguely only as a “great idealist” and “Tolstoyan” whom she had met in California.⁴⁶

Har Dayal had written,

Dear Comrade: I am well and busy. Can you send some earnest and sincere comrades, men and women, to help our Indian revolutionary party at this juncture? They should be persons of good character. . . . Kindly also send me names and addresses of the prominent anarchist comrades in Spain, Denmark, France, Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, Austria, and other European countries. Please also send letters of introduction for me to them from Emma or yourself, if you know them. With love and respect, Yours for the cause, Har Dayal.

In the second letter a couple of days later, he was still “well and busy,” but also “sad,” because “we have lost some very brave comrades in the recent skirmishes . . . we are fighting against heavy odds.” He repeated the request for aid and reinforcements, suggesting the “real fighters, I.W.W.s or anarchists” who might be found in New York or Paterson, New Jersey.⁴⁷

But guilt by such indirect association was not enough. Confident that deportation would be easy if he could only come up with damning evidence of anarchist convictions, Hopkinson set out to find it—such as the “large stock of anarchist literature” (unspecified) that police found in the possession of Ram Nath Puri, one of the early Bay Area radicals with whom Har Dayal was in communication. After a year of attending Har Dayal’s public lectures,

Hopkinson declared his quarry to be without a doubt the most dangerous of the Indian agitators he had yet evaluated in the United States, and warned ominously of the dangerous impact someone of Har Dayal's "knowledge and influence and declared Anarchistic tendencies, is bound to wield . . . on the young boys at the University."⁴⁸ The *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that as Har Dayal embarked under escort to the Angel Island immigration center for his interrogation, two hundred highly demonstrative Indians flanked him.⁴⁹

The answers provided in the course of his three-hour grilling may have been as illuminating as one of the public lectures haunted by Hopkinson.⁵⁰ The first line of questioning picked up on a speech Har Dayal had given on the Russian Revolution and important lessons to be gained from it. He considered himself a "disciple" of the movement and its literature, and felt the revolution had been "justified essentially and necessary for civilization."⁵¹

The questioner pounced: A disciple? What did he mean? Har Dayal responded: "The word discipline has so many meanings. I am a student of it; I have derived inspiration from it. I know personally many leaders of the Russian revolution." Presumably he meant the exiled Socialists-Revolutionaries in Paris. Pressed more closely on his endorsement of violence, he claimed that each case had to be considered in context, and that where violent action was the only means available for changing an unacceptable government, and if it would "help the progress of civilization and freedom," then he would condone it. The Russian situation fit his criteria: "That is my opinion as a student."⁵²

And India? While reiterating his conviction that “the British Empire is sucking the life blood of millions of people in Ireland, India, and Egypt,” he stated that he didn’t think violence was the most constructive option currently available in the Indian context. The revolutionary nationalist movement was still “in a stage of infancy and should devote all its energy to propaganda.”⁵³ In a country such as India, rendered “backward” by despotism, he predicted that the preparatory phase of education and propaganda would need to be lengthy.

What about the United States? He stated for the record that he did not “believe [in] or advocate the overthrow by force or violence” of the U.S. government, or of any government and form of law. He refrained from categorically disavowing the assassination of public officials, repeating that it depended on the specific situation, but that a mass uprising was generally preferable. He made a distinction between collective movements and individual acts of “terrorism,” or “direct action,” 99 percent of which he dismissed as unproductive or even retrogressive, though he would not condemn those who acted in the integrity of their conscience.⁵⁴

A related line of questioning pursued Har Dayal’s thoughts on U.S. labor militance. Commenting on labor leaders accused of illegally transporting dynamite, he opined that “no person should be heavily punished for the social phenomena in which we are involved,” and suggested that the steel trust officials bore culpability for the “horrible conditions” in their mills, so destructive of “the lives and health and manhood of American citizens.” As for his views

on the state, would he say that he was “at variance with most of the present forms of government in the administration of the judicial and . . . executive branches of government”? He replied: “I am a critic, but I should not say I am entirely at variance. . . . I certainly think that the social organization of what is called government is very liable to be perverted from its proper operation when there is a great difference of economic conditions in a community, because in a community where there is a small class of very rich people, they generally manage to control these institutions.” Har Dayal continued that in some countries, the situation could be rectified by the gradual “persuasive abolition” of the institutions in question, but that in others, the only possibility was through “upheavals called revolutions.”⁵⁵

His answers regarding his intentions in the United States clarified his dual role and dual audience. One of his tasks was to raise the Indian people’s revolutionary consciousness: in this context, he considered himself an active participant in the social/political struggle and “an organizer of a movement.” But in the U.S. context, the role he had assigned himself was more as a “thinker and philosopher, if I may be so vain as to use that word, than as an agitator participating in any temporal social movement. I always lecture from the academic and educational standpoint to the white people in this country, because, being a foreigner, I cannot directly influence social movements.”⁵⁶

In the end, the case for deportation hinged on proving that Har Dayal had been a confirmed anarchist at the time of entry and had come to the United States with the premeditated intention of violently overthrowing the British

government of India. F. C. Isemonger and J. Slattery of the Punjab police were at pains in their official report on the Ghadar movement to determine, based on letters written between 1905 and 1906, that these were long-standing aims that remained unchanged when Har Dayal began his activities in the United States. “Two quotations from these letters,” they assured readers, “will make this clear”: Har Dayal wrote, “Our object is not to reform the Government but to reform it away, leaving, if necessary, only nominal traces of its existence.” And

The more I think the more I realise that half measures are of no use. . . . We must lay the axe at the root of the tree. The people can never understand the figment of loyalty to the Sovereign and hostility to his Viceroy. This is a European conception, which cannot be assimilated by us. . . . “Constitutional Government,” “Colonial Self-Government,” “Autonomy,” etc., are terms borrowed from the western political phraseology which convey no meaning to our people. Place a clear issue before the people: “Such is your state; this is the cause; remove the cause.”⁵⁷

Context is needed to assess such statements, and there is no doubt Har Dayal was always a slippery talker. In this case, his words could be taken either as self-consciously anarchist or simply radically anti-British. He himself professed the latter. This was the defense often used by earlier expatriate revolutionaries, exonerating themselves of the

charge of anarchism by assuring their host countries that they had no interest in overthrowing that government, just the colonial regime back home, and so there was no reason to expel them since they posed no threat.

Chandra, for instance, pointed out that “England called American Revolutionists ‘Anarchists’” in 1776, and the Indians as republicans and nationalists were no different in 1914; “the yearnings of the oppressed for a measure of political freedom always appear ‘anarchistic’ to the oppressor.” (It should be mentioned that Chandra was on the more conservative end of the Ghadar spectrum in its post-Har Dayal era schism and not popular among those associated with the original Yugantar Ashram collective. For example, in the immigration debates of the 1910–20s, he pushed for extending Caucasian/Aryan status to high-caste Indians seeking U.S. citizenship, rather than opposing the racist policies that barred non-Caucasians, including Indians of low caste.)

Har Dayal insisted that “at the time of my entry into the United States I had not taught much on conclusions of government in general. My two chief interests were Buddhism and its efficiency and the nationalist movement in India. As time passed my interest in Buddhism has waned and the modern labor movement has taken its place, while the nationalist movement in India retains the same hold on my affection.”⁵⁸

Chenchiah implied that both accusations were applicable and had to be differentiated. Har Dayal was arrested for preaching anarchism, he said, not for serving the Indian national cause. And although he, Chenchiah, identified

himself strictly as a “Nationalist and a Revolutionary,” he nevertheless held Har Dayal in the highest regard as “the greatest intellectual exponent of the anarchist philosophy in San Francisco,” after giving what Chenchiah considered the best speech at an annual conference of anarchists, socialists, syndicalists, communists, and national revolutionaries held there in 1913.⁵⁹

True to form, Har Dayal was released from his interrogation in time to make it back to the IWW hall for one of his regularly scheduled Radical Lecture Course talks that very day, on “The Problem of Unemployment.”⁶⁰ But though the government had insisted that Har Dayal was not going to be deported, his lawyer was skeptical, and the client ducked quietly out of the country on his own accord shortly afterward, notwithstanding the five hundred dollar bail paid by the Ghadar office and the eight hundred dollars that the Indian community had raised for his defense. After assuring himself that the San Francisco operations were in capable hands, Har Dayal resurfaced in Switzerland to take up a brief yet prominent role among the Indian revolutionaries in Berlin and Istanbul. His local and international supporters did not remain quiet; from London, Aldred penned, “Stop this Infamy!” in *Herald of Revolt*, in Har Dayal’s defense.

Even on the run, Har Dayal’s intellectual energy did not flag. Indeed it long outlived his activism. In a letter to Brooks in April 1914, he expanded on an idea for a book he hoped to write “on ‘The Time-Spirit,’” in which he would “trace the different tendencies of XIX century civilization making for progress, finishing with the synthesis that I

approve of. It will be a kind of survey (from the Anarchistic standpoint) of XIX century history, descriptive and critical, having for its central theme the dissolution of medievalism and the introduction of Anarchism (in its broad sense).⁶¹

Incidentally, this plan brings to mind a similar opus envisioned by Aldred. Biographer and associate John Taylor Caldwell reveals some of Aldred's thinking circa 1908, toward an ambitious compendium of social philosophy in the form of a projected series of books and pamphlets. "One was a book containing the biographies of ten radicals, among them such varied characters as Richard Carlisle, Jonathan Swift, Theodore Parker, Robert Owen, Bishop Colenso, and Michael Bakunin. . . . This would be the first of a series of books . . . under the general title of *The Library of Synthetical Iconoclasts*. . . . The term 'Synthetical' did not refer to the character of the biographical subjects," explained Caldwell, but to Aldred's theory that "every aspect of dissension (iconoclasm) from right to left, whether in religion, politics, art or science, was the forward-urging of the first principle of change, of becoming This dissenting articulation should be brought together, synthesized, in a general concept."⁶²

Another of his intended projects, *Organisation*, was supposed to include sections on Marx, the Communist International, and the International's failure and supplanting by Lassallean social democracy; "the development of Capitalist Imperialism, and the subsequent industrial development of the native races towards the stage of International Working Class Solidarity, the specific examples taken being India and Africa"; the history and theory

of “Working Class Industrial Organisation” culminating in Aldred’s recently founded Industrial Union of Direct Action; political and educational struggle; bourgeois culture; and sexual relationships as they pertained to the class war. (Aldred, like Har Dayal, believed in free love.) In general, Aldred’s intellectual link with what Caldwell terms the “early Victorian radicals” who represented the “liberal-radical tradition” of republicanism prior to the “socialist turn within Secularism” in England also sounds quite similar to Har Dayal’s definition of radicalism in prewar San Francisco.⁶³

Har Dayal’s book was never realized, and within a few years he had abandoned the revolutionary movement. His comrades viewed his shocking political recantation and avowal of British loyalism at the war’s end (partially explainable, though not excusable, by the disillusionment evinced in his memoir/exposé *Forty-Four Months in Germany and Turkey*) as a harsh betrayal, tantamount to apostasy.

He ended his days in London, where he continued his studies of science and philosophy, earned a long-delayed PhD at the School of Oriental and African Studies with a dissertation on Buddhism, and opened the Modern Culture Institute for Rationalism, Socialism, and Self-Culture (Physical, Mental, Aesthetic, and Ethical). Its elaborate program and statement of precepts were weirdly reminiscent of a reformed Bakunin Institute. He was still aiming for a utopian holism, which was perhaps his truest and most consistent life’s quest; as Lal insightfully observed, his Ghadar work “was just one application” of this.⁶⁴ Jack London remarked after Har Dayal’s death in

1939 that the “two stars” he followed were the emancipation of India and elaboration of a “synthetic philosophy for the world.” Another eulogy acknowledged that the goal of liberating his homeland from colonial rule was a subsidiary albeit urgent component of his ultimate ambition of a “philosophical synthesis,” drawing the best elements from both Eastern and Western thought. This in turn would lead to the “moral, spiritual, and intellectual perfection of man . . . [in] a world of love, mutual trust, and respect among all people, where colonialism and nationalism would both disappear in a true internationalism of peace and prosperity for man in his beatitude.”⁶⁵

What is one to make of Har Dayal? He was a creative thinker and voracious learner. He was trying to create a new map toward total liberation. Furthermore, like Aurobindo Ghose before him and Mohandas Gandhi after, Har Dayal identified himself as a karma yogi, fixated always on the manifestation of principle through dynamic action. The social anarchism of the *fin de siècle*, when he encountered it, seemed to him to express what he was seeking. His interests and activities in San Francisco aptly reflected the ferment, language, and progressive trends of his day. His complexities also are a reflection of the counterpoint between rationalism and romanticism; he virtually encompassed within himself the whole discourse over time. Har Dayal’s ideas illustrated the ease with which revolutionary anticolonialism could shift between opposition to a particular government deemed illegitimate, and the determination to replace that very conception of government with other political, economic, and social forms.

Mukerji

In 1908 or 1909, Mukerji left India for Japan due to a combination of educational and political reasons.⁶⁶ After a stint of technical training, odd jobs, and some revolutionary support work, he made his way to San Francisco in 1910. But in the scramble for menial work to support himself in Berkeley, the erudite young scholar suffered unaccustomed daily racism and exploitation. He showed up for one job armed with “my bundle and one book, [Ralph Waldo] Emerson’s *Self-Reliance*,” but was fired in a day when it became clear he had no clue how to wash dishes. He was finally hired to serve meals and make beds at a boardinghouse.

Unfortunately, the University of California seemed to him much less intellectually stimulating than the University of Calcutta, where there had been

hot discussions with my fellow students regarding the state, society, and the future of man. And a very large majority believed, with me, that professors were not allowed to teach the truth because it was dangerous. So whenever we were assigned a dangerous topic such as the French Revolution, or civil war in England under [Oliver] Cromwell, we read up more books on the subject than were prescribed. We did it for the purpose of contradicting the professor and finding out the truth.

Here, it seemed to him, the students just took notes passively and never questioned anything in depth. Then an

Irish-born U.S. student called Leo who was staying at the boardinghouse where Mukerji worked befriended him, having noticed him in classes. By the way, inquired Leo casually, “Do you know anything about anarchism?” Mukerji replied that he did, and was a believer in Kropotkin’s communism. To which his new friend sneered, “That’s not anarchism. That’s mush.” Leo then launched into a diatribe on the “difference between . . . Kropotkin’s mush and Tolstoi’s mush. And he ended with a tremendous defense of [Pierre-Joseph] Proudhon’s Anarchism which was anti-mush.” Mukerji commented, “Of course I had heard of these gentlemen, though I had not read them all. Tolstoi I knew by heart, Proudhon only by name.” Leo then showed Mukerji the pictures on his wall: Adam Smith, Tolstoy, Bakunin, Kropotkin, Marx, Victor Hugo, and Jesus Christ. Leo was a disenchanting ex-Jesuit-in-training whom socialists had lured to the creed of Charles Darwin and Spencer. But socialism too had disappointed him. “To make a long story short,” he said,

I began to speak from soap boxes for the Socialists on different street corners, but as I associated with them I began to see that the majority of them had perfectly ragged minds. . . . [I]n order to overcome the system of the church, the Socialists gave me the system of social order, and that seemed even more gruesome . . . so I threw over the whole Socialist regime and took to individualistic anarchism.

He continued, “I read Tolstoi, Kropotkin and a lot of others. This suited my temperament. It substituted ‘no system’

for ‘system,’ liberty for authority, and personality for social gregariousness.” But his family was not happy with his apparent aimlessness, and promised him a monthly allowance if he would go to college and study law.

Mukerji was intrigued by Leo’s ideas. The two new friends decided to move out of the boardinghouse and share cheaper lodgings. Preempting university classes, they now applied themselves with “feverish” dedication fourteen hours a day to their chosen course of independent study. They liked Walt Whitman, glanced at Shaw, discarded Plato, and were “delighted” with Henry David Thoreau, Proudhon (particularly the suggestion that “property was theft”), and Friedrich Nietzsche (especially the notion that “God was dead”). When Leo flunked out and Mukerji barely scraped by in his exams, they blamed “the capitalist system,” which they also identified as the root of Mukerji’s lack of shoes, “petty larceny” of an exploitative boss, and presence of factory workers and prostitutes wandering rainy Oakland streets at night. On leaving school, Leo vowed never to work and thereby never to further enrich the capitalist system. Luckily for him his roommate did not take the vow. Mukerji accepted a job at another boardinghouse while supplying Leo with philosophy texts from the university; Leo summarized the chapters for his humble benefactor after Mukerji got off work. Sometimes Mukerji would pass the hat while Leo soapboxed.

One night Leo decided it was time to take Mukerji to see his friend Jerry, the “ideal anarchist.” When they sat down to talk, Jerry asked, “What makes you so interested in anarchism?” The starstruck Mukerji answered, “Why, it’s the vision of the future.”

After chiding him for grandiose phraseology, dead giveaway of bourgeois thinking, Jerry narrated his own background. He, like Leo, had emigrated from Ireland as a child. Exemplifying Leo's aspirations, Jerry had not done a lick of work in twenty-seven years. He attributed this fact to a life-changing experience at Haymarket Square on the day of the famous explosion, catalyzed as it was by a struggle over work conditions. Since that day, Jerry said, "I vowed to myself that I'd never help the capitalist system with the slightest exertion of a single muscle." He lived off charity, simultaneously despising other people for their pity, and himself for taking it. But he embraced the indignity, because for a true anarchist there could be "no pride nor humility, no matter what happens."

Mukerji asked whether Jerry still believed in a better future for humanity if he despised humankind. Jerry answered: "I despise the common herd, but I cannot despise the individual man. Whenever he stoops to pity I think of the common herd, but whenever he flays me with his insolence I think of the individual man." Mukerji was delighted, but Jerry rebuffed him.

First, he did not think Mukerji would be able to face jail and beatings, or handle the hard life of beggary, here criminalized rather than venerated as in India. Second, what did the traveler need anarchism for? "Why don't you go back to India?" challenged Jerry. "Your ancestors found the truths you are seeking thousands of years ago; Buddha was the greatest of all anarchists."

Mukerji asked if Jerry had ever visited his homeland. "No," Jerry admitted, "but one can fathom India. I can feel

them, those old Hindus. Once in a while I have read a scrap of their writings, and I have felt then that they were the primordial anarchists. Isn't it one of your ancestors who said, "This world is not, is not, is not?" In other words, to Jerry's mind, "those old Hindus" were primordial nihilists, achieving the apotheosis of negation and rejection that he himself somewhat inconsistently aspired to. Jerry was revealing here an idea of liberation that resembled not collective social utopia but instead *moksha*, release from material existence and restraint of any kind.

In a later discussion of Henrik Ibsen, Shakespeare, and Sophocles, Jerry again alluded to the notion that Asian civilization already possessed the secrets to a utopian countersociety without needing to pass through the steps of industrialization and modernization: "But, Mukerji, your ancestors knew all this and never were troubled about it. It is strange that you should come to us to find out what you had at home. It's time for you to go back." Again he hectorated, "Why in hell do you want to be an anarchist? I am an anarchist because I am a leader. I am not an anarchist because I am an example."

"What do you lead us into?" Mukerji probed.

"Into a greater sense of social danger," Jerry replied. "I want to lead you from security to bravery." Jerry's and Leo's was an individualist interpretation of anarchism, each rejecting any authority over himself without rejecting authoritarianism in principle. This was an unshackling of ego rather than (a Swadeshi militant's) annihilation of ego, with a whiff of the *Übermensch's* disgust for the herd. There was another acquaintance present, a socialist (though

Mukerji's individualist anarchist friends were generally quite contemptuous of his ilk), who scoffed, "Bah! Oriental stories. You may convince an Easterner like Mukerji. . . . But I want logic."

Jerry retorted, "Mythology is the logic of the imaginative races, as logic is the mythology of the dull races." After which the socialist "left us, furious." Jerry and the others had cast their friend as the mystical Oriental even as Mukerji pushed them on rationalist modernity.

Mukerji's next discussion with "the boys" addressed the question, "What is the relation of man to society?"

Jerry: "The basis of the relation of man to society is fear."

Leo: "The basis of the relation is ignorance. The more you know, the more unsocial you are."

Mukerji then reflected that in actuality, neither of them had any idea about people's relation to society—or at least, neither had any experience of the delicate negotiations required by the economic imperatives and behavioral restraints of that relation when one was a dark-skinned recent immigrant trying to make ends meet. For example, later that night Mukerji was threatened with violence by the drunken son of his employer ("You damned heathen, I'll smash your head!") and quit the job after his boss dismissed his concerns. Thus, Mukerji recalled, "began the most difficult part of my life."

Mukerji worked a series of odd jobs—boardinghouses during the school year and picking crops during the summer—and still soapboxed with Jerry and Leo, whose harangues invariably concluded with the tagline, "Now my Hindu comrade will pass the hat." They shared beds on a

rotating basis, and before long were sharing fleas. Mukerji earned their keep, while the others read, philosophized, and ranted.

At one point, the IWW local allowed them to sleep on the floor of its hall in exchange for four weekly street corner lectures. Mukerji carried the box. But while Leo and Jerry proved brilliant at holding forth on the abolition of church and state, it seemed Jerry could or would not comply with the IWW request that he “insist in his speeches on industrial control by the workers.” Rather, Jerry “insisted that even industrial control should not be in the hands of the workers, because that would be a violation of individualism.” So the IWW withdrew the offer, and the trio was again on its own.

Yet that was not the end Mukerji’s encounter with syndicalism—an idea personified for him by Frank Bonnington. Whereas Jerry epitomized the refusal to engage society in any way, Bonnington was committed to engaging with, contributing to, and transforming it.

Bonnington was the scion of a southern patrician ex-slaveholding family and a graduate of the University of Virginia. But he had rejected that life for vagabondage, walking across the country, sleeping under the stars, and eating out of garbage cans. Bonnington told them, “I had no desire to love humanity. I had no desire to do good; I had no desire even to improve myself. But a sudden vision seized me and compelled me to believe that a higher social order is essential for the growth of the free spirit. I believe that there will be a dissolution of church, state and society in a higher human organism. I believe in freedom so heartily that I am enslaved to my dream of freedom.”

He had later gone to Australia, where he “led two syndicalist strikes and put a factory ‘on the blink’” before stowing away in a boat leaving Sydney to evade arrest. To Mukerji’s question about any “extraordinary experiences in the course of his work,” Bonnington answered that he had had his “skull broken in two places once and another time I had to stand watch over a troupe of women and children, whose husbands had been arrested. The most terrible part of it all was that the children cried for milk and the women cried for food and I had nothing to give them. The only thing that tided us over was the singing. We sang the ‘Marseillaise’ so that in the delirium of it we forgot everything about hunger.” This sounded more like the constructive goal that Mukerji himself was seeking.

Bonnington now stepped in to help Mukerji as breadwinner, supporting all four of them on the monthly salary of eighty dollars he drew for editing a socialist weekly—lavish compared to Mukerji’s twenty-five cents per hour doing inventory at a socialist bookstore, or the monthly ten dollars plus room and board he had earned at his last boardinghouse job. Bonnington even loaned Mukerji money to continue his education and warned him against aspiring to the hobo’s life that Jerry so embraced.

“To be a hobo . . . means that you lose your greatest asset—you have no faith in anything, even in your own greatness,” said Bonnington. But hadn’t Bonnington himself endured it? Mukerji challenged. How? “You put all of your life out of yourself,” he answered. “You think and live in a far future when man will be as the Titans. Since you live in the far off, you don’t mind the here and the now.”

The next leg of Mukerji's political-intellectual journey intersected with the world of Ghadar through contact with Indian fieldworkers, both Sikh and Muslim, and with Hindu nationalist students.

Working in the fields during his Berkeley summer vacation, Mukerji's first impression of these Indians of such a different class and regional background from his own was that they labored so hard for incomparably long hours, yet lived on so little that native-born white workers were "agitating against Hindu immigration on the ground that my countrymen were pulling down the wages and getting all the jobs."

He described the physical ordeal of picking asparagus and celery from predawn to dusk, at ten cents a full box. He also noted the rampant alcoholism and occasionally homicidal jealousy over women induced, he believed, by the harshness of the working and living conditions (rather than by moral contamination of Western decadence, as the religious bodies claimed). Gradually Mukerji learned the tricks of the trade, picking apples and hops: how to pace oneself, slowing down whenever the foreman wasn't nearby, and posting a lookout in the apple trees; how to use "misunderstandings" through details deliberately lost in translation; and how to fudge the number of workers in the record book to more than were actually present on the crew in order to inflate the wage.

He also put his English-language education to use as interpreter for groups of his fellow workers. One humorous scene describes his wry rendition of a Salvation Army delegation's attempts to reach the heathen farm laborers, who

were astounded to hear the missionaries explained as those who “represent the Militarism of Nirvana.” The workers took up a collection simply to induce this nuisance, “ambassador of the Son of Bibi Miriam,” to go away.

Back at the university in fall 1912, Mukerji now found that all the Indian students he encountered there—more than there had ever been—were nationalists. “They wanted to free India. As if a politically free India meant an India traditionally and uniquely herself!” But despite his own family history, he quarreled bitterly with many of these radical students, who “thought that if India had factories and a government as well as an army and navy of her own, she would be one of the civilized countries of the earth.”

Here is Mukerji’s portrayal of his encounter with the quintessential Indian radical nationalist, a person he said many would still remember in San Francisco, though here unnamed:

He wanted to cut the throat of every English official just as he wanted to cut the throat of every Indian traitor. He meditated such a gigantic slaughter that he seemed to me like an epic poet of death. He contemplated vast holocausts as magnificent offerings to the god of Patriotism. He devised ingenious plans to blow up garrisons of English soldiers as a disinfectant and a preventive of political hells, and once in a while he would grow lyrical about the joy of belonging to a free people. He imagined very suave massacres, and delicate assassinations.

Mukerji one day challenged this revolutionist, “Look here, why should we supersede British massacres by our own, except that our own may be a little more radical? Theirs are only practical and utilitarian.” The answer was that the English massacres were continuous; their own would be economical and a temporary necessity—a little hurt to create a giant benefit.

Mukerji declared himself weary of such “hygienic” and “mathematical” conceptions of violence, for which the nationalist accused him of slave mentality “tainted” by Western influence. He decried the British charge “that rebellion is unholy, and a destructive profanity,” when it was the colonists’ “soulless railroads piercing through the sacred places throughout India” that had called it forth. Mukerji agreed this far: “It is true that this industrialization of Asia is terrible. . . . It is sucking out the life blood.” But he made a crucial distinction between culturalist and economic paths of resistance, correcting his interlocutor: “Your quarrel is not with the British nation, but with Western capitalism.”

The nationalist disagreed: If it was their own people running the army and exploiting the natural resources, he insisted, at least the wealth and benefits would be going back into the country. Mukerji, though, vehemently rejected this sort of nationalism as being virtually indistinguishable from imperialism in its greed and crudity. Instead, he suggested, why not “think in terms of two classes, the possessing class and the dispossessed classes, throughout the world? These two marching against each other are to my mind the forces of the conflict. I cannot make out much difference between imperialism and nationalism.”

“To this his rejoinder was that I talked like a soulless Socialist.” Mukerji denied this category as well. “I am not a socialist,’ I said. ‘I hate Socialism. Socialists only want to create a new authority in the place of an old one. What I want is to create a sense of freedom in people’s souls. Then all will be well.” So he sounded like a social anarchist after all, even while ultimately moving away from active involvement toward a more spiritual-philosophical approach.

They parted on poor terms. In a conversation with another newly arrived student, Mukerji expressed the idea that India’s salvation lay in its spiritual resources and rich intellectual tradition, and that the way to create beneficial change in the world was to change one’s own heart and consciousness. The other replied,

I agree with you that we have a spiritual wealth which is more important than our material wealth. The material wealth that we have underground in India combined with the cheap labor that lies above the ground is the thing that attracts Western exploitation. Western capitalism finds in those two factors enough inducement to come to India and to tear up the whole system of personal relationship founded on domestic industry, substituting in its place this terrible Western “civilization.” Peasants are driven from their fields where they worked eight hours a day to other people’s factories where they work twelve hours a day. When a peasant breaks the ground he sings, when he works in a factory he spits and swears.

To which Mukerji reiterated that “if we free ourselves from ourselves first”—that is, transform our own West-imported “gregarious gluttony”—then Indians would “be able to save Asia from the West, I think, almost automatically.”

But this interlocutor was not sanguine about the ability of a subject people to influence the spirituality of the world from that position; who would give credit to a conquered race? “The West will never accept the spirituality of the east until by force we free ourselves from any Western domination. In order to give the spirituality of India to the modern barbarism of Europe we must beat them at their own game. We must go through the necessary step of nationalism and nationality. Until we have a victorious India free from all foreign control and domination no proud Western nation will ever care to listen to our spiritual talk.” In other words, philosophical and spiritual influence could only come from a place of material strength and sovereignty.

By this point, having critiqued nationalism, imperialism, capitalism, and socialism, Mukerji admitted, “My zest for anarchism was coming to an end. I began to see that there was nothing to do but to find a new philosophy, something that had little concern with the material future of mankind. It was during this period that I began to re-discover India,” where at that time “things, both political and otherwise, were fermenting.” As Mukerji witnessed the trickle of Indian students grow to a steady stream crossing the ocean in search of “knowledge and wisdom, the more I grew convinced that they were coming through a desert to slake their thirst with the waters of a mirage.”

Although Mukerji retreated from active politics to literary and spiritual pursuits, perhaps he became even more of an apolitical, philosophical anarchist in the way that Jerry would have strived for: seeking liberation not through social organization but instead at the level of the individual mind.

The Critical Leftists

The three people featured here, like the two in the last chapter, were creative, flexible, and eclectic freethinkers, rather than systematic followers of a watertight body of philosophy. But they were also pragmatic in their commitment to a concrete goal—the end of colonial rule in India—and consistent in the set of concerns they were trying to address—the existence of injustice, oppression, and exploitation, and the nature of a liberated society. As contemporaries in the 1920s, they were all inspired by revolutionary socialism. Yet each, for his own reasons, was uncontainable within the Communist Party orthodoxy then crystallizing rapidly. So it was perhaps inevitable that in forging an alternate path, each of them encountered aspects of the anarchist tradition. Through these encounters, Acharya, Ranchhoddas Lotvala, and Bhagat Singh sharpened their critiques of a formal left wing that they identified with in spirit, if not always in letter.

Acharya

Among radical nationalist revolutionaries, none made their identification with the international anarchist movement more explicit than Acharya. Born in 1887, this “somewhat remarkable youth” was labeled early on as a “seditious character.” By the time he was twenty, he was working on two newspapers in Madras: the Tamil *India* and the English *Bala Bharat*. Over several months he “copied out . . . most of the English version of V. D. Savarkar’s book on the Mutiny” of 1857 for serial publication. When the editor was arrested in July 1908, Acharya took the reins.¹

On the retrospectively ironic date of August 15 the *India* office and press were raided, articles seized, and the paper charged with sedition. To evade further searches Acharya finally moved operations to French Pondicherry, transferred formal ownership to a cousin (who thought him “very enthusiastic and very daring”), and boarded a steamer to Marseilles, where he hoped to apprentice with a process engraver. Finding no prospects in Marseilles, he then wrote to Varahaneri Venkatesa Subramaniam Aiyar in London. Aiyar had been a correspondent for *India*; among his writings were an article on Rousseau’s *Social Contract* and a Tamil history of Garibaldi. He was also a part of the radical core at Krishnavarma’s India House, where he now invited Acharya to come and live for free. British intelligence first spotted Acharya at a meeting in London in January 1909, after a stop in Paris along with a nameless Bengali (who was in town “to learn the art of making noiseless bombs” from a M. Etienne). Aside from Aiyar,

Acharya's closest associates included Chatto, a prominent figure among the revolutionists in Europe who was himself tagged with the anarchist label despite his later ties to the Russian Communist Party (whereas Indian Communists dismissed him for nationalist deviation).²

As part of the Abhinava Bharat inner circle, Acharya was involved with firearms training as well as the publication of the papers *Talwar* and *Bande Mataram*. Copies of these flowed back to Pondicherry for distribution inside British India, along with Krishnavarma's *Indian Sociologist* and the *Gaelic American* from the United States.³ When Dhingra shot Curzon-Wyllie, Acharya was by Savarkar's side in court to protest the resolution condemning Dhingra to death, and when a barrister called Palmer "boxed [Savarkar] in the eye," Acharya retaliated by hitting Palmer with a stick, and added insult to injury by penning "A Straight Indian Lathi" as a rejoinder to Palmer's letter "A Truly British Blow" in the London *Times*.⁴ It was reported around this time that "Savarkar and others were urging" Acharya to follow Dhingra into martyrdom, perhaps by returning to India to carry out another assassination.⁵

He went instead to Paris, but soon after attempted to reach Morocco along with another comrade, Sukh Sagar Dutt (younger brother of Ullaskar Dutt, the original Maniktola Garden bombing instructor). Their intent was to gain militant experience by joining forces with Abdul Karim's Rif rebellion against Spain. But at Gibraltar, customs seized some suspicious items from their luggage: a rifle, a revolver, and three hundred rounds of ammunition. Acharya nevertheless made it to Tangier, only to find that

the “good friend” serving as his guide there was actually an agent who was informing on him and handing over his letters. He dodged police spies back to Paris, then went with Aiyar to Amsterdam, then Rotterdam (where the *Talwar* was published) to learn engraving and printing, then onward to Munich and Berlin.⁶ He also met Egyptian nationalists in Brussels and Young Turks in Constantinople.

The steamer *Argentina* brought him to New York in July 1912, where Irish republican George Freeman, editor of the *Gaelic American* and longtime friend to Indian revolutionists, received him. Almost immediately, though, the U.S. and Canadian immigration departments began efforts to get this undesirable alien “of a most desperate and dangerous type being prominently connected with the London-Paris group of revolutionary East Indians” out of the country. Just as they would do two years later in the case of Har Dayal, they sent special agent Hopkinson—who had been dogging the steps of Indian radicals in North America for almost as long as Freeman had had their backs—to seek out “any documentary evidence . . . to show that [Acharya] belongs to the revolutionary class, and is closely allied with anarchists.”⁷

Acharya managed to reach Berkeley, where he attended Ghadar meetings and attempted to apply for a naturalization certificate. But he left the country of his own accord when the war started and returned to Berlin along with most of his political compatriots abroad. He served in several missions to Egypt and Mesopotamia, cosponsored by the Berlin India Committee and German Foreign Office in its initiatives to weaken the British Empire by promoting

mutiny among the South Asian soldiers who formed the bulk of its army in the Middle East.

As German patronage dried up in 1917, Acharya accompanied Chatto to Stockholm, where they set about mastering Swedish as well as equipping a reference library and propaganda center. In spring 1919, the Criminal Investigation Department intercepted a letter from Acharya to Aiyer. “I have been alright these years and working in both continents on either side of the Atlantic up to San Francisco and Baghdad,” Acharya wrote. “I trust you have also been well. For the last two years, I . . . have been in Sweden. . . . All our friends are well in France and Germany—and very hopeful and cheerful in spite of the differences I have seen here our friend [French socialist Jean] Longuet and everyone is interested in us. I hope everything will go on well in a few years if not months, and we will see each other as soon as things are in order here and there.”⁸

But Yusuf Ali, the British Foreign Office’s designated Indian mouthpiece for loyalist propaganda, dismissed their efforts as not representing the Indian national cause on the grounds that the so-called Indian Committee, he scoffed, really consisted of “just two anarchists.” Aside from the customary use of the term to isolate and discredit “secessionists” regardless of their actual political views, the further implication of Ali’s slight was that what British rule provided in India was the quintessence of modern governance, otherwise lacking; and thus that the only idiot who could possibly reject such a thing would have to be an anarchist.⁹

Chatto and Acharya published a rebuttal in a Swedish paper in which Chatto—like Chandra—insisted that on

the contrary, their Indian Committee was “a revolutionary body, similar to the Irish Sinn Fein, striving for the independence of India.”¹⁰ And yet Chatto had blurred in response to an earlier allegation in 1909,

If it is anarchism to be thoroughly ashamed of being ruled by a handful of vile alien vandals, if it is anarchism to wish to exterminate them with the noble desire of establishing our national freedom upon the basis of popular sovereignty, of justice, of mercy, of righteousness, and of humanity, if it is anarchism to rise for the sanctity of our homes, the integrity of our life, and the honour of our God and our country, and to slay every individual tyrant, whether foreign or native, that continues the enslavement of the great and noble people, if it is anarchism to conspire ceaselessly to take human life with the only object of emancipating our beloved Motherland, then we say, Cursed is the man that is not an anarchist!¹¹

Of course, god and country are not generally within the vocabulary of Western anarchism, but it’s worth noting where the salient sites of oppression and resistance appear in this context.

In 1919, the pair made their way to Moscow. From there Lenin sent Acharya to Kabul as part of a mission to establish contact with the “Provisional Government of India,” which had been set up there by a wartime German-, Turkish-, and Ghadar-backed expedition. Following a

difference of opinion with the government officers regarding anti-British strategy, Acharya—who favored a more overt alliance with the Bolsheviks—relocated to Tashkent in July of 1920 with his colleague Abdur Rab to cofound a separate party called Inqilab-e-Hind (Indian Revolutionary Association), the precursor to the CPI associated with M. N. Roy.¹²

He attended the second and third congresses of the Third International in Moscow with consultative status. During his two years in Russia, he married an artist called Magda Natchmann. (Long forgotten, apparently, was the woman to whom his parents had married him before he ducked out of the country over a decade prior.) He contributed articles to Russian journals, including a monthly report for the *Foreign Office Review* and *Herald NKID* on revolutionary developments and movements in India. Meanwhile, he maintained contact with tribes along the Indo-Afghan frontier (what is now Pakistan's Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa region) in the continued attempt to move arms across the border. This had always been an important part of the Provisional Government's agenda, as a prerequisite for the cherished dream of sparking an uprising.

By 1921, Acharya was referring to himself as a “confirmed communist.” But a factional split pitted Acharya and Chatto against Roy, who wanted sole leadership of the fledgling Indian Left to be organized in a party whose doctrine and direction he alone was to determine. Acharya had always been part of the less orthodox faction, and his true ideals, at least in his colleagues' view, leaned in an antiauthoritarian direction. By the time he left Moscow,

Acharya's differences with Roy had developed into "differences with the Communist International and with the Communist regime in Russia itself. We are not against Communism," he had stated (presumably on behalf of the Indian Revolutionary Association) on December 5, 1920, "and we do not make a distinction between a Communist revolutionary or just a revolutionary. All we object to is forcible conversion to Communism," at least in the form dictated by Roy and the Comintern.¹³

CPI founding member Muzaffar Ahmad mentioned in his memoir that both Acharya and Chatto were "in contact with the Anarcho-communist Party" in France, and that Acharya had insisted on the inclusion of anarcho-syndicalists at the early congresses in Moscow. On growing disenchanted with the way things were developing in the USSR, said Ahmad, Acharya reverted to "his former anarchism, and described himself thereafter as an 'Anarcho-Syndicalist'—though also reportedly 'a member of the Trotskyist Fourth International.'"¹⁴

The pair returned to Berlin in late 1922 or early 1923, and worked together in the office of the League of Oppressed Nationalities, forerunner to the League against Imperialism (backed by the Communist International). Struggling as usual to remain solvent, Acharya did secretarial, steno, and typing work for the league and the Indian Independence Committee; intelligence reports commented that he was quite good at it. He also undertook the task of sending assorted political texts to the Comintern's mailing list inside India, including anarcho-syndicalist literature on his own initiative.¹⁵

When Indulal Yajnik met Acharya in Amsterdam in 1930–31, he was attached to the “School of Anarchist-Syndicalism” there.¹⁶ He kept tabs on emerging trade union activity in Madras, and wrote to one of the key figures in the Labour-Kisan Party there in July 1923 concerning the New International Workmen’s Association, which unlike the Comintern he described as “anti-political and federal. It is an improvement far ahead of the Third International with which I am at loggerheads after cooperating with hope for a whole year. I know all the personalities there well including Lenin, whom I had met twice. I am fighting them all in every writing and talk and everywhere.”¹⁷ He also mentioned a Russian anarcho-syndicalist paper called *Way of the Worker*, which he supplied with items on the Indian labor movement.¹⁸

Chatto, meanwhile, returned to the USSR in 1931, dedicating himself to a life as a scholar and Soviet citizen until he was shot in a Stalinist purge in 1937. He had found a brief happiness (after a tumultuous, and mutually damaging relationship with Smedley in the early 1920s) with a Russian woman named Lidia Karunovskaya, who headed the Indonesian section of the Institute of Anthropology and Ethnography in Leningrad, where he worked as a linguist.¹⁹

Meanwhile in 1935, Acharya finally overcame a long-standing ban on his entry into India. He had been trying since 1926, only to be repeatedly denied a passport or threatened with arrest on arrival. Now he scratched out a living as a journalist in Bombay, contributing a series of eight articles for the *Mahratta* called “Reminiscences

of a Revolutionary,” a series of autobiographical pieces for Lotvala’s *Praja Mitra Kesari*, an English weekly in Poona, and yet another series on the activities of Chatto, Cama, and other revolutionaries abroad. He also wrote for the *Bombay Chronicle*, *Free Press Journal*, and *Harijan*. Magda kept painting and even gained some recognition in her new hometown, but must have passed before her husband, for when Acharya died in 1954 he was alone and destitute.²⁰

His *Harijan* editor Mashruwalla memorialized him in that paper, writing that

Acharya was a total believer in the doctrine of philosophical anarchism. He believed in the message of Gandhiji’s non-violence and Sarvodaya. This belief he had come to hold as a result of his long and arduous campaigning in foreign lands for the cause of India’s freedom. He stood for a free and decentralised social order based on complete liberty, equality and dignity of true human personality.²¹

Long before his death, he had emptied himself of any “sympathy or tolerance” for “the politics of any kind of Party or Government,” and was “a convinced anti-Bolshevik.”²² Yet he remained engaged in the perusal of anarchist writings, declaring himself “after all this study,” according to Ahmad, to be “a Libertarian Socialist; I do not know what the thing is.”²³ Daniel Guérin or Noam Chomsky might have explained to the Marxist-Leninist Ahmad that “the thing” was their very definition of an anarchist.

Lotvala

Even if Acharya introduced the term libertarian socialism to India, as an institution it must be associated with one idiosyncratic (and problematic) figure who was its dedicated patron: Acharya's mentee and correspondent, Lotvala. Yajnik, Lotvala's biographer as well as Krishnavarma's, situates his early years against the backdrop of a vigorously simmering period in the social and political life of the Bombay Presidency, punctuated by outbreaks of plague and famine that catalyzed "agrarian and popular discontent," and swirling with new energies of nationalist activity both through the secular Indian National Congress (INC) and the religious, social reform-oriented Arya Samaj.

Born in 1875, Lotvala was one of twelve children of a successful Bombay flour trader. He took over the family business when his father died in 1894; his mother had died when he was quite young. Soon revealing a keen entrepreneurial talent, he managed to expand the business during the famine of 1899–1900, and made a tidy profit thanks to his stocks of wheat and flour while all the while earning a reputation for integrity. At twenty-five, the budding tycoon then bought up a mill with its adjacent land and buildings. But Yajnik claimed that what redeemed young Lotvala from either decadence or cutthroat profiteering was his education—a fruitful synthesis of spirituality and rationality. He had devoured the writings not only of John Stuart Mill and Spencer but also the teachings of Arya Samaj founder Dayananda Saraswati. Yajnik thought this enabled Lotvala to "integrate the new doctrines of political liberty

and social equality with passionate love for the religion and land of [India],” thereby saving him from the dreadful fate of alienated Westernization as “a cynical atheist or social rebel . . . uprooted from the land of his birth and cut away from the mass of the people.” Instead, he was able to connect “the modern rational cult of human equality and social reform” with an indigenous intellectual tradition.²⁴

But this enthusiastic fellow was not content with theory, said Yajnik; he must have praxis. He blossomed first as a propagandist and lecturer for the Bombay Arya Samaj as well as a generous funder thanks to his business success. Impelled to reach out to the masses, his next step was to branch into journalism, publishing a Gujarati-language weekly to which he also contributed “a series of articles on the vexed social questions of the day.” As he moved further away from the spiritual toward the material aspects of “the grim realities of human suffering and social injustice,” he joined the struggle against untouchability, capping his efforts at the abolition of the caste system with a series of “cosmopolitan dinner[s] . . . intended to deal a practical death-blow to the institution” by uniting members of the intelligentsia, social luminaries, reformers of varied ages and genders, and “notables of the depressed (untouchable) classes” all at one table. The enterprise generated massive public hostility, however, and in the end broke down over irreconcilable differences on the issue of menus: veg versus nonveg.²⁵

Soon afterward, seeing the need for “a daily paper which could serve as an effective vehicle of modern social and liberal ideas,” Lotvala rescued a struggling Gujarati daily, *Akhbar i Soudagar* (Business News), which he renamed

Hindustan. He began to recruit writers, including a young Fabian socialist lawyer named Narshinhadas Vibhakar. Taking Vibhakar's advice, Lotvala visited London in 1913, where "he began to devour [the Fabian Society's literature] with a new born zeal" and "cultivate personal relations" with leading Fabians. He returned home fortified with a fresh interpretation of his old concerns: now he had the language to articulate that "the grinding poverty of the vast masses, the root cause of their hunger, malnutrition, bad housing and high death-rate . . . were . . . the direct result of this exploitation of labour by those who had monopolised land, factories and banks—all the instruments of production, distribution and exchange." This could not be solved through any "crumbs of charity, private or Governmental." The only solution was expropriating the means of production, and "vesting these in Government or local authorities." He now began to interpret caste through the lens of class, not to mention the social position of women, on whose freedom the "innumerable restrictions" could be "easily traced to the latter day growth of the joint family system which enshrined the economic and physical mastery of man."²⁶

Hindustan's circulation continued to expand throughout the war years. Although the paper initially endorsed Gandhi on his return from South Africa, it soon turned to condemn his "reactionary social ideas," particularly his "stale views in favour of idolatry and caste." Instead, Lotvala anointed Vithalbhai Patel for his demonstrated commitment to fighting untouchability, audacity in spurning all manner of orthodoxies, and "irreverence toward all

authority.” The two became close friends and allies. At Patel’s request, Lotvala traveled again to London on a mission to build popular support for the INC in England, attempting to counteract ignorance and prejudice by appealing directly to the people rather than to the government.²⁷

When he returned in late 1919, he and Patel were disgusted by new turns in the national movement. They disagreed with the call to boycott all law courts and legislative bodies, suggesting that these very courts could be used “to harass the Government and defend the rights of the people,” though they had no objection to the boycott of taxes. And they deplored Gandhi’s “fatuous” obsession with the spinning wheel, which they feared would “distract the people from their rightful path of political agitation,” and that for Lotvala, symbolized the worst of Gandhi’s “irrational, superstitious and suicidal traits.”²⁸ The pair particularly opposed his support for the Khilafat movement, which they viewed as theocratic folly.

But was this the antireligious sentiment of a rationalist or the anti-Muslim sentiment of a Hindu? Although Yajnik’s account is a bit inconsistent on this point, the distinction is a significant one, with troubling implications. Lotvala had earlier identified progress, reform, and rationalism with the Arya Samaj program—that is, as the purified heart of true Hindu thought—only to clothe them in a socialist reading later. Given the idiosyncrasies and inconsistencies of his own mode of thought—which Yajnik sometimes chalks up to Lotvala’s anarchistic freethinking, sans content—no conclusions can be drawn from this that anarchism had any inherent link to later Hindu Right politics.

However, the pattern has yet again to be acknowledged and confronted wherever a duality of possible paths occurs.

In February 1922, after the collapse of the Noncooperation/Khilafat movement wave, Lotvala penned an indictment of the Gandhian program. His paper lost circulation thereafter through its championing of unpopular ideas, but in the end Lotvala preferred loss of income to ideological compromise. Meanwhile, he had acquired a new enthusiasm: the Russian Revolution. He now pored over the full works of Marx, Lenin, Reed, and Roy, and built up a formidable collection of leftist literature in the Nityanand Library, including books on socialism and socialist newspapers from abroad. Here he welcomed all workers, students, and other “young enthusiasts who flocked every day” for serious study of “discourses on all shades of Marxism.”²⁹ Forming the Lotvala Trust for advancing socialism in India, he also turned his attention to the plight of the proletariat.

Yajnik recalled the stimulating atmosphere of the *Hindustan's* editorial offices in the 1920s and 1930s: the egalitarian Lotvala joined journalists, college students, politicians, and workers with the Labour and Kisan parties for lively arguments over chai on matters of “various shades of reform and communism, Stalinism and Trotskyism, Gandhism and anti-Imperialism and all other vexed questions of the day.” The *Hindustan's* other major concern was advocating for workers’ rights in the Bombay textile mills, publicizing a series of massive strikes in the 1920s. The paper covered meetings, demonstrations, and world affairs, putting forth a consistently rationalist, progressive line on social issues, trumpeting the scientific and bemoaning the

superstitious or traditional approach to political mobilization. The paper approved the CPI role in the independence struggle, championing its constituency of workers, peasants, and “the underdog” even while often criticizing the party and its actions.³⁰

In 1922, Lotvala was responsible for the first-ever publication of the *Communist Manifesto* in India.³¹ In that same year, a section of the English and Marathi printing apparatus was set aside as the Labour Press, on which Shripat Amrit Dange put out one of the first Marxist weeklies in India, the *Socialist*.³²

The Labour Press also published a rather eclectic Socialist Series ranging from Kropotkin’s “An Appeal to the Young” to Karl Kautsky’s “Working Class,” to Paul Lafargue’s “Religion of Politics” and Delisle Burns’s “Politics of Oil.” Through his Liberty Publications, Lotvala issued pamphlets on scientific socialism to augment “the meagre sources of knowledge and scientific socialism available to the English-educated intellectuals of those days.”³³ Lotvala supported Dange’s study and writing until 1929, when Dange was tried and jailed in the Meerut conspiracy case, which by rounding up India’s most prominent leftist activists put the whole movement back for several years.

By the early 1930s, Lotvala had evolved into a Trotskyist. During his annual sojourns to London, he lent his aid to this faction while shunning previous associates; Stalinism, he had decided, was a betrayal of Marxism and socialism, and a danger to world revolution. He staunchly opposed the policies of Stalin’s regime, denouncing as “worthless propaganda” all the “literature emanating from

Russia and orthodox communist parties.”³⁴ His disenchantment with the Soviet dream—along with his perennial anti-Gandhism—facilitated a new friendship with and sponsorship of Subhash Chandra Bose, who he met in Europe in 1932 around the time of Patel’s death.³⁵

It also led to his formation of the Indian Institute of Sociology. Increasingly distancing himself from “militant, economic and political movements of the day,” he shifted focus once again to the consolidation of a “comprehensive body” for facilitating discussion and doing research on “all progressive, economic, social and sociological studies and activities” that might light the way toward “a new order of society in which economic equality would be harmonised with individual freedom” of thought and action. He was against “all totalitarian systems, whether fascist or communist,” in which equality could be secured only by sacrificing freedom.³⁶ Lotvala intended the institute to join together all the scattered discourses he felt were better addressed in conjunction with each other, such as “eugenics, poverty and individual freedom.”³⁷

It was around this time that he met Acharya, in Germany, circa 1932–33. Lotvala was “profoundly impressed” by what the veteran revolutionary had to report about his Soviet experience, confirming his own anti-Stalinist inclinations. After Acharya returned to India in 1935, the two spoke together regularly about “the anarchist and syndicalist theories in which he was deeply interested.” Under Acharya’s influence, “the economic theories of philosophical anarchism wormed their way gradually into [Lotvala’s] mind. Individual liberty,

economic and political, was now rooted in his mind as the alfa [*sic*] and omega of all human efforts.” His new mentor also seems to have convinced him “that centralised economic and political power would inevitably tend to totalitarian autocracy and oppression whether fascist or communist.” Instead of the “centralised power . . . generally visualised as the high objective, by Socialists and Communists,” he now began to favor the promotion of small industries and workers’ cooperative societies as “the most democratic bodies of the age and dreamt of the cooperative commonwealth as the best economic organisation [to] give plenty to the toilers while according the fullest individual liberty to them.”³⁸ But he never ceased “ridiculing” the Gandhian hand-loom production model. Furthermore, Yajnik tells us, in what sounds like a contradiction of what he has just endorsed, “Lotvala could not however stomach the doctrine of communist social order implicit in the anarchist theory. The cooperative commonwealth and the workers’ syndicates were alright as economic bodies. But how could they take the place of the modern State?”³⁹ After all, without a state, how could they fight off British rule in a war-torn world?

By the 1940s, Lotvala had experienced another dramatic conversion; Yajnik was “dumb-founded” to find his old friend had “not only [given] his support to Gandhi’s political fight but moreover waxed eloquent over his preference for the rural over the urban life, for the small over the big industries, and for all-round decentralisation . . . over the present system of centralisation in all walks of life.”⁴⁰ What had happened?

After the upheavals of the Quit India movement and Bose's tragic defeat, Lotvala developed "even closer relations with Acharya," from whom Lotvala "imbibed [even] more of the anarchist gospel" through the recommended reading of Bakunin, Kropotkin, Rocker, and Proudhon (his particular favorite). His "conversion to the creed of philosophical anarchism" as he understood it, after a magpie path, was nearly complete.⁴¹

In 1945, the appointed secretaries of the Institute of Indian Sociology, K. N. Phadke and Shanta Bhalerao, resigned from their long-standing arrangement with the Lotvala Trust. Though they had been producing articles on labor and women's rights to supplement the *Hindustan*, and holding discussion meetings on current topics, they could not support the new anarchist trend. Lotvala appointed Acharya and two others as the institute's new Managing Committee, tasked with redrafting its constitution under the new name of the Libertarian Socialist Institute to reflect the "socialist opinions" of its members. On August 7, 1947, a week before India proclaimed its own independence, they announced the institute's mission statement: to promote interest, gather and disseminate information about its way of thinking, run a library and eponymous journal, generally develop the discourse around libertarian socialism, and "facilitate the study of natural and social sciences," which it linked to human happiness.⁴²

Historically, governments are found to rest on force, maintain injustice, curtail freedom, cause

poverty and breed wars. Moral character of man is the product of his environment. . . . The most considerable environmental influence is “government” in the sense of all the social and political forces to which the individual is subjected. These forces are nearly all evil, the worst being the vast inequality of property, giving rise to the insolence and usurpation of the rich, and the toil, penury and servility of the poor. The causal connection between political power and economic privilege, [which also constrained] freedom of the mind is a major evil.⁴³

The writer elaborates on the minimization of government—even if pragmatically speaking, its total elimination were not possible—but anticipates the ideal of a stateless, classless society to be “worked for here and now,” by guiding an association “for the sake of mutual assistance and not so much . . . for the struggle of existence.”⁴⁴

The way to “regain paradise” would be through the use of reason, improvement of education systems, and interpretation of natural law. Furthermore, “such rationality leads one inevitably away from the narrowness of patriotism to cosmopolitanism. . . . A wise man will be ready to exert himself in the defence of liberty wherever it exists . . . but his attachment will be to the cause and not to his country as such. . . . Always he returns to freedom.”⁴⁵

Is it Acharya’s hand we detect in the attached statement? This certainly sounds—though here unattributed—like the stance of a seasoned veteran of the revolutionary movement abroad, plausibly reflective of Acharya’s

experiences and leanings. Lotvala's personal interpretation sounds slightly different, however.

In his own version of what the institute was selling, the “watchwords” were to be “Free Land, Free Money, Free Industry and Free Trade,” meaning the abolition of individual land ownership and the removal of cash flow from the control of banks. Lotvala retained some use for the state, which he felt should “limit its activities to defence of the people from foreign enemies and from anti-social forces within the country,” while in all other ways—but particularly the economic—leaving the “government of society to be managed by the people themselves without any let or hindrance.”⁴⁶ This will ring largely familiar to the U.S. ear; in fact, it sounds a bit as though libertarianism outweighed socialism in the foundation of Lotvala's Libertarian Socialist Institute. Lotvala had his origins in the system of free enterprise, with his mill “[laying] the solid foundations of his worldly fortunes which ensured his social and economic freedom and which secured him the leisure and the latitude to think and act untrammelled in all walks of life,” and making possible his journalistic endeavors and financial contributions. Indeed, Yajnik's description of his subject's mental composition makes him sound quite the paragon of a Weberian Protestant ethic—wedding his “innate asceticism” and thrift to an aversion to “inherited superstitio[n] . . . stimulat[ing] his active mind to think more freely and fully on the vexed problems of religion, morality and social life.”⁴⁷

Does this imply that unrestricted individual autonomy of thought and action, and a reputation for pragmatism, freethinking, and an aversion to dogma such as Lotvala's,

is a luxury reserved for the industrious and prosperous? If so, perhaps it is not surprising that in later years, the notion of libertarian thought in India seems to have become restricted to individualist consumer aspiration and free market capitalism, posited as the natural and only antithesis to a crushingly restrictive state apparatus. Lotvala's intellectual trajectory seems superficial, fickle, and self-serving, as if he seizes on the notion of "free thought" as an excuse for inconsistency. If he had worked fully through the logic of libertarian socialism, perhaps he might have seen fit to scrap both the state and free market in favor of a decentralized federation of small-scale free enterprise and collectives of producers, consumers, and service providers.

Bhagat Singh

One revolutionary who might have been capable of persuasively elaborating such a synthesis died too soon to do so. Bhagat Singh was perhaps the greatest of the anarchistic thinkers of the independence struggle era. Atheist, socialist, republican, and militant, he read voraciously from Kropotkin to Lenin, hung a portrait of Bakunin on the wall of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha headquarters in Lahore, and wrote a series of articles on anarchism for the *Kirti*, a Punjabi monthly founded by returned Ghadar revolutionaries in the mid-1920s.

Marxist-Leninists proudly claim that he saw the light shortly before his execution at the age of twenty-three, giving a clear indication that had he lived, he would have embraced

the proper orthodoxy; it is therefore safe to celebrate him as one of the fold, rehabilitated and approved. Although the British imperialists had labeled Singh and his comrades as “anarchists” or “terrorists” in order to “defame them in the eyes of the Indian people,” Communist contemporary Sohan Singh Josh insisted that they were “not terrorists or anarchists as those terms were known in Europe,” although they “accepted some of the political views” associated with that denomination.⁴⁸ On the contrary, he explained in their defense, they were nationalist revolutionaries, “the most self-sacrificing, most honest and selflessly dedicated to the cause of liberating India. They hated exploitation of the working class and the Indian people by the bloodsucking British imperialists and their allies, and were willing to make any sacrifice for the upliftment of the working class.”⁴⁹

This characterization was true, whatever name it was given. It is also true that Singh spent his time on death row engaged in a serious study of Marxist texts. Had he lived, he likely would have incorporated the new insights of his reading of Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Lenin into his own ever-evolving, flexible, innovative synthesis, as he had been doing for years with everything else he read; but based on his available writings, it is hard to imagine him limiting or reducing his thinking to them, let alone to the mandates of some party claiming to speak in their name.

Every detail of Singh’s short life and meteoric political career is familiar through several popular films and numerous biographical accounts ranging from painstaking scholarship to hagiographic excess.⁵⁰ His writings have been collected and commented on in multiple editions.⁵¹

Singh was born in 1907, to a political family—both his father and uncle were committed radicals, with tight Ghadar movement links. He idolized the revolutionaries who frequented their home, and resolved early on to emulate them. Eagerly he joined in the first great wave of mobilizations of the mature freedom movement, the Noncooperation movement kicked off by Gandhi in 1920 in coalition with the Khilafat movement.

But Gandhi called a halt on the growing resistance when protesters burned a police station in a small town in northern India, resulting in the death of twenty-three officers. For Gandhi, a movement marred by violence was not worth continuing, even though as rank-and-file activists well know, then and now, it is the police who most often make the first move when a protest “turns violent.” In this case, a few people had acted in retaliation for police firing on a demonstration, killing three and wounding others. Gandhi’s willful postponement (as Singh and many young noncooperators saw it) of independence in 1922 prodded protesters in more militant directions. Those dissatisfied with the meekness of Congress, yet bound by political principle to reject religiously framed mobilization, began forming “small, compact groups” for “revolutionary action.” Singh was a member of one such group, along with some friends he met while studying history and politics at the National College in Lahore. (Bhai Parmanand was one of his mentors there, as he had earlier been Har Dayal’s.)

Fleeing school in 1924 to escape the confinement of an unwanted arranged marriage, he joined a radical circle in Kanpur around journalist and activist Ganesh Shanker

Vidyarthi, and through this milieu, began his connection to the Hindustan Republican Association. He traveled around northern India forging links among radical groups, leafletting at *melas* and fairs, and presenting educational magic lantern shows.

Singh returned to Lahore in 1926, just as some of the returned veterans of the Ghadar movement were building a new formation known as the Kirti group, a worker-peasant organization that was in effect a rogue Communist Party. The party's founders came from the same faction as Acharya and Chatto, and maintained their autonomy from CPI directives. Beyond the factional rivalry with Roy that dated from the international meetings in Moscow in the early 1920s, they differed also in temperament and approach: "Kirti communism" tended to be more agrarian and rooted in actual militant experience, as opposed to the more urban intellectual profile of the CPI. The Kirti group also harbored a tendency in the eyes of the latter toward romanticism and individual adventurism (in a word, "infantile").

Kirti began publication in 1926, edited by Sohan Singh Josh. Bhagat Singh wrote for the journal under the nom de plume of Vidrohi ("rebel") in 1927–28 on a variety of topics related to the history of the revolutionary movement in India, the importance of revolutionary methods, and why youth should prefer the movement to Congress and mainstream leadership.⁵²

Between May and September 1928, he also produced a serialized essay for *Kirti* on the history of anarchism, commenting, "The people are scared of the word anarchism . . . [which] has been abused so much that even in India

revolutionaries have been called anarchist to make them unpopular.” He pointed out that if anarchism was defined as the absence of any form of government, there were also Indian philosophical equivalents to the concept: “I think in India the idea of universal brotherhood, the Sanskrit sentence *vasudev kutumbakam* etc., have the same meaning.” Singh offered a brief introduction to the Western tradition: “The first man to explicitly propagate the theory of Anarchism was Proudhon and that is why he is called the founder of Anarchism. After him a Russian, Bakunin worked hard to spread the doctrine. He was followed by Prince Kropotkin etc.” He then explained his attraction to the philosophy: “The ultimate goal of Anarchism is complete independence, according to which no one will be obsessed with God or religion, nor will anybody be crazy for money or otherworldly desires. There will be no chains on his body or control by the state. This means that they want to eliminate: the Church, God and Religion; the state; private property.”⁵³ His essay culminated in a reference to Auguste Vaillant’s bomb attack on the French Chamber of Deputies on December 9, 1893; just before Vaillant was executed for this act, he proclaimed, “Death to the bourgeoisie! Long live anarchy!”—the same words that Singh would use a few years later after his own act in the Legislative Assembly.

Singh also served briefly as the editor of *Kirti*’s Urdu edition, but went underground after three months.⁵⁴ The two editorial styles and distinct political leanings of Singh and Josh reveal two strands coexisting within the movement. Singh’s faction met at a house in Lahore, which Josh

described as “well decorated and neatly kept with pictures of Kropotkin and Bakunin hanging on the walls.” In Josh’s opinion, this group, with its insistence on immediate action instigated by small groups or individuals, lacked the patience needed for the long maturation of revolutionary conditions through mass organizing. “Bhagat Singh wanted to do something very quick, through the use of bombs and pistols, in order to awaken the slumbering youth and students who had forgotten their duty toward their motherland, something spectacular that would make them sit up and do some thinking about the soul-crushing enslavement of India and come forward to make sacrifices for the cause of freedom.”⁵⁵

Ajoy Ghosh (Bhagat Singh’s comrade and coaccused, later prominent in the CPI) said that for them at the time,

As for the most important question, however— . . . [of how] the fight for freedom and socialism was to be waged—armed action by individuals and groups was to remain our immediate task. Nothing else, we held, could smash constitutionalist illusions, nothing else could free the country from the grip in which fear held it. When the stagnant calm was broken by a series of hammerblows delivered by us, at selected points and on suitable occasions, against the most hated officials of the government and a mass movement unleashed, we would link ourselves with that movement, act as its armed detachment and give it a socialist direction.⁵⁶

This insurrectionary tactical logic was that “one deed brings forth another, opponents join the mutiny, the government splits into factions, oppression intensifies the conflict, [and] revolution breaks out.”⁵⁷

Of his own thinking at this time, with the hindsight of his later Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy, Josh admitted that back then even he “did not know much of Marxist theory. I knew only what I had read and learnt from [Charles T. Sprading’s book] *Liberty and the Great Libertarians*, which also contained some excerpts from the writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin. Hence, whatever I knew was eclectic, anarchistic and communistic all mixed together and un-systematic.” (Sprading’s anthology also contained writings from Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson, William Godwin, Mill, Emerson, Thoreau, Tolstoy, Kropotkin, Max Stirner, Josiah Warren, Benjamin Tucker, Lysander Spooner, George Bernard Shaw, Oscar Wilde, and Ferrer.) Since the only person he felt could have guided him—Santokh Singh, the California-returned Ghadar leader who had shepherded the organization to its postwar Marxist reincarnation—was extremely ill and not to be disturbed on strict doctor’s orders, Josh said he had to fend for his own ideological education. Given the official prohibition on importing Marxist literature into India, he assessed his own youthful writings as “progressive and leftist no doubt, but, strictly speaking, not Marxist.”⁵⁸

Josh ruefully criticized his own early articles in retrospect as “betray[ing] individualism,” revealing that he had still been “very far from . . . knowledgeable in the theory and practice of Marxism, of the Marxist principles of

organisation.”⁵⁹ Yet these were the same writings for which Santokh Singh had expressed approval before his death, suggesting that although Josh made no small contribution to Ghadar-Kirti’s Marxist-Leninist reorientation, perhaps it was Bhagat Singh’s less orthodox philosophical synthesis that had more continuity with Ghadar’s earlier manifestation. In any case, what he described sounds very much like the *mélange* of ideological ingredients that had informed Ghadarite writings prior to the war, as he himself would not have denied; like Bhagat Singh, he was then “under the spell of the Ghadar Party ideology and [Ghadar martyr] Kartar Singh Sarabha was the common hero to both of us.” While Josh might have considered this a sign of political immaturity, it could also be interpreted as an illustration of a consistent alternative sustained over a long period. To Josh’s dismay, even after he himself had abandoned it, “some Kirti poets . . . remain[ed] anarchist.”⁶⁰

Singh had played a founding role in a Lahore-based youth group, the Naujawan Bharat Sabha, whose main goal was the establishment of an independent peasants’ and workers’ republic in India. In 1928, at historic meetings in Amritsar and Delhi, the Sabha joined forces with the Kirti group as well as the United Provinces–based Hindustan Republican Association (established in 1924), which simultaneously renamed itself the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA). The boundaries between the three now more or less dissolved. Sixty people attended the first meeting, including “rural and urban middle-class youth” along with “Singh’s group of individual activists,” from which they adapted the Sabha’s name.⁶¹ At the same

time, they made a move toward internal democratization by introducing elections and collective leadership, and seeking consensus for decisions.⁶² These modifications in form and outlook reflected the conclusion—for which Singh was probably the most articulate spokesperson—“that it is not enough to simply ‘free mother India from the chains of foreign slavery,’ it was important to understand, and fight, the larger system that produces slavery in the first place.”⁶³

Singh took charge of ideological work while Chandrashekhar Azad was elected commander in chief of militant activities. Designed for political education and activist recruitment, the revamped group would also provide a gateway through which promising members might join the more clandestine inner circle. While not calling immediately for armed resistance, Josh said, “We . . . despised everything that created hurdles in the way of achieving freedom,” including “communalism, liberalism, Gandhian non-violence, etc. Our first priority was freedom of the country, everything else was subordinate. ‘Freedom by all possible means’ was our motto.”⁶⁴ The HSRA located its central office in Delhi, but set up an explosives workshop in Agra, for training in the manufacture and proper use of bombs and firearms, after which the association would disperse to reproduce operations elsewhere.⁶⁵ (Kanungo’s famous manual lived on.)

The Sabha launched a tract society to put out political pamphlets. One of its first pieces “urged the youth of the country to follow the example set by the young men of Ireland, Turkey, Japan and China in their struggle for independence,” and encouraged them to study Communist

movements as well as “doctrines of freedom and equality, democracy and self-determination, which alone could bring self-government and economic freedom.”⁶⁶ The series also included a pamphlet by Har Dayal emphasizing the importance of the peasants.

Propaganda secretary Bhagwati Charan Vohra stated in the Sabha’s new manifesto that “without going into details we can safely assert that to achieve our object thousands of our most brilliant young men, like the Russian youth, will have to pass their precious lives in villages and make the people understand what the Indian revolution would really mean. . . . A revolutionary does not necessarily mean a man of bombs and revolvers.” Vohra’s manifesto also urged its readers to look for worthy models, demanding, “Do you not know the wonders worked by the Turks? Do you not daily read what the young Chinese are doing? Was it not the young Russians who sacrificed their lives for Russia’s emancipation?” rather than eschewing such risks for elite privilege. He finished, “The future programme of preparing the country will begin with the motto ‘Revolution by the masses and for the masses.’ In other words Swaraj for the 98%.”⁶⁷

In December 1928, the HSRA carried out one such dramatic action. The plan was to assassinate police superintendent J. A. Scott to avenge the death of venerated nationalist leader Lajpat Rai, who had died as the result of a beating from police lathis at a demonstration against the Simon Commission. But they killed the wrong man, when assistant superintendent J. P. Saunders walked into the trap set for his superior officer. At least it was a step, commented

Singh to Josh, at whose house he had sought refuge when escaping the crime scene—maybe not the right officer, but a British officer nonetheless. While this sounds callous, his point was that the true target was not the man but the system. Accordingly, the next day a red leaflet was posted, announcing that the HSRA had avenged Rai's murder:

Today the world has seen that the Indian people are ever watchful of the interests of their country and no cost is too great for them to defend its honour. . . . We regret to have had to kill a person but he was part and parcel of that inhuman and unjust order which has to be destroyed. In him, an agent of British rule has been done away with. Shedding of human blood grieves us but blood shed at the altar of revolution is unavoidable.⁶⁸

The next major action was planned for April 8, 1929, to take place in the central Legislative Assembly in Delhi, where discussion was scheduled on the Public Safety and Trades Disputes Bills. These were seen as direct attacks on anticolonial dissent and labor organizing, respectively. A majority in the House rejected the two bills, but the viceroy had determined to go over its head and announce the enactment of the bills in this assembly session.

When the president of the assembly rose to announce the ruling, Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt threw two bombs down from their vantage point in the public gallery. Amid the smoke and fumes filling the hall, the two bombers then scattered a flurry of leaflets and shouts of "Inqilab

Zindabad!” (Hindi/Urdu for “viva la revolución”), “Down with British Imperialism!” and “Workers of the World, Unite!” Rather than trying to escape, they submitted willingly to arrest; the plan all along had been to use the subsequent trial “as a forum from which to proclaim their programme to the nation and rouse it to action.”⁶⁹

During the trial, the defendants freely acknowledged throwing the bombs, but insisted that their intentions could be amply shown by the results: no one was injured beyond “slight abrasions in less than half a dozen cases. . . . Loaded with an effective charge of potassium chlorate and sensitive picrate, the bombs would have smashed the barriers and laid many low within some yards of the explosion. Again, had they been loaded with some other high explosive with a charge of destructive pellets or darts, they would have sufficed to wipe out a majority of the members of the Legislative Assembly.”⁷⁰ The level of detail in the statement seems calculated to demonstrate that they could have constructed a maximally lethal bomb had they so chosen, but did not, just as they had aimed their throws carefully behind the president’s bench to avoid human targets. So while echoing the philosophy of propaganda of the deed, they had gone well beyond the fetishization of the blast evident in Har Dayal’s 1912 pamphlet. The often-quoted leaflet distributed in the assembly along with the bombs proclaimed, “It takes a loud voice to make the deaf hear. With these immortal words uttered on a similar occasion by Vaillant, a French anarchist martyr, do we strongly justify this action of ours.”⁷¹

Indeed movement participant Shiv Varma claimed that of the HSRA group at Lahore, “Bhagat Singh and

Sukhdev in particular” were still more under the influence of Bakunin than of Marx. In addition to Bakunin’s tactical thinking, Singh had also been influenced by his ideas on religion in *God and the State*, which were among the ingredients of Singh’s famous essay “Why I Am an Atheist.”

Somewhat predictably, much of the HSRA personnel was rounded up and incriminating materials seized in the ensuing crackdown, including bomb cases, chemicals, explosives formulas, small arms manuals, a live bomb, a pistol, and most combustible of all, the open letters written in the HSRA’s name.

One of these letters was pasted on Lahori Gate on April 15, 1929. Under the heading “Loud voice to make the deaf hear,” it threatened to take out more police officers than just Saunders if illegal police actions continued. Another letter was sent to the police superintendent in Delhi on April 21:

God Soviet guide our way [*sic*]. You arrested our brethren but we repeat, you can kill men, not ideas. Our movement is not backed by a few. We are many. . . . A general meeting of our Association is going to take place at Delhi . . . where we are going to chalk out a plan to blow up all Government places and offices. Therefore, beware. If the Government is proud, let it accept the challenge. Beware, beware.⁷²

Is this the work of the HSRA, or of an agent provocateur or copycat? Is there any way to know? The language

sounds far cruder than that seen in the usual HSRA documents, whose writers were quite politically sophisticated. Movement chronicler Gurdev Singh Deol notes that the writer(s) of “many letters of that type . . . received both by the Government officials and prominent members of the public” were never traced.⁷³

During his final two years in jail, from April 1929 until he was hanged on March 23, 1931, Singh did not await death quietly. In addition to continuing his activism within the walls and honing the messaging to be spread from the trial’s public platform, he was busy reading, writing, and making preparations for four intended manuscripts: on the personal side, an autobiography and a soliloquy titled “At The Door of Death,” plus a more general “History of the Revolutionary Movement in India” and an essay called “The Idea of Socialism.” It is unknown how far he got in making notes toward these projects. A friend destroyed many documents in 1938 to prevent these works from falling into the hands of police, although other writings were smuggled out and published both before and after Singh’s death.

His *Jail Notebook*, a collection of quotes and notations, offers a window into his preoccupations and thought processes. He was in a sense a brilliant autodidact, independently pursuing many of the same concerns that one would expect to find within any zone where iterations of libertarian socialism and antiauthoritarian Marxism converge. One request he made in July 1930 for library books for his reading list survives in a letter to his old friend Jaidev Gupta.⁷⁴ It included *Militarism* by Karl Liebknecht, *Why Men Fight* by Bertrand Russell, *Soviets at Work*, *Collapse of the Second*

International, Left-wing Communism, Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid and Fields, Factories, and Workshops*, Marx's *Civil War in France*, *Land Revolution in Russia*, Nikolay Ivanovich Bukharin's *Historical Materialism*, and—for fun—the 1920 novel *The Spy* by Upton Sinclair.⁷⁵

The interconnected themes in the notebook include theories of law along with its nature and purpose, the idea of natural rights, and the role of force; theories of government and the state; and notes toward a history of the political philosophy of the state and its institutional forms from Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle, to Thomas Aquinas, Benedict de Spinoza, Hugh Grotius, John Milton, John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, and Rousseau—specifically his *Emile* and the *Social Contract*. It's clear that Singh was extremely critical of all state forms that had existed so far; it's possible he would have put the Communist workers' state into an exceptional category, yet these notes may also be taken to contain a warning to the workers' society not to fall into the traps of previous powerholders.

He indicated justifications of revolutionary tactics, insurrection, and extralegality, combined with a developing analysis of organization, and an increasing appreciation for the pragmatic benefits of a disciplined mass party (“as opposed to sudden and unorganised or spontaneous change or breakdown”) and seizing political power in order to bring about economic liberation.⁷⁶ In addition to Marx, Lenin, and Engels, he was reading Trotsky, Morris Hillquit, Eduard Bernstein, and Kautsky.

He also pursued these thoughts in the posthumously published statement “To Young Political Workers,” plainly

a Marxist-Leninist influenced document. Singh stated unequivocally that workers' revolutionary aim must be to achieve power, snatching "the state, the government machinery" away from its use as "a weapon in the hands of the ruling class to further and safeguard its interest," and toward "utilis[ing] it for the consummation of our ideal, i.e., the social reconstruction on new, i.e., Marxist, basis." What forms would the new dispensation take? He posed some sharp questions without venturing to give definitive answers, though he did caution against institutions of top-down, centralized power. In calling for a dedicated cadre of professional party workers, Singh urged them to "crush your individuality first" in the total dedication to the cause. The question is how this hard line fits within the context of all his other writings.⁷⁷

On freedom and a just society, he drew inspiration from—among others—William Wordsworth, Whitman, Thomas Paine, James Russell Lowell ("If there breathe on earth a slave, / Are ye truly free and brave?"), Fyodor Dostoevsky, Hugo, Eugene Debs ("While there is a lower class, I am in it. While there is a criminal element, I am of it. While there is a soul in jail, I am not free."), Charles Fourier, Spencer, Wat Tyler, Maxim Gorky, London, and Ibsen ("Away with the State! Undermine the whole conception of a state, declare free choice and spiritual kinship to be the only all important conditions of any union, and you will have the commencement of a liberty that is worth something").⁷⁸

Singh included this Sinclair quotation: "The Anarchists and the apostles of insurrection are also represented; and if some of the things seem to the reader the

mere unchaining of furies, I would say . . . let him blame himself, who has acquiesced in the existence of conditions which have driven his fellowmen to extremes of madness and despair.”⁷⁹ He copied down inspiring lyrics ranging from the *Internationale* to *Charge of the Light Brigade*.

Singh also compiled demographic and economic statistics about the United States—an interest perhaps not surprising given his Ghadar links—and most poignantly, scraps of the words of revolutionary martyrs and political prisoners such as Patrick Henry, Figner, Nikolai Alexandrovich Morozov, and Ferrer, for solace in his present circumstances.⁸⁰ Legend has it that when the executioners arrived at Singh’s cell to escort him to the gallows, he was sitting absorbed in a book, attempting to finish Lenin’s biography before he died.

The point here is not to cherry-pick scraps that support a slender thesis on Singh’s true political stance while ignoring those that imply something else. In fact, he copied down many quotations that he plainly did not agree with, but valued as food for thought. Cherry-picking is anyway impossible in his writings; no excerpt is sufficiently representative without locating it in the complexity of the whole. What does seem clear is that through all his study, and the huge range of writers he quoted, he was trying to balance the imperatives of liberty and equality, socialism and democracy, always in pursuit of the meaning of justice and freedom.

While Singh is one of the most beloved heroes of the freedom struggle, it is hard to speculate about what role he would have played if he had lived longer, or how his

ideological position would have developed. Although it is clear that Marx, Lenin, and related theorists had exerted a compelling influence on his thinking, it's difficult to imagine him adopting any party line uncritically, based on what he wrote, said, and did.

In his notebook, he cites the words of Wendell Phillips: "If there is anything that cannot bear free thought, let it crack."⁸¹ Singh was in all likelihood engaged in building a dialectical synthesis that while exceeding leftist orthodoxy in its actually existing, codified form, nevertheless incorporated Marx's and Lenin's insights on economics and organizing resistance into all the other wide-ranging sources that his voracious mind never ceased processing. In this sense, rather than being recuperated by Communism—seeing the light before he died—perhaps he himself might have recuperated Communism, allowing it to develop into another actualized form more emancipatory in its theory and practice.

The Romantic Countermodernists

The hegemonic political discourse during the latter decades of the freedom struggle and early decades of independence, including Nehru's Fabian-influenced socialism and Ambedkar's Buddhist-influenced rationalism, tied the achievement of substantive liberation to a model of industrial development based in centralized state planning—meaning liberation not just from foreign rule but also from an oppressive past, the flaws in which had led to being colonized in the first place.

Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore were both culture heroes of the Indian freedom struggle, beloved as spiritual as well as political figures. They were also outspoken critics of modern industrial society, with deep misgivings about nationalism and the state. Both were radical pacifists, designers of utopian communities, and liberation philosophers whose closest counterparts were Tolstoy and Kropotkin.

The traditional Left, in its passionate devotion to economic materialism, secularism, and modernization, rejected Gandhian thought as reactionary. Their deep anxiety

about deviating from the principles of science and rationality is quite understandable, given what they were positioning themselves against—the bloodbaths of communalism, the religiously sanctioned degradation of the caste system, and recently the growth of religious politics both Hindu and Islamic. Yet this made the entire category of the spiritual or nonrational out of bounds for progressive politics, ceding it to the Right rather than allowing it other modes of expression.

The bifurcation between the Marxist and Gandhian schools of thought—sometimes coding for the rationalist/modernist and its antithesis—has been one of the major influences shaping the Indian radical spectrum, both during and after the independence struggle. Applying an anarchist lens here allows for the possibility of conceptually straddling the line.

Tagore

Most renowned as a writer of poetry, novels, and plays, and the first non-European winner of the Nobel Prize in 1913, Tagore was also a musician, painter, educational innovator and social reformer, generally regarded as having revolutionized Bengali culture. In 1901 he founded an ashram in Shantiniketan, linked to his Institute for Rural Reconstruction and later to an alternative university that he opened in 1921. Its philosophy aimed at replacing rote learning with holistic, creative pedagogy, featuring outdoor classrooms, individualized mentorship, training in the arts,

and a global rather than national focus. (He was also knighted, but publicly rejected the honor in protest of the British massacre of unarmed demonstrators in Jalianwala Bagh in 1919.) Although he is the writer of the lyrics adopted for two national anthems—India’s and Bangladesh’s—and despite his staunch anticolonialism, Tagore was highly critical of the nationalist movement. He raised his objections explicitly in his book *Nationalism*, first published in 1917, and more subtly in his fiction and drama.

Tagore’s critiques of colonialism and nationalism were of a piece with his diagnosis of modernity’s ills. Commerce and state were the deadly symptoms, but the criticism was sociocultural rather than socioeconomic in origin. The emphasis is on greed and consumption, not on class exploitation, and Tagore’s objections to industrial modernity are primarily moral, spiritual, and aesthetic—decrying selfishness, materialism, and utilitarianism. Unlike artisanal work, industry is ugly, defiling landscape and behavior; according to his moral aesthetics, beauty is an accurate index of the right and the true.

Tagore’s terminology of the “Nation” versus the “Spirit” of the people is reminiscent of Landauer’s distinction between state and nation. Nation, for Tagore, is a machine, an engine of oppression that crushes what is best within humanity. “I am not against one nation in particular, but against the general idea of all nations,” he insisted. In its greed and aggression, the existence of any nation in the world is a terrible danger to all peoples.¹ That which encourages divisive, narrowly national interests is destructive to the good of humanity. This is why patriotism is a

bad idea from the perspective of the spiritual evolution of humankind.²

“What is the Nation?” he challenged.

It is the aspect of a whole people as an organized power. This organization incessantly keeps up the insistence of the population on becoming strong and efficient. But this strenuous effort after strength and efficiency drains man’s energy from his higher nature where he is self-sacrificing and creative. . . . He feels relieved of the urging of his conscience when he can transfer his responsibility to this machine. . . . By this device the people which loves freedom perpetuates slavery in a large portion of the world . . . where whole peoples are furiously organizing themselves for gaining wealth and power.³

But through the very institution organized to procure them, such wealth and power endangered even those on the receiving side. Tagore compares the “government by the Nation” to a pair of shoes encasing feet walking on a gravelly terrain. If snugly fitting, as in modern times, perhaps no gravel could get in, but it was “a closed up system, within which our feet have only the slightest liberty to make their own adjustments.” Previously the feet might have encountered more gravel, but had room “to adjust themselves to the caprices of the inhospitable earth.” The problem was

not the numerousness of the outside obstacles but the comparative powerlessness of the individual to

cope with them. This narrowness of freedom is an evil which is more radical not because of its quantity but because of its nature. And we cannot but acknowledge this paradox, that while the spirit of the West marches under its banner of freedom, the nation of the West forges its iron chains of organization which are the most relentless and unbreakable that have ever been manufactured in the whole history of man.⁴

He warned,

When this organization of politics and commerce, whose other name is the Nation, becomes all powerful at the cost of the harmony of the higher social life, then it is an evil day for humanity. . . . When [society] allows itself to be turned into a perfect organization of power, then there are few crimes which it is unable to perpetrate. . . . When this engine of organization begins to attain to a vast size, and those who are mechanics are made into parts of the machine, then the personal man is eliminated to a phantom, everything becomes a revolution of policy carried out by the human parts of the machine, requiring no twinge of pity or moral responsibility.⁵

There is yet hope for society if it can find some wiggle room beyond the mechanisms of the modern state. “When the humanity of India was not under the government of the Organization, the elasticity of change was great enough to

encourage men of power and spirit to feel that they had their destinies in their own hands. 'The hope of the unexpected was never absent, and a freer play of imagination, both on the part of the governor and the governed, had its effect in the making of history.' But within nation's domain the exercise of creativity and moral choice has been destroyed:

For every single individual is completely in the grip of a whole nation. . . . At the least pressing of its button the monster organization becomes all eyes, whose ugly stare of inquisitiveness cannot be avoided by a single person amongst the immense multitude of the ruled. At the least turn of its screw, by the fraction of an inch, the grip is tightened to the point of suffocation around every man, woman and child of a vast population, for whom no escape is imaginable in their own country, or even in any country outside their own.

It is the continual and stupendous dead pressure of this unhuman upon the living human under which the modern world is groaning. Not merely the subject races, but you who live under the delusion that you are free, are every day sacrificing your freedom and humanity to this fetich [*sic*] of nationalism, living in the dense poisonous atmosphere of world-wide suspicion and greed and panic.⁶

Tagore is describing the panopticon of modern governmentality: not the character of Western civilization—whose achievements he also honored—but instead

the machinery of state and commerce, which would be the same if exercised by Indians. “This government by the Nation is neither British nor anything else; it is an applied science and therefore more or less similar in its principles wherever it is used. It is like a hydraulic press, whose pressure is impersonal and on that account completely effective.” Despite the differences in power between engines, ranging from hand-driven to many-horsepowered heavy machinery (that is, different colonial governments), they all function according to the same principle.⁷

Tagore’s own nationalism was separate from the political arena, the space of the state. Although calling for political and economic autonomy, the nation itself had more to do with a cultural aura that not only pervaded the social fabric of India but also extended beyond the subcontinent to an “organically interlinked” Pan-Asian sphere. Its self-discovery would lead not just to emancipation for Asian colonized countries but the spiritual redemption of the modern world as a whole, functioning as a rebuke to the capitalist-imperialist world order. Tagore’s vision of *swadeshi samaj* (autonomous society) was built on the “key elements . . . [of] the organization of cooperative enterprises, the critique of consumption practices, the emphasis on labor practices oriented toward the accumulation of spiritual and material shakti (power), the forging of rural grass-roots development projects, and mass education schemes through received folk media.”⁸ Again, this was primarily a moral and aesthetic critique, not a material analysis of capitalist exploitation.

A liberated culture and psyche would no longer be subject to crippling alienation through enforced imitation

of Western thought forms or institutions, not even the forms of resistance and liberation. Tagore proclaimed in many an address that colonial subjects need not look outside for models, need not “imagine ourselves to be dream-made Mazzinis, Garibaldis and Washingtons,” nor in economic life need they be “caught in the labyrinth of imaginary Bolshevism, Syndicalism or Socialism.”⁹ All that was required could be discovered within their own cultural inheritance. For Tagore, decolonization would not occur through the construction of divisions between parties and nations but rather in the integration of new inputs with any traditions conducive to maximizing freedom, equality, and holistic social, psychological, and ecological health.

After spending his later years as a universal celebrity, lecturing and meeting notables, intellectuals, and artists throughout the world, Tagore died at the age of eighty in 1941. He himself would never have claimed a connection to anarchism. His own use of the term equates it to pure individualism: “Then look at those who call themselves anarchists, who resent the imposition of power, in any form whatever, upon the individual. The only reason for this is that power has become too abstract—it is a scientific product made in the political laboratory of the Nation, through the dissolution of the personal humanity.”¹⁰ Yet there were plain affinities in his analysis, and those attitudes toward modern society recognizable as typical of the Romantic impulse, that is one component of the anarchist tradition.

Gandhi

It's not necessary to repeat the details of Gandhi's life and political career here. But it is important to draw attention to the anarchistic facets of his thought. It was not unusual during his lifetime for Gandhian ideas to be described as anarchistic—usually by hostile opponents, although also in some cases “positive, or at least neutral, when coming from a friendly critic.” When made sympathetically, an anarchist reading of Gandhi could function as an attempt to “make Gandhism intelligible within (though not compatible with) the framework of socialist thinking” by articulating it with socialist debates.¹¹

Economist J. C. Kumarappa was a close associate of Gandhi, the major public interpreter of Gandhian economic thought, a theorist of rural development, and cofounder in 1935 of the All India Village Industries Association aimed at poverty reduction and self-sufficiency. After independence, he resigned from the Congress National Planning Committee because of his skepticism concerning the INC's emphasis on big industrialization. A critic of the All India Village Industries Association scoffed at its approach, calling it “a cloak of tattered patches” that stitched Kumarappa's “economic notions” together with “elements of Ruskin, William Morris, Proudhon, Bakunin and Tolstoy . . . [to] try to furnish a swadeshi alternative to the imported ideas of socialism.”¹² On the anarchy of Gandhism, Kumarappa claimed neutrality while “admitt[ing] that ‘certain aspects of our reasoning can be paralleled from anarchists and others but that is not sufficient cause to hang us.’”¹³

In 1949 Lotvala (by then described as “a retired anarchist, of the Libertarian Socialist Institute, Bombay”) concluded, based on conversations he had with Kumarappa’s brother, that Gandhi’s basic positions could be summed up as “1) India being an agricultural country, priority should be given to rural development. 2) Decentralisation. 3) Man should be non-economic. 4) State being a class organisation to be replaced by voluntary cooperative associations.” Lotvala and Kumarappa “agreed that these were ‘predominantly Anarchistic ideas’; and added, ‘Fundamentally, Anarchist position is humanistic and so man has been made herein the centre of all rational and moral values. Gandhism is very near to it.’”¹⁴ (As historian Benjamin Zachariah also points out, recommending a grain of salt, Lotvala illustrates the possibility for “selective and creative readings” of Gandhi.)¹⁵

Nirmal Bose, another sympathizer, defended Gandhi from accusations by the Hindu chauvinist wing of the INC that excluded socialists and Gandhians in the article “Is Gandhi a Nationalist?”:

The Nationalists want to build a state that supports industries and culture of India. But Gandhi does not discriminate among humanity that way by class or nation. For him, humanity is one. In this respect, his sympathies are more with the Socialists than the Nationalists.

But Gandhi is not a Communist. . . . Gandhi is in fact a philosophical anarchist. But as a practical idealist, he aims at building up little village states, as

well as a feeble confederation of them in the form of a centralised State. That requires a certain use of violence, which he thinks, is unavoidable under the circumstances. He is eager to drop even that centralisation as early as possible. As such, Gandhi's Varnashrama, in its practical form, is another form of Socialism, but approaching Anarchism more closely than most prevalent forms of Socialism. It approaches Kropotkin's idea of an anarchistic socialism more closely than anything else.¹⁶

In addition to his well-known skepticism of the merits of modern Western civilization, Gandhi harbored a deep distaste for the institution of the state, and distrusted any nationalism that sought to lay instrumental claim to unified top-down power. Unlike Nehru and the INC, he had no desire to adopt rationalized techniques of administration and production; rather, Gandhi's vision of liberation called for spiritually fulfilled, nonalienated lives of material self-sufficiency through artisanal efforts within a decentralized federation of autonomous village republics.

He founded several intentional communities run as collective farms, such as Phoenix Settlement in South Africa and Sabarmati Ashram in Gujarat. The autonomous village republic was the building block of Gandhi's vision of a just society, and a recurring theme among those critical not just of colonialism's foreignness but of the rational/industrial system that nationalists too embraced. Although the authenticity of this trope remains controversial, it seems less important whether or not such a thing had ever

existed in the past than that the idea of it was welcomed as a desirable future.

Gandhi's utopia was influenced by his readings of Ruskin, Thoreau, Morris, Kropotkin, and most particularly Tolstoy, with whom he corresponded, and whose antimilitarist, socially emancipatory version of Christianity was not unlike Gandhi's version of Hinduism.¹⁷ Of course, his culturally specific religiosity gives his thought and practice quite a different guise from anything generally associated with anarchism in the West.¹⁸ It was precisely his religiosity, along with antimodernism and refusal to endorse class war or repudiate the caste system, that led the Indian Left to angrily reject him, holding him accountable for the festering canker of communalism within the Indian national movement and Indian society's persistent attachment to archaic structures of oppression. Instead of stoking dialectical conflict, he called for social harmony, counseling a benevolent, paternalistic relationship between landlords and peasants.

The paradigm for decolonization that prevailed during the mid-twentieth century pegged socialism and secularism to modernization, development, and scientific knowledge. To Gandhi, technology and industry were components not of emancipation but rather of spiritual and cultural damage, which is yet another reason why many leftists denounced him as a reactionary. He emphatically rejected post-Enlightenment reason, preferring a premodern condition, although not in the form of stasis or regression. Gandhi also at times fell into the trap of cultural superiority, which paradoxically made it possible for anarchistic content to coincide with an "extreme nationalist position." Nevertheless

there was room within the discourse for Left Gandhians and Gandhian socialists as well as Gandhian traditionalists and cultural conservatives. Furthermore, while it's possible to reject Gandhian discourse for reasons that can be linked to anarchism, it doesn't follow that one must then reject anarchism itself. More precisely, one rejects the Gandhian form of anarchism—as did his historical contemporaries, militant anarcho-communists Acharya and Singh.

The closest thing we have to a Gandhian manifesto is “Hind Swaraj,” an essay he wrote in 1909 while on a ship sailing from London to South Africa, where he lived and worked at the time. In this imaginary question and answer between himself as “Editor” and an imagined “Reader” of the *Indian Opinion*, he lays out his ideas on the state, modernity, industrialization, technology, the ideal village community, and the way to free India.

“The removal of the cause of a disease results in the removal of the disease itself,” he said, and his diagnosis of what ailed his country was stark: “It is my deliberate opinion that India is being ground down, not under the English heel, but under that of modern civilization. It is groaning under the monster’s terrible weight. . . . Civilization is like a mouse gnawing while it is soothing us.” One after the other he panned lawyers, doctors, railroads, machinery, factories, English education, and the profit motive. “[The English] hold whatever dominions they have for the sake of their commerce. Their army and their navy are to protect it. . . . They wish to convert the whole world into a vast market for their goods.”¹⁹ Violence was another symptom of everything that was wrong with Western civilization.

The essay was influential and was translated into many languages. Gandhi also spoke on his alternative vision on several public occasions:

[January 1939:] Political power, in my opinion, cannot be our ultimate aim. . . . The power to control national life through national representatives is called political power. Representatives will become unnecessary if the national life becomes so perfect as to be self-controlled. It will then be a state of enlightened anarchy in which each person will become his own ruler. He will conduct himself in such a way that his behaviour will not hamper the well-being of his neighbours. In an ideal State there will be no political institution and therefore no political power. That is why Thoreau has said . . . that that government is the best which governs the least.²⁰

[April 1946:] Independence should be political, economic and moral.

“Political” necessarily means the removal of the control of the British army in every shape and form.

“Economic” means entire freedom from British capitalists and capital, as also their Indian counterparts. . . .

“Moral” means freedom from armed defence forces. My conception of Ramarajya excludes replacement of the British army by a national army of occupation. A country that is governed by even its national army can never be morally free.²¹

[July 1946:] Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus, every village will be a republic or Panchayat having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world. . . .

[U]ltimately it is the individual who is the unit. This does not exclude willing help from neighbours or from the world. It will be a free and voluntary play of mutual forces. . . .

In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever-widening, never-ascending circles.²²

But as independence approached—and soon after it, the end of Gandhi's life—he was shunned and politically isolated by those who had been happy to tap into his mass-mobilizing power, but had no use for his antistate and anti-capitalist social vision.

States and Village Republics

For the first few decades after independence, Nehru's secular socialist democracy was the normative referent for the notion of the redistributive state. This paradigm for decolonization equated liberation with state-planned modernization and development, which was in turn equated with large-scale industrialization.

Both Tagore and Gandhi denied that the modern state was the most natural or desirable form for an emancipated, “regenerated” Indian society to take, and warned against the dangers of centralized authority, which they felt would threaten self-sufficiency at the local level. For them, the anticolonial commitment to self-determination ran deeper than the transfer of political power.

Historian Rajat K. Ray writes,

They shared the conviction that the essence of Indian civilization lay in the self-regulating character of society. This social autonomy was rendered feasible by the peripheral existence of the state insofar as the inner life of the community was concerned. . . .

Tagore’s concept of “self-strength” (Atmashakti’) and Gandhi’s notion of “self-rule” (Swaraj’) were both anti-state in tendency, one stressing the autonomy of the community and the other the self-sufficiency of the village. Neither of these prophets of Indian regeneration gave primacy to the political movement in their doctrine of self-help. The aim was to make society self-sufficient again, so as to render the state irrelevant.²³

According to the theorists of South Asian state formation, the unitary, centralized state was a late addition to the subcontinental repertory of political formations.²⁴ Prior to the nineteenth-century imposition of British paramountcy—the doctrine that all subcontinental power must be subject to one overarching authority—there was

instead a range of overlapping, segmentary, sovereign units oriented toward different centers. Ray describes this as a cellular “beehive” structure.

For centuries, the various communities and the villages had lived in their demarcated spheres, secure in the autonomy of their local and communal concerns from the interference of the [center]. . . . [T]he self-regulating units of society were forced into dependence as an alien government broke into concerns hitherto regulated within the village and the community. The British made state power central to the life of the people, and thereby profoundly disturbed the balance between the various cells.²⁵

Still, while decentralized and pluralistic, with a near-endless capacity to accommodate new cells and be “enriched” by any new arrivals willing to be incorporated without attempting to overhaul the whole, this society was also hierarchical. Tagore, says Ray, “deprecat[ed] the inequality but valued the multiplicity” of the traditional cellular society; for him, India’s community of sentiment was that of a civilization, but not of a modern nation-state.²⁶ In contrast, Nehru’s democratic vision was uniformly egalitarian but also centralized. Would visionaries invested in the shape of decolonized India have to choose between the priorities of freedom and equality?

The village republic idea is sometimes dismissed as an invention of East India Company ideologues such as Charles Metcalfe and Henry Maine, who deployed it as a

way to perpetuate Orientalist dualisms of tradition versus modernity, the timeless East versus the dynamic West, or later as a way to theorize subaltern spaces as external to the modern political arena.²⁷ Yet whether or not it had ever really existed in such a pure form, such a republic occupied the radical imaginary of those within the freedom movement who sought an alternative to the centralized industrial state—especially if it could be claimed as indigenous, not imported.

The idea also circulated in the movement overseas between the world wars. Surendranath Karr, editor of the *Independent Hindustan*, the New York–based organ of the heterodox Left Hindustan Ghadar Party, wrote eloquently “On the Village Republics of India” in the March 1921 issue.²⁸

“In view of the revolutionary movements that are so rampant in India at the present day,” Karr began, “and of the decision of the Indian people to set up an independent government of their own in accordance with the wishes of the people,” there was much speculation regarding “the plans and programs of the revolutionaries who are directing the forces to destroy British imperialism.” What did they envision?

First, Karr commented on the curious fact that humanity tends always to “look backward to find the basis of our present day activities, perhaps in the unconscious mind or dream of the past. A new thing we want to create, no doubt; but a great deal of energy is being spent in collecting the materials.” This was a quest for usable precedents. His intention in seeking hints of the possible shape of the “New India” was not “to delve into the discovery of whether the

Hindu genius evolved out of a conception of the present Soviet system existing in Russia or not, but to stimulate a desire among those who may, through close and careful study, find that India's soul is very fertile for transplantation of the ideas which have already shaken the very foundations of the political, economic and social theories." Even so, he compared the Russian proverb "What the Mir has settled is God's own judgment" with the Indian one "There is God in the Panch" (that is, the traditional five-person local decision-making council). Just as the "mir is the mother of the Soviet," Karr predicted, "the Panchayat is going to be the parent of the future Indian polity."

These were the village councils wherein the reclaimed traditions of the republic, "repository of rights and liberty of the peoples," could provide the political foundations for their future. "Industrial socialism may not be known to the people," he argued, "but agrarian communism is a natural system in which the people have been accustomed to live," although with "the advent of the British capitalistic system, the communistic principles have been shattered to pieces."

In this indigenous utopia of village republics, Karr claimed, there was no caste divide: intermarriage prevailed, along with free choice of occupation based in trade and craft guilds. Industry was "controlled by the public," with the means of production such as common looms and utilities such as wells and channels collectively owned. "Dignity of labor was duly recognized," and there was no conflict between work of brain and brawn. A village assembly held sessions in a sort of town hall, with legislation made by directly elected representatives. Six standing committees

were tasked with “Animal, Garden, Tank (Irrigation), Gold, Justice and Panchvara” duties. Committee membership was open to all men and women between thirty-five and seventy years old who owned an amount of taxable land roughly equivalent to five acres, lived in a house on its own site, were well educated (an education could trump the property requirement), honest in business dealings, and had not committed any crimes.

The public offices that Karr cited as examples of non-hereditary occupations in a Madras village included an executive, accountant, security and border guards, superintendent of tanks and watercourses, priest, schoolmaster, astrologer, smith, carpenter, potter, washer, barber, cow-keeper, doctor, dancer, musician, and poet. Education was paramount and knowledge treasured, until colonial rule “ruthlessly destroyed the indigenous national system of education.” This widespread “village republican educational system” had always been “secular and democratic in the strictest sense of the term,” and Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim schools in all regions “possessed identical constitutions, and methods of management and instruction.” It should be a priority for revolutionaries, counseled Karr, in boycotting English education to revive their own people’s intelligence.

He closed with the words of Dr. Radhakumud Mookerji, on whose work the article drew heavily:

It is often forgotten that a great deal of socialism and communism (representing advanced democratic ideals of the modern age) is held in solution in the Indian social system. Appropriate expression

is found through various institutions which all imply strong collectivist or communistic sense and intuitions in the people, combined with a due restraint of that aggressive individualism and proprietary instinct . . . emphasizing private property and the sacredness of creditors' rights over those of the debtors, have given, in the opinion of the most thoughtful sociologists and political philosophers, a somewhat wrong direction to the development of nations and states in Europe.²⁹

Mookerji was an eminent historian who had published a book in 1919 titled *Local Government in Ancient India*.³⁰ In his preface, Mookerji explained, "The present work aims at a systematic presentation of . . . the exuberant vitality and manifold growth of self-governing institutions among a people characterized by a genius for social experiments and constructions." His introduction "put forward, as a tentative suggestion, the hypothesis about the peculiar relations between the state and society in ancient India which has, to my mind, the merit of explaining some of the paradoxes in its history and throwing light on some of its obscure aspects or chapters." Namely, he felt that "a proper presentation of Hindu culture in all its aspects and phases should take into account these diverse developments . . . the many manifestations of the democratic principle which that culture represents. In the present work an attempt will be made to trace one particular line of that development, to dwell upon the workings of the democratic principle in one particular sphere": local self-government.³¹

It was to this trait that Indian society owed its resilience despite years of crises and upheavals, he claimed, quoting Metcalfe:

The village communities are little republics, having nearly everything they can want within themselves, and almost independent of any foreign relations. They seem to last where nothing else lasts. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down; revolution succeeds to revolution . . . but the village community remains the same. . . . This union of the village communities, each one forming a separate little state in itself, has, I conceive, contributed more than any other cause to the preservation of the peoples of India, through all the revolutions and changes which they have suffered, and is in a high degree conducive to their happiness, and to the enjoyment of a great portion of freedom and independence.³²

We might see here not static timelessness but rather continuity and survival in the face of great change.

Mookerji observed:

The fact is that India presents the rare and remarkable phenomenon of the state and the society co-existing apart from, and in some degree of independence of each other, as distinct and separate units or entities, as independent centres of national, popular, and collective life and activity. Both of them were independent organisms with distinct

and well-defined structures and functions of their own and laws of growth and evolution. The limits of state-interference were accordingly so defined and fixed as not to encroach upon the sphere of the activities of the social organization. A policy of non-interference was recognized as the ideal policy of the state, the functions of which were ordinarily restricted to “the irreducible minimum,” vis. the protection of life and property and realization of the revenue for the proper execution of that duty.³³

This created a stark contrast between India and the West, where

the predominant tendency has been towards a progressive extension of state interference and state control so as to bring within its limits all the main departments of social life and national activity until the ideal is attained of a complete nationalization or socialization of all the means and processes of life itself. The state, beginning as an agent of society, becomes its master and representative; society is merged in the state to which it surrenders its functions, dropping its independent life.³⁴

Even if in the “advanced” countries of the West the people’s main interface with power was through local not central bodies, these were still the creations and tools of the central government, “the wheels of a common machine,” whereas in ancient India the local bodies had originated

outside the state, which only later incorporated or superimposed itself on them.³⁵ In fact, pragmatically speaking, in the absence of any means of fast long-distance communication or travel by which to administer a far-flung empire, the smartest thing was to take advantage of existing institutions.³⁶ Such consolidation was only possible

because it did not cherish the ambition of setting up a centralized government consciously legislating for and controlling the life of every part of that vast whole, but aimed only at an elastic system of federalism or confederation in which were incorporated, along with the central government at the metropolis, as parts of the same system, the indigenous local administrations. The essence of this imperial system was thus a recognition of local autonomy at the expense of the authority of the central government, which was physically unfit to assert itself except by its enforced affiliation to the pre-existing system of local government.³⁷

The practical interest of this study lay in its applicability to current questions of administration and administrative reform. Of two rival schools of thought,

[one] seeks to introduce self-government “from above” and the other “from below.” . . . [I]t may, perhaps, be pertinent to point out that any form of provincial or central government which is organized merely “from above,” however mechanically

perfect it may be, will fail to take a real root or gather to itself that vital force without which it will be a mere lifeless machine, a cog upon our national development, unless it is grafted in some way or other upon the spontaneous groupings of the people themselves as represented by their local self-governing institutions and based upon these natural foundations of all government. . . .

[A] people cannot be deemed to be essentially self-governing and enjoying the blessings of free institutions if they are without the right of themselves administering their local affairs and interests, on which their daily well-being depends. Besides, local government is itself the best school of political training for the masses living in the villages who cannot take part in the provincial or the central government except through their few representatives, and it is also to be cherished as a school of social service and a most efficient factor of social progress.³⁸

Finally, Mookerji wanted to remind his readers that ancient Indian “[Hindu] society was suffused with the democratic principle. The numerous self-governing, ‘kingless’ states in ancient India, the existence of which is attested by sober history,” contrasted with the usual assumptions that it was only all about “respect for tradition and authority and blind faith, rather than discriminating judgement.”³⁹ And like Tagore, he suggested that not only was this model beneficial for India, it also offered answers applicable to the whole world.

Sarvodaya

Two postcolonial institutions have roots in the village republic ideal: the *panchayat* system, and the *bhoodan* or land grant movement. The panchayat system, sanctioned by the constitution since 1993, calls for seven-person village councils (originally five) democratically chosen for five-year terms at the village, block, and district levels, tasked with settling land disputes and civil disagreements, providing for water supplies, clinics, and schools, and implementing economic development and social justice. All villagers are supposed to be able to express their opinions as decisions are made. In practice, the system is far from emancipatory; critics point out that functional control often remains in the hands of petty tyrants among local landholders and caste elites, and that women who hold seats are frequently chosen more for their potential as puppets than as leaders.

Of course, restoring self-sufficiency and autonomy to village communities doesn't in itself erase existing oppressions any more than calling for "states' rights" eliminates racism. Even if an anarchistic logic holds that decentralization and local control are goods in themselves, it can never assume that changing the formal relations of governmentality is enough without also reweaving the very fabric of culture and society at every level. Har Dayal wrote in his *Modern Times* articles of the necessity for breaking the chains of tradition that shackled, subjected, and saddled women to patriarchy, subject "untouchables" to a toxic caste hierarchy, and saddle all with the corrupt and parasitic priesthoods of organized religion.⁴⁰

The bhoodan (and the related *gramdan* or village grant) idea evolved out of the work of Gandhi's disciple Vinobha Bhave, and then Jayaprakash Narayan (or JP, as he was commonly called). The Sarvodaya movement (taking its name from Gandhi's translation or "paraphrase" of Ruskin's *Unto This Last*) aimed to persuade landowners to follow the dictates of an evolved conscience, and bequeath parcels of their holdings to peasant collectives to be self-managed in perpetuity with an emphasis on self-sufficiency, equitable distribution of resources, and individual freedom. Gramdan continued Bhoodan: landowners in a village would agree to renounce ownership though retaining occupancy, donate a portion of their land to the landless, and donate a portion of produce annually to the village.

The saintly Bhave convened the first meeting of a Sarvodaya Samaj soon after Gandhi's death, to carry on the social mission that he wasn't able to complete. The Bhoodan land distribution project began in 1951, followed by the more extensive Gramdan program in 1952. This was intended not just as an ownership arrangement but a whole way of life. Bhave explained,

Sarvodaya does not mean good government or majority rule, it means freedom from government, it means decentralization of power. We want to do away with government by politicians and replace it by a government of the people, based on love, compassion and equality. Decisions should be taken, not by a majority, but by unanimous consent; and

they should be carried out by the united strength of the ordinary people of the village.

If I am under some other person's command, where is my self-government? . . . It is one mark of swaraj not to allow any outside power in the world to exercise control over oneself. And the second mark of swaraj is not to exercise power over any other. These two things together make swaraj—no submission and no exploitation. This cannot be brought into being by government decree, but only by a revolution in the people's ways of thought.⁴¹

“The fact is that people do not really need a government at all. . . . The ultimate goal of sarvodaya is freedom from government.” Bhave then took care to distinguish this from “absence of government,” meaning the absence of any kind of order and structure, wherein “anti-social elements” would have free rein. Rather, he said, the administrative authority for a harmonious, stateless society “rests in the villages.”⁴²

This must come about not through a period of totalitarianism, as the Communists said; it should happen through an ongoing process of decentralization until “in the final stage there would be no coercion but a purely moral authority. The establishment of such a self-directing society calls for a network of self-sufficient units. Production, distribution, defence, education—everything should be localized. The centre should have the least possible authority.”⁴³

Still, the achievement of this form was dependent on individual acts of enlightened paternalism without requiring

true systemic socioeconomic change. A fear was that bhoodan actually helped to stabilize rather than subvert the system, due to its ameliorative effects. In fact, after India attained independence it seemed that people had gotten all the more dependent on the central state, expecting it to do everything for them. Laws offered band-aids without enabling the self-strengthening necessary for a true “politics of the people” (*lokniiti*) to replace a “politics of the power-state” (*rajniti*).⁴⁴ The Bhoodan movement, Bhave claimed, as an attempt to weave comprehensive change in the fabric of society without recourse to the state, could produce such strengthening:

In our modern conditions a powerful state can bring nothing but slavery. Therefore sarvodaya stands for an immediate reduction in the power of the state. . . . In our social structure we must accept the principle that the welfare of one group is not opposed to the welfare of another.

In such a social order the need to use force would be eliminated. . . . Such a society would be truly self-governing.⁴⁵

In the mid-1960s, Bhave retreated into a life of spiritual contemplation, dying at his ashram in 1982. After Bhave, JP was the movement’s most prominent figure. The concerns and goals that motivated JP in the attempt first to bridge socialism and Gandhism, and then in his shift from Marxism to Sarvodaya, resonated with the concerns and goals expressed in anarchist critiques of the dominant Marxist tradition.⁴⁶

A native of Bihar, JP left Patna College just shy of finishing his science scholarship to join Gandhi's Noncooperation movement in 1921. After that revolution was aborted, he traveled to the United States for further study from 1922 to 1929, because his decision to avoid educational institutions sanctioned by the colonial government ruled out higher education in India. While working in "fields, factories, restaurants and slaughter houses," he attended universities in California, Iowa, Ohio, and Wisconsin, achieving a masters in sociology in 1929. In Madison, Wisconsin, he fell in with some local Communists and embraced Marxism.

During his long absence, his wife, Prabhavati, had been staying with Gandhi and his wife, Kasturba; on JP's return to rejoin the national movement they welcomed him as a son-in-law. Family obligations kept him busy during the first round of the Civil Disobedience movement, but he was active in the second round, and with most of the senior leaders under lock and key, was named acting INC General Secretary in 1932.

During this period he was shocked by the Communists' attitude of hostility toward the INC as a "bourgeois" nationalist movement. His own thinking was that it was imperative for socialism and the freedom struggle to inform one another. To this end, he helped to found and lead the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) in 1934.

In his 1936 pamphlet "Why Socialism?" he laid out the CSP's ideology. "The immediate task is to develop the national movement into a real anti-imperialist movement aiming at freedom from the foreign power AND the native

system of exploitation. For this it is necessary to wean the anti-imperialist elements in the Congress away from its present bourgeois leadership, and to bring them under the leadership of revolutionary socialism."⁴⁷

At this point he still viewed Marxism as the one true theory of socialism. Although acknowledging differences in tactics and approaches, it remained hard to refute the apparent success of the Russian Revolution. He also still assumed the necessity of seizing power to effect change. JP elaborated a program for economic liberation completely compatible with the then-dominant paradigm for Nehruvians and Communists alike: state-planned and controlled development, the socialization of critical industries, and the redistribution of land. Since inequality stemmed from the appropriation of natural resources and means of production by individuals for their own ends, private ownership had to be abolished. So did state support for distinctions of caste, religion, or gender.

But JP was already expressing a preference for pastoral communities over urban concentrations. His land redistribution plan was not based on massive collective farms but instead on evenly dispersed village cooperatives, with mixed agricultural and industrial economies, to be reorganized gradually through persuasion, not immediately through coercion.⁴⁸

When World War II broke out, JP toured the country calling for noncooperation with the war effort. For this he was imprisoned for nine months in 1940, then arrested again immediately on release and put into a special camp in Deoli along with other leftist leaders. He tried to send a

letter via Prabhavati to “chosen comrades of the CSP, advising them to go underground, collect arms and money and prepare for an armed struggle against the British.”⁴⁹ But the jail staff intercepted the letter, and the government publicized it in hopes that it would ruin JP’s reputation among Gandhians. It had quite the opposite effect on his standing in popular opinion, however.

After a successful monthlong fast for the demands of Deoli political prisoners, including repatriation to their home provinces, he was sent to a prison in Bihar. In 1942 he and five others broke out by scaling a wall under cover of holiday revelry—another boost to his reputation as a freedom fighter. He established contact with others, and wrote several morale-building letters for revolutionaries, in which he described not just the need for resistance but also the kind of society to be built afterward, already thinking beyond the seizure of power to the work needed throughout all levels of society. The desired goal was *gram-raj*—“self-governing village[s] or . . . village republic[s],” which would be “centres of struggle and resistance during a revolution and would constitute the bricks with which the structure of the free Indian republic could be built.”⁵⁰

Along with Ram Manohar Lohia, another CSP founding figure, JP tried to organize a guerrilla force dubbed Azad Dasta in north Bihar, near the Nepali border. He and six others were arrested during officer cadre training, but freed by their trainees. Before there was much time to build the organization though, he was arrested again, this time subject to solitary confinement, torture, and interrogation at Lahore Fort, and then held together with Lohia in Agra

Central Jail. By the time both were released in 1946, the war was over and arrangements for the British transfer of power were under way.

During the 1940s, JP began to have increasing doubts about the Soviet model, compounded by his disillusionment with the CPI and its tactics. In "My Picture of Socialism," in 1946, he emphasized that Marxist principles could not be applied uniformly or dogmatically, without taking into consideration India's specific history and conditions as well as the changes in the world since Marx's death.⁵¹

In 1947, he cautioned in "From Socialism to Sarvodaya" that "in a society where it was possible for the people by democratic means to bring about social change it would be counter-revolutionary to resort to violence" or coercion. Socialism, for its existence, required the presence of democratic freedoms. The dictatorship of the proletariat therefore had to be abandoned on the grounds that it created "in effect . . . the dictatorship of a bureaucratic oligarchy."⁵²

In his 1950 pamphlet "Democratic Socialism: The Ideal and Method," JP argued for the significance of human values in "any scheme of socialist reconstruction." Socialism, he insisted, "could not be equated with mere nationalisation of industry and collectivisation of agriculture. It should mean the end of exploitation, injustice, oppression and insecurity, equality of opportunity, and an equitable distribution of the good things of life." And "if under such an economy all political and economic power is concentrated in the hands of a party oligarchy, irreplaceable and self-perpetuating, there can be no socialism but its suppression, no revolution but reaction." True, socialism

“ultimately aims at creating a stateless society, but it wishes to make the State all-powerful by making the social revolution itself dependent upon State action. Gandhism too, like Socialism, aims at a stateless society,” the creation of which “begins here and now, and is not relegated to a remote and imaginary period in the future.”⁵³

Instead of Marxism, he now began referring to a “Democratic Socialism” that in his mind entailed a synthesis of Gandhian, socialist, and liberal ideas, such as guarantees for basic individual and civil rights, cultural and religious freedoms, and a mode of expression for the people’s will, while maintaining that the guiding principles for the political and economic organization of the state should be social justice and economic freedom, with large-scale production collectivized, combined with small-scale production by individuals and cooperatives “for the equal benefit of all concerned.” The public good had to be defined not solely in terms of providing for material comforts but also in the creation of “conditions for healthy living and the moral and intellectual development of the individual.”⁵⁴

Democratic socialists had no doubt talked vaguely of the decentralization of power. . . . But in practice I found that their entire concern was, and still is with the capture of power. . . . Decentralization cannot be effected by handing down power from above to people . . . whose capacity for self-rule has been thwarted, if not destroyed, by the party system and concentration of power at the top. . . . The process must be started from the bottom. A program of self-rule

and self-management must be placed before [them], and by a constructive, non-partisan approach they must be helped to translate it into practice.⁵⁵

He then went a step further; in questioning the political system,

fundamental questions arose in my mind as to the place and role of the State in human society, particularly in relation to the goals of social life that had fixed themselves before me. . . . Though I had given up the basic postulates of Marxism, because they did not promise to lead me to my goals, I continued to feel strongly that human freedom could be fully and wholly realized only in a stateless society. I was, and am, not sure if the State would ever wither away completely. But I am sure that it is one of the noblest goals of social endeavour to ensure that the powers and functions and spheres of the State are reduced as far as possible. . . . The test of human evolution for me became man's ability to live on amity, justice and cooperation with his fellow men without outward restraints of any kind. That is why I have considered the human and social problem to be at bottom a moral problem.⁵⁶

To the bourgeois state's monopoly of political power, JP noted, the socialist state added the monopoly of economic power, which made it even more dangerous, and would require even stronger checks and balances than a

constitution could provide. Could this be the function of trade unions, cooperatives, and consumers' associations? Possibly, but "the democratic socialist State remains a Leviathan that will sit heavily on the freedom of the people." The remedy, then, would be Sarvodaya. "Speaking as a socialist, I would put it thus: the remedy is to create and develop forms of socialist living through the voluntary endeavour of the people rather than to seek to establish socialism by the use of the power of the State," which would be both a truer socialism and a truer democracy, characterized by the values of "co-operation, self-discipline, sense of responsibility," to enable "self-government, self-management, mutual co-operation and sharing, equality, freedom, brotherhood," which were best "practiced and developed . . . in small communities."⁵⁷

This would further require a blending and balance of nature and culture, green space and urban space. Science and technology could help. Indeed, departing from Gandhi here, JP believed that the problem wasn't science and technology but rather the destructive uses to which governments and profiteers had put them. (JP had high hopes for nuclear energy.)

Nevertheless, his 1951 article "Socialism and Sarvodaya" defended the Gandhian legacy against charges of "wishy washy sentimentalism." It was a "concrete programme of basic social revolution," combining attention to morality and ethics with unprecedented tactics of resistance (with the corollary that ends do not justify means; means create ends), and "[insisting] on decentralisation—economic and political." Although "in leftist circles, this is

characterised as antediluvian,” JP insisted that “this aspect of Gandhism . . . does not necessarily mean the rejection of modern science and technology; though it does mean that the modern techniques of production are neither used as means of exploitation nor as means of domination.”⁵⁸

In 1952 he broke with Marxism. The questioning that had started with news of Russian purges led him now to abjure materialism as a philosophy of historical and political change. From his reading of Erich Fromm while in prison, JP had learned to focus on the humanistic as opposed to the economic side of the Marxian tradition, with its emphasis on alienation. Drawing on Fromm, he noted that while “socialisation of production means bureaucracy and manipulation of the individual . . . [a] balanced system . . . must be evolved so as to reconcile large-scale planning with freedom for the individual.”⁵⁹

In the same year, despite pressure to seek office in the first general elections of independent India, he abruptly walked away from the game of electoral power. He then immersed himself in Vinoba Bhave’s Bhoodan movement, facing bitter reproaches for giving up on politics. He retorted that he hadn’t: he had only abandoned rajniti, “the politics of parties, elections, parliaments and governments,” not lokniti.⁶⁰

In his 1959 “A Plea for Reconstruction of Indian Polity,” JP called for counteracting the alienation of modern industrial society by cultivating integrated, meaningful communities based on “a feeling of unity in the midst of diversity; a sense of freedom within the framework of accepted social responsibilities; differentiation of functions

converging to the single goal of the good of the community and its members.” The base units for this hypothetical social structure would be “neither so small that a balanced development of communal life and culture becomes difficult, nor so large that life in them becomes impersonalized. They will be neither rural nor urban, but . . . based on a balance of agriculture and industry, making full use of science and technology to serve their ends.” They would be “self-governing, self-sufficient, agro-industrial, urbo-rural communities.”⁶¹ These would then federate at the district, provincial, and finally national levels, from the base upward.

If possible, large cities would be reorganized into smaller federated communities. In each village the gram sabha would consist of all adult members, from which the five-member gram panchayat council would be chosen by consensus. Their duties would be to make sure that all village members had access to food, clothing, shelter, education, and medical care. Most things would be taken care of by those immediately involved. As responsibilities moved up the levels by indirect election from panchayat samitis to district councils and state assemblies, the national parliament would deal only with defense, foreign relations, interstate coordination, and currency.⁶²

Again, it’s crucial to note that JP acknowledged the innovation of such an arrangement: it was not a return to the past (as right-wing antimodernists might wish, restoring a time of Brahminic/patriarchal supremacy). These were “communities of the future.”⁶³

JP continued to elaborate these ideas in the 1961 “Swaraj for the People,” which dealt with the transition to

the new system and how to enable people “to participate in the management of their affairs as far as possible.”⁶⁴ This in turn entailed a criticism of the actually existing panchayati raj—yes, it was decentralized, but it would not be a truly participatory democracy until people were educated, competitive elections were abolished so that no one could use the panchayat as a launching pad for power, and all adults had a voice in the gram sabha, with the panchayat functioning as no more than an implementer of decisions.

He spent the 1950s and 1960s on speaking tours, writing, and taking stands on sometimes controversial or apparently hopeless causes. He took the unpopular position of advocating for Kashmiri and Naga efforts at greater autonomy from Indian central government. Then in the early 1970s, he began to move back toward conventional political engagement, sensing that Bhoodan-Gramdan was not proving sufficient to bring about the social revolution. In 1970, he threw himself into the mobilization led by leftists in Bihar to peacefully occupy land exceeding the legal ownership allotment ceiling. He also got involved in the Bihari youth movement, supporting students’ demands to disband the Bihar ministry and legislative assembly, while urging the dismantling of the caste-based hierarchical structures utilized to maintain the feudal landholding regime.⁶⁵

By 1974, aged seventy-two and in fragile health, JP was again facing assaults, lathi blows, and solitary confinement as in his early days of radicalization. He was released from prison in 1975, with failing kidneys, just in time for the Emergency period of authoritarian rule Indira Gandhi imposed from 1975–77.

JP was now promoting the idea of “total revolution” (Sampoorna Kranti). He sent “messages to the workers for the cause of total revolution that they must prepare for a long struggle”—a struggle that was permanent in duration, but always changing in form. The times called for a Second War of Independence (Doosri Azaadi)—this time to free the Indian people from the dictatorship of the postcolonial state.

For JP as for many others, the Emergency period was a turning point. Fearing that the vision of freedom and justice for India that he had worked for his whole life was falling apart, JP sent Indira Gandhi an impassioned letter imploring her not to destroy her father’s ideals. In 1977, he finally reentered the electoral battlefield to persuade leaders of all major non-Congress and non-Communist parties to form a coalition as the new Janata Party to oust Gandhi, in an election framed as a fight between dictatorship and democracy. The new party coalition was victorious but short-lived, quickly fragmenting into its Left and Right components whose only shared goal had been opposition—this time not to British, but to Congress raj.⁶⁶

Historian-diplomat Bimal Prasad stresses that, although Indian freedom was a lifelong motivation for JP, his ideal of liberation was more universal and comprehensive than that: “freedom of man everywhere and from every sort of trammel . . . freedom of the human personality, freedom of the mind, freedom of the spirit. . . . This freedom has become a passion of life and I shall not see it compromised for bread, for power, for security, for prosperity, for the glory of the State or for anything else.”⁶⁷

Although the Left parties criticized JP harshly—for the sins of romanticism, utopianism, and escapism from politics—in his own mind he was faithful to the Communist ideal. His anti-Communism referred to actually existing Communist parties in India, China, and the USSR, which he saw as damaging oppressors that were not promoting the goals of true socialism. For him, Sarvodaya was “a higher form” and fuller expression of socialism’s ultimate principles, and a better road to its goals.⁶⁸ But the parties each equated their own institutional identity with the universal ideal, seeing any opposition as tantamount to a betrayal of socialism itself. Moreover, since JP was identified with the Gandhian tradition, he was tarred with the same reactionary brush. But his propositions were not reactionary, if that meant clinging to the old against modern change. His proposals were new ones, simply calling for a different kind of transformation.

On Reaction and Progress

It can’t be overlooked that when Gandhi, Tagore, Lotvala, or Mookerji connected anarchist principles to a refurbished “indigenous” tradition, they cast this tradition in Hindu terms. The hackles this raises for modern progressives in the face of a still-powerful Hindutva are therefore unsurprising.⁶⁹ Even when done by default as reflective of a majority, without hostile intent or ideological commitment, this was a risk.

But no outcome can be projected backward as inevitable. Moreover not all criticisms of modernity are

antimodern, and not all antimodernisms are the same, though a certain kind of anti-antimodernist discourse tends to equate postmodernism, Hindutva, and anarchism as identically reactionary, and virtually interchangeable.

For example, the anarchistic dimension of Gandhi's thought is sometimes misidentified as his "postmodern" aspect.⁷⁰ But neither anarchist thought nor decolonizing theory is the same as postmodernism, although there are postmodernist forms of each. Indeed, recent assessments of postcolonial theory and subaltern studies have proposed a synthesis by which the interventions of various forms of oppositional knowledge (such as poststructuralism, critical race theory, and feminist and queer theories), if used in a nuanced fashion, can be seen as a necessary critique, enriching rather than negating Left thought and practice by using an intersectional, holistic strategy and analysis to better suit changes in the social, cultural, and economic shape of the world since the 1970s.⁷¹

As for the taint of reaction where tradition is defended, each situation needs to be evaluated for its content, not just its provenance. Where tradition is a source of oppression, it must be opposed; where it plays an emancipatory role, it should be retained. The same is true of elements of modernity, including instrumental reason. Where do science and technology, say, humanize and promote justice? Where do they dehumanize and promote injustice? Each old or new practice or belief gets the same evaluation relative to a chosen goal—in this case, maximizing freedom and equality. But it's misplaced to call something bad or good simply because it is either modern or traditional.

Simply, is it bad or good by the standards in question? That's all we need to know, as there are bad and good elements in both the modern and the traditional.

If there can be reactionary modernism—a description attributed to fascism in certain contexts—perhaps conceptually, there could also be a progressive antimodernism, or a critical alternative modernity restoring submerged or excluded principles whose submersion or exclusion contributed to the destructive imbalances we have experienced.⁷² In effect, what each of these political thinkers tried to do was to draw on the cultural resources they had as a source of emancipatory alternatives to the destructive forms of modernity they knew. The village republic had never existed as they imagined it. The key thing is that they did imagine it. They wanted to create it anew.

The New Social Movements

A crucial effect of looking at decolonization through an anarchist lens is that the story changes from the formation of a nation-state to the ongoing process of deconstructing hierarchies and exploitative power relationships, no matter who the perpetrator.¹ But it didn't take an anarchist to see that. On the recognition of formal independence, it was obvious to anyone Left of the INC that the visions of freedom that had inspired generations of revolutionaries had not been fulfilled in the new nation-states of India and Pakistan. The most radical elements among South Asian freedom fighters (including Ghadar, Kirti, and the HSRA) declared that their work would not be done simply by eliminating British rule; not until there was economic and social justice for all, not just the elite interests represented in the mainstream nationalist movement. After the handover of power, the new South Asian nation-states inherited the colonial state's army, bureaucracy, revenue extraction mechanisms, and disciplinary techniques. These then had to be confronted

on the grounds of their character and function, regardless of who was running them.

Furthermore, the revolutionaries' horizon of liberation was transnational: there must be no enslavement of peoples anywhere in the world, not just in India. No one was free until and unless everyone was free, they wrote; until then, the system(s) of oppression were still functional. This required taking the analytic step from opposing a foreign government in a particular context to contesting imperialism in general; from resisting foreign capital in one locality to fighting global capitalism as a whole.

Thus from the anticolonial (as opposed to the national) standpoint, the work of liberation was not completed in 1947. The post-British era might then be considered a period of continuing antisystemic struggle against both neocolonialism and internal colonialism as the new nation-state redefined its relationship to global capitalism, and its own dispossessed and marginalized peoples.

Activists and political theorists Nivedita Menon and Aditya Nigam read the movement history of late twentieth-century India in terms of a contradiction, not between capital and labor or colonizer and colonized, but more broadly between "power and contestation." From the perspective of what Menon and Nigam identify as the Indian New Left, "power is the axis constituted by Nation and Capital, while contestations are of two kinds—one demanding inclusion within, the other running counter to these entities."² (Plainly the anarchist preference would be for the latter.)

The following chapter scans the terrain of Indian social movements since 1947 to see what's visible to an

eye accustomed to applying the stereoscopic lenses of anarchism and anticolonialism. Whether the two views intersect remains to be seen.

The Postcolonial State

Even on purely nationalist terms, the handover of power on August 15, 1947, wasn't an unambiguous victory. Not all who aspired to inclusion in the nation were incorporated on equal terms; while some who didn't want to be included were strong-armed into joining. Some other areas might have been included—Afghanistan and Nepal—if the British had ever succeeded in conquering them. Partition broke the colonial unit into three pieces—India, West Pakistan, and the former East Pakistan, now Bangladesh—igniting a traumatic multidirectional transfer of populations tantamount to ethnic cleansing in some areas. By some estimates, between 500,000 and 1 million people died, and 14.5 million were made refugees during this crisis.

The unitary nature of these states proved no less precarious over time. When writing their constitutions, both the Indian and Pakistani government-forming bodies debated whether to enshrine a more centralized locus of power or a looser federal model with greater regional autonomy. Some argue that had a more decentralized federal structure been adopted from the start, the bloody plunge to partition might have been averted, as would the repeated pattern of separatist movements.

Yet both new states have forced an escalation in separatist movements by even further concentrating power, while enforcing discipline in the peripheries through draconian special legislation to empower brutal paramilitary forces. Through this vicious cycle, what began as initiatives for greater autonomy and representation within India's federal structure—protests against the “increasing concentration of power and wealth, [and] the extraction of surplus” in areas whose populations accuse the central government of plundering their mineral wealth, raw materials, and cheap labor, or in short, replicating the colonial relationship in the name of national progress—then hardened into demands for separate sovereign entities.³

This pattern came to a head in the 1980s in the northeastern regions of Manipur, Assam, and Nagaland, and in the northwest with the Sikh demand for Khalistan as an independent homeland. At its peak in the early to mid-1980s, this conflict claimed between fifteen and twenty thousand lives. In Pakistan, the country's eastern wing rebelled and then split to form independent Bangladesh in 1971, leaving a still-undetermined number (between one and three million) dead. Today separatist unrest is echoed in its far west, Baluchistan. To the south the Tamil separatist movement and Sri Lankan civil war raged from 1983 to 2009, killing over thirty-eight thousand. And of course, there is the perpetual tragedy of Kashmir. Despite UN calls for a plebiscite on independence—hanging in perpetual limbo since 1948—both India and Pakistan continue to lay violent claim to a territory with separatist aspirations. At least fifty-six thousand

have died since the insurgency emerged in 1989, with no end as yet on the horizon.

From the perspective of a regional separatist movement, calling the central state's behavior "internal colonialism" is already contentious, since the boundaries or sovereignty are precisely what's at issue. It's colonialism, plain and simple, complete with the illegal occupation of territory. But these death tolls are yet another indication that ethnonationalism does not solve the problem of colonialism, internal or otherwise.

Activist, sociologist, and social movement scholar Gail Omvedt writes, "The common denominator" among these various "assertions of autonomy," whether in border regions or interior hinterland areas, "was not simply 'identity politics' but the drive by the inhabitants of a geographically delimited area to control its economic and political life in a situation where they were increasingly coming under the domination and exploitation of a centralized state-industrial machine of capital accumulation."⁴

Yet the Indian state was originally founded as a socialist democracy, seen as a leader among the nonaligned movement of decolonizing nations. This endowed it with the lingering aura of standing for emancipation, anti-imperialism, and anticapitalism in the immediate postcolonial decades. Under the "Nehruvian consensus," it had a mandate for progressive development toward economic autonomy and redistributive justice. Assumptions about its fundamental legitimacy were common sense, even when subject to criticism for being ineffectual and corrupt in practice. The ideal was intact, and the problems lay in not living up to it.

Such assumptions were irreparably damaged when then Prime Minister Gandhi declared the Emergency period of dictatorship in 1975. Aimed ostensibly at stabilization, law, and order under threat from the militant Left, but in reality a move to shore up her slipping political control against charges of ethical violations, the Emergency made explicit the government's dictatorial, repressive nature. To some radical critics, this was no aberration—not a state of exception, but rather a state revealing its true face. In Partha Chatterjee's words (echoing Ranajit Guha's well-known formulation of Indian nationalism), there was now truly dominance without hegemony—that is, no component of consent, but only force. Recalling his leftist student days in the early 1970s, Chatterjee says, "The phenomenon we were always concerned with was the fundamentally authoritarian character of the postcolonial state. Why did it have to be authoritarian in this way, if in fact the national movement was what it claimed to be, which was a movement of the people against an authoritarian, colonial state?"⁵

The Emergency period was reversed in 1977, but the unraveling of the Nehruvian consensus could not be halted. During the 1980s, the territorial integrity of the nation seemed liable to fragment in multiple directions. Meanwhile—a foreshadowing of the liberalization to come—India accepted its first International Monetary Fund loan in 1981. These loans increased along with their structural adjustment demands throughout the decade.

After the cold war, the developing/decolonizing societies of Asia, Africa, and Latin America had to readjust. India lost the Soviet Union as ally and military patron. With the

neoliberal transformation of the Indian economy in the early 1990s, the state reoriented itself toward global capital along the familiar lines of the Washington Consensus, abandoning the previous protectionist, redistributive model, with the Indian capitalist class now aspiring to move from being comprador junior partner to major economic power in its own right. In the process, an unprecedented middle class with first world consumerist aspirations was spawned. The traditional Left, at the same time, was widely seen as no longer viable, while new forms of political consciousness were emerging on the basis of caste identity, a potential demographic tidal wave of long-submerged aspirations and justified rage. The resulting cultural anxieties and economic destabilizations fed the reemergence of the far Right Hindutva movement politically marginalized since the time of Gandhi's assassination by a right-wing extremist in 1948.

After the 1980s, Menon reminds us, the axis of debate among political scientists was not along a "simple Liberal/Marxist divide" in which both tendencies "took for granted the legitimacy of the nation-state's pre-eminent role in setting the agenda for development and social transformation/modernization." Now it was along the very "conception of the nation-state—its role and its legitimacy." Within this debate, those "who question 'the agenda-setting presuppositions and legitimizing myths of state-directed development led by a 'rational,' 'modern' elite," such as Chatterjee, Ashis Nandy, Guha, and in his later phase, Rajni Kothari, were (negatively) characterized as intellectual "anarcho-communitarians." India's contemporary

social problems, “ecologically unsustainable development, regional inequalities, and the growing control of the economy by global capital . . . are not trends that have emerged despite the nation-building project of Indian elites, but precisely are what ‘anarcho-communitarians’ point to as the result of that project.”⁶

Of course, these alleged anarcho-communitarians are intellectuals, and the context is a highly charged academic discourse that spills into other social science disciplines as a feud between Marxist and poststructuralist theoretical approaches. So maybe this debate has nothing to do with actual political struggles, social movements, and grassroots resistance. Yet the distance between the academic debates of activist scholars and their real-world political implications is far less in India than it is in the United States. Such debates affect the very recognition and validation of movements—how struggles are framed and carried out, who leads and takes part in them, and whose interests and beliefs are represented or left out of political space.

Once the ideal type of the Nehruvian developmental welfare state was discarded in 1991, other models replaced it: state as vehicle for neoliberal capital accumulation or violent ethnoreligious chauvinism. Either of these orientations made it less and less feasible for the organized Left to strategize a role within it. Not only had it failed in its original stated goals but it had then actively abandoned these goals altogether. The function previously ascribed to the state was as a defender against imperialism and military-backed capital accumulation with a British face. Now it was the promoter of the same, with an Indian face. It could be

condemned now for what it was trying to be, not just for what it was failing to be. The key questions for new social movement formations then became: If the state model had forfeited its credibility as a medium for representing the will of the people, and delivering on what they asked of it, what other routes to social transformation lay beyond it? If the political party model had failed as vehicle of emancipation, then what other forms of mobilization could be imagined?

The Nontraditional Left

It's a cliché to note that in India, old things don't disappear; new things just get added, juxtaposing computers with rustic squat toilets, and SUVs with bullock carts. This may have much more to do with the acute maldistribution of wealth than the persistence of tradition, but in any case you could say it was true of the Indian Left, where the Old Left never really disappeared; it was simply joined (sometimes in actual battle) by the New Left.

In 1962, the Communist Party of India (Marxist), or CPI(M), broke off from the CPI (founded in 1924), following the Sino-Soviet split. (The CPI stayed loyal to Moscow; the CPI(M) sided with China.) In 1969, the Maoist Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), or CPI(ML), peeled away from its Left flank along with an insurgent wing commonly known as the Naxalites (after the Bengali village of Naxalbari, site of a police firing on a peasant demonstration in 1967). As in many other places around the world, the late 1960s' revolutionary upsurge

crested into the early 1970s only to collapse in a round of lethal repression, crushing defeats, disillusionments, and major world-system shifts—and the way forward had to be reconsidered. Nevertheless, the array of militant groups shorthanded as Naxalite has reemerged from decades of quiet persistent growth throughout the “red corridor,” a north-south axis through the central forested areas from Nepal to Andhra Pradesh. A merger of the major militant factions in 2004 produced the CPI (Maoist)—which the prime minister and home minister have repeatedly called India’s greatest internal security threat (except when it’s the Muslims, as the joke goes).

The CPI(M) has remained the dominant party and a relatively significant force in electoral politics. It held power in the provinces of West Bengal and Kerala for over thirty years, and at several junctures was an influential player in national coalition politics. Adept in the pragmatic compromise required in the game of parliamentary power, it favors industrialization above all—which ironically has put it at odds with the further Left and its own rural constituency, especially given harsh recent conflicts around acquisitions of agricultural land for industrial projects.

It also identifies itself as the only true and representative voice of the Left. Yet critics had been challenging the CPI(M)’s attempts to claim its own institution and party line as synonymous with the Left itself for many years. As was the case worldwide, the critiques and correctives applied by the New Left to the Old Left tended to tilt it in more antiauthoritarian, flexible, and intersectional directions—which is to say, more anarchistic elements would be

present in its commonsense form and content. Incidentally, Omvedt comments that in the earliest stages of the New Left upsurge, “the Naxalite movement . . . combined orthodox Marxist-Leninist language with what many saw (with a good deal of validity) as ‘ruralist anarchism.’”⁷ (Of course, depending on who those “many” were, this was of a piece with other criticisms and self-criticisms, such as “infantile,” “adventurist,” and “ultra-left.”)

Several Delhi-based progressive scholars wrote a statement in May 2011 after the defeat of the CPI(M)-led Left Front governments that had governed West Bengal and Kerala since 1977, proclaiming that the death of the Left had been (yet again) greatly exaggerated, because the Left is not the CPI(M); and not only because the coalition, while losing its majority, had actually held on to a significant percentage of votes.

Votes have never been a real marker of the strength of a political movement and its culture. Indeed, the Left Front parties now have a historic opportunity to transform themselves, starting with a conscious effort to introduce more democracy in their ranks and a culture of open debate. . . . [I]t is clear that as long as Indian democracy survives . . . in its broken state as a system unable to nourish the mass of its population or live without violence and the subjugation of whole communities, the Left outside parliament, the left as a culture of democracy and resistance, a network of movements and organisations, and a new more vigorous set of campaigns, will continue

to flourish. A younger, more radical generation will undoubtedly be attracted to it and to its values of solidarity, equality, freedom and opposition to capitalism both in India and worldwide.⁸

Until his death in 2009, Kandalla Balagopal was one of the most highly respected voices within critical leftist circles. He left his position as a professor of mathematics in 1985 to work full time as a civil liberties and human rights activist, and later became a lawyer. After serving as general secretary of the Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee for fourteen years, he broke away in 1997 to form the Human Rights Forum.⁹ The split was due to a disagreement on the militant methods of the Naxalites. While unquestionably a man of the Left (and erstwhile Maoist sympathizer), he was unwavering in his criticism of violence and violations of human rights, no matter who perpetrated them.

“My own understanding of the human rights movement is that it is essentially a moral concern,” said Balagopal in an editorial in the *Human Rights Bulletin* shortly before his death. “This is where many of my friends disagree; they believe it is a political concern. It all depends on how you define politics, but my only point is that essentially it is a question of . . . asserting certain values other than the values of domination, power and oppression.”¹⁰ In the 1990s, he had a strong influence on student Left activities in Delhi. Menon recalls that “for many of us politicized during this period, Balagopal stood for something that many dedicated human rights activists/intellectuals found difficult to do: to respond to changing realities and not hesitate

to unflinchingly argue against even the (revolutionary) stream—from within—if that is where his analysis of realities took him.”¹¹ In the discussions inspired by Balagopal and the People’s Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR), they began moving beyond mode of production debates and “the traditional left questions,” such as “semi colonial/ semi feudal or capitalist; parliamentary/mass based politics or armed struggle,” by linking class analysis to other issues and structures, such as gender- and caste-based injustices, communalism, and regional autonomy.

Apart from the issue of violence, Balagopal’s critiques also had to do with the recognition of all kinds of rights violations on the basis of unequal power relations. The legitimacy of the political cause never lets you off the hook for acts of rights violation on your own account, he stressed. Those could and must be criticized even (or even more) when the cause is one you supported. Similarly, Balagopal pointed out the importance of the distinction between the political issues behind a militant struggle, which are primary and must be addressed, and the legal/criminal aspect, which should be dealt with separately (assuming the rule of law was recognized as just—perhaps a surprisingly optimistic view of the law on his part). Therefore, even if the political issues could be resolved in favor of what the movement is fighting for, the movement would then still have to pay for the consequences of its own crimes against democracy and human rights. This begs the question, What overarching rights framework and enforcement regime was Balagopal pointing toward? If it was one that existed both before and after the new dispensation,

was this then not a total revolution but instead a more localized reform?

“Can we turn to the law to make governance answerable to popular disapproval other than at election time? Constitutional democracy as we know it in India gives little scope for such a hope,” he wrote on India’s Republic Day in 2009. Although many activists seemed to look to Public Interest Litigation cases (PILs, comparable to class action lawsuits) as magical remedies, Balagopal was more skeptical of the system. “Desperation can be the only reason for these illusions. Less excusable is the ignorance of the sociology of adjudication. Judges, taken as a class, are at one with most of the political and economic tendencies since liberalisation for no more subtle reason than that they belong to the social class that has benefited and will benefit much more from these tendencies.”¹²

In the face of this kind of intractability,

There is no option but to devise ways of stopping the system in its depredations. Since Indian democracy has not learnt to respect reasoned criticism unless it is armed with the strength to physically prevent the execution of the policies criticized, ways of achieving such strength must be sought by agitational movements. In principle the best method is to mobilize the people likely to be affected in large numbers and physically sit in the path of the State and Capital.¹³

Activists must resist the temptation of shortcuts, whether by PIL or taking up arms.

It all came back to the principle that ends never justified means; prefiguration was essential.

When the violence attaches itself to a political path that is mediated by establishment of political and social domination at each level, as in the case of communists in general and the naxalites in particular, it raises more questions for the human rights movement. A defining characteristic of the human rights movement is its attitude of suspicion towards all power and authority, whether political or social. It may be utopian to believe that human society will at any time be fully free of all power and authority. And moreover, the human rights movement has positively welcomed the use of the authority of the law for ameliorative purposes in the context of social and economic deprivation. Yet it cannot be again said that a major and quite necessary concern of the human rights movement is to reduce the quantum of authority and power in society to the strictly necessary level. . . .¹⁴

This meant that activists could never relax their vigilance against

the consequences that spring from a political strategy of “liberation” through establishment of the authority and power of the “right” agents, whether the rightness is defined in moral terms or “scientific” terms. It cannot be content with the assumption

that when power is exercised by the “right” people, there can be no occasion for human rights concern. Most of us do not need to be told this about putative benevolent dictators, but we do not find it equally obvious about communist dictators, whether in power in the State or in power over local society preliminary to such ascendance. How can the Human Rights movement not look at how this power is being established, . . . what norms it is following, how democratic the norms are, how accountable this power is to the people in whose name it is exercised, and so on? Can the fact that the purported final aim of the authority is total liberation of us human beings from all oppression render one blind to these questions?¹⁵

For Balagopal, of course, the answer was no.

Another formation conscientious of prefigurative methods (although they probably wouldn’t have put it in those terms) was the Shramik Mukti Dal in rural Maharashtra, one of the “post-traditional communist” groups that developed throughout the 1980s. Bharat Patankar, one of its founding activists, said, “Now, revolution means . . . the beginning of a struggle to implement a new strategy regarding the relationship between men and women and between people of different castes and nationalities. It means alternative ways of organizing and managing the production processes, alternate concepts of agriculture and of agriculture/industry/ecology, and alternative health care.”¹⁶

He also insisted that the goal was no longer to encourage the working class to take over the state and industrial system but rather to reconceptualize and reconstruct the very nature of political and economic systems. According to the Shramik Mukti Dal's manifesto, "The basis of this conception is a total transformation in all fields including the relations among human beings, the means of human production and the relations of production, the relations of humans with nature." This would be a revolution that "creates a new ecologically balanced, prosperous, non-exploitative society," not as a single event, but instead a daily "process of creation," by "striking one blow after another against the roots of the established capitalist, casteist, patriarchal, social-economic structure."¹⁷ Rather than solely focusing on class, the means, process, and organization of production had to be understood as based also in the systems of caste and patriarchy. Furthermore, environmental sustainability could not be forgotten, nor the fact that (in Patankar's words) within the "symbiotic and harmonious balance existing in nature . . . [h]umankind could only advance on the basis of . . . the healthy development of these interrelationships" between themselves and "the atmosphere, water, rain, trees, jungles, rivers, hills, other animals, birds, insects, worms, germs, the sun, the moon, the solar system, and so on."¹⁸

"In order to create a new society of human liberation," therefore, "'revolution' cannot be simply a matter of the toiling classes taking of control of the means of production created by capitalism." Renewable resource based production, while not guaranteed to be carried out in a just way, could at least, unlike the production method instituted by

capitalism, be “undertaken in a decentralized fashion under the cooperative control of the toiling people.”¹⁹

Finally, it was not part of the Shramik Mukti Dal’s agenda to replace the current state with a new state power; instead,

destroying the power of the current state and in its place bringing in the organized network of decentralized and ecologically balanced agro-industrial centers and, the development of the whole society is the all-round development of every individual as a precondition for the people’s new democratic society, this is the revolutionary alternative. From its very beginning, “for a principled transformation the people’s parallel power” will be established from the “revolutionary process of the toilers.” . . . The power that has been known as the state will be ended and a new communal cooperative society will be established in this world.²⁰

Jogin Sen Gupta, another ex-sectarian Communist, was disgusted by parties but still committed to movements. Through participation in various struggles during the 1980s, he found himself learning from feminist and indigenous perspectives, and proclaiming himself heartened rather than depressed by the disintegration of the iron curtain, concluded that “autocracy—whatever be its color—stands for curbing the bottom peoples’ right to associate, assert and build up their power. So a movement against authoritarianism—whatever its color—is building

up people's capacity for socialism." To him it was "not vanguardist tendencies, but informal networks; not armed 'liberation struggles' but popular upsurges; not the purely political, but the daily-life-based cooperative practices [that] were the keys to the future. This process of cooperation and democratic action by ordinary people in everyday life was . . . the 'primary' social movement, the force behind the others."²¹

The Nonparty People's Movements

Other new manifestations of antisystemic resistance positioned themselves completely outside the contentious family tree of Left parties and guerrilla groups. This critical New Left perspective called for a more intersectional analysis, with a strong social ecology component as opposed to the Nehruvian dirigiste developmental orthodoxy. Just as the debate over post-Enlightenment reason was the implicit backdrop to the spectrum of Indian anticolonialism, the principle of the developmental state placed its stamp on the mainstream Left—pinning the task of liberation on state planning and science, with industrial development as the key to freedom and equity. There were also critical alternate interpretations, however, that argued for the need to conceptualize a nondevelopmentalist paradigm while simultaneously questioning their relationship to existing political institutions and the very meaning of democracy.

In the environment of advanced global capitalism, an entirely new notion of revolution and emancipatory

mobilization was essential—one that would address those sectors subject to “particular forms of exploitation not recognized in traditional class analysis” and yet more salient than ever at the present stage—namely, the women’s, peasant, environmental, and Dalit movements. The other stream of resistance to the structures of neocolonialism and internal colonialism since the 1990s came from the new social movements and “non-party people’s struggles,” as intellectuals and activists grew more aware of the necessity of incorporating the registers of caste and patriarchy as well as ecological concerns into their analysis of power.²²

Interestingly, one theme among the variously situated economic struggles that Omvedt identifies is that they are “directed against the state, rather than against the holders of private property; that is, the ‘decentralizing’ or ‘antistatist’ thrust, is economic as much as it is political.” She draws on Immanuel Wallerstein’s linkage between the political and economic decentralizing moves of “emphasizing democratic participation . . . ‘eroding the state’ rather than attempting to take state power,” and “retaining ‘local’ control over surpluses.” This movement orientation, though, is not apolitical but instead “an effort to redefine political action, to find ways of reconstructing politics.”²³ Foregrounding these dimensions called for a more comprehensive “unified” analysis of capitalism that could recognize manifold sites of surplus extraction—not limited to wage labor but rather falling everywhere along a complex and distended chain of accumulation—from appropriation of land and minerals, to reproductive labor, through a string of value-added transactions.

One of the first sustained analytic alternatives to the traditional Left approach came from the members of the Lokayan (“dialogue of the people”) group, founded by Rajni Kothari and D. L. Sheth in 1980.²⁴ Lokayan’s stated mission was to create a nonvanguardist “action-research project” that sponsored dialogues and workshops among intellectuals and activists on topics covering the gamut of new social movement concerns, including Dalit and tribal struggles, gender, ecology, communalism, and civil rights. The goal was

to evolve a systematic critique of the established models of development and the state, and also to promote political action drawing upon the large variety of micro-initiatives that are engaged in the struggle for a just society. . . . [T]o build a body of knowledge, opinion and concrete strategies of intervention at the “macro” level that will promote a decentralised democratic order and enhance respect for the cultural and social diversity of marginalised sections of society . . . [thus] helping to unify the various movements for egalitarian change.²⁵

The prolific writings of its key members, in the *Lokayan Bulletin* and other publications, made “the overall Lokayan perspective almost hegemonic in the wider circles of those who were attracted to the new movements and the issues they raised.”²⁶ But they ultimately stopped short of advocating a true alternative, turning back toward a reformation of the structures they were critiquing. (Lokayan’s

ambiguous relationship to foreign funding also underscored the wariness many activists came to feel toward transnationally connected NGOs in their subtle depoliticization of radical struggles.)

In dozens of articles, Kothari proclaimed the failure of most of the previous political institutions and systems associated with the postcolonial state alongside the failure of previous forms of resistance, revolutionary parties, and organization. This was partly their own fault, for losing touch with the people, their needs and aspirations; but the harsh backlash “perpetrated both by the State and by private vested interests” was not their fault. This took place in

a context where . . . the process of marginalisation is spreading, technology is turning anti-people, development has become an instrument of the privileged class, and the State has lost its role as an agent of transformation, or even as a mediator, in the affairs of civil society. It is a context of massive centralisation of power and resources, centralisation that does not stop at the national centre either and makes the nation State itself an abject onlooker and a client of a global “world order.”²⁷

Menon notes that “for Kothari, the crises of ‘ecocide, ethnocide and militarization’ [were] inevitable outcomes of processes unleashed by the three dominant projects of the state—Development, Secularism and Security.” This resulted in “a kind of development driven by the needs of global capital, which is destroying the resource base of the country,

its sustainability as well as people's access to it."²⁸ The state that once upon a time "had so confidently joined in Third World struggle against hegemonic powers, had been a pillar of the non-aligned movement, and had followed a model of self-reliance based on a measure of de-linking from the world capitalist system, has today fallen so easy a prey to the doctrines of . . . integration into the world market, and to the homogenising spread of high tech, high consumerism, ecological destruction and ethnic genocide."²⁹ In other words, it was being re- or neocolonized.

Furthermore, Kothari contended, its repressiveness was directly related to its increasing alienness and separateness from society: lacking hegemonic consent or a sense of legitimate representativeness, the only recourse was to force. He concluded one article by saying that

our overview is of the decline of the state as a legitimate instrument of social will and its being sidetracked by new constellations of power and resources—corporate capitalism with its global reach, communal and ethnic formations . . . also leading to its growing decline as an authoritative organ of civil society which was at one time supposed to possess a monopoly of coercive power and violence. What remains of the state is, of course, being turned over to agents of violence and terror, all the way from police and the military to mafia criminal gangs. . . . There is taking place a growing breakdown of authority of the state in the wake of its being challenged by a growing incidence of revolts and

rebellions on the one hand and delegitimisation through new managerial doctrines like privatisation on the other. Perhaps the fault lay in adopting this very conception of the state as the sole repository of power and authority.³⁰

After all, this concept had emerged in the Europe of the late Middle Ages. Why should anyone assume it was identically applicable in the modern third world?

All the changes on the international and domestic terrain, brought on by the turbulence of a new phase of globalization, called for new nonparty forms of popular resistance more appropriate to the conditions. These grass-roots movements could be understood as signs of a sense of the bankruptcy “of States. Of parties. Of other party-like organisations. Of the organised economy. Of leadership. Of democratic institutions. Of NGOs and voluntary agencies,” observed Kothari. “They are based on deep stirrings of consciousness . . . as a response to the incapacity of the State to hold its various constituents in a framework of positive action, its growing refusal (not just inability) to deliver the goods and its increasingly repressive character.”³¹

Yet their implications were on the macro scale. They also had “to be seen as part of the democratic struggle at various levels, in a radically different social context than was posited both by the incrementalists and the revolutionaries, at a point of history when existing institutions and the theoretical models on which they are based have run their course . . . when large vacuums in political space are emerging thanks to the decline in the role of the State

and the virtual collapse of ‘government’ in large parts of rural India.”³²

In Kothari’s view, the nonparty organizations and

movements for regional autonomy and decentralisation [were] intended to take the avenues of political participation closer to the people, to be carried out in an idiom and mode of communication and around issues that intimately relate to them. . . .

The “regional” phenomena in India, combining in its force a rejection of the authoritarianism of the Centre; the dominance of the metropolises (and their imperial patrons), the cultural hegemony of bourgeois cosmopolitanism and the political economy of corruption . . . the chauvinist drives of the national elite, has to be understood as part of the larger democratic struggle [that will] reorder the distribution of power in favour of the lower reaches of society.³³

Kothari, however, then made a 180-degree recuperative turn, apparently contradicting his own description. Although the movements he has just portrayed so positively “were to be seen as attempts to open alternative political spaces outside the usual arenas of party and government,” he then insisted that they were not really outside the state, which he had just depicted so negatively. They instead should be seen as potential “new forms of organisation and struggle meant to rejuvenate the State and to make it once again an instrument of liberation from exploitative

structures (both traditional and modern) in which the underprivileged and the poor are trapped.” With apparently no justification to be deduced from anything he had just said, he wanted to use “the democratic idea as a means of rendering the state into a socially purposive instrument” whose legitimacy and indispensable authority would be clear to all.

But who are the underprivileged and poor?

No antiauthoritarian history (or revolutionary social transformation) of India could overlook the issue of caste, one of the most toxic systems of social hierarchy ever instituted in the world, comparable in its entrenched effects to the foundational racism of the U.S. state—a comparison not lost on the Dalit Panthers, who modeled themselves on the Black Panthers, combined with a splash of Naxalism and a generous infusion of Ambedkarism, when they formed their group in 1972. The Dalit’s new political visibility after the Mandal Commission’s report in 1980 was one of the features identified as transforming the terms of the Nehru-era political discourse.³⁴ “To this new brand of vernacular leaders,” Menon and Nigam write, “the ideological battles between Left and Right might have appeared . . . as insubstantial differences within a modernist bloc of privilege.”³⁵

Yet Dalit movements weren’t necessarily antiauthoritarian, although some were indeed radically egalitarian. (Some weren’t even that, seeking not an end to the hierarchy but instead a better rung on the ladder for a particular group.) From the anarchist perspective, Dalit and feminist movements may be objectively, even if not subjectively, revolutionary in their efforts at dismantling interlocked,

hierarchical structures of oppression and exploitation. The greatest legacy of Ambedkar, Dalit leader, legal scholar, and primary drafter of the Indian constitution, was as a republican in the best Enlightenment sense of the word. His ideology combined the values of the French Revolution with the egalitarianism and rationalism of Buddhism. Hinduism, as a dominant feature of Indian culture, had to be judged like any ideology or system by the “test of justice” and “test of utility,” declared Ambedkar. It failed on both counts. True liberty, he argued, required social equality, economic security, and the availability of knowledge. After Ambedkar, though, in Omvedt’s regretful estimation the Dalit movement tended to lack ideological content; while the latter-day Panthers sorted themselves into Ambedkarite/Buddhist, Marxist, and urban gangsterish (“we didn’t read the manifesto, we only knew—if someone puts their hand on our sister, cut it off!”) tendencies.³⁶

Dalit movements did not necessarily see themselves as part of an anticolonial struggle, unless in the implicit sense that the Brahminic master narrative proudly claims the mantle of conquest along with the identity of primordial Aryans, enshrining an origin myth in which they entered the subcontinent from the northwest in ancient Vedic times, bringing their dominion and civilizational advancement to the primitive (and supposedly darker-skinned) prior inhabitants. During the anti-British mobilizations, Ambedkar and his followers were more apt to be British loyalists, blaming Gandhi and the INC for the discrimination, exclusion, and brutality they routinely faced within a conservative Hindu-dominated society.

On the other hand, the contemporary Adivasi narrative of resistance clearly evokes the dynamics of colonization. This is particularly true in the regions of Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh—the mineral-rich, heavily forested areas in the center of India, carved out of Bihar and Madhya Pradesh in 2000—where Adivasis are the bulk of the population.

In these as in many other regions of India today, the issue of land acquisition is possibly the most urgent frontier of resistance to neoliberal capitalism, with the Indian state seen as its agent. And the major legal instrument by which the Indian state commandeers land from agrarian and forest-based communities to give to mining and manufacturing corporations is still the Land Acquisition Act of 1894, put in place by the British colonial administration. The law was ostensibly a way to transfer private land to “public use”; in practice in the liberalized economy, it is quite the opposite. Nowadays, “private” can mean the commons of a village or tribal community, while “public” can mean a multinational corporation’s mining concession or designated Special Economic Zone. These zones are tax-free, duty-free areas that in effect function as foreign territory, exempt from compliance with domestic labor and environmental laws.³⁷ This arrangement sounds uncannily like the colonial-era concessions and extraterritoriality agreements by which the East India Company was able to set up shop even prior to formal sovereignty.

Resistance to land acquisition became big news with the Narmada Valley Development Plan, which sparked a massive mobilization against the submersion of villages that threatened the displacement of over a quarter million people. The

Narmada Bachao Andolan (Save the Narmada movement) was established in 1985, and grew to be an international cause célèbre, catalyzing an unprecedented alliance of environmental, peasant, human rights, and other organizations. But this target was still a remnant of the Nehruvian state model; dams were his great “temples” of modernity and the modern nation-state. In the more recent mobilizations, the enemy is more directly transnational capital.

In 2006, the villages of Singur and Nandigram in West Bengal, respective sites of a proposed Tata car factory and an Indonesian-owned (Selim Group) chemical plant, became volatile flash points for resistance and violent repression as well as widespread solidarity action, as did the Pohang Iron and Steel Company (POSCO), a Korean corporation, in the Indian state of Orissa in 2011. Such contestation is simultaneously an intervention in the logic of commerce and profit, and a primary defense of the lives and livelihoods of the people affected—thus addressing both aspects of “postcolonial” colonialism at once: global and internal. Yet the two are closely tied. Grassroots mobilizations that focus on manifestations of transnational corporate capitalism, engaged in the unmasked act of accumulation by dispossession, also function as implicit indictments of the neoliberalized state. So land acquisition struggles can easily be seen as continuing resistance to colonization, or at any rate to the economic processes included historically within the colonial package. This is what enclosure of the commons looks like.

Similarly, the Indian state utilizes the logic of insurgency and counterinsurgency to guarantee the security of

capital accumulation in these areas, through various army, police, and paramilitary bodies as well as a state-backed citizens' militia, the Salwa Judum, as a counterweight to Naxalite militance. It is not coincidental, as many progressive activists and scholars point out, that the Indian government sensationalizes the threat in order to justify the militarization and extralegality by which it controls unrest in these regions of great potential wealth extraction as well as endemic local poverty. Simply by slapping on the Naxalite label, any human rights activist or reformer who works in those areas can be accused of sedition—that is, any sort of criticism of the Indian government, which is again a move taken directly from the British colonial playbook of the early twentieth century—and made vulnerable to lengthy imprisonment or extrajudicial killing.³⁸

Acknowledging the need to incorporate ecological awareness on the long march to socialism, Archana Prasad, a researcher known for her work on forest policy and tribal issues, has criticized environmentalists for equating modernization with colonization. The difference, she argues, is that colonization means development for someone else's benefit; current development is for Indians' own benefit.³⁹

But this contention is somewhat misleading. First, we can't reduce modernity simply to development and/or industrialization. It's possible, as many have already done, to criticize industrialization while proposing an alternate modernity. This is a genuine point of disagreement between the new social movements and the CPI(M): if industrialization is the road to revolution and progress, because it will generate the revolutionary class, then the priority must be to

develop an indigenous industrial base; but if industrialization is part of the problem, then an alternate mode of socially and ecologically sustainable production must be sought.

Second, the tribal and regional separatist movements are saying precisely that they are undergoing development for someone else's benefit, for extraction and incorporation into the capital accumulation process. The attribution of classical colonial practices to the central state is in this case aptly applied. In fact, only according to a nationalist logic is it possible to limit the differences between a collective "you" and a collective "someone else" to nationality. Such differences can also be based in class, gender, region, and minority status. But the nationalist logic equates "your nation's benefit" with "your benefit," even if it asks you to sacrifice personally.

Many of these mobilizations have been linked—at least communicatively, if not operationally—through loose networks of the National Alliance of People's Movements, defined in 1992 as an emerging "process" in the context of the dual trends of intensified liberalization and the rise of the Hindu right wing. It was formalized in 1996 as

an alliance of progressive people's organisations and movements, who while retaining their autonomous identities, are working together to bring the struggle for primacy of rights of communities over natural resources, conservation and governance, decentralised democratic development and towards a just, sustainable and egalitarian society in

the true spirit of globalism. We stand against corporate globalisation, communalism and religious fundamentalism, patriarchy, casteism, untouchability and discrimination of all kinds. We believe an alliance emerging out of such a process with shared ideology and diverse strategies can give rise to a strong social, political force and a National People's movement.⁴⁰

The characteristic analysis—as summed up by Biju Mathew, referring to a conversation he moderated between Medha Patkar, a cofounder of the National Alliance of People's Movements and the Narmada Bachao Andolan, and political geographer David Harvey—true to its global South base, is rooted in a consciousness of anticolonialism, thereby challenging the Eurocentrism of traditional Marxist analysis.⁴¹ This analysis also expands on the category of class, using a more multilevel concept of community at multiple scales that cut across classes. It favors the revitalization of agriculture, but without romanticizing the collective return of land to the tiller or an Edenic agrarian life. As in the case of the panchayat system, while immediate control of resources by a local community may be structurally desirable, this in itself does not guarantee that the community will choose to use the resources in an equitable and sustainable way, unless the communities themselves are redefined from the bottom up.

Finally, as the early twentieth-century anticolonial activists found affinity and sought solidarity amid the international radical networks of the metropolises, some late

twentieth-century people's movement activists came into contact with the network of resistance from below known as the global justice or alter-globalization movement. This in turn provided opportunities at both moments for points of encounter with Western anarchists, or activists who at least partake of a movement culture pervaded by the influence of Western anarchism.

Many groups participating in the National Alliance of People's Movements were also associated with the People's Global Action, an international coordinating framework initiated in 1998 in response to a call put out by the Zapatistas. Representatives from grassroots movements of seventy-one countries met in Geneva, including a large (200,000) delegation from India's Mazdur Kisan Sangram Samiti farmers' movement. The People's Global Action hallmarks manage to comprehensively catalog the essential features of multiple facets of oppression and exploitation, while aiming for universal relevance without cultural particularism. In this sense, it is both antiauthoritarian and anticolonial.

Some of these linked campaigns have also maintained their dialogue with the alt-globalization movement through participation in the World Social Forum process, though not without controversy. When the forum was held in Bombay in 2004, it provided an opportunity to crystallize some of the major contemporary debates around means and ends of antisystemic struggle in South Asia. Multiple counterconvergences organized by the traditional Left parties denounced it as a tool of imperialism for derailing struggles, "putting a human face on neoliberal globalisation," and being a hotbed of counterrevolutionary

“anarchists, Trotskyists, postmodernists,” and proponents of the “Seattle tradition.”⁴² It also drew valid critiques of the forum’s complicity with corporate funding agencies in the global North, relative inaccessibility to nonelites, and general ineffectiveness on account of its refusal to shut down its treasured multivalence by committing itself to programmatic action. This indicated a tension between conflicting ideas of the forum’s function: “Open Space or Organisation? Event or Process?” Movement or festival?⁴³

The concept of open space has been the subject of extensive critical commentary anchored by the Delhi-based India Institute for Critical Action: Centre in Movement, which has played an active role in the World Social Forum process, and even more so in the evolving critical assessment of it.⁴⁴

Director Jai Sen articulates open space as a complex term with multiple meanings and implications. For Sen, this includes a maintenance of possibilities and resisting closure; emergence, indeterminacy, and ambiguity; a condition of “networking, the apparent horizontality of social relations,” which not only social movement activists but also corporate, military, and civil society entities have embraced as a “natural and normal way . . . to behave and organise things”; “the idea and practice of . . . a generalised, widespread, non-centralised and autonomous political-cultural phenomenon”; networking “in the material means of information exchange and communication and also of international travel”; an unstructured zone of “freedom, liberty, safety, a place where we can . . . exchange and learn more freely, the possibility of unexpectedness and therefore of unboundedness,

and the possibility of another world.” Open space, accordingly, “challenges and subverts the idea that structure and organisation are necessarily vertical or programmed,” or hierarchical by definition. Yet Sen also stresses the importance of contextualization and accountability. Such a space is never “inherently neutral, open or equal,” since it “lives in dialectical tension with its surrounds,” and may have been created through “displacement and appropriation.” It represents potentiality, not utopia. Therefore it must be “conceived, perceived, and practiced as struggle; as critical action. Open space—and opening spaces—must be seen as an insurrectionary act; as an insurrection.”⁴⁵

The task at hand is to keep an eye out for where antiauthoritarian and decentralizing tendencies are visible while also noting where resistance to neocolonialism, most obviously in the form of neoliberal capitalism and accumulation by dispossession, is visible, and asking whether there is any logic by which these two elements should have anything to do with each other.

In the context of post-cold war neoliberal globalization, the Indian state reneged on its social contract and renounced its previous institutional persona, betrayed often in practice yet still cherished in the abstract, as emancipator and benefactor. Now that the state was aligned with colonizing forces rather than against them, as its redistributing mechanisms channeled wealth upward, not downward, an anticolonial (or neocolonial) orientation would by default have to involve opposition to the state. But did this materialize as a principle, and not just a situational tactic? For some, perhaps, yes.

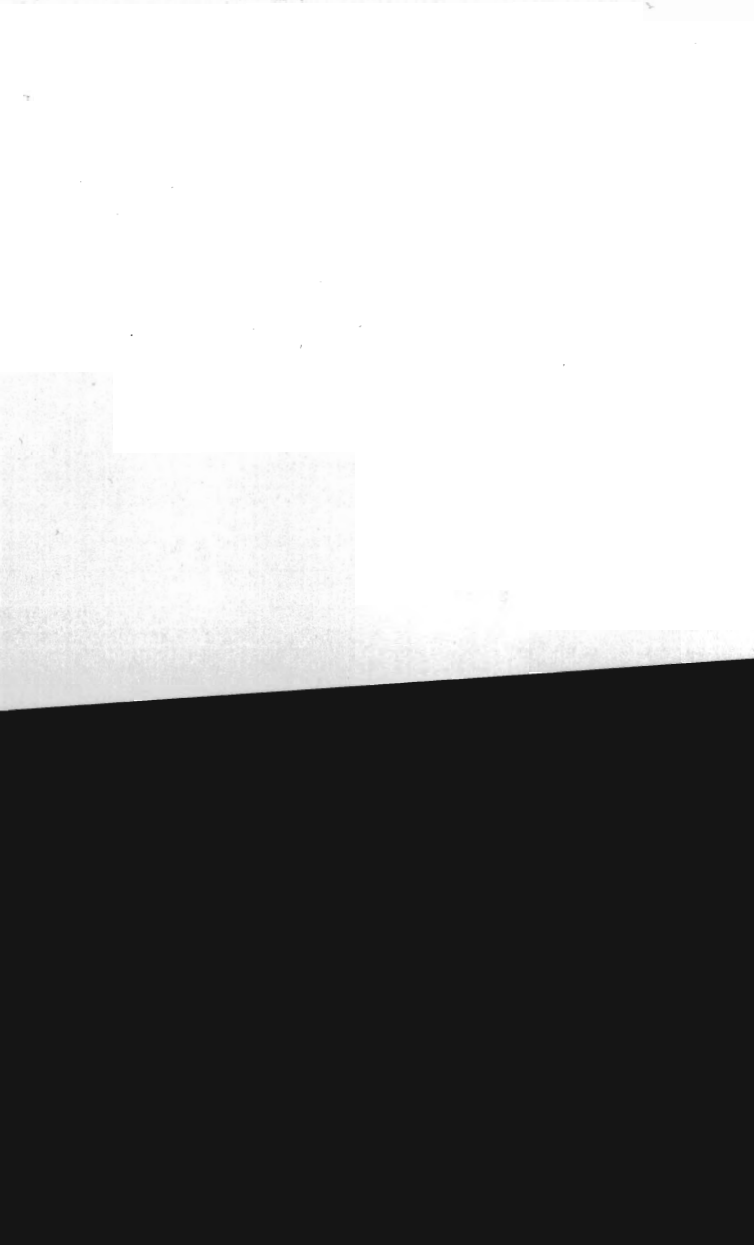
In the words of Menon and Nigam, “What began with dissatisfaction over formal institutionalized politics, and the consequent search for more ‘people-oriented’ kinds of political structures and institutions, eventually moved toward a realization that it was not just the authoritarian-bureaucratic nature of development that was problematic. There grew a recognition of the more fundamental problem with the very ideology of development, centrally tied as it was to the idea of the nation-state’s sovereignty over its domain.”⁴⁶

But again, this is an exploratory observation stemming from the analytic framework of this book, not an attempt to attribute this interpretation to anyone else. None of the movements discussed here is anarchist with a capital *A*; that word lacks resonance for them, and indeed conjures up quite different associations than it does in North America and Europe. Yet the questions, themes, conflicts, and issues involved—such as, How do you see the role of the state in relation to social movements? To global capitalism? To society? How do you relate to concentrated power? How do various forms of social hierarchy relate to class? What roles do technology, rationalism, and spirituality play in either liberation or oppression? What is “progress”? How do you articulate ecological sustainability with social justice?—are analogous to those that have characterized the anarchist problematic and lowercase *a* motif.

They are not anarchists, but some of them—for example, Vandana Shiva and Arundhati Roy—are people whom anarchists appreciate. Their commitments are intersectional, antiauthoritarian, nonhierarchical, and framed mainly in connection with a principle of social

ecology whose genealogy may be traced through a selective synthesis of Gandhian and socialist thought—that is, the best of the rationalist-progressive and the romantic-countermodern tendencies.

All of this reinforces the conviction that liberation never meant the handover of institutions of governmentality and surplus extraction from foreign to local rulers. Instead, it means the dismantling of those institutions entirely, and the replacement of their functions and the systems of relationships they are based on with other systems of relationships. In this way, the warp and weft of the ongoing process of South Asian decolonization beyond formal independence on into the twenty-first century are tantalizingly analogous to those of the Western anarchist tradition.



PURNA SWARAJ





On Solidarity

Now for some practical applications, for this book isn't intended simply for theoretical or historical interest. The study of anticolonial activity is never just theoretical, and can never be disembedded from its still-unfolding history.

The historical reference point for my exploration of anarchism and anticolonialism tends to be South Asia. But the reference point for current political activism relevant to this conjuncture tends to be Palestine. This jump would seem strange if the motivation was a particularist interest in an exceptional region, but not if it is the principle of anti-imperialism. Besides, whenever I ask myself—as I often do—what the historical subjects I admire would do if they were around today, it's not hard to speculate that they would be continuing their efforts at social and economic justice by fighting against neocolonialism and neoliberalism in India, defending civil rights and racial justice in the United States, supporting political prisoners, and lending their solidarity and aid to any anticolonial struggles extant

in the world—more or less exactly what they were doing fifty, seventy, or a hundred years ago.

In the memoir *Lucknow ki Panch Raaten* (Five Lucknow Nights), Ali Sardar Jafri paints a picture of himself and his Progressive Writers' Association comrades as young radicals in the 1930s, perpetually on fire with poetry and revolution. The fourth night is a dark and stormy one in 1941. Jafri and his friends have gathered at somebody's house after midnight, still on a collective high from a *mushaira* at All India Radio (a traditional high-culture form infused with new radical energy into something like an elevated spoken-word poetry slam). On the wall above the fireplace hangs a portrait of a *mujer libre* of Spain, below which is written "To Death." Jafri ardently describes the free woman's clenched fists, her heaven-raised face, her lips taut with fierce emotion, and the swelling breast that her warrior's garb could not conceal. (These are young guys, remember; amid the passions of global solidarity, they still had some work to do on the patriarchy front.)

"In a way," Jafri writes, "the picture was the translation of our romantic and our revolutionary emotions; we too wanted to be warriors unto death. We considered Spain to be our own country, because it was fighting against fascism for freedom and the beautiful dreams of humanity. Spain's freedom was our freedom, and on this night, the warrior woman was included in our party and advancing our courage in the intoxication of India's freedom."¹ (And possibly wine, he adds.) His buddy Faiz Ahmad Faiz offers up a poem he just heard, and they continue to trade couplets.² "This music was a new signal-bell in Faiz's soul, which in his later life would

bring him to the tents of the Palestinian mujahidin. This warrior woman of Spain, and Yasser Arafat of Palestine, are two names for the same united front.”³ So too their struggle against imperialism in India. (From there he segues into a story about a Ku Klux Klan riot at a Paul Robeson concert in Peekskill, New York, and the power of song and poetry.)

During the first half of the twentieth century, India was the most prominent front in the global struggle against imperialism. A strategic linchpin for British imperial power, it was also a focal point for Western activists involved in movements comparable to those that in a later era (after the 1955 Bandung conference) would be described as third world solidarity. Following World War II and South Asian decolonization this front shifted in the 1950s to Algeria, Cuba, and Vietnam, joined throughout the 1960s by a wave of African decolonization struggles as well as New Afrikan, Puerto Rican, and Native American movements within the United States in the 1970s, and then by U.S. involvement in Central America in the 1980s. In the 1990s, Chiapas was most prominent; in the 2000s, the biggest flashpoint among extant anticolonial struggles and solidarity movements has probably been Palestine, along with indigenous movements throughout the Americas. (This, of course, is not an exhaustive list of all the sites of anticolonial resistance, which are legion, but just a quick sketch of a moving front line.)

Inevitably, questions about the ethics and effectiveness of solidarity work come up in any situation in which a relatively privileged outsider is coming into contact with a less privileged community, whether within or across political

borders, and whether defined in terms of race, class, or anything else. It should be obvious that the first issue in relating to someone else's struggle is to avoid the Scylla of paternalist charity and Charybdis of appropriation, both exacerbated by the savior complex. Second, the recognition of analogies, affinities, and systemic connectivity—all of which may facilitate solidarity—has to be distinguished from simply claiming equivalence; “related” doesn’t mean “identical.” We can articulate connections and parallels by applying the language of colonization to various instances of expropriation, commodification, encroachment, enclosure, and subordination, without thereby trivializing the significance of actual historical colonization, located at a particular intersection of the racial power grid with the configurations of capitalism and state power.

I’m going to take a cue here from Gandhi, who wrote his manifesto *Hind Swaraj* in 1909, on a boat from England to South Africa, in the form of an exchange between himself and an imaginary interlocutor. The following composite exchange reflects years of internal and external dialogues, and countless workshops, events, and panels that I have attended or taken part in. These include most recently speaking on a panel exploring “anarchist solidarity” at the 2011 Left Forum along with Can Baskent and Matt Houston, and developing a workshop on boycott, divestment, and sanctions against the Israeli occupation for the 2011 anarchist book fair in New York along with Ethan Heitner, Samia Shafi, and Alexis Stern.

I hope this conversation continues, along with the effort to practice critical solidarity with those in

struggle for any form of decolonization—including both neocolonialism (read neoliberal globalization) and the persistent legacies of previous colonization (read U.S.-backed authoritarian regimes).

You say you're an anarchist. Yet you're supporting X national liberation movement. How can you support a demand for statehood?

I don't support demands for statehood, per se. I do support people's struggle for self-determination and the space to determine the conditions of their own lives. It's not the task of an ally to decide what the best alternative is; in order to remain consistent with our own principles, anarchist allies of anticolonial struggles have to recognize that the people in question must decide for themselves.

But isn't that kind of a naive cop-out, knowing that they plan to create a state?

Well, the fact remains that they're forced to operate within a world of states. The reason anticolonial resistance struggles feel the need to institute sovereignty is because at any scale, a "liberated" area—whether an autonomous zone, *quilombo*, *caracole*, reservation, or any space run on decentralized and nonhierarchical principles—is still embedded in nonliberated space. It has boundaries inside of which these principles prevail, and outside of which they do not. It needs ways to mediate or transition between the two. That is, a zone in which its right to set the terms of how things will go is recognized and enforceable, where another law or power can't interfere.

An area that has fought off colonial rule still exists within the interstate system. If a newly decolonizing area doesn't gain recognition by that system, it has to fear reconquest or incorporation into someone else's nation-state or empire. This has always been the case for places with fuzzy borders or in border marches. Independent statehood was at least a nominal guard against that, even if only to establish external boundaries by the terms of international law. The logical conclusion to this dilemma is that in order for a decolonizing area to truly adopt a "no-state solution," we would have to dismantle the interstate system as a whole and create anarchism everywhere. There can be no post-colonial anarchism in one country! No doctrine of peaceful coexistence, but continuous world revolution!

Whoa, you're freaking me out! For a while there I was thinking you sounded sort of like a Maoist, but now. . . . Are you some kind of Trot?

No. I'm putting you on—sort of. Maybe. At least about the Trot part.

Seriously, though, how do you feel about standing next to or under a national flag? In an era when media images are so powerful, you have to be aware of what it means to link yourself visually to an icon like that.

Yeah, I do pay attention to that—say, to where I'm standing during a rally. The same goes for some sectarian organizations back home. But since you brought up visual meanings: flags and such are powerful symbols for many groups, including nations and states. Still, the symbolism

of any given flag in a particular context is also layered with other complicated meanings and associations. We need to pay attention to the messages being communicated. Where is it shorthand for “freedom,” “revolution,” or “self-determination,” and where is it read as an icon of state power?

Yeah, about that idea: your principle about respecting other people’s self-determination raises more questions, and not just about states. What are the limits within which you can say, “This isn’t my business; they can organize themselves as they want to,” and beyond which you have to say, “This is abhorrent to my principles; I cannot stand with this struggle”?

Look, we all know that the enemies of our enemies aren’t always our friends. Especially given the emphasis we place on the importance of means and process as a prefigurative path to the desired outcome, anarchists engaged in solidarity-based resistance can’t postpone the problem or write it off as tactical. So one clue is whether someone else who’s opposing a particular empire—the United States, let’s say—is categorically anti-imperialist, or if they’re just pulling for a rival power to get the advantage, supporting some unsavory character simply because they’re anti-American. There are a lot of false binaries presented to us.

Well then, let’s be more concrete. If you can’t separate means and ends, the negative and positive fights, how can you support uncritically a group of people who are—oh, I don’t know—reactionary, misogynistic, authoritarian, anti-Semitic, chauvinistic, or super religious?

I don't. For one thing, be careful not to equate a whole culture or society with any of those adjectives. But I take your point, and the thing is, relationships of solidarity should not be uncritical from either side. If practiced on a level ground of mutual respect and two-way dialogue, there should be neither romanticizing nor paternalism. Your partners are not saints, noble savages, or charity cases. If I hate imperialism, then it's in my own interest to work against it from any angle I can. I'm not doing it as a favor to anyone. If we have (at least some of) the same goals and enemies, agreement in the need for resistance is not a stretch. And along the way you're learning from and changing each other. Pay attention. You gain trust by showing integrity and commitment over time. Then maybe someday, you'll have earned the right to intervene as an insider.

Sure, be respectful, listen, learn. OK. Still, how can you remain committed to your own core anti-oppression principles regarding things like gender and sexuality, or animal rights, without perpetuating the subtle (or not-so-subtle) colonialism of trying to "improve" someone else's culture? Can you refrain from imposing your own ideas on someone whom you're supposed to be supporting, if that means condoning ideas that go against your convictions regarding pure anarchist principle?

You mean, why can't we just persuade the Arab world to go vegan?

Very funny. But I mean really: is this an insurmountable paradox? On the other hand, is "taking leadership" just another cop-out, an abdication of principles?

It's important to recognize the internal debates within any society and its dynamic changes through time. Nothing is monolithic. It's virtually guaranteed that not all members of the putative nation are in total agreement about their social visions. Chances are that among these elements, you'll recognize counterparts with whose principles, strategies, tactics, and methods you do feel affinity. That's who you "take leadership" from.

I guess I feel comfortable enough with all that. So let's say I'm ready to get involved. What do I do? What is the job of a relatively privileged, mobile activist from the global North in relation to those resisting oppression on their own behalf in the South?

There are two answers to that. First of all, have you been invited to do something, and if so, what? Has someone put out a call for action? Who? What sort of action? Are there resources and capacities that are available to you as a first world dweller or northern passport holder that you can usefully leverage? Great, use that.

The second answer is deeper. It's pretty simple to see solidarity as the expression of support, whether symbolic or directly material, to a current resistance movement. But there's a deeper recognition of systemic, structural, and historical interrelationships that goes beyond that. A guy in the West Bank once said to some members of an International Solidarity Movement delegation, "We appreciate you all being here. It means a lot. But really, the best thing you can do to help is to go back home and end U.S. imperialism. Liberating ourselves is *our* job. Ending

U.S. imperialism is *your* job. You're in the belly of the beast." He was right. We've got the corporations and command systems all here, so what are we waiting for? If we recognize colonialism as an interconnected global power system in which we're all differentially located, then we're all engaged in a multifronted battle to dismantle and replace that system. Each particular site of exploitation and oppression requires resistance appropriate to that location. The key is to consciously link these sites and their particular struggles up with each other.

So how do they link up?

I knew you were going to say that. Aside from the military and monetary (thank you, Gil Scott Heron), I think perhaps the most obvious point of connection for anticolonial solidarity activists in the North during the last century has been the domestic struggle against racism. Antiracism in the metropolis is always profoundly interconnected with anticolonialism in the global South, since both depend on the same logic and are effects of the same historical causes. In fact, you could even say they're mutually constitutive. Accordingly, an APOC perspective or tendency makes an important theoretical contribution to anarchist praxis by foregrounding colonialism as a primary category of analysis as well as primary structure of oppression. This works in two directions: emphasizing antiracism with regard to North American society, including within its countercultures, such as anarchist milieus, and second . . .

Wait, aren't anarchist milieus already antiracist by definition?

Of course. They're also antipatriarchal. Therefore there is no manifest racism, sexism, ableism, ageism, homophobia, or other oppressive behavior within any anarchist space, project, collective, or community that I have ever seen. Nor is there any hegemonic orthodoxy about cultural practices and attitudes. That would be against our principles. So we're all set.

Now are you putting me on?

Yes.

And what was the second direction?

The second direction is emphasizing antiauthoritarian and nonnationalist modes of anticolonial struggle with regard to colonized peoples. This is what I meant before, about making decolonization a far more comprehensive liberation than the problematic concept of the nation-state can achieve. The meaning of freedom has to keep expanding to incorporate more categories of being, more dimensions of existence—I suspect I'm drawing that notion from Angela Davis.

Linking up these two dimensions, then, means viewing contemporary racial issues through the lens of colonial history and politics—not only in the ways we address native sovereignty claims and black civil rights, for example, but also in the ways we understand U.S. military doctrine and immigration policy. Occupying a hinge position, an APOC-oriented politics can create an intervention

concerning precisely the question of the relationship between anarchism and anticolonialism. It's a shift in emphasis, calling for large-scale contextualization in both space and time—an argument for the centrality of decolonization to emancipatory praxis.⁴

OK, OK, calm down, you're basically preaching to the choir here. But you've just said a whole lot of stuff. What do you really want me to take from this?

I'm glad you asked. To sum up, decolonizing anarchism means making anarchism a force for decolonization, and simultaneously dismantling colonial assumptions within our own understanding and practice of anarchism. That requires us to see anarchism as one locally contextualized, historically specific manifestation of a larger antiauthoritarian tradition.

This does two related things. For one, it enables us to recognize processes of decolonization and practices of anticolonial struggle as analogous or parallel to the anarchist tradition (or at least to its aspirations), but without seeing them as imitations of anarchism, and without trying to claim them or pressuring them to take on our mantle. Questions about power, industrialization, and alienation that have been at the heart of the struggle for a postcolonial future have the capacity to shed light on the similar dilemmas that have marked out some of the debates central to the Western anarchist tradition, and vice versa.

The second is that it makes colonialism—as a system constructed from state institutions, global capitalism, and profound racism—a primary component of all our analysis

and strategy. Much of this logic is common to the anti-imperialist politics of the 1970s' radical Left, but with the crucial amendment of antiauthoritarian means and ends. Efforts to facilitate nonstatist concepts of anticolonial liberation along with attempts to dismantle and discredit the racial inequities on which Western empires were built, and by which their resultant societies continue to function, are then two fronts in the same epic emancipatory struggle.

Meaning, in practical terms . . .

That if someone puts out a call that you have the capacity to answer, then go, but only if you're willing to be engaged consistently over the long term. And if you're able to do so with empathy and respect, without abandoning your critical awareness. Above all look to your own house; work at and from your own sites of resistance. While you do that, connect the dots; make the connections explicit. Fight racism. Undermine neoliberal capitalism. Interfere with war making. Resist gentrification and displacement. Subvert norms. Decolonize your mind.

Wait, didn't you forget one?

Oh yeah. Smash the state.

Notes

Introduction

1. See, for example, Adi Doctor, *Anarchist Thought in India* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1964).

Highest Form of Anarchism

1. Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1992), 69.

2. Cited in Robert Cutler and Robert Baird, eds., *The Basic Bakunin: Writings, 1869–1871* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1996), 175–77; see also Alfredo Bonanno, *Anarchism and the National Liberation Struggle* (Elephant Editions, 2002), 20–21. Many other classic texts on this theme can be found at <http://theanarchistlibrary.org>. More recent texts of interest include Steven Hirsch and Lucien van der Walt, *Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1870–1940: The Praxis of National Liberation, Internationalism, and Social Revolution* (Boston: Brill, 2010); Jason Adams, *Non-Western Anarchisms* (Zabalaza Books, 2003).

3. Rudolf Rocker, *Nationalism and Culture* (Montreal: Black

Rose Books, 1997), 252–53; Bonanno, *Anarchism*, 22–24.

4. Gabriel Kuhn, ed., *Revolution and Other Writings: A Political Reader* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2010).

5. See, for example, pieces by Walter Mignolo, Anibal Quijano, and Enrique Dussel in *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

6. See Chela Sandoval, *The Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

7. In the 1820s, Roy and Tagore founded Brahma Samaj, a liberal social reform movement that in essence redefined Hinduism; Roy is also sometimes called “the father of modern India.” Khan did much the same for Islam, as a modernizing reformer and founder of Aligarh University in 1875.

8. This theme recurs throughout Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

9. Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 38. Chatterjee is drawing on Louis Althusser here.

10. *Ibid.*, 39.

The Propagandists of the Deed

1. Tilak Raj Sareen, *Select Documents on the Ghadr Party* (Delhi: Mouno Publishing House, 1994), 136. From the *Springfield Republican*, August 11, 1916.

2. Peter Heehs, *Nationalism, Terrorism, Communalism: Essays in Modern Indian History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 33–34.

3. Cited in *ibid.*, 27.

4. James Campbell Ker, *Political Trouble in India, 1907–1917* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1917), 62–65.

5. Hechs, *Nationalism*, 112–13.

6. Rowlatt Sedition Committee Report (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1919), 21–24.

7. Cited in Ker, *Political Trouble*, 51; paraphrase.

8. Cited in *ibid.*

9. Rowlatt Sedition Committee, 22, citing *Yugantar*, April 11, 1907.

10. Cited in Ker, *Political Trouble*, 66.

11. Cited in *ibid.*, 67.

12. Cited in *ibid.*, 75–76.

13. Cited in *ibid.*, 78.

14. *Ibid.*, 47; Hechs, *Nationalism*, 112. According to Nirode K. Barooah (*Chatto: The Life and Times of an Indian Anti-imperialist in Europe* [New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004], 40, 45), *Bartaman Rananiti's* authorship was attributed to Abhinash Chandra Bhattacharya. Bloch's book appeared in 1900. A banker and railway magnate of humble Polish origins, Bloch served briefly as adviser to Czar Nicholas II. The book, which still appears in military curricula, was an indictment of modern industrial war as prohibitively destructive, annihilating the loser and economically crippling the winner, whose resources would be far better put toward pragmatic, constructive investment. It analyzed in detail military technology at that point, and predicted an emphasis on defensive positioning and guerrilla tactics rather than mobilization of massive conventional land armies.

15. Ker, *Political Trouble*, 49, 50.

16. Cited in *ibid.*, 50.

17. Cited in *ibid.*, 51–52.

18. Cited in *ibid.*, 52; see also Rowlatt Sedition Committee, 24–25.

19. Cited in Ker, *Political Trouble*, 52.

20. The most famous of these were the attempted assassination of Superintendent Bampfylde Fuller; efforts to mine the railroad tracks on which the lieutenant governor's train would be passing; and several attempts to use bombs to assassinate Presidency Magistrate Douglas Kingsford, resulting in the "Muzaffarpur Outrage" when two Englishwomen were killed departing from his Muzaffarpur home in a carriage.

21. Indulal Kanailal Yajnik, *Shyamaji Krishnavarma: Life and Times of an Indian Revolutionary* (Bombay: Lakshmi Publications, 1950).

22. Home Political file 35A, October 27, 1908; Indian Home Rule Society (February 1905), *Indian Sociologist* 1, no. 3 (March 1905), in Arun C. Bose, *Indian Revolutionaries Abroad, 1905–1927: Select Documents* (Delhi: Northern Book Centre, 2002), 6.

23. Ker, *Political Trouble*, 156; Rowlatt Sedition Committee, 5.

24. Home Dept. A, September 27, 1905; Pran Nath Chopra, ed., *Indian Freedom Fighters Abroad: Secret British Intelligence Report* (New Delhi: Criterion Publications, 1988), 88–91.

25. Britain and France Sedition Committee Report, Bengal Secretarial Press, Calcutta, 1918, in Bose, *Selected Documents*, 3–5; Arun C. Bose, *Indian Revolutionaries Abroad, 1905–1922: In the Background of International Developments* (Patna: Bharati Bhavan, 1971), 16–17.

26. Cited in Brown, *Har Dayal*, 26. Brown notes the sources of these quotations as, respectively, *Principles of Ethics*, section 272, and *The Study of Sociology*, chapter 8.

27. Cited in *ibid.*, 26.

28. Cited in Bose, *Indian Revolutionaries Abroad, 1905–1922*, 15.

29. See Bose, *Indian Revolutionaries Abroad, 1905–1922*, 18; Chopra, *Indian Freedom Fighters*, 69–70.

30. Home Political file, Secret 3, March 1909, 148–50, in Bose, *Selected Documents*, 28–30.

31. Letter from Sukh Sagar Dutt to Arun C. Bose, March 30, 1958, in Bose, *Selected Documents*, 38–39. For details on the intelligence operations, see Richard Popplewell, *Intelligence and Imperial Defence: British Intelligence and the Defence of the Indian Empire, 1904–1924* (London: Frank Cass, 1995).

32. Secret Prog. 49, DCI Simla 14.8.1909, B. September 1909, 47–54; DCI 31.7.1909, B. August 1909, 120–29; Prog 110, DCI 4.9.1909, B. October 1909, 110–17—all in Bose, *Selected Documents*, 32–38. See also Rowlatt Sedition Committee, 8. On other propagandists of the deed, see Chaman Lal Azad, *Bhagat Singh aur Dutt ki Amar Kahani* (New Delhi: Satya Prakashan, 1966); Sohan Singh Josh, *My Meetings with Bhagat Singh and on Other Early Revolutionaries* (New Delhi: Communist Party of India, 1976).

33. Cited in Ker, *Political Trouble*, 168–69.

34. Cited in *ibid.*, 99.

35. In June 1912, Aldred published another article about Savarkar in the *Freewoman*, Dora Marsden's weekly suffragist journal. In fact, commented Ker (*Political Trouble*, 176–77) with some surprise, the Indians' main source of English sympathy, if not substantive support, was now among "the Socialists, and even . . . the Women Suffragists." Ker, with prim distaste, expresses some suspicion of Aldred's motives for doing so, since Ker sees no logical

reason why such an article should appear in “a magazine mainly devoted to sex questions which the lady editor permitted to be discussed with an amount of freedom usually confined to medical journals.” Leela Gandhi doesn’t find this surprising, however. On affinities between anticolonial movements and counterhegemonic groups within the empire whose oppositionality stemmed from other sources, see Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-De-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

36. John Taylor Caldwell, *Come Dungeons Dark: The Life and Times of Guy Aldred, Glasgow Anarchist* (Glasgow: Luath Press, 1988), 95. See also, in general, the work of Ruth Kinna, such as “Bridging Differences through Revolutionary Action: Aldred on Anarchism and Marx” (paper presented at Cooper Union, New York, March 15, 2008); cf. DCI 11.9.1909, B. October 1909, 110–17, in Bose, *Selected Documents*. Indian radicals warmly recalled him later as the only Englishman to have stood up for them at the time, although Caldwell (*Come Dungeons Dark*, 213) notes that the only hint of socialist sympathies his Indian colleagues evinced occurred incidentally, “on the common ground of opposition to imperialism.”

37. Caldwell, *Come Dungeons Dark*, 96. Aldred was later to return to prison as a conscientious objector to World War I.

38. Confidential, A. August 1909, 44–52, “Notice on Pondicherry and Chandernagore as Centres of Seditious Agitation,” in Bose, *Selected Documents*, 70; evidence is given here that French Chandernagar was a conduit for arms and ammunition being moved from Paris to Bengal: “It is my strong impression that Chandernagore constitutes the arms depot of the Calcutta anarchist group.”

39. Cited in Brown, *Har Dayal*, 30.

40. Cited in Ker, *Political Trouble*, 97; Bose, *Indian Revolutionaries Abroad, 1905–1922*, 22. In this connection, see also Bruce Marks, *How Russia Shaped the Modern World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).

41. Cited in Ker, *Political Trouble*, 97.

42. Heehs, *Nationalism*, 89.

43. Chopra, *Indian Freedom Fighters*, 13–14.

44. Peter Heehs, *The Bomb in Bengal: The Rise of Revolutionary Terrorism in India, 1900–1910* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 90–91. Another suspect in the instruction of the Indians is “the Russian revolutionary Mirinow—an exiled military engineer and a Sanskrit scholar” (Heehs, *Nationalism*, 91).

45. Chopra, *Indian Freedom Fighters*, 112.

46. Cited in Heehs, *The Bomb in Bengal*, 181.

47. See Richard Parry, *The Bonnot Gang: The Story of the French Illegalists* (London: Rebel Press, 1987)

48. Heehs, *Bomb in Bengal*, 90–91. See also Marks, *How Russia Shaped the Modern World*; Paul Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971).

49. Cited in Ker, *Political Trouble*, 55.

50. Cited in Bose, *Indian Revolutionaries Abroad, 1905–1922*, 21. On other bomb trainees in the course of the next year or so (1908–9), see Chopra, *Indian Freedom Fighters*, 1, 26.

51. Ker, *Political Trouble*, 56.

52. Heehs, *Bomb in Bengal*, 134.

53. The phrase means literally “hail to the mother” or motherland—one of the national liberation movement’s main slogans.

54. Har Dayal, “*Shabash!* or *Yugantar* Circular,” *Hindustan*

Ghadar (San Francisco), 1913, box 2:2, Bancroft Library, South Asians in North America Collection, Berkeley, CA (hereafter SANA).

55. Heehs, *Bomb in Bengal*, 256.

56. Cited in Ker, *Political Trouble*, 106.

57. Cited in Chopra, *Indian Freedom Fighters*, 78–79.

58. Ker, *Political Trouble*, xii.

59. John Nicol Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India* (Macmillan, 1915), 354–86.

60. Ker, *Political Trouble*, xiii, xvii.

61. Cited in *ibid.*, 71; cf. 92.

62. This is a common theme. On various aspects of it, see, for example, James Joll, *The Anarchists* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1964); James Billington, *Fire in the Minds of Men: Origins of the Revolutionary Faith* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1999); George Katsiaficas, *The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis of 1968* (Boston: South End Press, 1987); Yves Fremion, *Orgasms of History: Three Thousand Years of Spontaneous Insurrection*, trans. Paul Sharkey (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2002).

63. See Rowlatt Sedition Committee, 93–96; Heehs, *Nationalism*, 243. In actuality, the name Yugantar Gang referred to a larger, looser community that after the breakup of the “Maniktola Garden gang” in the Alipore bomb case, reconvened informally at the *Yugantar* publishing offices as well as various rendezvous points around Calcutta and environs, and was distinct from the Dhaka formation.

64. Cited in Heehs, *Nationalism*, 152.

65. Cited in Ker, *Political Trouble*, 100.

66. *Ibid.*

The Anarcho-syndicalists

1. Tilak Raj Sareen, *Select Documents on the Ghadr Party* (New Delhi: Mouto Publishing House, 1994), 153.

2. In this account I am primarily drawing on the words of Gobind Behari Lal, a member of Ghadar's original inner circle, included in Sareen, *Select Documents*; Emily Brown's comprehensively detailed biography *Har Dayal: Hindu Revolutionary and Rationalist* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1975). See also Dharmavira, *Lala Har Dayal and Revolutionary Movements of His Times* (New Delhi: India Book Company, 1970).

3. His cousin Bengali revolutionary leader Jatin Mukherjee was part of the Maniktola Garden group and later killed by police during a Germany-backed insurgency attempt during World War I; his brother Jadu Gopal Mukherjee was active in the alliance of the postwar Hindustan Ghadar Party and Friends of Freedom for India, based on the U.S. West and East coasts, respectively.

4. Gordon H. Chang, introduction to *Caste and Outcast*, by Dhan Gopal Mukerji (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 8.

5. Lal, cited in Sareen, *Select Documents*, 23–25.

6. Brown, *Har Dayal*, 21.

7. *Ibid.*, 50.

8. Lal, cited in Sareen, *Select Documents*, 26–27.

9. *Ibid.*, 29.

10. Indulal Yajnik, *Shyamaji Krishnavarma: Life and Times of an Indian Revolutionary* (Bombay: Lakshmi Publications, 1950), 275.

11. Brown, *Har Dayal*, 81.

12. *Ibid.*, 83, citing Aldred's "Stop this Infamy!" *Herald of Revolt* 4, no. 5 (May 1914).

13. Brown, *Har Dayal*, 85.

14. Brooks, a Stanford literature professor best known for his work on American transcendentalism, became a long-term intellectual confidante. See Van Wyck Brooks, *An Autobiography* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1965).

15. Lal, cited in Sareen, *Select Documents*, 30, 38.

16. Brown, *Har Dayal*, 129.

17. *Ibid.*, 7–126.

18. Har Dayal, “Some Phases of Contemporary Thought in India,” *Modern Review*, August 1911, cited in Brown, *Har Dayal*, 92. See also *Writings of Lala Hardayal* (Benares: Swaraj Publishing House, 1923); *Barabari ka Arth* [The Meaning of Equality], 1913, box 1:33, SANA; *Ghulami ka Zeher* [The Poison of Slavery] (San Francisco: Hindustan Ghadar Press, 1918), box 1:35, SANA; *Indian Peasant*, box 1:36, SANA; *Social Conquest of the Hindu Race* and *The Meaning of Equality* (San Francisco: Hindustan Ghadar Press, undated.), box 2:3, SANA.

19. Brown, *Har Dayal*, 102–3.

20. Har Dayal, *The Indian Peasant* (San Francisco: Hindustan Gadar Press, n.d.), box 1:36, SANA.

21. *Ibid.*, 98–9.

22. *Ibid.*, 99–100. “Karl Marx: A Modern Rishi” also appears in Dharmavira, ed., *Writings of Lala Hardayal*. As was often the case with the multivalent radicalisms of the day, one could interpret this phrase as pointing *either* to anarcho-communism à la Kropotkin or protofascist integral nationalism.

23. Lahiri had graduated from Calcutta University with a degree in chemistry and was continuing his research in explosives on the way to a master of science. As the initial organizer of Nalanda Hostel, a group house for Indian students, he had residents read

books on the revolutionary movements of the world as well as the glories of Indian history and civilization. He also had them train in self-defense, boxing, fencing, wrestling, shooting revolvers and rifles, cartridge making, and “how to recruit, organize and train terrorists.” Darisi Chenchiah, “History of the Freedom Movement in India: The Ghadar Movement, 1913–1918,” 4–6, box 4:3, SANA; L. P. Mathur, *Indian Revolutionary Movement in the United States of America* (Delhi: S. Chand, 1970), 21; Sareen, *Select Documents*, 72.

24. Chenchiah, “History of the Freedom Movement.”

25. Lal, cited in Sareen, *Select Documents*, 31.

26. March 27, 1914, cited in Brown, *Har Dayal*, 112.

27. Lal, cited in Sareen, *Select Documents*, 30.

28. Savitri Sawhney, *I Shall Never Ask For Pardon* (New Delhi: Oxford India, 2008), 226–249.

29. Brown, *Har Dayal*, 107.

30. Brooks, *Autobiography*, 210. This description could easily evoke Nechayev or Nikolay Chernyshevsky as much as Bakunin.

31. Chenchiah, “History of the Freedom Movement,” 6. See also F. C. Isemonger and J. Slattery, *An Account of the Ghadar Conspiracy, 1913–1915* (repr., Berkeley, CA: Folklore Institute, 1998), 10.

32. Brown, *Har Dayal*, 112–14.

33. Sareen, *Select Documents*, 38.

34. Har Dayal to Brooks, December 23, 1913, letter and enclosed leaflet, Van Wyck Brooks Correspondence, Van Pelt Library, Rare Documents Collection, University of Pennsylvania. Also cited in Brown, *Har Dayal*, 114–16.

35. Har Dayal to Brooks, December 23, 1913.

36. *Ibid.* PC meant “Post Commune,” a reference to Paris 1871.

37. Ibid. See also Brown, *Har Dayal*, 116–17.

38. Chaz Bufe and Mitchell Verter, eds., *Dreams of Freedom: A Ricardo Flores Magón Reader* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2005), 75, 81, 357.

39. Brown, *Har Dayal*, 137.

40. Lal, cited in Sareen, *Select Documents*, 32.

41. Brown, *Har Dayal*, 129; Lal, cited in Sareen, *Select Documents*, 33. According to Lal, Har Dayal said that it was “one of our boys,” meaning most likely one of his young “disciples” from the circle around Amir Chand circa 1908. Amir Chand was a major suspect, and it came out later that Har Dayal’s letters to him were in the hands of the police.

42. The following Har Dayal quotations in this section are in Har Dayal, “*Shabash! or Yugantar Circular*” (San Francisco: Hindustan Ghadar Press, 1913), box 2:2, SANA.

43. See Benedict Anderson, *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anticolonial Imagination* (New York: Verso, 2005); Mike Davis, “Heroes of Hell,” *Radical History Review* 85 (2003): 227–37. The Ghadar Press later published a collection of profiles of “early anti-czarists and Russian socialists,” including Perovskaya, Zasulich, Vera Figner, and Leo Deutsche.

44. Guy Aldred, “Stop This Infamy!” *Herald of Revolt* 4 (May 1914), cited in Brown, 144.

45. Brown, *Har Dayal*, 153.

46. Cited in Brown, *Har Dayal*, 209. See also Richard Drinnon and Anna Maria Drinnon, eds., *Nowhere at Home: Letters from Exile of Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975). Goldman, unlike her young acquaintance Agnes Smedley, had minimal awareness of the Indian struggle.

47. Letters contained in Record of Trial, *USA v. Bopp, Ram Chandra et al.*, U.S. Attorney, Northern District, CA, Neutrality Cases, 1913–1920, Work Papers and Evidentiary Notes, record group, 118, National Archives and Records Administration, San Bruno, CA; also cited in Brown, *Har Dayal*, 208–9.

48. Cited in Brown, *Har Dayal*, 133.

49. *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 28, 1914, cited in Brown, *Har Dayal*, 156.

50. On the succeeding exchange, see Deportation File, Interrogation Report: Proceedings against Har Dayal, Bureau of Immigration of the Department of Labor, record group 85, files 53572/92, 53572/92A, National Archives and Records Administration, San Bruno, CA.

51. Cited in Brown, *Har Dayal*, 156

52. Cited in *ibid.*, 157.

53. Cited in *ibid.* The Ghadarites' experience in North America has been described as "proletarianization," in function and mentality. That is, their collective self-consciousness was modified by the conditions of a low-wage migratory labor force that were initially landless—and racialized to boot. At home in Punjab, by contrast, they could have been squarely labeled as classic middle peasants: independent smallholders rather than landless tenants of big landlords, proud of their self-sufficiency, and less interested in collectivization than in autonomy and release from land revenue.

54. *Ibid.*

55. Cited in Brown, *Har Dayal*, 158.

56. Cited in *ibid.*

57. Cited in Ved Prakash Vatuk, introduction to Isemonger and Slattery, *An Account of the Ghadar Conspiracy*, 1.

58. Cited in Brown, *Har Dayal*, 161.

59. Chenchiah, "History of the Freedom Movement," 8.

60. Brown, *Har Dayal*, 161.

61. Har Dayal to Van Wyck Brooks, April 30, 1914.

Van Wyck Brooks Correspondence, Van Pelt Library, Rare Documents Collection, University of Pennsylvania.

62. John Taylor Caldwell, *Come Dungeons Dark: The Life and Times of Guy Aldred, Glasgow Anarchist* (Glasgow: Luath Press, 1988), 87–88.

63. *Ibid.*, 88–89.

64. Lal, cited in Sareen, *Select Documents*, 12.

65. Cited in Caldwell, *Come Dungeons Dark*, 13, 14.

66. This section is drawn from Mukerji, *Caste and Outcast*, 141–210. Though somewhat fictionalized, Mukerji's story corroborates the details of contemporary accounts.

The Critical Leftists

1. C. S. Subramanyam, *M.P.T. Acharya, His Life and Times: Revolutionary Trends in the Early Anti-imperialist Movements in South India and Abroad* (Madras: Institute of South Indian Studies, 1995), 67, 77.

2. *Ibid.*, 9–10.

3. Militant Irish republican expatriates were among Ghadar's closest allies in the United States. Much of the early Indian anti-colonial literature was printed on the *Gaelic American's* press.

4. Subramanyam, *M.P.T. Acharya*, 11.

5. Letter from Sukh Sagar Dutt to Arun C. Bose, March 30, 1958, in Arun C. Bose, *Indian Revolutionaries Abroad, 1905–1927: Select Documents* (Delhi: Northern Book Centre, 2002), 38–39.

6. Ibid.

7. Home Political files 37–39B, March and April 1913, arrest warrants and a series of letters between Hopkinson; C. W. Bennett, British Consul General in New York; William Williams, Commissioner of Immigration, Ellis Island; William W. Cory, Canadian Deputy Minister of the Interior; all in the National Archives of India, Delhi.

8. DCI Weekly Report, Home Political files, B. April 1919, Progs. 148–52, Criminal Intelligence Department, Delhi, Archive on Contemporary History, Jawaharlal Nehru University; DCI Weekly Report, March 24, 1919, 140, Criminal Intelligence Department, Delhi, Archive on Contemporary History, Jawaharlal Nehru University.

9. Nirode K. Barooah, *Chatto: The Life and Times of an Indian Anti-imperialist in Europe* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 126–28. Ali was a former civil servant who at the time taught Hindustani at the London School of Oriental Studies.

10. *Afton Tidningen*, May 29, 1918, cited in Barooah, *Chatto*, 130.

11. *Talvar*, December 1909, cited in Barooah, *Chatto*, 22.

12. Muzaffar Ahmed, *Myself and the Communist Party of India, 1920–1929*, trans. Prabhas Kumar Sinha (Calcutta: National Book Agency, 1970), 51; Subramanyam, *M.P.T. Acharya*, 162–63.

13. Cited in Subramanyam, *M.P.T. Acharya*, 160–73.

14. Ahmad, *Myself*, 51–55.

15. Ibid., 52.

16. Indulal Jainik, *Life of Ranchoddas Bhavan Lotvala* (Bombay: Libertarian Book House, 1952), 76.

17. Cited in Home Political file, 1924/10/61, Criminal Intelligence Department, Delhi.

18. Subramanyam, *M.P.T. Acharya*, 176.

19. Barooah, *Chatto*, 283–324.

20. Subramanyam, *M.P.T. Acharya*, 184–91.

21. *Harijan*, May 1, 1954, cited in Subramanyam, *M.P.T. Acharya*, 192.

22. Acharya to British consul in Berlin, February 15, 1926, cited in Subramanyam, *M.P.T. Acharya*, 185.

23. Ahmad, *Myself*, 115.

24. Yajnik, *Life of Ranchoddas Bhawan Lotvala*, 1–24.

25. *Ibid.*, 23–24.

26. *Ibid.*, 29.

27. *Ibid.*, 38.

28. *Ibid.*, 37–39.

29. *Ibid.*, 53.

30. *Ibid.*, 60.

31. Aijaz Ahmad, Prakash Karat, Irfan Habib, and Prabhat Patnaik, *A World to Win* (New Delhi: LeftWord, 1999), 132–33.

32. Yajnik, *Life of Ranchoddas Bhawan Lotvala*, 51. Dange, a CPI founding member, was the mainstay of the Bombay organizing base, as was Ahmad in Calcutta and Singaravelu Chettiar in Madras.

33. Ahmad et al., *A World to Win*. 12–13; this is according to Gangadhar Adhikari, Marxist theorist and documenter of the early CPI.

34. Yajnik, *Life of Ranchoddas Bhawan Lotvala*, 68.

35. Bose was at one time Nehru's main rival for INC leadership, and later head of the insurgent Indian National Army formed from the Indian prisoners of war and migrant laborers

in Southeast Asia during World War II. Because of his attempts to form strategic anti-British alliances with Germany and Japan, Bose's political ideology has been difficult to categorize.

36. Yajnik, *Life of Ranchoddas Bhavan Lotvala*, 74–75.

37. *Ibid.*, 75.

38. *Ibid.*, 78.

39. *Ibid.*, 78–79.

40. *Ibid.*, 79–80.

41. *Ibid.*, 80.

42. *Ibid.*, 83.

43. *Ibid.*, 85.

44. *Ibid.*, 86.

45. *Ibid.*, 86–87.

46. *Ibid.*, 82.

47. *Ibid.*, 11.

48. Sohan Singh Josh, *My Meetings with Bhagat Singh and on Other Early Revolutionaries* (New Delhi: Communist Party of India, 1976), 19.

49. Sohan Singh Josh, *My Tryst with Secularism: An Autobiography* (New Delhi: Patriot Publishers, 1991), 143–44.

50. See, for example, Ajoy Ghosh, *Bhagat Singh and His Comrades* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1979); Gopal Thakur, *Bhagat Singh: The Man and His Ideas* (1953; repr., New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1962); Gurdev Singh Deol, *Shabeed-e-Azam Sardar Bhagat Singh: The Man and His Ideology* (Nabha: Deep Prakashan, 1978); S. R. Bakshi, *Bhagat Singh and His Ideology* (New Delhi: Capital Publishers, 1981); Josh, *My Meetings*. Note that in the following section, when I cite page numbers from one author such as Deol or Thakur, the quotations or information can usually be found in multiple sources.

51. For collections of his writings and Lahore Conspiracy Case documents, see Shiv Varma, ed., *Selected Writings of Shaheed Bhagat Singh* (New Delhi: National Book Centre, 1986); Malwinderjit Singh Waraich and Gurdev Singh Sidhu, eds., *The Hanging of Bhagat Singh: Complete Judgment and Other Documents* (Chandigarh: Unistar Books, 2005).

52. Niraja Rao, "Bhagat Singh and the Revolutionary Movement," available at <http://www.revolutionarydemocracy.org/rdv3n1/bsingh.htm>.

53. Cited in *ibid.*

54. Josh, *My Tryst*, 142–43.

55. Josh, *My Meetings*, 14, 133.

56. Ghosh, *Bhagat Singh*, 144.

57. Josh, *My Tryst*, 143.

58. *Ibid.*, 102, 103.

59. *Ibid.*, 101. He is referring to two articles he wrote for the December 1926 issue of *Kirti* (*ibid.*, 99, 100).

60. *Ibid.*, 134.

61. *Ibid.*, 128.

62. Varma, *Selected Writings*; Deol, *Shaheed-e-Azam Sardar Bhagat Singh*. 29. See also S. K. Mittal and Ifan Habib, "Towards Independence and Socialist Republic: Naujawan Bharat Sabha," *Social Scientist* 8, no. 2 (September 1979), 18–29: parts 1 and 2; Neeti Nair, "Bhagat Singh as Satyagrahi: The Limits of Non-Violence in Late Colonial India," *Modern Asian Studies* 43, no. 3 (2009), 649–81; Shalini Sharma, "Developing a Communist Identity: The Case of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha," *Journal of Punjab Studies* 14, no. 2 (Fall 2007), 167–86.

63. Chaman Lal, ed., *Bhagat Singh: The Jail Notebook and Other Writings* (New Delhi: LeftWord, 2007), 12.

64. Its stated objects were “(a) to establish completely independent Republic of workers and peasants of the whole of India; (b) to infuse a spirit of patriotism in the youth; (c) to express sympathy with and to assist the economic, industrial and social movements, which, being free from communal sentiments, are intended to take us nearer to our ideal . . . [and] (d) to organise the workers and peasants.” Josh, *My Tryst*, 135; Deol, *Shaheed-e-Azam Sardar Bhagat Singh*, 111–12, 124.

65. Deol, *Shaheed-e-Azam Sardar Bhagat Singh*, 10.

66. Mittal and Habib, “Towards Independence,” 25.

67. Cited in Varma, *Selected Writings*, 44–45.

68. Cited in *ibid.*

69. Deol, *Shaheed-e-Azam Sardar Bhagat Singh*, 12.

70. *Ibid.*, 32.

71. Cited in Varma, *Selected Writings*, 188. According to Varma, “Philosophy of Bomb” was written by HSRA member Vohra in consultation with Azad and approved by Singh while he was in jail. This document emphasizes a diversity of tactics in which the practice of Gandhi’s soul force could include both physical and moral aspects.

72. Cited in Deol, *Shaheed-e-Azam Sardar Bhagat Singh*, 49–50.

73. *Ibid.*, 51.

74. Varma, *Selected Writings*, 116; Lal, *Bhagat Singh*, 150.

75. Varma, *Selected Writings*, 24–25. A notice in the *Bookman Advertiser* gives an indication of why *The Spy* may have appealed to Singh: it was also known in the United States as *100%: The Story of a Patriot*. “Many letters come to us from political prisoners who have read this book in jail. ‘Here is the truth!’ writes one. ‘If only the people would read this story!’ . . . ‘100%’ is the story of the ‘White Terror,’ and tells how ‘big business’ pulled off the

stunt of landing the 'reds' in jail. It is the inside story of a 'secret agent,' and deals with half a dozen celebrated cases concerning which you have been fooled. Louis Untermeyer writes: 'Upton Sinclair has done it again. He has loaded his Maxim (no silencer attached), taken careful aim, and—bang!—hit the bell plump in the center. First of all '100%' is a story . . . full of suspense, drama, 'heart interest,' plots, counterplots, high life, low life, humor, hate and other passions—as thrillingly as a W.S. Hart movie, as interest-crammed as (and a darned sight more truthful than) your daily newspapers" (*Bookman: A Review of Books and Life* 13 [March 1921–August 1921]).

76. Lal, *Bhagat Singh*, 161.

77. *Ibid.*, 159.

78. Cited in *ibid.*, 37, 39, 29.

79. Cited in *ibid.*, 35.

80. Figner, cited in *ibid.*, 47–48: "During the moment which immediately follow upon his sentence, the mind of the condemned in many respects resembles that of a man on the point of death. Quiet, and as if inspired, he no longer clings to what he is about to leave, but firmly looks in front of him, fully conscious of the fact that what is coming is inevitable." And Morozov, cited in *ibid.*, 48–49: "Naked walls, prison thoughts, / How dark and sad you are, / How heavy to be a prisoner inactive, / And dream of years of freedom"; "Entirely for our fellowmen we must live, / Our entire selves for them we must give, / And for their sakes struggle against ill fate!"

81. Cited in *ibid.*, 39.

The Romantic Countermodernists

1. Rabindranath Tagore, *Nationalism* (New York: Macmillan,

1917), 131.

2. Ibid., 84–85.

3. Ibid., 131–33.

4. Ibid., 36–37.

5. Ibid., 23–24.

6. Ibid., 37–38.

7. Ibid., 28–29.

8. Manu Goswami, “Autonomy and Comparability: Notes on the Anticolonial and the Postcolonial,” *boundary 2* 32, no. 2 (2005): 49.

9. Cited in *ibid.*, 44.

10. Tagore, *Nationalism*, 21–22.

11. Benjamin Zachariah, *Developing India: An Intellectual and Social History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 192–93, 167.

12. Ibid., 191.

13. Ibid., 193.

14. Ibid., 192.

15. Ibid., 192–93.

16. Nirmal Bose, “Is Gandhi a Nationalist?” *Congress Socialist*, February 19, 1935, cited in *ibid.*, 167.

17. It also should be noted that he was far from an antiauthoritarian personally, and his assumptions about spirituality and hierarchy, caste and gender, and asceticism and the body require a critical eye.

18. Except for the Catholic Worker movement. See also Linda D’Amico, *The Anarchist Dimension of Liberation Theology* (New York: P. Lang, 1987); Alexandre Christoyannopoulos, *Christian Anarchism: A Political Commentary on the Gospel* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2011).

19. Cited in Rudrangshu Mukherjee, ed., *The Penguin Gandhi Reader* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 37, 22, 20. See also Anthony Parel, introduction to Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

20. Cited in *ibid.*, 79.

21. Cited in *ibid.*, 82.

22. Cited in *ibid.*, 83.

23. Rajat K. Ray, *The Felt Community* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 48.

24. *Ibid.*, 47.

25. *Ibid.*, 47.

26. *Ibid.*, 50.

27. Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 68–72.

28. Surendranath Karr, “On the Village Republics of India,” *Independent Hindustan*, March 1921, 52, microfilm, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Delhi. The following Karr quotations are also taken from this same source.

29. Radhakumud Mookerji, *Local Government in Ancient India* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1919), 22–23.

30. Mookerji was also the author of *The Fundamental Unity of India* (1914; repr., New Delhi: DC Publishers, 2005). While it may be possible to read this text as essentially equating Indian with Hindu culture, in the context of freedom movement discourse it was a refutation of the common argument that British rule was needed to unify a fragmentary society. Like Tagore, Mookerji saw nationalism and the nation-state principle as inimical to holism and peaceful coexistence.

31. Mookerji, *Local Government*, xi, xv.

32. Cited in *ibid.*, 3.

33. Ibid., 3.

34. Ibid., 4.

35. Ibid., 7.

36. Ibid., 7–8.

37. Ibid., 10.

38. Ibid., 20–21.

39. Ibid., 22.

40. Har Dayal, *Writings of Lala Hardyal* (Swaraj Publishing House, 1923), 54.

41. From *Democratic Values: Selections from the Addresses of Vinoba Bhave, 1951–60* (Kashi: Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1962), cited in Richard Graham, *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2009), 2:183–4. For detailed analysis of the Sarvodaya movement's ideology and methods, see Geoffrey Ostergaard and Melville Currell, *The Gentle Anarchists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 1–61.

42. Ibid., 184.

43. Ibid., 184–85.

44. Ibid., 185.

45. Ibid., 186.

46. See also Ramachandra Guha, *An Anthropologist among the Marxists and Other Essays* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001).

47. Cited in *ibid.*, 174–75. Not all CSP members could be considered Marxist, although JP's influence as organizer and ideologue gave it a Marxist orientation.

48. Ibid., 176–77; see also Jayaprakash Narayan, *Towards Total Revolution* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1978), 1:55–73, 126–41.

49. Cited in Prasad, *Gandhi*, 180.

50. Cited in *ibid.*, 184–85.
51. Narayan, *Towards Total Revolution*, 56.
52. Cited in Graham, *Anarchism*, 2:185–88.
53. Prasad, *Gandhi*, 192.
54. *Ibid.*, 185.
55. Jayaprakash Narayan, “From Socialism to Sarvodaya” (1957), in Bimal Prasad, ed., *Essential Writings, 1929–79* (New Delhi: Konark Publishers, 2002), cited in Graham, *Anarchism*, 2:188.
56. *Ibid.*, 188.
57. *Ibid.*, 189, 190.
58. Narayan, “From Socialism to Sarvodaya,” 148.
59. Cited in Prasad, *Gandhi*, 187.
60. Cited in Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy: Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1964), 199.
61. Cited in *ibid.*, 222–23.
62. *Ibid.*, 222.
63. Cited in *ibid.*, 278.
64. Cited in *ibid.*, 224.
65. Cited in *ibid.*, 113.
66. Chaman Lal (*Himal*, July 2010) notes that JP’s Bihar-based total revolution movement in the 1970s gave birth to most of the major post-Emergency, anti-Congress figures who were not Naxalites.
67. Cited in Prasad, *Gandhi*, 170.
68. Bimal Prasad, *Gandhi, Nehru, and JP: Studies in Leadership* (Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1985), 190.
69. See, for example, Meera Nanda, *Prophets Facing Backward: Postmodern Critiques of Science and Hindu*

Nationalism in India (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008); Benjamin Zachariah, "Uses of Scientific Argument," *Economic and Political Weekly* 36, no. 39 (September 29–October 5, 2001).

70. For Lloyd and Susanne Hoebler Rudolph, in their book *The Postmodern Gandhi* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), "postmodern" refers to anything that is first, present during the time of post-cold war late capitalism; and second, critical of at least one of the pillars of high modernism. This includes any sort of oppositional ideas or practices facing any one of the dominant features of high modernism, lumping together all the various sorts of possible critiques from the reactionary to the progressive. This makes their argument not only anachronistic but also sloppy. For instance, among the traits they consider evidence of Gandhi's postmodernity are his conscious affinity with the critical "other west," epistemological relativism, critique of modern industrial development and positivist hegemony, dislike of the centralized and authoritarian state, spirituality, and vegetarianism (since this is countercultural in the Western context, though of course not in the Hindu Indian context, it therefore must be "postmodern").

71. Robert Young, in *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001), roots postcolonialism in third worldist socialism, defining its innovations in practice as the adaptation of Marxist thought to the anticolonial context. Similarly, in *Methodologies of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), Chela Sandoval argues that the insights of poststructuralist thought and other academic forms of oppositional knowledge run parallel to movements of the oppressed against colonization.

72. The phrase was coined in Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

The New Social Movements

1. I was initially reluctant to write this more contemporary chapter, because I'm not a participant-observer in the movements in question, just a knowledgeable sympathizer with multiple points of oblique contact. Plus the topic of the book itself calls for a heightened awareness of my own practice as a writer. With the inevitable risk of misrepresentation or distortion through misplaced emphasis, this piece should be considered a friendly interpretive hypothesis.

2. Nivedita Menon and Aditya Nigam, *Power and Contestation: India Since 1989* (New York: Zed Books, 2007), 3.

3. Ibid.

4. Gail Omvedt, *Reinventing Revolution: New Social Movements and the Socialist Tradition in India* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1993), 183.

5. Partha Chatterjee, "Towards a Postcolonial Modernity: AsiaSource Interview with Partha Chatterjee," available at <http://www.sciy.org/2009/07/04/towards-a-postcolonial-modernity-asiasource-interview-with-partha-chatterjee/>.

6. Nivedita Menon, "The Nation-state in the Mirror of Political Science" (paper presented at the National Centre for Biological Sciences, Bangalore, December 1999), available at <http://criticalencounters.wordpress.com/2009/02/08/the-nation-state-in-the-mirror-of-political-science-tracking-a-discipline-in-india>.

7. Omvedt, *Reinventing Revolution*, 304.

8. "End of the Left' in India? Statement by Leftists after

Recent Election Results,” May 24, 2011, available at <http://kafila.org/2011/05/24/end-of-the-left-in-india-statement-after-recent-election-results/>. The statement was signed by Jairus Banaji, Sukumar Muralidharan, Dilip Simeon, Satya Sivaraman, and Rohini Hensman, and endorsed by twenty-four others.

9. The Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee, like other similar regional organizations, had a genealogical link to the People’s Union for Civil Liberties founded by JP in 1976, intended as nonpartisan and without specific political ideology. It later split into the People’s Union for Civil Liberties and the People’s Union for Democratic Rights, of which the former was more reformist, seeking redress within the system, while the latter called for a more radical, systemic transformation.

10. Kandalla Balagopal, “Developing Destruction,” editorial, special issue, *Human Rights Bulletin*, 2009, available at <http://balagopal.org/?p=729>.

11. Nivedita Menon, “Saluting a Revolutionary,” October 11, 2009, available at <http://kafila.org/2009/10/11/saluting-a-revolutionary-jinee-lokaneta>.

12. Kandalla Balagopal, “Reflections on Violence and Non-violence in Political Movements in India,” January 26, 2009, available at <http://www.sacw.net/article1169.html>.

13. Ibid.

14. Kandalla Balagopal, “Political Violence and Human Rights: The Case of the Naxalite Movement in A.P.,” *Voices for Change* 2, no. 3 (1998). The passage continues, “Which includes the need of positive discrimination by the authority of law in favour of the disadvantaged, eliminate all arbitrariness of authority, and free society totally from oppressive forms of social, political and economic power.”

15. Ibid.
16. Cited in Omvedt, *Reinventing Revolution*, 170–71.
17. Shramik Mukti Dal manifesto, chapter 2, available at <http://www.xa.yimg.com/kq/groups/10707696/.../Shramik+Mukti+Dal+Manifesto.doc>.
18. Cited in Omvedt, *Reinventing Revolution*, 241.
19. Shramik Mukti Dal manifesto.
20. Ibid.
21. Cited in Omvedt, *Reinventing Revolution*, 246.
22. High-profile recent examples include the farmers' movement against debt enslavement via Monsanto's genetically modified Bt cotton in central India, and villager mobilizations against Coca-Cola Company's abuse of water resources in the South. One of the most formative mobilizations for nonparty activists in recent decades was the attempt to hold Union Carbide, a subsidiary of Dow Chemical, responsible for the devastating poison gas leak that killed thousands of people in Bhopal in 1984, and continues to exact chronic damage on thousands of survivors.
23. Omvedt, *Reinventing Revolution*, 309.
24. This was initially a project of the Center for the Study of Developing Societies in Delhi, with funding from West Germany during its first few years.
25. Available at <http://www.rightlivelikelihood.org/lokayan.html>.
26. Omvedt, *Reinventing Revolution*, 192.
27. Rajni Kothari, "The Non-party Political Process," *Economic and Political Weekly* 19, no. 5 (February 4, 1984): 219.
28. Menon, "The Nation-state."
29. Rajni Kothari, "State and Statelessness in Our Time," *Economic and Political Weekly* 26, nos. 11–12 (March 1991): 554.
30. Ibid., 558.

31. Kothari, "The Non-party Political Process," 221.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. The backlash sparked by the report's recommendations on reservations for those groups designated as "scheduled castes" and "tribes or other backward classes" in education and employment was comparable to the controversies around affirmative action in the United States.

35. Menon and Nigam, *Power and Contestation*, 7; paraphrasing Sudipta Kaviraj.

36. Gail Omvedt, "Ambedkar and After: The Dalit Movement in India," in *Social Movements and the State*, ed. Ghanshyam Shah (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2002), 303.

37. Menon and Nigam, *Power and Contestation*, 65.

38. High-profile cases recently include health care activist Binayak Sen.

39. Archana Prasad, *Environmentalism and the Left: Contemporary Debates and Future Agendas in Tribal Areas: Signpost 8* (Delhi: LeftWord, 2004).

40. Available at <http://napm-india.org/aboutus>.

41. Panel, Alwan for the Arts, New York, April 23, 2011, available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_Ia93DURSY.

42. Mayur Chetia, "World Social Forum and Reactions from the Indian Left," *Critical Engagement* 5 (August 2008): 14–16.

43. Mamata Dash, "The World Social Forum through the Eyes of Movement Groups in India," *Critical Engagement* 6 (August 2008): 11–13; Susana Barria with O. J. Nelson, "Main Debates around the WSF 2004 in Mumbai," *Critical Engagement* 4 (August 2008): 25.

44. Much of this material can be found at <http://www.cacim>.

net; Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, and Peter Waterman, eds., *The World Social Forum: Challenging Empires* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2008).

45. Jai Sen, "Opening Open Space: Notes on the Grammar and Vocabulary of the Concept of Open Space," *Critical Engagement* 2 (August 2008): 5, 10–14, 18–24.

46. Menon and Nigam, *Power and Contestation*, 116.

On Solidarity

1. Ali Sardar Jafri, *Lucknow ki Panch Raaten* (1962; repr., Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan, 1998), 46; my translation.

2. Faiz Ahmad Faiz (1911–84), founding member of the Progressive Writers' movement and the Communist Party of Pakistan, is generally regarded as one of the greatest Urdu poets of all time.

3. Jafri, *Lucknow ki Panch Raaten*, 49.

4. Some important texts include Roger White, *Postcolonial Anarchism: Essays on Race, Repression, and Culture in Communities of Color, 1999–2004* (Oakland, CA: Jailbreak Press); Sureyya Evren, "Post-Anarchism and the Third World," available at http://theanarchistlibrary.org//HTML/Sureyyya_Evren_Postanarchism_and_the_3rd_World.html; Ernesto Aguilar, ed., *Our Culture, Our Resistance: People of Color Speak Out on Anarchism, Race, Class, and Gender* (Creative Commons, 2004), available at http://zinelibrary.info/files/ocor_book_1.pdf; Revolutionary Anti-authoritarians of Color, "An Anarchist Introduction to Critical Race Theory," 2002, available at http://theanarchistlibrary.org/HTML/Revolutionary_Anti-Authoritarians_of_Color_An_Anarchist_Introduction_to_Critical_Race_Theory.html; Kuwasi Balagoon, *A Soldier's Story*:

Writings by a Revolutionary New Afrikan Anarchist (Montreal: Kersplebedeb, 2001); Lorenzo Komboa Ervin, *Anarchism and the Black Revolution*, available at <http://libcom.org/library/anarchism-black-revolution-lorenzo-ervin>; Ashanti Alston, "Beyond Nationalism but Not without It," available at <http://www.anarchistpanther.net/writings/writing4.html>.

Credits for Anarchist Interventions

Maia Ramnath

Maia Ramnath is a teacher, writer, activist, and dancer/aerialist living in New York City. She has been involved in various manifestations of global justice, anti-imperialist, and Palestine solidarity organizing for many years. Maia attended graduate school at the University of California at Santa Cruz (UCSC), earning a PhD in history, though it appears in retrospect that she spent most of the time on a picket line. She has taught courses at UCSC and New York University on global history, modern South Asian history, and anticolonial radical movements. Maia is the author of *The Haj to Utopia: How the Ghadar Movement Charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overthrow the British Empire* (University of California Press, 2011)—in many ways a companion volume to this one. She was a member of the Free Radio Santa Cruz and original Bluestockings bookstore collectives, and is currently a member of the Institute for Anarchist Studies board and Historians against War steering committee. Finally, as cofounder and director of a multidisciplinary performing arts group sometimes called Constellation Moving Company, she hopes some day to “use her powers for good” like radical Left circus artists Dharamvir Singh and John S. Clarke did a century ago.

Decolonizing Anarchism examines the history of South Asian struggles against colonialism and neocolonialism, highlighting lesser-known dissidents as well as iconic figures. What emerges is an alternate narrative of decolonization, in which liberation is not defined by the achievement of a nation-state. Author Maia Ramnath suggests that the anarchist vision of an alternate society closely echoes the concept of total decolonization on the political, economic, social, cultural, and psychological planes. *Decolonizing Anarchism* facilitates more than a reinterpretation of the history of anticolonialism; it also supplies insight into the meaning of anarchism itself.

"Maia Ramnath offers a refreshingly different perspective on anticolonial movements in India, not only by focusing on little-remembered anarchist exiles such as Har Dayal, Mukerji and Acharya but more important, highlighting the persistent trend that sought to strengthen autonomous local communities against the modern nation-state. A superbly original book."

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