



**NMML
OCCASIONAL PAPER**

HISTORY AND SOCIETY

New Series

79

**Sadhus, *Sampradaya*, and Hindu Nationalism:
The Dasnamis and the Shri Bharat Dharma
Mahamandala in the early twentieth century**

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**Nehru Memorial Museum and Library
2015**

NMML Occasional Paper



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Published by

Nehru Memorial Museum and Library
Teen Murti House
New Delhi-110011

e-mail : ddnehrumemorial@gmail.com

ISBN : 978-93-83650-87-3

Price Rs. 100/-; US \$ 10

Page setting & Printed by : A.D. Print Studio, 1749 B/6, Govind Puri
Extn. Kalkaji, New Delhi - 110019. E-mail : studio.adprint@gmail.com

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Sadhus, Sampradaya, and Hindu Nationalism: The Dasnamis and the Shri Bharat Dharma Mahamandala* in the early twentieth century¹

Malavika Kasturi

Abstract

Monastic orders belonging to Shaiva religious traditions of teaching, tenets and beliefs (sampradaya) played a robust role in shaping neo-Brahmanical constructions of orthodox Hinduism, or sanatana dharma. By the early twentieth century, sampradayik preceptors, gurus and devotees shaped the dense network of orthodox Hindu associations, the sanatana dharma sabhas, dominating urban centres in the Hindi heartland. The paper throws light on this issue by examining the Shri Bharat Dharma Mahamandala of Banaras, an association initially established in the late nineteenth century by Din Dayalu Sharma to spread sanatana dharma. After 1902, the association was given a new direction and vision by Swami Gyanananda, a Shaiva (Dasnami) guru, his ascetic disciples, lay devotees and patrons. The Mahamandala was an important early example of a sectarian association, drawing upon its monastic networks and its ascetic affiliates and identifying itself with orthodox Hinduism. However, many Sanatanis largely suffused in Vaishnava idioms of religiosity were discomfited by Shaiva monastic orders seeking to renegotiate their position and authority in a reconfigured socio-

* The paper will use the term Bharat Dharma Mahamandal to refer to the association under study until 1902, which is when it split. After that, it will be referred to as the Bharat Dharma Mahamandala.

¹ This article is a revised version of the paper presented in Jawaharlal Nehru University on 19 March 2014.

religious landscape by staking their claims as proponents of orthodox Hinduism, and representatives of a Hindu 'race' and nation. Further, orthodox Hindu associations allied to Din Dayalu Sharma and Madan Mohan Malaviya were uncomfortable with endorsing the primacy of monastic orders, and of sampradaya in political initiatives seeking to regenerate the 'Hindu nation'. Through a close reading of the Mahamandala's articulation of religion and 'Hindu nation', the paper maps the fraught, but central role of sampradayik associations in shaping twentieth-century discourses on Hindu nationalism.

If you go to the different parts of India you will find different views about Hindu religion entertained by different people. Here you are mostly Vaishnavites, or followers of Sri Krishna ... if you go to the South you will meet followers of Ramanuja, and such others... . What is Hindu religion then? The Bharat Dharma Mahamandala cannot be a Hindu Mahamandal unless it includes and co-ordinates these different sections and parts. Its name can only be significant if different sections of Hindu religion are united under its banner ... the term sanatana dharma shows that our religion is very old ... Hindu religion as such provides for a social and moral tie. We have the ground and eternal promise Sri Krishna made in the Gita that when there is a decay of Dharma then Sri Krishna will come down and restore dharma ... no other religion has such a definite and sacred promise as we have of Shri Krishna"...²

²Printed book, B.G. Tilak's speech to the Shri Bharat Dharma Mahamandala, 1902, South Asian Proscribed Pamphlets, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML).

Introduction

With this exhortation, Bal Gangadhar Tilak reminded the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal in 1902 of the need to move beyond the problem posed by ‘sectarian traditions’, and rally around a congregational religion united through critical texts like the Gita.³ Such debates shaped the perspectives of monastic orders belonging to Shaiva and Vaishnava ‘religious’ traditions of teaching, tenets and beliefs, or *sampradaya*. This paper explores the role of gurus and preceptors in forming orthodox Hindu associations propagating neo-Brahmanical constructions of sanatana dharma (the eternal religion). It suggests that the middle class orthodox Hindu leadership, key players in the generation of these public forms of religiosity and its associated political and civil society visions, had an ambiguous relationship with ascetic orders, their *mahants* and *gurus*. The paper probes this relationship through an examination of two ‘moments’ in the associational life of the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal (1887). The Mahamandal was initially formed by Din Dayalu Sharma to oppose the Arya Samaj and Christian missionaries, and to propagate a new ‘traditional’ yet modern form of public religion suffused in Vaishnava idioms and forms of religiosity. While its early history actively involved *sadhus*, *gurus*, and *mahants* (heads of monastic orders), the association was given a voice and direction by its lay leaders, members of the emergent middle and professional classes in smaller towns. The Mahamandal established itself as an influential voice amongst orthodox Hindu and Vaishnava associations. In 1902, a major shift took place, when Swami Gyanananda, a Shaiva ascetic associated with the Dasnami order transformed the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal into a sectarian association. Henceforth known as the Shri Bharat Dharma Mahamandala, the association was controlled by the most brahmanical strand of this Shaiva sampradaya to renegotiate their authority and position in the religious culture of north India. The Mahamandala’s articulation of sanatana dharma was interlaced with Dasnami tenets

³ For recent debates of Tilak’s discussion of the Bhagavat-Gita see C. Robinson, *Interpretations of the Bhagavad Gita and Images of the Hindu Tradition, the Song of the Lord*, London, 2007 and F. Devji and S. Kapila (eds), *Political Thought in Action, the Bhagavad Gita and Modern India*, Cambridge, 2013.

and practices. Simultaneously, the association connected its vision of a neo-Brahmanical socio-religious order dominated by sadhus and Brahmins to new forms of governance, civil society and notions of 'Hindu nation'. The Mahamandala's understanding of politics and religion placed ascetic orders at the heart of the 'Hindu social organism'. This shift in the direction of the Mahamandala marked a broader break in orthodox Hindu associational forms. Now, despite converging interests, led by gurus combining 'modern' institutional and civic forms with sectarian teachings were distinct from dharma sabhas headed by middle-class practitioners like Madan Mohan Malaviya and Din Dayalu Sharma. Sanatanis subsuming sectarian identities within universalist interpretations of orthodox Hinduism and pan-Indian notions of Hindu nationalism were discomfited by monastic orders claiming to be the leaders and representatives of orthodox Hindus. Indeed, an examination of the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal is suggestive of the multiple ways in which sectarian guru-based associations forged the language and sensibility of Hindu nationalist visions.

An examination of guru-based associations organically linked to ascetic orders and their 'devotional publics' indicates that they were central to the production of religiosity under colonialism.⁴ Ascetic orders drew upon a pre-British world comprising sampradayik communities connected by devotionalism, common belief systems, rituals, practices, tenets and texts.⁵ The sampradayas, or religious traditions have received serious attentions from scholars studying in the fifteenth to eighteenth

⁴ The main interest in 'self-conscious' religious leaders, or charismatic gurus has often focused on religious reform movements such as Rammohan Roy, Vivekananda and Aurobindo. For this view see the various articles A. Copley, *Gurus and their Followers and New Religious Reforms in Colonial India*, New Delhi, 2000. For more recent perspectives on gurus in postcolonial India see M. Warriar, 'Traditions and Transformation: An Introduction' in J. Zavos et al. (eds), *Public Hinduisms*, New Delhi, 2012, 166–75; M. Warriar, *Hindu Selves in a Modern World, Guru Faith in the Ma Amritanandamayi Mission*, Abingdon, 2005; M. Warriar, 'Modernity and its Imbalances, Constructing Modern Selfhood in the Mata Amritanandamayi Mission', *Religion*, 36, 2006, 179–95; A. Ikegama, and J. Copeman (eds). *The Guru in South Asia, New Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, Routledge, London, 2012.

⁵ C. Novetzske, *History, Bhakti and Public Memory*, New Delhi, 2009.

centuries, when these diverse Vaishnava, Shaiva, Shakta, and Tantric ‘religious traditions’ were institutionalised.⁶ Recent scholarship on monasticism has persuasively argued that these ascetic orders were part of a broader social and spatial universe of monasticism with its own institutional and power hierarchies centred on *maths* (monastic institutions).⁷ Mahants and their maths were serviced by vast trading, political and devotional networks. Given that many ascetic orders had military wings called *akharas*, they were closely organically connected to courts and princely rulers.⁸ By the eighteenth century, it was common for teachers from ascetic lineages to influence princely rulers as teachers, guides and political players. I suggest that as the world of monastic orders transformed, their role in politics and society was concomitantly redefined. By the twentieth century, as an analysis of the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal shows, monastic orders associated with various ‘religious traditions were connected to new socio-religious and political projects and associational forms.

An examination of the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal highlights that the transformation of robust sampradayas occurred alongside new formulations of religion.⁹ For the most part, in the scholarly focus on universalist interpretations of Hinduism, or alternatively on Hindutva, sampradaya vanishes as an object of scholarly and political enquiry, despite the fact that Vaishnava and Shaiva sampradayas and their ‘devotional publics’ remained at the heart of popular religiosity.¹⁰ With

⁶ W. Pinch, *Warrior Ascetics and Indian Empires* (henceforth mentioned as *Ascetics and Empires*), Cambridge, 2006 and I. Chatterjee, *Forgotten Friends, Monks, Marriages and Memories of North East India*, New Delhi, 2013.

⁷ Chatterjee, *Forgotten Friends*, 24.

⁸ See N. Peabody, *Hindu Kingship in Precolonial India*, Cambridge, 2003; W. Pinch, *Ascetics and Empires*, 2006; Chatterjee, *Forgotten Friends*.

⁹ On the role of associational forms in shaping the public sphere see D. Haynes, *Rhetoric and Ritual in Colonial India, the Shaping of a Public Culture in Surat City, 1842–1928*, California, 1991; C. Watt, *Serving the Nation, Cultures of Service, Association and Citizenship*, New Delhi, 2004; S. Joshi, *Fractured Modernities, Making of a Middle Class in Colonial North India*, New Delhi, 2002; U. Stark, ‘Associational Culture and Civic Engagement in Colonial Lucknow, The Jalsah–e Tahzib’, *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 48, 1, 2011, 1–33.

¹⁰ Pinch, *Peasants and Monks*, 3–9.

notable exceptions, when sadhus and ascetics are the focus of attention, they are studied disconnected from the sampradayas of which they are a part.¹¹ In this regard, I seek to engage with two broad perspectives. Thus Vasudha Dalmia's magisterial work on Bharatendu Harishchandra contends that Vaishnava religious traditions (in this case the Pushimarg tradition) were 'nationalised' to become the template for hegemonic constructions of 'modern' Hinduism.¹² In contrast importantly, William Pinch suggests that while 'something called Hinduism' came into being under colonialism, this was separate from the parallel if 'disaggregated multiplicity of overlapping religious systems', that is the sampradayas.¹³ He argues that all socio-religious reformers across the board, including orthodox Hindus perceived the sampradayas as antithetical to new formulations of religion and politicised forms of 'Hindu community'.¹⁴ Through this study of the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal I suggest that while Vaishnava and Shaiva sampradayas did not remain untouched by new hegemonic constructs of Hinduism, neither were they subsumed. Indeed, sampradayas shaped new articulations of religion in unexpected and non-linear ways by the 1920s, as monastic orders and sampradayik associations debated the autonomy of their religious traditions vis-à-vis Hindu dham.¹⁵

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) drew upon a dense network of associations formed by monastic orders articulating discourses on citizenship, civility and politics when it formed the Vishva Hindu Parishad in 1964.¹⁶ By the twentieth century, spiritual preceptors

¹¹ For an example of the same, see W. Gould's, *Hindu Nationalism and the Language of Politics in Late Colonial India*, Cambridge/Delhi, 2005.

¹² V. Dalmia, *The Nationalisation of Hindu Traditions, Bharatendu Harishchandra and Nineteenth Century Banaras*, New Delhi, 1997, 82–110, 338–429.

¹³ Pinch, 'Becoming Vaishnava, Becoming Kshatriya' (thesis, 1990), 5.

¹⁴ Pinch, *Peasants and Monks*, 9; J.S. Hawley, 'Sanatana Dharma as the Twentieth Century Began; Two Textbooks Two Languages', in S. Dube (ed.), *Religion, Ancient to Modern: Religion, Power and Community in India*, New Delhi, 2009, 312–36.

¹⁵ Here, I am both building upon and exploring the nuances of Pinch's invaluable argument.

¹⁶ Peter Van Der Veer, 'God Must Be Liberated: A Hindu Liberation Movement in Ayodhya', *Modern Asian Studies*, 1987, 21, 2, 283–301. A. Nandy and S. Mayaram (eds), *Creating a Nationality, the Ram*

from Vaishnava and Shaiva orders participated in associational forms to redefine their tenets and boundaries anew.¹⁷ They mobilised their ‘publics of belief’ through print culture and public sphere activities through Shiva and Shankar sampraday mandals, vaishnava mahasabha, mahamandals and sammelans.¹⁸ Such organisations differed from the Ramakrishna Mission and math, comprising sadhus and ascetics committed to the dissemination of ‘practical Vedanta’, and service to build a non-sectarian Hindu community.¹⁹ In contrast, sampradayik associations defended the centrality of guru-bhakti and considered the position of religious leaders, whether mahants and gurus sacrosanct. They were also implicated in intra-sectarian disputes and splits.²⁰ Thus, early twentieth Vaishnava *sammelans* were spaces where the split between the open-caste Ramanandis and the Brahmin Sri-Vaishnavas, or Ramanujas was articulated and played out.²¹ Likewise, the Shri

Janmabhumi Movement and the Fear of the Self, Delhi, 1995, 88–95; M. Katju, *The Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Indian Politics*, New Delhi, 2003; A. Ikegama and J. Copeman, *The Guru in South Asia, New Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, Routledge, London, 2012, 9.

¹⁷ On the role of associational forms in shaping the public sphere see D. Haynes, *Rhetoric and Ritual in Colonial India, the Shaping of a Public Culture in Surat City, 1842–1928*, California, 1991; C. Watt, *Serving the Nation, Cultures of Service, Association and Citizenship*, New Delhi, 2004; S. Joshi, *Fractured Modernities, Making of a Middle Class in Colonial North India*, New Delhi, 2002; U. Stark, ‘Associational Culture and Civic Engagement in Colonial Lucknow, The Jalsah –e Tahzib’, *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 48, 1, 2011, 1–33.

¹⁸ On the role of sectarian associations in the split between Ramavats and Ramanujis see Pinch, *Peasants and Monks*, 1994, chapter two. On the role of associations in the reformulation of Gorakhnathi identity see V. Bouillier, ‘Kānphaṭās’, in Knut A. Jacobsen (ed.), *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Hinduism, Vol. III. Society, Religious Specialists, Religious Traditions, and Philosophy*. Leiden, Brill, 2011, pp. 347–354.

¹⁹ Beckerlegge, *The Ramakrishna Mission*.

²⁰ Thus, deep divisions about the inheritance to the position of the Shaiva Shankaracharyas of the Dwarka and Goverdhan drove wedges between orthodox Hindus, supporting one or the other candidate in the 1920s.

²¹ There was a sectarian split between the Ramanuji order, dominated by Brahmins and the ‘mixed caste’ Ramanandi ascetics. By 1920, the Shri Ramanandiya Shri Vaishnava Mahamandal in Ayodhya became the main forum articulating an independent genealogy for the Ramanandi sampradaya. See P. Agarwal, ‘In Search of Ramanand, The Guru of Kabir and Others’,

Bharat Dharma Mahamandala was involved in succession disputes within Shaiva maths, and renegotiations between Dasnamis and other Shaiva orders like the Nath Yogis. The Shri Bharat Dharma Mahamandala (1902), formed by Shaiva ascetics, and linked to monastic networks, was one of the prime examples of a sampradayik association straddling multiple identities as sectarian bodies, and also claiming to be spokespersons for the Hindu 'nation', 'race' and 'social organism'. Through such associational forms, of which the Mahamandala was an important example, ascetic orders sought to marry sampradayik identities with varying degrees of success with ideological formulations on Hinduism's socio-religious and political 'community'. In particular, ascetic orders had critical differences with the Hindu Sabha's understanding of *sangathan* (unity) and Hindutva.

Associations like the Shri Bharat Dharma Mahamandala intervened in a socio-religious landscape that viewed Shaivism with great suspicion.²² Until the eighteenth century, Shaiva orders had a dominant presence in the Hindi heartland. Subsequently, the gradual move towards bhakti devotionalism, quietism propagated by Ramanandi forms of belief led to the marginalisation of Brahmanical Vaishnava orders like the Sri-Vaishnavas and Shaiva orders.²³ Simultaneously, the colonial state demilitarised Shaiva warrior ascetics and akharas to their disadvantage.²⁴ There were regional differences at play between north India and the Tamil country, where Shaiva-Siddhanta remained the hegemonic form of religiosity shaping caste and Dravidian politics.²⁵

in I. Dube and S. Dube (eds), *From Ancient to Modern, Religion, Power and Community in India*, New Delhi, 2009, 171–206.

²² For an excellent discussion of the history of decline of Shaivism in north India see Pinch, *Monks and Peasants*, 213–221 and *Warrior Ascetics and Empires*.

²³ Pinch, *Ascetics and Empires*, chapter three.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ For the changing fortunes of Shaivism in north India see Pinch, *Ascetics and Empire* and D. White, *Sinister Yogis*. For the Shaiva Siddhanta movement in the Tamil Country see A.R. Venkatachelaipathy, 'Dravidian Movements and Saivites, 1927–44', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 13, 14 April 1994; R. Vaithispeera, 'Maraimalai Atigal and the Genealogy of the Tamil Creed', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 44, 14, 4–10 April 2009, 45–51; and R. Vaithispeera, 'Forging a Tamil Caste. Maraimalai

In the Hindi heartland Ramavats or Ramanandi Vaishnavas and their idiom of religiosity expanded in agrarian north India because of their more egalitarian socio-religious universe.²⁶ Consequently, Shaiva maths, mahants and sampradayas, like the Nath Yogis and the Dasnamis fundamentally renegotiated their position under colonialism. This was achieved by incorporating the language and idioms of Vaishnavism to broaden their devotional base. The Dandi and Parahamsa sadhus, the most Brahmanical and orthodox strand amongst the ten sub-subdivisions of the Dasnamis played an important role in this process. Apart from maths, new associational forms like the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal emerged as important platforms from which Dasnami and Dandi sectarian identities were re-represented, vis-à-vis Vaishnavas and ‘wandering’ Shaiva yogis like the Nath Yogis associated with magic, sorcery, and transgressive lifestyles.²⁷

As has been shown elsewhere, more than the Hindu Mahasabha, sampradayik associations like the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal cleaved more to the orthodox Hindu associations. In the urban centres of northern India, there emerged a dense network of dharma sabhas propagating and espousing neo-traditional brahmanical articulations of religion, called sanatana dharma (the eternal/universal religion).²⁸ The enunciation of orthodox Hinduism, hitherto ignored by most scholarship, took shape against the broader backdrop of universalist forms of ‘modern’ Hinduism associated with Swami Vivekananda and

Atigal and the Discourse of Caste and Ritual in Colonial Tamil Nadu’, in *Ritual, Caste and Religion in South India*; R. Vaithespeera, ‘Reinscribing Religion as Nation, Navee Caivar (modern Shaivites) and the Dravidian Movement’, *South Asia*, 2012, 35, 767–68; M.S.S. Pandian and S. Anandi, ‘A Rebel in Saffron’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 31–2, August 5–12 1995, 1957–8; M.S.S. Pandian, ‘Dilemmas of Public Reason, Secularism and Religious Violence in Contemporary India’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 40, 22, 28 May–10 June, 2313–2320.

²⁶ Pinch, *Peasants and Monks*, 38.

²⁷ D.G. White, *The Alchemical Body, Siddha Traditions in Medieval India*, Chicago, 1996; *Sinister Yogis*, Chicago, 2009.

²⁸ M. Kasturi, ‘Monasticism and Political Constructions of Hinduism: The All India Dharm Sangh, Hindutva and the Hindu Code Bill Agitation’, Paper presented at Panel on ‘Religion, Gender and Identity’, in a Conference on ‘The Long Indian Century: Historical Transitions and Social Transformations’, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 2 July 2014.

Aurobindo Ghosh.²⁹ Largely dominated by Brahmins, and upper castes, the dharma sabhas constituted an oppositional, if disaggregated political and socio-religious consciousness subscribing to heterogeneous formulations of sanatana dharma distinguished from rival interpretations of neo-Hinduism. In conversation with universalist representations of religion, the proponents of sanatana dharma emphasised that all Hindus were united by a belief in *saguna bhakti* (belief in formless God), *murti-puja* (image worship), and the core doctrines elaborated by the Vedas, Puranas, Smritis, Upanishads and their commentaries. Through dharma sabhas, orthodox Hindus highlighted the importance of the unifying principals of sanatana dharma, its rituals and sacred spaces in building the 'Hindu community'. Such associations crafted their 'public' through print culture and elaborating on focusing on the socio-religious rituals, practices and spaces associated with the 'orthodox Hindu way of life', connecting bhakti (devotionalism), dharma (an ethical way of life) and religion to the dominant motifs of Rama and Krishna and texts like the Bhagavat Gita and the Puranas.³⁰ An influential strand of orthodox Hindu opinion gave pride of place to sectarian traditions, sampradayik autonomy and the sanctity of mahants. Through an elaboration of the first 'moment' of the Mahamandal's history, I suggest that hegemonic Vaishnava forms of orthodoxy suffused orthodox Hindu rhetoric.³¹ Their associations propagated interiorised and quietist forms of religiosity, piety, and bhakti, shorn of erotic and

²⁹ G. Beckerlegge, *The Ramakrishna Mission, The Making of a Modern Hindu Mission*, New Delhi, 2000; P. Heehs, 'The Centre of the Religious Life of the World, Spiritual Universalism and Cultural Nationalism in the Work of Sri Aurobindo', in A. Copley (ed.), *Hinduism in Public and Private, Reform, Hindutva, Gender and Sampraday*, New Delhi, 2003; C. Robinson, *Interpretations of the Bhagavad Gita and Images of the Hindu Tradition, the Song of the Lord*, London 2007; A. Sartori, *Bengal in Global Cultural History, Culturalism in the Age of Capital*, Chicago, 2008.

³⁰ S. Banerjee, 'Radha and Krishna in a Colonial Metropolis', *Logic In a Popular Form, Essays on Popular Religion in Bengal*, Calcutta, 2002, 87-118; J. Fuller, 'Remembering the Tradition, Bhaktivinod Thakurdas Sajjanatosani and the Construction of a Middle class Vaishnava Sampradaya in Nineteenth Century Bengal', in A. Copley (ed.), *Hinduism in Public and Private: Reform, Hindutva, Gender, and Sampraday*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 173-204.

³¹ *Kalyan* averred its contributors and readers, whether eminent *sants* and religious-minded Rajas and Maharajas derived great advantage by practicing in life the precepts of knowledge, devotion and good conduct set forth

subversive strains.³² As an exploration of the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal suggests, attempts to subsume multifarious Vaishnava and Shaiva traditions within constructions of sanatana dharma remained unresolved and disturbed.

Sectarian associations led by gurus were critical to new formulations of religion and Hindu nationalism, given the entangled and ambivalent histories of the orthodox Hindu associations with the Hindu Mahasabha in the early twentieth century.³³ Elsewhere, it is suggested that the dharma sabhas articulated a unique cultural and political vision of Hindu nationalism that often diverged from and complicated discourses on Hindu sangathan and Hindutva.³⁴ The relationship between sampradaya and visions of Hindu nation divided orthodox Hindus, or sanatanis. Many dharma sabhas were closely linked with

in the educative essays published in their journals. Editors of *Kalyan* to Grierson, Gorukhpur, 11-3-33, Eur Mss Grierson Eur/223/334 Linguistic Survey of India, United Provinces Miscellaneous, Asia and African Collections, British Library.

³² Dalmia, *Nationalisation of Hindu Traditions*, 82–110, 338–429.

³³ Such a narrative seeks to rupture the assumed genealogy of Hindu nationalism which is traced to the Hindu Mahasabha (1925) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (1923), into which all dharma sabhas were supposedly assimilated. On works undergirded by this narrative see T. Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave, Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*, Princeton, 1999; C. Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalist Movement in Indian Politics*, New Delhi, 1993; D. Ludden, *Making India Hindu, Religion, Community and the Politics of Democracy in India*, New Delhi, 1996; V. Dalmia, *The Nationalisation of Hindu Traditions, Bharatendu Harishchandra and Nineteenth Century Banaras*, New Delhi, 1997; J. Zavos, *The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India*, 2000; William Gould, *Hindu Nationalism and the Language of Politics in Late Colonial India*, Cambridge/Delhi, 2005; C. Jaffrelot (ed.) *Hindu Nationalism, A Reader*, New Delhi, 2007; C. Jaffrelot, *Religion, Caste and Politics in India*, Primus, 2010; A. Devare, *History and the Making of a Modern Hindu Self*, Routledge, 2011; P. Bapu, *Hindu Mahasabha in North India, 1915–1930, Constructing Nation and History*, Cambridge, 2011. See J. Zavos, 'The Arya Samaj and the Antecedents of Hindu Nationalism', *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, 1999, 3, 1, 57–81.

³⁴ See M. Kasturi, 'Crafting Hindu Publics Sadhus', *Sampradaya, Sanatana Dharma Sabhas and Hindu Nationalism in Twentieth Century India* (book manuscript in preparation).

sampradayik mandals and their members were part of the ‘devotional public’ of various spiritual preceptors. Having said that, many members of orthodox Hindu middle class lay leadership found ‘guru organisations’ problematic.³⁵ While Din Dayalu Sharma and Madan Mohan Malaviya sought the active participation of religious leaders in the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal in the nineteenth century, they were not interested in promoting personalised forms of guru-bhakti. After 1902, they opposed the attempt of Swami Gyanananda to propagate Shaivism, sanatana dharma and participate in conversations on the ‘Hindu nation’. While acknowledging the role of ‘political sadhus’ in a number of movements, Malaviya and his allies argued it was necessary to reform sadhus before they could participate in projects of socio-religious regeneration. Further, Madan Mohan Malaviya, the co-founder of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Hindu sangathan campaign considered sampradayas divisive to projects of pan-Indian Hindu religion and community. He and his fellow *Sangathanists* opposed the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal’s claim that monastic orders were the ‘natural’ leaders and representatives of the ‘Hindu race’, ‘nation’ and ‘social organism’.³⁶

The paper explores the role of the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal in shaping orthodox Hinduism in four sections. First, it highlights the role of the Dasnamis in negotiating the socio-religious landscape under colonialism. Second, it analyses the early history of the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal (1887), which emerged from the Vaishnava engagement with orthodox Hinduism, the Arya Samaj and Christianity. Third, the paper examines the transformation of the organisation from an association led by middle-class leaders into an institution organised by Shaiva ascetics. Fourth, it probes the organisation’s enunciation of Shaivism, sanatana dharma and its vision of the ‘Hindu nation’. The institutional forms and debates preoccupying the Mahamandala in both

³⁵ On the middle and professional class leadership of socio-religious associations in north India see Dalmia, *Nationalisation of Hindu Tradition*; Joshi, *Fractured Modernities*; and Starke, ‘Associational Culture’.

³⁶ M. Warriar, ‘Modernity and its Imbalances, Constructing Modern Selfhood in the Mata Amritanandamayi Mission’, *Religion*, 36, 2006, 179–95, M. Warriar, ‘Traditions and Transformation: An Introduction’, in J. Zavos et al. (eds), *Public Hinduisms*, New Delhi, 2012.

‘moments’ of its associational life was the precursor to communal articulations of Hindu ‘nation’ and its civil society visions from the 1940s.

1. Dasnamis and Shaiva Negotiations with Vaishnavism in Colonial India

The Dasnamis along with the Nath Yogis were important Shaiva sampradayas with a dominant presence in northern India.³⁷ The Dasnamis were linked in hagiographies with Shankaracharya and the four *pithas*, or elevated seat founded by him and his disciples in Puri, Dwarka, Govardhan and Jyotirmath. However, scholars agree that the Dasnamis took their organisational form between the sixteenth and eighteenth century, when a heterodox group of monastic and warrior ascetics were welded into one order.³⁸ This occurred at a time when various Vaishnava and Shaiva sampradayas and Sufi traditions were institutionalising themselves in engagement with each other and with political formations.³⁹ After the Dasnamis came together as an

³⁷ On the early Shaiva traditions see A. Sanderson, ‘The doctrine of Malinivijayotaranta’, in A. Padoux (ed.), *Ritual and Speculation in Early Tantrisms: Essays in Honour of Andre Padoux*, 282–315. On the Nath Yogis see D. Gordon White, *The Alchemical Body, Siddha Traditions in Medieval India*, Chicago, 1996; D. Gordon White, *Sinister Yogis*, Chicago, 2009. D. Gold, ‘Nath Yogis as Established Alternatives, Householders and Ascetics’, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 1999, 68–88; V. Bouillier, ‘Kānpaṭṭs’, in Knut A. Jacobsen (ed.), *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Hinduism, Vol. III. Society, Religious Specialists, Religious Traditions, and Philosophy*. Leiden, Brill, 2011, 347–354; V. Bouillier, ‘Hajji Ratan or Baba Ratan’s Multiple Identities’ with Dominique-Sila Khan, *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 2009, 37, 559–595; V. Bouillier, ‘Modern Guru and Old Sampradaya, How a Nath Yogi Anniversary Festival Became a Performance on Hinduism’, in J. Zavos, *Public Hinduisms*, 2012, V. Bouillier, ‘The Pilgrimage to Kadri Monastery (Mangalore, Karnataka), a Nath Yogi Performance’, in H. Pauwells (ed.), *Patronage, Performance and Pilgrimage: Channels of the Flow of Religious Exchange in Early-Modern India*, Wiesbaden, Otto Harassowitz, 2009. For excellent studies of the Dasnamis, see M. Clark, *The Dasnami Sannyasis, The Integration of Ascetic Lineages Into An Order*, Leiden, 2006, and Pinch, *Ascetics and Empire*.

³⁸ Clark, *The Dasnami Sannyasis*, 61.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 242–3. See Pinch, *Ascetics and Empires*; Chatterjee, *Forgotten Friends*.

institutionalised ascetic sampradaya, they retained an enormous diversity of interpretations towards renunciation, theological doctrines and everyday practices.⁴⁰ The Dasnamis were associated with Advaita philosophy and various schools of Tantric thought. Before British rule, Banaras emerged as an important centre of debate and philosophical discussion and debate amongst various Shaiva orders led by the Dasnamis.⁴¹ As I argue below, the Dasrams were to play an important role in samprodaying association by the twentieth century.⁴²

The Dasnamis were broadly divided into ten *panths* (sub-divisions). They comprised the *Tirtha*, *Asrama Vana*, *Aranya*, *Giri*, *Parvata*, *Sagara*, *Saraswati*, *Bharati* and *Puri* orders.⁴³ Further, these orders were associated with three broad sub-divisions. These were the *Dandis*, or the scripture holders who wielded the staff, the *Parahamsas* (the pure) and the *Nagas*. Each Dandi and Parahamsa order was organised around a *guru-parampara* tradition based in maths. Additionally, the Parahamsas and Nagas were also connected to akharas. The Naga akharas were fluid and dynamic institutions with unique relationships with maths.⁴⁴ Although ascetic genealogies were intertwined with sexuality, kinship and family, Dandis and Parahamsas represented themselves as *nihang* (celibate) renunciatory orders.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Clark, *The Dasnami Sanyasis*, 8.

^{41,42} For the importance of pandits and monastic orders in Banaras see, M. Dodson, *Orientalism, Empire and National Culture, India, 1770–1880*, Cambridge, 2007; R. O’Hanlon, ‘Letters Home: Banaras Pandits and the Maratha Regions in Early Modern India’, *Modern Asian Studies* 44, 2 (2010), 201–40; R. O’Hanlon, ‘Speaking from Shiva’s Temple: Banaras Scholar Households and the Brahmin Ecumene of Mughal India’, *South Asian History and Culture*, 2011, 563–95. On the historical relationship of the Dasnamis with Banaras, and the different positions with Advaita Vedanta that developed in conversation with each other and the Vaishnavas/non-dualists, see, M. Clark, *The Dasnami Sannyasis, The Integration of Ascetic Lineages Into An Order*, Leiden, 2006, 61–72 and C. Minkowski, ‘Advaita Vedanta in Early Modern History’, *South Asian History and Culture*, 2011, 205–31.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 246.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 133–47.

⁴⁵ Elsewhere, it has been shown that sexuality, kinship and women shaped supposedly ‘spiritual genealogies’. M. Kasturi, ‘Asceticising Monastic Families: Ascetic Genealogies, Property Feuds and Anglo-Hindu Law in Late Colonial India’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 2009, vol.43, 5, 1039–83.

Importantly, Dasnami identities were shaped by caste. The four panths, or sub-sects of Dandis (Tirtha, Asrama and Saraswati), important players in our story, were recruited from Brahmins.⁴⁶ Dandi Dasnamis observed caste hierarchies within their maths and with other Dasnami ascetics. In Dandi maths, the rules of commensality between the Pancha Gauda and Pancha Dravida Brahmins were strictly observed. Further, they exhibited deeply entrenched prejudices between the Kanyakubja and Saryapuri Brahmins.⁴⁷ The Dandis' refusal to consider Parahamsas and Nagas of equal status, and their deep-rooted belief in *varnasramadharm* led to conflict within the order.⁴⁸ In short, there were diverging approaches towards caste within the different panths of the Dasnamis, which were exacerbated during the public sphere debates and agitations over caste and the sangathan campaign.⁴⁹ Further, under colonialism, the deep-rooted class hierarchy amongst the Dasnamis deepened as rich and propertied mahants, redefining themselves as proprietors under colonial law looked askance at the 'rank and file' sadhus and yogis.⁵⁰

Until the eighteenth century, Shaiva orders like the Dasnamis and Nath Yogis were influential forces in north India.⁵¹ However, by the eighteenth century, their influence declined due to the spread of Ramanandi forms of belief.⁵² The Ramanandis emphasised the

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁴⁷ Surajit Sinha and Baidyanath Saraswati, *Ascetics of Kashi, An Anthropological Exploration*, Varanasi, 1968, 70.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁴⁹ For discussions on sampradaya and caste, see Pinch, *Peasants and Monks*, chapter two. Also see M. Kasturi, 'Crafting a "Hindu Public" Through Ritual: Orthodox Hindus, Sampradaya and the *Shuddhi-Karan* Campaign' (unpublished paper).

⁵⁰ For the growing distances between rich mahants, gurus and yogis see M. Kasturi, 'This Land is Mine: Mahants, Civil Law and Political Articulations of Hinduism in Twentieth Century North India', in G. Tarrabout, D. Berti and R. Voix (eds), *Filing Religion, State Hinduism and the Court*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi (forthcoming).

⁵¹ The Dandi prejudice towards the Parahamsas was based on the fact they were drawn from the Vaishya and shudra castes, while their disdain towards the Naga akharas drew upon their recruitment from the lower orders in ways that deliberately blurred caste lines. Clark, *The Dasnamis*; Pinch, *Ascetics and Empires*, 43–82.

⁵² Pinch speaks of the disdain exhibited by the bhakti reformers for the

importance of bhakti, an abstract concept of Vishnu drawn from everyday texts such as the Bhagvata Puranas, and a new view of society.⁵³ The language of Ramanandi Vaishnavism, with its emphasis on social equality and a relatively progressive assimilative cultural order appealed to upwardly mobile semi-independent cultivating castes like Kurmis, Yadavs and Ahirs in comparison with other Vaishnava forms of worship.⁵⁴ This process was accompanied with the demilitarisation of the Dasnamis by the colonial state, and the formal re-institutionalisation of monastic orders as the centres of ascetic orders connected to broader pilgrimage and trading networks. After the eighteenth century, the Dasnamis adapted to the institutionalisation of Vaishnavism by accommodating their language, idioms and forms or by abjuring their Dasnami identity.⁵⁵ The Dasnamis renegotiated their identity and associational forms against the broader backdrop of discomfort with Shaivism for its beliefs, and Tantricism in the Hindi heartland.⁵⁶ The number of Dasnami sanyasis and gurus, declined given the growing popularity of Vaishnava forms of religiosity and ideas in the Hindi heartland.⁵⁷ Increasingly, Dasnami and Naga mahants gave lip service to Vaishnavism to gain bhaktas amongst the middle class, mercantile groups, and semi-agricultural class.⁵⁸ Henceforth, ascetic orders were reinvented as sedentary groups organised around maths that remained connected to broader pilgrimage and trading networks.⁵⁹

Despite the climate of critique, however, Dasnami maths remained prominent in larger cities like Banaras and Ayodhya, and in smaller towns in many districts. These institutions were connected to Dasnami monastic networks that shifted and adapted to colonial rule, that bound institutions in Banaras and Allahabad with those in Bihar (the Buddha

yogis and sadhus who claimed to possess magical powers attained by yoga and Tantricism. Instead, texts like the *Ramcharitmanas* condemned the tap that destroyed the world, praising instead the quiet contemplation and individual worship of god. *Ascetics and Empires*, 213–221.

⁵³ Pinch, *Peasants and Monks*, chapter three.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Pinch, *Ascetics and Empires*, 222.

⁵⁶ Pinch, *Peasants and Monks*.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Pinch, *Ascetics and Empires*, 222–227.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Gaya math) and Bengal (the Tarakeshwar math and temple). Further, the period from 1780 to 1940 witnessed an expansion in the building of Dasnami monasteries and akharas in the Banaras division and city as public forms of religiosity and gifting exploded under colonialism.⁶⁰ Monastic institutions were significant for their wealth and heads of monastic orders played an important role as zamindars, traders and moneylenders. Maths built in the Banaras division combined Vaishnava, Shaiva and Tantric forms of worship and doctrines.⁶¹ Shri Somari Giri, another renowned *siddhi* (semi-divine), established the Srinath Baba math in Ballia that had *melas* during Shri Krishna Janamashtami, Ramanavami and Mahashivaratri.⁶² Thousands of rupees were spent on Ramlilas annually by the math.⁶³ Equally prominent was the Gita Swami math in Mirzapur, founded in 1934 by Divyanand Saraswati.⁶⁴ Further, Dandi and Parahamsa orders dominated the Banaras division. The Dandi maths witnessed a smaller expansion. Between 1800 and 1963, 27 of the 37 Dandi maths were constructed in Banaras district. Twenty-three of these maths were affiliated to the Sarada pitha (superior math) and 14 to the Sringeri pitha. Fifty per cent of all Dandi ascetics were located in Banaras.⁶⁵ From the late nineteenth century, therefore, although Banaras emerged as one of the centres of Vaishnava resurgence,⁶⁶ its Dasnami maths remained vibrant, and Shaiva sadhus constituted 48 per cent of the population. The Dandis managed 18 maths, while the Parahamsas owned 15 institutions.⁶⁷ All Dandi monastic institutions were associated with Sanskrit, the Vedanta and Tantric learning. The city was also home to 24 Naga centres.⁶⁸

⁶⁰ M. Kasturi, op. cit.

⁶¹ S. Trivedi and Swami Devanand, *Hindu Math, Ek Samajshastriya Adhyan*, Varanasi, 1978, 138–143.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 141–43. This math had a *gaushala* and a Srinathji library.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 173–4.

⁶⁵ Minkowski, 'Advaita Vedanta', 212–17, 217–18.

⁶⁶ Dalmia, *Nationalisation of Hindu Traditions*, 51–93.

⁶⁷ Clark, *The Dasnamis*, 42–7.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 49. In Banaras, prominent dandi institutions included the Kamroopa math, Dakshinamurti math, Gaudaswami math, Tryamurti math, Dattatreya Bhagwanka math, the Sumera math, the Taraka math and the Siddha Yogeshrama math.

Importantly, various Shaiva orders sought to emerge as important voices in the articulation of sanatana dharma in the early twentieth century. They engaged with public forms of Hinduism that denigrated Shaivism for its *patit* (fallen practices) and counselled Shaivas to see themselves as part of a Vaishnava universe, where Shiva was presented as one form of Vishnu.⁶⁹ By the early twentieth century, Hanuman Prasad Poddar, the editor of the most widely circulated orthodox Hindi journal *Kalyan* (1927), published by Gita Press, Gorukhpur, expressed his worry about the marginalisation of Shaivism within sanatana dharma. *Kalyan*, undoubtedly the most successful orthodox Hindu journal, brought out special issues on *Bhaktiankh* (1928), the *Srimad Bhagavatgitaankh* (1929) and *Krishnankh* (1931) in the first seven years of its existence. The 1931 special issue on Krishna, in keeping with the broader currents in neo-Hinduism projected Krishna as the ideal citizen, the *karma-yogin* and epitome of *maryada* (moral conduct), and the Gita as the ur-text of the Hindus, albeit with different interpretations. When preparing for the *Ishwarankh* in 1932, Poddar wrote to George Grierson of his discomfort of not representing Shaiva and Sakta traditions within the widely read periodical.⁷⁰ To repair the ‘imbalance’, Poddar published a special issue on Shaivism, to discuss the issue on the basis of ‘ancient lore and experience without being confined to any sectarian point of view to propagate the central tenets and teachings of Shaivism. *Kalyan* also solicited photos relating to Shiva and his works, prominent temples, sacred events and places connected with the name of the God Shiva with necessary descriptions relating thereto’.⁷¹ Subsequently, *Kalyan* brought out the *Shivankh* (1933), *Shaktiankh* (1934) *Yogankh* (1935) and *Vedantankh* (1935). While Shaiva sacred spaces, beliefs and practices were accommodated within orthodox Hinduism, the hegemonic Vaishnava perspective endorsed by the majority of dharma sabhas, the centrality of Vaishnava motifs and representational forms was not displaced.

⁶⁹ On criticisms of Shaivism see Dalmia, *Nationalisation of Tradition*, 420–27; Pinch, *Ascetics and Empires*, 211–27.

⁷⁰ Editors of *Kalyan* to Grierson, Gorukhpur, 11-3-33 Eur MSS Grierson Eur/223/334, Linguistic Survey of India, United Provinces, miscellaneous, Asia and African Collections, BL.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

The Shri Bharat Dharma Mahamandala constitutes an important example of Dandi and Parahansa sanyasis negotiations of identity and authority, articulations of religion and Hindu nationalism. By the 1920s, Dandi sanyasis used Dasnami maths, Shiva mandals, and new associational forms in urban centres as key nodes to spread their interpretation of Shaivism, and concomitantly marginalise other Shaiva orders. Most important amongst these was the Nath Yogi sampradaya. Simultaneously, they negotiated the onslaught of Vaishnava critique and doctrines.⁷² The Shri Bharat Dharma Mahamandala, therefore, is an important example of particularised Shaiva negotiations with hegemonic Vaishnava idioms and forms. Through these associational forms, Dasnamis became involved in the world of nationalist and communal politics. By the early twentieth century, Dandi and Parahansa ascetics joined forces with the Kashi Pandit Sabha and Tirth Sudhar Sabha to oppose the Arya Samaj. It is pertinent that the Dandi sanyasis played a prominent role in consolidating the dharma sabhas and putting forward the perspective of no-change Sanatanis on Hindu sangathan and Dasnami mahants from other *panths*.⁷³

The Bharat Dharma Mahamandal drew upon the monastic world of Dasnami maths, akharas and their networks in the subcontinent. Interestingly, this was a time when Dasnami maths and mahants like Satish Chandra Giri of Tarakeshwar were pilloried as the epitome of licentious sadhus, brutal zamindars, seeking to corrupt guileless devotees and tyrannise their tenants. Instead, Dasnamis emphasised the valorisation of ascetics and sadhus in religious periodicals, to make a case for the importance of guru-based organisations to propagate orthodox Hinduism to devotees. Dandi and Parahansa sanyasis self-consciously separated themselves from the licentious and itinerant sadhus, and from ‘wandering’ Shaiva orders like the Nath Yogis. Bemoaning the disappearance of the *pavitra sadhu*, or pure sadhu who protected the Hindu ‘social organism’, Gyanananda Swami’s

⁷² See for example Swami Karpatri’s *Ramayan Mimamsa*, Radhakrishna Dhanuka Prakashan, Vrindavan, 2012.

⁷³ Swami Karpatri, who formed the pro-RSS All India Dharm Sangh in 1940, hailed from the Sumeru math in Banaras, whose mahant was designated as the Shankaracharya of Kasi. Clark, *The Dasnamis Sanyasis*, 146–7.

Bharat Dharma Mahamandal committed itself to the regeneration of the sadhu samaj, varnasramadharm and sanatana dharma. Simultaneously, the Mahamandal committed itself to protecting the position of monastic orders, mahants and the autonomy of various sampradayas. Articulating its disapproval of lay leaders like Madan Mohan Malaviya, the Mahamandal averred that sadhus together with Brahmins were the ‘natural leaders’ of the Hindu ‘social organism’, jati and race. The paper suggests below that these notions met with mixed responses.

2. Din Dayalu Sharma and the Early Bharat Dharma Mahamandal

From the late nineteenth century, Banaras emerged as one of the centres of a Vaishnava resurgence led by Bharatendu Harishchandra, through which sanatana dharma was enunciated and nationalised.⁷⁴ The Kasi Dharma sabha, patronised by the Raja of Banaras, and supported by the pandits, mercantile princes and professionals, outlined the initial contours of Vaishnava orthodoxy through its confrontations with Christians and Arya Samajis. Subsequently, it equated Vaishnava bhakti with religion.⁷⁵ By 1870, a number of dharma *sabhas* were formed in Banaras, Agra, Chandausi, and other parts of the western United Province districts where the Arya Samaj had a strong presence.⁷⁶ The Bharat Dharma Mahamandal (1887) formed by Din Dayalu Sharma, a Gaur Brahmin from Rohtak, was embedded in pre-existing dense networks of overlapping and contesting socio-religious associational forms in north India’s small towns and *qasbas*.

The Bharat Dharma Mahamandal was the culmination of many associations formed by Din Dayalu Sharma (1851–1930), beginning with *Riaf-i-am*, a non-denominational body that included Hindus and Muslims. He also began an Urdu magazine called *Mathura Samachar* that propagated sanatana dharma. In 1886, after Din Dayalu Sharma

⁷⁴ Dalmia, *The Nationalisation of Hindu Traditions*.

⁷⁵ Dalmia, *Ibid.*, 82–110, 338–429; on the pandits of Banaras and the dharma sabhas in the nineteenth century, see M. Dodson, *Orientalism, Empire and National Culture, India, 1770–1880*, Cambridge, 2007.

⁷⁶ Balkaran Sharma Dharmakar, ‘Panditji Ka Jiwan Jhanki’, *Sanatan Dharm*, Vishesh Ankh, Pandit Din Dayalu Sharma, 14.

attended the Indian National Congress session, he felt a desire to create an all-India religious body from which nationalism would ‘spring’.⁷⁷ Din Dayalu Sharma was Madan Mohan Malaviya’s mentor.⁷⁸ On 12 October 1885, Madan Mohan Malaviya and Din Dayalu Sharma established the Gauvarnasrama Dharma Hitokshini Ganga Sabha. Its establishment was precipitated by a clash in Haridwar between the Arya Samajis and the *pandas*.⁷⁹ The Arya Samaj established boxes for *dana* (charitable gifting) near the river, beseeching pilgrims to pay their obeisance to God by giving it to ‘useful causes’ instead of wasting it on Brahmins. The Arya Samaji workers collected thousands of rupees as *dana* meant for the celebration of the *mahima* (greatness) of the Ganga. Din Dayalu Sharma suggested that the pandits form an association to celebrate the Ganga, preach the importance of gurus, pilgrimages, and *murti-puja* (idol worship) and support Sanatani gurus with the monies it collected.⁸⁰ However, Din Dayalu Sharma’s aim that the Gauvarnasrama Hitokshini Sabha would strengthen and unify the ‘scattered pearls of sanatana dharma’ was not realised, as its influence did not extend beyond Haridwar.

Thereafter, Din Dayalu Sharma established the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal in Haridwar on 4 May 1889 welcoming persons belonging to all sampradayas, castes, and religions to come together and reform and strengthen Hinduism.⁸¹ The Bharat Dharma Mahamandal while espousing equality between Shaivism and Vaishnavism in orthodox was decidedly Vaishnava in its bent. The Mahamandal had a special association with Mathura. Its third session held in 1889, significantly, was held at the Brahmin-dominated Sri-Vaishnava Rangji temple in Brindavan.⁸² Seth Lakshman Das of Mathura, a mercantile banker and a staunch devotee of the Rangji temple was the President of the working committee of the Mahamandal. All donations for membership were directed to his *kothi* in Mathura.⁸³ Madan Mohan Malaviya, Din

⁷⁷ Harihar Swaroop Sharma, *Vyakaran Vachaspati Pandit Din Dayalu Sharma Ki Smarak Granth*, Delhi, 22–3.

⁷⁸ Balkaran Sharma Dharmakar, ‘Panditji Ka Jiwan Jhanki’, 14.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 18–20.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁸² Sharma, *Vyakaran Vachaspati*, 31.

⁸³ Din Dayalu Sharma, ‘Mathura Main Ashtham Adhiveshan’, *Ibid.*, 143.

Dayalu Sharma's collaborator in the Mahamandal was also a staunch Vaishnava. His biographer notes that his grandfather was a Krishna devotee.⁸⁴ Malaviya's father Brajnath Chaturvedi recited the Bhagvat katha for the Maharajas of Darbhanga and Kashi, and lectured on the Bhagvat, Ramayana and other Vaishnava texts.⁸⁵ Madan Mohan Malaviya, immersed in Bhagvat bhakti, in common with other members of the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal was also involved in Vaishnava mandals and sammelans well after its takeover by Swami Gyanananda in 1905.⁸⁶

Under Din Dayalu Sharma's leadership, the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal operated as a religious body whose rules and organisations covered orthodox Hindu associations throughout the country.⁸⁷ At its first session, that took place between 21st and 31st May 1889, its members resolved to protect varnasramadharma and work for the unity of Shaivas and Vaishnavas. It averred that all sampradayas were Vaidik religions, shared fundamental principles and were part of sanatana dharm.⁸⁸ In 1892 the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal moved its headquarters to Brindavan, and held its third annual meeting at the Rangji temple.⁸⁹ Thereafter, annual sessions were held in Banaras (1892) and Delhi (1893, 1900 and 1901). Subsequently, the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal moved to Banaras.⁹⁰ Between 1889 and 1900, all the main sampradayas were represented in Mahamandal meetings. The association also attracted rich patrons like the princely rulers of Kashmir, the Deccan, Patiala and Ayodhya, big zamindars like the Maharaja of Darbhanga, mercantile princes like

⁸⁴ Sitanath Chaturvedi, *Mahamana Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviyaji Ka Jivan Charitra*, first published in 1938, reprint 2009, Banaras Hindu University Press, 9.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 9–12.

⁸⁶ Malaviya's close associates included *Radhe Shyam Vanaprastha*, a famous playwright and publisher of Bareilly, whose Radhe Shyam press preached and propagated the *Ramayana*. Correspondence with *Radhey Shyam Vanaprasthi*, Jhabarmal Sharma Papers, NMML.

⁸⁷ Sharma, *Vyakharan Vachaspati*, Delhi, 25.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 32–3.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁹⁰ Balkaran Sharma Dharmakar, 'Panditji Ka Jivan Jhanki', *Sanatan Dharm*, 14.

Seth Lakshmandas of Mathura, Sanskrit scholars and editors of prominent Sanatani journals.⁹¹ In 1892, a new Hindi magazine was launched to propagate religion.⁹² At this meeting, the association resolved to put down in writing the controversial issues debated with Arya Samajis, such as *shraddh*, *tapasya*, murti-puja, *varnavyavastha*, marriage and pilgrimages. Organisationally, the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal decided to build a university for the propagation of Sanskrit and Hindi.⁹³

In common with the Arya Samaj, dharma sabha associational forms like the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal were interested in systematising and rationalising religious practices. To a large extent, the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal was born out of debates taking place between dharma sabhas, Christian missionaries and Arya Samajis in the late nineteenth century. Its anti-Arya and pro-Brahmin stance was clear from *dharmic prashnavalis* (religious questionnaires) sent out to scholars and pandits in 1889.⁹⁴ The questionnaires focused on core issues Arya Samajis and Sanatanis debated in local *shastrarths* (debates in theological subjects).⁹⁵ These included theological doctrines and beliefs, the significance of ritual and how varnasramadharma shaped everyday life.⁹⁶ More broadly, the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal's *prashnavalis* (questionnaires) reflected concerns with rationality, science and theological knowledge. It also focused on organising, reforming and purifying religion. In this regard, Din Dayalu Sharma asked pandits to reflect upon whether the Vedas were part of the sanatana dharma scriptures, whether they were the word of God, were created at one time, how many parts they comprised and how the differences were to be accounted for. Pandits associated with the Mahamandal were encouraged to scrutinise the Vedas, Brahmanas, and Upanishads and point out the core differences between these texts.

⁹¹ 'Mathura Mein Ashtam Adhiveshan', Circular of Din Dayalu Sharma, *Bharat Mitra*, Sharma, *Vyakharan Vachaspati*, 148.

⁹² Sharma, *Vyakharan Vachaspati*, 34.

⁹³ Din Dayalu Sharma, 'Mathura Mein Ashtam Adhiveshan', *Ibid.*, 143.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 25–6.

⁹⁵ See section one.

⁹⁶ Questionnaire of the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal (BDMM), Sharma, *Vyakharan Vachaspati*, 25–6.

The Bharat Dharma Mahamandal also emphasised that it was important to present the Puranas to orthodox Hindus and their critical interlocutors in an authoritative form. Hence, an important section of the *prashnavalis* lingered on the eighteen Puranas in detail to query whether they were all available, when they were written and addressed questions of authorship.⁹⁷

Dharmic *prashnavalis* submitted to pandits also contained questions of ritual and belief, and were concerned with rewriting older traditions with ‘contemporary’ understanding of rationality.⁹⁸ They were asked whether God was nirguna (formless) or sarguna, the nature of incarnations and their worship and the Arya criticism of Krishna. Like other dharma sabhas, the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal asserted that murti-puja was the duty of all four varnas, and reflected on the significance of temples and pilgrimage sites associated with sanatana dharma. The *prashnavalis* felt it necessary to tabulate the number of pilgrimage sites, one of the main bones of contention with the Aryas. With regard to *tirthas* (religious places), they sought to answer Arya Samajis on why if God was everywhere, only particular spots were considered especially holy; and if there was any one text which has directions on the practices, rites and knowledge about pilgrimages. The Bharat Dharma Mahamandal also invited pandits to reflect on the significance of pilgrimage sites, and give evidence that sins vanished upon viewing images and going on pilgrimages. Eager to refute Arya Samaji contentions that pilgrimages were part of the superstition of ‘traditional’ religion, the questionnaires wondered if sins did vanish during pilgrimages, and whether it could be verified that this constituted evidence that pilgrimages were an effective way of abolishing sins.⁹⁹ The *prashnavalis* also wished to enumerate the number of festivals Hindus followed, the pujas or rites appropriate to each festival, and how festivals associated with God could be celebrated in a manner that raised the stock of the festival concerned.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 28.

Unsurprisingly, the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal was preoccupied with varnasramadharmā, the ideology underpinning orthodox interpretations of caste. In particular, the dharmic prashnavālis raised concerns about whether it was possible to retain the varnasrama order, and the relationship between the world, *karma* (actions) and birth. Given the current trend, where any person could become a Brahmin, the Mahamandal feared what the future portended, and how the social order outlined in the scriptures would endure. It was concerned about the intermixture taking place within castes, and whether this was taking place in conformity with the varnasrama order. The prashnavālis also wondered about the nature, rites and duties of the four *asramas* (stages of life), that is brahmacharya, *grihastha* (householder), *vanaprastha* and *sanyasi* asrama. In particular, the questionnaires wondered whether ascetics were necessary in modern times, to which varnas they belonged, what rules they followed, whether contemporary sanyasis were in conformity with the shastras, and the societies that could be formed to regulate the social evils amongst them.¹⁰¹ As the Arya Samaj campaigned in favour of *shuddhi-karan* (conversion), the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal asked its pandits to solutions on how to stop conversions to other faiths, and whether ‘converts’ could be readmitted to orthodox Hinduism through rites of expiation. Furthermore, the questionnaires pondered on the fate of varnas who moved away from religion, and who then wished to return to a life based on sanatana dharmā.¹⁰²

Throughout the nineteenth century, the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal articulated its Brahmanical understanding of religion. In late nineteenth century circulars, Din Dayalu Sharma emphasised that the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal had been created to rouse persons from religious slumber in a period in which men had fallen from the path of righteousness. He reminded men that it was their religious duty to protect religion from ‘reformers’ (like the Arya Samaj) who abused idol worship, rituals and religion.¹⁰³ In 1900, Din Dayalu Sharma urged

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Din Dayalu Sharma, quoted in *Bharat Mitra*, 23 July 1900; Din Dayalu Sharma, ‘Mathura Mein Ashtham Adhiveshan’; Sharma, *Vyakharan Vachaspati*, 148.

believers in the Vaidik religion from all sampradayas to discuss national education and how varnasramadharm could progress in accordance with Vaidik rites and rituals. Din Dayalu Sharma also emphasised the importance of having a dialogue with the opponents of orthodox Hinduism, and sought to build the relationship between social conferences, caste associations and the Mahamandal.¹⁰⁴ In meetings of the association, it clearly enunciated the differences between Sanatanis and other Hindus. In Delhi, in 1901, the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal resolutions reiterated that Vaidic religion valued murti-puja, pilgrimages, and the life-cycle sanskaras. It identified reformers, whether the Arya Samajis or others who lectured against sanatana dharma and ate and married against its principles and rules as its opponents.¹⁰⁵ A glance at Din Dayalu Sharma's correspondence suggests that the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal was preoccupied with a number of organisational matters, establishing provincial branches, and establishing an institutional structure.¹⁰⁶ As a young institution, it was dependent on dana.¹⁰⁷ Central to the goals of the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal at this time was education. Its donors and admirers stressed the importance of Sanskrit pathshalas (schools) as well as a University.¹⁰⁸ The Mahamandal hoped to establish a Bharat Mahavidyalaya for the propagation of sanatana dharma. What seems to have been a matter of debate is whether the proposed institution would be in Brindavan, Indraprastha (Delhi), or in Kashi.¹⁰⁹ Din Dayalu Sharma was hopeful of Indraprastha, or Delhi, given that there was not enough money for two institutions.¹¹⁰ The exact shape and plans for the institution were unclear.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁴ *Bharat Mitra*, 10 August 1900, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 155.

¹⁰⁵ *Bharat Mitra*, 23 August 1900, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 159.

¹⁰⁶ See the correspondence between Bhanu Dutt, Kishen Lal, Bulaki Ram Shastri, Murli Dhar Sharma to Din Dayalu Sharma, Din Dayalu Sharma Papers (DDS), NMML.

¹⁰⁷ Bhanu Dutt to DDS, 27/10/1883, DDS Papers, NMML.

¹⁰⁸ Kishen Lal to Din Dayalu Sharma, undated, DDS Papers, NMML.

¹⁰⁹ Bulaki Ram Shastri to Din Dayalu Sharma, July 1893; Kishen Lal to Din Dayalu Sharma, 27/7/1893, DDS Papers, NMML.

¹¹⁰ Din Dayalu Sharma, Bharat Dharma Mahamandal, Subject File 2, date? DDS Papers, NMML.

¹¹¹ Hawley, 'Sanatana Dharma', and L. Renold, *A Hindu Education, Early Years of Banaras Hindu University*, New Delhi.

In 1901, Din Dayalu Sharma and Madan Mohan Malaviya left the Mahamandal, after it split. Supported by his princely devotees, led by the Maharaja of Darbhanga, and princes from Rajputana, Swami Gyanananda formed an organisation called the Nigamagam Mandali in Mathura, loosely affiliated with the Mahamandal. Through a variety of manoeuvres, he appropriated the association which was renamed the Shri Bharat Dharma Mahamandala. Subsequently, Din Dayalu Sharma formed the Sanatana Dharma Sammelan, which was amalgamated with Malaviya's All India Sanatana Dharma Mahasabha in 1906. These organisations propagated Din Dayalu Sharma and Malaviya's interpretation of orthodox Hinduism, and the Hindu Sabha movement.¹¹² All the dharma sabha organisations associated with Malaviya preached an understanding of religion that was deliberately inclusive and universalistic, and purged of sectarian divides.¹¹³ Din Dayalu Sharma and Malaviya opposed Gyanananda Swami's model of religiosity that linked the world of Shaiva monastic orders to orthodox Hindu associations. After resigning from the Mahamandal, Din Dayalu Sharma reminded Gyanananda that sadhus needed to work for the poor, instead of being attached to worldly possessions, rich patrons and underhand activities.¹¹⁴ Contemporaries noted with distaste that the Shri Bharat Dharma Mahamandala was now transformed from a religious organisation to a 'sadhu's matter', that Swami Gyanananda claimed to be an incarnation, or *avatara* of God, and the publications of the Mahamandal focused on 'tantra and occult matters'.¹¹⁵ Many dharma sabhas accused Gyanananda of 'misrepresenting' the Gita in Bharat Dharma Mahamandal publications.¹¹⁶ His bhaktas in turn accused Malaviya of tarnishing Gyanananda's name by suggesting that he posed as a holy man, took *dakshina* (gifts) from princes, rich *seths*

¹¹² Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, *Ishwar*, 11–13.

¹¹³ Ganesh Goswami Datta, *Varshik Vivran, Shri Sanatan Dharm Prathnidhi Sabha*, Punjab, Lahore, 1924, 2.

¹¹⁴ Letter of Din Dayalu Sharma to Swami Gyanananda, quoted in Sharma, *Vyakharan Vachaspati*, 185–7. Also see letters of Din Dayalu Sharma to Private Secretary of Maharaja of Darbhanga, 13/12/ 1901 and Din Dayalu Sharma to Bal Mukund Sharma 15/1/1902, quoted in Sharma, *Vyakharan Vachaspati*, 188.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 190–91.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 258.

and notables, without mentioning that he gifted the money for religious purposes.¹¹⁷ The gulf between the sectarian and lay leadership of the dharma sabhas was only to widen.

3. Shaiva Ascetics, Maths and Associational Forms: The Shri Bharat Dharma Mahamandala

Swami Gyanananda, the ‘ascetic organiser’ of the rejuvenated Shri Bharat Dharma Mahamandala acquired prominence after 1903.¹¹⁸ Official biographies of Gyanananda, following hagiographies, represented him as an incarnation of God, and Shankaracharya, born at a time when sanatana dharma was threatened by its enemies led by the Arya Samaj.¹¹⁹ Recording the history of Gyanananda as a sant, or mahatma, akin to Vallabhacharya and Ramanucharya, his biographer emphasised that Shriji (or Gyanananda) was absorbed by *vairagya* (detachment) and tapasya even when he was a householder, or grihastha. He is said to have renounced grihastha asrama, strengthened in his resolve by Adi Shankaracharya’s idea that worldly attachments were part of the illusion of the world.¹²⁰ Gyanananda apparently found a guru in Swami Keshavanand Bharati, a Dasnami sanyasi of the Parahansa order with ashrams in Bhuvaneshwar, Haridwar and Vrindavan. Keshavanand was learned in Tantric studies and the *Kriya Darshanas*.¹²¹ Subsequently, after a long and arduous period of tapasya near Mount Abu, where he is said to have gained *sidh* (knowledge), his fame began to spread far and wide amongst the princes of Rajputana.¹²² His biography averred he was equally famous for his knowledge of *mahayagnas*.¹²³ It presented Gyanananda as a *siddha* (semi-divine being) praised him for his command over the Upanishad, Darshanas and Tantric shastras, like the *Shakti Upasana*

¹¹⁷ Pandit Govindshastri Dugvekar, *Bhagwat Puujyapad Maharishi Swami Gyananandaji Maharaj Ka JiwanVrith*, Shri Bharat Dharma Mahamandala Shastra Prakash Vibhag, Kashi, 1963, 205.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 154

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1-7

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 128.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 144–47.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 154.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

Rahasya.¹²⁴ Accounts of Gyanananda published by the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal emphasised the miracles associated with him, and he was extolled as an exemplar of the powerful and controlled yogi.¹²⁵

The Shri Bharat Dharma Mahamandala retained its 'modern' associational forms. Gyanananda established the Shri Bharat Dharma Mahamandala as a registered society. From 1905, it published its rulebook, or *Niyamvali*, annual reports, dictionaries, and religious literature.¹²⁶ The Mahamandala's goal was to revive sanatana dharma through education, dissemination of religious literature and preparation of sadhu workers as preachers.¹²⁷ In 1915, the Mahamandala highlighted that it wished to protect the 'Rishi ordained' system of varnasramadharma, the foundation of the 'Hindu social structure'. It also wished to disseminate amongst Hindus the eternal and all embracing principles of their religion. Further, the All India Prathinidhi Sabha of the Mahamandala asserted it aimed to regenerate the Hindu race, or *Arya jati* by rekindling in it its innate and inherited religious spirit. The Mahamandala's purpose was to resurrect the Hindu 'social organism', or 'nation', categories that were used frequently. Its main agents for this project were ascetics, and sadhu workers, who worked as organisers, pracharaks, teachers and disseminators of orthodox Hinduism.¹²⁸ Its 1916 report stated that the regeneration of the sadhu community was closely linked to the Mahamandala's four main aims. These included the provision of trained religious teachers preachers and other workers, the dissemination of the truths of orthodox Hinduism, propagation of theological and shastraic literature and establishment

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 199–202.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 150–52.

¹²⁶ *Bharat Dharma Mahamandal Ki Niyamvali*, Amrita Lal Sarma, Dharmamrita Press, February 1905, 1st edition, 500 copies, *Statement of Particulars Regarding Books and Periodicals in the United Provinces Published During the First Quarter of 1905*.

¹²⁷ Appendix C, Shri Swami Gyayananda Maharaj and BDMM, Copy of Resolutions of Local Committee of Mahamandal at Banaras, 7 December 1914.

¹²⁸ Appendix A, Appeal Issued on Behalf of the BDMM issued by his Highness the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, Partab Singh, President, All India Prathinidhi Sabha, BDMM, Foreign and Political Department Notes, Secret-G, March 1915, 1–5, NAI.

of a socio-religious organisation representing the entire Hindu population. It used the term 'Hindu' as being applicable to believers in varnasramadharmā.¹²⁹ The Mahamandala had a variety of departments, the most important of which were propaganda, *raksha* (protection), *dharma sansthan* (dealing with religious sites) and the shastras that published religious literature and texts propagating the 'orthodox Hindu way of life'. The Sarada Mandali instituted by Gyanananda and the Maharaja of Darbhanga established religious institutions and schools to spread sanatana dharma, such as the College of Divinity to train sadhus, *vidyapithas*, Sanskrit pathshalas and eventually a Sanskrit University. The Mahamandala's interest in shaping family life in accordance with varnasramic principles was evident in the establishment of the Arya Ladies College and Widows home, later known as the Sri Arya Mahila Mahavidyalaya. The latter, patronised by the Rani of Khairagarh, hoped to train upper caste women as teachers, preachers, and governesses to provide for the religious education of girls, disseminate religious knowledge amongst zenana ladies and keep 'non-varnashramik' influences away from Hindu homes.¹³⁰ In addition to its religious periodicals like *Bharat Dharm*, *Nigamagam Chandrika* and *Suryodaya*, it also published a periodical called *Arya Mahila* focusing on women's and gender issues.

In keeping with the BDM's belief that sadhus and Brahmins were the 'natural' leaders and heads of the 'Hindu social organism ascetics led the organisation'.¹³¹ Gyanananda was presented as the backbone of the Mahamandala. The 'ascetic organiser's' indefatigable strength was the key to organising, administering, breaking new ground, adding to the sources of income of the association and strengthening sanatana dharma.¹³² Gyanananda represented the strength of the 'Hindu nation',

¹²⁹ Pandit Ram Chandra Naik Kalia, Secretary, and K.P. Chatterjee, Report of Shri BDMM for the year 1916, File Home, Political (B) August 1917, No. 190-91, NAI.

¹³⁰ Principal, Arya Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Jagatganj, Banaras, in *The World's Eternal Religion*, Publication Department BDMM, Nawal Kishore Press, vii.

¹³¹ BDMM Report of 1916 in File Home, Political (B) August 1917, No. 190-91.

¹³² Pandit Ram Chandra Naik Kalia, Secretary, and K.P. Chatterjee, Joint General Secretary, Banaras, Report of Shri BDMM for the year 1917, BDMM Private Bharat Dharma Mahamandala Private Institutional Collection (BDMMPIC), Banaras, 4.

that were spirituality and renunciation, associated with the sadhu and Brahmin respectively. To answer his denigrators, the Mahamandala's report of 1916 averred it was fortunate in having sadhus at the helm of affairs. These ascetics had played a vital role in founding the organisation, and achieving its chief goals.¹³³ Mahamandala publications warned Gyanananda's detractors that any attempt to supplant sadhus and Brahmins in the unquestioned leadership of 'progressive measures' to regenerate religion was doomed to failure.¹³⁴ The Bharat Dharma Mahamandala also stressed the importance of seeking gurus for guidance in religious knowledge.¹³⁵ Ideal gurus and their disciples were likened to *pavitra* sadhus, or pure sadhus like Shankaracharya. A *pavitra* sadhu remained immersed in *tapas* (penance), refused to be recognised as a *siddha* given that he wanted nothing for himself that would transfer the attention of devotees from God to himself. Such sadhus also remained oblivious to the fact that wherever they wandered, the sick were cured by their shadows, the forests they inhabited were regenerated, dead plants revived and dry lakes refilled.¹³⁶ *Devi Shakti* was only available to such yogis, and sadhus.¹³⁷ Consequently, only they could save the Aryan race. Unlike 'kalyugi sadhus', such ascetics were Brahman sadhus, who remained detached from wealth, power and self-interest, focusing instead on knowledge, austerities and *vairagya*.¹³⁸

¹³³ Others included Chaudhari Ram Prasad, rais and banker of Banaras. Report of Shri Bharat Dharma Mahamandala for 1917, BDMMPIC, Banaras, 41.

¹³⁴ BDMM Report of 1915.

¹³⁵ 'Sachha Sadhu', *Nigamagam Chandrika*, August 1919, 192.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 192–3.

¹³⁷ 'Narpati Ke Sadhu Updesh', *Nigamagam Chandrika*, 1920, 102–3. The article advised princes and rajas to distinguish real from false sadhus, and reform Brahmins and sadhus so that they could learn and imbibe good values to spread religious education through the land. *Ibid.*, 104. For the idea of Kalyugi sadhus, who lived impure lives and imbibed ganja, charas, and opium see 'Sadhu Jiwan', *Nigamagam Chandrika*, July 1921, 186–192.

¹³⁸ Mahamandala journals stated that there were four kinds of sadhus, that is Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaish and Shudra sadhus. While Brahman sadhus wore the clothes of sadhus, performed kirtans, were scholars and wandered hither and thither in search of their goal. Chatitra sadhus comprised the

Gyanananda's *khas chelas* (special disciples) Dayananda Swami and Swami Vivekananda, who held key posts in the Mahamandals were extolled as exemplars of ascetics, 'who have no worldly cares and trammels, in carrying out holy mission than of the grihasthas, who have a hundred other things to attract their attention'.¹³⁹ Dayananda was described as the right hand of Swami Gyanananda.¹⁴⁰ He wrote a seven-volume series on sanatana dharma and several commentaries and articles in the Shri Bharat Dharma Mahamandala periodicals like *Bharatdharm*, and *Nigamagam Chandrika*.¹⁴¹ Swami Dayananda was also in charge of the Punjab Mandal of the Mahamandala and on the sub-committee in charge of the Upadeshik Mahavidyalaya, or College of Divinity to train *sadhus*.¹⁴² Dayananda was credited with religious education and preaching in Punjab and towns in the United Provinces,¹⁴³ including Lucknow, Kanpur, Meerut, Mathura, Brindavan, Haridwar and Etawa.¹⁴⁴ By 1918, he supervised the Library, and taught at the College of Divinity. Further, he was one of the secretaries of the Mahamandala,¹⁴⁵ in charge of its Propaganda department and the Secretary of the Aryan Bureau of Savants.¹⁴⁶ Additionally, Swami Dayananda was the main spokesperson for the Mahamandala at the Hindu Mahasabha and other forums until his death.

mandalidhari sadhus and the *mathdharis*. Sadhus who wandered in bands were best understood as Vaish sadhus. Those ascetics who begged for a living were Shudra sadhus. 'Narpati Ke Sadhu Updesh', *Nigamagam Chandrika*, 103-4.

¹³⁹ BDMM Report for 1917, 41, BDMMPIC.

¹⁴⁰ Gyanananda had four sadhu *shishyas* (disciples), Swami Dayanand, Yoganand, Vivekanand and Parmanand. Vivekanand and Dayananda worked for the Mahamandal until his death in 1935. Dugvekar, *Gyananandji Maharaj*, 509-10.

¹⁴¹ Circular No 73: A Brief Account of *My Literary Work*, by Swami Gyanananda, Foreign and Political Department, 20/10/14, NAI.

¹⁴² BDMM Report for 1916,13, BDMMPIC.

¹⁴³ BDMM Report for 1917, 71, BDMMPIC.

¹⁴⁴ BDMM Report for 1916, 18-19, BDMMPIC.

¹⁴⁵ BDMM Report for 1917, 87, BDMMPIC.

¹⁴⁶ Swami Dayananda, Secretary, Aryan Bureau, c/o Bharat Dharma Mahamandala, Banaras city.

The Mahamandala's reports emphasised that one of its primary tasks was the training and utilisation of sadhus to devote themselves wholly to the country's spiritual uplift.¹⁴⁷ In common with the current of critique against contemporary ascetics, the Mahamandala's report of 1916 and 1917 bewailed that the sadhu and Brahmin had fallen to their lowest depths.¹⁴⁸ It agreed with the broader critique of ascetics insofar that most sadhus were a burden to the society, on which they lived with 'dignified ease' but to which they gave little in return.¹⁴⁹ Thus, in 1919, the *Nigamagam Chandrika* stated that of the 70–80 lakh sadhus in the country most were not interested in the welfare of the country.¹⁵⁰ It bemoaned that unlike the sadhus of ancient times, gurus of the present day were filled with more greed, lust and worldly desires than householders.¹⁵¹ Bharat Dharma Mahamandala periodicals warned readers against such rogues who attacked the virtue of their female devotees. Such accounts bewailed that most renunciates had no knowledge of the shastras, and orthodox Hindu *samskaras* and rituals due to their low religious and moral fibre, and personal greed.¹⁵² Interestingly, the Bharat Dharma Mahamandala separated its dandi sanyasis from undesirable Shaiva sadhus like wandering Dasnami nagas, and Gorakhnathi and Kanphata yogis, embodying all that was dangerous and corrupt within the sadhu samaj.¹⁵³ The Mahamandala averred that 'reformed' sanyasis in tune with the times would lead the vanguard of sanatana dharma. The report of 1917 said that 'it would be as much

¹⁴⁷ BDMM Report for 1916, File Home, Political (B) August 1917, No. 190–91, NAI.

¹⁴⁸ BDMM Report of 1915,

¹⁴⁹ BDMM Report for 1916, File Home, Political (B) August 1917, No. 190–91, NAI.

¹⁵⁰ 'Sachha Sadhu', *Nigamagam Chandrika*, August 1919, 191. In this connection also see 'Sadhu Dharm', *Nigamagam Chandrika*, 1921 and 'Sadhu Jiwan', *Nigamagam Chandrika*, 1921. The overriding concern with sadhus and mahants was part of a general discourse preoccupying Sanatanis, and middle-class associations across the board, echoed in *Chand*, *Saraswati* and other Hindi journals.

¹⁵¹ 'Sachha Sadhu', *Nigamagam Chandrika*, August 1919, 192.

¹⁵² 'Narpati Ke Sadhu Updesh', *Nigamagam Chandrika*, Bhag 7, Sankhya 4, 101. This article emphasised that yogis were the only ones who had access to different kinds of *shakti* (power). *Ibid.*, 102.

¹⁵³ 'Sachha Sadhu', *Nigamagam Chandrika*, August 1919, 192.

hope of victory in fighting a modern army with bows and arrows as of fighting the scepticism and indifferentism, vanity and ignorance of the 'educated Hindu with *kathas* and *vyakhyans*' of the ancient type. What was needed was preachers fighting the doubts of young men of sanatana dharma through the tools of modern arts of public speaking, comparative philosophy and science, that is, 'modern intellectual equipment' to deal with college educated young men.¹⁵⁴

Towards this end, the Bharat Dharma Mahamandala sponsored the Updeshak Mahavidyalaya, or College of Divinity for the training of sadhus and Brahmin scholars to become guides, preceptors and preachers. It was hoped that sadhu-preachers would propagate sanatana dharma in a methodical, well-informed, manner to cope with 'young Hindu of the times'. At the college, they practiced the art of public speaking, received practical instruction in spiritual exercises, and the example of 'lofty self denying lives' lived by their ascetic teachers.¹⁵⁵ It hoped that if the students were fed, clothed and supplied with books, lived the prescribed life of brahmacharis under the vigilant guide of their sadhu preceptors, learnt how to preach and received a thorough grounding in the shastras, they could be utilised for the nation's service.¹⁵⁶ The college had separate classes for sadhus and a general class for others. Scholars reading in the *upadesak* (preacher) class had free board and lodging. In the general class, religious instruction was given to non-resident scholars. Special training prescribed only for those who would become preachers. The staff comprised, a Principal, teachers of darshana, vyakarna and sahitya. The Smritis and Puranas, and general knowledge, comparative theology and philosophy.¹⁵⁷ For the 'sadhu students' there was a course of graduated practice for yoga. Additionally the teachers taught speech making once a week, shastrarths twice a week, and lectures on general knowledge.

¹⁵⁴ BDMM Report for 1917, 130–31, BDMMPIC.

¹⁵⁵ BDMM Report of 1916, File Home, Political (B) August 1917, No. 190–91, NAI.

¹⁵⁶ The Mahamandal Upadeshik Mahavidyalaya, Appendix C, Foreign and Political Department Notes, Secret-G, March 1915, 1–5, NAI.

¹⁵⁷ BDMM Report of 1916, File Home, Political (B) August 1917, No. 190–91, NAI.

The Mahavidyalaya also gave opportunities to scholars to speak at religious meetings, and preach under preceptors or by themselves.¹⁵⁸

By 1920, The Principal of the Hindu College of Divinity averred that this institution had created an avenue of ‘usefulness for the ‘sadhu class’ by preparing them for the task of leadership.¹⁵⁹ In 1925, the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal further clarified the central role of the *dharma pracharaks* (religious preachers) and *dharm sewaks* (workers) in creating orthodox Hindus into a corporate mass’. In its advertisement, it hoped that preachers would go personally to every branch society, and explain the utility of the movement. For this work, preachers would earn from 100 to 200 rupees plus an allowance of 40 to 100 rupees, depending on every member they gained.¹⁶⁰ Religious preachers did not have to be ascetics but sincere and industrious men with a three-fold motive—to earn for themselves, their country and religion. They would be Brahmins by caste. Dharm sewaks could belong to any of the four higher classes possessing elementary knowledge of reading and writing. The Mahamandala would provide both preachers and sewaks with a special certificate to give them authority to carry out their work.¹⁶¹ Further, they would be required to knock on the door of every ‘Hindu family’ to explain the Mahamandala’s mission, initiate them as members, explaining the association’s mission to organise ‘national life’. It envisaged that religious preachers and workers would be used in large and small cities.¹⁶² After, the demise of Dayananda Swami, the Hindu Upadeshak University’s fortunes declined until 1940 when, the pandits of Banaras helped to reorganise the institution.¹⁶³ Between 1940 and 1942, its preachers made speeches at Dasaswamedh ghat,¹⁶⁴ the Mahakumbha fair in Allahabad, and dharma sabha podiums opposing shuddhi, temple-entry and the abolition of

¹⁵⁸ BDMM Report for 1916, 33, BDMMPIC.

¹⁵⁹ *The World’s Eternal Religion*, iii.

¹⁶⁰ ‘Notes for the Guidance of Dharma Pracharaks, of the Samaj Hitakari Kosh’, *The Mahamandala Magazine*, January 1925, 25.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁶³ ‘Shri BDMM Mahamandala Activities, *Suryodaya* Special Trilingual Edition, March 1940, 7.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

chuya chut (untouchability). These issues were the main planks of the Hindu Mahasabha's *sangathan* campaign.¹⁶⁵

Gyanananda Swami's devotees comprising princes, mahants, maths, big zamindars, and mercantile princes, supported the Mahamandala in its ventures and undergirded the Mahamandala's articulation of elite norms of citizenship, sociality and political order.¹⁶⁶ He raised the controversial Bharat Dharma Mahamandal Reserve fund, and the buildings of the association from *bhent* (offerings) made to him by his bhaktas.¹⁶⁷ A glance at the Mahamandal's private correspondence suggests that bhaktas gave handsome *danpatras*, or donations for the establishment of pathshalas,¹⁶⁸ for the Hindu College of Divinity and the Sanskrit University.¹⁶⁹ For example, the Raja of Narsingharh, who acknowledged Gyanananda Swami as his guru, gave a permanent donation to the Mahamandal for the upkeep of the sadhu workers of the Mahamandal, or any other purpose acceding to Swami Maharaj'.¹⁷⁰ In 1904, the Raja of Darbhanga, the moving force behind the Shri Bharat Dharma Mahamandala promised to donate 20,000 rupees to its general fund, which was the beginning of a handsome financial commitment to the association.¹⁷¹ Over time, the Mahamandala also sought to widen its network of patrons to include groups like the Marwaris of Burrabazaar,¹⁷² and notables of Banaras and Kanpur.¹⁷³ Princes and mahants dominated the Mahamandala as

¹⁶⁵ 'Mahamandala News', *Suryodaya*, The Trilingual Special Quarterly Edition, March 1942, 158.

¹⁶⁶ Dugvekar, *Swami Gyayanandji*, 209–11.

¹⁶⁷ BDMM Report for 1917, 131, BDMMPIC.

¹⁶⁸ Prime Minister, Faridkot State, to the Secretary, Provincial Committee, BDMM, Mathura, 3 March 1903, Private Correspondence File (PCF), BDMMPIC.

¹⁶⁹ Diwan, Kota to Assistant Secretary, Shri BDMM, 15 April 1921, PCF, BDMMPIC.

¹⁷⁰ Notes Regarding the Improvement of the Shri BDMM, Maharaja of Narsingharh, 5 February 1914, PCF, BDMMPIC.

¹⁷¹ Assistant Manager of the Raj, Darbhanga to the Secretary, BDMM, 23/24 May 1904, BDMMPIC.

¹⁷² K. Agarwal to Shrimaan Pandit Maharaj Narain Shivpuri, General Secretary, Shri BDMM, 25 August 1909, PCF, BDMMPIC.

¹⁷³ This included Munshi Mahadeo Sharma, Choudhary Ram Prasad, Rais, and Umkant Pande, of Banaras. BDMM Report for 1916, 10, BDMMPIC. Also prominent amongst them was Rai Bahadur Vikramjit Singh, president

patrons, and its Prathinidhi Sabha were represented on the Board. 'Ordinary' members dominated the Karyakarini Sabha, or managing committee.¹⁷⁴ In turn, the Shri Bharat Dharma Mahamandala was involved in the Kshatriya Hitkarini Mahasabha discussions on *roti-beti* (inter-marriage and inter-dining) within the Rajput *jati*.¹⁷⁵ Gyanananda's devotees stamped their own understanding onto the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal's vision of religion, society and politics.¹⁷⁶ Princely patrons and propertied spiritual preceptors were clear of the societal dividends they hoped from the control over religious trusts and associations, and where their power and hegemony would spread concomitantly.¹⁷⁷ They were interested in revitalising sanatana dharma and strengthening a conservative social order.¹⁷⁸ Therefore, Mahamandala supported a 'stable' and hierarchical social, proprietary and religious order rooted in static Brahmanical readings of varna and caste, supported by an orthodox Hindu education.¹⁷⁹

of the Kanpur Bar Association, member of the Legislative Assembly, and the BDMM's Chief Secretary. See 'A National Loss', *Suryodaya*, The Trilingual Special Quarterly Edition, March 1942, 154–56.

¹⁷⁴ Note on the BDMM, 20 August 1909, J.C. Ker, Foreign and Political Department Notes, Secret-G, March 1915, 1–5, NAI. The administration of the BDMM in 1916 comprised the Maharaja of Gidhore as President, Pandit Maharaj Narayan Shivpuri and Raghavendra Prasad Narain Singh as Vice Presidents, Chandra Naik Kalia Sahib as General Secretary, and Kaliprassanna Chatterji, Editor, *Tribune* and Professor Hindu College of Divinity, as Joint Secretary. BDMM Report for 1917, 138, Banaras, BDMMPIC.

¹⁷⁵ Dugvekar, *Swami Gyayanandji*, 212. The Mahamandal literature emphasised that the movement brought together the Kshatriyas and Brahmins. *Ibid.*, 212–14.

¹⁷⁶ By 1940, the tri-lingual *Suryodaya Tribhashik Visheshank* (Hindi–Sanskrit and English) defined its ideal readership as 'Hindu Ruling houses, Maharajas, Landlords, zamindars, nobles, mahants, men and women of all grades, and societies and libraries'. See 'Best Medium For Advertising', *Suryodaya*, September 1940, 94.

¹⁷⁷ See Note of Maharaja of Indore, undated, PCF, BDMMPIC.

¹⁷⁸ Maharaja of Narsingharh to Maharaja of Indore, 22 February 1914, Foreign and Political Department Notes, Secret-G, March 1915, 1–5, NAI.

¹⁷⁹ Maharaja, Nepal to Beni Prasad Singh, Kankit Raj, President, Finance Committee of BDMM, Banaras, 29 July 1935, PCF, BDMMPIC.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, the Mahamandala's brand of politics was against societal change, upheld loyalism to the colonial state and princely paternalism. Here, Gyanananda emphasised that Bharat Dharma Mahamandal included 'the majority of Hindu gentlemen who counted' in all that affected the orthodox community, that is the vast bulk of Hindu lieges of his Gracious Majesty'.¹⁸⁰ He emphasised the importance of the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal as 'the most potent and enduring indigenous instrument for "binding" the Hindu race to the British throne'.¹⁸¹ Unsurprisingly, the Mahamandala was loyalist and it was opposed to nationalist projects led by 'neo-Hindus and atheists'. By 1940, the Mahamandala spoke of a Dominion, in which princes and landlords would form the natural leaders in a constitutional environment supported by *dharmacharyas* and gurus.

The Shri Bharat Dharma Mahamandala dominated and supported by Dasnami sanyasis and Dasnami maths represented itself as Shaiva, Hindu and Sanatani. A guide written by the Bharat Dharma Mahamandala of Kanpur in 1930 connected the association with Banaras' pluralistic nature, as a Pauranic city, and 'a recognised centre of Hindu culture, Vaidik philosophy and Oriental learning'.¹⁸² For the popular imagination, the text contextualised the Dasnami connection with Kashi, Shiva's holy city, where Ishwara manifested himself for creation, protection and dissolution—the last function was attributed to Shiva.¹⁸³ Simultaneously, the Mahamandala connected itself to Banaras' 'international character', where Vedantists, Saivas, Vaishnavas, Saktas, Mullas, Christian Missionaries and Arya Samajis preached without the least disturbance.¹⁸⁴ Such a city was a fit space

¹⁸⁰ Petition to Viceroy Hardinge from Swami Gyanananda, 10 September 1914, Foreign and Political Department Notes, Secret-G, March 1915, 1–5, NAI.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.* Again, in 1918, at the annual meeting of the BDMM the General Secretary conferred a literary distinction on the Viceroy, as a token of appreciation of the orthodox Hindu community led by the Shankaracharyas of Dwarka, Puri and Sringeri and leading Hindu princes. General Secretary, BDMM, to Viceroy and Governor General of India, 12/1/1918, Home, Political, Deposit, March 1918, No. 22, NAI.

¹⁸² Kali Pada Sarkar (ed), *Guide to Banaras*, Governing Director, Bharat Dharma Syndicate, Banaras, 1930, 1, 6–15.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 3–6.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

for the 'All-India association for all Hindus, making it possible for the Mahamandala to transcend its Shaiva affiliations'.¹⁸⁵ This would enable the Bharat Dharma Mahamandala make important connections between Shaivism and *sanatana dharma*.

4. Shaivism, Sanatana Dharma and the Orthodox 'Hindu Nation'

The Bharat Dharma Mahamandal was clearly a Dasnami and Shaiva association, both of which categories it sought to collapse. It acknowledged Shankaracharya was the main avatara of God and Vedanta the main repository of *sanatana dharma*. Local mandals led by the Shri Brahmavart Sanatana Dharma Mahamandal, propagated Shankaracharya's teachings and the relevance of Shaivism.¹⁸⁶ The Mahamandala, its provincial mandals and Shiva sabhas celebrated Shankaracharya's birthday with great alacrity. Thus on April 1914, the Brahmavart Sanatana Dharma Mahamandal recounted the life story and contributions of Shankaracharya to *sanatana dharma*, with bhajans and speeches.¹⁸⁷ The Bharat Dharma Mahahamandal insisted that Shankaracharya was an incarnation of Shiva, born to save *sanatana dharma* from the 'Buddhist atheist faiths'.¹⁸⁸ To underscore the dominance of Shaivism in such representations of *sanatana dharma*, Vishnu and Brahma were reincarnated as Shankaracharya's disciples. In many articles and publications Shankaracharya was credited with destroying Buddhism, re-establishing the *vaidik dharm*, writing many commentaries, and expounding the Vedanta philosophy.¹⁸⁹ In 1919, Dayananda Swami argued that Adi Shankaracharya had given shape to the Hindu religion as defined by *varnasrama dharma* and the knowledge of Vedanta.

The Bharat Dharma Mahamandal attributed to Shankaracharya the Advaita philosophy of the Vedanta.¹⁹⁰ In addition to its emphasis on Tantricism, therefore, the Mahamandal regularly published on

¹⁸⁵ Shri Dayanand Swami, 'Uttarakhand Mein Jinodvar', *Nigamagam Chandrika*, April 1919, 95–96.

¹⁸⁶ See 'Vaishnava Samaroh', *Dharmasukumara*, January 1912, 234.

¹⁸⁷ Shankar Jayanti, *Dharma Sukumara*, January 1914, p. 28–9.

¹⁸⁸ 'Sri Swami Shankaracharya, *Dharmasukumara*, 1914, 28.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 28–29.

¹⁹⁰ 'Restoration of Jyotirmath', *Suryodaya*, March 1941, 89.

Vedanta, as interpreted in the Shakta and Tantric traditions. Dayananda Swami analysed Shankaracharya's teachings in the Mahamandala's periodicals and his own books. Amongst the Mahamandala's publications were the tri-lingual *Suryodaya*, *Bharat Dharm* and *Nigamam Chandrika*. It also included *The Eternal Religion*, co-written by Gyanananda and Dayananda in which it was stated that the Vedanta philosophy was 'the most important of all Hindu philosophies, expounding nirguna worship, or that of the formless one of Brahman, the Supreme one, who was the creation, continuance, and dissolution, creator of all worlds and the author of revelation'.¹⁹¹ Given that this path of knowledge and worship of the absolute self was for those who had attained self-knowledge and had won liberation from the bonds of the flesh, it emphasised that grihasthas could understand the path preached by Vedanta with the help of gurus and spiritual preceptors.¹⁹² Indeed, in 1924, the *Mahamandala* magazine reminded its readers that Vedanta was beyond sampradaya, for it accepted the teachings of all the great teachers of the world, recognised all aspects of the divine, and explained the basics of ethics. Reaching out to Vaishnava *bhaktas* (devotees), it emphasised that a student of Vedanta belonged to no creed, religion or denomination, for as Shri Krishna had reiterated in the Bhagavat Gita God could be reached through many paths.¹⁹³

The Mahamandala was unabashed about its closeness to the Shankaracharyas of Dwarka, Goverdhan, and Puri, and the Dasnami mahants of all *panths*.¹⁹⁴ It attributed to Shankaracharya the establishment of four strongholds of Hindu religion given to his principal disciples.¹⁹⁵ The working assumption was that acharyas of all four pithas were acknowledged dharmarajas and all princes and their subjects lived their lives according to their teachings.¹⁹⁶ The

¹⁹¹ *The Eternal Religion*, 155–7.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 155.

¹⁹³ S.K. Bose, 'What Is the Vedanta', *The Mahamandala Magazine*, November 1924, Vol 13, no. 3, 303.

¹⁹⁴ Circular 147, BDMM, 30 June 1917, Succession to Sarada Peeth Gaddi, from Sarada Charan Mitra, GS, BDMM, F/846/1922, Home, Political, NAI.

¹⁹⁵ 'Restoration of Jyotirmath', *Suryodaya*, March 1941, 89.

¹⁹⁶ 'Shankar Sampradaya Aur Joshimath', *Suryodaya*, September 1942, 222.

Mahamandala openly hosted the Shankaracharyas, or Jagatgurus, and were involved with their maths and their affairs.¹⁹⁷ The main trustee of the Bharat Dharma Mahamandala was Madhusudhan Tirtha Swami Jagatguru Shankacharya of the Goverdhan Math of Puri.¹⁹⁸ Equally importantly, the Bharat Dharma Mahamandala spearheaded the restoration of Jyotirmath.¹⁹⁹ Mahamandala periodicals recounted that at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Shankaracharyas of Sringeri math, Goverdhan math and Sharada math had requested the Bharat Dharma Mahamandala to search for the remains of the shrine and restore it.²⁰⁰ Between 1919 and 1941, periodicals and monies were harnessed to build the Jyotirmath, with the help of the princely bhaktas and members of the Mahamandala.²⁰¹ Dayananda Swami reiterated that if the Jyotirmath was rebuilt, the four Shankaracharyas would reunite, open branches of the shastra maths in Banaras, and aid the progress of sanyasis, and sanatana dharma.²⁰² In 1941, the Maharaja of Darbhanga announced the re-establishment of the Jyotirmath at a special meeting of the Mahamandala, and Shri Brahmanand Saraswati, a Dandi Swami was formally installed on the *gaddi* (throne) in April 1941.²⁰³ The major representatives of the Dasnami sampradaya, ranging from mahants to members of Shankar sampradaya mandals were present at his installation.²⁰⁴ Thereafter, the Shankaracharya of Jyotirmath was acknowledged by the 'sanyasi world' at the Kumbha mela, and led the bathers on all three bathing days.²⁰⁵ Subsequently, both Hariharanand Saraswati (Swami Karpati) and his disciple Shri Advaitanand Saraswati publicised the cause

¹⁹⁷ See correspondence of F/846/1922, Home, Political, NAI.

¹⁹⁸ Circular 147, BDMM, 30 June 1917, 'Succession to Sarada Pith Gaddi', from Sarada Charan Mitra, GS, BDMM F/846/1922, Home, Political, NAI.

¹⁹⁹ Clark, *The Dasnamis*, 119.

²⁰⁰ 'Restoration of Jyotirmath', *Suryodaya*, March 1941, 89.

²⁰¹ BDMM Report for 1916, 20–21, Circular 147, BDMM, 30 June 1917, Succession to Sarada Peeth Gaddi, from Sarada Charan Mitra, GS, Bharat Dharma Mahamandal, F/846/1922, Home, Political, NAI.

²⁰² Shri Dayanand Swami, 'Uttarakhand Mein Jinodvar', *Nigamagam Chandrika*, April 1919, 95–96.

²⁰³ 'Restoration of Jyotirmath', *Suryodaya*, March 1941, 89.

²⁰⁴ 'Shankar Sampradaya Aur Joshimath', *Suryodaya*, September 1942, 222.

²⁰⁵ 'Mahamandal News', *Suryodaya*, March 1942, 156.

of the Jyotirmath, and marshalled charitable donations for the same.²⁰⁶

The Mahamandala was also closely connected to powerful Dasnami maths. Unsurprisingly therefore, the Mahamandala fought vociferously for the autonomy of maths, *akharas* and sampradayas through organisations like the Tirtesh Mahasammelan and Mathadhish Sammelan.²⁰⁷ In addition to Jyotirmath, the Mahamandala was involved with succession disputes within various Dasnami maths, especially the pithas associated with Shankaracharya.²⁰⁸ Further, between 1920 and 1940, the Bharat Dharma Mahamandala and its ascetic allies clashed with the Hindu Mahasabha, Arya Samaj and reformist dharma sabhas in the United Provinces seeking to make maths legally accountable to the ‘Hindu public’ and nation so that their accounts could be audited. The Mahasabha and its allies also sought to police the moral lives of ‘renunciate orders’, so that ascetics did not leave ‘religious properties’ to female companions and their children.²⁰⁹ This campaign, driven by the idea that math and temple wealth existed for the ‘public good’, drew upon nineteenth century judicial schemes of reform and the Gurudwara reforms in Punjab. It resulted in two satyagrahas—one directed against Mahant Satish Chandra Giri of Tarakeshwar math (1924) and the second against the Sri Vaishnava Mahant Paras Ram of the Bharatji math and temple in Rishikesh, who was grooming his son as mahant.²¹⁰ While it was aware of the need for internal reform within maths, the Mahamandala and its ascetic allies who were part

²⁰⁶ ‘Shankar Sampradya Aur Joshimath’, *Suryodaya*, September 1942, 222.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 110A, 114A.

²⁰⁸ Circular 147, Bharat Dharma Mahamandal, 30 June 1917, Succession to Sarada Peeth Gaddi, from Sarada Charan Mitra, GS, Bharat Dharma Mahamandal, F/846/1922, Home, Political, NAI. Also see the Judgement of the Honourable High Court of Patna Regarding Goverdhan Math Appeal and Swami Bharti Krishan Tirtha, printed at the Bharat Dharm Press, 1937, PCF, BDMMPIC.

²⁰⁹ Report of the Sanatana Dharma Mahabir Dal, F/231/1936, General Administrative File, Uttar Pradesh State Archives, Lucknow.

²¹⁰ The satyagraha mirrored the intra-Vaishnava sectarian split between the Brahmin Ramanuji *acharyas* (teachers) and the ‘open caste’ Ramanandis, who were articulating their identity as a separate *panth* in the early twentieth century. See footnote above (209).

of the United Provinces Hindu Religious Endowments Committee opposed legal measures seeking to give devotees the right to regulate the lives of spiritual preceptors, audit their wealth and control math administration.²¹¹ From 1925 the Maharaja of Darbhanga presided over meetings of the Mathadish Sammelan in Banaras and of mahants in Faizabad. All the meetings advocated the protection of temples, maths and their properties.²¹² Agitated mahants and akharas and the Mahamandala opposed proposals to use colonial law to supervise and control the administrative affairs of mathdharis as inroads into sampradayik autonomy.²¹³ Instead, the Mahamandala proposed giving special representation to different sampradayas, sects and sub-sects in administrative boards supervising maths, on the grounds that mahants and sadhus alone could rule on sectarian matters.²¹⁴ It further preached the wisdom of ‘sampradayik autonomy’ as the various sampradayas followed ‘different religions’ and their sub-divisions had divergent theological perspectives. In a pointed reference to the Bharatji satyagraha, this faction of the Committee controlled by the Mahamandala advised that in view of the ‘antipathy and ill feeling between various sub-sects’, a decentralised scheme would secure their co-operation for the successful working of endowments legislation.²¹⁵ The Hindu Mahasabha members on the Committee led by Raja Rampal Singh and Ramakant Malaviya refused to accept the Bharat Dharma Mahamandala and the mahants proposal of sampradayik ‘autonomy’, on the grounds that it would breed disharmony and disunity amongst Hindus.²¹⁶ For sympathisers of Hindu sangathan such statements constituted a denial that Hinduism constituted a coherent religion and ‘nation’. In such debates, Hindu Sabha members suggested that ascetic orders were not committed to Hindu dharm, rather to their particularised tenets, doctrines and narrow circle of bhaktas.

²¹¹ M. Kasturi, ‘All Gifting is Sacred, The Sanatana Dharma Sabhas and Civil Society Visions in Early Twentieth Century India, *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 2010, Vol. 47, 107–39.

²¹² PAI/2/2/1925 No. 3.

²¹³ PAI/3/9/27 No. 34.

²¹⁴ *United Provinces Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act*, Lucknow 1930, 110–14A.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 132–3A.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 110A, 114A.

In response, the Mahamandala emphasised the organic relationship between hegemonic representations of Hinduism and sampradaya. Proudly Shaiva, the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal constantly spoke of the complimentary nature of Vaishnavism and Shaivism.²¹⁷ Seeking to engage with anti-Shaiva critique, the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal pointed out that despite the differences in name and forms, Shaivas and Vaishnavas theologies and ideas of God overlapped and could cooperate if they did not fall prey to the illusion of differences.²¹⁸ Such articles emphasised the importance of bhakti as the only path to approach god, whether named Vishnu or Shiva.²¹⁹ The Mahamandala asked readers not to denigrate Devi worship and Shaivism, given that both sects believed in the Vedas, preached knowledge and the way to God.²²⁰ It reminded Vaishnavas of those mahatmas like Gosain Tulsidas who had praised Shiva fulsomely, while Rama worshipped Shiva in the *Ramcharitmanas*.²²¹ The Mahamandala also pointed out that each sampradaya had its own inspired authorities, liturgies and own Gita, all of which gave insights into Vedic philosophy, sanatana dharma and saguna worship. All these texts unfolded the meanings of *karma-kand* (ritualism) *upasana-kand* (worship) and *gyan-kand* (philosophy) from their 'special standpoint'.²²² Mahamandala claimed that all five Gitas showed that 'the various sects were like different roads followed by travellers according to their 'taste and circumstances', all of which led to the same goal.²²³ Such pieces warned true devotees, that such internecine rifts between Shaivas and Vaishnavas only benefited the Arya Samajis who had drifted far away from Vedanta.²²⁴ Such compromises did not imply undermining the

²¹⁷ Dugvekar, *Swami Gyayanandji*, 220.

²¹⁸ 'Shiv Vaishnav Virosh Parihar', *Dharmasukumara*, March–April, 1913, 91

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 91.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 94–5.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 96–8.

²²² These sects included the five sects of Vaishnavas, Surya (worshippers of the sun), Shakta (worshippers of Shakti), Ganapatya (worshippers of Ganesha) and Saiva (worshippers of Shiva). The five Gitas included the Vishnu Gita, the Surya Gita, Sakti Gita, Ganesh/Dheesh Gita and Sambhu Gita. *The Eternal Religion*, xvii–xix.

²²³ *Ibid.*, xix–xx.

²²⁴ Shiv Vaishnav Virosh Parihar', *Dharmasukumara*, March–April, 1913, 92.

relevance of sampradaya, but would ensure that sectarian bickering, no longer stood in the way of 'national solidarity'.²²⁵

Despite its Shaiva affiliations, the Shri Bharat Dharma Mahamandala claimed it represented all sects. The Mahamandala constantly reiterated that it had received the approval of the Shankaracharyas and Vaishnava spiritual preceptors.²²⁶ At its 1906 session, it underscored that the Vaishnava, Kabirpanthi, Dasnami and Nanakpanthis acharyas, mahants and holy men had supported Gyanananda. In 1915, the Rudra yagna at the sixth annual meeting of the Mahamandala was followed by a procession led by a cavalcade of the Banaras Raj, students from pathshalas wearing saffron robes, sadhus and nagas. Prominently displayed at this procession were moveable shrines of Radha and Krishna, the 'grandly simple structure' of the Vedas, Brahmins waving banners, amidst thunderous roars of 'Sanatan Dharm ki Jai'.²²⁷ The Mahamandala's report of 1917 gave great importance to the Vishambar yagna, the first Vaishnava yagna held by the Mahamandala.²²⁸ By 1917, the associations report counted twenty-six Tantric, Vedic and Vaishnava yagnas performed by the Bharat Dharma Mahamandala.²²⁹ Simultaneously, the Bharat Dharma Mahamandala propagated the idea of Krishna and Rama as avatars, and exemplars of the *maryada puroshottam* (the ideal man) to connect with the hegemonic Vaishnava inflected discourse of orthodox Hinduism.²³⁰ The Mahamandala also gave pre-eminence to the Vishnu Gita, preached by Shri Krishna, an avatara of God, like Shankaracharya, which was relevant for all sampradayas and religion.²³¹ Increasingly, the Bharat Dharma Mahamandala described the places

²²⁵ Bhanusingh Varma, 'Sampradayik Mat Bhed', *Dharmasukumara*, January 1912, 155.

²²⁶ BDMM Report for 1915, 140, PCF, BDMMPIC.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 80–1.

²²⁸ BDMM Report of 1917.

²²⁹ BDMM Report for 1917, 21, BDMMPIC.

²³⁰ See 'Ramavatara', *Dharmasukumara*, January 1914, 4. Also see 'Puranas', *Nigamam Chandrika*, 1925, and Krishna Charitra, *Nigamam Chandrika*, 1925, 95 and Radhikaprasad Vedanth Shashtri, 'Sri Krishna Charita', *Nigamam Chandrika*, January 1925, 15–25.

²³¹ 'Gita Path Ka Prasthavana', *Dharmasukumara*, June, 1912, 338.

associated with Krishna whether Mathura, Vrindavan and Nathdwara as sites of devishakti.²³²

From bridging the gap between sampradayas, the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal repeatedly underscored its position as the only ‘All-India organisation’ representing orthodox Hindus. The Mahamandal reiterated that the ‘Hindu spirit’ had its roots in sanatana dharma, the eternal laws of God, revealed in the Vedas and Upanishads, discussed and expounded in the darshanas, and brought to the means of popular comprehension by means of parables, allegories and concrete illustrations in the Puranas.²³³ This view was expanded in *The Worlds Eternal Religion* (1920), where Swami Dayananda and Swami Gyanananda outlined the universality of Dharma or religion ‘which is expected to prove useful to all’. The text sought to reconcile all religions from the standpoint of the ‘Hindu religion’, and also to show how all the religions of the world could unite to realise more fully the ‘fatherhood of God’, spirituality underlying every faith, and universality of the Vedanta.²³⁴ Simultaneously, Swami Dayananda wrote the ambitious *Dharma Kalpadruma*, ‘giving information about everything connected with ‘Hinduism’, a category used interchangeably with sanatana dharma from general dharma, the scriptures from the Vedas to the tantras, and rites and sacraments.²³⁵

From its inception, the Mahamandala used a variety of interchanging terms and categories to speak of orthodox Hindus—the Arya jati, the Hindu race, social organism and nation. In 1925, the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal enunciated that the Hindu ‘nation’ and race, or Arya jati

²³² The Mahamandal spoke of the divine relationship established between the idol of Krishna at Nathdwara and Gyanananda, the incarnation of Vishwanatha or Shiva. ‘Shri Krishnajanmabhumi Aur Srinathji Ki Adhbuth Mahima’, *Suryodaya*, September 1940, 60. Unsurprisingly, the Mahamandal was involved with the internal management of the Nathdwara shrine after the untimely death of the Gosain Maharaj. Subject File No. 233, Puroshottam Das Thakuras Papers, NMML.

²³³ BDMM Report for 1917, 5, PCF, BDMMPIC.

²³⁴ *The World’s Eternal Religion*, 1–2.

²³⁵ By 1920, the first 6 volumes were out, covering 25,000 pages. Gujarati, Bengali, Urdu and Hindi editions were also available. *The World’s Eternal Religion*, iv.

organised on the *chaturvarna* system of categorisation was the foundation of ‘the ‘Sanatan fold’.²³⁶ This national ‘corporate’ body included religious associations of the ‘varnasramidharmi’ community, or those bound by the brahmanical interpretation of Varna including dharma sabhas, Shiva sabhas, Hari sabhas, and Varnasrama Raksha sabhas.²³⁷ Also included were social bodies, caste sabhas and panchayats representing Hindus, philanthropic bodies and other religious and charitable associations willing to participate in this ‘national movement of the Hindus’.²³⁸ These associations were invited to disseminate sanatana dharma according to Vaidik, Smarta and Pauranic goals, ameliorate the conditions of the ‘Hindu community’ through education and religious training of children, publish the activities of the Mahamandala and foster the spread of Hindi.²³⁹ All sabhas would be part of this ‘national organisation’, would help in the cause of national solidarity, religious and spiritual culture, spread of shastraic literature and national work of benevolence and self-help, and establish electoral centres of the varnasrama dharmi community. Further, as Philip Lutgendorf has shown, orthodox Hindu bodies like the Bharat Dharma Mahamandala encouraged the performance of *harisankritan* to establish and encourage the ‘old Pauranic’ tradition of *katha* and *utsava* on ‘catholic lines’, asked affiliated sabhas to organise religious ceremonies suited to the occasion on auspicious days of sanatana dharma known as *parva*, and conduct rituals associated with grihastha ashrama, or family life. The Mahamandala argued that given that the religious and social improvement of a ‘nation’ depended as much as *tiraskar* (reprimands) and *puraskar* (praise), all associations needed to encourage the sadhus and Brahmins living in their locality, by reviving panchayats and the ‘old system of social organisation’ and appoint spiritual preceptors and gurus as leaders. Importantly, it suggested that local dharmacharyas make the panchayat’s local decisions.²⁴⁰

²³⁶ BDMM Report for 1915, 75, BDMMPIC.

²³⁷ ‘Notes for the Guidance of Dharma Pracharakas of the Samaj Hitakari Kosh’, *The Mahamandala Magazine*, January 1925, 14.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 28–9.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 30–31.

The Mahamandala defined the orthodox Hindu identity and politics through interventions in contemporary debates. It was well known for its anti-Arya diatribes, expositions of Puranic religion, and essays on sanatana dharma.²⁴¹ In 1913, for example, the Mahamandala abused heterodox reformers who interrogated and criticised the Puranas for not being ‘scientific’ and rational.²⁴² It suggested that sanatana dharmis believed that the seeds of true knowledge contained in the Vedas were amplified in the various Puranas, a source of religious knowledge.²⁴³ It established close links with the Pandit Sabha of Kashi, established to protect the rights of Brahmins and sanatana dharma against Christians, and ‘atheists’ and ‘qualified’ Hindus led by the Arya Samaj and Hindu Mahasabha. Between the 1920s and 1940s, the Mahamandala led the orthodox Hindu onslaught on the Hindu Mahasabha’s propagation of Hindu sangathan, and opposed its understanding of a ‘Hindu nation’, predicated on a cultural and territorial essence, within which caste, religious and sampradayik sectarian divisions were purged. In contrast, the Mahamandala emerged as the vocal leader of sampradayik identities and varnasramadharmi Hindus, the ‘ancient spiritual race of humanity’, whose creed, faith, and ideals were based on a special system of philosophy.²⁴⁴ Orthodox Hindus like Malaviya, as demonstrated elsewhere, were regarded with ambivalence. The Mahamandala and its allies debated on a variety of forums with Madan Mohan Malaviya, an orthodox Hindu whose involvement with the Hindu Mahasabha, and attempt to reconcile sanatana dharma within a broader pan-Hindu nationalist vision met with great hostility. The debates between these two strands of the dharma sabha movement led to interrogations of *sangathan*, and its limits for orthodox Hindus. From the fraught 1940s, the Mahamandala confusingly supported the Hindu Mahasabha on the issue of Akhand Bharat, simultaneously rejecting its vision of Hindu nation, and underscoring the necessity of uniting orthodox Hindus.²⁴⁵ The

²⁴¹ Tirthiya Varshik Utsav, Brahmavart Sanatana Dharm Mahamandal, Kanpur, *Dharmasukumara*, September, 1911, 127.

²⁴² ‘Puranas’, *Dharmasukumara*, March 1913, 31–36.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁴⁴ ‘An All India Sanatana Dharma Conference’, *Suryodaya, Special Trilingual Quarterly Edition*, March 1941, 72–3.

²⁴⁵ ‘Coming Census of 1941 and the Duty of the Hindus’, *Suryodaya Tribhashik Visheshank*, December 1940, 96. Also see ‘The Hindu Mahasabha’, *Suryodaya*, June 1941, 95–6.

Mahamandala suggested that Sanatanists needed to capture the political field to central and provincial assemblies, councils, municipal and district boards to protect their civil, religious and social rights.²⁴⁶ Ironically, new monastic associations thereafter marginalised the Bharat Dharma Mahamandala which drew on its institutional template. However, unlike the Mahamandala, they espoused new alliances with political organisations supporting Hindutva.

Some Tentative Conclusions: The Dasnamis and Hindu Nationalism

An analysis of the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal suggests that associational forms established by gurus and dependent on monastic networks, provided the framework, language and institutionalised forms for later sectarian associations fronted by spiritual preceptors. It also suggests that prior to the establishment of the Vishva Hindu Parishad, the entangled histories of sampradayik preceptors and pro-Hindutva organisations were non-linear, ambivalent and contradictory. Indeed, organisations like the Bharat Dharma Mahamandala led and supported by Dasnami sanyasis and maths had an ambiguous, if not oppositional, relationship with the proponents of Hindu nationalism from the early twentieth century. Having said that, this paper on the Mahamandala suggests that such sampradayik organisations lie at the heart of the plural and complicated genealogies of Hindutva. After the 1940s, when Akhand Bharat became the war cry of Hindu radical parties, monastic alliances and the votaries of Hindutva sought to strike new alliances. It is significant that a new chapter in this relationship was opened when another Shaiva ascetic, Mahant Digvijaynath of Gorukhpur of the Nath Yogi sampradaya assumed the leadership of the Hindu Mahasabha in north India. However, the fundamental tension between sampradaya and Hindutva has remained unresolved.

Further, this analysis historicises the deep-rooted ambivalence of middle-class advocates of Hindu unity towards ‘guru organisations’ and monastic orders. In more recent times, the popularity of charismatic gurus has been linked to the neoliberal moment, when religion was

²⁴⁶ ‘An All India Sanatana Dharma Conference; *Suryodaya*, March 1941, 75.

commoditised and cyber guru-bhakti and guru-sewa became a regular feature of the internet. This study indicates that middle class orthodox Hindu engagements with the Bharat Dharma Mahamandala bordered on derision. Din Dayalu Sharma and Madan Mohan Malaviya criticised Swami Gyanananda for claiming he was an incarnation of Shankaracharya and a siddha. Swami Gyanananda's propagation of personalised forms of guru-bhakti amongst his devotees also came under censure. Further, from 1920, the Hindu Mahasabha in north India attacked mahants and sadhus for misusing monies belonging to maths and temples, and for openly embracing sexuality and family. While the dharma sabhas allied to Madan Mohan Malaviya's valorised asceticism as a model to follow, they perceived personalised forms of devotionism to gurus and *sadhugiri* as suspect.

The two 'moments' of the Bharat Dharma Mahamandala's genealogy illustrates that it was part of Shaiva resurgence in northern India's religious culture and public sphere after being marginalised by Vaishnavism. The Dandi sanyasis's effort to simultaneously state the Mahamandala's claims to be Shaiva, and orthodox Hindu by blending Vedanta with sanatana dharma was considered problematic amongst 'reformist' orthodox Hindu middle class like Malaviya with Vaishnava leanings. Swami Gyanananda and the Mahamandala's open association with Tantricism, which was preached through the associations publications and periodicals was looked upon askance. More broadly, the response to the Mahamandala represented two different orthodox Hindu engagements with sampradaya and monastic orders. Thus, Din Dayalu Sharma and Madan Mohan Malaviya were clear that orthodox Hindu associations were pulpits from which lay leaders would shape the 'Hindu nation', its discourses and cultural practices. Further, Madan Mohan Malaviya, who was sympathetic to the Hindu Mahasabha, perceived sampradaya (and caste) as hurdles in the path of new formulations of Hinduism and its political community.²⁴⁷ The Shaiva and Dasnami dominated perspective of the Mahamandal inspired criticism of their narrow visions, which were contrasted with organisations with a pan-Hindu vision. The claim made by various

²⁴⁷ M. Kasturi, 'Elaborating "Brahmin Reformism": Madan Mohan Malaviya, the Dharma Sabhas and *Sangathan*' (unpublished paper).

monastic orders, and seconded by the Bharat Dharma Mahamandala, that Hindus were merely the sum of the sampradayas they belonged to, was perceived as a threat to hegemonic articulations of Hinduism and its political community. It is pertinent that after 1940, Swami Karpatri's All India Dharma Sangh self-consciously marginalised its sectarian affiliation to ally with the RSS, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Jana Sangh (1951).²⁴⁸

The activities of the Bharat Dharma Mahamandala need to be located within the broader frame of the Hindu unity, or sangathan campaign sponsored by the Hindu Mahasabha. The Mahasabha unsuccessfully sought to heighten its appeal by accommodating sadhus, mahants and their ascetic and lay devotees in the All-India Sadhu Mahamandal from 1919. Shaiva and Vaishnava sampradayik preceptors, including the Shankaracharyas participated in campaigns for cow protection, Hindi and its associated campaigns. Despite these strategic alliances forged with the Hindu Mahasabha, sampradayik mandals and their orthodox Hindu allies opposed the Hindu Mahasabha's perception of sampradaya as an inherently pernicious force undermining Hindu unity. Further, pro-Brahmin Shaiva and Vaishnava monastic orders vehemently opposed the limited caste reforms propagated by Hindu Mahasabha, emphasising that it was deleterious to the interests of Brahmins and its custodians, the ascetic orders. The Mahamandala was a prominent participant in public sphere agitations and *satyagrahas* opposing temple-entry, *shuddhi* (conversion) and the abolition of *chuya chut*, core planks of the sangathan campaign. Unsurprisingly, the Shri Bharat Dharma Mahamandala and its princely and mercantile bhaktas argued that the Hindu Mahasabha's sangathan campaign transgressed the socio-religious and political order and everyday life of varnasrami or 'original' Hindus.²⁴⁹ No-change Sanatanis led by the Mahamandala insisted that

²⁴⁸ M. Kasturi, 'Monasticism and Political Constructions of Hinduism: The All India Dharm Sangh, Hindutva and the Hindu Code Bill Agitation', Paper presented at Panel on 'Religion, Gender and Identity', in a Conference on 'The Long Indian Century: Historical Transitions and Social Transformations', Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 2 July 2014.

²⁴⁹ For a longer exposition of the same, see M. Kasturi, 'Sadhus, Shaivas and Associational Forms: The Dasnamis and the Bharat Dharma Mahamandala', unpublished paper, March 2014).

the Hindu Mahasabha was unsuited to represent orthodox Hindus, given its 'political angle of vision', that accommodated itself to various religions with no scriptures in common.²⁵⁰

Increasingly, through contestations with the Hindu Mahasabha and its allies in northern India, the Mahamandala offered alternative readings of how sampradaya, religion and caste could shape a 'Hindu nation'. Politically, it took uniformly loyalist positions, unsurprising given Gyanananda's devotional base and close connections with rich maths and mahants, who were spiritual preceptors, as well as zamindars and businessmen. From the 1920s, threatened by the far from radical Hindu sangathan campaign, the Mahamandala argued that even limited caste mobility would corrupt the Hindu family, race nation and 'way of life'. In later discussions, it claimed special protection for Varnasrami/Sanatani Hindus as a political 'minority'. In the Mahamandala's understanding of Hindu 'nation,' sadhus and Brahmins were recognised as the undisputed leaders, alongside dharma *parishads* dominated by monastic orders and gurus. Subsequently, many aspects of the Mahamandala's vision were incorporated with differences into Swami Karpatri's vision of Ram Rajya, and later, with considerable modifications into the Vishva Hindu Parishad.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Glossary

- acharya*—teacher
asrama—stages of life
bhakti—devotionalism
bhakta—devotee
brahmachari—celibate student
chela—disciple
dakshina—gift to guru or brahmin
dana—charitable gift
dharma pracharak—religious preacher
Dharma sewak—one who works for religion
dharma sansthan—department of religious sites
devi shakti—the power of devi
dharmic prasnavalli—religious questionnaires
guru bhakti—the devotion to a guru
gyan-kand—philosophy
jati—caste/race
karma-kand—ritualism
khas chela—main disciple
mahant—head of a monastic institution
math—monastery
murti-puja—idol worship
nihang—celibate ascetic
nirguna—imagining God in human form
maryada—conduct
mahayagnas—great sacrifices
mahima—greatness of God
maryada puroshotttam—the ideal man
pavitra sadhu—pure sadhu
panth—sub sect
pir—religious leader, sufi or Shaiva
pitha—elevated seat of Shankaracharyas
pathith—fallen practices
puraskar—reprimands
raksha—protection
roti beti—inter-dining and inter-marriage
sadhu—ascetic
sadhana—discipline
saguna—God in unknowable form
sampradaya—religious community bound together by common teachings and tenets

sanyasi–ascetic

samaj–community

sanatana dharma–the eternal religion/orthodox Hinduism

shastrarth–theological disputation or debate

sidh–knowledge

siddhi–semi-divine being

shraddh–death rituals

shuddi karan–conversion

tap–heat austerities

tirtha–pilgrimage

tiraskar–praise

upasana–kand-worship

updeshak–preacher

vairagya–detachment

*varnasrmadharm*a–rule of conduct for each varna

varnavyavastha–the way of life

vanaprastha–the way of the forest

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