Beyond India: Sangh International and Vernacular Hindutva Politics in the UK

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Table of Contents

Introduction

In November 2019, the UK was heading into its third general election in five years. The newly formed government of Boris Johnson hoped to win a majority, end years of parliamentary paralysis and, with a populist campaign strategy, finally "get Brexit done" (Hayton 2021, 416). In the midst of news around the 'Brexit election', a story broke that an affiliate of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), India's ruling Hindu nationalist party, was openly campaigning for Conservative Party candidates in forty-eight marginal constituencies (Canton 2019). According to the leadership of the Overseas Friends of Bharatiya Janata Party UK (OFBJP UK) their move was explicitly anti-Labour Party, who they viewed as anti-Indian, because of the Labour party's critical stance on Indian-administered Kashmir (O. Khan 2019).

This vignette from 2019 reveals the intersection of a global and local politics which scholars from various disciplines have approached separately but often failed to analytically unite. Namely, the intersections of transnational right-wing populism and how its discourses are grounded and deployed locally, in national or regional contexts (Brubaker 2017, 357, 358). In this case, it was the right-wing populism of Hindu nationalism that appeared to suddenly intervene in the 2019 UK general election. Understandings of Hindu nationalism differ, but it can be broadly defined as a collection of primordial ideologies unified by their belief that India's essential national identity is Hindu (Bhatt 2001, 3). Since 2014, under Prime Minster Narendra Modi's leadership, the ruling BJP government's discourse and foreign policy has been variously described as "authoritarian populism" (S. Sinha 2021, 320), "nationalist populism" (Ashutosh 2021, 17) and "right-wing populism" (McDonnell and Cabrera 2019, 488). Populism can be understood as a way of 'doing' rather than an ideology in itself, or what Rogers Brubaker calls a "discursive or stylistic repertoire" (Brubaker 2017, 360). Populism, regardless of the regime, claims to speak for 'the people' and against 'the elites'; in right-wing populism the people are cultural or ethnically bound as insiders threatened by outsiders or 'others' with whom the 'elites' ally (Brubaker 2017, 359, 363, 364). In the last decade, populist discourses have increasingly featured in politics across the world, understood as the global rise of populism (Brubaker 2017, 379). Right-wing populism has also become a feature of UK politics, particularly since the 2016 referendum decision to leave the European Union (Brexit). Brexit and the preceding popularisation of anti-outsider, right-wing populist discourses, have become mainstream. Thus, this sets the stage for the

reception of further transnational right-wing populist discourses in the UK (Hayton 2021, 415, 418).

Over the last two decades, scholars of Indian politics have noted Hindu nationalism's transnational organisations and discourses, mapping out the reach and activity of Hindu nationalist groups in the US, UK and beyond but often failing to consider local realities (Jaffrelot and Therwath 2007, 278, 279). Scholars of diaspora and ethnicity have examined the place of ethnic minority politics in the UK, noting the activism and political networking of British-South Asians on issues like Kashmir, but mainly among Muslims with Hindu nationalism remaining rarely covered (Peace and Meer 2020, 194, 195). In contrast, scholars of religious studies have examined the effect of Hindu nationalism and British multiculturalism on Hindu identity formation and visibilisation but have often failed to address its overt political and electoral consequences (Zavos 2015b, 243, 244; 2008, 328). This thesis aims to bring together these academic perspectives to examine transnational right-wing popularism via the case of the principal organisational network of Hindu nationalism, the Sangh Parivar. I aim to address how the discourse of the Sangh Parivar has been made relevant to local realities and discourses in the UK through the process of "vernacularisation" (T. B. Hansen 1996, 179). This means that Hindu nationalism, or the Sangh Parivar's specific strand of Hindu nationalism, Hindutva, in the context of global populism's rise becomes an elastic and familiar ideology, a discursive repertoire with British commonalities, with which to understand, address and influence politics in the UK. Thus, Hindutva as a populist vernacular is no longer bound by the geography of its origination or the sole desire to create a Hindu India but instead is utilised as a discursive strategy not only by an ethnic or religious minority but the politicians that seek to represent them (D. Reddy 2009, 310).

The primary theoretical frame for understanding how Sangh Parivar discourses have intermingled with British political discourse is vernacularisation. Vernacularisation was first applied by Thomas Blom Hansen in their 1995 study of the electoral success of the Shiv-Sena and BJP alliance in Maharashtra (D. Reddy 2011b, 419). Both parties took advantage of local structured contingencies, such as resentment of patronage networks between Muslims and the ruling party, to produce discourse strands that moulded Hindutva with local grievances and structures (T. B. Hansen 1996, 209, 210). The concept of vernacularisation has been applied to other Indian contexts and ideologies, notably in Lucia Michelutti's examinations of the vernacularisation of democratic practises and ideals in North India (Michelutti 2007, 339).

So, the process of vernacularisation is attuned to a given local political context and conveyed in local idioms.

However, scholars have also argued that transnational Hindutva is also a global vernacular that is employed strategically in regional, national and supernational contexts (D. Reddy 2009, 310, 311). The vernacularisation of Hindutva can be identified by its conscious employment in local contexts through local discourses, rather than those specific to Hindutva's origin and core tenets, and the visible use of identity-based political claims, often where a defined community is referenced (D. Reddy 2009, 311). Thus, the process of vernacularisation often goes hand in hand with visibilisation. John Zavos defines visibilisation as a process where "[…]group identities become visible within a range of wider public spheres, possibly as a result of the actions of state agencies[…], the dynamic development of identities within particular groups, wider political events, or, most likely, a combination of these three factors" (Zavos 2008, 328). Given previous research has thoroughly addressed identity formation among Hindus in the UK, visibilisation and identity formation will not be the conceptual focus of this thesis. However, my research does visibilise the partially or previously invisible networks of the Sangh Parivar UK and Hindutva activism in the UK.

My study can also be understood in a comparative perspective, diasporas acting as a special interest group and engaging in the political arena of the host country, employing local discourses, to affect the politics of the host country rather than the 'homeland' directly is a noted feature of US politics (Carter 2005, 61). In the US, representation of diaspora views by special interest 'umbrella' groups can be used to silence criticism of the homeland, misrepresent or homogenise the views of the diaspora and encourage antagonism between minority groups (Dieckhoff 2017, 277). However, this has been a less studied feature of UK politics, referred to by some older scholarship as an example of the "Americanisation" of British politics, reflecting past uncertainty over the newness and foreignness of ethnic minority politics to UK politics (Ellis and Khan 1998, 427). My approach attempts to build on studies on the political dimensions of Hindu interest groups in the UK (Anderson 2015, 46; Zavos 2015b, 248). But I also address the importance of online discourses and networking in blurring the differences between outsider and insider discourses, particularly where they share right- or far-right populist features. Thus, my study will highlight how online discourses make visible and attempt to normalise populist right-wing discourses,

which are then posed as the popular will of British-Indians and British-Hindus in electoral and parliamentary discourses (Krzyżanowski and Ledin 2017, 577).

The Sangh Parivar

The Sangh Parivar (the family of the Sangh), also referred to as the Sangh, is a conglomeration or network of organisations formed and based in India. These organisations are related through their genealogical connection to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS, National Volunteers Organisation) and through their ideological advancement of Hindu nationalism. The Sangh Parivar have been the most important group of organisations to impact the growth of Hindu nationalism in India and abroad (Jaffrelot 2005, 1) .

Hindu nationalism developed in the 1920s as an ideology and movement in response to European colonialism and agitation by Indian-Muslims during the pan-Islamic Khilafat Movement (1919-24). During this period, the Hindu nationalist politician and thinker V.D. Savarkar published *Essentials of Hindutva* (1923), republished as *Hindutva – who is a Hindu?*, which subsequently inspired the thinking of the newly formed RSS (1924-26) (Jaffrelot 2009, 13, 16). Savarkar described his ideology as 'Hindutva', literally 'Hinduness'. However, Savarkar's Hindutva was based not on religion but on belonging to a Hindu race and allegiance to India as a fatherland and civilisational or cultural home of Hindus (Savarkar 1923, 32, 33). This form of Hindu nationalism inspired Keshav Baliram Hedgewar to found the RSS and continues to be used to describe the ideology of the Sangh Parivar by scholars (Jaffrelot 2009, 16).

Rather than seeking to gain state power, the RSS originally worked to reform Hindu society in a grassroots fashion. This involved creating local *shakhas* (branches) across India that young men could join, become *swayamsevaks* (volunteers) and receive daily martial training (games) and ideological instruction (Jaffrelot 2009a, 17). By the 2000s, the Indian RSS had around 20,000 regular *shakhas* and several million *swayamsevaks*. The RSS claims to not keep membership records, so estimates range between 2-6 million members (Bhatt 2001, 113). The RSS began developing its Sangh Parivar in 1936 when Laxmibai Kelkar created the Rashtra Sevika Samiti (National Women's Service Committee). Since then, RSS has created or assisted in creating through its own *pracharaks* (preachers) numerous organisations aimed at different strata of society, including a student wing (Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad), lawyers organisation (Adhivakta Parishad) and a labour union (Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh) (Bhatt 2001, 113, 114). However, the most influential affiliates

of RSS today are the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council) created in 1964 and the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (Indian Peoples Party), created in 1980 by the members of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh party (1951) (Chetan Bhatt 2001, 115).

Sangh International

From its inception, the Sangh Parivar has spawned sister organisations beyond India. The earliest organisations began with *swayamsevaks* migrating to British colonies, with the first non-Indian RSS branch started in Kenya in 1947 (Jaffrelot and Therwath 2007, 185). Much of the focus on the work of the Sangh Parivar outside India became salient for Asian studies scholars after the Babri mosque demolition in 1992, initiated by the VHP, an event that actively mobilised the Indian diaspora as a source of financial and ideological support in a way previous events in India had not. For example, with consecration and sending of bricks to India for the building of a temple to the deity Ram in the place of the Babri mosque (Rajagopal 1997, 45,48). Some of the earliest scholarship to comprehensively address Hindu nationalism and the Indian diaspora was found in a 2000 special issue of *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. These articles focused predominantly on Hindu nationalism and the work of the Sangh Parivar in the US and UK (Bhatt and Mukta 2000, 407). Many of these early articles, conceive of Hindutva in the UK through the lens of the globalisation of religious fundamentalism or religious resurgence (D. Reddy 2011a, 428.; Bhatt and Mukta 2000, 409).

However, John Zavos has recently argued that dramatic events in India since the 1980s have "over-determined our understanding of Hindu nationalist organisation in Britain" overfocusing on the Indian Sangh to determine its form in the UK (Zavos 2010b, 6). Indeed, Edward Anderson has argued for focusing on "Neo-Hindutva" in the UK or idiosyncratic forms of Hindutva that "operate outside the organisation and institutional framework of the Sangh Parivar" (Anderson 2015, 47). These include, Hindutva discourses that are spread by Hindu representative organisations not traditionally thought of as Hindu nationalist that avoid connections to the Sangh (Anderson and Longkumer 2018, 373). Zavos assumes that the political dimensions of the Sangh have been exhausted by scholars and argues that connections are often made between Sangh organisations and British Hindu nationalist activities without substance (Zavos 2010b, 9, 18). Thus, Anderson argues, on the basis of Zavos's points, that it is important to focus on diffuse or vernacularised forms of Hindutva formulated by Hindu umbrella groups and other non-Sangh groups (Anderson 2015, 46). However, while I take no issue with focusing on vernacularised Hindutva, I argue that

previous scholars failed to grasp the full extent of the Sangh in the UK and its work with non-Sangh Hindu groups. Moreover, scholarship has focused too much on the Sangh's religious dimensions to the detriment of the political. Finally, none of these studies have examined how Sangh discourses impact non-Hindus or Indians in the UK, leaving vernacularised Hindutva as an insular entity. Instead, I argue that while vernacularised Hindutva primarily impacts British-Hindus and Indians, it also impacts local politics in where British-Hindus and Indian are concentrated, the politicians that represent them and Westminster politics.

Questions surrounding the nature of the relationship between nationalism and Indian diaspora are not new, they have been central to scholarly examinations of the Indian diaspora and the study of diaspora in general (Tölölyan 2007, 648). Here, the Indian diaspora has often been defined through the idea of India as a homeland that members of the diaspora seek to remember (Rai and Reeves 2008, 1, 2). Conceptions of the Indian diaspora are complicated by the various times and types of migration out of India, both during the colonial period and after. The partition of British India and creation of new states based on religion and ethnicity, as well as migration to colonies and colonial metropoles outside of India. Consequently, scholars often discuss the Indian diaspora interchangeably with the South Asian or Hindu diaspora (Bhatt and Mukta 2000, 409). Significantly, academics often utilise Bendict Anderson's theory of long-distance nationalism, where the sense of belonging and longing for nation, and experiences of difference in the host country, create a sense of diaspora (van der Veer 1995, 7). However, Jaffrelot and Therwath argue that long-distance nationalism is not simply organic, but in the case of Hindutva and the diaspora, deliberately cultivated by the Sangh Parivar and the Hindu nationalist government (Jaffrelot and Therwath 2007, 279). In this instance, long-distance nationalism has a practical dimension aimed at providing financial and political support to nationalists in the homeland (Schiller and Fouron 2001, 20, 26, 27). More recent work on Hindu nationalism specifically has emphasised the multi-directional relationship between the diaspora and India, where the diaspora's experience of xenophobia and financial advantage abroad are utilised by Hindu nationalists in India (Jaffrelot and Therwath 2007, 279, 292). My research departs from the focus on long-distance nationalism, as I intend to address the global and local aspects of the Sangh Parivar's organisation and the vernacularisation of its discourse in the UK.

British-Indians, British-Hindus

For the purposes of this thesis, it is important to ground understanding of the Indian diaspora in the UK context. Although South Asian people have been present in Britain since the founding of the East India company in 1600, the majority of British-South Asians today descend from those who came to the UK during the post-war period (1945-1969) (Visram 2002, 354). Many migrated to the UK due to the promise of jobs caused by labour shortages, with most early migrants coming from the Punjab. Initially, due to the policy of *civis Britannicus sum* – a policy that allowed British subjects of commonwealth countries to enter the UK – migration was laissez-faire (Choudhary 2014, 101, 103, 105). However, by the late 1950s, fears around increased immigration by 'coloured' migrants from the Commonwealth enabled the Conservative government to pass the first immigration control act, the Commonwealth Immigration Act, 1962 (R. Hansen 2000, 100). Between 1958-62 some 58,000 Indians migrated to the UK to 'beat the ban' (Choudhary 2014, 105). Moreover, in the 1960s newly independent African countries, such as Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, began introducing Africanization policies which drove Indians out of key economic positions, forcing many to migrate to the UK (R. Hansen 2000, 153). These 'twice migrants' were predominantly skilled labourers of Gujarati descent. Their arrival boosted the demographic and electoral presence of British-Indians, beginning a history of engagement with local politics from the late 1960s onwards (Choudhary 2012, 161).

Academically, British-Indians were first approached as part of a homogenous ethnic minority by researchers concerned with 'race relations' between white and black people (which South Asians were sometimes grouped as in the late 1960s and 1970s). By the 1970s, political research began to be conducted that specifically addressed South Asians, ethnic minority electoral participation and representation more generally (Peace and Meer 2020, 193, 194). A major development in the political history of British-Indians was the creation of South Asian unions and their involvement with anti-race discrimination activism (Josephides 2005, 174, 177). Other scholarship has focused on the relationship between British-Indians and political parties, particularly the involvement of British-Indians in the Labour and Liberal party from the 1970s (Choudhary 2012, 181, 182). This highlights how the relationship between British-Indians, British conservatism and the right-wing has been underexamined. The 1991 census was also a milestone in academic consideration and political awareness of British-Indians, because it was the first census to include questions on ethnicity (Statham 1999, 605). Ethnicity in the 1991 census asked about nation of origin and phenotype, and

later the 2001 census included religion (Office for National statistics 2021). Since the 2000s, political studies of ethnic minorities in the UK have taken a distinctly religious turn, where religion is now a key part of ethnic identity, with the bulk of studies focused on British-Muslims (Peace and Meer 2020, 105).

Mary Searle-Chatterjee has critiqued this religious turn, pointing out how the world religions paradigm in studies constitute Hinduism in the UK as an ethnic religion and give primacy to Hinduism as a point of identification among British-Indians, ignoring others like caste or class. This unwittingly provides legitimacy for the homogenising project of Hindutva (Searle-Chatterjee 2000, 498, 501). Moreover, where academics have studied the Sangh Parivar, they ignore the political dimensions and discourses of these UK organisations (Searle-Chatterjee 2000, 511). Other scholars have highlighted how Sangh Parivar organisations campaigned for changes to the primary identification of British-Indians using anti-racist discourses in the 2000s. For example, from British-Asian to British-Hindu in response to the Satanic Verses controversy and Islamic terrorism (Raj 2000, 543). Other authors have highlighted the close associations between the Sangh Parivar and other Hindu religious organisations, such as the Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) or International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) in the UK. This can be explained in part because of the historical predominance of internationally networked organisations in early diaspora Hinduism and British multicultural faith relations industry that created alliances between Hindu organisations (Zavos 2010b, 7). For example, with BAPS and the Sangh Parivar acting as representatives of Hindus in the UK (Kim 2009, 368, 371). This has led many scholars to focus on how Hindu nationalism has shaped the identity of British-Hindus and conceptions of Hinduism in the Indian diaspora. However, these approaches, while cognisant of broader political or governmental discourses have failed to examine the relationship between Hindutva, the Sangh Parivar and British parliamentary and electoral politics. British-Indians have generally been examined in a siloed manner, predominantly from a religious or racial/ethnic perspective.

Debates around defining Hindutva

Questions concerning Hindutva and the Indian diaspora are compounded by debates among scholars over the nature of Hindutva itself and whether it should be understood predominantly as a form of Hinduism or ethno-nationalism for which ‘Hindu’ is the common identifier (Zavos 2010a, 324, 329). This debate is important given that the Sangh Parivar

positions itself as a Hindu organisation and its work is understood by the politicians who interact with it as such, despite the political dimensions of its activities in the UK. Much of this foundation of this debate is due to the disciplinary lens and potential activism of scholars studying Hindu nationalism. For instance, Members for the Feminist Critical Hindu Studies collective have highlighted how the process of defining Hinduism in the early 20th century, academically and socially, is entrenched in Brahmanical primacy and necessitated othering groups like Dalits (formally known as untouchables), Muslims and Christians. They argue that this process of defining Hinduism and Hindus produced "a discourse of Hindu supremacy, of which Hindutva […] is one manifestation" (FCHS Collective 2021, 5). Moreover, they highlight how the discourses of Hindu supremacy have sought closeness with white supremacy in the diaspora, on racial and caste lines. For example, the 1923 case of *United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind*, 261 U.S. 204 where high-caste Hindus were positioned as Aryans and inter-caste marriage analogous to inter-racial marriage, illegal under Jim Crow laws (FCHS Collective 2021, 6).

Importantly, these debates highlight how scholarship itself is influenced by Hindu nationalists' discourse and critique of academia. For example, a common Hindu nationalist online tactic is to label scholarship of Hindu nationalism "anti-Hindu" or "Hinduphobic"; this in turn led to academics stating that "Hindutva is not Hinduism" as a defence (Sippy and Krishnamurti 2021). Moreover, for some academics, as exemplified by Jaffrelot, the influence of European fascism and colonialism on the Hindutva movement means that it requires distinction from Hinduism, whose essence and original quality needs further defining and distinguishing by scholars (Jaffrelot 2009, 6). I do not think the sides of this debate are in disagreement over their respective understandings of Hindutva, rather whether it is necessary or appropriate to define and distinguish it from Hinduism. For the purposes of this thesis, especially given my data's online nature, I am aware that my working and thinking on Hindutva does not exist in an academic vacuum. Scholars studying such a current issue must be aware of how Hindutva is framed and will potentially have discursive consequences.[1]

In fact, scholarly discourses are already impacting how Hindutva and Hinduism are framed. For example, the Commission for Countering Extremism, an expert panel that advises the British Home Office on non-terrorist extremism, cites the work of Anderson on Neo-Hindutva under a section on "religious fundamentalism" in the commission's seminal

[1] For a discussion of academic framing of Hindutva see (D. Reddy 2011a).

report on “Challenging Hateful Extremism” (Commission for Countering Extremism 2019, 57, 59). This inclusion of vernacularised Hindutva in the UK highlights governmental awareness, albeit cursory, of Hindutva beyond the Sangh Parivar (Anderson 2015, 51). But the framing of vernacularised Hindutva as “religious fundamentalism” also obscures its political dimensions and intent. For example, Hindutva meets all of the Commission specifications for far-right narratives and identification which is understood, in contrast with religious fundamentalism, as organisationally political i.e. political parties, interest groups, electoral campaigns and demonstrations (Commission for Countering Extremism 2019, 36, 37). I intend to prioritize local and national political realities in this examination of the Sangh Parivar. However, that does not mean I wish to deny the religious aspects of the Sangh and Hindutva. Instead, I think this aspect of the Sangh UK has been overemphasised by previous research to the detriment of the political. Importantly, it is the religious and the political discourses of the Sangh that make it such a relevant object of study.

Research Methods

The primary research for this project was conducted entirely online from February to June 2021. The main methods used for this project were discourse analysis, including visual and content analysis, of social media output, parliamentary debates, and news articles. This was supplemented by further online research, on social media websites and organisational websites.

Previous authors who have conducted research on the Sangh Parivar used archival research, participant observation of Sangh activities and qualitative analysis of sources such as newspapers, speeches and press statements (Anderson 2015, 47; Raj 2000, 541). With regards to the online material analysed, previous research has mostly studied website content, publicly available information and, to a lesser extent, social media (Zavos 2010b, 8; Therwath 2012, 553). The lesser emphasis on social media output in previous research constitutes a gap in the literature given the importance of social media sites like Facebook and Twitter to political news and networking (Pew Reaserch Center 2018, 9). Additionally, social media sites are a tools through which interest groups attempt to shape their public image and convey their socio-political discourse to a wider audience (Chalmers and Shotton 2016, 375). Moreover, the organisational structure of Hindu nationalist groups on social media often replicates offline connections between groups, with Facebook linking related

pages, but with greater ambiguity (Therwath 2012, 570). This gives an impression of separate groups presenting the same worldview, despite this not being the case.

Discourse is a form of human expressions, often in the shape of language or other forms of communication, for example, images, which create a "discourse world" or reality that is assumed by the speaker and is what the speaker thinks is others' reality (Chilton 2004, 54). Politics, at both a macro, institutional and micro, personal, levels is largely communication based, meaning discourse analysis is a tool that cites this empirical evidence, language, to understand political meaning and its underlying cognition (Chilton and Schäffner 2002, 3, 5). Political cognition is understood as knowledge and opinions about politics and political actors that are acquired, changed or confirmed through discourse during socialisation, education, media usage, connections and conversations with others (Dijk 2002, 203). Political cognition is made up of our personal models, personal opinions about a situation, and social memory, the shared and undisputed cultural knowledge and views of a group, or common ground (Dijk 2002, 209, 2011). It is through political cognition that we can understand how one discourse strand, a general theme or event, say, 9/11, becomes incorporated into another discourse, say, a conservative politician's speech on how Islam is dangerous (Jäger 2001, 47; Dijk 2002, 211).

The process of discourse analysis for this project involved collecting material from the official Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts of the BJP, RSS, VHP and the Overseas friends of the BJP UK (OSFBJP UK), the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS) – the RSS in the UK – and the Vishva Hindu Parishad UK (VHP UK). Research for VHP UK excluded Twitter and Instagram, since there was no account. I collected posts that incorporated the following discourse strands, which were identified previously through secondary research: the status of Kashmir, the Citizenship Amendment Act (2019) and National Register of Citizens, caste, Muslims, and Islam. The posts were then reviewed to find specific coding categories, refined discourse stands, and other relevant discourse fragments, texts that incorporate discourse stands (Jäger 2001, 47). I carried forward these coding categories into the second discourse analysis of speeches by parliamentarians related to India. Additionally, I conducted a third discourse analysis on the representations of British-Hindus and British-Indians in the British and Indian news media. This followed a similar process but with an additional quantitative discourse analysis to understand in what discursive contexts British-Indians or British-Hindus were referenced most. In each analysis, the discursive context was considered, for example, parliamentarians must structure their

discourse according to the British parliament's rules and customs. The material collected for each discourse analysis was published between 2014 and 2021, to include the last three UK general elections, 2015, 2017 and 2019, and the 2014 public consultation on the inclusion of caste in the Equalities Act 2010.

Outline of thesis

The aim of this thesis is to ground the Sangh Parivar and its discourse in the UK to understand how transnational right-wing populist discourses, ideologies and movements impact politics far outside their nation and constituency of origin.

I begin my investigation with a chapter on the organisation, structure and history of the Sangh Parivar UK. I then examine the discourse of the Sangh Parivar, addressing how Sangh India discourses have become vernacularised in the UK and discourses unique to Sangh UK. Then, in the concluding chapter I will investigate the connections and collaborations between Hindu umbrella groups, Members of Parliament (MPs) and the Sangh Parivar UK. In chapter three I will also show how Sangh Parivar discourse are utilised by MPs in parliamentary discourses and consider why selected MPs may utilise Sangh discourses and cultivate relationships with the Sangh Parivar. Finally, I reflect and conclude on the question; **How has the organization and discourse of the Sangh Parivar vernacularized in the UK and affected the discourse of British politicians?**

Chapter one: The formation, organisation, and vernacularisation of the Sangh Parivar UK

Introduction

In this chapter, I will illustrate how the central organisations of the Sangh Parivar India have become vernacularised in the UK context. I will make visible the connections between different Sangh organisation in the UK and update previous literatures understandings of the Sangh network in the UK. Moreover, this chapter will highlight how the visibility of these Sangh organisations today resulted from their online social media networking, and a growing confidence based in the ascendancy of the Sangh Parivar in India since 2014 and a changing UK context. Additionally, I will discuss the historical formation of the Sangh Parivar in the UK, its work, and connections to Sangh Parivar India, highlighting the importance of the Sangh as a globally networked yet locally grounded group. Most of the historical information for this chapter comes from a special 50-year edition of the HSS's newsletter, *Sangh Sandesh*, which contains personal accounts of Sangh UK members since the sixties. I will also highlight how my primary research supplements and differs from previous research that has made assumptions about the formation, organisation and network of the Sangh Parivar UK that is now outdated. Understanding how the Sangh is organised and organises is necessary for understanding the impact of the Sangh Parivar's discourse in the UK and globally as part of 'Sangh International'

The Formation of Sangh UK

The First Swayamsevaks in the UK: Overseas Bharatiya Jana Sangh and the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS)

The development of the Sangh globally, and in the UK, began with the migration of *swayamsevaks* (RSS volunteers) out of India. For *swayamsevaks* recently arrived in a foreign land, their RSS networks were often their only connections in the UK, with pre-established

swayamsevaks helping find housing and providing social and religious connections (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 23, 28). Contrary to what previous research has assumed, the first Sangh organisation in the UK was not the HSS, but the Overseas Bharatiya Jan Sangh (OBJS), founded in April 1964 (Bhatt 2000, 578; D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 24). The OBJS was the UK counterpart to the Bharatiya Jana Sangh party (BJS), the current BJP's predecessor. OBJS was created by UK-based *swayamsevaks* explicitly "with the aim of facilitating interaction between the political leaders of Jan Sangh in India and their counterparts in British politics" (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 24). Additionally, much of the work of the early OBJS focused on arranging meetings between BJS leaders and British-Indians, with visits from BJS leaders such as Balraj Madhok in 1964 and Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 1966 (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 26). It was Vajpayee who was critical in urging the first *swayamsevaks* to expand their work to incorporate what became the HSS (Y. Shah 2018, 17; Chandra Sharda Shastri 2008, 47). The founding members of the OBJS subsequently founded the Friends of India Society International UK (FISI) in 1976, which still works closely with OFBJP UK (Canton 2019). FISI UK was founded during the state of emergency declared by Indria Gandhi from 1975-1977, and proved a significant period in the Sangh Parivar's development (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 46, 148). The banning of the Sangh's movement and detainment of cadres and politicians created a need for a lifeline of financial and political support abroad (Jaffrelot 2021, 18, 35). The Emergency also emboldened the Sangh Parivar abroad, giving them renewed legitimacy as bastions of Indian democracy, removing the "untouchability" of Hindu nationalism vis-a-vis Indian nationalism (Anderson and Clibbens 2018, 1772).

Today, the FISI continues to act as a lobbying group to British and European politicians particularly on issues they feel are "anti-Indian" (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 149). Although they claim they hold no affiliation to any political party, they broadly support the BJP, as with much of the Sangh Parivar movement. For example, the FISI often shares BJP-created material on their social media, with BJP references removed (Friends of India Society International UK 2021; G. K. Reddy 2021). This highlights how the organisational relationships of the Sangh Parivar are both recently visible, and discrete, a historical legacy and operational necessity to appeal across the political divide in the UK to gain international support for their movement in India (Andersen 2019). Thus, the earliest work of the Sangh in the UK was and continues to be overtly political and targeted towards British politicians and the British-Indian population. However, whilst Sangh Parivar groups like the FISI originally

aided the Sangh movement in India, these groups have now become entrenched in the UK and have vernacularised their discourse and network to local contexts.

Figure 1. Image from c. 1976 of Labour and Co-operative MP Laurie Pavitt, sitting with swayamsevaks Arjan Lal Sharma and Dr Krishna Hardas, founding member of OFBJS and FISI UK (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 49).

The Shakha (branch) model

Due to pre-existing *Swayamsevak* networks formed in the early 1960s, the HSS was formed its first branch (*shakha*) in London in 1966 (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 32, 35). There are approximately 58 HSS branches across the UK as of 2016, in addition to 30 Balagokulam children's branches and 35 Sevika Samiti womens' branches (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 70). Although, according to Cristophe Jaffrelot, in 2002 there were 72 HSS branches (Jaffrelot 2005, 418). Part of this discrepancy may be due to the branch model itself, which is often highly volatile in the UK due to the attendance rates of young people who make up the bulk of the HSS's members; of around 2,000 members 65% are under 25 (Bhatt 2000, 581; D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 70). The branch model in the UK follows similar logic as in India. The focus is on physical and ideological training; however, it is discursively understood as training of Anglicized youth in their religious and cultural heritage. Thus, a key draw for British-Indian parents to the Sangh is their fear of their children's cultural loss (Bhatt 2000, 581). However, for the HSS, the focus on young people is also a deliberate aim to ensure that they are raised with the 'correct' morals, pride and discipline necessary to be leaders of a strong Hindu society (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 90).

The UK Sangh strategy also follows the same logic as the RSS in India, where young children are seen as easily enculturated through the branch model via the provision of free spaces to play (Vachani 1993, 3:13, 11:45). For example, Balagokulam is aimed at children between 5 and 14 years old, of all genders, and has no admission fees (Balagokulam UK

2013). However, the HSS, has indicated its wish to incorporate an organisation targeted at nursery aged children, below the age of 4, given the need, from the Sangh's point of view, to enculturate westernised children as early as possible (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 59; Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh UK 2016, 51). Youth training has long been integral to the Hindu nationalist movement in India, with the RSS' *modus operandi* following the lead of Hindu reformist groups like the Ayra Samaj in the 1930s, in part inspired by German National-Socialist approaches (Gould 2009, 152, 158). Although branches are the quintessential basis for the RSS, the development of the branch model outside of traditional Hindu nationalist heartlands and the Sangh Parivar UK's discourse of halting the threat of cultural loss or westernisation in British-Indian children, are a sign of the vernacularisation of the Hindu nationalist model in the UK. Shakhas are intrinsically local and are key to connecting the discourse of the Sangh to the local area, and its politics (T. B. Hansen 1996, 192). For example, HSS branches are often based in local cross-community spaces like schools and church halls (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 23, 91). Thus, Sangh activities appear as though they provide a useful youth-focused social service to a locality in the way a youth club would.

Figure 2. Image from 2015 Sangh Shiksha Varg (Youth Leadership Training) of boys of the HSS and girls for the Hindu Sevika Samiti (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 95).

Internal Organisation of the HSS UK

Similar to the RSS, the HSS UK is centrally organised, with a dedicated officer for UK regional divisions (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 40). HSS employees use the same title and rank system as the RSS, with a hierarchy of membership including experienced full-time workers or preachers (*pracharaks*) and less experienced full-time workers (*Vistaraks*) (Dheeraj 2009). It also has teams of workers devoted to specific departments of the organisation, such as youth instructors (*Tarun Pramukh*) and intellectual instructors

(*Bauddhik Pramukh*) (Bhatt 2000, 580; D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 40). The HSS is headed by an organisational director known as the *Sanghchalak*, a term used for a state-level director in the RSS in India, not *Sarsanghchalak* (supreme chief) the head of the RSS, indicating that the HSS UK is considered a state-level constituent of the RSS (Bhatt 2001, 115). Division officers and department chiefs, make up the 21 members of the *Kendriya Karyakarini Mandal* (central executive committee, KKM) which is appointed each year (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 40). The members of this board are also often involved with other "Sangh work," with founding members of the HSS KKM helping start HSS activities across Europe and founding or standing on the boards of organisations such as the VHP UK and OFBJP UK. Indeed, the HSS has both a public and internal relations department which coordinates and publicises the work of the HSS with the Sangh Parivar at large (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 107). This in practise means that the organisation of the Sangh UK often coalesces in the hands of a few interchanging men, and has meant that there are often familial connections between those at the top (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 44).

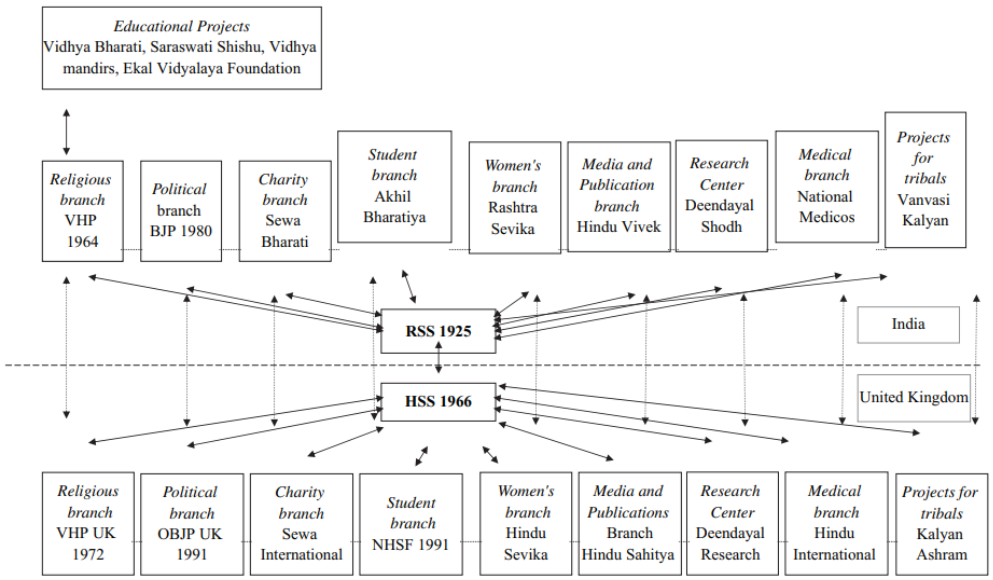
The curricula of branches are also centrally planned, with local branches encouraged to facilitate connections with officialdoms in their local area (Bhatt 2000, 580, 581). This is often done through regular engagement with local politicians, emergency services and armed forces (Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh UK 2021). For example, the HSS has used *Raksha Bandhan*, an annual Hindu rite where sisters tie a bracelet around their brother's wrist to symbolise a bond of protection, to engage with local officials. This rite has been utilised and altered by the RSS in India for nationalist mobilisation (Chacko 2019, 403). However, the Sangh Parivar UK use *Rakasha Bandhan* to present themselves as representatives of Hindus locally and an organisation that trains Hindus to develop a 'good' law abiding character (Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh UK 2019). Additionally, *Raksha Bandhan* is also used to centre their relationship with officialdoms on the security and protection of Hindus (Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh UK 2018b). Alternatively, in India, the RSS uses *Rakasha Bandha* to present itself as a protector of Hindus (Chacko 2019, 403). This highlights how Sangh organisations have vernacularised their rituals in the UK to engage with officials as representatives of Hindus, present themselves as model, law abiding, minorities, and highlight themselves as the protected.

Relationship with the RSS and Sangh International

Among scholars studying the transnational network of the Sangh, there has often been the assumption that the Sangh UK hides its RSS connections. This partly stems from the influence of an AWAAZ-South Asia Watch, a London-based activist group that opposes communal politics, report in 2004 on the HSS in the UK. The report found funding connections between a HSS affiliate, Sewa International which raises funds for charity work in India, and the Indian RSS (Jaffrelot and Therwath 2015, 347). The findings of this report led to a British Charity Commission investigation into the HSS. Thus, scholars have argued that it is the threat of investigation again by the Charity commission that leads the HSS to obscure its relationship with the RSS (Jaffrelot and Therwath 2007, 283). However, I argue that despite a second public scandal in 2014-5 and subsequent Charity Commission investigations, the HSS appears more unfazed by this threat that perhaps scholars realise. For example, in 2014 a speaker giving a Hindu history lesson at a HSS event was filmed for an undercover ITV documentary telling children that "the number of good Muslims can be counted on fingers," and "to destroy Hindu history is the secret conspiracy of the Christians" (ITV News 2015). Additionally, in unaired footage the event's speaker, when asked whether he was a member of the RSS or HSS, claimed that … "they are both the same, only thing is that here [in the UK] we cannot call RSS as RSS so we call it HSS" (Charity Commission for England and Wales 2016, 6). As a result, the Charity Commission specifically investigated connections between the RSS and HSS, and advised the HSS that, "they need to take proactive steps to ensure RSS has no control or influence over the charity and its affairs" (Charity Commission for England and Wales 2016, 6, 7). Despite this investigation in 2015-2016, in 2016 the HSS held a 50 year anniversary *Mahashibir* (great camp) at which the supreme chief of the RSS, Mohan Bhagwat, was guest of honour, alongside Dattatreya Hosabale, the general secretary of the RSS (Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh UK 2016, 22, 23). Thus, while legal implications of the HSS' relationship to the RSS are important to consider, the investigative and legal powers of the Charity Commission should also be relativised (ITV News 2015). The Commission is predominantly a registrar and has itself highlighted that it only has the power to shut down charities that are no longer charitable, and it cannot investigate outside of the UK (Charity Commission for England and Wales 2013). Thus, although the connection between the HSS and RSS may not be fully visible, the HSS does not obscure all its connections to the RSS for fear of the law. Moreover since 2014, when the BJP took control of the Indian government, it may no longer feel it needs to.

The RSS have regularly assisted in Sangh operations in the UK, despite the HSS appearing to be administratively independent (Zavos 2010a, 329, 330). Since 1989, the RSS has sent senior preachers (*pracharaks*) from India to the UK and Europe every few years (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 84). These preachers are UK based, with offices in HSS owned properties, and are the only preachers in the Sangh Parivar UK and HSS (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 140). These RSS/HSS and RSS/Sangh UK preachers work develop the role of the Sangh Parivar abroad according to the desires of the Sangh Parivar in India. Once a preacher has completed his work in the UK, he usually returns to India, to manage another area of the Sangh Parivar operations, usually in a more senior position. (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 88; RSS Rajkot Mahanagar n.d.). The position of the international preacher is considered highly prestigious and opportunity-laden for Indian RSS cadres. Since the BJP's rise to power, the Sangh Parivar no longer only represents the ideology of Hindutva abroad but also the Indian government, with many RSS preachers given government roles as ambassadors to the Indian diaspora and beyond (Jaffrelot 2005, 423). For example, in 2017 the current RSS/HSS preacher, Chandrakant Sharma, was the guest speaker at an anniversary celebration of Deendayal Upadhyaya (a Hindutva ideologue and RSS leader) hosted by the High Commission for India in the UK (the Commonwealth equivalent of an embassy) (Samvad: Shri Vishwa Niketan 2017, 4). Although many of the Sangh India organisations wish to expand their organisations overseas, like the VHP or the BJP have, the preachers are not necessarily facilitating a carbon copy of the Sangh Parivar India in the UK. The accounts of preachers collected in my research instead show a keen awareness of the impossibility of complete uniformity with Sangh India and instead emphasise developing local, nation-specific, methods for creating functionaries to spread the Sangh's ideology across their respective nations. This local method involves the creation of UK-specific organisations and initiatives, which shows the organisational growth of the Sangh Parivar has vernacularised in the UK. This also shows how Sangh India has developed an approach to their overseas affiliates that embraces vernacularised Hindutva (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 85, 89).

The UK Sangh Parivar: beyond the HSS



Flowchart 2. The network of the Sangh Parivar in India and in the United Kingdom (based on AWAAZ, 2004: 10).

Figure 3. Flowchart of Sangh Parivar structure according to scholar Ingrid Therwath based on the Awaaz-South Asia 2004 report (Therwath 2012, 559).

Amongst those studying Sangh UK, there has also been the belief that it regularly attempts to obscure the connections between its component organisations, to avoid scandal and a repeat of the 2004 investigation by the British Charity Commission (Jaffrelot and Therwath 2007, 283; Anderson and Longkumer 2018, 48). The 2004 AWAAZ-South Asia Watch report has become the basis of scholars understanding and depictions of the structure of the Sangh UK, see *Figure 3* (Therwath 2005, 419). However, given these sources are now nearly twenty years old and their activist nature, scholars such as John Zavos have begun discussing the connection between Sangh organisations with greater uncertainty and hedging (Zavos 2015b, 247). For example, Zavos describes organisations within the Sangh Parivar UK, like Sewa Day, as having a "sense" in which they are embedded within existing networks of the Sangh Parivar. Moreover, Zavos describes the connections made between Sangh organisation by AWAAZ-South Asia Watch, which I have found confirmed openly by the Sangh, as implications, see *Figure 4* (Zavos 2015b, 247).

Figure 4. Screenshots from a HSS Instagram story showing the logos and names of the Sangh Parivar UK, including Sewa Day, overlaid with the caption "Our extended Parivar [family]; Vividha Kshetras (different areas) (Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh UK 2018a).

Whilst in the past, the Sangh Parivar UK and India may have had to guard their structural secrecy due to the history of prohibition of its organisations and leaders, today the Sangh Parivar is in ascendency in India (Bhatt 2001, 116). For example, following the Gujarat pogrom/riots in 2002, BJP Chief Minister of Gujarat Narendra Modi was barred from entry to the UK until 2012 (J. Burke 2012). Today the political context of the UK has changed. Since 2010, the UK has been ruled by the Conservative party and successive governments since Brexit have sought closer relations with Modi's India to project an image of "Global Britain" without needing the EU (Heritage and Lee 2021). The discursive landscape has also changed in the UK and India, with transnational right-wing populism ascendent since 2014-2016 and with it a greater tolerance of authoritarian right-wing leaders and movements (S. Sinha 2021, 330).

Compared to the early 2000s, the public image and discursive impact of interest organisations now depends on social media (Chalmers and Shotton 2016, 387). When some Sangh organisations hold a higher profile than others (like the HSS) it has become necessary for the Sangh UK to be relatively transparent with its followers about its affiliates to involve them in several related Sangh UK organisations. This is heightened by the activist mobilising power of social media, which enables the Sangh to present their charitable work in a medium more accessible to non-members (Zavos 2015a, 30). Besides mobilisation, other Sangh organisations and affiliates use social media as a space to network and move right-wing populist Hindutva discourses from the fringe to the mainstream (Krzyżanowski and Ledin 2017, 577). As a result, I argue that previous scholars' emphases on the Sangh Parivar UKs

structural secrecy is overstated and may no longer be relevant for social media conscious and ascendent Sangh of today. The layout and description of the Sangh Parivar UK given below is based on my own findings on the HSS UK social media pages and in their Sangh Sandesh newsletters.

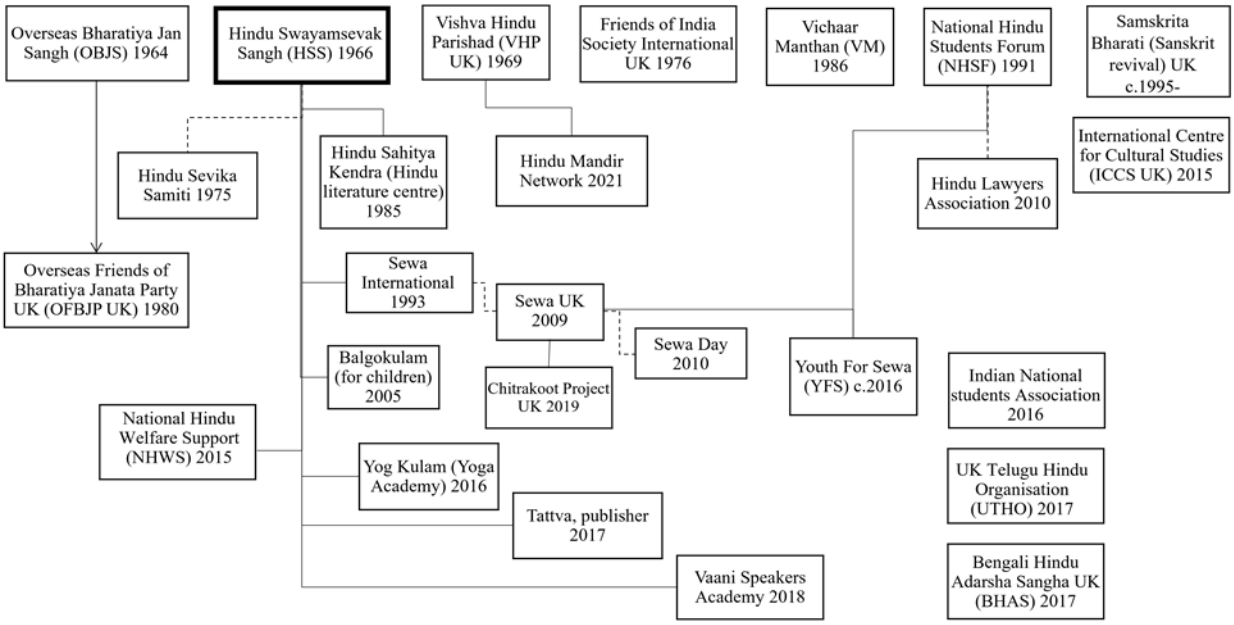


Figure 5. Authors flowchart of the organisational development of the Sangh Parivar UK as of 2021, complied from a range of sources (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 72-73.; Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh UK 2018a; UTHO n.d.; Youth for Sewa n.d.; Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh UK 2018c; 2017b; "BHAS UK" 2017). A line with an arrow, shows the organisation changed its name, clean lines show an organisation originating and/or managed by another and dashed lines show organisations that originated and were formally managed by another but now have their own management.

The flowchart above depicts the organisational development and management of the Sangh Parivar UK from 1964 onwards based on primary research that I conducted through social media analysis. This is not an exhaustive chart and I have found other organisations that could be part of the Sangh Parivar UK too. However, all the organisations featured in *Figure 5* have been acknowledge by the HSS to be part of the Sangh Parivar UK.

Importantly, most of the Sangh Parivar UK organisations were founded by individuals who went through the RSS or HSS system, often as *swayamsevaks* (or higher-rank members) (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 168). However, not all Sangh organisations are directly managed by the HSS, as previous research may have assumed, see *Figure 3*. For example, the Hindu Sevika Samiti is now administratively independent from the HSS and has parallel projects to some of the HSS'(D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 125). Certain organisations are also unique to the

UK Sangh, outlined below, while others are inspired by or are chapters of other Sangh India organisations, such as Samskrita Bharati (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 160). However, for all of these UK-based organisations, the HSS, like the RSS, remains an ideological and organisation fount, with most of their members and leaders coming from the HSS (or Sevika Samiti for women) system (Mary Kaldor and Diego Muro 2003, 140). In addition, the HSS is the central vehicle through which new organisations are created, often with the leaders of multiple organisations coming together to create organisations that target issues they feel need addressing in the Hindu population. In the UK, this happened most recently at the HSS 50th year anniversary great camp in 2016. Here, yoga, broken families, temples and early education (nursery age) were highlighted as areas that needed targeting (Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh UK 2016, 51) Since then, Yog Kulam, a yoga academy which teaches Hindutva infused yoga, and the VHP's Hindu Mandir Network (temple network) have been created (Yog Kulam 2021; Kadia 2021).

Vernacularised organisations and UK contributions of Sangh International

Sewa International, Sewa UK and Sewa Day

A key strategy of the Sangh Parivar has been to vernacularise its organisation in the UK, which includes creating UK-specific organisations with their own discourses, *Sewa* (service) is an example of this. In 1993, Sewa International was created. Initially a HSS project to raise funds for earthquake relief in India. Sewa International has now moved out of the UK to become an international organisation with branches in multiple countries, notably in the US and Australia (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 96, 97). This shows how organisations that are specific to the Sangh UK can impact the Sangh Parivar's development globally and highlights how, as a transnational entity, Sangh International is multi-directional and multi-polar. Today, Sewa International is closely affiliated to the Antar Rashtriya Sahayog Parishad (India Council for International cooperation, ARSP) a member of the Indian Sangh Parivar (Jaffrelot and Therwath 2007, 280). ARSP and Sewa International share leadership and work closely with the Indian government (Antar-Rashtriya Sahayog Parishad 2017). Thus, *sewa* organisations and volunteerism in the diaspora are a key, vernacular, means by which the Sangh Parivar and Indian government influence diaspora and shape its image abroad (Indian

Council for Cultural Relations 2021). Following the creation of Sewa UK, Sewa Day was developed as an initiative of Sewa UK (Zavos 2015b, 247). Sewa Day is perhaps the most visible organisation in the Sangh Parivar UK, utilising pre-existing Sangh networks to encourage a day of local volunteerism (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 163). Through the utilisation of local networks, Sewa Day is also an opportunity for the Sangh Parivar to engage with local officialdoms, such as councils, police and MPs (Zavos 2015b, 253). Much of its work focuses on collecting for food banks. Food banks are a charitable sector which has become a high-profile feature in UK political discourse since the 2008 recession. The cause of this was the Conservative-Cameron government's introduction of austerity measures, which drove the growth of food banks nationally (Purdam, Garratt, and Esmail 2016, 1073). Thus, the development of Sewa Day represents a case of Sangh vernacularisation, given it is unique to the UK Sangh Parivar and with UK charitable focuses.

Vichaar Manthan

The Vichaar Manthan (to churn ideas or brainstorming, VM) is an organisation that has, as I am currently aware, yet to be documented by scholars studying the Sangh Parivar UK. It is unique to the Sangh UK and represents vernacularised organisational attempts to impact British political debates. According to the HSS, the VM was founded in 1986 by HSS functionaries in Birmingham to be a forum for debate on philosophical and societal issues (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 156). Since then, VM has expanded and sought to develop university chapters in connection with the National Hindu Students Forum (Vichaar Manthan 2021a; 2019b). VM has also sought to replicate itself outside the UK, with the US as an area of expansion, highlighting again the Sangh UKs impact on Sangh International (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 168.; Tattva 2020). Today, VM aims to engage in intellectual discussion and, in its words, "to influence the influencers". Here, the VM brings together many like-minded, often conservative, right-wing or Hindutva sympathetic, academics, experts and political figures to speak on UK and Indian topics, such as Brexit or UK-India relations (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 168; Vichaar Manthan 2019a). As with most of the Sangh Parivar UK organisations, the VM discursively present themselves as speaking for British-Hindus. However, many of VM's expert speakers are sourced from leaders of other Sangh Parivar organisations. For example, for an event on the topic of "Are schools responsible for building character?" VM invited Madhvi Haria, a founder of Yog Kulam and a Sevika Samiti leader, to be an expert speaker (Vichaar Manthan 2021b). Moreover, VM organises events on current affairs and British

political debates. For example, it held an event on how "Hindu experiences" should guide how British-Hindus should vote in the 2016 Brexit referendum (Vichaar Manthan 2016b). At this event, the leader of VM argued in a speech that while Hindu culture bound together and created India, there did not exist a similar European culture or sense of Europeanness in the UK, implying that a natural position for British-Hindus was to vote to leave the EU. This speech was subsequently shared on the All-party-parliamentary group (APPG) for British-Hindu's Facebook page (Vichaar Manthan 2016a). This highlights how the organisation of the Sangh Parivar has vernacularised in the UK, with an organisation like VM, that attempts to speak for British-Hindus on British political and intellectual debates using Sangh discourses. VM's presentation of itself as giving Hindu positions on political debates in turn is promoted by parliamentarians as representing British-Hindus political positions on topics like Brexit, as indicated by the APPG for British-Hindus' sharing of VM's speech.

Vishwa Hindu Parishad UK's Hindu Mandir Network

The VHP UK, while an original Sangh India organisation, has vernacularised in the UK through the creation of the Hindu Mandir (temple) Network in 2021. As a result of VHP India's influence on religious organisations in India, Zavos has argued that VHP UK's influence has been overemphasised compared to non-Sangh Hindu umbrella groups like Hindu Forum for Britain (HFB) and Hindu Council UK (HC) (Zavos 2010b, 4, 8). However, the VHP UK, as with the HSS and National Hindu Students Forum (NHSF) is a member of, these non-Sangh Hindu umbrella groups, including HC (Hindu Council UK 2021). Moreover, the VHP UK plays a role in a number of interfaith networks alongside the HC and HFB (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 166; The Inter Faith Network UK 2021). These networks provide religious groups with legitimacy, recognition and provide a forum for 'corrective' education (Mukta 2000, 444). This reality also contradicts Edward Anderson and Arkotong Longkumer's argument that non-Sangh Hindu umbrella groups avoid connections to the Sangh (Anderson and Longkumer 2018, 373). VHP UK has always harboured ambitions to position itself as an umbrella organisation of which other Hindu groups are a part, and, in 2021, the VHP went further in realising this ambition with the launch of its Hindu Mandir Network (Katju 2005, 431:Vishwa Hindu Parishad UK 2021). Thus, the VHP as the religious arm of the Sangh Parivar has begun to structure itself in accordance with the vernacular of the multicultural faith relations industry in the UK. The faith relations industry was developed from the early 1970s, as a successor to the race relations industry, when non-Christian groups

began presenting themselves as “faiths” (a Christian concept) to gain the same regulatory support churches did (Knott 2009, 96). Moreover, when state managed multiculturalism began to develop in the 1990s, minority religious groups were encouraged to coalesce in large homogenising umbrella groups on the basis of shared religious identity to advise and participate in state endorsed community relations programmes (Zavos 2009, 887, 897; 2012, 73). Thus, I would argue contrary to Zavos, that although the work of the VHP has perhaps been overemphasized in scholarship, the organisational landscape in the UK is not a zero-sum game, and Sangh organisations do play a critical and collaborative, but often a less visible, role in influencing that landscape (Zavos 2010b, 4, 8). Importantly, the Sangh Parivar has vernacularised its organisation in the UK by shaping the VHP UK’s work into the faith relations model formulated by the British government since the seventies.

Conclusion

The key themes of this chapter have been the vernacularisation of the Sangh Parivar’s organisation in the UK, and making visible the network of the Sangh Parivar UK and global Sangh. My ability to connect various Sangh organisations is due to the ascendency of the Sangh Parivar in the last ten years and its cultivation of digitally networked activism and discourses in the UK. Thus, I can depict a far larger Sangh Parivar than previous authors have.

The organisations detailed above show how the Sangh Parivar UK is a distinct entity, rather than a carbon copy of the Sangh Parivar India. The creation of UK-specific organisations such as VM or the VHP’s Hindu Mandir Network, shows how the Sangh Parivar has vernacularised and grounded its organisation in the UK to propagate its discourse (which I will examine further in the next chapter). Moreover, the activist tactics of these organisations are also grounded in UK social and political contexts and discourses such as political debates around Brexit or the growth of food banks since the 2008 recession. However, as with the RSS in India, the HSS can be considered the ideological source of the Sangh Parivar with affiliate organisations sharing members and founders. Additionally, the HSS remains the key organising body of the Sangh Parivar, coordinating with affiliates through internal relations teams and collaborative events. However, this does not mean, as previous scholars have assumed, that the HSS centrally manages each organisation in the Sangh Parivar. Rather, certain organisations are directly, or have been, managed by the HSS,

but many are independent. Though there is a substantial crossover of leaders from different Sangh Parivar organisations.

Finally, I have shown the relationship between Sangh UK and Sangh India to be collaborative, with the RSS providing preachers to facilitate relations with the UK and India. However, the relationship is not purely unidirectional, as previous research may have assumed, but multidirectional and multipolar – as Sangh UK organisations become international Sangh organisations. For example, organisations like Sewa International, have gone global and now have international and Indian leadership. This demonstrates how global Hindutva is multidirectional not only in terms of funding, as previous scholars have noted, but also in terms of the organisations of the Sangh Parivar. Thus, I would argue that rather than a purely national-based understanding of Hindutva activism there needs to be an entity thought of as Sangh Parivar International.

Chapter two: The vernacularised discourse of the Sangh Parivar UK and its grounding in British discourses

Introduction

The last chapter highlighted how the Sangh Parivar UK has vernacularised its organisations and discourses in the UK to have the most impact locally and nationally. This chapter will explore the vernacularised right-wing populist discourses of the Sangh UK further and explain how the Sangh's discourses are grounded in the discursive landscape of British politics. Importantly, this chapter with layout the commonalities between Hindutva discourses and British political discourses and highlights how a shared discursive landscape of right-wing populism enables Hindutva to vernacularise and become a local discourse in the UK. This chapter is organised thematically along discourse strands discovered mostly on social media or through the *Sangh Sandesh* newsletter during primary research. This highlights the importance of social media to foregrounding and popularising transnational right-wing populist discourses. Finally, this chapter will show how vernacularised Sangh Parivar discourses permeate in the Sangh UK and the wider British-Hindu organisation landscape they collaborate with.

A Model minority: moral character and youth citizenship

Discourses centred on the character of young people have been a concern of politicians and the media since the post-war development of 'teenagerhood' (Todd and Young 2012, 455). However, since the 2000s, there have been shared, cross-party discourses around the perceived political apathy and incivility of young people. These discourses were first produced in response to low youth turnout in the 2001 and 2005 general elections (49.4% and 37% respectively) and the 2011 England riots (known as the London Riots), where young people believed to be influenced by "gang culture" who came from 'broken families' were blamed for looting (Mycock and Tonge 2012, 138, 142; Wilkinson 2013, 4). Additionally, the youth climate strikes in 2019 and Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests in 2020 prompted further discursive concern in Johnson's Conservative party over what they considered to be young peoples' inappropriate political engagement through activities such as

demonstrations (Leadsom 2019; Merrick 2021). The Johnson government's hostility to social justice demonstrations stems largely from their attempt to juxtapose the concerns of 'the people' with social justice and environmental issues, which young people often support (Hayton 2021, 416).

It is in response to the discursive event of low youth turnout that the Labour government introduced citizenship education to the national curriculum in 2002. Through citizenship education, students are expected to become informed citizens and develop skills of participation and responsible action (Davies, Gorard, and Mcguinn 2005, 342). Later, the Cameron-Conservative government of 2010 promoted their agenda of "the Big Society", where combined civic service and privatisation repair a British society broken by state intervention and a lack of civic virtue (Lister 2015, 365, 366). The Big Society discourse promoted a sense of British citizenship centred on individual and community responsibility, rather than government, for the provision of social justice and basic needs (Zavos 2015b, 248).

In this political context of concern around the moral character and citizenship of young people, the Sangh Parivar UK, as a youth dominated organisations, can discursively present its work as addressing these failings in young Hindus (Mycock and Tonge 2012, 139). Since its inception, the RSS strategy has emphasised cultivation of *samskars* (values) to make men of character who can realise the Hindu nation (Golwalkar 1968, 350, 352). Today, the Sangh UK continues to utilise the concept developing moral character with the primary aim of the HSS being "*samskar*, *seva* and *sangathan*" ― described by the HSS as values for life, selfless service and organisation (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 20, 21). The vernacularisation of Sangh Parivar discourses of character development as citizenship development can be shown in the Sangh UK's involvement with Parliament Week. The UK Parliament Week is an annual festival that began in 2011. It was predominantly aimed at young people to encourage education on and engagement with the UK Parliament and other democratic institutions (Hansard 2011, vol 534, c 1085). A key concern of Parliament Week from the onset was youth political apathy and the development of future citizens, with school citizenship education being the primary in-road for the UK parliament organisers to young people (Millicent Scott 2011).

The HSS has been involved with UK Parliament Week since 2016 and became an official partner in 2020, winning a Partner of the Year Award in 2020 (Hindu Swayamsevak

Sang UK 2021). The HSS is one of two Hindu partner organisations for the week, the other being the Hindu Council UK (UK Parliament Week 2021b). The HSS discourse around Parliament Week and other connected activities, such as visits to parliament, utilises the discourse of developing character and young citizens. For example, in the partners section of the UK Parliament Week website, the HSS is described as "a charity with strong emphasis on preserving, practising and promoting Hindu values and responsible citizenship" (UK Parliament Week 2021a). Moreover, text accompanying an Instagram post promoting the HSS' inclusion in Parliament Week on the podcast *Why Parliament Works* with Jacob Rees-Mogg MP, the leader of the House of Commons, reads: "Ancient Hindu Vedic values of #ResponsibleCitizenship #VasudhaivaKutumbakam [the world is one family] #Youth participation" (Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh UK 2020b). It is interesting to note how the HSS articulates and intwines contemporary British socio-political conceptions of responsible citizens and youth participation as ancient Hindu values. The *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* hashtag in this post also illustrates how Hindu nationalists employ humanist maxims for anti-humanist or identarian aims. By linking these three concepts together, the HSS claims these popular discourses as originating from Hindus (Bhatt 2000, 569). It is important to note that this discourse of the responsible youth citizen, cultivated through the inculcation of Hindu values (*samskar*s), is utilised in the HSS' interactions with politicians. For example, in a congratulatory letter to the HSS on their 50th anniversary MP for Brent North, who has a large British-Hindu constituency, Barry Gardener notes (Wells 2013a):

> "HSS has been an integral pillar of the Hindu community in the United Kingdom and certainly in North West London over the course of the last fifty years and their focus on empowerment and citizenship through Hindu values has helped countless young people to better themselves and the society around them" (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 17).

Importantly, the HSS caters not only to the youth but importantly, ethnic minority youth. A distinction in the discourses on youth apathy and incivility is its widespread characterisation in the media and by British politicians of racialised youths as more apathetic, alienated, and criminal. It is Black-British and British-Muslim youths who are often portrayed at the extreme end of this discourse. This is clear in the discourse, promoted by Cameron's government and the British media's of 'gang culture,' a racialised construct linked to black culture, as the cause of the 2011 England riots (Cottrell-Boyce 2013, 202). Moreover, in response to the riots, Cameron also linked racialised youths' involvement with 'gang culture' to 'broken families' (implying single-mother families) in poor, urban areas.

Thus, the representation of racialised youths as alienated criminals is a result of intersections of race and class in Conservative political discourses (Wilkinson 2013, 6). Here, the HSS have been able to utilise stereotypes of British-Hindus as a model minority (Bhambra 2021, 4). The model minority trope or stereotype has been noted in the US where it was first applied to East-Asian Americans. The model minority is discursively constructed as the most socio-economically successful and politically unthreatening (described through terms like "law abiding") minority, usually in juxtaposition to criminalised African-Americans (Wu 2013, 6). In the UK, the Sangh Parivar has been keen to utilise this discourse particularly in its interactions with politicians and officialdoms. An example of this comes from a Sangh Sandesh article describing the Sangh Parivar's Virat Hindu Sammelan 1989, the first large gathering of Hindus in the UK. This was an event remembered with pride by the HSS. It was held at the same time as the annual Notting Hill Carnival, an iconic Black-British Caribbean festival. Under a section titled "Hindu unity and behaviour" the HSS writes:

> "The Mayor of Milton Keynes, made special mention of this *disciplined behaviour and remarked that it was a reflection of the Hindus inherent law abiding and peaceful nature*.
>
> Many dignitaries in the UK later contrasted this with a parallel event at the time. The *Notting Hill Carnival in London had more than a thousand policemen deployed to manage the huge crowds at which there were unfortunate incidents of fights and clashes amongst unruly mobs*.
>
> [emphasis added]."
>
> (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 54, 55).

Thus, a key component of the vernacularisation of Sangh Parivar discourse in the UK context has been the transformation of the Sangh's role in developing the moral character of youth in service to the Hindu nation to one where the Sangh transforms the character of young Hindus into responsible citizens. This vernacularised discourse, whilst responsive to popular British socio-political discourses around youth political apathy and incivility, is articulated by the Sangh as that of ancient Hindu values. Moreover, the Sangh's vernacularisation of the youth character and citizenship development discourses has occurred in connection with their increased involvement with UK Parliament Week. Young people hold a strategic place in political discourse as future citizenry. Thus, the perceived good character and civility of Hindu youths trained by the HSS has been utilised in interactions with politicians and officialdoms to position Hindus as a model minority compared to poor, Black-British and British-Muslim youths, who are portrayed as unruly criminals.

The Anti-national elite: the Culture Wars and Universities

"Culture war" is a term most frequently applied to American political partisanship, describing a normative conflict between groups, usually envisioned as liberals or progressives vs. social conservatives, over the values and beliefs of a society. One example is abortion rights in the US (Koch 2017, 221). Culture wars are a debated thesis among academics, some argue it assumes natural and widespread cultural or identity differences between people and is a constructed conflict between social elites (Koch 2017, 228). However, in post-Brexit Britain, the 'culture wars' have been utilised as a political tactic by the Johnson government to hold together his Brexit coalition, who coalesce over identity issues (Sobolewska and Ford 2019, 152). For example, polling data has found that people who thought "equal opportunities measures had gone too far" and that "immigration is a threat to British culture" were the most likely to vote for Brexit (Sobolewska and Ford 2019, 148).Thus, discourses that portray a culture war are employed on issues of social justice and equal opportunities of ethnic minorities and immigrants. The culture war strategy is explicitly employed in a right-wing populist vernacular. For example, targets of the culture war strategy have often been the BBC, the legal profession and universities, who are defined as the elites (Hayton 2021, 416). These 'elites' are then contrasted with 'the people'; patriotic Brexit-supporters (Clarke and Newman 2017, 107, 110). Discourses that portray a culture war draw heavily on global right-wing populist and far-right discourses and employ conspiracy theories and dog-whistles, coded phrases whose implicit meaning is understood by an insider group without alienating others. Conspiracy theories and dog-whistles are important aspects for formulating and explaining right-wing populists' interpretations of social relations. For example, how the government, the conventional holders of power, are not classed as 'elites' (Bergmann 2018, 166, 170, 171).

One example where Conservative politicians have applied a culture war discourse has been to university humanities education and social justice movement critiques of British colonial history (Hayton 2021, 416). For example, to make this political stance clear, 59 Conservative MPs, including those like Bob Blackman who closely associate with the Sangh Parivar, are members of a parliamentary caucus: The Common Sense Group. This group describes its aims as:

> "to speak for the silent majority of voters tired of being patronised by *elitist bourgeois liberals*…to ensure that institutional custodians of history and heritage, tasked with

safeguarding and celebrating *British values, are not coloured by cultural Marxist dogma, colloquially known as the "woke agenda* [emphasis added]"(The Common Sense Group 2020).

This quote highlights how culture war discourses are employed in a right-wing populist vernacular, and how the Common Sense group claims to be speak for the majority and against the elite. Moreover, these Conservative politicians position themselves as protectors of the nation's values against "the woke agenda" and "cultural Marxist dogma" of the elite. "Woke" is US slang for those who are concerned with issues of racial and social justice which in US right-wing discourses has become an insult (The Economist Explains 2021). Cultural Marxist, as it is used here, is an anti-semitic dog-whistle that relates to the Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory, that critical theorists and intellectuals (coded as Jews), through universities, are attempting to destroy western society (Braune 2019, 16).

This discourse holds parallels with the 'anti-nationals' or anti-India discourse of the Sangh Parivar. 'Anti-nationals' or anti-India sentiment has been a pervasive discourse in Indian politics since the Emergency era (1975-1977). Originally, 'anti-nationals' referred to anyone who attempted to, publicly or internationally, oppose the Emergency regime. Today, the discourse around anti-nationals, conveyed by the Sangh Parivar retains the association with dishonouring India internationally and attempting to destroy Indian society (Anderson and Clibbens 2018, 1751). However, the target is now the enemies and opposition of the BJP government and Hindu nationalism more generally. These enemies are viewed as groups or individuals that are considered by the Sangh to be 'elites'. This also includes those who had influence during the rule of the opposition Indian National Congress party (c.1947-1996), including the Indian left and liberals (McDonnell and Cabrera 2019, 491). However, the discourse of the anti-Indian elites is also frequently applied to university students protesting the BJP government in India. For example, Jawaharlal Nehru University students who were arrested for sedition and accused of being anti-national for protesting against capital punishment in 2016 (McDonnell and Cabrera 2019, 490, 491).

The Sangh Parivar UK reformulates the discourse of the anti-national elites in a culture wars vernacular. The Sangh UK do this by adopting the same views as the Common Sense group: university education overrun with "cultural Marxist dogma" (The Common Sense Group 2020). For example, in 2020, the Vichaar Manthan (VM) hosted a panel on "culture and literature in the post-modern world" (D. Shah 2020, 1). The panel critiqued

Postmodernist thinking in universities. Postmodernism is a school of thought that has inspired popular humanist thinking on social justice issues but is erroneously considered 'Marxist' by conspiracy theorists (Braune 2019, 6). The VM panel described Postmodernism as a "Trojan Horse… since postmodernism heralds a form of "vagueology" [sic] (smoke and mirrors), it is easy to bring along cultural Marxism as the solution." According to the VM, Postmodernism was thus a narrative that encouraged "nihilism" and "a rejection of moral realities" in the West. However, according to the panel, Postmodernism does not affect India because of the "Dharmic psychology of the Indian population… and is immunised from nihilism as a result" (D. Shah 2020, 1, 2).Thus, VM have vernacularised Sangh Parivar discourses on anti-national elites to incorporate British right-wing populist cultural war discourses on social justice and universities. VM utilised the popular far-right conspiracy theory of cultural Marxism to make the case that India holds the cure to the threat of British societal decline because of its psychological and religious superiority (D. Shah 2020, 2). Through the Hindu nationalist tropes of religious and educational superiority to the West, VM can offer a solution to British culture war discourses around university education and critiques of British history (Gould 2009, 152).

Thus, due to their shared right-wing populist worldview, both the Sangh Parivar and the Johnson government engage in an anti-national style discourse, portraying ideological and intellectual opposition as seditious. In the UK, the Johnson government has used culture wars as a strategy to retain their electoral coalition, thought to coalesce around racially bounded understandings of British identity and history (Sobolewska and Ford 2019, 152). In both the UK and India, the target of the anti-national/culture war discourse have been universities, students and intellectuals, portrayed as elites. In particular anti-national and culture war discourse has been mobilised around symbolic issues of social justice and equal opportunities. Moreover, a shared right-wing populist climate has promoted conspiracy theories as a way to explain the populist worldview. When parties in power position themselves as anti-elite underdogs, conspiratorial discourses provide explanations for social relations. For example, according to the Common Sense group, those in power are the 'cultural Marxists', the experts who mislead impressionable students (Bergmann 2018, 166, 170, 171). In this case, the conspiracy theory of Cultural Marxism is used to discredit academic schools of thought like Postmodernism that have influenced humanist thinking on social justice issues in the UK. Thus, VM's formulation of an anti-national style discourse uses a culture wars vernacular and is an example of the vernacularisation of the Sangh

Parivar discourses in the UK. Additionally, the grounding of the anti-nationals' discourse in the UK context also draws on shared UK and Indian populist authoritarian hostility to 'uncivil' forms of protests, particularly by young people and students, as highlighted in the first section on youth citizenship.

The Muslim other: Grooming gangs, appeasement and love jihad

In 2011, a moral panic developed in the UK around child sexual exploitation and organised crime – so called 'grooming gangs' which are understood implicitly as being Asian/Muslim/Pakistani gangs (Gill and Harrison 2015, 36). The discourse around grooming gangs originates with right-wing media outlets' racialized reporting on a number of high-profile criminal convictions in Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) cases in towns in North-England and the Midlands like Rotherham and Rochdale in the 2010s. Newspapers like *The Times* emphasised racial and religious backgrounds of the convicted to argue that a disproportionate number of British-Asian/Pakistani/Muslim men were grooming white-British girls for organised CSE (Cockbain and Tufail 2020, 4, 6). Grooming does not have an accepted definition though it broadly used to describe the "tactics of child sex offenders in their sexual abuse of children" (Gill and Harrison 2015, 35). CSE is a subset of Child Sexual Abuse, which includes crimes such as rape. However, 'grooming gangs' became portrayed in the media and by politicians as a specific crime in itself, though it, grooming and CSE are not. The breadth of these definitions and lack of a specific corresponding crime that the grooming gangs refers to has meant that those using the discourse have been able to produce hazy claims about the 'epidemic' of grooming gangs which cannot be easily refuted, enabling the discourses to enter the mainstream (Cockbain and Tufail 2020, 5).The grooming gangs discourse was also been taken up and promoted by far-right groups like the English Defence League (EDL) and British National Party, who have long argued for the racialisation of CSE crimes. These groups connect grooming gang discourses to Islamophobic tropes like 'rape jihad' and conspiracy theories of 'the Great Replacement," where elites collude with Muslims to replace white-European populations (Cockbain and Tufail 2020, 9).

The grooming gangs discourse has also been picked up the Sangh Parivar UK as a vernacularised understandings of the Sangh Parivar discourse of 'love jihad'. Love jihad is a conspiracy theory that claims there is a plot by Muslim men to seduce, convert and marry young Hindu women (Strohl 2019, 27). Like grooming gangs, love jihad has been described

as a moral panic, a period where moral entrepreneurs, like the VHP or RSS, attempt to reconstruct social relations to combat a perceived threat or social decline (Strohl 2019, 32). The VHP link love jihad to what they call "Demographic jihad," or the idea that Muslim men seek out Hindu women in order to procreate and become the demographic majority in India (Tyagi and Sen 2020, 114). In my research, I found that grooming gangs and love jihad were understood as discursive synonyms by the Sangh UK and its affiliates (Anderson 2015, 58). For example, on Twitter I found one example that encouraged Hindu families affected by 'love jihad' to contact NHWS (Abbakka (@abbakka2) 2020), see Appendix *Figure 16*. The difference between the original UK discourse on grooming gangs and the Sangh UK's discourse, is the incorporation of features of love jihad; the targets are British-Hindu children and women, instead of only white-British children, and this is done specifically to convert British-Hindus. Importantly, the moral panics around love jihad and grooming gangs both connect with global hegemonic discourses, and moral panic, around human sex trafficking and organised crime (van der Pijl, Oude Breuil, and Siegel 2011, 568).

In the UK, the Sangh Parivar has utilised vernacularised love jihad/grooming gangs discourses through the establishment of National Hindu Welfare Support (NHWS) in 2015. The NHWS presents itself as raising awareness of grooming, entrapment and rape of Hindu women and children in the UK. The NHWS is modelled on religious-based anti-grooming organisations such as the Sikh Awareness Society, whose website is hyperlinked on the NHWS website (National Hindu Welfare Support 2021). Religious-based social care organisations like the NHWS gained legitimacy in response to the Cameron government's Big Society agenda in the 2010s, which emphasised the role of the voluntary sector over government, and cut funds to social services and policing (Furness and Gilligan 2012, 606). Since around 2018, NHWS has begun touring Hindu temples and community centres to hold free "awareness seminars" on the topic of child grooming. These seminars notably began in the Midlands of England, where the first 'grooming gangs' cases emerged in the 2010s (Shree Geeta Bahawan Mandir 2018; D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 158). This mode of outreach is not unique, as there has been an increase in 'awareness raising' of CSE in response to the grooming gangs moral panic, such as, information seminars held at schools (Cockbain and Tufail 2020, 14, 15). The NHWS employs an affective (emotionally moving) discourse of Hindu children, youths and women under threat from Muslim men and encourages Hindus (men) to "awaken" socially and politically (Shree Geeta Bahawan Mandir 2018). For example, in the HSS' 50th anniversary magazine there are quotes from people who attended

these seminars. One such quote reads: “Our girls are being targeted. We are keeping quiet. Imagine if the shoe was on the other foot! Let us wake up men” (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 159). The connection made between threat of grooming of Hindu children and women and the need for specifically men to “wake up” draws on notions of patriarchal community honour and control, which are bound up in womens sexuality (Anand 2007, 264).

Moreover, the NHWS has linked with other Hindu activist groups to utilise the grooming gangs discourse for political activism. For example, the NHWS organised joint grooming awareness seminars with the Dharmic Ideas and Policy Foundation (DIPF) and INSIGHT UK (Shree Geeta Bahawan Mandir 2018; INSIGHT UK 2020). DIPF is a political think tank, established prior to the 2015 UK General Election by members of the Ghent School[2] and the Sangh Parivar, that aims to produce policy and electoral material on the concerns of the ‘Dharmic communities’. The DIPF describes Dharmic communities as being ‘Indian traditions’. However, this is a stand-in for religions that Hindu nationalists view as ‘Hindu’ such as Sikhism, Jainism and Buddhism (Longkumer 2017, 209, 210; P. Shah and Naker 2015, 3). INSIGHT UK is a self-titled Hindu social movement, which works closely with the VHP UK, and so far has focused on changing the representation of Hinduism in school curriculums (INSIGHT UK 2021, 6). To further understand the discourse of the NHWS seminars and how they vernacularised love jihad discourses as grooming gang

[2] The Ghent School is a term describing the students and affiliates of philosopher S.N. Balagangadhara through the Centre for Comparative Sciences of Cultures at Ghent University. The Ghent school has long been accused by other academics of being sympathetic to Hindu nationalist arguments, see (Sutton 2018). However, the board of the DIPF suggests members of the Ghent school works with the Sangh Parivar, see appendix Figure 15.

discourses, I have used social media material from the NHWS, DIPF and INSIGHT UK, see *Figure 6*.

In the NHWS poster for a free awareness seminar, Hindu girls are positioned as primarily under threat from "entrapment and grooming". Though this contrasts with the love jihad discourses which tend to position young women of marriageable age as the primary victims, this is in-keeping with the vernacularised discourse of grooming gangs that the Sangh UK employs (Tyagi and Sen 2020, 109). Additionally, the images on the right in

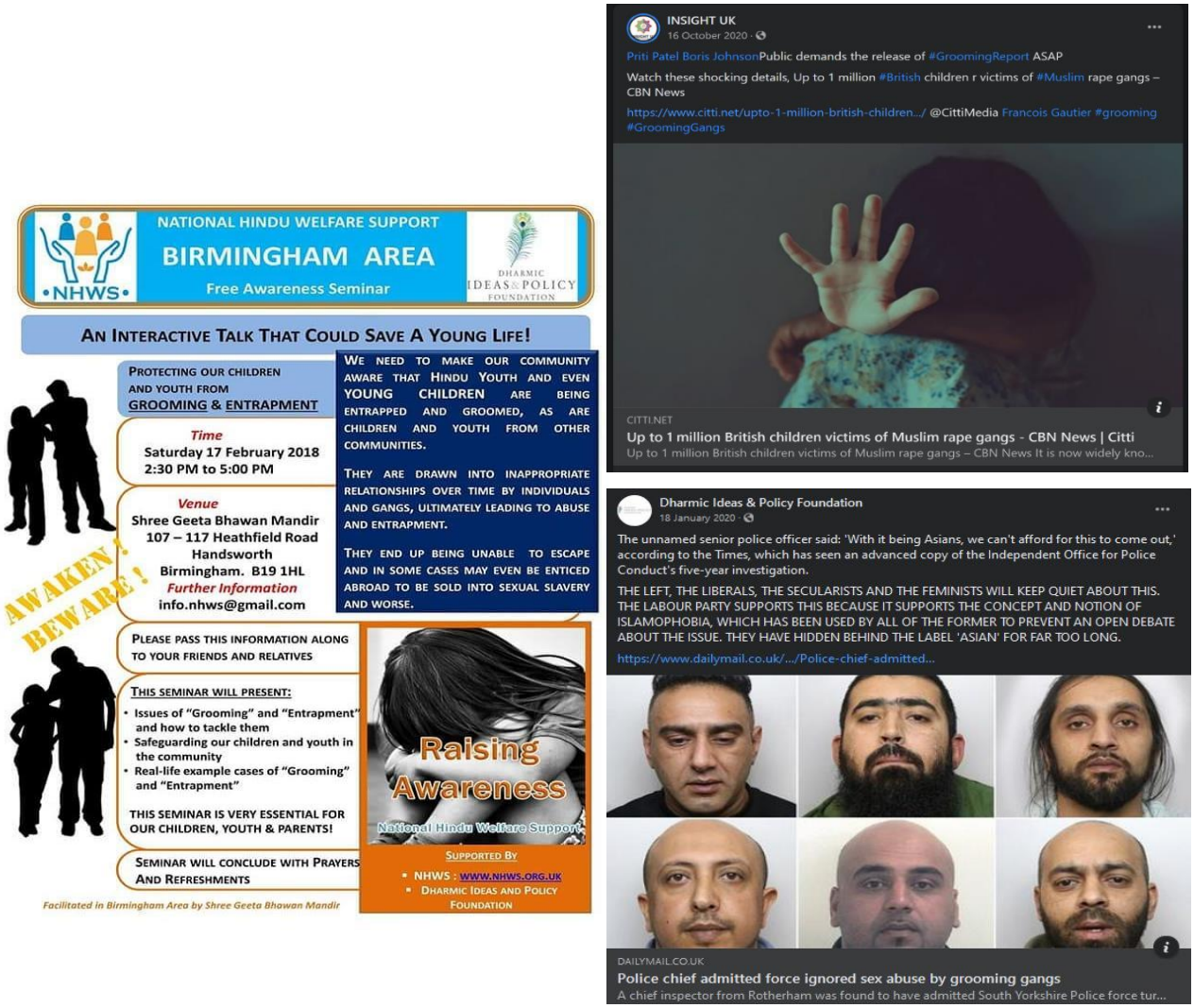


Figure 6. Left, NHWS-DIPF grooming awareness seminar poster from 2018 Shree Geeta Bahawan Mandir 2018). Right top, Facebook post from INSIGHT UK (INSIGHT UK 2020)/ Right bottom, Facebook post from DIPF (Dharmic Ideas and Policy Foundation 2020).

Figure 6 also highlight the utilisation of far-right discourses by affiliates of the Sangh Parivar UK. The INSIGHT UK post (top right) is sharing a video article hosted on *citti media*, a Hindu-nationalist online news site based in the UK, and is produced by the Christian Broadcasting Network, a US conservative evangelical site. The video article features Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (aka. Tommy Robbinson) the former head of the far-right EDL who

discusses how Muslim grooming gangs target white children (Citti Staff 2020). This example highlights the nexus between far-right Islamophobic media and Hindu nationalist media spheres online. The Commission for Countering extremism has itself picked up on the EDL's courting of Hindus and Sikhs. However, they have failed to recognise how shared Islamophobic and patriarchal discourses of vernacularised Hindutva and the far-right shape this connection (Commission for Countering Extremism 2019, 39).

The post in *Figure 6* by DIPF highlights how affiliates of the Sangh Parivar utilise right-wing populist discourses of elite collusion with the other to legitimise their Islamophobia. For example, The DIPF's post on grooming gangs claims, "THE NOTION AND CONCEPT OF ISLAMOPHOBIA, WHICH HAS BEEN USED …TO PREVENT AN OPEN DEBATE ABOUT THE ISSUE [sic]" (Dharmic Ideas and Policy Foundation 2020). The DIPF also position Islamophobia as a form of censorship that protects sensitive and threatening Muslims and is used by the "LEFT, THE LIBERALS, THE SECULARISTS AND THE FEMINISTS [sic]," (Poole 2012, 174). The choice of these groups as the elite highlights the DIPF's Hindutva ideology (secularists, liberals) and its conservative leanings (the left, the feminists) (McDonnell and Cabrera 2019, 491). These elites are positioned in the discourse of right-wing populism as 'soft on crime', and, in the case of the Labour party (the largest centre-left political party in the UK), as 'appeasing' Muslims for electoral reasons (Phillps 2017; Poole 2012, 175). This discourse mimics Hindutva discourses in India of 'minority appeasement.' The Sangh Parivar argues that the 'soft state', envisioned as the elite liberals and leftists (associated with the Indian National Congress Party), fails to combat threats coming from minorities because of vested electoral interests (Manchanda 2002, 301, 302).

The Indian moral panic, promoted by the Sangh Parivar, of love jihad has become vernacularised in the UK via the moral panic of grooming gangs. The intersection of love jihad and grooming gangs is the shared discourse of Muslim men as criminal and sexual threats. In the intersection of these discourses, vernacularised Hindutva finds patriarchal and Islamophobic commonalities with far-right discourses that are promoted by organisations like the EDL. Importantly, the global climate of transnational right-wing populism and hegemonic concerns with human sex trafficking mean that the discourses and conspiracy theories of the far-right and Hindutva find a common audience, particularly online. For example, there are commonalities between the conspiracy theories of the Great Replacement and Demographic Jihad. Additionally, conspiracy theories ground the right-wing populist worldview. For

example, that elites like the Labour Party support the concept of Islamophobia to 'appease' British-Muslims who vote for them. In this climate, the Sangh UK's NHWS employment and mixing of British grooming gangs discourses with love jihad represents the vernacularisation of Hindutva in the UK. Moreover, the NHWS has vernacularised in form as well, it has emulated other diaspora organisations like the Sikh Awareness Society and responded to governmental (Big Society) discourses of the religious-voluntary sector providing social care services. Thus, The interconnected discourses of Muslim appeasement, love jihad and grooming gangs highlight the populists right-wing framing and affective tactics of othering and victimhood of vernacularised Hindutva in the UK (Gill and Harrison 2015, 45).

The Hindu victims: Kashmiri Pandits, the Holocaust and anti-Semitism

The exodus of Kashmiri pandits, who migrated *en mass* due to violence that overtook Kashmiri society at the beginning of the militancy (1989-present), has become vernacularised in the UK as a Hindu genocide, example of ethnic cleansing, and a holocaust (Chowdhary 2019, 114, 115, 120). Since the exodus, there have been successive Kashmiri Pandit diaspora-led campaigns for memorialisation of their suffering under the militancy and their rehabilitation back to Kashmir. These diaspora campaigns have become known as "holocaust day," observed on January 19th (Tribune News Service 2017). The exodus of Kashmiri Pandits has particular salience among Hindu umbrella groups in the UK because of their prominence within them (Duschinski 2008, 47). For example, the Hindu Council UK, of which a number of Sangh UK organisations are a part of, has a member of their executive board devoted to Kashmiri Pandit affairs (Krishna Bhan 2016). The interpretation of the Kashmiri pandit exodus as a holocaust or genocide represents, first, the impact of Hindutva discourses of Hindu persecution by Muslims. For example, the RSS, drawing on right-wing populist discourses, views the exodus as forced, and any violence as systematically carried out and approved of by the region's Muslim majority, while the Indian state looked on without intervention (Chowdhary 2019, 123). This interpretation ignores the long history of communal co-existence and composite culture in Kashmir (Singh and Amin 2020, 84). Moreover, the Sangh discourse on Kashmir employs an implicit essentialist threat; whilst a Hindu-majority India tolerates the presence of Muslims within it, a Muslim-majority India (a plausible possibility in the Sangh's discourse of 'demographic jihad') would always oppress

Hindus, as they have in in Kashmir. In addition, the discourse of the Kashmiri Pandit exodus as a holocaust is also a vernacularisation of victimhood, where discourses of the Holocaust and anti-Semitism have a particular resonance in a UK/European context.

The Holocaust has become universalised as the archetypal symbol and metaphor of national suffering and loss. It has become central to how many nations perform histories of their own, real or perceived, victimisation and heroism. Moreover, the Holocaust has become central to global conceptions of genocide (Macdonald 2002, 39, 49). While any comparison with the Holocaust is not necessarily a trivialisation of its uniqueness, it is often instrumentalised, sometimes minimised, by those wishing to benefit from the moral entitlement, reward or redress, that comes with victimhood discourses (Bayer and Pabst 2018, 63). By making historical comparisons with the Holocaust, national groups also make comparisons with their, real or perceived, experiences of othering and anti-Semitism (Macdonald 2002, 63, 64, 91). In the UK, discourses of a holocaust hold great affective capital, given the prominence of Holocaust memorialisation and history from the 1990s onwards, when the Blair-Labour government was an early supporter of the idea of an international Holocaust Memorial Day (Pearce 2019, 102). Holocaust Memorial Day in the UK has become an opportunity for the Sangh to formulate its vernacularised discourse of the Kashmir Pandit exodus as a genocide or holocaust, see *Figure 7*.

Figure 7 is a HSS UK post commemorating Holocaust Memorial Day 2021, held on January 27th in the UK. Whilst the text of the post concerns the Holocaust, the list of hashtags below the text make an explicit association between Holocaust Memorial Day, and "Kashmiri Hindu Genocide," implicitly understood as the targeting and exodus of Kashmiri pandits from 1989 onward (Chowdhary 2019, 114, 115, 120). Importantly, Kashmiri Pandits are not explicitly referred to, rather their plight is coded as Hindu. Thus, Pandits, a group of upper-caste Hindus native to Kashmir represent the plight of all Hindus in the Sangh's discourse (Sarkaria 2009, 206, 207).

Figure 7. Post taken from the HSS's Instagram account, in remembrance of Holocaust Memorial Day 2021. The second # tag links the Holocaust and its memorial to "#KashmiriHinduGenocide (HSS 2021).

In the diasporic context, the discourse of the exodus as a genocide has parlance today in-part due to the growth of 'Hindu holocaust' histories online since the 2000s. Hindu Holocaust discourses usually encompass the entire history of India from the Mughal era onwards, claiming a continuous religious genocide that is quantifiably worse than the Holocaust. This discourse has been propagated by Europe-based Hindutva adherents like Francois Gautier and on websites like IndiaFacts (Srinivas 2020; Anand 2007, 259). Hindu holocaust discourses, issue a 'call to arms' (or entitlement to redress) to Hindus due to their long-history of victimhood at the hands of Muslims (Chopra 2006, 197). These Hindu holocaust discourses also draw on colonial tropes of Hindus as passive and tolerant. These same tropes are being employed in the Instagram post above, where the hashtag "the world as one family" (*Vasudhavia Kutumbakam*) codes the HSS instrumentalization of the Holocaust in humanist language (Bhatt 2000, 569).

Since the 2000s, the coalition and Conservative-Cameron governments adopted affective, populist right-wing, discourses around Holocaust memorialisation as an example of the British moral and civic values instilled by 'the Big Society'. The Cameron government's promotion of Holocaust memorialisation grew from an attempt to a distinguish British values and identity from European, in response to growing anti-immigrant and anti-European sentiment from the 2010s onwards (Pearce 2019, 105). The moral politics of Holocaust remembrance and anti-Semitism reached an apex in the context of allegations of anti-

Semitism in the Labour party since 2015, with the Equality and Human Rights commission ultimately declaring the party "institutionally anti-Semitic" in 2019 (Antony Lerman 2019). Much of the media discourse around these allegations centred on the idea that the Labour Party, under Jeremy Corbyn, was being overrun by an anti-Semitic, anti-Israel and pro-Palestine far-left (Mathew Robinson 2018). In this context, the Hindu council and the DIPF used Labour anti-Semitism allegations to argue that Labour was also "anti-Hindu" because of its membership's position that Kashmir should be given the right to self-determination was perceived as "pro-Muslim." (P. Shah and Naker 2015, 14). In *Figure 8*, an article is featured in the *Daily Mail's* 2019 general election edition linking the Labour party's anti-semitism allegations to the idea that it is also anti-Hindu. The article quotes Anhil Bhanot, the Hindu Council's spokesperson for interfaith relations, of which a number of Sangh UK groups are members. The article mentions that "He [Bhanot] accused the Labour leadership of speaking out against Islamophobia while anti-Semitic and anti-Hindu position remain unchanged" (Martin 2019, 13). It is important to note that not only are Sangh affiliated groups instrumentalising anti-semitism for their Hindutva political project, but they are speaking for British-Hindus. The *Daily Mail* discursively treats the views of Bhanot as representative of the views of British-Hindus, with phrases such as "… and Hindus claim" In my discourse analysis of news media, I found this headline construction was common across British media, see appendix *Figure 17*. This highlights the importance of Hindu umbrella groups in shaping the representation of British-Hindus and British-Indians in the British national media, which tend to homogenise the representation of ethnic minority groups.


THE BREXMAS ELECTION

RACE FURY EN GULFS CORBYN

After attack by Chief Rabbi, he faces the anger of his own party

... and Hindus claim Labour's now 'veering toward fascism'

RACIST CORBYN UNFIT TO BE PM

CLAUDIA WEBBE

APSANA BEGUM

IT'S TIME FOR REAL CHANGE

'Deep sense of insecurity'

'Worst terror outfits in the world'

'An open door for all faith leaders'

Figure 8. Spread from the Daily Mail's 2019 General Election edition. See column article on the right "..and Hindus claim Labour's now 'veering towards fascism" (Martin 2019, 13)..

Thus, a key vernacularisation of Sangh Parivar discourses on Hindu victimhood and the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits in the UK has been the instrumentalization of the Holocaust and anti-Semitism to engage in affective moral politics. In the diaspora context, the employment of discourses of Hindu victimhood in Kashmir, provides a sense of moral entitlement and a call to arms against Muslims. These discourses remain relevant in the UK context where this call to arms gains a political dimension. Thus, it delegitimises arguments for Kashmiri self-determination and criticism of India's human rights record in the region. Moreover, this call to arms is utilised to homogenise and shoehorn British-Hindu interests into a vernacularised Hindutva. In the case of the Labour Party, this comparison with anti-semitism has led the new leadership, under Keir Starmer, to avoid the topic of Kashmir and court Hindu umbrella groups (*Al Jazeera* 2020). Furthermore, the UK context, where the Holocaust is regularly memorialised, and anti-semitism is a morally unacceptable form of othering. So, comparison and connection to these discourses provides a readily understandable (to non-Hindus) sense of British-Hindu victimhood and paths to re-dress. Finally, the comparison with the exodus of Kashmiri pandits with the Holocaust fits into right-wing populist victimhood discourses that are popular online, namely the Hindu Holocaust, itself a discourse originating from European Hindutva adherents and on websites.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how Sangh Parivar discourses have become vernacularised in the UK social and political context. Many of the discourses addressed reveal populist right-wing and far-right intersections between Sangh Parivar discourse in India and British political discourses. This highlights how contextual, ideological and temporal commonalities, such as Islamophobia, having gained prominence with the global rise of populism, have provided the basis for Sangh discourses to vernacularise. This chapter has highlighted how the Sangh UK position themselves discursively as the representatives of British-Hindus and attempt to shape how British-Hindus are understood in national discourses. For example, the Sangh positions British-Hindus as model minorities whose youth are political engaged 'good' citizens. Moreover, the Sangh positions 'Hindu values' as providing citizenship training while guarding against 'Cultural Marxism' and 'the woke agenda'; political threats in the culture war discourse of Johnson's Conservative party. Finally, Hindus are presented in two of the examined discourses as victims who are under threat from the political and sexual violence of Muslims.

All four of the vernacularised discourses examined respond not only to right-wing populist discourses but also to the prevailing discursive events and ideologies of the last twenty years in the UK. For example, the Cameron government's ideology of the Big Society which privileged voluntary work and civil values has been key to the organisational formations and discourses of the Sangh UK. For instance, the creation of NHWS to tackle the perceived threat of grooming gangs. Moreover, I have illustrated how the discourses of different governments are layered and combine to influence the vernacularised discourse of the Sangh Parivar. This highlights an important feature of how political discourses influence each other more generally.

The vernacularised discourses examined in this chapter frequently identify the anti-national elites and the other, usually Muslims. This right-wing populist framing highlights how the Sangh has come to identify its political project with the Conservative Party. For example, the Labour Party is positioned as anti-Hindu and needing to 'appease' Muslims. Aside from populist identification of 'in' and 'out' groups many of the discourses outlined engage with conspiracy theories, highlighting the importance of conspiracy theories for explaining and justifying social relations in populist world-views. Conspiracy theories have become prevalent features of political discourse with the global rise of populism and the

growth of online ‘fake news’ and networked politics that bring these discourses to the mainstream (Bergmann 2018, 153). Online, there are frequent intersections between far-right and Hindutva news media spheres. These conspiracy theories, whether of Cultural Marxism or the Great Replacement, also highlight the Islamophobic and patriarchal intersections between the discourse of the right-wing, the far-right in the UK and Hindu nationalists in the diaspora context. An interesting sub-theme of this chapter has also been the implicit anti-semitism of these vernacularised discourses. Anti-semitism is generally not a feature of Hindutva but is a strong feature of far-right discourses. That anti-semitism, either through engagement with anti-semitic conspiracy theories or through the minimisation of the Holocaust, features in these discourses is evidence of the vernacularisation of Hindutva discourses too.

These vernacularised discourses also reveal how the Sangh UK positions British-Hindus to make an appeal to UK politicians. They are presented as a unified group of ‘model minorities’ whose youth are politically unthreatening. Through discourses of Hindu victimhood, the Sangh UK not only fosters a sense of victimhood and others Muslims, but provides a political ‘call to arms’ for Hindus in the UK. Additionally, this chapter highlighted how understanding the Sangh UK discourse cannot be removed from their engagement with collaborative campaigns with other Hindu groups such as the Hindu Council or DIPF.

Chapter three: The relationship between the Sangh and British politics

Introduction

The Sangh International works to facilitate relationships between MPs and Hindu groups, thus affecting the discourses of parliamentarians. The chapter will consider the impact of these discourse and why these selected MPs have developed relationships with the Sangh Parivar, considering local electoral realities and shared political cognition (Dijk 2002, 208).

This chapter will address the discourse of parliamentarians through two themes that bring together discourse strands identified in my research. I two themes highlight how elements of these right-wing populist discourses are used by MPs. MPs were selected during the process of collecting material for social media discourse analysis when several MPs and Lords appeared in Sangh UK organisations' social media posts. Of 17 politicians, four were chosen to analyse Sangh discourses because of their regular appearances and financial connections to the Sangh Parivar. These MPs are Barry Gardiner Labour MP for Brent North, Bob Blackman Conservative MP for Harrow East, Therasa Villiers Conservative MP for Chipping Barnet and Virendra Sharma Labour MP for Ealing Southall.

As a final note, for the House of Commons debates referenced in this chapter, I will be using the Hansard official parliamentary transcripts of the debates. The Hansard citations have been formatted to include the location of the debate, Westminster Hall (WH) and Commons Chamber (CC). However, Hansard produces idealised versions of parliamentary speech, removing repetition and what it views as mistakes in speech, which, from a discourse analysis perspective, are useful material (Chilton and Schäffner 2002, 7). Thus, some of the quotes have been edited in accordance with the videos of the debates to make the quotes accurate to what was said, here Parliamnetlive.tv, the House of commons video website, will also be referenced. Thus, there will be slight difference between the quotes given and the official transcripts.

The relationship between MPs and the Sangh Parivar

Why and how the Sangh UK engage with MPs

A key part of the Sangh UK's historical strategy has been to engage with "prominent persons in the community and […] establishment" to raise its own profile and attempt to exert socio-political influence. The HSS' *Sampark vibhag* (liaison department) is devoted to outreach to prominent persons, and specifically targets leaders of Hindu denominations and temples, politicians (British and Indian), academics, diaspora and Indian journalists and community leaders, for example, of Hindu umbrella groups (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 66, 67, 68). Sangh Parivar organisations like the HSS and VHP UK position themselves as representing and consolidating the Hindu 'community' in the UK (Mukta 2000, 445). As a result, they appeal to MPs as representing British-Hindus and British-Indians (given these categories are merged in the Hindu nationalist worldview). The Sangh's primary outreach strategy is to invite MPs to branch meetings, seminars and special events, including religious festivals and charity days (D. D. Shah et al. 2016, 66). As the organisation and structure of the Sangh UK is both national and local, it is well-suited to target the multiple strata MPs represent, most importantly in the Westminster system, their party and their constituency (Saalfeld and Bischof 2013, 306, 307).

The Sangh engage with politicians through international initiatives as well as through local events. One such international initiative is International Yoga Day, which has become a key international initiative of India's soft-power relations under Modi. This initiative promotes Yoga as Hindu India's gift to the world (Chacko 2019, 404, 405). Alok Sharma MP even took part in an HSS-run Yoga session on International Yoga day at Reading Temple in 2015. This event was reported on by Berkshire Live, a local news outlet (Fort 2015). This illustrates how, by getting involved with local Sangh activities, MPs raise their profile in their local constituencies and connect themselves to global campaigns with popular (Chacko 2019, 405). The Sangh also engages more directly with politicians through local vernacularised discourses of cultivating youth citizenship, appealing to politicians' desire to cultivate future citizenry (Mycock and Tonge 2012, 141). For example, the HSS invites MPs to speak at nationally orientated events like Parliament Week. According to the HSS, 41 MPs and local councillors attended constituency-based Parliament Week events in 2020, mostly online (Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh UK 2020a). At these events, there is a focus on encouraging

youth to be politically engaged, with the Sangh aim of "exposing these youngsters during their formative years to such meetings may help alleviate any misgivings that may hold about going into politics in the future [sic]" (Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh UK 2017a). This replicates the global aims of the Sangh Parivar expressed at events like the World Hindu Congress, which also stressed the importance of "developing young political leaders" in the diaspora (Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America 2018, 2). Moreover, the desire to cultivate future political leaders in the diaspora mirrors similar RSS strategies in India, where most of the BJP leadership, including Narendra Modi, are *Swayamsevaks* or higher grades (Jaffrelot 2021, 34, 35).

The Sangh UK also engages with MPs through nationally oriented political events, such as during general elections and referendums. For example, VM hosted a general election event in 2015 where it invited MPs from all parties to give their party pitch to 'the Hindu vote'(Vichaar Manthan 2015). Interestingly, this event was publicised by the All-Party Parliamentary group for Hindus, run by Bob Blackman and Virendra Sharma, see Figure 9. This represents an attempt by the Sangh, in collaboration with certain parliamentarians, to develop the concept of a "Hindu vote" as a specific national constituency with homogenised "Hindu values" rather than a group of voters only relevant to certain constituencies where they are significant electoral demographic.

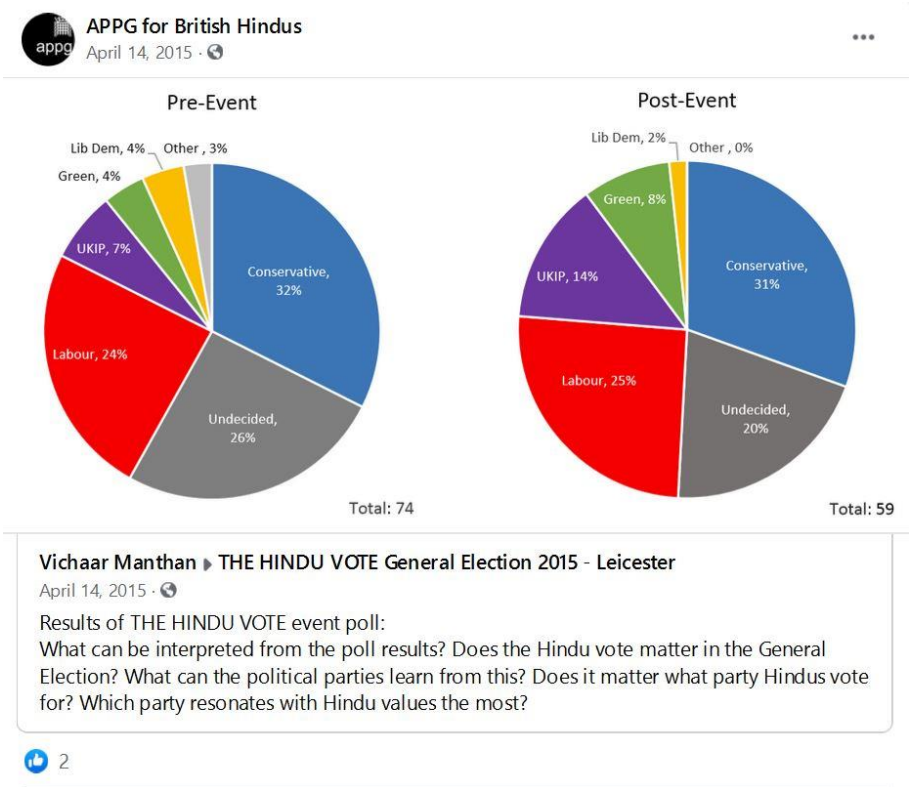


Figure 9. Facebook post by VM on the results of their poll after their General Election 2015 event, reshared by the All-Party Parliamentary group for British Hindus on their Facebook page (VM 2015).

MPs' visits to local constituency branches are also opportunities to provide the Sangh's socio-political material to an MP. For example, on a visit to his local Reading children's branch, Alok Sharma MP was given a copy of the "Hindu Manifesto containing details of issues important to Hindus in the UK" during the 2015 general election period (Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh UK 2015). The Hindu Manifesto refers to 'The British Hindu Manifesto' created by Hindu Forum for Britain and other Hindu groups (P. Shah and Naker 2015, 22). The manifesto is based predominantly on a blog post by an opinion writer for the *Asian Voice* (P. Shah and Naker 2015, 6). A British-Indian newspaper with noted Hindutva positions (Mukta 2000, 451).This manifesto included pledges to; repeal the Caste duty in the Equalities Act 2010, recognition that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India, supporting Modi, raising the issue of Pakistani terrorism, try perpetrators of sexual grooming and denouncing direct or indirect forced conversions (Dudakia 2015). This highlights how the Sangh's engagement with politicians cannot be understood solely as positive-image cultivation on the part of the HSS through "the legitimation of the local Member of Parliament (MP)" as John Zavos has assumed (Zavos 2015b, 253). Importantly, these are

opportunities for the Sangh to exert political influence as a representative organisation that can ‘speak for Hindus and Indians’ (Anderson and Longkumer 2018, 373).

Why and how MPs engage with the Sangh Parivar

Much of explanation for MPs engagement with the Sangh UK comes down to the constituency an MP represents, its ethnic and religious makeup and the marginality of an MP’s seat (Saalfeld and Bischof 2013, 325). In the UK, the primacy of political parties in determining the longevity of an MP’s tenure means that cultivating a personal vote locally is rarely significant in MPs’ career and re-election (Jackson and Lilleker 2004, 528, 529). However, when MPs hold a marginal constituency, cultivating a positive reputation locally makes a difference at election time (Jackson and Lilleker 2004, 534). This logic has greater significance in the last 10 years because the supremacy of the two-party system, in providing legislative majorities, has eroded leaving political parties and MPs feeling increasingly unstable (Quinn 2013, 378, 398). MPs’ engagement with the Sangh UK often involves taking part in constituency-based Sewa Day activities that focus on collection for food banks or cleaning local areas (Zavos 2015b, 253). Food banks and providing food to the local needy is a form of charity that has become a high-profile feature of UK political discourse since the 2008 recession, and an increasingly important non-state public service during the COVID-19 pandemic (Purdam, Garratt, and Esmail 2016, 1073; BBC West Midlands 2021). Thus, Sewa Day activities are particularly appealing to MPs, allowing them to visibly take part in volunteer work in their constituency, which is then publicised on through public relations media like social media. For example, in 2020, Theresa Villiers MP took part in HSS Sewa Day volunteer work, “to pick up food donations for delivery to vulnerable people in Barnet”. A photograph of the MP, socially distanced and appearing to deliver food to an elderly British-Asian couple, then headed her e-newsletter to constituents for May, see

Figure 10 (Villiers 2020).

Figure 10. Image header from Threasa Villiers E-Newsletter for May 2020, taken from her website. Image show Villiers collecting food from Harsha Jani (in red) the HSS Parliamentary outreach officer and her father, a first-generation RSS/HSS Swayamsevak (Yajur Shah 2018, 17).

Villiers is an example of why MPs engage with the Sangh Parivar and Hindu umbrella groups. Villiers' seat is highly marginal; at the 2017 election she held her seat by 353 votes (Harpin 2019). Although Villiers' constituency the majority is white-British, of which British-Indians and Hindus are third the largest ethno-religious demographic (Wells 2013b; Barent Council 2013, 6). Whilst openly supporting the Sangh Parivar could be a risky strategy for Villiers, might alienate her Muslim constituency, they are unlikely to vote for her given British-Muslims strongly poll in favour of the Labour party (Duckworth, Kapur, and Vaishnav 2021, 19). Besides electoral strategy, the Sangh also supported Villiers with a donation of £3,001 for her constituency party from Harsha Jani, the HSS UK Parliamentary outreach officer (House of Commons 2021, 473). As highlighted in chapter 2, Hindu groups have made comparison with 'anti-Hindu' sentiment and anti-semitism, which may appeal to Villiers, as a representative of a notably Jewish constituency and a key member of Conservative Friends of Israel (Conservative Friends of Isreal 2018). In the 2019 general election, Labour party anti-Semitism was seen as a key reason why she held her seat, increasing her majority (Frazer and Cohen 2019). Thus, constituency demographics and marginality are key reasons why MPs engage with the Sangh UK. Moreover, shared discursive contexts or political cognition, for example, the affiliation between Labour Party

anti-semitism and vernacularised Hindutva discourses on perceived anti-Hindu stances, also motivate MPs to engage with the Sangh.

Finally, MPs are incentivised to engage with engage with Sangh International because of close association between Sangh International and Indian government. This association provides international and local prestige for MPs with notable British-Indian constituencies (Buck and Cain 1990, 136, 139). For instance, Sewa UK and its international affiliate, Sewa International, have become a Hindutva-diplomatic tool through which the Sangh Parivar in India courts foreign politicians (India News England News 2021). For example, in 2016 Bob Blackman received a trip to India, costing £2,344, courtesy of Sewa UK to visit Sewa International India projects (House of Commons 2016, 39). During this time, he met with the head of Sewa International and ARSP, the India Council for International cooperation, and other Hindutva politicians (Sewa UK 2016, 1). On his return to the UK, he praised Sewa International in parliament as an example of the contributions of the Indian diaspora to the UK (Hansard 2016, vol. 608, c. 520CC). This shows how, for Blackman, the work of the Sangh Parivar is representative of work of British-Indians. Additionally, like Villiers, Blackman is incentivised to court the Sangh Parivar and Hindu umbrella groups because, besides receiving paid trips from them, he also has a marginal seat (Wells 2013d). Blackman, like Sharma and Gardiner, represents constituencies where British-Asians are the largest ethnic group, of which British-Hindus are the largest religious group (Wells 2013d; Harrow Council 2012; Wells 2013c; Wells 2013a; Brent Open Data Portal 2021). Gardiner and Blackman both represent constituencies where Hindus are the second largest religious group after Christians (Wells 2013a; 2013d). This is significant because, according to Saalfeld and Bischof, the biggest determinant of an MP raising issues concerning ethnic minorities in Parliament is if they represent a constituency with a high share of ethnic minorities, not if the they are from an ethnic minority (Saalfeld and Bischof 2013, 325). Thus, the constituency connection that is a feature of the single-member plurality electoral system in the UK is an important reason why MPs engage with the Sangh Parivar and its discourses (Saalfeld and Bischof 2013, 325). For MPs with many Hindu constituents, engagement with the Sangh is an attempt to represent what they believe are they interests of their constituents. Additionally, features of political cognition, the shared opinions and cultural memory of a MP, are also at play (Dijk 2002, 233).

Operation Dharmic vote: the collaborative electoral and lobbying campaign of Hindu organisations

At the 2015, 2017 and 2019 British general elections Hindu umbrella groups have organised electorally based on their shared Hindu (nationalist) identity. On the evening of February 4, 2015, delegates from various Hindu and Sikh organisations gathered in a House of Commons committee room to discuss the upcoming May general election. Formally, the event was hosted to launch the Dharmic Ideas and Policy Foundation think tank (DIPF), see *Figure 11*. This is an organisation that would act as an policy and international coordination arm of the 2015 general election campaign for the 'Dharmic communities' (Pattni 2015).The DIPF, notably assembled with the help of MPs Alok Sharma, Paul Uppal and Bob Blackman, describes the 'dharmic communities' as religions that Hindu nationalists view as Hindu (Longkumer 2017, 210). Employing 'dharmic' rather than 'Hindu' enables the campaign to claim DIPF speak for a large, multi-religious constituency of British-Indians (P. Shah and Naker 2015, 3). Although this is doubtful as most groups who signed up to the 2015 campaign were Hindu or Sikh, see *Appendix, Figure 18.* As the leadership and council of the DIPF also mostly comprises of Ghent School and Sangh Parivar members, the DIPF is an example of an organisation that could be considered part of Sangh International; it is based in the UK and targets UK politics, see Appendix, *Figure 15* (Sutton 2018, 343, 344).

Figure 11. Launch event for the Dharmic Ideas and Policy Foundation (DIPF) at the Palace of Westminster in 2015. From left to right, Dr. Gautam Sen, Mukesh Naker, Bob Blackman MP, Dr. Prakesh Shah, Paul Uppal MP, and Alok Sharma MP. In the background is a poster screen depicting the DIPF and the Dharma Sewa Purvapaksha Campaign aims (Pattni 2015).

In the 2015 General election, the DIPF identified key constituencies to target, producing literature supporting and publicizing 'dharmic' policy matters, building a presence on social media and working with 'like-minded' think thanks overseas (Dharmic Ideas Policy Foundation 2015). The activist arm of the DIPF's campaign was introduced as *Dharma Sewa Purvapaksha* (DSP). In the 2017 and 2019 General Elections, the DSP pro Hindutva campaign was renamed 'Operation Dharmic Vote,' with the substance of the 2017 and 2019 campaigns remaining similar (M. Francis 2017:Naker 2019b, 2). With close ties to the DSP campaign communications lead, Mukesh Naker, the Sangh UK took up a significant place among the organising Hindu groups, see *Figure 16* (Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh UK 2014). The HSS, OFBJP UK, VHP UK, National Hindu Students Forum, the Vichaar Manthan and Hindu Forum of Britain and other Hindu umbrella groups all took part in the DSP's 2015 campaign. These examples refute Edward Anderson's argument of the difference between Hindutva (Sangh organisations) and Neo-Hindutva (non-Sangh organisations who distance themselves from the Sangh), because these groups cooperate on national political campaigns (Anderson 2015, 47). Highlighting the important collaborative role of Sangh International.

Right-wing populist campaign strategies: the anti-Hindu elite, the Muslim other and the Conservative allies

Besides religious discourses, the 2015 DSP and 2017 and 2019 Operation Dharmic Vote campaigns utilised right-wing populist vernacularised Hindutva discourses identifying the anti-Hindu 'elites' and 'others'. In the 2015 DSP campaign, the Labour and the Liberal-Democrat Parties were termed the anti-Hindu elite because of their stance that the caste duty should be implemented in the Equalities Act 2010, which protects people from discrimination when in employment (P. Shah and Naker 2015, 3, 9). In 2013, the UK Parliament amended the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013 to convert caste into a 'duty' — requiring Parliament to amend the Equalities Act 2010 to include caste as an aspect of race and ethnicity, thus protecting citizens from caste discrimination (Waughray and Dhanda 2016, 178). The 2015 DSP campaign, supported by the DIPF and other Hindu organisations, to have the caste duty removed continued after the 2015 general election. The campaign focused on notions that caste is a colonial construct and the caste duty was a Christian conspiracy to vilify Hindus and engender 'caste consciousness' (Mosse 2020, 16). The DIPF's assertion of caste as false and a 'colonial construct' is taken from the work of S.N Balagangadhara,

illustrating the importance of the Ghent school in vernacularised Hindutva campaigns (Mosse 2020, 17). This campaign propagated the discourse that "Labour and Libdems [Liberal-Democrat Party] would brand every Dharmic parent and child living today and forever casteists", see *Figure 13* (Dharma Sewa Purva Paksha 2015). This was accompanied by an image of a Hindu mother carrying a baby with the word "caste" 'branded' on their foreheads, alongside the strapline to "say NO" to Labour and Liberal-Democrat candidates. In the second page of the leaflet, it gave the Labour and Liberal-Democrat positions on the caste duty and asked "…can you trust such as candidate?" Moreover, in the 2019 campaign the DIPF continued to denigrate the Labour party as anti-Indian and anti-Hindu through religiously code material, see *Figure 12*. In most leaflets, the slogan below an image of the *Samudra Manthan* from Hindu mythology, asks: "Will the Dharmic Community end up with Amrut [ambrosia] or poison.". The Labour Party, which the leaflet describes as "all things anti-Indian", are positioned as the poison Hindus "end up with" if they do not vote Conservative. Thus, the DIPF campaign produced a right-wing populist discourse of the Labour and Liberal-Democrat parties as an untrustworthy, anti-Hindu elite.

Figure 12. Left, first page of 2019 electoral camapign leaflet for non-targeted consituencies (Naker 2019c) Right, first page of electoal campaign leaflet for Harrow East consituency (Naker 2019b).

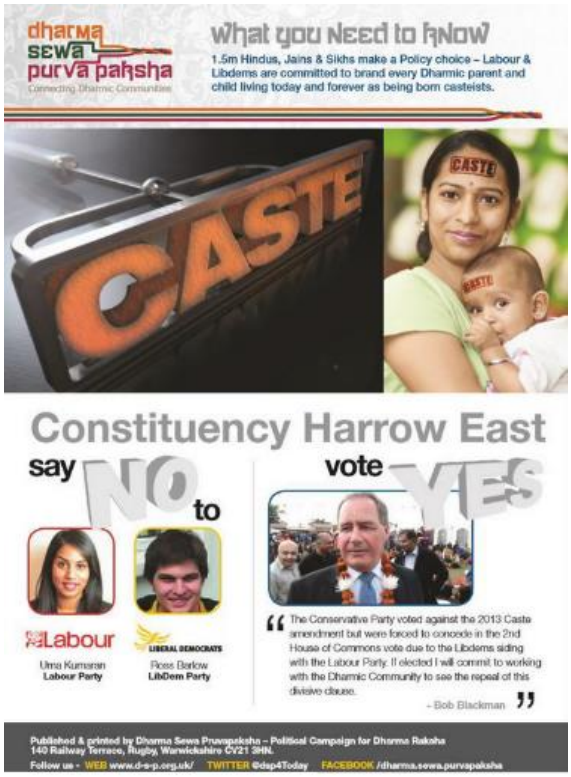


Figure 13. First page of 2015 Campaign general election leaflet for the consituency of Harrow East (Dharma Sewa Purva Paksha 2015).

Further layering the othering of the Labour and Liberal-Democrat 'elites', the DIPF general election campaigns also utilised right-wing populist discourses linking the Labour Party to British Muslims. The DSP 2015 campaign drew strongly on the vernacularised Hindutva idea that Hindus or the Dharmic community were "Politically marginalised and ineffective" compared to British-Muslims. British-Muslim protest of the 2003 Iraq War was used as an example of the effectiveness of British-Muslim politics, where "The Labour party learned its lesson" not to upset or go against the foreign policy wishes of British-Muslims (Naker and Shah 2015, 7). In this regard, the organisers contrasted a weak, fragmented dharmic community with British-Muslims, perceived as having a strong forum of loyal activists, policy units, grassroots reach and academics who "nobody criticises that he is being partial, communal etc" (Naker and Shah 2015, 4). The 2015 DSP election campaign material and manifesto even called for parties to reject "prohibition of alleged Islamophobia" and endorse "Britain's unequivocal commitment to free speech and freedom of conscience" (Dharmic Ideas Policy Foundation 2019, 1). The preference for tolerance of Islamophobia was put more bluntly in the campaign literature, where the Conservative party was 'ticked' as

"the least likely to enforce Islamophobia prohibitions" (Naker 2019a, 2). Thus, it is not a coincidence that Conservative MPs engaged with the DSP campaign and vice versa. Since around 2013, pressured by the growth of right-wing parties like the UK Independence Party (UKIP), the Conservative Party has increasingly engaged with populist, anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim discourses (Hayton 2021, 414, 415, 416.). Thus, Conservative MPs' engagement with the Hindutva-infused DSP campaign due to the shared right-wing populist, anti-other electoral discourse of both the Conservative party and the Sangh Parivar since 2013/2014 (S. Sinha 2021, 330).

This engagement also highlights how Hindu representative groups and the Sangh Parivar have drawn on British far-right vernaculars of Islamophobia as forms of censorship on 'free' speech while arguing that they suffer Anti-Hindu "hate speech" from Muslims and leftists (Poole 2012, 170). This argument is significant because, aside from caste, much of the campaign work done during the DSP campaigns in 2015, 2017 and 2019 utilised grooming gangs' discourses, see *Figure 14*. As highlighted in chapter 2, the grooming gangs discourse is a vernacularisation of Sangh discourses on Love Jihad which centred around the idea that Hindu women and children are at increased risk of sexual exploitation by 'Muslim' gangs who wish convert them (P. Shah and Naker 2015, 7). Thus, vernacularised, right-wing populist, Hindutva discourses of an anti-Hindu elite allied with the Muslim other was utilised in electoral campaigns.

Figure 14. Image taken from HSS Woolwich Shivaji & Pannabai Shakha Facebook page. The image depicts the NHWS and HSS at a Shree Kutch Leva Patel Community (SKLPC) Function in 2017, note the NHWS grooming gangs campaign alongside the anti-caste duty campaign (HSS UK – Woolwich Shivaji and Pannabai Shaka 2017).

Breaking with the 2015 Operation Hindu Vote campaign, the 2019 campaign vernacularised their Hindutva via British neoliberal familism and Conservative political discourses on 'broken families' in poor urban ethnic minorities. This neo-liberal familism was revived during the Cameron-Conservative governments and idealises self-reliant nuclear families for not relying on the state for political or economic protection. In contrast large, poor or single-parent families are vilified as 'broken' and only 'having children to claim child benefit payments'(Wilkinson 2013, 6, 7). In the case of Operation Hindu Vote, the 2019 campaign manifesto also promoted neoliberal familial measures like limiting government support for large families (Dharmic Ideas Policy Foundation 2019, 2). This highlights how the discourse of the DSP and DIPF appears to implicitly target British-Muslim families, who, in traditional Indian Hindutva discourse, deliberately have large families to become the demographic majority in India, named 'Demographic Jihad' (Strohl 2019, 332, 333). Thus, the DSP and DIPF vernacularise Hindutva discourses of 'Demographic Jihad' as overpopulous, broken British-Muslim families, which are contrasted with British-Hindu families that are socio-economically successful, self-reliant and 'Model Minorities'; i.e. the Conservative neoliberal ideal.

The role the Sangh Parivar UK played in the 2015, 2017 and 2019 vernacularised Hindutva electoral campaigns and its collaborative engagement with Hindu groups and politicians is crucial. The DSP and Operation Hindu Vote campaigns show vernacularised Hindutva cannot be divided into Sangh and non-Sangh, as Anderson has proposed, because the political activities of non-Sangh groups are intertwined with the Sangh UK and Sangh International (Anderson 2015, 47). While Zavos highlights the visibility of Hindu umbrella groups on a national governmental stage, the Sangh Parivar, internationally and in the UK, is also a visible and significant presence in the collaborative electoral and political campaigns of Hindu umbrella groups (Zavos 2010b, 9). The Sangh's collaborative political activities are not obviously visible on social media or the Sangh's website. I have gathered together the information presented above from details of Sangh activities collected through discourse analysis of social media content, websites and MPs' financial contributions pages. Thus, social media research is an important tool for understanding the political networking and socio-political discourse of interest groups like the Sangh Parivar (Chalmers and Shotton 2016, 375). Significantly, the Sangh, both in India and the UK, is one of the only Hindu groups, that has provided large donations and paid trips to MPs. This shows how the Sangh Parivar is political and has, since 2014, exerted political influence in the UK. Thus, contrary

to what Zavos assumes, Sangh groups like the VHP are a significant presence at both a local and national political level (Zavos 2010b, 18). As politics in the UK is constituency based, the Sangh Parivar's local presence is made further politically significant since the Sangh Parivar has what other Hindu umbrella groups do not: a grassroots base that reaches across localities in the UK, a membership base that is young and connections with the Sangh Parivar in India and across the world. Thus, Neo-Hindutva groups may not be institutionally part of the Sangh, but they are not only influenced by its ideology and discourse; they are enmeshed within its global network, working together and collaborating with the Sangh Parivar as ideological allies.

The Parliamentary Discourse of MPs with connections to the Sangh Parivar

Building on the discourse strands highlighted in chapter two, this chapter reveals how they are adapted and employed in UK parliamentary discourse. The parliamentary speech is taken from three debates that took place between 2014-2021 on Kashmir (2014 debate), the persecution of minorities in India and press freedom and safety of protestors in India.

The Anti-national elite and Anti-India sentiment

In the UK, the Sangh Parivar has employed a similar discourse of 'elite' anti-nationals towards criticism of the Modi government, describing it as 'anti-Indian'. In the parliamentary discourse of MPs with connections to the Sangh Parivar, a similar discourse emerges. The House of Commons Backbench Business Committee (BBBC) is a parliamentary committee that lets backbenchers (MPs who are not Ministers or shadow ministers) debate topics of their choice weekly. BBBC debates, while having little legislative importance, are regarded by MPs as opportunities to hold topical debates with high public interest, prompt large quantities of constituency mail for MPs and are often the most watched debates on Parliament TV (Foster 2015, 122). On January 12th 2021 the BBBC held a debate on "India: Persecution of minority groups", brought by Democratic Unionist (DUP) MP Jim Shannon (Hansard 2021, vol. 687, c. 53, 54, 57WH). During this debate, Barry Gardiner, a Labour MP, utilised a discourse that invoked many of the features of the anti-India discourse. Gardiner began with comparisons with the persecution of minorities in the UK: "Imagine […]if there had been a

debate in the Indian Parliament about the persecution of black people in Britain […] in 2011, when the London riots broke out […] through The Troubles in Northern Ireland, accusing the British Government of persecuting the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland." (Hansard 2021, vol. 687, c. 61WH). This excerpt illustrates what Paul Chilton calls deontic implicature: Gardiner's comparison only makes sense if the audience subscribes to certain values and assumptions, principally, that these examples are comparable, and that the audience would be outraged if foreign parliamentarians debated these issues (Chilton 2004, 38). These examples are chosen to target the MP from the DUP (a Northern Irish party with anti-Catholic links) who raised the debate (Tonge et al. 2011, 412). Gardiner implies that Shannon does not have the moral authority to comment on the persecution of religious minorities in India. Gardiner goes further in making this an anti-colonial argument: the "UK is a former colonial power," thus Indians would be "outraged" at such a debate, as some of his constituents who had written letters to him expressed. Here, a debate on the persecution of minorities groups in India is construed as specifically "attacking the Government of India" (Hansard 2021, vol. 687, c. 61WH). These examples show how Hindutva discourses have vernacularised, made relatable to the UK context, by an MP with connections to the Sangh. Events that are regarded as shameful or polarising in the UK, the 2011 England riots and The Troubles, are put in the same terms as the treatment of minorities in India. Thus, other MPs are encouraged to relate to Gardiner's constituents and the Indian government, who feel outraged that such a debate is taking place.

In a debate on 'the political and humanitarian situation in Kashmir' in 2014, Gardiner picks up on anti-national Sangh discourse again, quoting Edmund Burke's Speech to the Electors of Bristol, which is a popular speech on the role of an MP (Hansard 2014, vol. 585 c. 362WH). In the speech Burke weighs representing the views of his constituents, many of whom have financial connections to the slave trade, against his own moral objections to slavery (E. Burke 1774; Selinger 2020, 1181, 1185). Gardiner uses Burkes speech to argue that MPs who represent their British-Kashmiri constituency and who are critical of India are biased. In the passage Gardiner quotes, he omits a line of Burke's speech that would more evenly weight the excerpt in favour of representing his constituents. Instead, Gardiner ends on the line: "Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion" (Hansard 2014, vol. 585 c. 362WH). By quoting Burke, the founder of modern conservatism and an abolitionist, Gardiner, as a Labour MP, is employing 'positive face' - an orientation of solidarity and

inclusiveness with MPs from different parties - to persuade MPs of his argument's moral authority (Chilton 2004, 40). Gardiner's employment of Burke is well received by other MPs like Steve Baker, a Conservative MP, "because he reminded us of our duties" (Hansard 2014, vol. 585 c. 367WH). This highlights not only an MP's employment of the 'anti-nationals' discourse but illustrates how MPs like Gardiner, who are persuasive speakers, portray undemocratic positions as dutiful, discredit MPs who are critical of the Indian government and win over others. Both examples show how Gardiner has vernacularised his Hindutva-infused discourse to Westminster politics, where he has formulated arguments which would have the most impact on other MPs.

Labour MP Virendra Sharma employees a similar 'Anti-nationals' style discourse in the Kashmir debate, but goes further than Gardiner in asserting the inappropriateness of the debate. Sharma suggests that the debate, having no legislative or governmental impact, threatens relations between the UK and India (Hansard 2014, vol. 585 c. 377, 378WH) The strength of Sharma's response is due to the Indian High Commission's disapproval of the debate (K. Sinha 2014). This has been a technique employed by the High Commission of India at all the parliamentary debates analysed (PTI 2021; Vachhatani 2021). Debates perceived as critical towards India are critiqued as biased and MPs' critical comments "are made to mislead British Indian community" about Indian internal affairs (Indian High Commission in London 2021). This fixation with what backbench MPs, in debates that have little legislative impact, say about India reflects the Modi governments' populist prioritisation of diaspora diplomacy. Here, British-Indians become a financial and political resource, or 'ambassadors', of the Indian government (Plagemann and Destradi 2019, 294). In this regard, what MPs say about India becomes significant because MPs hold positions of discursive influence, at a local and national level, and thus can potentially threaten the Indian government's cultivation of the diaspora as a resource.

For British politicians, India stands as an example of a former colony that had not succumbed to violence or authoritarianism as in other former colonies like Pakistan. (Kaul 2018, 127). For example, in Villier's speech in the debate on "Press Freedom and Safety of Protesters: India" which was primarily concerned with the policing protests in India, she spoke of the debate as "denigrating India with unjustified criticism, we should celebrate it as the democratic success story that it is" (Hansard 2021b, vol. 690, vol. 690 c. 6WH). It is thus, an example of the 'success' of British colonialism, at a time in British political discourse when colonialism is under increasing scrutiny as a result of movements like BLM and

Rhodes Must Fall (Shahvisi 2021, 455, 459). This debate occurred the day before the government introduced the controversial Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill 2021,which criminalises peaceful protest considered a 'nuisance' and was passed in response to Black Lives Matter protests in 2020 (Siddique and Weaver 2021). Villiers alludes to this in her speech, "complaints about police officers here in the UK are frequently made after mass protests" (Hansard 2021b, vol. 690, vol. 690 c.5WH). The Conservative government has responded defensively to some of the arguments made by social justice movements by utilising populist culture war discourses of elitist "violent protestors" vs 'the people' (Hayton 2021, 416; Johnson 2020). This demonstrates how the Johnson government's culture wars discourse and more authoritarian populist acts, like curbing peaceful protests, become entangled in Sangh Parivar discourses around 'anti-national' protests in the vernacularised discourse of MPs with connections to the Sangh (S. Sinha 2021, 330).

Hindu Victims and the Muslim other

In a continuation of Hindutva social media discourses, the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits as a holocaust, genocide or example of ethnic cleansing facilitated by predatory Kashmiri Muslims are vernacularised in parliamentary discourse of MPs with Sangh connections. In the 2014 debate on the political and humanitarian situation in Kashmir, Blackman utilised a discourse that drew on the Hindu victims discourse:

> "[…]the Hindu Pandits were forced out in a process of ethnic cleansing. The reports that I hear give a figure of 700,000 of them still living in refugee camps having been forced out. It would be absolutely ridiculous to reward those who ethnically cleanse—
>
> […]by saying, "We will get rid of all the people who might vote the wrong way, and then have a plebiscite." It is absurd to represent the question in that way" (HC Deb 11 September 2014, vol 585, c 380WH: Parliamentlive.tv. 2014, 15:27:20).

Here, Blackman draws on the idea that the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits was a case of ethnic cleansing, which Alexander Evans describes as a conspiracy theory (Evans 2002, 23). Blackman then claims that 700,000 Kashmiri Pandits, who he identifies as "Hindu Pandits", are "still" living in refugee camps in 2014. This claim is what Chilton calls quantitative misrepresentation (Chilton 2004, 46). First, the figure of 700,000 is vastly above what academics and the Indian state estimate, based on census data, there would have been

160,000 – 170,000 Pandits living in the Kashmir valley prior to the exodus in the 1990s (Evans 2002, 24). In the case of Blackman, a group he interacts with on this issue include the Indo-European Kashmir Forum (IEKF). At an event with the IEKF, VHP UK, members of the DIPF and Blackman, in 2016, the IEKF claimed "half a million" Pandits left their homes and now live in refugee camps, a figure closer to Blackman's estimate (Krishna Bhan 2016). However, the debate over the statistics of the exodus and the universalisation of victimhood discourses, via the Holocaust, means that groups need to quantify and amplify their suffering to gain moral entitlement and political redress (Evans 2002, 20). This shows how Hindu umbrella groups are able to influence MPs through the provision of 'facts' on debate issues. In the context of Blackman's speech, this claim recentres the debate on the suffering of "Hindu Pandits".

Further utilizing common far-right discursive tactics, Blackman claims that a Plebiscite on Kashmir's status would reward "those who" and "those people" who "engaged in ethnic cleansing" (Hansard 2014, vol. 585 c. 379, 380WH). This euphemistic blurring and ambiguity over who is responsible for the exodus highlights Blackman's attempt to misrepresent or conflate Kashmiris who want a plebiscite, Muslim Kashmiris, with terrorists and Pakistanis, who are referred to interchangeably in his speech (Chilton 2004, 46). Blackman makes this clearer in an earlier section where he lists all the groups who according to him "do not want self-determination" leaving only Sunni Muslims, who he claims are a minority, who do (Hansard 2014, vol. 585 c. 379WH). In the Final section of his speech, Blackman gravitates towards Sangh UK discourse on the exodus of Kashmiri pandits and grooming gangs/love jihad discourses when he asserts that "The victims are the Pandits who were forced out of their homes and *the women who were forced at the point of a gun to convert from Hinduism to Islam*, and were left to suffer [emphasis added]" (Hansard 2014, vol. 585 c. 380WH). Blackman's use of the definite article "the victims" asserts how the only victims in Kashmir for him are Pandits or, as his wording entails, Hindus (Chilton 2004, 62). The focus on women as "forced" converts to Islam mimics Sangh discourses on love jihad and forced conversion (Tyagi and Sen 2020, 114). Moreover, this highlights the role of political cognition in Blackman's parliamentary discourse and engagement with the Sangh Parivar (Dijk 2002, 208). In this case, a feature of his political cognition is Islamophobia, which is his 'shared knowledge' with the Sangh UK. For example, Blackman shared an article from a Islamophobic site called Hardcore News USA, titled "Muslim Somali sex gang say raping white British children 'part of their culture" in the past. He has also retweeted a

Tommy Robinson, former head of the EDL, about Muslim violence towards Hindus (Lo 2018). Thus, the prevalence of Islamophobia and the influence of far-right discourses, particularly on conservative politics, also provides shared references for the Sangh Parivar and British politicians (Crawfurd and Ramli 2021, 6).

Additionally, it is important to note how parliamentarians reduce the 'political and humanitarian situation in Kashmir' to a conflict between India and Pakistan whose identities become discursively coded as Hindu and Muslim. For example, in 2021, Blackman and Virendra Sharma sponsored an Early Day Motion which read "That this House pays tribute to the resilience of the persecuted minorities, victims of Jehad, living as refugees;…highlights the special case of Kashmiri Hindus (Pandits) who continue to live as refugees in their own country as their genocide is yet to be acknowledged" (EDM *Kashmiri Hindus and World Refugee Day*, 2021-2022). Here, Pandits, a group of upper caste Kashmiri Hindus, become synonymous for all Kashmiri Hindus (Sarkaria 2009, 206, 207). Moreover, the linking of the exodus of Kashmiri pandits as victims of "Jehad" highlights the framing of Kashmiri Muslims as terrorists, an implicit assertion Blackman makes in his speech in the 2014 debate. Blackman connects violence in Kashmir to the 9/11 attacks in the USA. He specifically comments that it is ironic to be commemorating 9/11 on the same day as the debate. His use of "ironically" together with his identification of the antagonists of his speech as, Kashmiris who want a plebiscite, Sunni Muslims, Pakistanis and those who commit ethnic cleansing, reveals the irony of a debate which, in his view, appears to support 'terrorists'(Hansard 2014, vol. 585 c. 379, 380WH; Parliamentlive.tv 2014, 15:22:51). Moreover, the linking of 9/11 with Kashmir through the discourse on terrorism highlights what Moustafa Bayoumi names a 'War on terror culture,' a hegemonic discursive frame that assumes Muslims are collectively sympathetic to or responsible for acts of violence committed by individual Muslims around the world. This 'war on terror culture' means that the word 'Islam' or 'Muslim' comes to stand for 'terrorism' and 'terrorist' (Bayoumi 2015, 12.). This discourse, while promoted by the Sangh, has resonance in the UK given its active role in supporting the war on terror and the discourse around it.

Finally, MPs with connections to the Sangh, have also engaged with discussion on the demography of Muslims in India and Hindutva discourses on demographics. For example, in Villiers' speech at the debate India: persecution of religious groups, she commented that "The size of India's minority populations has been growing in recent years, and India is, for example, home to 16% of the world's Muslim population" (Hansard 2021b,

vol. 690, vol. 687 c. 64WH). That MPs feel the need to mention this in their debate also reveals an awareness of anxieties around demographic growth of Muslims in India, or 'demographic jihad'. Villiers follows her comment on the growing minority population with one linking India's population size to Hindutva violence, "in a country as huge as India, of course, sadly there will be lawbreakers who attack others, including members of minority communities and faiths. Sadly, no state can prevent all such crimes and tragedies, no matter how seriously they take policing and justice" (Hansard 2021a, vol. 687, c. 64WH: Parliamentlive.tv. 2021, 10:17:06) . Villiers uses evidentialities like "of course" that present ideas that the size of a country affects attacks on "minority communities" as fact. She utilises a discourse that ignores the political, Hindutva, source of such violence and instead argues that the very presence of religious minorities makes violence towards them inevitable or normal. This mimics Sangh Parivar discourses on religious minorities and violence which focus on Christian and Muslim conversion as a cause of the violence directed at Christians and Muslims (Menon 2010, 54, 55).

Overall, MPs have no way of knowing what the priorities of their Indian or Hindu constituents are, other than through those who reach out to them who are likely to be the most politically engaged, or whether they are appealed by Hindutva discourses or not. Although what polling data is available suggested that in 2021 British-Indians do not view UK-India relations, which all these debates would come under, as an important electoral issue (Duckworth, Kapur, and Vaishnav 2021, 3). However, because Sangh Parivar groups and Hindu umbrella groups position themselves as spokespeople for Hindus and Indians, and are able to organise outreach campaigns, their views can have considerable sway over an MP (Anderson 2015, 60). Moreover, these examples also show how MPs with connections to the Sangh are themselves able to influence other MPs by positioning themselves as experts on India. Finally, these examples also show how Hindutva discourses become vernacularised through both local level politics and through national level discourses and party priorities, such as the Conservative strategy of promoting polarising culture wars discourses on issues like British colonial history, with which they intersect (Hayton 2021, 418).

Conclusion

The vernacularisation of political actions and discourses of the Sangh Parivar and how these discourses impact those of British politicians and electoral politics in the UK are numerous. With the Sangh Parivar's political ambitions in the UK, it is one of the few Hindu

groups that provides large donations or paid trips to MPs. A feature of how the Sangh Parivar operates, what I term Sangh International, is where the Sangh is both grounded locally in the UK or other countries but also operates and collaborates internationally, with India, but also elsewhere . Moreover, I have critiqued recent literature's theorisation of vernacularised Hindutva in the UK as 'Neo-Hindutva'. The difference between the Sangh Parivar UK and Hindu umbrella groups, whose discourse Anderson describes as Neo-Hindutva, are few. In the case of their collaborative political campaigns and Hindu umbrella groups' relationship with the Sangh, this should be described as vernacularised Hindutva. It is only 'neo' in so much as the overtness and the intensity of theses political interventions, at least the ones examined here, have broadly occurred since 2014. This highlights how 'Neo-Hindutva,' at least as a political ideology or electoral strategy is still entwined with events in India, and the ascendancy of the Sangh Parivar in 2014 with Modi's election. Moreover, the assumptions made in previous literature about the logic of the Sangh UK, as an organisation conscious of its negative reputation and coloured by secrecy as a result, may no longer be fit for purpose from 2014. The Sangh Parivar does not cultivate relationships with MPs purely for its own legitimacy. Instead, MPs engage with the Sangh under their own logic, or what Dijk calls 'political cognition.' An important part of this political cognition is awareness of electoral realities: the MPs named have significant British-Hindu populations in their constituencies, thus substantive representation is a key explanation of why MPs may engage with Sangh discourses. However, in the case of Villiers, the significance of a British-Hindu constituency is partly determined by the marginality of an MP's seat. In the UK, political parties usually hold greater sway over determining an MP's career than any personal, local vote. However, in marginal seats and with the decline of the two-party system, developing a positive local reputation becomes increasingly important. The Sangh Parivar, which is both locally based and nationally oriented is thus well suited to attract MPs, who can take part in Sewa-based activities or the HSS' Parliament Week events, who wish to cultivate positive public relations in their constituency. Finally, I have shown in this chapter how MPs with connections to the Sangh utilised Hindutva discourses in their Parliamentary work. Significantly, the discourses MPs employ are not Indian Sangh discourses verbatim but combine both vernacularised Sangh UK discourses and the MPs' own understanding of the discourse, often grounded in UK national discourses and Westminster politics. Importantly, the utilisation of these discourses in parliament and as electoral strategies highlights how the global context of populist, authoritarian right-wing nationalism provides a foundation for Hindutva and British political discourses and logics to mingle.

Final Conclusion

Hindutva, originating from 1920s India, has become a transnational, right-wing populist vernacular that is grounded in the UK as a local political discourse through the principal Hindu nationalist organisational network, the Sangh Parivar. The Sangh has vernacularised in the UK through the development of UK-specific organisations and discourses, formulated in response to prevailing events and national discourses of UK politics for more than 20 years. Noticeably, since around 2013-2014, Sangh discourses and organisations have absorbed British and Indian right-wing populist discourses and strategies. These right-wing populist discourses have become prominent in the last five years in line with the global rise of populism. Events such as Modi's 2014 ascent to power and 2016's Brexit in the UK have been caused by and facilitated the move of right-wing populist repertoires into the mainstream. This shift simultaneously enables the Sangh Parivar and Hindu nationalists' growing confidence and organisational visibility. Importantly, right-wing populism and far-right discourses, which the Sangh draws upon, are networked in online spaces, such as social media platforms, where the difference between national and international discourses is blurred. Thus, in contrast to previous understandings of Hindutva, a siloed entity that only affects the 'Indian diaspora', vernacularised Hindutva and the Sangh Parivar UK must now be understood as British political discourses and organisations.

The Sangh Parivar UK has vernacularised by responding to prevalent political discourses in the UK. For example, through the Big Society agenda of the Cameron-Conservative government and the Sangh's promotion of voluntary and religious social care organizations such as the NHWS in response to 'grooming gangs'. So, the Sangh Parivar UK is not a carbon copy of the Sangh Parivar India, but is a locally grounded and responsive network of organisations. Importantly, the Sangh Parivar UK has also contributed to the development of global Sangh organisations and collaborations, such as Sewa International and DIPF. Thus, the Sangh Parivar is a multi-polar, multi-directional and diffuse network of organisations that non-Sangh organisations and individuals, such as British-Hindu umbrella groups and parliamentarians, become intwined in. This can best be understood as 'Sangh International'.

The Sangh Parivar UK has also vernacularised discourses about itself, those in power and perceived enemies in accordance with dominant British political and governmental discourses of terrorism, security, and Islamophobia. The Sangh Parivar UK has developed a

discourse of itself as fostering responsible youth citizens and consolidating British-Hindus as a socio-economically successful and unthreatening 'model minority'. This discourse of the Sangh UK also draws on themes of representation, where British-Hindu (nationalist) representative organisations claim to speak for, thus homogenise, British-Hindus and British-Indians. Moreover, the Sangh Parivar UK has furthered this 'unthreatening' characterisation by developing discourses of Hindu victimhood. These discourses of Hindu victimhood promote ideas of Hindus as sexually, physically and demographically threatened by Muslims in the UK and India. Examples of these discourses include conspiracy theories around grooming gangs and the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits as part of an on-going Hindu holocaust. Therefore, vernacularised Hindutva discourses British-Hindus are formed through contrast and vilification of the other. In the UK, this other is non-Hindu ethnic or religious minorities including, Black-British and British-Muslim people.

Islamophobia has become a major feature of the global rise of right-wing populism and the mainstreaming of far-right discourses. However, it has also become a key shared discourse, an element of political cognition and an important networking tool connecting the Sangh Parivar's affiliates. Moreover, Islamophobia is a feature in Sangh UK right-wing populist discourses of 'elites'. The Sangh UK has absorbed far-right discourses of left and liberal parities as needing to 'appease' Muslims. Muslims 'appeasement' by the left and liberals also draws on Sangh India and Conservative discourses over the inherent weakness and anti-national character of universities and social justice movements associated. This highlights how the Sangh Parivar has forged an affinity with the Conservative Party and its discourses in the UK, and is willing to denigrate its political and ideological opposition as 'the elites'. However, the Sangh Parivar do not exclusively engage with the Conservative Party, as Labour MPs also engage with the Sangh. Instead, the Conservative party has increasingly formulated right-wing populist repertoires in the last five years, bringing it naturally closer to transnational Hindutva.

Activities of the Sangh Parivar have also affected the parliamentary discourse of British MPs. This affect is not a direct intervention by the Sangh but shows the broader impact of Sangh Parivar discourses in the UK, and on other Hindu organisations that seek to represent British-Hindus and Indians. However, contrary to what previous research has assumed, the Sangh UK is political; it has collaborated with other Hindu groups on electoral campaigns and provides financing to MPs. Importantly, unlike other Hindu umbrella groups, the Sangh is nationally spread and locally based, through the *shakha* model. This provides the Sangh

and MPs incentives to develop relationships, particularly if the MP in question has a notable Hindu constituency. Thus, MPs formulating vernacularised Hindutva parliamentary discourses are in largely motivated by attempts to represent the views, as they see them, of their constituents. This raises important questions about the substantive representation of ethnic minorities in the UK politics. How significant are the roles of representative groups like the Sangh and Hindu umbrella groups in determining how British-Hindu views are represented by politicians, the media and by academics? This is an important area for further research and consideration. Moreover, given MPs with notable Hindu constituencies engage with vernacularised Hindutva, it is likely that these discourse and strategies are already affecting the local politics of certain districts, boroughs and counties in the UK. As such, an area ripe for further research is the impact of vernacularised Hindutva on local politics, councillors, and the day-to-day interactions of multi-ethnic or multi-religious localities in the UK.

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Appendix

Dharmic Ideas & Policy Foundation (DIPF)

Chairman: Prof. Nath Puri

Co-Director: Dr. Gautam Sen

Co-Director: Dr. Prakash Shah

Communications: Mukesh Naker

Council Members

Prof. S. N. Balagangadhara

Sandeep Balakrishnan

Smita Barooah

Dr. Come Carpentier

Dr. Jakob de Roover

Dr. Koenraad Elst

Dr. Manish Pandit

Mr. Rohit Patel

Dr Jasdev Rai

Dr. Yvette Rosser

Sanjeev Sanyal

Dr. Atul Shah

Dr. Rakesh Sinha

Rajiv Varma

Swami Vigyanananad

Figure 15. This image lists the board and council members of the Dharmic Ideas and Policy Foundation. The image is taken from page two the DIPF's report Britain's Dharmic Communities and the General Election 2015 (P. Shah and Naker 2015, 2). *The council members include notable members of the Ghent school such as S.N Balagangadhara, Jakob de Roover, and Konrad Elst, as well as member of the Sangh Parivar, such as Swami Vigyananand, the General Secretary of the VHP.*

Figure 16. Twitter thread linking Hindutva twitter activist Arif Aajakia to the NHWS. Note, the link between grooming and love jihad in the original post (Abbakka (@abbakka2) 2020).

Why are UK Hindus against a caste law?

By Vishva Samani & Athar Ahmad
BBC Asian Network

18 January 2017

It's offensive rubbish, say Asians

THE UK's major Asian faith groups were last night united in condemning the union's abortion warning.

Muslim, Sikh and Hindu representatives all gave their full support for gender-selective abortions to be criminalised.

And they attacked the TUC's suggestion that it should not be outlawed because of "complexities" to do with cultural issues as "ridiculous rubbish".

Dr Majid Katme of the Islamic Medical Association said: "The claim that the amendment is divisive is ridiculous. It's rubbish.

"No-one will accept that. How will this divide communities? This is unsettling only the pro-choice people, that's all."

He added: "All the major faith groups in the UK are strongly united against this criminal act of killing girls in abortion.

"Why in a civilised society do you target girls to be killed? Why are we going the way of India and China in targeting girls?"

By Social Affairs Correspondent

Rai Bandhu, of the Sikh Council UK, agreed and described the TUC's opposition to the ban as "outrageous". He said: "They shouldn't be saying that. I am absolutely shocked.

"This is completely out of the TUC's remit. It is very offensive."

In response to the claim that there might be "cultural" reasons for allowing a gender-specific abortion, he said: "It is appalling that they can make such generalised statements, that they can say something like that.

"To see in support of sex-selective abortions being a criminal offence because it will act as a deterrent and people might think twice.

"It doesn't mean that these will be wife-battering as a result. It will simply send out a clear message that sex-selective abortions are illegal, unacceptable and will not be tolerated in this country."

Dr Zaker Qureshi, Muslim co-chairman of the Medical Ethics Alliance, said: "To sanction of sex-selective abortion would put Britain on the slippery slope to designer families.

"Islamic teaching is very clear on this – it is not allowed, period. I am extremely worried about this being abused."

Hindu leaders also spoke out against the practice, saying they had been campaigning on the issue for years.

In a letter to the Bruce amendment, members of the Hindu Council UK and National Council of Hindu Temples UK wrote: "We are all united in the belief that sex-selective abortion must end. We were campaigning for this long before Fiona Bruce or anyone else became interested."

Harrods stops selling handbag after backlash from Hindus

Priya Elan
Deputy fashion editor

Harrods has stopped selling a luxury handbag after the accessory caused offence among the Hindu community.

The bag, from the New York label Judith Leiber favoured by Beyoncé and Jennifer Lopez, sculptures the Hindu god Ganesha into a leather clutch. Many Hindus saw the image of the god on a handbag as demeaning and commodifying their religion.

They believe in non-violence against animals, so the use of leather is considered insensitive.

"Our gods are not accessory fashion items, and it is highly disrespectful for them to be represented as such," said Nandini Singh, the head of social media at Keach (Race, Ethnicity and Culture Heritage). The handbag "was mocking and demeaning our faith", she added.

Harrods removed the item, which retails for £6,340, from sale after a social media outcry, but many asked why it had stocked the item.

Kajnish Kashyap, the director of the Hindu Council UK (HCUK), said: "It raises a serious question, why doesn't a world-renowned brand do proper research on religion and faith to find out what [its products] mean to the people who are following that faith. It's cultural and religious appropriation."

Singh added: "What will be good is if they and other sellers have measures in place to ensure that such blunders do not happen again."

In response to the protests, Harrods tweeted: "Thank you for bringing this to our attention, we have removed this from sale from our site."

Judith Leiber's Instagram page, which featured the bag with the caption "in nature", has been removed and the company have told The Guardian that they will no longer produce the clutch with the leather lining. "We are deeply sorry to hear that our bag has caused offence to the Hindu community," said company president Lela Katsune. "[Our goal] has always been to create unique pieces that respectfully celebrate art, individuals, and cultures.

"However, now that we are aware that the leather lining in the bag contradicts the Hindu belief system, we will be ceasing production on this style with leather lining. Going forward, this style will be produced with a synthetic lining."

Last month, Rihanna angered Hindus by posting an Instagram picture of her wearing a diamond-studded pendant featuring Ganesha. Kashyap believes such incidents keep happening due to a lack of "religious literacy and understanding among management of corporate organisations".

Harrods have been approached for comment.

Harrods removed the £6,340 bag from sale after a social media outcry

Figure 17. Selection of news headlines which homogenise the view of British-Indians or British-Hindus usually using British-Hindu umbrella groups as spokespeople. Top, BBC News article on the Caste Duty 2010 (Samani and Ahmad 2017). Middle, The Daily Mail on the banning of gender selective abortions (Elan 2021, 15). Bottom, The Guardian on a Ganesha styled Handbag (Social Affairs Correspondent 2015, 8).

Endorsed by

Sikh Organisations - Representing over x00,000 community members Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Southall. Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Hounslow Guru Amardas Gurdwara , Southall, Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha, Martindale Road, Hounslow, Ramgharia Gurdwara, Southall, Ramgharia Gurdwara Hayes, British Sikh Consultative Forum, Gurhar Rai Gurudwara West Bromwich, Sri Hargobind Sahib Gurudwara Tividale, Sri Guru Amardas Gurdwara, Leicester, Baba Sangh Dhesia Gurdwara, Smethwick, International Panthik Dal	Hindu & Jain Organisations – Representing over 600,000 community members Global Punjabis * Gujarat Arya Kshatriya Mahasabha UK * Gujarati Valand Gnati Mandel * Hindu Forum of Britain * Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh UK * Institute of Jainology * ISSO * Kashmiri Pandits Cultural Society * Leicestershire Brahma Samaj * Lohana Community UK * Nat Council of Hindu Temples * Nat. Congress of Gujarati Org. * National Hindu Students Forum * Nepalese Hindu Forum UK * Overseas Friends of BJP * Shree Wanza Community Leicester * Shree Prajapati Samaj Association UK * The Hindu Council of Birmingham * Vichaar Manthan UK * Vishwa Hindu Parishad UK * Walsall Hindu Forum

Figure 18. Organisation that took part in the DSP 2015 General election campaign, screen clip take from online PDF on the website of Pattni Connection (Dharma Sewa Purva Paksha 2015).

Table 1. List of abbreviations

APPG: All-party-parliamentary group (cross-party issue-based groups formed by MPs)

ARSP: Antar Rashtriya Sahayog Parishad (India Council for International cooperation)

BAPS: Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha

BBBC: Backbench Business Committee

BJS: Bharatiya Jana Sangh (Indian Peoples Organisation)

BJP: Bharatiya Janata Party (Indian Peoples Party)

BLM: Black Lives Matter

Brexit: British exit from the European Union

CC: Commons Chamber (House of Commons, UK Parliament)

CSE: Child Sexual Exploitation

DIPF: Dharmic Ideas and Policy Foundation

DSP: Dharma Sewa Purvapaksha (2015 general election campaign)

DUP: Democratic Unionist Party

EDL: English Defence League

FISI: Friends of India Society International

HC: Hindu Council UK

HFB: Hindu Forum for Britain

HSS UK: Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh United Kingdom

IEKF: Indo-European Kashmir Forum

ISKCON: International Society for Krishna Consciousness

KKM: Kendriya Karyakarini Mandal (central executive committee)

Lib-Dem: Liberal-Democrat Party

MP: Member of Parliament

NHSF: National Hindu Students forum

NHWS: National Hindu Welfare Support

OBJS: Overseas Bharatiya Jana Sangh

OFBJP UK: Overseas Friends of the BJP United Kingdom

RSS: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (National Volunteers Organisation)

The Ghent School: Students and affiliates of philosopher S.N. Balagangadhara

UKIP: UK Independence Party

VHP: Vishva Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council)

VHP UK: Vishva Hindu Parishad United Kingdom

VM: Vichaar Manthan (to churn ideas or brainstorming)

WH: Westminster Hall (House of Commons, UK Parliament)