

Travelling Hindu Missionaries¹

This paper is part of a chapter which looks at the various international Hindu missionaries who began visiting South Africa at the beginning of the twentieth century. Such missionaries travelled across the globe conducted lectures, formed religious institutions and worked with existing institutions in their attempts to propagate the Hindu religion and work for the betterment of Hindu people abroad. Highly influential in creating and maintaining “institutional Hinduism” in South Africa they impacted greatly on the policies pursued by the Maha Sabha which was formed under the leadership of one, Swami Shankaranand.² After his departure from the country the Sabha fell into a twenty year period of dominance until 1934 when it was revived at a conference presided over by another such missionary. While there were numerous missionaries who visited the country, this paper looks at three who were particularly significant in the revival of the Maha Sabha after its twenty year period of inactivity.

In accounting for their work in South Africa, the chapter seeks to explore the following issues. What were the policies pursued by these missionaries? How were they received by local Hindu leaders, Hindu people in general, other Indians as well as other South Africans? Where they a source of promoting unity, division or both? Did missionaries differ in their mission and if so in what ways? What role did they have on the local institutions like the Maha Sabha? What were their political views and did they differ in this regard? Is it possible to trace the influence of their experiences in South Africa on their work overseas? Can the study of religious missionaries serve to highlight the web interconnectivity that existed between places where Hindus settled in large numbers?

The Arya Samaj missionary movement founded by Swami Dayananda (1824 –1883) in 1875 in Bombay is a particularly significant movement in exploring this theme of

¹ This is work in progress and some of the references are incomplete.

² This is part of an MA dissertation which looks at the work of the South African Hindu Maha Sabha from its inception in 1912 until 1960, as a prism to unpack questions of Hindu and Indian identity in the country. This Sabha was formed with the intention of functioning as the umbrella national body for all Hindu South Africans. Regardless of its sectional differences between “Hindus” existed and the dissertation is concerned with how the Maha Sabha managed these differences.

interconnectivity. While there were a number of missionary movements which emerged in India during the latter part of the nineteenth century to refine Hindu worship, the Arya Samaj was the most influential in sending its missionaries overseas. A strong theme that permeates Arya Samaj produced literature is the idea that Indians in the various places they ended up in forgot the teachings of their religion and partook in practices based on “superstitious beliefs and meaningless rituals” which made them receptive to proponents of other faiths. Proponents of the Arya Samaj saw it as their mission to “save” Hindu migrants from “degenerated” practices and educate them on the fundamental teachings of their own. In South Africa the first Hindu missionaries to arrive were exclusively that of the Arya Samaj. Two of the missionaries observed in this paper were of this movement while the other was the first representative of another reformist movement known as the Ramakrishna Mission, to arrive in the country.

Swami Bhawani Dayal

After the departure of the Swami Shankaranand³ the next major Arya Samajist leader was Bhawani Dayal who was also a widely recognized political leader who travelled to India on numerous occasions to raise concern over the predicament of Indians in South Africa as well as that of other overseas Indians. Dayal also travelled extensively across India, South Africa and areas in East Africa for the purposes promoting the Hindi language and the Vedic faith. In 1927 he became the first South African born individual to be admitted to order of Sannyasi and on the 1 May 1938 was elected as the president of the Natal Indian Congress (NIC), the first Hindu to occupy such a position.

Bhawani Dayal was born on the 10 September 1892 in Johannesburg. His father, Jairam Singh was a native of Bihar while his mother Shrimati Mohini Devi was from the United Provinces. They were both brought to Natal under the indentured labour system where they married and after serving their five year contracts moved to Johannesburg where Singh became a notable businessman and was eventually elected as president of the

³ For an account of the Swami’s work in the country see G.Vahed. “Swami Shankeranand and the Consolidation of Hinduism in Natal, 1908-1914” *Journal for the Study of Religion*, 10:2 (September 1997). Pp 3-34.

Transvaal Indian Association, which like the Hindu Young Men's Association was one of the first associations for Indians run by former indentured.⁴ Through his work in the organisation Singh came into close contact with Gandhi and his last years in South Africa were spent assisting Gandhi to distribute copies of the *Indian Opinion* in the Transvaal at which time Dayal became a regular reader.⁵

Dayal grew up in the overcrowded location set aside for Indians in Johannesburg which lacked basic sanitation until his family moved to a detention camp in Klipspruit Farm to escape a plague that broke out. He received his early education at the St. Cryprain and Wesleyan Methodist School where he learnt English and was sent to a private school conducted by Pandit Atmaram Narshiram Vyas, a Guajarati Brahman to be instructed in Hindi.⁶ In 1899 at the age of six, Dayal's mother passed away and two months later his father took him and his two siblings to live in Durban to escape the Anglo Boer War which broke out in the Transvaal. In 1902 after the war ended his family returned to Johannesburg but were ejected like numerous other Indian families that returned after the war.⁷ After a brief return to Natal his father decided to move the family to his home town of Bihar where Dayal would spend the next eight years of his life until his return to South Africa in 1912.⁸

In Bihar, Dayal continued with his education with an emphasis placed on Hindi literature which he received from private tutors and at age fourteen he was given the responsibility of managing his father's land which gave him experience working with Indian farmers. He became a reader of a Hindi Newspaper called the *Venkateshwar Samachar* and began writing articles for them which was his first experiment with journalism.⁹ In 1910 his father arranged his marriage to Shrimait Jagrani Devi, the daughter of a well known

⁴ Hindu Young Men's Association was formed in 1905 by Prof Parmanand the first Hindu missionary to arrive in the country.

⁵ Agrawal. *Bhawani Dayal Sannyasi: A Public worker of South Africa*. (Etawah: The Indian Colonial Association, 1939). 8

⁶ Agrawal. *Bhawani Dayal Sannyasi*. 6-8

⁷ The first law targeting Indians in the country, Law No. 3 of 1885 was never implemented until after the war.

⁸ V. D. Bista. "A Brief Biography" in *Karma Yogi: Swami Bhawani Dayal Sanyasi*, R. Rambilas (ed) (Durban: Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, 1992) 7.

⁹ Bista. "A Brief Biography", 8.

landowner. While illiterate, Dayal taught her to read and write which would later enable her to assist him in running a school in South Africa.

During his stay in Bihar, Dayal also experienced aspects of Hindu practice that troubled him especially the caste system and untouchability, with his very first experiences in India were spent at a Khali Temple where he witnessed animal slaughtering rituals. While he was developing this anxiety over such traditions, his father found out that prior to her marriage Dayal's mother was a child widow something condemned by orthodox Hinduism with Singh's family being no different. In response to pressure from his family Jairam Singh stated before the Panchayat¹⁰ that "if the brethren of this society do not want to accept my children, I am prepared to leave them and enter the fold of this society".¹¹ While developing such animosity he became receptive to the influence of a Christian priest, and contemplated conversion. This ended however when he came across an article in a Calcutta Newspaper the *Veer Bharat* warning about a Swami Dayananda and his book the *Satyarth Prakash* (light of truth) which was going to "destroy India." He became interested in Dayananda and began reading some of his published works including the *Satyarth Prakash* which had a great effect upon him.

He wrote to Swami Shraddhanand a prominent Arya Samajist and the founder of the famous Gurukul Kangari University in 1902 which aimed to revive ancient Hindu teachings and serve as an alternative to Western Universities, in request to join the Arya Samaj. After encouragement from the Swami, he established the first Arya Samaj in his village and became its president. Dayal began travelling to various villages urging the people to boycott British goods¹² as part of the Indian Independence movement empathised by Swami Dayananda known as Swadeshi. He thereafter established a school in Bahuara to impart free education for poorer children and in 1909 he undertook the role as the principle. The following year he was made an honorary preacher by the APS of Bihar at which time he also became assistant director to *Aryavortha* a monthly magazine published in Patna.¹³

¹⁰ Panchayat which translates to "assembly" was a type of village court system that settled minor disputes.

¹¹ Bista, "A Brief Biography", 8.

¹² See Agrawal. *Bhawani Dayal Sannyasi and the Hindi*, 27 November 1925.

¹³ See Agrawal, *Bhawani Dayal Sannyasi* and Bista, "A Brief Biography".

In 1911 Dayal's father passed away and tensions soon emerged over the estate between him and his step mother. He gave her the entire estate and returned to South Africa.¹⁴ He arrived on the 22 December 1912 bringing his wife and son as well as his brother and his wife. However upon arrival they faced difficulty with the immigration act were assisted by Gandhi and his attorney Mr Henry S. L Polak who represented them at the Supreme Court and won the case. After the dispute was settled Dayal went to stay at Transvaal in Germiston and worked at a Laundry, first ironing clothes and later served as a bookkeeper. In 1913 when the Indian Young Men's Association was formed in the Transvaal with the intention of promoting social and political awareness as well as the study of literacy works and Indian culture, Dayal was elected as its first president.¹⁵

Later that year Dayal resigned from his job and he and his wife joined Gandhi's Satyagrah campaign. On the 16th October they arrived at New Caste and helped to organise a strike which resulted in their imprisonment with hard labour. They spent three months in prison before being released on January the next year.¹⁶ Devi was imprisoned with her son who was taken care of by mother Kasturba. After release they were invited to stay at Phoenix in Gandhi's Ashram where Dayal began editing the Hindi section of the *Indian Opinion*.

After Gandhi's departure from the country Dayal returned to Germiston and began working at the Rose Deep Gold Mine, during which time he wrote his first book *The History of the Satyagraha in South Africa* which was published in India. After its publication Dayal formed in Germiston a Hindi Pracharini Sabha, Hindi Night School and Hindi Football club to promote Hindi language and culture. In spite of financial difficulty the night school was open to children free of charge and Dayal was assisted to a large extent by his wife and brother.¹⁷ He travelled throughout the Transvaal and thereafter to Durban to preach the Vedic religion and propagate the importance of Hindi

¹⁴ FIAT LUX - January/February 1983.

¹⁵ Bista, "A Brief Biography",

¹⁶ Dhane Bramdaw. *South African Indian's WHO'S WHO and commercial Directory 1936* (Petermaritzburg: Natal Witness Ltd, 1936) 136.

¹⁷ Bista, "A Brief Biography", 63.

education. In the course of his travels he set up Hindi Pracharini Sabhas and Hindi schools in Verulam, Charlestown, Newcastle, Glencoe, Ladysmith and Durban. In Clare estate he set up a Hindi Ashram, with Hindi school and donated his collection of books to establish a library. Due to the publicity gained by the Ashram he was able in 1916 to set up the first Hindi literacy conference in Ladysmith which was followed by the second in Pietermaritzburg the following year.¹⁸

From 1917-1918 he took up the editorship of the *Dharma Vir* a weekly Hindi Newspaper owned by an adherent of the Arya Samajist R. G. Bhalla. Dayal used his voice through the paper to promote to its readership Arya Samaj ideals like the equality of women, importance of Hindi language and the abolition of various religious practices that the Arya Samaj condemned. In 1917 he managed to persuade a Hindu couple to abandon old customs for their wedding and conducted the first wedding according to Vedic rites in the country. During this time he wrote a number of other books dealing with topics such as his experiences in prison, Gandhi and the ideals of Vedic religion. Dayal also used this time to continue his promotion of Hinduism in the country and reintroduced the Shuddhi practice where he “reconverted” a number of former Hindus who converted to Islam, backed to Hinduism.¹⁹

On the 13 February 1919 when his second son was born he bought 25 acres of land to start a farm with his brother. However after two months he decided to travel to India for the second time to represent South African Indians at an annual convention of the Indian National Congress (INC) in Armistar, Punjab. He was accompanied by his elder son and nephew as his wife wanted them to be educated at the Gurukul Vrindavan which she argued would make them better able to serve the Nation without self-interest.²⁰ Dayal’s first stop was Vrindavan where he got the two youths admitted to at the Gurukul whose leaders at the time were celebrating its anniversary. During the occasion Dayal met many famous Arya Samajists.²¹ Thereafter he went to Armistar where the political climate was

¹⁸ The literacy conferences were funded by a reform oriented organization called the Arya Yuvuk Sabha.

¹⁹ *The Hindi*, 27 November 1925.

²⁰ Bista, “A Brief Biography”, 14.

²¹ Bista, “A Brief Biography”, 14.

centred on the disarray resulting from the notorious Rowlatt Act which was the subject matter of the conference. Dayal who served as the delegate for South African Indians used the opportunity to bring forth for discussion their predicament. The conference also allowed Dayal to meet for the first time Indian political leaders including Lok Manya Balgangahar Tilak, Mrs Annie Besant, Vipin Chandra Pal, Mohomed Ali Jinnah and Motilal Nehru. During the conference chaired by Nehru, Dayal stayed with his old friend Swami Sharddhanand who was the chairman of the reception committee.²²

He thereafter toured India for a year organising public meetings, delivering speeches and writing articles on the challenges facing Indians overseas. It was during this tour of 1919 when he visited Matiaburz and first witnessed the poor living conditions of Indians repatriated from some of the other colonies that Dayal became one of the fiercest detractors of the repatriation scheme that would characterise his later work.²³ At Indore he met famous writer and editor, Benarasides Chaturvedi as well as the Swami Shankaranand. At the beginning of the following year he attended the Hindi Literacy Conference in Patna where he met Dr Rajendra Prasad and many famous writers at which time he wrote a book called *Indians in the Transvaal*. In July in he travelled to Calcutta where he wrote an article in a newspaper the *Bharat Mitra* on the plight of Indian Immigration to South Africa.

After a successful tour of raising awareness on the Indian predicament in South Africa he decided to return and left India at the end of July. At the end of the year a committee was established to revive the dormant NIC and by March the following year the NIC was revived and Dayal who played a role became its vice president. In 1921 the Union Government planed to inaugurate reparation scheme to send Natal Indians to British Guiana where there was a demand for plantation labour. As a response a meeting was held in Rawat's Bioscope Hall to protest the government's invitation to send an Indian delegation to Guiana with the Protector of Indian Immigrants present. Dayal was elected

²² Bista, "A Brief Biography", 15.

²³ For detail description of living conditions of Indians repatriated from South Africa after the Cape Town agreement see B. Dayal and B. Chaturvedi. "A Report on the Emigrants Repatriated to India under the Assisted Emigration Scheme from South Africa" 15 May 1951.

president of the meeting a put forward a strong speech resulting in a unanimous decision to reject not just the invitation but oppose the scheme as a whole.²⁴

The next year his wife encouraged him to start his own Newspaper and by the 5 May 1922 he produced the first issue. *The Hindi* was printed in Jacobs in Durban and published by “The Jagrani Press” named in honour of his wife who unfortunately passed away before the first issue.²⁵ It was published in both Hindi and English subscribers coming from Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mozambique, Uganda, Kenya, Mauritius, Fiji, Trinidad, Jamaica, Suriname, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. The paper enabled Dayal to communicate important messages as an Arya Samaj preacher including articles in honour of the work of Dayananda as well the Arya Samaj missionaries who arrived in South Africa. *The Hindi* also served as import means of allowing important international figures like Andrews, Chaturvedi, Rajah Mahendra Pratab, Dr Sudhindra Rose to communicate general problems facing Indians abroad.²⁶

On the 27 November 1922 he embarked for India once again to represent the South African Indian Congress (SAIC) at the INC meeting at Gaya. At the conference Dayal managed to affiliate the NIC, Transvaal British Indian Association and the Cape British Indian Council with the INC which entitled each organisation to send ten delegates to subsequent annual sessions of the INC.²⁷ On this tour he was accompanied by B.A Tilakdharee, A. Dookan, and R. N. BodhaSingh who after the conference accompanied him across India to study the Nationalist movement.²⁸ Dayal gave a series of lectures in Bihar and Vrindavan, thereafter attended the Hindi Literacy conference in Kanpur where he received an award for some of his earlier writings and received praise for the service his paper rendered to overseas Indians and for his work as a Hindu preacher. He used the occasion to deliver a speech on the literacy conditions of Indians abroad. After a short tour of Firozabad and Indore he went to Mathura and joined Swami Shanddhanand and

²⁴ *Indian Opinion*, 19 December 1921.

²⁵ *Indian Opinion*

²⁶ See *The Hindi 1922-1925*.

²⁷ *The Hindi*, 27 July 1922.

²⁸ *The Hindi*, 1 December 1922.

Mahatma Hansraj²⁹ to partake in the Shuddhi movements there. On the 22 March he gave a speech at Gurukul Academy complementing the success of the Shuddhi movement in reconverting “converts” back to Hinduism. He claimed that Dayanand taught India that the only way of attaining freedom is by “the upliftment of the oppressed classes” and that he had “no doubt that the Arya Samaj would be the means of gaining Swaraj for India”.³⁰ Subsequently he went to Bihar meeting Prof Parmanand and C. F. Andrews. On July 1923 he returned to South Africa accompanied by Chaturvedi and Sarojini Naidu who were sent by Gandhi to study the situation of Indians in South Africa.

The Arya Pratinidhi Sabha

1924 marked the birth centenary of Swami Dayananda. The occasion was celebrated by Arya Samaj bodies throughout the world with the main celebration being conducted in Matura, India. Since South Africa at this time lacked a central Arya Samaj body, the Arya Yuvuk Sabha’s president D. G. Satyadeva decided to take a leadership role and on the 4 November 1924 he arranged a meeting for followers of the Vedic religion to organise a conference to coordinate the celebrations.³¹ The meeting attracted delegates from over ten Arya Samajist bodies and was chaired by Dayal who was also elected to preside the celebrations the following year. These celebrations took place from the 16 to 22 February 1925 in Durban with lectures held each night that dealt with the life and teachings of Dayananda.³²

On 22 February the delegates met at Rawat’s Bioscope and after lengthy discussion, decided that in view of the success of the celebrations and in particular the high turnout throughout the week, they would create a formal structure, the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha (APS), which would serve as the central umbrella organisation for all Arya Samaj bodies in Natal. Thus a Natal APS with Dayal as president was founded to promote

²⁹ Mahatma Hansraj was principle of Lahore College who sent Prof Parmanand who was the first Hindu missionary to arrive in South Africa.

³⁰ *The Hindi*,

³¹ Satyadeva an employee at the Durban Corporation was a follower of Swami Dayananda who formed a Arya Balliah Munda to promote the reflective kind of Hinduism. On the 19 April Swami Shankaranand visited the institution and changed the name to Arya Yuvuk Sabha.

³² 12 March 1925.

- i. Abstinence from indulgence in alcoholic drinks
- ii. Performance of 16 Samskaras.
- iii. Reciting Sandhya prayers and havan daily
- iv. Holding feelings of love and brotherhood for all people
- v. Removal of the caste system
- vi. The encouragement of mother tongue education
- vii. Education of woman

The APS emerged as an important Hindu organisation and given its role in serving as the umbrella Arya Samaj body, it is no surprise that Naidoo argues that the organisation filled the gap left by the non-functioning Maha Sabha.³³ Within in the same year as its formation the organisation managed to convince the government for the first time in the country's history to permit nominated Hindu preachers to preach in all prisons every Sunday, as Christian preachers were already doing.³⁴

On the 4 October a Vedic conference was held in Ladysmith, and the large turn out gave the APS a huge boost in its foundational year. Dayal put his paper *the Hindi* to good use in promoting publicity for the two conferences. Besides the current members of the APS, the conference was also attended by Hindu cultural leaders V. S. C Pather, P. R Pather and R. B Maharaj.

In his presidential speech Dayal amongst other things claimed that had it not been for the visit of "great persons" from India referring both to the Arya Samaj missionaries as well as the political leaders "we might still be darkness". He added that in other places like Jamaica, Trinidad, Suriname and Demerara³⁵ where he claimed Indian leaders both religious and political did not travel to "the people there fell into the clutches of other denominations and forgot their own."³⁶ He also stressed that it was essential for people to

³³ T Naidoo. *The Arya Samaj Movement in South Africa*. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1992) 70.

³⁴ Bista, "A Brief Biography", 18.

³⁵ Originally a Dutch colony situated in South American but was captured by the British and became amalgamated to other British colonies to form British Guiana in 1831.

³⁶ *The Hindi*, 16 October 1922.

be untied “especially Hindus in this country” not only politically but socially and religiously. He also called for the unity between “Sanathanists and Samjists” and called them “the two eyes of Hinduism” and claimed that they were they were both the “followers of the same great Vedic Religion.”³⁷ He added that they were “two streams of the same river” and “two fruits of the same tree” the exact same analogies that he would use many years later when he described Islam and Hinduism as being the two eyes of Hindustan.³⁸ Dayal expressed his disappointment that there were not yet literature in the country on the Vedas written in Tamil and requested to those in attendance that they do something about it. Another important theme that his speech dealt with was the importance of sending girls to schools and his concern over the “degeneration” of Hindu youths urging elders to guide them on the right lines.³⁹

The APS’ momentum was lost soon after, however. The surge in the APS that had emerged at the beginning of 1925 when the birth of Swami Dayananda was commemorated was stymied to an extent with the passing of the Areas Reservation Bill later in the year. To protest against this bill many important South African leaders, including Dayal, were sent to India to gather support against the Bill. The fact that political leaders also tended to dominate membership of religious organisations was detrimental to the latter. For example, the Tamil Maha Sabha was founded in 1924 with 22 affiliated bodies and temple committees, and by the following year they held the first Tamil conference with P.R. Pather and V S. C. Pather as secretary and chairman respectively.⁴⁰ The Tamil Sabha, however, soon ceased to function as both Pathers were part of the deputation sent to India and the organisation lost momentum. Being part of the deputation also meant that Dayal had to cease the publication of his newspaper.

This deputation left Durban on the 23 November and upon arrival conducted an interview with the Viceroy to whom they presented their case before embarking to the INC annual conference at Cawnpore where they pleaded their case before National Assembly. Thereafter they addressed mass meetings across India to present their case before the

³⁷ *The Hindi*, 16 October 1922.

³⁸ Dayal, *Abdulla Ismail Kajee*, (Ajmer: Pravasi-Bhawan, 1941) 21.

³⁹ *The Hindi*, 16 October 1922.

⁴⁰ C. Kuppasami, *Tamil Culture in South Africa*, (Durban: Rapid Graphic, 1993) 49.

general public and a variety of political leaders. Dayal however became ill and departed from the others to return to his village of Bahauara straight after the Campore conference. While conducting his missionary work in South Africa Dayal decided that he would build a Pravasi Bhawan in Bahauara and he used this time to see the project through. By the end of July it was complete at a cost of ten thousand rupees consisting of a library and school ready to provide free education for poor children. The school was named the Dookhan School after a South African who donated two hundred pounds.⁴¹ In 1927 faced with pressure from a number of his close friends to remarry, Dayal decided to be admitted into order of sannyasi where a ceremony was performed by Swami Shivanand, Swami Munishananad and Pt Vedvrat Vanaprasthi.⁴²

Meanwhile in South African negotiations took place between the Indian and Union Government in the form of a round table conference beginning in 1926 and ending with the signing of what became known as the Cape Town agreement on 12 January 1927. The Union government agreed to drop the Areas Reservation Bill in return that the Indian Government would support a scheme of voluntary repatriation.

One of the stipulations was that an Indian Agent be sent South Africa to administer the treatment of Indians in the Union. On the 27 May V. S. Srinivasa Sastri was appointed as the first agent general and arrived in South Africa on the 29 June. After another lecture tour throughout India, Dayal returned to South Africa but this time as a preacher for the International Aryan League and upon arrival met Sastri and was invited to dinner during which time Sastri convinced Dayal not to protest the repatriation scheme for the sake of the Cape Town agreement.

During this same year Sastri and C. F. Andrew saw to it that an Indian Education Commission was appointed in Natal. To study, prepare and present the case of Indians before this commission the Indian government sent an expert in the field, Kailas Prasad Kitchlu and an assistant Miss G. Gordon. Dayal accompanied them on a tour across the North Coast of Natal to assist with the collection of information. He was also elected to

⁴¹ Agrawal, *Bhawani Dayal Sannyasi*, 67.

⁴² Bista, "A Brief Biography", 20.

give evidence before the commission on behalf of the NIC.⁴³ However Sastri and Dayal would come to disagreement over the issue of vernacular education. At the Kimberly session of the SAIC in 1927 Sastri opposed the introduction of vernacular education for reasons that concentrating exclusively on English would be more beneficial to South African Indians. He gave a short speech on the matter which convinced the majority to accept his reasoning. As a response Dayal staged a walkout protest which managed to sway the congress's view on the matter. As a result the SAIC's submitted a proposal to the government for the inclusion of vernaculars in the curriculum of Indian schools. However Kichlu himself opposed the introduction of vernaculars on grounds that since "there are several Indian vernaculars spoken by Indians in this country" if all are introduced the "organisation of the school would be impossible."⁴⁴

At the end of 1929 Dayal embarked for India once again to conduct an independent study on the living conditions of repatriated Indians from South Africa. He first visited Madras where the government opened a department to receive expatriated Indians before embarking to Calcutta where he was elected at the chairman of the All-Aryan Conference. The following year was declared the year of independence with the 26 January being celebrated as an Independence Day throughout India. At the Arya Samaj Mandir in Calcutta an Independence Day Programme was organised with Dayal as chairman and later in the year he was elected as the chairman on the Shahabad district Congress Committee the subsequently president of a All-Aryan Youth Conference. Due to his involvement in Gandhi's Satyagraha campaign he was sentenced to two and a half years imprisonment with hard labour on the 2 April under section 124 (a) of the Indian Penal Code for "delivering seditious speeches." He stayed at well-known prison at Hajaribag in Bihar with a number of other famous politicians, poets and editors who contributed to a hand written paper that Dayal used this time in prison to edit called *Karagar*.⁴⁵

Dayal submitted a statement to the magistrate in which he claimed to be innocent before his God and that he saw it as a blessing and success to be imprisoned as a Satyagrahi. He

⁴³ Agrawal, *Bhawani Dayal Sannyasi*, 70.

⁴⁴ Kuppasami, *Tamil Culture*, 45 and also see K. P. Kichlu *Memorandum on Indian education in the Transvaal 1928* and *Memorandum on Indian education in Natal 1928*

⁴⁵ Bramdaw. *WHO'S WHO*, 136.

gave an account of his life to explain his work for the betterment of Indians abroad a cause he claimed that he would continue his life for but would prove futile as long as remain under British subjection. He added that while there was a time that he was prepared to cooperate with the government on issue concerning Indians abroad, his faith in the British Empire vanished entirely when he undertook his investigation of the grievances of repatriated Indians. He argued that twenty years of work has convinced him that as long as Indian remained under British subordination “the Indians either at home or abroad cannot have a place of honour.” He concluded his statement claiming to be the enemy of Imperialism and that he would say nothing in his defence since he does not recognise the authority of the British Raj and sees it as an insult to enter into the defence in a British Court of justice.⁴⁶

In May 1930 the first Indian Overseas Conference was held at the Gurukul in Brindabad during their Silver Jubilee Celebrations, for the purposes of bringing the position of overseas Indians into the forefront and deal with the difficulties that they faced. The conference was attended by Arya Samaj missionaries Swami Shankaranand and Swami Swatantranand who was the first Hindu missionary to travel to Mauritius. Although Dayal was elected as the president he was unable to attend due in his imprisonment. Chatuvedi took his place and read a paper that Dayal wrote before being sentenced. The paper dealt with the living conditions of Indians in Mauritius, British Guiana, Trinidad, Suriname, Fiji and South Africa. It began by thanking Justice Ranade who Dayal called the first Indian leader to realise the problems of “Greater India” followed by describing his admiration of the Arya Samaj movement and its work for Indians abroad.⁴⁷ He expressed frustration at the criticisms levelled by preachers of other faiths and urged the All-India Aryan League to take greater responsibility of overseas propaganda. Dayal also requested educational institutions in India to give special faculties to colonial students

⁴⁶ Dayal’s statement submitted to the Magistrate became known as “the statement” and appeared in a number of Indian Newspapers as well and in the appendix of Agrawal, *Bhawani Dayal Sannyasi*. The statement also appeared in the Fiji Newspaper the *Pacific Press* and some argue that it angered the Fiji Government which refused a passport to Dayal when he tried to gain entry into Fiji in 1932 to preach. See *Indian Opinion*, 9 June 1933.

⁴⁷ Greater India is the idea of a network that existed between Indian and places where Indians settled in large numbers based on the common features of colonial subjugation see Hofmeyr, Kaarsholm and Subramanian “Print Cultures, Nationalisms and Publics of the Indian Ocean”

and complemented the Gurukul of Brindaban for leading in this regard. The conference was a noted success and the predecessor to the Second Overseas Hindu Conference held in the Hindu Maha Sabha⁴⁸ Pandal at Amjer toward the end of 1933. Amongst those present at this conference were Arya Samaj missionaries Prof Parmanand and Dr Bhagatram who had previously conducted missionary work in South Africa as well as Mehta Jaimimi who would visit the country the following year.⁴⁹

On the 5 March 1931 a set of agreements was reached by the Viceroy of India, Lord Irwin and Gandhi known as the Gandhi-Irwin Pact which amongst others included the “Release of prisoners arrested for participating in the civil disobedience movement”.⁵⁰ Thus Dayal did not have to serve his full term and upon release he continued his work on the conditions faced by expatriated Indians. By the 19 May with the assistance of Chaturvedi he published a 70 page report on the grievances of repatriated Indians.⁵¹

In May 1931 the All-India Editors Conference was held in the Senate Hall of Calcutta University with Dayal being the first colonial born Indian to preside an Indian Editors conference. Dayal’s long speech was characterised by the responsibility he attributed to journalists as the educators of the public. He claimed that he believed in the four divisions of the Varna system but that it was the individuals who undertake “the task of educating the people by writing books and newspapers” who were the “real Brahmans” and that the duty of journalist is the same of that of “the God knowing Brahman.” However he condemned the current age which he called the age of the Vaisyas (merchant) which leads to the functions of the Brahmans occupying a subordinated position. He urged journalists present to resist the pressures of commercialisation and refrain from sacrificing their role as educators to attract advertisements from large businesses. He argued that “no other profession carries greater responsibility with so small remuneration” and expressed his admiration to those Hindi journalists who in spite of labouring great hours in dire poverty refuse to adopt “the Western method of trading

⁴⁸ The Indian version of the national Hindu body.

⁴⁹ *Indian Opinion*, 1 December 1933

⁵⁰ See <http://www.indhistory.com/round-table-conference-2.html>

⁵¹ B. Dayal and B. Chaturvedi. “A Report on the Emigrants Repatriated to India under the Assisted Emigration Scheme from South Africa” 15 May 1951.

on education.” He ended his speech by claiming that the pecuniary conditions of journalist had to be improved to enable them to continue their roles as educators of the public and prevent them sacrificing this role to attract profits.⁵²

His admiration to those Hindi journalists that laboured great hours can also be illustrated in the fact he at this time was editing a weekly journal of Patna the *Aryavarta* and his health steadily deteriorated. He returned to South Africa in March 1932. Prior to his arrival the Durban Corporation named a road in Clairwood the Dayal road in his honour.⁵³ Soon upon his arrival he was appointed by the Governor General as a Commissioner of Oaths and an honorary probation officer of the Durban Magistrate.⁵⁴ On the 9 March 1932 he left South Africa with a South African passport intending to go to Fiji but was refused a visa. The Governor of Fiji wrote to the Governor-General of South Africa on 5 May 1932 that it would be “very undesirable that he should reach this Colony or neighbouring islands. Please refuse or cancel passport facilities.” A letter dated 6 June 1932 from J.B.M. Hertzog informed the Secretary for External Affairs that the ‘necessary amendments to the passport has been made.’”

Before Dayal’s return to the country the Second Round Table conference was held in Cape Town where an agreement was reached by both the Indian and South African Governments to explore the possibility of a colonisation scheme to resettle Natal Indians to others colonies. The support for the controversial scheme came as a surprise to many especially considering the fact that Dayal’s report on the grievances of repatriated Indians was one of the issues of discussion at the Second Round Table conference. Nonetheless at a conference held on 3 August 1932 in Johannesburg with Dayal as a representative of the NIC, the SAIC eventually decided to cooperate with the decision of the two governments. However the decision to cooperate with the scheme was not unanimous and by August the following year a group lead by P. R. Pather, Manilal Gandhi and Albert Christopher broke away to form the Colonial Born Indian Settlers Association (CBISA) to oppose the scheme.

⁵² English translation to Dayal’s speech appeared in a number of Indian Newspapers including *Searchlight*

⁵³ Agrawal. *Bhawani Dayal Sannyasi*, 89.

⁵⁴ *Indian Opinion*

The political elite became divided into two groups and tensions erupted at a mass meeting held on the 24 August by the SAIC at the Pietermaritzburg city hall. The meeting began with Rev Author John Choonoo one of the early pioneering Indian Methodist leaders in the country reading a prayer at which time loud disruptions were made by a rowdy crowd. Dayal followed speech he conducted in Hindi as the crowd shouted “Speak in English”; “we don’t understand Hindi.” When Rustomjee Sorabjee intervened by reminding the crowd that Hindi was the language of their fathers and grandfathers some in the crowd declared “we are South Africans. We are Colonial-borns” and chaos ensued. According to the *Natal Witness*, Dayal was unfazed and declared that he was prepared to stand until midnight. However a fight broke out when a small group of CBISA supporters the armed with armed with knives, knuckledusters, bicycle chains and iron rods attacked the crowd and the police were called in to intervene.⁵⁵ While this incident of violence was a once of event tension between the two groups continued in the years to follow and it was in this environment when the national body to unite all Hindus was revived.

The revival of the Maha Sabha

The possibility of establishing an organisation to unite all existing Hindu bodies in the country and coordinate their affairs (hence reviving the Maha Sabha) was discussed at third Vedic conference organised by the APS at the end of July 1926 in Pietermaritzburg. Due to Dayal representing the SAIC in India, the conference was presided by Pandit R. B. Maharaj, a businessman who became involved in promoting the cause of the Arya Samaj ever since he attended a lecture by the international Arya Samaj missionary, Swami Manglanand Puri who visited South African in 1913. According to Vedalankar nothing transpired from the conference owing to a lack of support from the other institutions as well as the presence of Pandit Trivedi who was opposed to a Maha Sabha.⁵⁶ Trivedi was the first missionary sent to South Africa to propagate Hinduism who

⁵⁵ *Natal Witness*, 5 September 1933.

⁵⁶ N. Vedalankar, *Religious Awakening in South Africa: History of the Arya Samaj Movement in South Africa*. (Natal: Arya Pratinidhi Sabha), 35.

was not of the Arya Samaj. He was of the Sananathan Dharma and sought to establish a Sanatan Dharma Maha Mandal.

Given the Round Table Conference, the question of repatriation, and the difficulties faced by Indians as a result of the Great Depression that all captured the attention of Indian leaders at the time forming religious organizations to unite different groups of Hindus a task that died down.

This was to change with the arrival of Professor Ralaram of the Dayanand Anglo Vedic College, Hoshiarpur, India on 8 February 1932.⁵⁷ In his address to a large gathering of Vedic leaders in Johannesburg he urged them to establish an umbrella body to unite the existing Hindu institutions in the Transvaal and coordinate their activities. He warned that a “failure to unite would result in the loss in their Indian Identity.”⁵⁸ His prayer was answered when, after numerous discussions, the Transvaal Hindu Sevaj Samaj was formed in 1933 to promote the “social, moral and religious upliftment of Hindus in the Transvaal.”⁵⁹ Unlike the Tamil Maha Sabha, the Sevaj Samaj did not prove short lived but expanded significantly. One of their first tasks was to bring a lecturer from the Ramakrishna mission to South Africa who would play a big role in the Maha Sabha’s revival conference.

During the same year Bhawani Dayal was elected as president for APS for the second time and he organised the fiftieth year death anniversary for Swami Dayananda. On this occasion he wrote a biography for the Swami and distributed it for free. Coinciding with the anniversary celebrations APS held a conference from the 21-22 October in Durban to address the possibility of reviving the Maha Sabha. The conference began with a short introduction by the chairman of the reception committee B. M. Patel who in making his claim for the necessity of reviving the Maha Sabha stated that “the primary cause of weakening the community” was that there was no existing organisation that could “voice the opinions of the Hindu Community as a whole, nor is there a medium of bringing the

⁵⁷ Indian Opinoin, 19 February 1932.

⁵⁸ See Pandya, *The Samaj*.

⁵⁹ *Indian Opinion*, 2 February 1934.

people together under one banner.” He added that “we have great leaders such as Gandhi, Sastri, Malaviya, Sapru, Tagore, Raman, Bose and Jayakar, but unfortunately these great leaders who are recognised world over, cannot mould the Hindu nation into a single entity.”⁶⁰

Dayal followed with his presidential address in which he put forward a number of propositions for the necessity of a Maha Sabha in South Africa capturing the importance he attributed to promoting a Hindu identity. He exclaimed that “we must create a feeling among the Hindus that they are Hindus first and Calcuttas, Madrasis and Guajaratis or Sanathanists and Arya Samajists afterwards”. He added that without the existence of a Maha Sabha “Hindus cannot be protected and their interests cannot be safeguarded.” He appealed to the committee not to miss this unique occasion for the “formation of a central Hindu organisation thus proving [their] love and affection towards Hinduism.” Dayal’s speech for the necessity of reviving the Maha Sabha is interesting not only because it captures the importance that he attributed to a central organisation without which Hindu religion and culture would be threatened but also the way in which he contextualised the position of Indians in South Africa as opposed to India. While Dayal’s disapproval of the all Indian Maha Sabha is well documented his disapproval was for the organisation’s involvement in politics and tensions they caused between Hindus and Muslims, this he argued “would not be possible” in South Africa because “our conditions are entirely different.” He added that in South Africa all existing Hindu institutions in the country concerned themselves primarily with educational, religious and welfare projects and do not venture into the realm of politics like their counter parts in India so there was no reason to suggest that a South African Maha Sabha would get involved in politics. He proposed the formation of a Maha Sabha that would “proceed on similar line as adopted by the Tansvaal Hindu Seva Samaj.”⁶¹

The APS conference resulted in a meeting on the 26 December at the Tamil Institute Hall in Durban attended by over 30 different institutions who expressed a unanimous decision to revive the Maha Sabha. Due to the absence of the appointed Chairman R. G. Bhalla,

⁶⁰ Minutes of the APS Conference 1933.

⁶¹ Minutes of the APS Conference 1933.

M. B. Naik who was a secretary of the original Maha Sabha of 1912 presided. Elections were held to decide the membership of the Maha Sabha and it was decided to hold the third South African Hindu conference the following year to officially revive it.⁶² To preside over the conference a resolution was passed to bring the highly experienced Arya Samaj preacher Pandit Mehta Jaimini.

While Maha Sabha supporters like Dayal and Patel saw it as so vital there were others including the *Indian Opinion* who viewed the formation of a national Hindu body with great suspicion. On the 14 May the Indian Opinion published an article titled “On the wrong lines” which stated that they are “averse” to reviving the Maha Sabha in South Africa. While acknowledging the “delicacy of the matter” and admitting that the paper could not dedicate too much space to a religious matter, they nonetheless published a long front page article which claimed that they had to express their “opinion on a matter which is taking an important turn in the history of Indians in South Africa” and has “bearing on the whole Indian Community.” They drew comparisons with the All Hindu Maha Sabha of India to warn against possible dangers of establishing one in South Africa. They expressed pride that South African Indians could hail from the “motherland” and “create a little India” and yet in spite of all the “evils of caste and communal distinction” South African Indians could live as “Indians first and Indians last” in a “common brotherhood of men.” The reporter went on to say that only when Swami Shankaranand arrived did signs of communalism become noticed. He added that while his lectures on Hinduism were listened to, his activities on the whole did not receive unanimous support from even those in whose interests he was working.⁶³

The Indian Opinion’s stance however is hardly surprising considering the fact that its editor Manilal Gandhi was of the faction that broke away to form the CBISA to oppose the colonisation scheme while those in support for the Maha Sabha were part of the NIC who were prepared to cooperate with it. The article immediately attracted criticism which the Indian Opinion published a fortnight later to give its editors time to respond. The newspaper outlined the main arguments of two critics and thereafter its response to these

⁶² *Indian Opinion*, 5 January 1934

⁶³ *Indian Opinion* 5 May 1934

criticisms. The critics felt that the subject matter was out of the author's specialty and was "full of ignorance" and "portrayed the wrong perspective". All that the Hindu Maha Sabha proposed to do, the critics added, was "to combine the various minor associations into a powerful one" and "thereby unify the Hindu community." The authors added that if Muslims and Christians were free to vigorously proselytise to Hindus, "why should the Hindus not try to fortify themselves against such attacks?" The critics also said that every responsible Hindu in the country realised the "urgent necessity of a body" like the Maha Sabha to protect the interests of Hindus and to "disseminate the gospel of the greatest and certainly the best religion in the world."⁶⁴

Indian Opinion, however, remained unconvinced. The newspaper claimed that given that they did not know what the objectives of the Maha Sabha were, and insisted that neither did their critics know these, it was only rational to believe that they were the same as the Indian version and "we have reason to believe that it is the desire of the Hindu Maha Sabha to affiliate with the body in India." The author further criticised the notion that a Maha Sabha could unite all Hindus and claimed that anyone who made such a claim was holding on to a "distant ideal that not even the greatest leaders in India have been able to achieve." The author argued that there were three distinct sects of Hindus, one which "believes in the universal brotherhood of man", one which "believes in the caste system", and a third that "believes in proselytising and denounces idolatry."⁶⁵ These sects had failed to unite in India and thus "we cannot believe that they can come together in this country." The author remained of the opinion that a Maha Sabha was unnecessary and any necessity that its proponents attributed to it could be achieved via existing institutions like the APS and Veda Dharma Sabhas. The newspaper claimed that these institutions were necessary to convince Hindus to stop participating in various popular but "barbaric" festivals, yet "one of the supporters of the Hindu Maha Sabha has been an advocate of the barbarous ceremony known as firewalking."⁶⁶ The Indian Opinion warnings however did little to hamper the efforts to revive the Sabha and with the presence of two missionaries

⁶⁴ *Indian Opinion*, 14 May 1934

⁶⁵ *Indian Opinion*, 14 May 1934

⁶⁶ *Indian Opinion*, 14 May 1934

who were about to arrive in the country it seemed like the revival ferment would be a marked success.

Pandit Mehta Jaimini

Pandit Mehta Jaimini was born in Punjab in 1861. He was educated in Multan where he graduated in 1896 with an LLB degree. He worked in the legal profession for the next twenty years. During this time he became an adherent of the Arya Samaj and started working with various movements that sought to promote the education of women. In 1922 he joined the Hindu College at Bindravan where he decided to dedicate his life to teaching Hinduism. The following year he travelled to Burma where he conducted 182 lectures. His next tour was to Mauritius to preach for the Arya Samaj movements there. His stay in Mauritius coincided with the 1925 birth centenary celebrations of Dayananda of which he took a leadership role.⁶⁷ According to Ramsurrun his lectures during this time had a huge effect on the youth and resulted in the formation of the Arya Kumar Sabha, a youth wing for Mauritius's major Arya Samaj body the Arya Paropkarini Sabha. Ramsurrun adds that his visit marked an increase in militancy of the Arya Samaj movement in Mauritius. Arya Samajists began organising debates where they defended Vedic culture against Sanatan Pandits, Christian priests and Muslim mullahs as well as introducing the Shuddhi movements for both Christian and Muslim converts with over a hundred "reconversions" in the next 20 years.⁶⁸

The following year he left Mauritius to continue his missionary work across to the Pacific Islands where he visited Siam, Singapore, Malaya, Java and Sumatra. He ended the tour by visiting Fiji and New Zealand. By 1929 he ventured to the Americas where he first conducted lectures in Northern and Central America before turning his attention to the Hindu populations of Trinidad and nearby Islands. The strong theme that permeated his lectures was promoting the "glory" of ancient India and its traditions a theme that would

⁶⁷ *Natal Witness*, 30 April 1933

⁶⁸ P. Ramsurrun. *Arya Samaj In A Nutshell*. (Delhi: Aryan Heritage, 1984)

continue on his tour to South Africa. He followed his tour of the Americas by visiting China, Japan and Europe and lectured throughout these states.⁶⁹

In 1931 when he visited East Africa he made appeal to the APS of South Africa to invite him. However due to financial difficulties faced by the APS at the time they were unable to and he returned to India.⁷⁰ It was during the APS's Hindu conference of 1933 which dealt with the topic of reviving the Maha Sabha when M. C. Varman who had raised the funds to bring both Parmanand and Shankaranand, volunteered to bring Mehta Jaimini to arouse the enthusiasm amongst Hindus necessary to revive the dormant umbrella body.

Jaimini wasted little time in getting to work and managed to conduct 47 lectures during his first 49 days spent in the county.⁷¹ He dealt with various themes promoting the ancient teachings of the Vedas from a typical Arya Samajist perspective and stressed equality for women and the importance of educating girls. His first set of lectures was conducted in Pietermaritzburg and admission to attend was free of charge. The first lecture on "Indian Culture" was held at the HYMA Hall on 31 April 1933 and presided by the Superintendent for Education at the time Mr F. D. Hugo.⁷²

In a lecture conducted at the City Hall in Pietermaritzburg to a large number of Indians and "fair sprinkling of Europeans and natives" the Swami stressed the importance of five duties, prayers and readings of the Vedas every morning, cleanliness in the home, the support of education and scholars who propagate religion, service of the less fortunate and the protection of domesticated animals. He also talked about the Vedas which he called "the foundation of all religions, languages, science and culture" and accused the European translators of the Vedas as incorrectly translating them resulting in various misconceptions which are constantly being corrected to reveal India as the cradle of the human race.⁷³ As a typical Arya Samajist he argued that a "study of the Vedas would

⁶⁹ *Natal Witness*, 30 April 1933

⁷⁰ Vedalankar *Religious Awakening*, 55.

⁷¹ *Indian Opinion*, 1 June 1934.

⁷² 30 April 1933

⁷³ 30 April 1934

dispel the error that they represented the worship of idols, trees, stones and so forth” and that “there was only One God, omnipotent, omniscient, infinite and eternal.”⁷⁴ He ended the lecture by speaking about his experiences in the United States which he accused of contradicting the ideals of Universal brotherhood. He exclaimed his frustration that Asians were barred from gaining American citizenship and said that if Jesus Christ (born in Jerusalem) had to visit the US he would have to arrive with at least f100s and would still be “told to push off” after his turn was finished. His last remarks about the US were criticisms of its millionaires like Henry Ford who have to live guarded by police.⁷⁵

On a Saturday afternoon on the 5 May 1934 the Swami gave a lecture at the HYMA hall to women only on the “Ideals of Womanhood” followed it with a lecture on “Cremation verses Burial” in the evening where he quoted from the Yajur Veda to stress an important aspect of various traditions of Hinduism, cremation. He added that from economical reasons alone it was rational to cremate and not burry and used data from prominent medical researchers in England to add to the argument.⁷⁶

On the flowing Saturday he gave a lecture in Pietermaritzburg on reincarnation. He defended reincarnation on various grounds and argued that its truth was indicated in several verses in the bible. He thereafter criticised the two different reasons put forward by Christian leaders and scientists to explain physical and mental deformities present at birth. He accused Christian explanations of using the idea of an unjust God and scientific explanations of heredity of being unsupported. He claimed the answers always lay in the Vedas. The idea of reincarnation and paying for past sins was his explanation and he made the potential controversial claim that physical deformities at birth were the result of sins committed in past lives.⁷⁷

On the 10 May 1934 he represented India in a meeting of the Natal Debating Society held in Pietermaritzburg and argued for good will between India and South Africa. Prominent Maha Sabha council member at the time S. R. Naidoo (who was also the SAIC

⁷⁴ *Natal Witness*, 30 April 1934

⁷⁵ *Natal Witness*, 30 April 1934

⁷⁶ 7 May 1934

⁷⁷ 22 May 1934

representative to partake in the Government's Indian Colonisation Enquiry Committee) supported Jaimini and defended the "integral part played by Indians in the country." On the 23 May Jaimini gave a lecture on Indian culture at the inaugural meeting of the Indian Study Circle, a body established to promote the study of ancient Indian culture under the presidency of B. D. Lalla. This he followed with a lecture organised by the Overport Indian Study Group and Debating society on the Mahabharata at the Shree Ramayan Sabha schoolroom which was packed to its capacity.⁷⁸ The Maha Sabha organised three of his lectures at the Parsee Rustomjee Hall titled "Eastern View of civilisation", "Reincarnation a Myth" and "Cult of the coming man" which he gave on the 18th, 20th and 22nd of June respectively.⁷⁹

On the 17 December, the Sea View Hindu Association and district Hindu woman's organised a meeting presided by Mrs Veerasamy to pay tribute to the work conducted by the Pandit. At a lecture on Indian culture at the HYMA hall he accused "oriental scholars and certain missionaries" of showing only the darker side of India to designate superiority for themselves.⁸⁰ He thereafter quoted Kurt Baron von Schroeder, a German businessman known for his rightwing political views and financial support to the Nazi Party of Germany during the 1930s.⁸¹ He quoted from von Schroeder's assertion that the ancient Aryans possessed the purest, simplest and best civilisation that was the mother of world culture. Jaimini thereafter made a comment common to many Hindu reformers that while the Western world advanced scientifically and materially it still lagged behind India in spiritual contentment and added that if the world followed Indian culture then "peace and tranquillity would prevail."⁸² He made more comments about Indian culture prohibiting the destruction of life which he argued was necessary to prevent the new methods of warfare conducted in the West before criticising the League of Nations who he claimed would be unable to bring peace when nations continue exploit and extend

⁷⁸ Indian Opinion, 15 June 1934.

⁷⁹ Indian Opinion, 18 June 1934.

⁸⁰ 4 May 1934

⁸¹ See John Hoefle "The British Empire's Fascism Stalks America" March 20, 2009 issue of *Executive Intelligence Review*.

⁸² 4 May 1934

territories. The superintendent for education Mr F. D. Hugo presided by the lecture which was followed by a short speech by S. R. Naidoo.⁸³

Jaimini also used the medium of newspapers to communicate the teachings of the Vedas to the public. He responded to an article in the Natal Witness called “the Future of a Great Religion” to address the “misunderstandings” concerning Hinduism he felt were present in the article. In a very long and detailed article he challenged the notion that Hinduism had no book or central teaching but based on a complex social organisation which he called the author’s “unfamiliarity” with Hindu culture. He stressed the centrality of the Vedas to Hindu religion and drew reference to Max Muller and Jaccoliet. He said that Hindu religion was not a creed but a realisation that was “pliable but firm”. An interesting comment he made was his support for the legitimacy of the caste system as stated in the Vedas but strongly challenging the notion that it be based on heredity. He claimed that they were based on merit through “meritorious services”⁸⁴ These words very reminiscent of Pandit Karamchand of the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College of Kadiana, India who visited South Africa in 1927.⁸⁵

Swami Adhyananda

Jaimini’s stay in the country coincided with that of Swami Adhyananda who was the first representative of the Ramakrishna Mission to arrive in the country. The Ramakrishna Mission was a Neo-Hindu reform movement founded in 1897 by Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902) the chief disciple of the Indian mystic Sri Ramakrishna (1834-86). By 1933 there were already over a hundred and twenty Ramakrishna Missions throughout India and it was to the branch in Calcutta that Transvaal Hindu Seva Samaj sent an appeal for a missionary. The mission replied by sending Swami Adhyananda, a Sanskrit scholar of Calcutta University who had served the Mission for 16 years. When asked about why he joined the mission the Swami claimed that Bengal in the days he joined was seething in nationalism and being philosophically minded and in close contact with followers of

⁸³ 4 May 1934

⁸⁴ Natal Witness, 7 June 1934

⁸⁵ Natal Witness, 9 August 1927

Vivekananda the “spirit of service awoke within him.” He also served as editor to a paper published by the Mission and was the founder of the Singapore Ramakrishna Mission.⁸⁶

He arrived in the Transvaal in the beginning of 1934 and preached there for three months before he was brought to Natal under the invitation of Maha Sabha. The Swami’s views were characterised by a lecture conducted Johannesburg where he claimed that “if there is one thing that India could teach the world it is her philosophy.” He talked about all the economic, political and social problems in the world claiming that India’s philosophy was not only the solution but would “make for mutual respect between different creeds and nations.” He said that “India in spite of her ills today, sent out that idea of religious synthesis in thought and showed the warring world how real peace based on spiritual idealism might be obtained.”⁸⁷

On the 21 May 1934 Swami Adhyananda received a reception at the Royal Picture Palace in Durban organised by newly elected representatives of the Maha Sabha. Also present at the reception was Bhawani Dayal and Mehta Jaimini. Jaimini received a huge applause upon his arrival at the Hall that was packed to its limit with a substantial number of Europeans present, another indication of his popularity in the country. B. M Patel gave a speech to welcome the Swami and thereafter garlanded him. A few others spoke including Swami Dayal.⁸⁸

At a speech in Pietermaritzburg the Swami continued with his theme of the universality of Hindu thought claiming that “Hinduism is a universal religion. It does not limit its teachings to any one personality or to any one book, but on its revelations. It does not impose limit on the limitless, nor dogmatise on the Infinite”. However he was careful in highlighting that Hinduism was a coherent religion and not merely a collection of diverging thoughts by adding that in spite of all the apparent divisions there is a fundamental unity which is goal of achieving “the realisation of the Supreme Reality.” The Swami’s speech was characterised by the strong reformist idea of showing Hinduism

⁸⁶ Indian Opinion, 15 May 1934.

⁸⁷

⁸⁸ 22 May 1934

as a universal religion while maintaining monotheism. Like Jaimini he claimed reincarnation was the “only” rational explanation for inequality at birth. A typical reformer he argued that religion was not based on ceremonies but on individuals getting “inside themselves to see the truth” and added that his experience in this country shows “that people who go under the name of Hindus do not know anything of their faith.” He urged such people to study the Bhagat Gita which he called the “nut shell” of Hindu thought.⁸⁹ The Swami ended the lecture by urging local Hindus establish schools to teach religion and never to forget their cultural heritage.

When asked about what about his experiences in South Africa in an interview conducted by the *Indian Opinion* the Swami answered that education needed to be improved and that in spite of the “harsh laws much constructive work could be done” by Indians with regard to improving sanitation and hygiene. He added that “provincialism and sectarianism seem to be very common in this community.” He added that Gandhi left behind ideals which should act as inspiration for this community.⁹⁰ Like Jamini he also responded to questions via correspondence in the newspapers and stress education. Articles appeared by Hindus claiming who argued that it was time that Hindu instruction be taught at Indian schools and used speeches by the two preachers to justify it. Toward the end of the year the Swami was requested to write a number of articles for the *Indian Opinion* on Dewali and the relation between science and Hinduism.

Revival Conference

The Maha Sabha held the third South African Hindu conference at the Durban Town Hall on the 27 May beginning at 3 pm which attracted representatives from over sixty institutions throughout the country. This was the first Hindu conference in the country which was attended by representatives from Woman’s associations as well. The deputy Mayor Councillor S. K. Elgie who filled in for the Mayor who was unable to attend gave an opening address to the conference claiming that “it showed a fine spirit when delegates came forward in large numbers as they done in the interests of a useful movement of this

⁸⁹ *Natal Advertiser*, 1934

⁹⁰ *Indian Opinion*, 15 May 1934.

kind.”⁹¹ The presences of the two missionaries whose lectures were filling halls throughout the country no doubt played a large role in arousing the enthusiasm.

In his opening address speech Swami Adhyananda criticised those who declared Hinduism a medley of thoughts without an underlying unity. He thereafter defended an “underlying unity” and argued that Hinduism is “the perennial source of solace for” those seeking truth. He added that Hinduism does not believe the doctrine that particular theological belief or a particular form of worship is the only way towards light and salvation.” He criticised those who promoted competition between the religions and argued that as there is always diversity in nature there is also unity in deferent thoughts and experiences making the different religions. He levelled criticism against proselytisation which he said is only adding to the troubles and contributing to the hatred that exists in the world.⁹²

In his presidential speech Pandit Jaimini branded South Africa the “motherland” of Hinduism’s future and outlined the requirements that he felt the Maha Sabha had to meet. He called on them to send young Hindus to Japan, Germany and England to learn arts and acquire an industrial education which they could introduce in South Africa. He claimed this would help in the fight against poverty and unemployment which should be a central aim of the Maha Sabha. He also emphasized the importance of vernacular education and the revival of ancient culture which he claimed were necessary for national solidarity in this country. He also used the occasion to argue strongly for female education, something that he stressed throughout his lectures during his South African tour. He appreciated the celebration of Hindu festivals in South Africa but wanted the Maha Sabha to make an effort to increase their popularity. He claimed that festivals and the recognition of national heroes were fundamental for generating a sense of patriotism. He cited Japan and Russia as examples of patriotism that South African Hindus should follow. He appealed to Hindu youths to “arise, awake, caste of the spirit of lethargy, come forward with feeling hearts, aspirations of patriotism and honest ambitions. Be

⁹¹ Natal Mercury, 28 May 1934

⁹² Minutes of the third Hindu Conference 1934.

good citizens of this land where you were born and brought up and be faithful to your motherland and her culture”⁹³.

Pandit Jaimini also referred to South African Hindus as part of the “Hindu nation” which he called the most ancient on the globe. He claimed that “no nation on Earth can vie with the Hindus in respect of their antiquity in civilisation and religion” and exclaimed his frustration that a nation that was “a teacher and initiator of the whole world” has become “down-trodden, degenerated and treated as hewers of wood and drawers of water.” This he blamed on the Mahabharata which he called “that terrible war when all the statesmen, politicians, spiritual guides, sages and eminent scholars were slain.” As a result the Hindu nation lost its energetic spirit “selfishness and egotism commenced to pervade its life.” He saw the “many schools of thought, sects and new cults” devitalising the Hindu nation. He criticised Buddhism of depriving Hindus of their “material and chivalrous qualities” which weakened Hindus and led to “physical degeneration and cowardliness.” Like all Arya Samajist’s he claimed that the neglect of Vedic Scriptures resulted in “ignorance, superstition and blind faith”⁹⁴ It is interesting to note than many of the projects that were dealt with in Maha Sabha conferences in years to follow were suggested in this speech.

While the enthusiasm generated at the conference suggested that there would be resurgence in the Maha Sabha, this proved to be rather shortlived and it was not until the 1940s that the organisation restructured itself again and became a factor nationally. Shortly after the conference, the Maha Sabha fell into dormancy again and there are only a few sporadic references made to it in the newspapers. Two important Hindu leaders arrived in the country this time Pandit Rishi Ram and Radhankrishna who sought to promote cooperation. However there were other factors which caused Indian politics to become fractured one again.

In November 1935 Dayal went to India to represent the SAIC at the All India session of the National Congress at Lucknow. In an interview he said that he would place the need of South African Indians before the Indian Government and other leaders of the public

⁹³ Minutes of the third Hindu Conference 1934.

⁹⁴ Minutes of the third Hindu Conference 1934.

opinion there.⁹⁵ He arrived at Madras in the first week of December and began writing articles for a number of Indian Newspapers before embarking to Calcutta where he addressed a large assembly and criticised Tagore for not supporting Hindi as the national language on India.⁹⁶ In the same month he performed the official opening for Rajenda Ashram, named in honour of Dr Rajenda Prasad. The next year he went to Lucknow for the conference while a controversy occurred back in South Africa when the Muslim Agent General for South Africa Sir Syed Raza Ali married a local Hindu of Tamil descent Miss Sammy resulting in the conversion of the latter to Islam. In protest a large number of Hindus in the SAIC resigned. Dayal decided not to join and later wrote of the experience as

I was also approached to resign from the Congress, while I was in India... with a threat that I would be regarded as a betrayer of the Hindu cause and would be treated as an outcaste, if I refused to follow their lead. Needless to say, I flatly repudiated their authority to dictate to me in such manner. In fact, it was a matter of principle with me. As an Arya Samajist, I dare not interfere even in the conversion from one faith to another, let alone the matrimonial bond of two individuals of different faiths, when I claim the same right and liberty for my own co-religionists; and above all as an Indian nationalist, how could I be a party to such a communal quarrel?⁹⁷

After the Lucknow conference Dayal sold his assets in Bahura including the Pravasi Bhawan and distributed the money to his heirs keeping a small portion to build a Bhawani Bhavan when he returned to Durban. He travelled to Johannesburg, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and East London to preach the Vedic religion but not associated to any society. On the 4 November 1937 Dayal laid the foundation stone of a Vada Mandir in Lourenco Marques (Maputu) capital of Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique). The Mandir was built by the Bharat Samaj of Lourenco Marquese and the following year on 31 July Dayal performed its official opening an occasion attended by the consult generals of Britain and South African as well as the Governor General of East Africa.

⁹⁵ *Natal Witness*

⁹⁶ Bista, "A Brief Biography", 23

⁹⁷ Dayal. *Abdulla Ismail Kajee*,

On the 1 May 1938 Dayal was elected as the president of the NIC and he laboured greatly to unite the different factions that previously caused rifts in the organisation. In June Richard Stuttaford, the minister of the Interior proposed a Servitude Scheme which in effect was a continuation of segregation policies and seen by many Indians leaders as a clear violation of the Cape Town Agreement. The NIC organized mass meetings to bring this to the attention of the public and elected Dayal as a one man deputation to travel to India to bring the segregation scheme to attention of the Indian Government and general public. At a send off attended by a large number of Indians including NIC secretary Kajee he stated “I am going to India to give the people there first hand information about the position in South Africa” and “persuade the Indian government to oppose this segregation scheme.”⁹⁸

On his journey he stopped of at Lournenco Marques, Daresalaam, Zanzibar and Mombasa to preach religion and discuss politics. He reached Bombay on the 18 March and quickly travelled to Bombay, Delhi, Agra, Ajmer, Baroda and Navsari. At Baroda he stayed with Pandit Anandpriya. He wrote a letter to the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow on the plight of Indians in South Africa and received support from Nehru. Thereafter he spent three weeks in Calcutta using the press to communicate the difficulties faced by Indians in South Africa. Dayal urged the government of India that if it failed to persuade the Union Government to drop the scheme then the Indian Government should withdraw its Agent-General from South Africa as a protest.⁹⁹ By 6 May the Mercury was informed of relations between the two governments reaching “a breaking point” over the scheme. Dayal had by this time convince numerous Indian leaders over the dangers of the scheme with Gandhi claiming that it would result in the “slow death of the Indian Community” in South Africa and claiming that this breach of the Cape Town agreement is comparable to the breaches of various pacts made by Hitler.¹⁰⁰

However during this time there was once again a rift forming in the NIC, resulting in Abdulla Kajee sending Dayal and urgent message requesting his return. Just before he

⁹⁸ *Tribune*, 27 February 1939.

⁹⁹ *Mercury*, Saturday 6 May 1939.

¹⁰⁰ *Sunday Times*, 7 May 1939.

left the CBISA and the NIC were drifting apart once again however during his stay in India tensions grew worse between supporters of waging a passive resistance and those who did not. On the 4 June chaos broke out conference held by the Transvaal Indian Congress where supporters of Yusuf Dadoo were attacked by a group armed with chains, iron rods, knuckledusters and one armed with a loaded revolver. Nine were injured and a supporter of Dadoo was disembowelled.¹⁰¹ As a result of the growing tensions Dayal returned to Durban on the 15 August 1939 and laboured to mend the rifts threatening the NIC but to no avail. In December he visited Lournenco Marques to preach once again. He thereafter made his last trip back to South Africa.

Dayal decided to settle permanently in India. On the 21 November 1941 the NIC organised a farewell reception with the Mayor of Durban R. Ellis Brown as chairman. On his way to India he preached at Lournenco Marques, Daresalaam and Mobasa and arrived in Bombay in early November. Dayal spent the rest of his life in Ajmer where he built a Pravasi Bhavan and an office for the NIC to keep in contact with its leaders in South Africa.

¹⁰¹ *Mercury*, 5 June 1939