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Hindu Nationalism and North Indian Music in the Global Age

Bob van der Linden

Introduction¹

In modern states around the world, the imagination, canonization and institutionalization of national music by members of a social majority has repeatedly led to the stigmatization and marginalization of music created by social minorities. Roma music in Hungary (Brown 2000) and Turkey (Bates 2011), Bukharan Jewish art music in Uzbekistan (Levin 1996), Uyghur art music (Harris 2008), Nazi music (Rees 2000) in China and Jewish popular music in Tunisia (Davis 2009) are just a few examples. Central to this process were hierarchical, if not evolutionary ideas about music, whereby the imagined national music—by and large, either in the European idiom, as in China, or in that of a modern ‘classicized’ local tradition of art music, as in the cases of *shashmaqam* in Uzbekistan and *ma’luf* in Tunisia—was seen as more ‘progressive’ than other, often folk or popular forms of music (van der Linden 2015). The making of north

B. van der Linden (✉)

Study Platform on Interlocking Nationalisms, University of Amsterdam,
Amsterdam, Netherlands

e-mail: vanderlinden.bob@gmail.com

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Indian art music, known as Hindustani music, into national music fits this context, while also being very different. This is because it concerned, besides a growing demarcation between ‘high’ art music and ‘low’ folk and popular music, a transfer from a Muslim ‘minority’ community to a Hindu ‘majority’ community of musicians, patronage and audiences within a single art music tradition.²

Indeed, since the seventeenth century, due to Mughal rule and Muslim patronage in general, the Hindustani music scene was dominated numerically and professionally by Muslim hereditary musicians, commonly known as *ustads* (literally, teachers), yet this supremacy by a social minority was gradually dismantled into the twentieth century through a process of ‘Hinduization’.

This unique event in global history undoubtedly highlights the significance of the institutional and structural forms of Hindu discrimination and oppression, if not violence, against Muslims that took place under the banner of Hindu nationalism in India. Its scholarly importance also lies in the fact that it sheds light on the relations between ‘religion’, nation and state power in the context of processes of modernization and the global circulation of ideas. To this day, Indian art music remains the non-Western world’s main last stand in the face of the global hegemony of European music in its basic form, that is the use of equal temperament tuning and (functional) harmony, as well as different instruments and ensemble playing (van der Linden 2020). Hence, expectedly, since the late nineteenth century Indians and a great number of Westerners generally saw it as the critical essence of the nation’s ‘spiritual’ culture, whereby they assumed that the ‘tradition’ had largely survived the imperial encounter unscathed. However, this chapter argues that the patronage, performance practice and reception of Indian art music changed remarkably under colonial rule. Thus, like ‘religion’, music became part of the global process of transforming pre-modern ‘tradition’ into national ‘culture’. By taking music, that quintessentially non-representational medium, as a lens through which to view this fundamental transformation, I am basically reiterating a point I made earlier (van der Linden 2008), namely the inadequacy of ‘religion’ as an analytic concept for understanding what happened in modern India.³ To conduct a comparative study of national ‘cultures’ in global interaction, conversely, the focus must be upon the

modern institutionalization of (scientific) rational and moral thinking, economic competition and politics by numbers in the context of processes of nation-state formation.

Obviously, Hindu and Muslim identities existed among musicians in pre-colonial India too, if for different reasons: for instance, numerous Hindu musicians converted to Islam (Manuel 1996: 122–123; Scarimbolo 2014: 432–451; Subramanian 2006: 4649). Likewise, it cannot be accidental that at the courts of Hindu rulers most musicians were Hindus, as in Gwalior during the century before Indian independence or in Benares, with its Hindu maharaja and numerous temples. Even so, these Hindu and Muslim identities were definitely fuzzier in comparison to those of modern times. Decisive in this transformation were the modern national music reforms by elitists, mostly Hindu Brahmin and English-educated reformers, first in Calcutta (now Kolkata) and Western India (today's Mumbai and Maharashtra). These were the immediate consequence of the rapid social and intellectual transformations that Indians experienced during the imperial encounter. In the context of an emergent modern public sphere in north India, Indian music reformers began to ask new questions about their own musical culture. In what ways did Indian music differ from Western music? How could Indian music be changed in order to make it modern and, indeed, 'scientific'? In relation to the latter, for instance, music notation gained much attention. Also typical was the fact that the Western harmonium, with its well-tempered tuning, was widely adopted by musicians so that by the first decade of the twentieth century it had replaced the *sarangi* (a bowed, short-necked string instrument) as the main accompanying instrument.

Most significantly, while Hindu music reformers imagined and defined Indian national music in light of European musical practice and history as well as texts on Indian music, they located the origins of Indian music in a pre-Muslim golden age of 'Hindu music'. Moreover, they incorrectly argued that Hindustani music had declined because it had fallen in the hands of the 'illiterate' Muslim hereditary musicians, who 'secretly' kept their knowledge to themselves rather than share it with Hindus. Quite the reverse, however, the nineteenth century was an important and creative period of transition for north Indian art music, with new instruments like the *sitar*, *sarod* (a fretless, plucked lute) and *tabla* (a pair of tuneable

Indian hand played drums), and relatively new genres like *khayal* and a modernized *thumri*, replacing the instruments and styles associated with the Mughal court. All the same, Hindu national music reformers construed and institutionalized a 'classical' north Indian music on a par with the European classical music tradition, among other things through music schools, music conferences, canonical repertoires, concert arrangements, (staff) notation and theoretical elaborations. In this way, Hindustani music was made respectable for the emerging Hindu middle class, especially for its women, and a commercial market for music education and performance was created at the same time. Into the twentieth century, then, the Hindu community became the mainstay of Hindustani music in terms of students, resulting in an ever-increasing number of professional musicians and audiences. Through this 'Hinduization' of north Indian art music, moreover, music reformers took music away from the private world of princely courts and hereditary musicians, of whom the great majority were Muslim, and into the modern concert hall and the public sphere at large.

To be clear, north Indian art music is an oral tradition to a great extent based upon the 'improvisation' of formerly studied, and often strictly defined, patterns that are specific to a certain *raga* (a tonal framework for composition and improvisation). Hence, rather than composers, as is common in European classical music, one must think in terms of specific performers and their musical lineages. Moreover, Hindustani music does not have European musical concepts such as harmony, counterpoint, chords or modulation. In its place, highly individual soloists and their accompanists 'improvise' solely with melody and rhythm, whereby the microtonal 'ornamentations' around the notes are as important as the actual notes or semitones, the smallest difference between two pitches in European music. Actually, one of my key arguments in this specific musical context is that because of Hindu national music reforms and the subsequent 'Hinduization' of north Indian art music, which led to a process of musical standardization, the divergent knowledge of the Muslim *ustads* was increasingly undermined.

In general, this chapter builds upon certain publications that were partially triggered by Janaki Bakhle's *Two Men and Music: Nationalism in the Making of an Indian Classical Tradition* (2005), the first monograph that

straightforwardly discussed the Hindu nationalism underlying the making of modern Hindustani music, and which afterwards created much scholarly debate. In particular, Bakhle was criticized for her ‘rather simplistic picture’ of ‘Muslim loss and Hindu gain as the *raga* tradition was classicized throughout the twentieth century’ (Slawek 2007: 507). In what follows, therefore, I will repeatedly emphasize that the stigmatization and subsequent marginalization of the Muslim *ustad* was anything but a linear process but, as so often in history, to a considerable extent the outcome of the unintended consequences of human initiatives. In reality, for instance, many Hindu and Muslim musicians continued to work together. A great number of Hindus studied with Muslim musicians who themselves sometimes played important roles in modern music reforms. A few well-known examples are Maula Baksh, Abdul Karim Khan and his daughter Hirabai Barodekar, and Karamatullah Khan (Bakhle 2005; Katz 2017).⁴ On the other hand, singers like Abdul Karim Khan were famous for their interpretations of Krishnavite devotional songs (*bhajans*) and numerous Muslim musicians, among whom India’s most famous *shehnai* (Indian oboe) player Bismillah Khan in Benares, continued performing in Hindu temples. Be that as it may, the legendary Allauddin Khan was compelled ‘to take on a Hindu name at least twice during his life in order to avoid “anti-Muslim ostracism”’ (Scarimbolo 2014: 449).⁵

The chapter is divided into three sections followed by a conclusion. The first section discusses the importance of European Orientalist knowledge—mainly the discovery of Sanskrit, which led to the idea of a ‘Hindu’ golden age, and the historical view of Muslims as outsiders to the subcontinent—to the stigmatization of Muslim musicians by Hindu national music reformers. Over time the latter institutionalized music theory and practice in a modern and rational manner. Continuing this theme, the second section shows how, into the twentieth century, the Muslim *ustads* were marginalized in music institutions, both for their supposedly ‘unscientific’ music practices and for their immorality, and Hindustani music in general was ‘Hinduized’. The final section considers the growing violence against Muslims as a minority in Indian society in the face of Hindu nationalism since the late nineteenth century and—especially after the Partition of British India into India and Pakistan in 1947—the difficult

position therein of the ‘secular’ Muslim musician, who increasingly had to live and perform in a ‘Hindu cultural sphere’.

Stigmatization: Hindu National Music Reforms and the *Ustads*

In his classic *Indian Music and the West* (1997), Gerry Farrell argued that the roots of Hindu national music reforms lay mainly in the British colonial imagination:

When India was discovered as a cultural entity by Orientalists in the late eighteenth century, the study of music, like language, had to suit their project of discovering and reconstructing a pristine Hindu past, free from Muslim influences. Hence the ‘dead’ music of Sanskrit texts was more revered than the living Indo-Muslim tradition. (Farrell 1997: 1–2)

In particular, the works of William Jones and N. Augustus Willard were crucial to the Indian reception of the idea of ‘Hindu music’ and its degradation under Muslim rule. In *On the Musical Modes of the Hindus* (1792), Jones not only peddled the myth of Indian music being on the verge of extinction but also, like other Orientalists glorifying Sanskrit sources, directly combined it with the loss of the ‘Hindu music’ of a supposedly golden age. Although he had a great affection for Persian literature, Jones only trusted Sanskrit music treatises in studying Indian music while arguing that Muslim writers had mystified the tradition through their poor translations of these texts.

In his *Treatise on the Music of Hindoostan: Comprising a Detail of the Ancient Theory and Modern Practice* (1834), N. Augustus Willard emphasized that the study of books alone was not enough to bring about the revival of ‘Hindu music’. One also had to gather information from performing musicians, even if they were generally ‘ignorant of the theory of music’ and were ‘the most immoral set of men on earth’ (Willard 1834: 3, 29, 122). Moreover, although Jones was ambiguous about the role of the Muslim period in the decline of ‘Hindu music’, Willard openly blamed Muslim rulers for what had supposedly happened. Having failed

to patronize music's theoretical tradition properly, he argued, Muslim rulers had brought about the 'defection' of its theory from its practice and caused music to fall into the hands of 'illiterates' (ibid.: 2–3). Still, whereas he made a division between musicians and musical theorists, Willard never specifically identified the musicians he was so critical of as Muslim. On the contrary, he wrote, for example:

I have not confined myself to the details in books, but have also consulted the most famous performers, both Hindoos and Mussulmans, the first Veenkars⁶ in India, the more expert musicians of Lucknow, and Hukeem Salamut Ulee Khan of Benares, who has written a treatise on music. (Ibid.: 12)

Hence, the stigmatization of the *ustads*, which became so dominant later, cannot be unambiguously attributed to Jones or Willard. The decisive step to anti-Muslimness was taken up only by later British colonial writers and, especially, Hindu nationalist music reformers.⁷

The role of India's first modern musicologist, Sourindro Mohun Tagore (1840–1914), was crucial. In 1871 in Calcutta he founded the Bengal Music School and, a decade later, the Bengal Music Academy for the teaching of 'Hindu music' on scientific principles. On the basis of courses, syllabuses and degrees devised by Tagore himself, these institutions offered systematic music education. He saw music notation as an essential component of any advanced musical system and accordingly he endorsed a Bengali letter notation system. Between 1872 and 1896, he published numerous books and articles on Indian music for the expanding market of amateur musicians, including manuals on how to play *sitar* and harmonium. At his own cost, moreover, Tagore distributed these and collections of Indian musical instruments to learned institutions, museums and heads of state in many countries around the world. For him, music became a central means to propagate the greatness of Hindu civilization to the West, and accordingly he corresponded with numerous scholars around the world. More immediately, Tagore seized the latent criticism of the *ustads* from the British colonial writings of Jones, Willard and others and incorporated an explicit anti-Muslim argument into it. In his editorial in the 1872 volume of *Sangit Samalochani* (The Music

Review), he was among the first modern Hindu music reformers to specifically dismiss Muslim musicians as unwilling and ‘illiterate’ teachers. It is ironic that Tagore himself had been taught by several Muslim teachers (Scarimbolo 2014: 351), whom he now condemned as responsible for the decline of ‘Hindu music’:

Within this royal lineage of invaders there have been born one or two knowledge-loving emperors who, understanding the exquisiteness of Hindu music, contributed their enthusiasm towards its advancement. But be it through chicanery or might, they started converting exponents of Hindu music to their own religion. We think this is the outstanding reason why cultivation of music is so rare among Hindus, and it is due to this that one sees more music-exponents among Muslims [...] What is a matter of even greater sorrow is that Muslims are not easily inclined to teach music to Hindus. Even if they are favourably inclined, they are ignorant regarding how to teach in a simple way. Therefore, learning music from Muslims is not easily forthcoming. (Basu 2011: 336)

Earlier, in fact, Tagore’s guru and the chief instructor at the Bengal Music School, Kshetra Mohan Goswami, had argued in his *Sangitasara* (1869) that the ‘great intellectual tradition of Sanskrit learning in music died out with the usurpation of musical practice by Muslim *ustads*’ (Katz 2017: 134).

India’s most important modern music reformer, Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande (1860–1936), best exemplifies the Indian music reformers’ adherence to modern scientific knowledge: the Enlightenment search for origins in music, the standardization of music theory and practice, notation, music education and so on. Overall, he sought to revive and re-define Hindustani music scientifically as a national music that would be accessible for a wider Indian public. To this end, he claimed that north Indian art music had a history of only ‘a couple of centuries’ while pointing out ‘the futility of trying to trace India’s music back to the Vedas or even more recent treatises such as the *Natyashastra* or the *Sangitratnakar*’ (Neuman 2014: 288). He based his argument on extensive fieldwork, during which he collected an enormous orally transmitted musical repertoire from contemporary, mostly Muslim performers from different

lineages. This material resulted in the six volumes of *Kramik Pustak Malika* (1919–1937), a collection of compositions in the Indian *sargam* notation. Between 1916 and 1926, Bhatkhande convened five All India Music Conferences at which scholars (mostly Hindu) and musicians (mostly Muslim) came together from all over India with the goal of regulating the standards and boundaries of a national music. In particular, a national system of notation and a uniform description of *ragas* were thought necessary. During the 1920s and 1930s, Bhatkhande's inspiration was a major factor in the founding of music schools in Baroda, Gwalior, Bombay, Nagpur and, above all, Lucknow. Undeniably, his Western education as a lawyer contributed to his systematic approach to music education.

Altogether, Bhatkhande propagated his own research findings, system of *raga* classification and music notation system over what he saw as the 'unscientific' knowledge of the hereditary musicians. Yet, unlike many of his contemporaries, he did not believe that Muslim rulers had been bad music patrons or that the *ustads* had ruined Indian music. On the contrary, he often praised the latter's musicality, including that of one of his main informers, the celebrated Wazir Khan. Likewise, he sent his foremost disciple S.N. Ratanjankar to the illustrious singer Faiyaz Khan for further studies and, at the All-India Music Conferences, he allowed some Muslim scholars and musicians to describe their alternative views on Indian music history. Thus, by challenging the continuity of Indian music since Vedic times and admiring the creativity of Muslim musicians, Bhatkhande softened what by his time had become a clearly defined narrative of Muslim dominance and the decline of 'Hindu music'. Nevertheless, in his search for a textual foundation for Indian music history, he too was very critical of the *ustads*, whom he generally described as ignorant of texts and history, as well as bad teachers. As Janaki Bakhle argued, however, Bhatkhande's irritation was ultimately directed at 'musicians, singers, and instrumentalists—not because of their religious affiliation, but because as performers they did not pay adequate attention to posterity nor, for that matter, to the future' (Bakhle 2005: 123). He simply could not accept that 'musicians were the living archive of music's theoretical history, even if they were his resource for its performative history' (ibid.: 109). Ultimately, he only believed in the Sanskrit music

treatises and Hindu origins of Indian national music. Or, as Justin Scarimbolo put it: ‘Bhatkhande excluded Muslim musicians not because they were Muslim, but because they were *not* Hindus’ (Scarimbolo 2014: 362, emphasis in original). Hence, the reformer’s position was comparable, he continued, to William Jones’s rejection of Persian writings on Indian music, which had nothing to do with being anti-Muslim, but with the fact that ‘for him, India was essentially Hindu, and any claim to authenticity on the part of Muslims was therefore seen as illegitimate’ (ibid.).

In contrast to Bhatkhande, the musician and music reformer Vishnu Digambar Paluskar (1872–1931) straightforwardly argued that ancient ‘Hindu music’ had become degraded in the hands of the *ustads*, and accordingly he made its revival and diffusion among the general public the goal of his life. For this purpose, he propagated Indian national music on behalf of Hindu devotional music (*bhakti*). In Paluskar’s hands, and especially in those of his disciples, music education and public performances became channels for Hindu proselytizing. With the support of two Hindu nationalist organizations, the Arya Samaj and the Sanatan Dharm Sabha, he founded the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya music school in Lahore in 1901. Typically, although Lahore had a large Muslim population and was a prime centre for Hindustani music, the school had no Muslim teachers and only a few Muslim students. The Gandharva Mahavidyalaya was a Hindu music school with prayers in Sanskrit and a major focus on Hindu festivals. Paluskar also developed his own notation system and wrote books on music theory and collections with compositions in different *ragas*. Conversely, he promoted the inclusion of devotional songs (*bhajans*) in the concert repertoire as well as the singing of nationalist songs, especially ‘Vande Mataram’ (on which more later). In 1911, Paluskar founded another music school in Bombay, and it was from here that, after his death in 1931, his disciples under the leadership of Vinayakrao Patwardhan established the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya Mandal to promote the foundation of affiliated schools with a uniform music curriculum, examinations and degrees governing them all. In 1946, this became the Akhil Bharatiya Gandharva Mahavidyalaya (All India Music University Board), an institution that today coordinates the

numerous affiliated music schools set up throughout northern India and which has about 100,000 students sitting examinations every year.

Although use of the term 'Hindu music' at that time was probably not intended to be sectarian as it would be today and may have meant much the same thing as Hindustani music does now, 'it must nevertheless have alienated Muslims to some degree' (Kippen 2006: 55). This is all the more likely because Muslim rule and the *ustads* were increasingly blamed for its decline. In chorus, Hindu nationalists generally adopted beliefs of superiority about the antiquity, complexity and, indeed, spirituality of 'Hindu music'. A sideshow in this process, facilitated by modern print culture, was the growing visual dominance in society of musical images of Hindu gods, such as Krishna playing the flute, Saraswati the *vina* and Shiva as the 'Cosmic Dancer' Nataraj. Above all, however, the agenda of Hindu national music reforms clashed with the *ustads*' study and teaching methods. The notated compositions and overall urge towards musical standardization undermined the diversity of the oral versions in circulation, and sometimes preserved in the hereditary musicians' notebooks. Although the example of Bhatkhande testifies to the latent relationship between the quest for modern scientific knowledge and opposition to Muslim musicians, it simultaneously shows that what happened was part of a complicated socio-cultural configuration. Hindu reformers mainly wanted to be modern and to belong to their times, but it was impossible for them to predict the future results of their initiatives. Nonetheless the ascendancy of a dominant Hindu identity in Hindustani music led not only to the retreat of an important domain of shared music and affective experience but consecutively also to the marginalization of the *ustads* in modern music institutions.

Institutional Marginalization

In 1926, together with Rai Umanath Bali and Thakur Nawab Ali Khan, Bhatkhande founded the Marris College of Music in Lucknow.⁸ As honorary secretary, Rai Umanath Bali would run the College's day-to-day affairs for some three decades. He was an ardent nationalist affiliated to the Indian National Congress and viewed the College as a national effort.

Furthermore, when he wrote down its goals in 1926, he particularly insisted on freeing knowledge about Hindustani music from the grip of ‘illiterate’ hereditary musicians and proposed

[...] to (1) revive old and ancient art of music and to introduce it to high society, which from the last 60 years has fallen in the hands of illiterates; (2) to arrange for new *raga* productions on scientific and systematic lines; and (3) to collect and preserve the great masterpieces of the art now in the possession of illiterates. (Katz 2017: 110)

Thus, from the very beginning, Marris College was imagined as a modern national institution, and elements that appeared as ‘unscientific’ to its founders, its financiers and, over time, its teachers had to be removed.

It can be assumed that, in his use of the term ‘illiterates’, Bali meant the Muslim hereditary musicians. For example, the great majority of the performing musicians at Bhatkhande’s five All India Music Conferences, which preceded and led to the foundation of the Marris College, had been *ustads*. Although David Trasoff’s argument that they ‘were kept segregated from the “respectable” classes’ (Trasoff 2010: 337) most likely did not account for the most celebrated Muslim musicians, one could nonetheless argue that Bhatkhande and others, mostly Hindu music reformers, to a certain extent used the Conferences to scrutinize the *ustads* in a ‘respectable’ setting. Likewise, in the first decade of its existence, the College was heavily dependent on Muslim hereditary musicians as teachers,⁹ who were repeatedly praised for their art, but ultimately it did not invest in them. On the contrary, in 1931, while looking back at the College’s first four and a half years in operation, Bali wrote: ‘In short, this institution is meeting the keenly felt need of turning out properly and scientifically trained music teachers from amongst the respectable classes’ (Katz 2017: 110). At the same time, the College became increasingly Hindu-centric, for instance, by celebrating Hindu holidays in a grand style and later appointing Hindu teachers from Benares (*ibid.*: 122–3). By 1940, then, a radical shift in the ratio of Muslim to Hindu teachers took place, although as Max Katz has recently stressed:

The marginalization of Muslim hereditary musicians and the ennobling of middle-class Hindus [...] was a nearly inevitable consequence of the ideological base on which the College was founded, and thus should not be ascribed to the bias or prejudice of any specific individual. (Ibid.: 127)

At the Partition of British India in 1947, a great number of Muslim musicians left for Pakistan, especially from Punjab and Delhi, and those who had decided to stay on in independent India now increasingly (had to) represent(ed) themselves as 'secular' Muslims, a point I return to later in this chapter. More importantly, and perhaps predictably, the institutional marginalization of the *ustads* became more open, to begin with at All India Radio (AIR), which for decades was the largest organization employing musicians. Under B.V. Keskar, Minister of Information and Broadcasting (1952–1962), AIR hired thousands of musicians as regular or part-time employees. Keskar was nonetheless a convinced Hindu nationalist and a resolute follower of the reforms of Bhatkhande and Paluskar. By and large, he sought to reassert Hindu cultural influence in Hindustani music by purging the 'Islamic influences' which, he argued, had led to its 'eroticisation' and its drifting away from its 'spiritual' core. While he believed that the state of Indian music had been waning under both Muslim and British rule, he particularly blamed Muslim musicians for this. In his view, the *ustads* had 'appropriated and distorted the ancient art, turning it into the secret craft of exclusive lineages, the *gharanas*, and, ignorant of Sanskrit, divorced it from the religious context of Hindu civilization' (Lelyveld 1996: 55). In Muslim hands, he continued, music was no longer 'spiritual' but had become the special preserve of 'dancing girls, prostitutes and their circle of pimps'. It was therefore hardly surprising that respectable Hindus had turned away from it in disgust (ibid.). As to be expected in this ideological context, Keskar mainly wanted to employ musicians at AIR with a qualification from one of the modern music institutions. With the help of Paluskar's student Vinayakrao Patwardhan and Bhatkhande's disciple S.N. Ratanjankar, he developed an elaborate audition and selection system whereby musicians were graded as A, B or C on the basis of a brief performance and their knowledge of music theory. Only some of the most famous musicians, both Muslims and Hindus, did not have to go through this. As a matter of fact, in line with their

overall civilizing mission, the British had established AIR in 1936 partly to cultivate good taste among Indian audiences, and the efforts of Keskar, Patwardhan and Ratanjankar should undeniably be seen as a continuation of this moral ideology. Although many *ustads* obviously made their way on to AIR, the point is that in doing so they not only had to perform in a disciplined manner in a recording studio, to some extent they also had to adapt their ways of music-making to those propagated by Hindu music reformers.

While *ustads* were thus more or less marginalized at Lucknow's Marris College, AIR and Paluskar's schools, they were, as expected, expelled entirely from Benares Hindu University (BHU). Formerly known as Central Hindu College, BHU had been a centre for the dissemination of Hindu nationalist ideas since its foundation in 1916. The Theosophist Annie Besant, who was actually the President of Indian National Congress in 1917–1918, had established Central Hindu College in 1898, and for a long time it was closely linked with the Theosophical movement. As is commonly known, Theosophists generally played an important role in the making of Indian nationalism, especially because they propagated the 'spirituality' of the Hindu (and Buddhist) traditions as superior to Western 'materialistic' civilization (van der Linden 2013: 16, 18–20). BHU's College of Music and Arts was founded in 1950 and headed until 1957 by Paluskar's disciple, Omkarnath Thakur (1897–1967). Besides being an influential teacher (formerly at the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya in Lahore and at his own music school in Bombay), Thakur was a celebrated singer who performed widely in India and Europe. As a steadfast Hindu nationalist, however, he urged his Indian audiences to shout 'Jai Shri Ram' (Victory to Lord Rama) after his recitals (Dasgupta 2006: 3862). Thakur generally scorned Bhatkhande's work and his system of *raga* classification in particular. Hence, between 1938 and 1963 he himself published six influential textbooks titled *Sangitanjali*, which dealt with the theory and practice of *ragas*. On the whole, Thakur believed in a golden age of 'Hindu music' and declared that Hindustani music practice had to reflect the ancient Sanskrit music treatises. His student Prem Lata Sharma, who from 1966 onwards led India's first Department of Musicology at BHU, did the same (Powers 1992: 19, 49). That said, like

Paluskar, Thakur continued to teach and sing compositions by Muslim hereditary musicians (Dasgupta 2006: 3862).

To different degrees, Marris College, Paluskar's schools, BHU and other modern musical institutions cultivated a 'Hindu cultural sphere' (about BHU, see Slawek 2007: 507). Almost all students and, eventually, teachers were Hindus and, over time, these institutes also delivered an ever-growing number of Hindu professional musicians, teachers and informed listeners, many of whom were women. Indeed, in contrast to what has been repeatedly argued (Bakhle 2005: 253; Neuman 2014: 288; Slawek 2007: 508), institutional music education was successful in producing Hindu professional musicians. A number of Paluskar's students became celebrated singers, including his own son Dattatreya Vishnu Paluskar, Vinayakrao Patwardhan, Omkarnath Thakur, Narayanrao Vyas and B.R. Deodhar. Likewise, under the directorship of S.N. Ratanjankar between 1928 and 1957, Marris College produced Balasaheb Poochwale, D.T. Joshi, Chinmoy Lahiri, Dinkar Kaikini, Sumati Mutatkar, V.G. Jog, K.G. Ginde and S.C.R. Bhat. Some may argue that these musicians do not belong to the very best performing artists and that, on the contrary, those who do were trained within long-term personal teacher-disciple relations known as *ustad-shagird* or *guru-shishya*, away from modern institutions. Yet, it should be emphasized simultaneously that in the twentieth century, and especially since Indian independence, it became increasingly difficult to learn in this traditional way, and that only a few of those who did eventually so also succeeded as concert musicians. To a great extent, therefore, post-1947 references to the traditional teacher-disciple relationship belong to the realm of 'romantic' recollection. Moreover, the comparison remains generally out of place because, as with Western conservatories, institutional music education in India only aims to provide a basis for further musical development.

In any case, Bhatkhande and Paluskar, and their disciples in particular, created a network that led to a highly influential sense of historical continuity in musical institutions, canonical compositions, teaching methods and so on. The curriculum developed by Bhatkhande and Ratanjankar was adopted by all the universities with Hindustani music departments and at numerous music colleges and schools. Indeed, there is no doubt that, through his writings, system of *raga* classification and music

notation system, which generally replaced all other existing systems, Bhatkhande had a definite influence on modern Hindustani music teaching and practice, including indeed on traditional learning and performing. As Daniel Neuman has emphasized, although generally *ustads* 'would be loath to acknowledge much of anything from Bhatkhande', they nonetheless occasionally appeal to him as an authority 'when they feel the need to look learned or corroborate a claim' (Neuman 2014: 289; cf. Dasgupta 2006: 3862). In addition, among other things, music recordings, radio performances, the modern concert format and music tours to the West led to greater professionalization and standardization in Hindustani music.

Conversely, the 'Hinduization' of the oldest extant festival of Hindustani music in India, the Harballabh Festival (since 1875) in Jalandhar, Punjab, may be mentioned in relation to the marginalization of Muslim musicians. The festival's origins are associated with the death of Swami Harballabh, whose guru had taken over the site, which was originally a Muslim Sufi shrine. Although it is not clear whether the festival was merely a continuation of the earlier celebrations of the Sufi saint, the majority of the performing musicians were initially Muslims. Yet, partly due to Paluskar's involvement at the beginning of the last century, what was originally a music fair and an impromptu gathering changed into a modern annual music conference and concert event with admission charges. Furthermore, Paluskar himself not only popularized the *khayal* singing style over that of *dhrupad*, which was earlier the dominant genre at Harballabh, but generally also turned it into a festival of Hindu devotional songs (*bhajans*) with his own disciples, among whom were Omkarnath Thakur, Vinayakrao Patwardhan and Narayanrao Vyas, as main performers over time (Kapurja 2018: 27). Needless to say, fewer Muslim and Sikh musicians and audiences attended the festival over time, especially since Indian independence.

Yet, as I have already remarked, many Hindu musicians, including most of those mentioned so far, continued to study with Muslim musicians, although often only temporarily. While as a result musical knowledge from different lineages was more or less maintained, one could simultaneously argue that it was partially—and, once again, largely unintendedly—'Hinduized', in the sense of being taken away from the *ustads*

and appropriated into a reformist musical idiom and/or in a modern institutional setting. One most significant result of this process was the emergence of a whole new generation of ‘respectable’ female singers from a Hindu middle-class and generally upper-caste background, especially in Maharashtra. For example, two of the greatest female singers of the first half of the twentieth century, Kesarbai Kerkar and Mogubai Kurdikar (the mother of the eminent singer Kishori Amonkar), studied with Alladiya Khan. Together with Hirabai Barodekar (the daughter of Abdul Karim Khan), Gangubai Hangal and others, they subsequently paved the way for Dhondutai Kulkarni, Manik Bhide, Veena Sahasrabudhe, Padmavati Shaligram, Ashwini Bhide-Deshpande and others, away from singing at private gatherings (*mehfils*), as was common for women of previous generations, to public concerts. The point, of course, is that the great majority of the female singers, and often dancers, at these *mehfils* were unacceptable as role models for middle-class Hindu women because they belonged to the courtesan class and were Muslim. Thus, due to Hindu national music reforms and the overall ‘civilizing’ morality of elitist Hindus, these courtesans, known as *tawaiifs* and *baijis*, and indeed their male accompanists on the *sarangi*, of whom the great majority were Muslim too, were stigmatized and marginalized during the early twentieth century. In fact, one of the first policies of AIR after Indian independence was to ban singers and musicians associated with courtesan culture and indeed anyone ‘whose private life was a public scandal’ (Lelyveld 1996: 57).

The ‘Secular’ *Ustad* at a Time of Hindu Nationalist Majority Politics and Violence

From the final decades of the nineteenth century onwards, Hindu majority politics became progressively dominant in the north Indian public sphere in the context of processes of modern state formation. Among other things, the growing use of essentialized census categories of religious communities and the foundation of religious-nationalist political parties, such as the Muslim League and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh,

not only led to the assertion of antagonistic Hindu and Muslim identities, but periodically also to Hindu violence against Muslims. In fact, Muslims were confronted with the pairing of anti-Muslim chauvinism and music in society as well. Best known are the ‘music before mosque riots’, which generally occurred in the major cities after ‘the deliberate display of a musical procession, usually accompanying a Hindu festival, in front of a Muslim place of worship, causing offence and, very often, violence’ (Lynch 2012: n.p.). The following commentary from *The Times of India* for 10 October 1924, about a riot during the celebration of the Hindu Durga Puja festival in the greater Calcutta area, is illustrative of the way in which music had attained an antagonistic kind of power. After a group of Hindus had gathered outside a mosque, one anonymous journalist wrote, ‘[S]tone-throwing was indulged by the Mahomedans within the mosque ... [and the] Hindus *retaliated* by playing band and music’ (ibid., emphasis in original).

Similarly, the use of music during the Ganapati festival in Maharashtra led to confrontations between Hindus and Muslims. The Hindu nationalist Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1853–1920) almost single-handedly reinvented the Ganapati festival, from a devotional one celebrated by families in honour of the popular elephant-headed god Ganesh (or Ganapati), Shiva’s son, into a political one, rejoicing at Hindu nationalist glory. Music was not only central to the reinvented festival; it also included songs with anti-Muslim lyrics. One song, for example, asked of participants: ‘What boon has Allah conferred upon you, that you have become Mussalmans today? Do not be friendly to a religion which is alien, do not give up your religion and be fallen’ (ibid.: n.p.). Another participant straightforwardly asked for action: ‘Disturbances have taken place in several places, and Hindus have been beaten. Let all of us with one accord exert ourselves to demand justice’ (ibid.: n.p.). On the whole, Tilak’s Ganapati festival was a direct attack on syncretic religious practices. While formerly Hindus used to participate in the Muharram celebrations, Tilak now asked them to boycott this Muslim festival, ‘offering Ganapati as a new, and divisive, alternative’ (ibid.). No doubt all this changed the way in which Hindus and Muslims saw each other. In pre-colonial times, Muslims hardly worried about music near mosques, and the standing of Sufism in South Asia was undeniably important. However,

the Muslim socio-religious reformers of the Deobandi Movement (founded in 1867) and the closely related Tablighi Jama'at Movement (founded in 1926) explicitly came to denounce music and dance, as well as Muslim participation in Hindu festivals. In doing so, they too undermined the syncretism of north Indian music.

The coupling of Hindu violence and music in attacks on Muslims continues to this day. Peter Manuel has described the importance of anti-Muslim songs in the Ram Janmabhoomi (literally, Ram's birthplace) campaign. In 1992, this campaign led to the demolition of the Babri Masjid (a mosque built by Mughal Emperor Babar) in Ayodhya by Hindu nationalists and was followed by widespread Hindu-Muslim violence across north India (Manuel 1996: 131–133). Likewise, the tomb of the earlier mentioned Faiyaz Khan in Baroda was heavily desecrated during the Gujarat anti-Muslim pogrom of 2002. Most recently, north Indian DJs have become very popular for their mixing of music with anti-Muslim and anti-Pakistan texts, mainly from movie dialogues and political speeches. The music is often played close to Muslim neighbourhoods and mosques to hurt members of the community and contains passages such as (in relation to Ayodhya) 'Child Ram, we'll go and build the temple there itself ... Scram, men of Allah! The birthplace has been surrounded. Make your mosque somewhere else, this is Ram Lalla's establishment' or (in relation to Pakistan) 'The saffron flag will fly in Pakistan too, you and your father will scream the name of Ram' (Anshuman 2018). This craze can be traced to Pankaj Kushwaj, better known as DJ Lucky, who has a channel on YouTube with over 830,000 subscribers. He took the internet by storm with millions of views, especially of his 'Modi' and 'Yogi' mixes with explicit anti-Muslim and anti-Pakistan texts (i.e. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Yogi Adityanath, the current Chief Minister of the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, who both are Hindu nationalists).¹⁰

In general, Hindu anti-Muslim violence was and is accompanied by rallying cries such as 'Vande Mataram' (Glory to the Mother[land]) and 'Hindu Dharm ki Jai' (Glory to the Hindu Religion). The first of these was actually sung by Paluskar and Omkarnath Thakur, among others, at nationalist gatherings and anti-colonial rallies, and it deserves further attention because of its controversial history as India's 'national song'.

Originally 'Vande Mataram' was part of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Anandamath* (1881), India's first and celebrated, but anti-Muslim, novel (Bhattacharya 2003; see also Julius Lipner's less absolute interpretation of Chatterjee's anti-Muslimness in Chatterjee 2005). Ever since, many Muslims and 'secular' Indians have objected to the song's opposition to Islam, particularly because they regarded some of its verses as idolatrous for addressing Mother India as a Hindu goddess. Ultimately, just the first two verses of 'Vande Mataram' were declared to be India's 'national song', as distinct from the national anthem, 'Jana Gana Mana'. The remaining two verses only refer abstractly to one's mother and motherland; they do not mention any Hindu deity by name, unlike later verses, in which comparisons are made between one's country/mother and the goddesses Durga and Lakshmi. From the very beginning, nonetheless, the attempt to secularize 'Vande Mataram' was resisted by Hindu chauvinists, especially those in the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. They not only coined the slogan, 'If you want to live in this country, you will have to sing "Vande Mataram"', they also attempted to have the song sung in public schools as an expression of loyalty to the Indian nation. Since the rise of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (the political party of Narendra Modi) in the 1990s, new productions of 'Vande Mataram' have become immensely popular. One 1998 clip sung by India's most famous Bollywood playback singer, Late Mangeshkar, achieved cult success. It is rather belligerent, full of marching, horseback riding and hosting of the flag in different Indian settings. Most interesting are its subtitles, which describe India's population as '700 million below the age of thirty!', followed by 'and home to 150 million peaceful Muslims'. In this way, then, Muslims are excluded from their rightful Indian citizenship and instead categorized as pacified others inhabiting the nation.¹¹

Undeniably, this wider context of the joining up of Hindu nationalism and music influenced how Muslim musicians envisaged their position in society, especially in independent India. In fact, during the 1950s and 1960s, Indian Muslims largely voted for the 'secular' Indian National Congress, but afterwards they voted for whichever party that appeared to cater to their interests best. As a minority community that sometimes, and since the 1990s increasingly, is perceived to have sympathies with India's constant military and political enemy, Pakistan, Indian Muslims

obviously could not go in for confrontational politics. Unlike Hindus, moreover, they were not in a position to link music with identity politics, especially because the *ustads* soon realized that their position as musicians would be even worse in Pakistan. For this reason, the famous singer Bade Ghulam Ali Khan returned to India in 1957. On the whole, the Congress Party, which ruled India continually between 1947 and 1977, and for some periods thereafter, propagated secularism and harmony between Hindus and Muslims, and the idea of a syncretic Hindustani music tradition (see particularly Manuel 1996) undoubtedly suited this context. In any case, the government supported leading Muslim musicians by sponsoring concerts, Festival of India tours abroad, scholarships, awards and so on. Over time, concerts in the West became an important source of income, if not the main one, for leading *ustads*, as well as Hindu musicians, and overall this global relationship had a great impact on the Hindustani music scene. The *dhrupad* genre, for instance, had fallen from popularity in India until Western interest from the mid-1960s onwards provided it with both support and audiences.

Since the early twentieth century, and over the last fifty years in particular, Hindustani music has increasingly been performed in a 'Hindu cultural sphere' in both India and abroad. Hence, when *ustads* in independent India chose to invoke Hindu deities publicly (being a devotee of Saraswati, the Hindu goddess of learning, in particular) or religious practices, as they often did when talking about the music being performed, they now regularly did so on a stage 'with the accoutrements of Hindu ritualism, such as incense holders, marigold garlands, and oil lamps' (Bakhle 2005: 261). At present, typically, the *sarod* master Amjad Ali Khan welcomes his audiences with the Hindu greeting *namaskar*, clarifies the significance of the teacher-disciple relationship by using the Sanskrit *guru-shishya* instead of the Urdu *ustad-shagird* and explains the *alap* or slow introduction to a *raga* as similar to Hindu yoga meditation. The point is that all these obligatory celebrations of a 'Hindu cultural sphere' acknowledge that the *ustad's* 'personal faith was a matter of no consequence' (Subramanian 2006: 4649). On the contrary, as if the social meaning of the terms 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' had not changed since the imperial encounter, numerous Muslim musicians began to speak openly about their supposed 'Hindu' ancestry. Members of the Dagar family,

who are leaders of the *dhrupad* genre, repeatedly emphasized their Brahmanical status (ibid.: 4650), and Aminuddin Dagar specifically described his art as ‘an offering to the feet of *bhagwan* [God]’ and compared the *alap* to ‘the ritual decoration (*sringar*) of a Hindu deity’s image’ (Manuel 1996: 126). Of course, syncretic remarks like this have a long history among Muslim musicians, but one cannot deny that their meaning has become more politicized in modern times. In fact, Muslim musicians occasionally adopted secular surnames, as in the case of the renowned *sitar* player Jamaluddin Bharatiya.

Then again, even if high-profile *ustads* such as Ali Akbar Khan, Bismillah Khan, Vilayat Khan and Amjad Ali Khan found their way as ‘good secular Muslims’ (Subramanian 2006: 4649) on to stages in India and around the world, the present-day Indian Muslim community at large constitutes a poor, backward and relatively uneducated minority of around 200 million (still the world’s second largest Muslim community or ‘nation’ in numbers). Unquestionably, other Muslim musicians not only had far fewer opportunities, but also had more direct experience of Hindu discrimination and oppression—which indeed, as Ahmad and van der Veer emphasize in this volume, has extremely exacerbated under Narendra Modi’s prime ministership. I have already mentioned the examples of the Muslim courtesans and *sarangi* players, and Max Katz has recently shown how something similar happened to *ustads* in Lucknow (Katz 2017), yet this important topic definitely awaits further research. Actually, the relationship between Hindus and Muslims in the context of the ‘Hinduization’ of Hindustani music is largely comparable to what happened musically between Sikhs and Muslims in North India. Since its foundation by Guru Nanak (1469–1539), the Sikh tradition had a great number of Muslim musicians (*rababis*) performing devotional music (*kirtan*) from the Sikh Holy Scripture, the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Yet, due to the Singh Sabha reform movement, which led to the ‘classicization’ of *kirtan* and the definition of ‘Sikhism’ at large, these *rababis* were discarded during the early twentieth century (van der Linden 2013: Chapter 5).

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the stigmatization and subsequent marginalization of the Muslim *ustad* has a historical genealogy that began at the latest in the late nineteenth century. It has discussed how Hindu national music reforms in the context of processes of modernization and state formation led to the ‘Hinduization’ of north Indian art music and how this undermined the social position and authority of these Muslim hereditary musicians in different ways. Although this was anything but a straightforward trajectory, at least three developments were decisive. Firstly, in the wake of the work of British Orientalists like William Jones, Hindu reformers reclaimed a golden age of ‘Hindu music’ that had supposedly declined under Muslim rule, for which, prejudicially, they blamed the ‘illiterate’ *ustads*. Secondly, as part of this very same process of reviving ‘Hindu music’, reformers of the Paluskar variety in particular highlighted the devotional function of north Indian music, which again they assumed to be pre-Muslim. Hence, musical performance, regardless of the genre (*dhrupad*, *khayal* and so on), essentially came to be understood as a form of Hindu religious practice, with students, for example, worshipping their teachers as spiritual gurus in a manner characteristic of *bhakti* (i.e. emotional devotionism). To some extent, no doubt, European Orientalist thought, including in its Theosophical incarnation, played a role in this nationalist endeavour to recover the ‘spirituality’ of ‘Hindu music’. Thirdly, and probably most significantly, Hindu national music reforms, and especially those introduced by Bhatkhande, directly challenged the ‘unscientific’ knowledge and teaching practices of the *ustads*. Above all, this was because, over time, processes of professionalization led to the theory, performance and teaching of Hindustani music being standardized. The main results of this complex socio-cultural configuration were the marginalization of Muslims in modern music institutions and the fact that Hindustani music was increasingly studied and performed in a ‘Hindu cultural sphere’ largely consisting of middle-class Hindu audiences. In addition, Muslim musicians were faced with a growing link between Hindu chauvinism and music in society, which surely also affected their lives and public appearances. No doubt Hindu

nationalist majority politics was crucial to the marginalization of the *ustads* in all its subtle and complex manifestations.

To conclude, music and ‘religion’ are often similarly conversed about, especially in terms of their ‘spirituality’ and transcendence. Yet, as I have argued in this chapter, they are both closely embedded in society and formative in its construction, negotiation and transformation in terms of both consensus and conflict. Moreover, while the two generally overlapped in pre-modern ‘tradition’, they were equally defined and institutionalized as part of modern national ‘cultures’. Thus, while the transfer from Muslim ‘minority’ community to Hindu ‘majority’ community in modern Hindustani music-making remains unique in global history, this does not mean that it cannot be compared with the cases I mentioned in the first paragraph or similar ones. For instance, underlying the dominant propagation of European classical music over Asian ‘traditional’ art and folk music by imperial (Christian and later communist) Russians and imperial (Confucianist and later communist) Han Chinese is the same complex process as that I have discussed in this chapter, namely of (scientific) rational and moral and/or civilizing modes of thought that become institutionalized under the banner of nationalism and are backed by the state power of a majority community. Indeed, the global history of music not only shows the datedness of the scholarly use of the category of ‘religion’, it above all reaffirms the continuing importance of knowledge of the imperial encounter for a historical understanding of the making of national ‘cultures’ in the global age.

Notes

1. Peter van der Veer’s writings (for an overview, see Ahmad, this volume) have given me joy and food for thought since my student days. To a great extent this chapter supplements his work on ‘religion’ and nationalism in India (and beyond) and I dedicate it to him with gratitude. Further, thanks to Irfan Ahmad and Jie Kang for their supportive comments on an earlier version of this chapter and for making this volume happen in the first place.

2. In India, a distinction is made between north Indian ‘Hindustani’ art music and south Indian ‘Karnatak’ art music. Although there is a great deal of overlap between the two traditions, especially in music theory, Hindustani music mainly developed in a different manner because of the far more dominant interaction between Indic and Persian–Central Asian music in the north. During the colonial period, however, the two traditions underwent similar processes of musical standardization and institutionalization in the context of nationalism and wider processes of state formation.
3. Of course, my criticism of the use of the concept of ‘religion’ equally accounts for its binary opposition ‘secularity’. Instead of taking these two nineteenth-century categories as a starting point and accordingly argue that ‘religion’ continued to be alive and kicking in a modern world which never became ‘secular’, it seems more worthwhile to me to try to understand what actually happened. About the ambiguousness of the use of the binary opposition ‘religion’ versus ‘secularity’—and indeed the definite importance of majority community nationalism and state power—in modern India, see also Ahmad and van der Veer in this volume.
4. Two famous Hindu students of Abdul Karim Khan, for instance, are Sawai Gandharva (who later taught Bhimsen Joshi and Gangubai Hangal) and Kesarbai Kerkar (although she studied for only eight months with him during her youth and eventually became a disciple of Alladiya Khan).
5. Allauddin Khan was the guru of Ravi Shankar and the father of two other celebrated north Indian art musicians, Ali Akbar Khan and Roshanara Khan. The latter later became a Hindu so as to marry Shankar and renamed herself Annapurna Devi.
6. Players of the *rudra vina*, a large plucked string instrument originating in the Indian subcontinent.
7. The narrative of the deterioration of Indian music and the ‘illiteracy’ of its performers can also be found in pre-colonial Persian sources; yet, it was the British colonial writers and Hindu national music reformers who specifically endowed it with anti-Muslim significance.
8. In 1966 it was renamed the Bhatkhande Music College of Hindustani Music, and since 2000 it has been known as the Bhatkhande Music Institute Deemed University.

9. Unsurprisingly so, of course, because for a long time Lucknow, especially under Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, was the cosmopolitan Islamic cultural capital of north India and a hub for music and dance.
10. 'Modi' mix: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pTs7qb1Xfso>; 'Yogi' mix: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8-PIDCQs9jU>.
11. 'Vande Mataram', sung by Late Mangeshkar (music: Ranjit Barot/directors: Bala and Kanika), 1998: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c6PHJg9D_Sk.

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