Unity, Democracy, and the All India Phenomenon, 1940-1956

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Dedication

To Abe for his support and love

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Introduction: India's Crisis of Unity: Defining the "All India" Phenomenon

India has been an independent country for more than sixty years and yet the question of Indian unity continues to be a matter of almost universal concern. In March of 2008, in the midst of attacks on people from the northern state of Bihar living in Mumbai, *The Hindu* newspaper printed a cartoon depicting a map of India with the states demarcated and inside each state was a map of India. In the cartoon one man asks another, "and you want to remove Bihar from Maharashtra?!".[1] The cartoon was attempting to argue that each Indian state both existed as part of the Indian nation and also fully and fundamentally encompassed the unity of the Indian nation. It argued for a cessation of the violence against Biharis in Mumbai by claiming that because each state inseparable from the nation, it would be impossible to remove what was Bihar from what was Maharashtra and the characteristics of Marathis from the characteristics of Biharis. Yet that the question of separating out one state or identity from another could be raised, indicates the strength of regional identities in India and the uncertainty of the national identity, which could allow for the possibility of the separation of "essential Bihari-ness" from the quality of being that describes the Marathi.[2] Moreover, if there is something that defines Maharashtra as fundamentally different from Bihar—a regional identity that cannot be

[1] "National Unity," *The Hindu*, March 10, 2008. The harassment and violence toward Biharis in Mumbai is almost endemic at this point, with stories about continued harassment in 2010 in *India Today*. See, for example, "Won't Allow Bar on Migrants in Maharashtra: Rahul," *India Today*, (February 2, 2010); "Rahul Attacks Sena, MNS for Tirade against North Indians," *India Today*, (February 1, 2010). While the problem of harassment against North Indians is almost entirely blamed on Marathi chauvinists attempting to stir up trouble in Mumbai, it has historic precedents in the fight to define Maharashtra, Bombay, and Gujarat in the 1950s and 60s. See Ramachandra Guha, *India After Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 197-208.

[2] And perhaps even what defines this essential Bihari-ness is hard to understand, as the state itself has recently been refigured with the creation of Jharkhand state in late 2000. The question certainly becomes more difficult when the city of Mumbai (one of the world's largest metropolises) is the site of defining Marathi identity, despite its ambivalent historical relationship with Maharashtra, and which includes permanent residents from not only every state in the Indian nation, but many other countries as well.

easily reconciled with the national identity—then the concept of a unifying Indian identity that holds both Bihar and Maharashtra must be more complicated than merely declarative. Indian unity continues to be a nearly universal watchword in Indian politics, although the meaning of that unity is, as it was just before independence, uncertain.

In its sixty years of independent existence, India has never been able to articulate a singular vision of what it means to be Indian, though it has tried. Nothing about the national presentation of itself has remained static. In addition to wars with Pakistan and China that have resulted in the changing of international borders, there are several regional movements looking for some kind of division either from the states the area belongs to or from the nation entirely.[3] There are active separatist movements in the Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, and Kashmir. Sikh movements for an independent Khalistan, although small, are still active both in India and abroad. It is possible, based on Indian Government announcements, that by the end of 2010 a separate Telangana state, carved out of the inland areas of Andhra Pradesh (including Hyderabad), may finally be accomplished.[4] The Telangana movement, as much a socio-economic movement as a linguistic one, has been agitating for separate statehood since before the advent of the Indian nation—first fighting the Hyderabad princely state, and later fighting the government of India.[5] Excluding territorial disagreements about the structure of Indian national unity, religious and caste-based organizations have sought to define Indian unity

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[3] Indeed the borders with China and Pakistan are both still disputed with no nation agreeing to make the 'lines of control' permanent demarcations of national territory.
[4] Aparna Alluri, "Victim of History," *Frontline* 26, no. 26 (2009); S. Nagesh Kumar, "Talking Peace" *Frontline* 27, no. 2 (2010); Jim Yardley, "A Politican Goes Hungry to Redraw India's Map" *New York Times*, December 11, 2009; Yardley, "Bid to Partition Indian State Intensifies in India," *New York Times*, December 14, 2009.
[5] P. Sundarayya, *Telengana People's Struggle and Its Lessons* (Calcutta: Communist Party India: Marxist, 1972).

as exclusively benefits their cause. Hindu nationalism, which has had a large political voice in India, has sought to define India as a Hindu nation to the exclusion of other religions. At the same time, other national movements have asked whether national unity is defined by the way that the nation treats its citizens, leaving poor, rural, and minority citizens as mere victims of the nation. In either case, the idea of Indian unity, so flippantly defined as "unity in diversity," is just as much under question now as it was before independence. Independent India, obsessed with its unity, is still trying to decide what unity means.

A Crisis of Unity: Defining National Unity for India

One of the things that the national independence programs of the 1920s and early 30s taught anti-colonial groups was that in order to make an impact, there needed to be some kind of gesture toward the indivisibility of the Indian nation, whether it be through history (as was most usual), geography, or common suffering under colonial rule. Both Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru wrote extensively about the indivisible history of India. In *Discovery of India*, Nehru wrote that India, though seemingly rife with difference, was actually a palimpsest where diversity overlaid a fundamental and historical unity, "Though outwardly there was infinite variety among our people, everywhere there was that tremendous impress of oneness, which had held us together for ages past."[6] Gandhi emphasized the importance of building out of raw

[6] *The Discovery of India*, follows Indian history from the beginning of time until 1942. Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2004), 51-52. Nehru also published a volume of his essays written from 1937-1940 about the meaning and sites of Indian unity. See Nehru, *The Unity of India: Collected Essays, 1937-1940* (New York: John Day Company, 1942).

history a long national story that emphasized the fundamental unity of India.[7] Nehru and Gandhi were not alone in the repetition of a historical record that defined India's fundamental unity. In 1942, the Indian History Organization (which also called itself the *Bharatiya Itihas Parishad* and *Anjuman-i-Tarikh-i-Hind*), planned and announced "the writing of a comprehensive History of India in 20 volumes," which explained the history of India from "Pre-history" through the "Struggle for National Independence," effectively defining all the history from the subcontinent as a lead up to the eventual unified Indian nation.[8]

While a history of Indian unity written by historians falls well within common nationalist attempts to create a unified national identity, and into the broadly statist mission of historical studies in general, the historicizing of Indian unity was not confined to the pens of historians.[9] Discussions of literature, music, and art often began with the

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[7] Mohandas Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, in *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, ed. Anthony Parel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[8] "Indian Historians' History of India" *The Modern Review* 71, no.1 (January 22, 1942): 20. This history, which emphasizes the way that the separate kingdoms and provinces in the historical India resembled each other and worked together, tends to ignore much of the inter-India fighting, or when it cannot be ignored, defines it as fights between brothers.

[9] The connection between history and the production of the state has been long postulated for precisely the reason that Indian history was complicit in the discussion of state building. National identities are not natural, but drawing them back to time long past makes them feel as if they are. The problem with history as a statist enterprise is that writing history to define the nation fundamentally writes some people out of history. In the last several decades, Indian historians, especially those associated with Subaltern Studies, have attempted to de-link history from its nationalist, or statist, past. In one of the group's most famous essays, Ranajit Guha pushed scholars to listen to the 'small' voice of history by paying attention to the ways that nationalist history leave out subaltern voices. Ranajit Guha, "The Small Voice of History," in *Subaltern Studies 9: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, ed. Shahid Amin and Dipesh Chakrabarty (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 1-12. Also in this volume see, Kamala Visweswaran, "Small Speeches, Subaltern Gender: Nationalist Ideology and its Historiography," in *Subaltern Studies 9*, ed. Amin and Chakrabarty, 83-125. Guha followed this discussion of the need for an expansive history with another more rousing call for it in his book, *History at the Limit of World-History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003). Other authors in the group, notably Shahid Amin, *Event, Memory, Metaphor: Chauri Chaura, 1922-1992* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995) and Gyanendra Pandey, *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), have put pressure on nationalist constructions of the nation and its pivotal

long history of India's culture.[10] At the same time, political causes, like women's rights and reform, couched their own demands and concerns with Indian life in a discussion of "ancient" India and life today.[11] Each of the organizations featured in this dissertation had an expression of Indian unity as one of the key tenets in their constitution, despite not being primarily organized for the purpose of seeking independence. To many anti-colonial activists in the 1940s, national independence, if it could be achieved well, seemed like the solution to the problems of repression, injustice, and poverty that plagued the country.[12] Yet it was clear to many that the success of the nation and the achievement of a "good" independence depended on the near universal decision that India was capable of being unified in the colonial present, hence the number of repetitions of the fundamental historic unity of India.[13]

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movements. There have been many other discussions of history's statist past, especially as it acted as a cover for colonial domination and later as a ploy of nationalism. One need only read Hegel's *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, with its global historical explanation for European colonial domination, to understand the power of history as a tool for defining national power. G.W.F. Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, trans. Leo Rauch (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1988). The English should not have been surprised when their colonial subjects used the British history trick on the British themselves. For more on this subject see: Richard Roberts "History and Memory: The Power of Statist Narratives" *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 33, no. 3 (2000): 513-522, Jacques Ranciere, *The Names of History*, trans. Hassan Melehy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism,* revised edition (London: Verso, 1991).

[10] R.R. Diwakar, "Forward," in *An Anthology of Indian Literatures*, ed. K. Santhanam. (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1969); *Indian Literatures of Today*, ed. Bharatan Kumarappa (Bombay: All India PEN Centre, 1947); *Indian Writers in Council Proceedings of the First All-India Writers' Conference, Jaipur 1945*, ed. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar (Bombay: International Bookhouse Ltd., 1945); *Aspects of Indian Music: A series of special articles and papers read at the Music symposia arranged by All India Radio* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1957); Kamaladevi Chattopadhey, *Toward a National Theatre* (Aundh: Aundh Publishing Trust, 1945).

[11] Renuka Ray, "The All India Conference as a National Forum," *All India Women's Conference Souvenir: 1927-1970* (New Delhi: All India Women's Conference, 1971).

[12] The question of what a good independence would look like was contentious.

[13] Jyotsna G. Singh, *Colonial Narratives/ Cultural Dialogues: "Discoveries" of India in the Language of Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1996), 155-157; Nizar Ahmed, "A Note on Gandhi, Nation and Modernity" *Social Scientist* 34, no. 5/6 (May/June 2000): 50-69.

The repetitions and requirements for reiteration of the fundamental unity of India originated from a deep insecurity about what could constitute unity in India. Although Indian anti-colonial leaders were not willing to agree with the British that India's differences essentially disabled its ability to create a unified national identity, there could be no disputing that strong regional, religious, class, caste, and linguistic differences made it difficult to pinpoint the affect that described Indian unity. Additionally, political movements that attempted to represent the needs of various minority groups as separate from the "national" needs had gained popularity beginning in the 1930s and expanding in the 1940s, during the height of the anti-colonial movement. These "separatist" tendencies worried anti-colonial leaders, who were concerned that the fight for independence would be undermined by the multiplicity of agendas and descriptions of the nation. The crisis of unity was the fear that in the face of many national agendas, and without the constant recourse to the myth of eternal Indian unity, there would be nothing that particularly defined Indian unity. The push among minorities, attempting to define their role in national life, only exacerbated the crisis.

The cause of rights for Untouchables and the recognition of India's many languages were both singled out as important but potentially divisive causes. B.R. Ambedkar, the leader of the Untouchable political movement, began his campaign to redefine the Untouchables as a separate political concern from caste Hindus in the late 1920s. By the 1940s, his claim of minority status for Untouchables—while generally bemoaned by the All India Congress Committee as a divisive move—was accepted, if

reluctantly, by most anti-colonial activists.[14] As an important step to woo regional activists toward national anti-colonial agitation, the Congress Party organized its branches based on linguistic regions. Still, there were many anti-colonial leaders who feared that language would be an easy way to divide the country. Gandhi, among others, while accepting the idea of linguistic difference and local language traditions as an important organizing tool for politics, strongly supported Hindi/Urdu as a national language. The stated intention of naming Hindi/Urdu to be the national language alienated anti-colonial activists in the South, who felt that their own linguistic traditions were being sublimated to northern dominance.

For the mainstream, especially Congress and the independence activists, the most troubling "separatist" movement was that of the All India Muslim League (AIML). The AIML had been arguing from very early in the anti-colonial struggle that mainstream nationalist agitations, which focused on Hindu signs and symbols, alienated Muslims as part of the definition of India. The moves by Hindu nationalist organizations associated with the mainstream National Congress Party, like the Hindu Mahasabha, to define Muslims as the "outsiders" added to the disconnect between Muslim anti-colonial activists and the nation they were fighting for. After a series of attempts to create safeguards for minority populations in Congress rhetoric throughout the 1920s and 30s, the AIML become more and more convinced that Indian Muslims needed to redefine

[14] Though not by Gandhi, who seemed to take as a personal affront the idea that untouchables were a separate group from Caste Hindus.

their relationship to Hindu India.[15] At the 1940 Lahore meeting of the All India Muslim League AIML President Mohammad Ali Jinnah argued that, "The Mussalmans are not a minority. The Mussalmans are a nation by any definition."[16] The declaration of Indian Muslims as constituting a nation rather than a minority, and the subsequent push for a separate Muslim state of Pakistan undermined the concept of simple, fundamental Indian unity.[17]

In one of the best discussions against the 1940s push for Indian unity, B.R Ambedkar's *Pakistan or the Partition of India*, discusses the function of a national idea with respect to Indian unity.[18] Specifically, following Ernest Renan, Ambedkar systematically dismantled the idea that India, as a single or indivisible nation, existed. Taking seriously Renan's idea that a nation is structured by two things—a cache of common memories and "present-day consent, the desire to live together,"[19] Ambedkar contended that no matter how much nationalists argued that India was united by specific cultural currency, nationally they were already divided by the Muslim demand for Pakistan. Ambedkar maintained that India had no common language, no common religion, only specious common geography, and encompassed several competing empires

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[15] Some attempts, like the Lucknow pact, were relatively short-lived. By the 1930s the Presidential address at All India Muslim League conferences routinely addressed the problem of the Congress's unwillingness to engage with the Muslim League as equals.
[16] Jamil-ud-Din Ahmad, ed., *Historic Documents of the Muslim Freedom Movement* (Lahore: Publishers United, 1970), 377.
[17] There are many sources about Muslim politics in the 1940s. One of most well-regarded, is Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1994). In the book, Jalal convincingly argues that the AIML and Jinnah were not exactly agitating for Pakistan as it stands, but that in face of internal and external pressures were forced to adopt the British partition plan.
[18] Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, *Pakistan or the Partition of India* (Bombay: Thacker, 1946); Ernesto Renan "What is a Nation?" in *Becoming National: A Reader*, ed. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 41-55
[19] Renan, "What is a Nation?" 52.

and princely states. For this reason, India was a nation only insofar as the people involved desired it to be so, and the Muslim demand for Pakistan deemed their declared intention of being a nation to be already fulfilled.

In part, the concerns about Indian unity functioned as an effective rallying tool for anti-colonial activists trying to create a more effective argument against British colonial rule. Congress and its allies argued that British policies (like the census and land taxes) as well as British politics encouraged religious and regional groups to organize separately in order to more effectively negotiate with the government.[20] Further, Congress, the majority party, argued that as Indians were granted limited voting rights in the 1920s and 30s, the British took the chance to enact separate electorates and governmental quota systems that further encouraged religious and regional groups to organize for the purpose of vote banking.[21] Congress argued that British policies were built to define people by their differences, so that various groups would be less likely to work together to fight against the British, a policy known as "divide and rule."

Congress and other anti-colonial activists often cited divide-and-rule tactics to describe communal and regional disputes. It was an especially well-used argument against the claim, often made by the British, that any measure of peace in India was due

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[20] Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Cohn, "Notes on the History of the Study of Indian Society and Culture," in *An Anthropologist Among the Historians and Other Essays* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 136-171; Ranajit Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal: An Essay on the Idea of Permanent Settlement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996).

[21] Interestingly, while Congress complained vigorously about separate electorates and the harm they did to unity in India, they were careful not to criticize all of the British colonial states' divisive practices. Most glaringly, they were careful not rail against the enactment of religion specific personal laws, probably because they were popular with their right-leaning Hindu constituency.

to the restraining and civilizing influence of British rule.[22] For example, a December 19, 1940 cartoon in the *Hindustan Times* depicts the then viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, arms outstretched, each hand holding a noose attached to a Hindu man on the left and a Muslim man on the right. On his arms is written the words, "divide and rule." The caption to the cartoon is a quote from Lord Linlithgow, "we are entitled to claim, we do claim, and I claim today that it is for the Indian parties themselves; for those communities, interests, and political leaders concerned to get together and to see what they can do by way of reaching accommodation with one another."[23] The cartoonist was pointing to the hypocrisy of British officials who, while making it nearly impossible for communities to coordinate and unify, argued that based on continued communal mistrust India was not ready to be a unified and independent nation. Implicitly, the argument made by anti-colonial activists was that recognizing divide-and-rule tactics for what they were then allowed for "communities, interests, and political leaders" to put divisive colonial practices aside and affirm their commitment to Indian independence.[24]

The problem with this argument is two-fold. First, it suggested that the best chance to witness India unity was the fight for Independence, and second it assumed that because the British helped to manufacture and encourage separate life-worlds in communities, regions, and political affiliations of India, these differences were superficial

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[22] R.J. Moore, "The Problem of Freedom with Unity: London's India Policy, 1917-1947," in *Congress and the Raj: Facets of the Indian Struggle 1917-47,* ed. D.A. Low (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 375-404; Dipesh Chakrabarty, "'In the Name of Politics': Democracy and the Power of the Multitude in India," *Public Culture* 19, no. 1 (2007): 35- 57, esp 41-47.

[23] "The Indian Axis at Work," *Hindustan Times*, December 19, 1940, page 4.

[24] "Dr. Khan Saheb on the Unity of India," *The Modern Review* 75 no. 2 (1944): 95. For an interesting look at the idea of divide-and-rule in the African colonial context see Patricia Lorcin, "Imperialism, Colonial Identity, and Race in Algeria, 1830-1870: The Role of the French Medical Corp," *Isis* 90, no. 4 (December 1999): 653-679.

and ultimately scurrilous. The concern that the movement for Independence was the only way to effectively describe Indian unity was one of the major contributing factors to the "crisis of unity." When independence failed to produce a clear vision of India as a unified nation, nationalist historians and politicians were forced to wrestle with the causes of this failure. The easy answer was that the failure to recognize Indian unity was the result of the after-effects of colonial domination. This claim, while certainly at least partially true, threatened to make any attempt to be more interested in minority political expression into a move that re-inscribed colonialism into the nation. That is, it defined minority nationalisms as fundamentally misguided and colonial. Because some Indian nationalist organizations, and especially Congress, could not think about ways that unity could be defined that allowed difference to be fundamental, has allowed the "crisis of unity" to continue as a national motif.[25]

Democracy and Minority

One of the problems with mainstream nationalistic articulations of Indian unity was they created a vision of Indian-ness that either failed to consider minority ideas of the nation, or failed to conceive of minorities in the national story. The historic view of Indian nationalism often started with Aryans, Sanskrit, and Vedic Hinduism, and ended with present-day India. In this vision, people living in the South, speaking non-Sanskrit derived languages, and non-Hindus just did not fit in the Indian imagery. Still, the nationalist movement tried to include these outliers as part of the rhetoric of the Indian nation by arguing that India had "diversity in unity." The problem was that the nationalist

[25] There are still publications written every year reaffirming the fundamental unity of India. Including books like, *Facets of Indian Unity* (Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1965), that were written for the government.

vision of unity was a conflation between a fundamental homogeneity, though admittedly overlaid by diversity, and the idea of unity.[26] In the Indian nationalist vision of the nation, minorities were Indians disguised as something else, but in the minority reading of these nationalist histories, minorities were "not-quite" Indians, defined as much by their ill-fit into the national story as by their commitment to the nation that story was supporting.[27] In a sense, the national minority could only be defined as "the remainder" of the Indian nation, part of the nation, but outside the nation's own mythos.[28]

Scholars have often recognized that nationalism constitutes exclusion and that this exclusion is often made in terms that are broadly recognized as "majority constitutive group" and "minority other."[29] This is certainly the most common way that Indian nationalism has been described. Focusing on contemporary (or historical) effusions of Hindu nationalism, scholars have pointed to the way that Indian-ness was prefaced on making the majority national.[30] National identity is therefore often defined as "majority identity," expansively defined. This is as much the case in India as elsewhere, and the Indian citizen continues to be imagined as northern, light-skinned, male, and caste

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[26] Gyandendra Pandey, *Remembering Partition*, 154.
[27] Madhava Prasad writes interestingly about the idea of commitment that allows a person to hold one position and think critically about it at the same time. Madhava Prasad, "On the Question of a Theory of (Third) World Literature," in *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*, eds. Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, Ella Shohat (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 158.
[28] John Beverley, "Theses on Subalternity, Representation, and Politics," *Postcolonial Studies* 1, no. 3 (1999): 308.
[29] James Scott, *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London: Verso, 1991); Joan Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
[30] Gyandendra Pandey makes an excellent argument against the use of the word Hindutva, literally translated as Hindu-ness, as an equivalent to Hindu Nationalism both because it adopts Hindu nationalists' self-definition into arguments critiquing their ideology, and because it allows that Hindu Nationalists' idea of Hindu-ness to define Hindu-ness more generally. Gyandendra Pandey "Monumental History," in *Routine Violence: Nations, Fragments, and History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 89.

Hindu.[31] Still this does not mean that men and women outside this picture were unable or uninterested in the project of building the nation that could include them more intimately. Minority attempts to create an Indian nation inclusive of minority identities were seen both in their rejection of the trite Indian unity and in the challenge to establish a democracy that was interested in unity defined by both minority and majority.

The inability of Congress and other mainstream nationalist political organizations to imagine an Indian unity that did not relegate minorities to "not-quite" status promoted a rethinking of what kind of democracy would be suitable for the Indian context. The rethinking of democracy (the national political method of choice) to be more responsive to minorities' call for responsibility promoted a columnist in the AIML newspaper *Dawn*'s minority corner column to ask, "is the Anglo-Saxon type of democracy suited to Indian conditions or not?"[32] The column and the question were part of the larger conversation asking how could the Indian national ideal, and by extension the Indian national government, be expanded to accommodate national minorities.

The questions of how majority and minority are defined with regard to religious and socio-economic status has long been a concern for those categorized as minor. The fight for independence saw many shifts in the way that the concept of minority was mobilized. The structure of minority often thought of as numerical or about statistics has several other valences, including the minor as child, the minor as unable to support or

[31] I am indebted to Dilip Menon for pointing this argument out to me. See also Dilip Menon "An Inner Violence: Why Communalism in India is about Caste," in *The Future of Secularism*, ed. T.N. Srinivasan (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009).
[32] An Indian Christian, "Minorities Corner," *Dawn,* January 11, 1946, page 10.

represent itself, and the minor as less important.[33] As Chakrabarty points out, "numerical advantage is by itself no guarantor of major/majority status."[34] The definition of majority in India was the ability to define the structure of national unity, and by extension, the identity of the nation. When considered this way, the structure of majority as representative and therefore defining, and minority as protected and defined by its relation to the majority, created a system whereby minority actors were either pushed to the margins of national life, or created strategies to define Indian unity differently.

"All India" as a Description of Alternative Indian Unity

One of the most intriguing phenomena of early twentieth century India was the flourishing of organizations named with the prefix "All India." Not a momentary blip in the politics of naming, the "All India" prefix has remained a staple of Indian organizations attempting to assert their contribution to and assertion of Indian unity. In 1941, *The Hindu*, one of the most well-respected moderate newspapers in India began to evaluate the year's crop of new and recurring "All India" conferences as part of their January year in review.[35] Less seriously, Pothan Joseph, the well-known editor of the *Indian Express* newspapers quipped that, "The Bombay police have been directed to

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[33] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 99-113, esp 100-102 Gyanendra Pandey, "Can the Muslim be an Indian?," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41, no. 4 (October 1999): 608-629; Faisal Devji, "The Minority as Political Form," in *From the Colonial to the Postcolonial: India and Pakistan in Transition* ed. Dipesh Chakrabarty, Rochona Majumdar, and Andrew Sartori (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007), 85-95; Faisal Devji, "Hindu/Muslim/Indian," *Public Culture* 5 no.1 (1992): 1-18; Anupama Rao, "Ambedkar and the Politics of Minority: A Reading," in *From the Colonial to the Postcolonial*, ed. Dipesh Chakrabarty, Rochona Majumdar, and Andrew Sartori (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007),137-159; Shahid Amin, "Representing the Musalman: Then and Now, Now and Then," in *Subaltern Studies XII: Muslims Dalits and the Fabrications of History*, ed. Shail Mayarom, M.S.S. Pandian, and Ajay Skaria (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2005), 1-35; Zoya Hasan, "Minority Identity, State Policy, and the Political Process," in *Writing the Women's Movement*, ed. Mala Khullar (New Delhi: Zubaan, 2005), 202-217.

[34] Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* 100.

[35] "A Review of the Various All India Conferences," *The Hindu*, January 13, 1941.

learn Hindi and discard English. They expect full cooperation from criminals, whose all-India federation has given the assurance that they too will use only Hindi in their operations in the future."[36] Both of these examples show that the prefix "All India" was common, even to the point of being comical, but both also suggest a valence to the naming strategy that goes beyond mere familiarity. The article in *The Hindu* questions if something is "all," how could there be so many different articulations of it. The Pothan Joseph quip, beyond the comical idea of the existence of a guild of criminals, suggests that the "All India" naming strategy was a common and important way to connect marginal and minority actors to the recognized actors of the nation. In the quote, the criminals, almost the archetypical marginal member of society, communicate to the Bombay police, the state actor, through their "All India" guild.

In both of these ways the "All India" naming strategy was used to embrace differences that constituted India for those outside the majority. Specifically, the "All India" prefix indicated a commitment to the unity of India without giving in to the urge that would create that unity by smoothing over difference. That is the "All" in "All India" could indicate two contradictory ideas of unity, the first broadly expansive and the second exclusive. The more radical of these political assertions were often unspoken, or more commonly spoken only in the delineation of the kind of policies specific "All India" organizations supported as "All India" organizations. This dissertation explores the way that several of these "All India" organizations, especially in the midst of the final push for

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[36] Quoted from T.J.S. George, *Pothan Joseph's India: A Biography* (New Delhi: Sanchar Publishing House, 1992), 226. The fact that the quote was meant to lash out at the central government's attempt to force public institutions into using Hindi, even in areas where Hindi was not the regionally dominant language, makes this quote even more interesting.

independence, used their idea of the meaning of the "All India" in their name to commit to a kind of politics that argued for a more inclusive kind of unity not often thought with respect to scholarship on nationalism.

As the crisis of unity began to be more pronounced in the 1930s, organizations began to preface in their mission statements, and anti-colonial activists in their speeches, the importance of pushing for a unified India. The "All India" ethos was part of this effort. "All India" as prefix suggested unity broadly while still privileging the main concern, Indian nationality. Perhaps the best articulation of the promise of "All India" politics was described by a fervent detractor of the idea of Indian unity (and the name all India itself.) In 1933, Choudhary Rahmat Ali published a pamphlet entitled "What Does the Pakistan National Movement Stand For?" in which he argued that the varied nations of South Asia had been unwittingly co-opted into what he calls "Indianism." The main marker of the virulent Indianism was the "high-sounding title of 'All India'." More specifically, he argued that, "Now this preposterous prefix of 'All-India' [affixed] to the names of their organizations meant, if it meant anything at all, that though they were Muslims, Sikhs, or Rajpoots, yet they were all 'Indians'."[37] Ali, imagining that inexpert groups had been duped into following the lead of the All India National Congress Party in their naming strategy, points out precisely the stakes involved in choosing the "All India" prefix. The name signaled a commitment to the idea of India that was added to the

[37] Choudhary Rahmat Ali, "What Does the Pakistan National Movement Stand For?," in *Complete Works of Rahmat Ali*, ed. K.K Aziz (Islamabad: National Commission on Historical and Cultural Research, 1978), 15. Ali published three editions of this pamphlet, the final one was published in 1942 and distributed in South Asia, unlike the other issues. It is worth noting as a side bar that its distribution in 1942 came two years after the Lahore resolution which declared the All India Muslim League's commitment to securing Pakistan (whose name also comes from Ali initially).

already present commitment to the community or issue that the organization primarily addressed. In this sense, the "All" was a way for organizations to put aside criticisms of communalism or narrow particularity, while the "India" expressed both a national aspiration and a commitment to the future of the nation at work. Thus, "All India" named the commitment while the organizational suffix named the constituency. Together they offer insight on minority organizational politics, because they point to the attempt, often dismissed in the traditional national narrative, to include minority concerns in the negotiation of nationality and citizenship.

For this reason, the "All India" prefix, when read against the grain, offered an acknowledgement of the tension between unity and minority in India. Minority is the "other" required for the construction of a majority, and the terms "minority" and "majority" within the context of the nation are often shorthand to define the complete picture of national identity.[38] The problem with this structure in India is not only the preponderance of minority identities, or the shifting identification with these identities, but also that the failure to properly name the national minority creates a structure in which minority and unity, rather than minority and majority, are antonymic.[39] In the Indian case, where many minorities were claiming a stake in the definition of the nation through the identification of their concerns as part of an "All India" movement, the stable footing on which Indian unity could be defined was questioned. The multitude of minority concerns pushed the majority to argue that majority and unity were

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[38] Ernesto Laclau, "Subject of Politics, Politics of the Subject," *difference: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 7, no.1 (1995): 145-164.
[39] For a discussion of the politics of shifting identification, see Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Culture Dimensions of Globalizations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press; 1996).

synonymous, and any attempt to defend minorities as an active partner in national negotiation was seen as an attempt to derail unity.

Implicitly the problem was that minority demands for a good faith effort to include their voices in the negotiation of the national idea and governmental structure during the movement for national independence and directly afterward seemed to undermine the majority's story of fundamental equivalences in the needs and desires of the entirety of the Indian population. Minority commitment to the nation and minority difference, as well as organizational attempts to actively define Indian-ness as inclusive of difference, fractured the uncomplicated national unity story that majority nationalism was trying to create. As the 1940s progressed, minorities were asked to commit either to nation and national unity as defined by the majority, or to remain a "non-national," communal force. Many organizations chose to reiterate their commitment to both the nation through a redefinition of their "All India" prefix and the dedication to their constituency.

The commitment to the nation suggested by the "All India" prefix was not the same for each organization, nor did it indicate a sublimation of organizational policies and politics to the majority's goals for the nation. Indeed, at the same time that the "All India" prefix indicated a commitment to the nation, it also indicated an argument for the meaningful inclusion of each party in the work of nation building. The "All" may have indicated that the group was incomplete without the nation, but it also argued compellingly that the nation could not be constructed without the groups represented by these "All India" organizations. Indeed Dhanvanti Rama Rau, the president of the All

India Women's Conference (AIWC) in thinking about the All India commitment of her organization argued,

> Our Conference can guide not only our members, but women generally, to formulate views on matters of vital importance. At this critical time in our history with political freedom must come great changes in our economic and social life and the task of regeneration will fall on the shoulders of men and women alike. The majority of our women are so ignorant of the great currents of progress, that the work of educating them to accept the ideals of nationalism and internationalism, of social justice, economic and educational rights will fall on progressive organizations like the All India Women's Conference [which] will play an inspired part an awaken our women to their responsibilities so that they may help to overcome superstition and illiteracy and strive to contribute their share to the general rebuilding of our nation.[40]

Rama Rau argued that while it was the AIWC's responsibility to commit to the nation, the nation would be incomplete without the work of women for its prosperity. Moreover, for organizations like the AIWC, it was important to note that the responsibility to the nation was not wholly fulfilled by a responsible majority. The "All" for these minority organizations indicated an argument about the need to recognize themselves both as actors with responsibility (and not just rights) to nation. Thus, organizations like the All India Muslim League argued that they could speak to issues outside of the representation of Muslims, because their commitment to the nation included a commitment to safeguarding national spaces for minorities. In this sense, the idea of the "All" in the "All

[40] Dhanvanti Rama Rau, *Roshni* Special Number (1946).

India” naming strategy is always in excess of its ability to define an organization. The excessive “all” in some “All India” organizations’ names defines the organization and their national commitment, but only with the recognition that they remain an “all” among other “alls,” each with claims to India.

Interestingly, the “All India” naming strategy was only available as description of Indian unity, defined simply or in a more complex way, in English. Any translation of the words “All India” into an Indian language automatically undermined the universal availability of the sentiment for the whole nation, as it made the organization’s name illegible to a large portion of the country. Even an organization devoted to a particular language, like the All India Hindi Sammelan, used the English words, “All India” in place of some Hindi language translation. Moreover, the decision that the translator makes to translate the very word “India” often gave a sense of the communal, regional, or political affiliations of that translation. As such, most “All India” organizations, when translating their name, attempted to incorporate the idea of their “All India” commitment while dropping the prefix. For example, All India Radio, when it decided to adopt a Hindi-language name, adopted from the radio network’s initials AIR to decide on the name *Akashvani*, meaning “airways” in Hindi. Other organizations, like the All India Progressive Writers Association, simply dropped the prefix altogether, choosing to expect that readers of Indian languages would be able to assume at least the “Indian” portion of the prefix, if not the “All.” In some ways, the “All India” naming strategy was only available because of the shared colonial history that made English the most common bridge language for India in the 1940s and 50s. As such it is important to remember that

the “All India” naming strategy, developed as much against the continued British colonial occupation as for assertions of Indian unity, works in large measure because it can imagine an “outside” to the unity defined by both the “All” and the “India” in the prefix.

The “All India” concept is significantly less straightforward than it gets credit for being. In part this is because the term “all” is both inclusionary and exclusionary depending on the terms of its use. “All” has this contradictory nature because it suggests something that is already completed. That is to say, “all” is inclusive because it gathers together everything of a sort, but “all” is also exclusive because it defines everything that fits as Self and every thing else as Other. When scholars have considered the ‘All’ (and only schematically) they have pointed to organizations like the All India Newspaper Editors’ Conference as an example of “all” politics that are functionally exclusive groups, and organizations like the All India National Congress Committee as groups that are functionally inclusive. The argument for this assumption is clear; the AINEC had an exclusionary membership policy that only allowed newspaper editors to join, whereas the All India National Congress Committee was available to anyone willing to pay a small fee.

The All India National Congress Committee (AINCC), because of its comprehensive mission and expansive membership, saw themselves as able to define the meaning of national organizations for India, and to police the “All India” prefix. Jawaharlal Nehru argued that, “Whatever the shortcomings and errors of Congress might be it is in conception and even in practice a national movement… It is essential that there

be such an organization. There is no other."[41] His argument was that by presenting themselves as a universal, rather than particular advocacy group, AINCC was the only organization that was fully able to live the "All India" prefix. Indeed, the argument that the AINCC made is perhaps the most conventional (and in my view least compelling) way to understand the "All India" naming strategy. For Congress, the "All" in "All India" meant the whole nation in no uncertain terms. If organizations like the All India Muslim League had to wrestle with the name "All India" in light of exclusionary membership policies, the Congress had an open membership. If groups like the All India Rajput Conference had to define their all around a geographic restriction, Congress had branches open in every province. If groups like the All India Women's Conference used their "All" to underline the centrality of minorities to the nation, the Congress merely pointed directly to the center of the independence movement. Still, it seems, if not fair, at least textually correct to point out that Nehru's comments made the All India National Congress Committee's "all" much more exclusionary than that of many other organizations.

The AINCC, often seen as the most inclusively national organization of any "All India" organization, also presented the most restrictive, and in some ways exclusive, vision of the national project defined by the "All India" prefix. For most other "All India" organizations the "All" was, by necessity, a commitment larger than themselves. For "All India" organizations like, for example, the All India Women's Conference, there could be no doubt that their members were, at most, engaged in only a fragment of the national

[41] *Jinnah- Nehru Correspondence including Gandhi-Jinnah and Nehru Nawab Ismail Correspondence* (Lahore: Accurate Printers, 1948). In several letters, Nehru actively questioned the right of the All India Muslim League to use the prefix 'All India' because of their exclusive membership.

vision of India. They neither wanted nor could envision a nation where women were the only people responsible for the rebuilding of the nation. The AINCC never framed their commitment to the nation in this way. Nehru's statement that the Congress was the organization that ran the only national movement was not an isolated verbal spar. The AINCC did not have to be one of many national actors engaged in working alongside other groups who made commitments to the nation. Congress *was* the nation. Under their rubric, any group willing to be part of the nation should submit themselves to the Congress. Their "All" is the least difficult to decode, and their "India" is certainly the one which came out the victor in the drive to define the nation. This is not to say that Congress's "All India" commitment was insincere or unproductive, but when compared to the meaning of all in some other organizations, theirs was less clearly a symptom of a radical rethinking of the structure and content of the nation.

Therefore, it is important to read both the "All" and the "India" components in the "All India" prefix. For organizations functioning from the seat of the majority and the power that status brings, the "India" could act as a way to describe the organization itself. As I have argued with Congress, the "All India" in their name described their own vision of a nation. The vision was a wide-ranging one, anyone who wanted to be part of the Congress vision could hitch their wagon to the party, but Congress could not imagine or commit to an Indian nation in which its vision negotiated with (and sometimes lost to) competing Indian national plans. Because, in the mind of the majority, the "India" that followed the "All" in the All India Congress Committee defined the organization itself,

the “All” bounded acceptable visions and programs for the nation to those groups that function through or with Congress in some way.[42]

In contrast, the “India” in the “All India” of groups that functioned as minorities was key to describing their inclusive nationalism. The difference between the exclusivity of their constituency (for example Muslims) and the inclusivity of their prefix (“All India”) meant these organizations could only be, at best, a part of the Indian unity, and could not dictate its content or function. For these organizations the “All” described both “India” and the constituency, with the idea being that the All India Sikh League was an organization for “all” Sikhs and “All” of India. The Sikh population was no less a part of Indian unity for being Sikh. As such, these organizations, by their very commitment to interior and exterior unity, had to recognize and respond seriously other “All India” groups who claimed both difference and inclusion.

Indeed, the need to engage beyond their constituencies forced these organizations to ask pointed questions about whether liberal democracy, the type of democracy practiced in a country like England, was the best way to encourage Indian unity. They argued that their organizations, by their “All India” commitment, had the right to be considered in more than just an ancillary position. At the same time, their awareness of their own inability to create the “All India” that defined the whole of India caused several of these “All India” groups to propose new kinds of democratic politics in order to define unity along more broadly ideological lines. Some “All India” organizations couched their commitment to the nation as a focus on local action, while others suggested a democracy

[42] That is not to say that a group with majority members could not or would not necessarily be more inclusive, but just that a majority group would not be.

was created not in the actual end result of legislation but in the commitment to constant negotiation based on a commitment to freedom and unity expansively defined. Underlying each of these attempts to redefine the nature of democracy was an argument about the way India, differently defined, could be reborn as "All India."

Chapter Outline

My dissertation consists of case studies of four "All India" organizations, each with a different strategy for creating Indian unity without falling back on the more exclusionary majority unity defined by the AINCC. The first chapter, "Listening to the Nation: Local and National Valences of All India Radio," focuses on the different strategies for running a unifying and nationalizing radio network taken by the two most influential early leaders of Indian radio, A.S. Bokhari, director from 1940-1946 and B.V. Keskar, director from 1950-1962. In this chapter, I argue that Bokhari succeeded in making the radio a successful national asset by encouraging local production and transmission of radio content and by focusing on a dispersed or locally determined Indian unity. When Keskar took over the running of All India Radio, he began focusing on centralizing radio production and content, broadcasting a directed or centrally determined Indian unity. The move from promoting a local vision of national identity to using radio to define the ideal Indian identity transformed All India Radio from a dynamic national resource to a radio network that came across as governmental and pedantic.

In "National Unity, Freedom of the Press, and All India Organizing: The Rise and Fall of the All India Newspaper Editors' Conference," my second chapter, I follow the founding and eventual loss of power of the All India Newspaper Editors' Conference

(AINEC). The AINEC was founded in 1940 by Indian newspaper editors to fight against escalating attempts by the British colonial government to censor Indian news about World War II and the anti-colonial movement. The AINEC saw itself as pivotal to the fight for Indian national ideals, emphasizing the news media's role as representing the nation, its citizens, and India's national unity. In an effort to define Indian and organizational unity in a way that included any newspaper editor who wanted to join, the AINEC defined unity on the basis of a single shared ideological position in favor of freedom of the press. This position allowed the AINEC to make representational claims on behalf of the entire newspaper industry while welcoming the expression of dissent from organizational action. At the same time, the AINEC argued that in order to represent the newspaper industry to the government in negotiations, they needed the illusion of unanimous intent on behalf of the whole organization, or unity defined as unanimity. My chapter follows the organization as it negotiates these two contradictory definitions of Indian unity.

The third chapter, "An All India Organization for All Indian Women: The All India Women's Conference and Federated Unity," considers the All India Women's Conference's (AIWC) definition of "All India" as separate from local and national conceptions of Indian womanhood. In the first decade after its founding in 1927, the AIWC focused on building an "All India" organization on the basis of being an umbrella association for already-established women's groups. The AIWC's goal was to bring national focus to local women as active participants in the attempt to create and reconstruct an independent India. Yet from 1939, the AIWC began shifting both its focus

and organizational structure to accommodate an agenda almost solely focused on national legislative goals to provide government safeguard protections for women and away from the spotlighting of local women workers as active national citizens.

In the final chapter, "The Unmade Nations of the All India Progressive Writers' Association," I explore the All India Progressive Writers' Association's (AIPWA) commitment to a vision of national unity told through the voices of the many unrecognized Indians. Using the writing of three prominent writers associated with the AIPWA--Premchand, Ahmed Ali, and Krishan Chander--I argue that the writers of the AIPWA, though often decried as foreign and anti-national, were arguing for a completely reconstructed Indian government that was more interested in recognizing and including its substantial minority populations. The AIPWA's literary power was hurt significantly by Partition in 1947 and the consolidation of Indian governmental ideas of "nationhood," but the critiques that the group made of the Indian government still resonate with authors and activists in India today.

Chapter 1: Listening to the Nation: Local and National Valences of All India Radio

Man: To tell you the truth, I never much cared for the "Indian State Broadcasting Service." Long-winded and pompous, wasn't it?[43]

In 1936, radio in India underwent a sea change, when Director General Lionel Fielden convinced the Indian viceroy to change the name of radio network from the stodgy Indian State Broadcasting Service to All India Radio or AIR.[44] The above quote is from a radio play broadcast on All India Radio in 1961 as a part of a retrospective on the history and the importance of All India Radio in creating and spreading the new idea of the nation. It is not a coincidence that the changing of this radio network's name was deemed important enough to be part of the radio retrospective alongside nationalizing radio moments, like Jawaharlal Nehru's "Tryst with Destiny" speech that broadcast over All India Radio at midnight on August 15, 1947, upon India's Independence.

Radio in India has been pivotal to the national experience since the mid-1930s. The new name, All India Radio, pointed subtly to the kind of influence radio had in defining the nation, both before and after Independence. The state wanted the network to help create and reinforce an idea of the unified Indian nation. Changing the name from "Indian State" to "All India" drew upon the associated meanings of the well-used "All India" naming strategy. Drawing on the idea of a nation defined by its unity, as the "All India" name did, freed the radio, if

[43] Radio play discussing the name change, as quoted in K.S. Mullick, *Tangled Tapes: The Inside Story of Indian Broadcasting* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, Pvt Ltd., 1974), 15.
[44] Lionel Fielden, *Natural Bent* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1960), 193. For more on Lionel Fielden and his role as the first director of All India Radio see Joselyn Zivin, "'Bent': A Colonial Subversive and Indian Broadcasting," *Past and Present* 162 (1999): 195-220.

only in nomenclature, from association with strict governmental controls on content and ideas. From its beginnings in 1927, radio in India was promoted as a technology that could reach Indians from all classes and provide information and education even to Indians who were illiterate. Changing the name from the technical sounding "Broadcasting" to "Radio," a word already common in a variety of Indian languages, emphasized the "common" nature of the network.[45] Finally, the new acronym of the radio network, AIR, aside from being catchy, suggested that radio was something that flowed across the whole nation--much like the air.

Although these three characteristics of the name All India Radio are key to understanding both its role as a governmental body and its use as a tool to create national unity, the radio network's negotiation of unity and difference within the Indian national identity was shaped by the two most important of Fielden's early successors. All India Radio's directorship changed hands three times between 1940 and 1961. In 1940, Lionel Fielden returned to England, and his second in command, A.S. Bokhari, took over the organization. Bokhari led AIR until just before independence, late in 1946. Bokhari left the network amid unfounded concerns about whether his status as a Muslim would taint his loyalty to India, given the immanent founding of Pakistan.[46] After a brief tenure by Sardar

[45] The word 'radio' to mean broadcasting was already co-opted into Hindustani. Unlike with television, where the state coined the term *doordarshan* soon after the technology became available, the term radio was viral by the time the state actively took over broadcasting services.

[46] Luthra quotes Sardar Vallabhai Patel's secretary writing that "Bokhari's sympathies were unmistakable." But Luthra also points out that contrary to the idea that Bokhari was communally oriented, the fact that he declared his preference to remain in India rather than transfer to Pakistan "indicate[d] that communal considerations did not weigh heavily with him, even in those days when passions were running so high"

Vallabhai Patel, B.V. Keskar took over the directorship of All India Radio and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in 1950. While all the directors brought some notable changes in the philosophy of how to best present India to itself, the most significant shift was between the leadership of Bokhari and that of Keskar. Although Bokhari and Keskar both believed in the same set of goals for broadcasting success—growth and the establishment of national identity, education and entertainment through quality programming, and the creation of a network that could fundamentally reach Indian citizens—their definitions of these concepts were very different. Moreover, these divergences in the definitions of the concepts that defined AIR, led the radio network to promote wildly different policies on issues of unity and identity under the leadership of Bokhari and Keskar.

Bokhari, who was in charge of AIR during the final push for Indian independence when even nationalist organization disagreed about what Indian identity might mean, imagined an Indian unity that was regionally and locally defined. Bokhari attempted to define the idea of Indian unity as something that could be articulated differently depending on regional, religious, caste, class, and gender identities.[47] That is, that national unity could be built and bolstered by a widely dispersed idea of the nation, defined as much by regional, class, and caste difference as by centrally broadcasted national ideas. Although Bokhari's administration was far from perfectly addressing difference in the nation, it

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(H.R. Luthra, *Indian Broadcasting* [New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1986], 161-162).

[47] This idea of All India Radio connects broadly with the discussion of the minority reading of the "All India" naming strategy. For more on this concept see the introduction to this dissertation.

supported policies that proposed the unifying proprieties of All India Radio as defined by its engagement with people on their own terms, within the specific binds of war, imperial policy, and technological problems.

After Bokhari was pushed out in 1946, India's political climate changed significantly. The implementation of the Indian constitution in January 1950, as well as internal struggles in Hyderabad, Kashmir, and the Northeast, prompted a more rigid interpretation of what India was, which limited the expression of difference as an acceptable nationalist position. The limits were in part a reaction to the failure of Indian unity to materialize upon independence. For this reason, Keskar, as the leader of AIR from 1950 until the mid-60s, emphasized a centrally-directed vision of the nation. For Keskar, the best way to create a unified national identity was to broadcast a centralized vision of the ideal India. By minimizing the effect of regional, class, caste, and gendered ideas of the nation, Keskar's policies followed up on the idea of Indian unity as based on a fundamental sameness.[48]

The difference between promoting a dispersed idea of national unity whose goal was to encourage active citizenship as advocated by Bokhari, and promoting a directed vision of nation unity whose goal was a singular idea of India as advocated by Keskar, led All India Radio to shift from a dynamic and successful national radio network into a network often seen as overly governmental and stagnant. I will begin this chapter with a brief discussion of A.S. Bokhari and B.V. Keskar, and the main differences in their outlook. Focusing on the idea of "All

[48] This idea of All India Radio roughly corresponds to the idea of a single, foundational idea of Indian unity, proposed by majority "All India" organizations. For more on this see the introduction of this dissertation.

India" as a defining characteristic of the national radio network, the second section will show how Bokhari and Keskar's policies on the production and dissemination of nationalizing messages differed. The third section will talk about the dynamics of language and the common good, as captured in the name change from broadcasting to radio.

Bokhari and Keskar

The difference between Bokhari's and Keskar's approaches to producing radio for India could be attributed in part to when they directed AIR and the way they were identified religiously. Bokhari, who became the director of AIR at the beginning of WWII, had to work with the imperial government as they stepped up their censorship of broadcasts, especially of news, while demanding more government air time and propaganda to fight German and Japanese broadcasts from already taxed technological resources.[49] As a result, Bokhari was forced to invent ways to broadcast messages to as many people as possible without losing credibility because of the obvious censoring of news related to the anti-colonial movement. To tackle this problem, Bokhari suggested a number of interventions, both in terms of technology and programming, to bring in new listeners to AIR. Bokhari pushed for wider access, advocating a scheme of installing many medium-wave transmitters in regional centers to reach more people across the country. He also

[49] H.R. Luthra has pointed out, that before the war (and while there was still a British head of AIR,) All India Radio was given control over the task of censoring the news on the radio. After war began, and as the anti-colonial movements began their final pushes, the censoring powers were taken away from the bureaucracy and given over to the government censors. During this period the external service expanded rapidly as a way to counter axis propaganda and eventually the broadcasts of S.C. Bose and the Indian National Army. See H.R. Luthra, *Indian Broadcasting*, 127-130.

pushed for the installation of community-based listening stations, even suggesting that AIR should set up public loudspeakers for radio in villages and small towns.[50] With regard to programming, Bokhari suggested a wide variety of specialty programs to appeal to specific audiences, as well as increased broadcasting in regional and local languages. Additionally, Bokhari suggested that each station should be able to direct their own schedules and create their own programming to better appeal to the local interests and constituencies and include more people in the radio project.

Bokhari, as an upper-class, educated Muslim, did not fit the mold of the "idealized" Indian to which Indian nationalist leaders often obliquely referred.[51] As such, Bokhari may have been less susceptible to the rhetoric that suggested that there was a single, fundamental characteristic that defined Indian unity. Certainly, Bokhari's suggestions on the running of the AIR network pointed to a more dispersed understanding of the national identity that was inherent in radio production. Bokhari advocated for more regional, and even local, control of broadcasting: including news, music, and feature programs.

In his lectures on radio in India during colonial rule, Partha Sarathi Gupta argued that British civil servants in India showed their resistance to Indian unity by "pinn[ing] their hopes on the provincialization of the Indian polity,"[52] against the possibility of radio programming that strengthened national unity. But the structure

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[50] National Archive of India (NAI), External Affairs/ Frontier Branch, F. No. 683(1)/7 1940.
[51] Bokhari was a Muslim, as was mentioned earlier. He was not affiliated with any political party and discussions of his connection to the Muslim League, made obliquely at the time, were scurrilous.
[52] Partha Sarathi Gupta, *Radio and the Raj* (Calcutta: Centre for Studies in Social Science, 1995), 26.

of Bokhari's AIR did not encourage the kind of provincialism that undermined a potential national unity. For Bokhari, local and regional radio production were both marked as part of the national dialogue precisely because they were both produced under the broad rhetoric of All India Radio.[53] This idea of dispersed unity suggested that the network itself parlayed national identity onto regional production. With dispersed unity, the content of national identity was variable and negotiated but the effect of national identification was felt from place to place.

B.V. Keskar, who became the Minister of Information and Broadcasting in 1950, came into his post at All India Radio at a significantly different time—joining after the end of World War II and Indian Independence—and from a significantly different subject position as an upper-class, Brahman scholar of music. Unlike Bokhari, Keskar was the image of the ideal Indian, wealthy, educated, upper-caste, and male. Though hitting on the same main goals as Keskar--nationalization, education and entertainment, and building a radio network that reached out to a large audience—Keskar saw AIR's mission as defining and, in some cases, creating a single national system of politics and culture directed by the government. In forwarding his mission, Keskar railed against both foreign influence and provincial difference in Indian broadcasting.

Arguing that it was AIR's duty to work for unity across the country, Keskar was particularly active in promoting "national" programming, especially in the areas of news and music. One of the highlights of Keskar's push for a centrally-

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[53] A.S. Bokhari, *Basic Plan for the Development of Broadcasting in India* (New Delhi: Broadcasting House, 1945). See also notes on the above plan in NAI, Home/Political, F. No. 176/ 1946.

defined Indian unity was the creation of the National Programmes of Music, Talks, Plays, and Features. The National Programmes were all produced in Delhi and were mandatory for all AIR stations to rebroadcast. Keskar is also notorious for his crack down on "perverted" forms of Indian music, specifically popular music from Hindi films. These moves, along with attempts to centralize news and language, were aimed at the creation of a single idea of the nation and the idealized Indian citizen that would trump or at least override regional, religious, class, or caste identities.

Keskar argued that centralizing content reminded listeners of the single idea of unity at the core of a diverse nation. He wrote, talking about the systems of music in India, that "in a big country like India, the development of difference is natural and does not, in any way, indicate a difference in the basic concept."[54] Keskar's management of AIR strived to make central the "basic concept" that belied the depth of difference. The effect of post-independence policies of AIR was to associate the network with a rigidly governmental point of view. In 1954, on a speaking tour of the country to promote AIR, Keskar was consistently called on to defend AIR against charges that the variety and quality of programming had declined during his tenure.[55]

All **India Radio: Defining Nationalizing Characteristics of Radio**

> *Woman*: Well, perhaps it was. But why "*All* India Radio"? They don't say "*All* British Broadcasting Corporation" do they?
> *Man*: No, they don't. And that is precisely why *we* should. Ours is not just a country, it's almost a continent. Think of the scores of languages… and

[54] B.V. Keskar, *Indian Music: Problems and Prospects* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1967), 13.
[55] "Keskar Answers Critics," *The Hindu,* April 9, 1954.

> countless regional and local traditions. Unless our broadcasting system is truly *All* India in character and outlook…[56]

This segment of the 1961 radio retrospective on the changing of the name of Indian radio from the Indian State Broadcasting Service to All India Radio offers one of the most explicit discussions of why the "All India" naming strategy was an effective nationalizing tool. The argument hinges on two issues: first, that India, with its diverse and far-flung population, required a different unifying outlook than the British concerns; and second, and perhaps more significant, India, which was looking to create a new nation out of said diversity, required a more democratic acceptance of national institutions than did Britain, which had been well established as a unified nation.[57] The renaming of the Indian State Broadcasting Service to All India Radio also represented a shift from an organization whose funding, governmental status, and mission were similar to the contemporary gold-standard for national broadcasting services, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), to an organization that was better suited to the nascent national identity of the Indian subcontinent. Although some changes in the way the organization was funded and operated were made before the name change, the name change signaled AIR as a different kind of operation from the BBC.[58] Specifically, as the quote from the radio play suggests, if it were to accomplish any of its goals, radio in

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[56] Radio play discussing the name change, as quoted in K.S. Mullick, *Tangled Tapes*, 15-16, emphasis in the original.

[57] Great Britain still actually had several unification challenges of its own, particularly with regard to Scotland and Ireland, though it was perceived by Indians as more axiomatically unified.

[58] For the transition between the name Indian State Broadcasting Service and All India Radio see, Partha Sarathi Gupta, *Radio and the Raj*, lecture 1; G. C. Awasthy, *Broadcasting in India* (Bombay: Allied Publishers Private Ltd., 1965), preface; Joselyn Zivin, "'Bent': A Colonial Subversive and Indian Broadcasting," 211; K.S. Mullick, *Tangled Tapes*, 15-32.

India needed to at least think about circumstances particular to the widely-articulated Indian situation.[59] Despite its circumscribed listener base and technology, All India Radio was a nationalizing project. Referencing the inclusiveness of the Indian ideal of radio and the variety that the "All India" naming strategy often encompassed suggested both a desire for unity and the kind of work (both figural and actual) that was actually needed to articulate the Indian nation as such.

All India Radio worked as a nationalizing service both in terms of its attempts to unify the nation with an all-encompassing radio feed available across the nation and in terms of the way people imagined various parts of the nation. Even though the radio was unavailable in much of the nation, as it only broadcasted in certain areas, the "All India" name was based on a desire to make the nation audible to itself. This is perhaps best articulated by the talks given about the parts of the nation where broadcasting was not yet available. In one memorable radio talk, the lecturer expounded on the beauty and history of the Andaman Islands, which did not have an AIR feed for more than five years after the broadcast.[60] Other programs featured folk music from parts of India still considered distant from the main cultural idea of India. In the early years of the service, much of the folk music put on the air was almost exclusively taken from marginalized and minor communities. Despite not having radio lectures about the

[59] In some ways the British Broadcasting Service also indicated the potential wideness of its programming needs by using British in its name. Although the first broadcasts were mainly available in England itself, the service chose the name British to indicate its wider appeal.
[60] NAI, Home Affairs/ Andamans Section, F. No 48/1/1949.

Northeast until around the time of the China war in 1962, at least a tenth of folk music programs featured tribal music from the northeastern state of Assam. Obviously, making the peripheral regions of the nation into folk or primitive places was problematic; but even as these programs shifted the folk traditions into the role of the other, they made a point of labeling them the national other, something that needed to be articulated into a national understanding of itself.

It is interesting that the above quote, which mentions vast spaces, a large variety of linguistic traditions, and a wide array of regional and cultural traditions, seems more like an argument for the eventual disunity than the unity of Indian nation. The direct contrast to the British colonial way of doing things was to speak about difference without reconciling it. The radio, according to the quote, was not available to make the nation into something smaller or less broad but rather to recognize the difficulties in the nation. The ellipse that ends this section of the radio play, the purposeful marrying of the threat, "unless," to the absence of utterable consequence, is telling. It seems to indicate if the radio is not somehow nationalizing—not in some meaningful way "*All* India"—then AIR is not Indian at all. More troubling is that the tantalizing ellipse encapsulates the vagueness of the goal of being "truly *All* Indian." Beyond recognizing the unconventionality of the Indian nation, whose main characteristic is its defiance of defining characteristics of a nation, what kind of actions would or could be put forward to prove All India Radio's "truly" unifying character? For the proponents of early national radio services, including both Bokhari and Keskar, a major goal of the radio, as a non-

literacy dependent medium, had to be the transmitting of nation to its citizens.[61] The question that the radio play poses is, "what defines the 'All' in All India Radio?" Bokhari and Keskar offered different visions of the "All." Bokhari suggested, within his constraints, that the "All" posed a challenge for radio to embrace each listener on his own terms, so that the whole network became nationalizing because of its widely divergent scope. Keskar saw the "All" as a chance to define and transmit the nation in a way that was limited to his ideal of what India should be.

When A.S. Bokhari became the director-general of AIR in 1940, mere months after the Indian government was named as a combatant in World War II, the radio network was at a turning point. In order to begin rethinking the nationalizing purpose of AIR, Bokhari needed to reconsider the issues of structure, funding, and content. Structurally, the colonial government had named the central government functions of the radio *network* as a governmental concern, while it defined AIR *stations* across the country as commercial concerns. While the separation was made primarily for a budgeting reason, defining the work of the center as governmental and therefore worthy of funding had the collateral effect of making regional radio, even under the name of AIR, less of a national endeavor. Bokhari's ideas about national radio required that both the central administration of AIR and the regional and local stations be defined by their All India

[61] At the first Commonwealth Radio directors meeting, much was made of this very point. See NAI, Commonwealth Relations/ Overseas (I), F. No. 79/10/1945. This file includes the manuscript, A.S. Bokhari, *Report of the Director General, All India Radio on the First Commonwealth Broadcasting Conference* (Broadcasting House: New Delhi, 1945).

connections. To this aim, Bokhari claimed that regional centers and stations, especially if they were expected to broadcast "national" news, needed to be respected as national assets and funded as such.

The funding question was tied into the designation of the AIR network and AIR stations as national. In 1927, when the government took over the funding of radio broadcasting in India, it was stated that the budget would largely come from three sources: customs duties on radio sets paid by the importer, licensing fees from the consumer of radio, and advertisements in the several radio journals.[62] The problem with this funding scheme was that, even together, these three sources were not able to fund AIR operations entirely or to allow the number of stations to expand. This was in large measure because of the expense to the consumer of "free" national radio. Bokhari and many other radio commentators complained that between the customs duty for the import of radio sets and the licensing fees, even the "cheap" radio units were a luxury beyond most consumers beside the wealthy.[63] Despite the inevitable shortfall, at the outset of World War II the government began to demand an expansion of broadcasting services from AIR. During WWII, AIR broadcasts were considered important propaganda tools for the

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[62] In 1940 there were several journals of radio information published by All India Radio. They included the English language *Indian Listener*, the Hindi *Akashvani* (meaning airways), and the Urdu *Awaaz* (meaning voice, discontinued after1947). Initially, advertising in these journals was limited to radio-related advertisements, like advertisements for radio sets or cabinets, but in 1938, the government allowed any product to place an advertisement in the journals. These radio journals, being rather disposable, have only been archived in a haphazard fashion. I was unable to find any of the Hindi and Urdu language publications. I found the English *Indian Listener* only from the 1950s, after the Urdu publication had been discontinued. For more about early funding of the radio see, Lionel Fielden, *Report on the Progress of Broadcasting in India up to the 31rst of March 1939* (Delhi: Broadcasting House, 1940), 131-135.

[63] Radio sets were often upwards of Rs. 100 in the 1940s for even a poor set, putting them beyond the reach of many people. In addition, licensing fees of about 10% were added to the cost of the set per annum. See H.R. Luthra, *Indian Broadcasting,* 473-475.

Allies against the strong broadcasts of Axis powers into China, Afghanistan, and the Middle East,[64] as well as a tool to counter the pull of internal Indian protests against the war.[65]

AIR used this increased demand for programming on the station to claim that, "the out break of the war has emphasized the view that AIR's activities form part of the essential idea of Government. As an important organ of publicity the All India Radio is undoubtedly making a considerable contribution to India's war effort," and therefore was a government service in need of funding separate from its commercial products.[66] Still, the government claimed that the parts of AIR that were a "governmental" service did not include programming that did not serve the government's propaganda needs. But, if, as was initially described, the AIR network's mandate was to be a national and nationalizing service, the content of the service needed to go beyond merely centrally-produced propaganda programs. This meant committing to funding for both local stations integral to the government network and non-war related content that encouraged people to listen to the radio.

The fight over the funding of All India Radio was entangled in the discussion about the content appropriate to the network. In 1941, Bokhari

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[64] At the end of the war, AIR had one of the largest external services in the world, rivaled only by the BBC for its outreach. To this day, AIR has a wide set of external broadcasts in Asia and another set of stations in countries with a large population of Non-Resident Indians, like the United States and the United Kingdom.
[65] This was both meant as a deterrent to Gandhian style non-participation in the war effort and, more importantly, to deter Indians angry about continued colonial rule and the entrance into the war by fiat from joining Subhas Chandra Bose's Indian National Army.
[66] NAI, Home/ Police, F. No. 174/47/1941.

admonished that viewing every program that was not war propaganda as purely entertainment was clearly faulty. He wrote that entertainment was,

> only one side of the activities of this department. AIR is also a social service insomuch as rural uplift items form an important part of the daily programming of all stations of All India Radio. Then there are educational, women's and children's programmes which are instructional items.[67]

The fear among AIR supporters was that, once the war ended, the idea of AIR as government service, controversial even during the war, would be undermined. Because the government's budget through the end of 1945 was set before the end of the war, and the budget for 1946 was defined by an Indian-elected parliament more interested than the colonial government in the nationalizing potential of radio, the eventual drastic slash in AIR's budget did not happen at that time. Still, this threat of a precipitous drop in funding for AIR activities once the network was presumed to return to "mere entertainment" helped to define the very concept of AIR that Bokhari was trying to propagate. Specifically, Bokhari posited that AIR should be building its network and stations to include more people, both passively as listeners and actively as broadcasters.

By focusing on programming that people could produce, understand, and receive, Bokhari was attempting to include Indians in the nationalization of the radio. The argument was that AIR's national status would be confirmed by the connective strand of people being *able* to listen and engage with a national network through their regionally-directed stations, whose content was radically different, as was needed across the country. The term network, which allowed for

[67] Ibid.

all the different AIR sites (including the centrally produced journals) to be equally national in scope despite widely divergent regional programming, was a powerful structuring concept for AIR's post-war regionally-based focus. G.C. Awasthy has argued that during the Bokhari era, All India Radio emphasized a plan of increasing the number of short and medium wave transmitters across the country, in order that AIR would be able to open regional and sub-regional stations that would effectively produce their own locally targeted programs. Ideally, the station strategy would cover each separate "cultural" and linguistic zone, allowing for a strong diversity of programs.[68] These stations would also be available to rebroadcast national programs and news from the central AIR feed.

The push for regionally and sub-regionally produced programming and local audience surveys also included a push for creating a broadcasting culture that emphasized community-broadcasting and community-listening as national activities. Indeed, some of the suggestions for broadcasting enhancements in the 1940s, particularly community listening stations and regular out of studio recording, are being reintroduced by community radio activists in India at present as schemes that would bring communication and global technology into wider local use.[69] The key to a regionally-determined nationalizing network was having active listeners, who both listened and through their habits, if not their expertise, directed station content. With this idea as a starting point, the problem of the

[68] Awasthy, *Broadcasting in India*, chapter 1.
[69] Vinod Parvala and Kanchan K. Malik, "Narrowcasting Voices: Community Radio and Participatory Communication," in *Other Voices: The Struggle for Community Radio in India* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2007), 145-182.

expense of both transmitters and receivers became paramount to implementing Bokhari's nationalizing vision.

Bokhari suggested that, without producing cheaper technology, the middle and lower classes in the cities would have a hard time listening to broadcasts. Moreover, without supporting and producing community listening devices in rural areas and short-wave transmitters across rural India, several large communities would not be served at all. In a report of a 1940 trip for the external service to view Afghani radio consumption, Bokhari described the experience of viewing a community listening post and produced sketches and technical schematics of the device. He claimed that the whole time he was in Afghanistan, listening posts like the one he saw in Kabul and gatherings in public places like stores and restaurants meant that he "never missed our Hindustani and English news bulletins."[70] Although the main point of the report was to emphasize the success of the external service in Afghanistan, the most fervent portions of the report were Bokhari's determination that AIR should be primarily investing in the production of programs and technologies that promoted a wider audience. In the end of the section on community listening, Bokhari argued that, for the good of the Indian nation, the state should be most interested in "introduc[ing] free community broadcasting on a large scale."[71] The problem with community listening was

[70] NAI, External Affairs Frontier Branch, F. No. 683(1)/7 1940.
[71] Ibid.

financing; there was no good way to levy the licensing fees or the import fees on community and public listening devices.[72]

In 1945, with the war ending and Indian independence contemplated by both anti-colonial activists and colonial governors, the interim Indian government in connection with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, asked AIR to layout a plan for radio broadcasting after independence. Freed from the constraints of spending for war propaganda, and with the implied promise that independent India would be more willing to fund national radio, Bokhari widened his rhetoric about the best way to make AIR more of a national broadcasting network. His approach was to expand access in terms of transmissions and languages while promoting local content variety. The implicit argument was that for Indian radio to be effective as a tool for the nation, it needed to be something that was available widely, both in terms of technological and content availability; that is, the network worked as a nationalizing tool best when the ability to conceive the nation was dispersed among the populace rather than directed by the center.

Based on the idea of a dispersed national identity, Bokhari's final plan, called *Basic Plan for Post-War Development of Broadcasting in India*, conceptualized a wider definition of AIR content. The first sentence of the published plan reflected this focus. Bokhari wrote, "the object of this memorandum is to formulate a scheme by which every person in India, wherever

[72] The government, in thinking about the problems associated with supporting these kinds of listening strategies, pointed out that ad hoc community listening, where several households chipped in to acquire a set and listened to programs together meant that far more people listened to AIR broadcasts than subsidized them. In the end the colonial government refused to increase AIR's budget during the war to include and promote these communal listening strategies.

he is situated, is provided with a broadcast programme in his own language, and one moreover, which he can pick up even with an inexpensive receiver."[73] The memorandum declared that AIR could only work as a network that could help the government define independent India, its rights and duties, and its national character by giving each person an opportunity to engage with these difficult new concepts on their own terms and in their own language. Moreover, Bokhari pointed out that, without making the means of listening (receivers) available at prices that were attainable, even if not easily attainable, then whether or not the content was accessible, listening would never be an accessible action. Additionally, Bokhari claimed that making the means of transmitting (stations) accessible widely would increase both the content and the revenue stream from that content.

Two different categories of objections were made against Bokhari's plan: fiscal and ideological. The fiscal problem seemed somewhat insurmountable. Despite a clear commitment toward funding radio at a higher rate, making radio available to every person in India on his own terms would have been unmanageably expensive. Moreover, critics of Bokhari's plan, most notably Sardar Patel who took over the director-general position of AIR in 1947, pointed out that attempting to fund universal listening would inevitably take away from producing more and higher quality programs for the largest and most important populations. Although the AIR report offered several possible schemes to raise money, including a national tax and funding from regional areas, the change in leadership

[73] NAI, Home/ Public, F. No. 176/ 1946, *Basic Plan for post-war development of Broadcasting in India*, 1.

and in focus of the AIR network shortly after the *Basic Plan*'s publication meant that none of the suggestions were tried.

The ideological objection was more emblematic of the problem for AIR as a nationalizing system. In the 1946 report, Bokhari argued that the programming produced by the central AIR network in Delhi should be on equal—or near equal—footing with content produced in regional centers, as both were integral parts of the AIR network. The plan proposed a system of increasingly local centers of operations for AIR broadcasting, suggesting that once these centers were in place, more responsibility for programs and news should be shifted to local radio producers.

The change would be most significant in the way that news was chosen, translated, and produced for AIR. In 1939, when the colonial government used the Defense of India Rules to institute stricter pre-censorship rules on newspapers, censorship of the news on AIR stations was also increasingly monitored.[74] The war forced much of AIR news to be chosen by the center for the purpose of censorship.[75] Because it was easier to judge importance and effect of national news stories, the colonial government insisted on a news procedure that preferred national and international news to regional and local news and that put the onus of selection and translation of news stories on the central AIR station. Bokhari wrote that, under the proposed new news system, given the possibility of operating a

[74] For more information on the 1939 strengthening of the Defense of India Rules, see chapter 2 of this dissertation.
[75] NAI, F. No. 50/16/1939.

> large number of zone, local, and rural centres (…) the present system of news dissemination whereby service is contained almost entirely of news of all-India importance, will be unrealistic and unsatisfying. (...) News service will therefore have to be arranged at three different levels: (a) all-India, (b) zonal, and (c) local.[76]

With the production of news and of programming made significantly more local, more people would be able to participate in what was, by its very name, an "All India" concern. More importantly, including all the levels of news, all-India, zonal (regional), and local news in an All India Radio bulletin signaled that regional and local news, and by extension regional and local concerns, were clearly delineated as All Indian. The change would have empowered communities, even minority communities, to help to define India by defining the sound of All India Radio.

The 1946 *Basic Plan for Post-War Development of Broadcasting in India* was never implemented. On September 2, 1946, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was given the Minister of Information and Broadcasting Portfolio. Patel's and Bokhari's views about India and the role of AIR were radically different. In addition to holding different ideas about the role of national radio, Patel thought that Bokhari, a Muslim, was dangerous and less than sufficiently Indian.[77] Indeed, the fact that Patel felt that the content and culture of AIR's general offices were too focused on minority identities to be Indian suggests that an organization with a plan to empower minorities and regional communities would be untenable under

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[76] A.S. Bokhari, *Basic Plan for post-war development of Broadcasting in India*, 38.

[77] Patel had often been criticized for overtly distrusting the loyalty of Indian Muslims. He fought with Maulana Azad and with Mohandas Gandhi over the perception that he would prefer it if Muslims would go to Pakistan. In this case, Patel very clearly felt that Bokhari, and by extension All India Radio, were too connected to "Muslim culture" to adequately represent India. See Luthra, *Indian Broadcasting,* 262.

his direction. For Patel, the idea of making the network more local undermined the goal of telling the nation what it was, and what it should become. Patel argued that "pandering" to minority concerns (broadly defined) took time and money away from examining the fundamental (read majority) quality of the Indian nation. Both Bokhari's plans and A.S. Bokhari himself were no longer employed at All India Radio by the time an independent India was established.

Patel made several changes in the hierarchy of AIR that set up the changes that B.V. Keskar would later make when he became the Minister of Information and Broadcasting in 1950. One of the first things that Patel did upon being made Minister of Information and Broadcasting was to declare that any "persons whose private life was a public scandal should not be allowed to broadcast."[78] The rule was targeted at dancing girls and courtesans, many of whom were Muslim women. These broadcasters were some of the first and most successful local performers for AIR. When the radio began broadcasting locally, from Delhi and Lucknow especially, the station-masters looked toward the local community's performers to fill the music performance time. In several places, some of the most popular and able performers were courtesans, who were often extremely well-trained in singing and dance.[79] Some of the rationale for attempting to eject these women from the

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[78] Luthra points out that the rule was not applicable to men or people who broadcasted western music. See Luthra, *Indian Broadcasting*, 305.

[79] B.N. Goswami goes into this in much more detail in the introduction to his *Broadcasting: The New Patron of Hindustani Music* (New Delhi: South Asia Books, 1996). In her novella *Agle Janam Mohe Bitiya Na Kajo* (In My Next Life Don't Let me be Born a Daughter), Qurratulain Hyder talks explicitly about this moment, where women of "questionably" moral pasts were banned from singing on AIR, as a tragedy for women who were trying to shift with the times to an occupation more steady than brothels . Hyder translated the novella under the title "The Street Singers of Lucknow." See Qurratulain Hyder, *The Street Singers of Lucknow and Other Stories* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1996).

radio was that All India Radio and its programmes represented India to itself; and as such, the network had to police the kind of people involved with its efforts. The idea that the network presented an ideal and authentic Indian voice to the Indian public suggests a change in the culture at AIR; it now emphasized directed nationalizing efforts rather than the dispersed efforts to create a national network under Bokhari. Bokhari had strived to make AIR as accessible to as many Indians as possible, even if this meant the overrepresentation of some minorities. For Patel, and even more so for Keskar, the goal was to broadcast the idea of India that they wanted to instill, even if it meant alienating large segments of the Indian listening public.

Perhaps because he had several important ministerial profiles including Home Minister in addition to his appointment to the post of the Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Patel was unable to spend much time on broadcasting, with the exception of the rule discussed above. The real changes in the AIR culture came with the death of Patel and the appointment of B.V. Keskar to the post of Minister of Information and Broadcasting in 1950. As Bokhari had been, Keskar was fully convinced of the role that the radio, and especially music on the radio, could have in producing and protecting Indian unity and culture. But Keskar saw All Indian Radio as a chance to strip what he saw as inauthentic and un-Indian elements from the public perception of the nation.[80] His policies seemed to argue that giving regional and sub-regional stations the ability to make decisions

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[80] Janaki Bakhle, *Two Men and Music: Nationalism in the Making of an Indian Classical Tradition* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005). Bakhle's book is an excellent analysis of the way that classical traditions came to be updated and changed while also being codified.

about programming, news, and listening, ran the risk of "destroy[ing] the country's culture and polity."[81] Unlike AIR's vision under Bokhari, which attempted to make all Indian cultures national by allowing them to express Indianness as they lived it, Keskar saw the AIR mandate for nationalization to mean creating and broadcasting a unified and idealized vision of Indian culture. Keskar was looking to direct public opinion about the nation and define the role of an ideal Indian citizen.

For this reason, Keskar tried to put more of the programming and news in the hands of the central radio administration, or, failing that, in some standardized format that gave the central government some control over the way that the nation was articulated. He did this by creating a series of four "National Programmes" in each of the main areas of AIR programming, music, talks, plays, and features. In order to better control the kind of performers local and regional AIR stations invited to broadcast, Keskar's AIR also created a national audition system to standardize desirable local talent and wrote rules about what could be classified as Indian music and regional music for performances. Finally, he came to a "compromise" with stations asking for more regional and local autonomy in news production. After trying to keep news production and distribution as a function of the central AIR network, Keskar allowed local stations a very limited amount of time for local news broadcasts, provided that they also played the national news.

The four National Program series, all of which continue to this day in modified formats, were created as a way to educate the Indian population about the

[81] Sevanti Ninan, "History of Indian Broadcasting Reform," in *Broadcasting Reform in India: Media Law from a Global Perspective*, ed. Monroe F. Price and Stefaan G. Verhulst (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 1.

national character of India. The National Programs started with the National Programme of Music, which began in late 1952, and the National Programme of Talks in early 1953.[82] The National Programme of Plays and National Programme of Feature were started in early 1956. I will focus primarily on the issues involved in the first two national programs developed—music and talks—but it is worth noting that the National Programme for Plays and the National Programme for Features have been on the whole very successful at developing material that was made specifically for radio audiences.[83] Still, the National Programme for Plays especially suffered for being almost entirely presented in Hindi, thought to be the best candidate for the national language.[84] This meant that North India, and particularly the Hindi belt, was often represented as the image of India. Even when the National Programme for Plays attempted to adapt a South Indian author's work, All India Radio translators rewrote the plays (often badly) into Hindi.

The idea behind these all four national program series was, "to focus attention on national issues, and to present a picture of the development of the country as a whole.[85]" For Keskar, the National Programme of Music was key to (re)creating a national mode for India. Keskar argued that a culture's music is the aesthetic center of the nation and that Indian music, washed over by waves of external cultures, had lost much of its "Indian" essence. Determined to both root

[82] Awasthy, *Broadcasting in India*, 149

[83] Radheshyama Bajyapeyi, *Hindi Natyakala tatha Radio Natak* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishing Aid Distributions, 1977).

[84] Some of the most famous writers of the time, including Krishan Chander, Saadat Hasan Manto, and Raja Rao, wrote plays and scripts for radio. Some of the most famous Indian books, plays, and epics were also adapted for the radio, including popular radio versions of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata (both of which also were made into extremely popular television programs).

[85] Awasthy, *Broadcasting in India*, 149.

out bad influences on pure Indian music, especially Muslim and British influences, Keskar's National Programmes of Music leaned heavily on well-defined classical ragas, modern classical pieces created by the AIR Indian Orchestra, and composite versions of traditional Hindu devotional music.[86] Folk music made its debut on the National Programme for Music almost a year into its founding, something that radio reviewers in the newspaper commented on. Keskar claimed that folk music, while important to India and especially to rural listeners, was badly derived from classical music, and as such, could be traced to and replaced by "more traditional" forms. The desire to make folk traditions into merely a badly articulated version of the national classic forms was an attempt to create a single, almost ur-music. But in doing so, AIR disregarded regional and sub-regional music traditions as poor imitations of "real" music.

The argument for a fundamental Indian music was troubling in other ways. India is often described as having two discreet sets of "classical" music: Hindustani Music associated with north India and Carnatic Music associated with south India. The problem for music nationalists was that having two types of Indian classical music undermined the idea of a fundamentally unified India. As Janaki Bakhle suggests in her book, music scholars in the first half of 20th century

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[86] The performers in the National Programme of Music were announced both on-air and in the Radio journals (mentioned earlier), which is how we have a measure of what kind of music was played and who played it. On the All India Radio Orchestra, see D.T. Joshi, "Experiments in the Orchestration of Indian Music," in *Aspects of Indian Music: A Series of Special Articles and Papers Read at the Music Symposia arranged by All India Radio* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1957), 9-13; and J.C. Mathur, "Music on the A.I.R.," in *Aspects of Indian Music*, 65-75. The leaders of the AIR Orchestra are all familiar names, though most well-known is certainly Ravi Shankar, who lead the National Programme of Music and the Orchestra for many years. For more on Indian classical music, see B.V. Keskar, *Indian Music: Problems and Prospects* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1967); David Lelyveld, "Upon the Subdominant: Administering Music on All-India Radio," *Social Text* 39 (1994): 111-127.

devised notational systems to best define Indian music scientifically, and as time went on, actively tried to combine the two systems into a comprehensive Indian classical music system. Influenced primarily by the work of the pioneers of modern Indian "classical" music V.N. Bhatkhande and V.D. Paluskar, Keskar believed that Indian classical music, once epitomizing the separation of traditions in India, was able to be unified, and in unifying classical music, so too could the nation be united.[87] The National Programme for Music was part of this effort to create a single, unified Indian classical tradition.

The National Programme of Talks was created a few months after the National Programme of Music.[88] The idea behind the talks was to help educate Indians about their national rights and responsibilities. The talks were given by a variety of people. Although appropriately important politicians often gave them, government bureaucrats or middle managers also occasionally gave talks. Looking at the topics that were presented, starting with a long series entitled "The Challenge of Democracy" and including topics such as "Education for the Nation," "The Role of Women in India," and later talk series on the National Plan, Indian Languages, and Indian Literature, it is clear that the National Programme of Talks was meant as a way to focus on defining the civic nation of India to its citizens.[89]

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[87] B.V. Keskar, *Indian Music*; Bakhle, *Two Men and Music*; David Lelyveld, "Upon the Subdominant: Administering Music on All-India Radio," 111-127; J.C. Mathur, "Music on the A.I.R."
[88] As with the National Programme of Music, the talks for the National Programme of Talks were published in the Radio Magazines after they aired. Many of the talks have also been aggregated in volumes of Indian Radio Talks. See *Patel Memorial Lectures* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting 1990); *The Plans: Progress and Portents*, ed Dr. S. R. Mohnot, (Calcutta, Oxford: IBH Publishing Co., 1968); Wasantha Wana Singh, *Folk Music of India*, Ethnic Folkways Library: Folkways Records FE 4409, 1950.
[89] Talk series names were published in the *Indian Listener*.

The civic nationalism presented in the National Programme of Talks also often emphasized the need for active participation in particular, centrally-proscribed ways. For example, in the series about the challenges of democracy, each of the talkers laid out the role that each Indian citizen has in order to keep the Indian experiment with democracy from failing. Each talker's prescription was based on his own political goals and expertise, but all went toward the same end of defining the country as a whole.[90] The final talker in the series, John Matthai, even argued that one of the solutions to keeping a democracy functioning in a united India was the funding and support for All India Radio, because a national radio network was essential in defining India across the breadth of the nation in a unified way. Clearly, these talks are good examples of the way that AIR, under the national government and under the control of someone like Keskar, was attempting to create a directed version of India.

If the National Programmes represented AIR's efforts to direct the nationalizing campaign through standardizing content throughout the country, then the changes in the regulations about what kind of music was able to be broadcast

[90] In the talks B. Shiva Rao, a former newspaper man, advocates that listeners actively attempt to learn to read (or teach their wives) and suggests that the Gandhian legacy of non-cooperation would continue to be a problem for the success of the Indian nation until more people were better educated. See B. Shiva Rao, "National Programme: The Challenge to Democracy," *Indian Listener*, June 28, 1953. C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer, who was known for being a moderate politician, argued that the key to successful democratic government was for citizens to be willing to be actively involved in the nation, make sacrifices, and make compromises. See C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer, "National Programme: The Challenge to Democracy," *Indian Listener*, August 2, 1953. J.P. Nayaran, a radical politician, argued that democracy's biggest challenge would be with economic instability, and that citizens needed to be aware of their spending. See J.P. Narayan, "National Programme: The Challenge to Democracy," *Indian Listener*, August 30, 1953. Finally, and perhaps most compellingly for AIR, John Matthai, an industrialist and the Chairman of the State Bank of India, argued that India's biggest challenge to democracy was the feeling of separate-ness that India's diversity engendered. Matthai argued that listening to All India Radio would be a good cure for this problem. See Dr. John Matthai, "National Programme: The Challenge to Democracy," *Indian Listener*, September 6, 1953.

and how performers were chosen, was a way that the AIR's board of directors, led by Keskar, could indirectly direct the sound of broadcasting. Specifically, Keskar implemented two policies that fundamentally worked as a power grab by the center. First, Keskar crafted and implemented a mandatory audition system as a way to determine the "suitability" of musicians for the radio; and second, he all but banned popular and film music in favor of more time for classical music.

Under Bokhari, local stations largely chose musicians and other performers. The stations used recommendations from local aficionados, personal experience, and even commissioned local artists and students from prominent music schools and families (*gharanas*) to perform on the radio.[91] Letting local stations broadcast local performers based on these criteria meant that AIR's musical programs sounded different based on where the station was located. For example, Lucknow was renowned for their female performers, while Calcutta was lauded for its folk or light music. Even two stations playing similar musical programming, because of the gharana system, often had very different sounds, as was the case for the musical offerings in Delhi and Lucknow.

The Gharana system was a major target for reformers of Indian classical music like Keskar because of the system's argument that each gharana, each musical family, upheld a slightly different musical tradition, replete with familial

[91] Gharana's were essentially family-based musical schools. Although all the performers were not necessarily from the same family, control of the system of teaching, the instrumental patterns, and the particular ragas used were strictly proprietary to students in that Gharana, and the teaching of the school often was passed down inside a maestro's family. For more on the gharana system, see Daniel M. Neuman, *The Life of Music in North India: The Organization of an Artistic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

ragas, teaching styles, and musical notations. In contrast, Keskar thought that the gharana system was ruining the musical traditions of India.[92] In part to supplant the gharanas' influence and to emphasize classical musical traditions over more popular folk music, Keskar implemented a set of audition criteria, in which potential performers would have to audition to an audience who could not see them, either in their local studios a few times a year or via recording. The judges would rank the auditions on several things, including Indian traditionalism, musical style, vocal timbre, and suitability for radio. While the center claimed the auditions were set up to improve the quality of performers and remove favoritism on the radio, the criteria and the requirement of national programmers approval meant that the auditions also standardized the kind of music that would be deemed acceptable for any All India Radio station.[93]

While the standardization of radio music served to decrease the variety of music played over the radio, the 1952 decision to all but ban Hindi film music and most other popular music from the Radio was much more damaging. Arguing that film and popular music was corrupted by western influences and instruments, Keskar declared that AIR would focus almost exclusively on Indian classical music. For Keskar, film and other popular music forms were intrinsically harmful to the cultural education of Indians, because they were neither authentically Indian nor musically sound. The banning of film music in an attempt to force listeners

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[92] Keskar, *Indian Music*.

[93] Its worth noting that the audition board was particularly unforgiving to women singers, many of whom were thought to be unfit to sing on the radio, and performers of music associated with the Muslim community, like qawaali. See Luthra, *Indian Broadcasting,* 306-308.

into an appreciation of a newly created "authentic" Indian classical music was a heavy-handed way to dictate the habits and culture of the population. While Keskar suggested that listening to classical music would encourage the reenergizing of classical values, the AIR audience saw it as taking away some of the most popular and pleasurable radio programs. The plan backfired as Indian radio listeners realized that they could often receive Radio Ceylon from Sri Lanka, which specialized in Hindustani variety shows, comedy programs, and especially film music. AIR's listenership fell so drastically that in 1957, AIR was forced to create *Vividh Bharati*, a light music program, to compete with Radio Ceylon.

As Keskar was trying to create a standard, unified "Indian" music, he was also trying to permanently anchor the news system to the central AIR station in Delhi. During World War II, radio news, like all news, was heavily censored.[94] Critics of AIR during the war complained that AIR news was often little more than "official communiqués."[95] After the war, Bokhari tried to start including local and regional hubs more in the production and dissemination of local news in local languages, with the plan to eventually transfer news duties to regional stations almost entirely.[96] Keskar, on the other hand, wanted to keep radio news largely directed by the central news section of All India Radio. He set up a system by which an editor in Delhi created a news bulletin in English by selecting articles

[94] There is an interesting side note here that during an All India Newspaper Editors' Conference meeting during 1942, the editors noted that while they were concerned about radio news biting into their market share, at least the radio was operating under similar and, perhaps more, stringent censorship. See NAI, F. No. 33/1/1942.
[95] *Indian Social Reformer*, October 11, 1941, page 62.
[96] Mehra Masani, *Broadcasting and the People* (New Delhi: National Book Trust of India, 1976), 43-56.

from parliament, ministers, the states, and the world. This bulletin was then transferred to various regional language translators for translation. Mehra Mesani, who wrote about this system, argued that the editor who initially chose the stories was not able to gauge the important pieces for each region. Equally crippling for the possibility of getting important regional news in the Delhi produced broadcast was that news stories of local and regional interest might not be available through English language reporting. The flaws in the system meant that it was "not surprising that bulletins [were] standarised to a degree which [made] them uninteresting."[97] Regional stations were unable to broadcast locally interesting or sensitive issues.

Public opinion was against Keskar's stand on this, with radio critics in at least two major newspapers, *The Statesman* and *Aaj* pointing out that news directed by the center failed to emphasis the information and ideas that would be most useful to local situations. Ideally, the attempt to relocate all news production to the center would have created a series of topics for national discussion that emphasized the national government. It corresponded to the strategy of broadcasting what the *Statesman*'s radio critic called the "tedious homilies" by government officials attempting to direct the issues of "national" interest.[98] At the same time, because AIR was fighting against the entertainment programming of Radio Ceylon and losing, making the news tedious and unavailable to much of the

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[97] Ibid., 75.

[98] *Statesman*, January 14, 1951. The critic argued about official talks claiming, "the medicine in small doses might make the listener more amenable to swallowing his quota. He is prepared to admit the medicine is good for him, but a little sugar coating might help."

population continued the decline in listenership. In 1953, Keskar made an agreement with powerful regional stations to allow regional stations to broadcast regional additions to the news broadcasts constructed in Delhi. This meant that states still had to broadcast the English, Hindi, and the nationally constructed regional language versions of the "national" news broadcasts; but they were able to add state and regional news at the end of these broadcasts.[99]

The attempt to place news broadcasts entirely in the hands of the central government corresponded with Keskar's other moves to nationalize All India Radio's content by preferring India as whole, to a more dispersed vision of the nation. The problem with the move toward the Indian whole as the Indian nation was that it reinforced the idea that lower-caste, lower-class, minority religious communities, and under-represented Indian regions were less or only peripherally associated with India. While the news compromise allowed regional centers to add to the national news, the news that they added was clearly marked as less important than the national news, as the national news broadcast was aired in English, Hindi, and the local language before the local additions. As with both the move toward unifying and privileging modern "classical" Indian music and the images of ideal India that the National Programmes articulated, the direction of news from the center was a way to create a single national view through broadcasting. The difference between the dispersed nationalizing efforts made by Bokhari—which attempted to localize the ways that broadcasts were created and communalize how they were heard—and the directed nationalizing interventions

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[99] Awasthy, *Broadcasting in India*, 120.

by Keskar—which intended to create a totalizing vision of India and Indians—was that Bokhari's efforts recognized India in as many guises as AIR could, while Keskar efforts alienated Indians who did not fit his image of the nation.

All Indian *Radio*: Defining a Common Radio Language for the Common Good

> *Woman* (interrupting): All right, all right, *All* India. But why Radio? Somehow it sounds so…so…
> *Man*: So common?
> *Woman*: Yes, doesn't it?
> *Man*: But what's wrong with having a *common* word for something that which is meant for the common good?[100]

In the 1961 radio play referenced above, the change from the term "broadcasting" to the term "radio" in the name of the national radio network was used to emphasize the idea of radio's mandate to improve the "common good." Obviously the term 'common' with regard to a public utility such as AIR could be read in many ways. In the radio play, the woman's objection was that the word radio was lower-class and already widely-used, unlike the more technical term, broadcasting. For the woman, the idea of radio being common was taking away some of its value as a novelty item for the upper and middle-class consumer, in reality the main purchasers of radio sets. The man, on the other hand, imagines the word common in the context of the common good, referring the educational and nationalizing missions of AIR. The man's argument is that the radio network was ideally meant for general consumption and its name should indicate its function. It is no surprise that the part of the radio play that targeted AIR's use for the common good should

[100] K.S. Mullick, *Tangled Tapes*, 15-16.

revolve around the idea of the kind of language that corresponded to the common. Indeed, debates around the usefulness (or the illusion of usefulness) of radio for the "common good" almost always revolved around the language in which the radio was broadcast, and what language meant and how it defined India and Indians.

Since the beginning of broadcasting in India in 1927, the question of what language should be used as the primary language for programs and news broadcasts was hotly contested.[101] Initially radio broadcasts were primarily in English; the people involved in broadcasting came from many linguistic communities, but all were upper-class and educated in English.[102] As the AIR network began to be interested in the broader base of listeners—defined by radio reports as the common people—the question of what Indian language should be preferred was important. Specifically the heads of AIR debated over whether radio's default language should be Urdu, Hindi, or Hindustani.

All three languages, Urdu, Hindi, and Hindustani, were in one way or another manufactured by British colonialism. Hindustani most closely resembles

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[101] Broadcasting is by no means the only site in the troubled history of the Indian language debates. The English dominance allowed for an early debate about the usefulness of Persian as the language of the court in the mid-18th century. The English emphasized some regional languages as 'dominant vernaculars,' which led to virulent lobbying on behalf of some languages and against others. The most studied debate was between Urdu and Hindi. As Independence movements began to spring up, the question was often raised as to whether the movement would be organized in vernacular languages, in English, or in Hindi/ Urdu/ Hindustani. Nationalists, like 'Lokmanya' Tilak, M.K. Gandhi, and Tagore, all wrote their work initially in their own vernacular (Marathi, Gujarati, and Bengali respectively) before translating them into English. See Alok Rai, *Hindi Nationalism* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman India, 2001); Amrit Rai, *A House Divided: The Origin and Development of Hindu- Urdu* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992); Christopher King, *One Language, Two Scripts: The Hindi Movement in Nineteenth Century North India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[102] Peggy Mohan, "Hindustani, Hindi and English in India" *Economic and Political Weekly* 35, no. 19 (May 6-12, 2000): 1672-1673.

the spoken vernacular of northern India; but, as it was defined by the British in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it excluded language habits of the multitude of "dialects." Hindi and Urdu were defined as separate forms of Hindustani and made to be associated with the Hindu and Muslim religious communities. Hindi, in its "pure" form, was a north Indian vernacular stripped of Persian and English influences. Urdu, in its "pure" form, was a north Indian vernacular stripped of its Sanskrit and English influences. All of these languages were viable options of differing degrees of usefulness for broadcasting in North India, but none of them filled the needs of South Indian listeners, many of whom did not speak any North Indian language.

The question of language on the radio was important both because it fit into a larger debate about what the proper national language for India was and because of the claim made on behalf of radio that radio was the best way to reach populations thought to be unlikely to read or understand English, specifically minority populations like women, children, and illiterate workers.[103] For this reason, the language controversy was important, both in the ethos of a dispersed national identification, as a way to make the radio more accessible more broadly, and in the ethos of directed national identification, in the need to define India as a unified nation. Especially after the first Indian—Bokhari—took over as Director-

[103] K.S. Duggal, *What Ails Indian Broadcasting* (New Delhi: Marwah Publications, 1980). In large swaths of the country, these same populations would not be able to understand Hindi, Urdu, or Hindustani, but these were seen as regional considerations. See David Lelyveld, "Colonial Knowledge and the Fate of Hindustani," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35, No. 4 (October, 1993): 665-682.

General of AIR, the assumption was that the radio network would be influential in the eventual choice of an Indian national language.

Under Bokhari, AIR made the claim that if the radio was meant to reach out to the common man, then programs needed to be recorded in a language that the common man could understand. This meant that local stations needed to spend the majority of the broadcasting day in the most readily available local language or dialect, regional centers needed to broadcast most of their programming in the most prominent regional language, and that the center needed to make programs available in both English, the most common lingua franca of the elite, and in some form of Hindi/Urdu/Hindustani, the presumptive future "national" language. Moreover, if some form of Hindi/Urdu/Hindustani language was the choice of the nation as the national language, then the radio needed to broadcast in a form of Hindi/Urdu/Hindustani that was generally understood broadly. Thus, in 1940, AIR claimed that it was appropriate that news reports and announcements of civic importance (as well as programs targeted for women and children) be broadcast in "a common language based on the rival claims of Hindi and Urdu named Hindustani."[104] AIR agreed that the network would author a word-list identifying the most widely accessible words for various concepts, like politics, prime

[104] "Lingua Franca of A.I.R.," *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, December 27, 1940, 5. The history of Hindustani as a compromise between Hindi and Urdu is long. Hindustani was often described as the language spoken commonly on streets in the Hindi belt. It is neither Sanskritized Hindi nor is it Persianized Urdu, but rather a mix of the two. There is a very interesting debate between Alok Rai and Shahid Amin about the term Hindustani and its eventual equation with Urdu in terms of being about privilege and minority rights today. See Alok Rai and Shahid Amin, "A Debate with Alok Rai and Shahid Amin Regarding Hindi," *The Annual of Urdu Studies* 20 (2005): 181-202.

minister, and nation, to ensure that easily understandable words would be preferred in the creation of news broadcasts.[105]

Bokhari argued that Hindustani best satisfied the need to broadcast in common speech because it was more widely circulated and understood than either Hindi or Urdu. Still, many nationalists claimed that the language of AIR needed to define the national Indian citizen. For them, Hindustani represented an attempt to widen ideas about the national language to represent a wider speech community including Urdu and Hindi as they mixed together in everyday speech, rather than provided a "clear" idea of the singular national language.[106] Defined by Bokhari and the AIR dictionary committee, which consisted of two Muslim men and one Hindu man, the idea of Hindustani was seen by many, even mainstream Indian nationalists, as fundamentally pandering to the Muslim minority population.

Hindi language supporters had long maintained that AIR had an Urdu language bias in its representation of Hindustani. Pointing to language choices like using the Urdu greeting *Adab-arz* to open and close programs rather than the Hindi *namaste*, among other language quibbles, organizations like the All India Hindi Sammelan[107] protested that AIR's use of Hindustani was a ploy to prefer Urdu over Hindi. The accusations of an Urdu bias were often leveled as arguments about the inability of AIR leadership to represent the wide variety of India. Urdu bias in

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[105] "Lingua Franca of A.I.R.," *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 5. Bokhari also argued that regional and local stations should continue to broadcast in regional languages. The AIR Hindustani dictionary prepared in the 1940s was not published, but subsequent AIR dictionaries, specifically the 1950 *Akashvani Shabdakosh*, have been.

[106] There are some serious questions about whether languages considered to be dialects of Hindi should be recognized as independent languages. See Alok Rai and Shahid Amin, "A Debate with Alok Rai and Shahid Amin Regarding Hindi,", 200-202

[107] All India Hindi Association

the name of Hindustani was pointed to as sign of British attempts to "divide and rule"' by choosing minority (read Muslim) languages and actors to lead national institutions, such as AIR. By expressing concern for "common Indians" (read Hindi-speaking Hindus), these attacks were often innuendo about the religious affiliation and therefore national loyalty of Bokhari and, by extension, all Muslims. The redefinition of Hindustani (and in some way, Bokhari himself) as structurally associated with the Muslim community by Hindi activists, poisoned a unifying attempt in the realm of language. Bokhari chose Hindustani particularly because it was associated with the mixing of cultures (not Hindi/ Hindu or Urdu/Muslim) and therefore seemed to serve as a national language, in addition to his concept of regional national identity.

Pointing out that AIR was being run by a Muslim man, and that several Muslims were high up in the radio hierarchy, articles suggested that "the All-India Radio under the direction of those who are in control… [have] made efforts to strangle Hindi language and culture, and to give a fillip to Urdu language and Islamic Culture."[108] Hindustani became associated heavily with Urdu, and with what was defined both by the British and the Hindi supporters as the affected cultural airs of Muslim *tezeeb* or culture. It is not a mistake that the complaints of Urdu bias in Hindustani revolved around cultural moments; beyond the *adab arz* / *namaste* controversy, articles complained about the radio hosting a *ma'fil* rather

[108] Dropdi Nandan, "The All India Radio: Its Administration and Programmes," *The Modern Review* 70, no. 2 (August 1941): 153.

than *kavita sammelan*, and broadcasting *qaawali* rather than *raga*.[109] The argument served to intensify the sense that Hindustani, to the extent that it embraced Urdu words, was damned as an upper-class Muslim attempt to redefine India's cultural landscape. To its critics, Hindustani, under its "Islamic" taint, was defined as neither common in the sense of being commonly available, nor common in the sense of being part of a common heritage. For proponents of Hindi, Hindustani was associated with the kind of accommodations that Muslims were asking for politically.

The problem was with the idea of the word "common" itself. Bokhari and his AIR tried to define "common" linguistically as clear and intelligible to an already existing community that fluidly embraced Hindi and Urdu vocabularies. The emphasis on intelligibility linked explicitly to Bokhari's emphasis on increased regional linguistic variation in radio broadcasts. But the debate about a national language was one that undermined Bokhari's emphasis on intelligibility and indeed his idea of common with regards to language, because the debate's conclusion would prefer one language in a sea of hundreds of viable choices. Hindustani, while the most widely-accessible of the three contenders, was still utterly foreign to much of India, even much of north India. Any national language,

[109] A Ma'fil is a meeting to read poetry. In Urdu, Kavita Sammalen means the same thing as Ma'fil in Hindi. Qaawali is a type of Muslim light music; raga is Hindu classical piece. The idea of Urdu as being more affected a language than Hindi exists to this day. In the excessively troubling movie *Gadar*, set around independence and partition, a group of Punjabi Pakistani men stand around a dining room toasting (in Punjabi) that India got much of the money, but were left bereft any good poetry or music, presumably left to the cultural inheritance of Urdu, Pakistan's national language. In a similar turn. in the recent book *The Age of Shiva*, Mani Suri has one of his main characters, a secularist devoted to Nehruvian politics, declare the utter superiority of Muslim music and cultural expression. See Manil Suri, *The Age of Shiva* (New York: W.W. Norton Co., 2007).

Hindi, Urdu or Hindustani, would have to imposed from the center. For this reason, the national language debate and its conclusions fit much better with Keskar's directed unity of an ideal India, than with Bokhari's striving for dispersed unity.

Bokhari left AIR around the same time that Hindi was being seriously proposed as the national language. Shortly after, the Department of Information and Broadcasting announced that it was studying whether "the attempt should be continued to build Hindustani up as a common language or the use of both Urdu and Hindi should be established."[110] Patel came out with a statement soon after, that radio clarity and mass appeal needed to be preferred over ideological attachment to Hindi, that, in an effort to change the culture at AIR, the Hindustani dictionary would be reevaluated, but finally, that Hindi would not be adopted whole-scale.[111] Privately, the department was uncertain of how to proceed. On the one hand, a pure Hindi language broadcast would render AIR unclear to a large portion of the listening audience, even its Hindi-speaking audience, but focusing on Hindustani meant that the radio could not encourage the national language policy. The uncertainty in the national network bled into wider broadcasting uncertainty; for example, AIR's external service had a news broadcast for East Pakistan in Bengal but was unable to broadcast a similar service in West Pakistan,

[110] NAI, F. No. 1/33/1946.
[111] Luthra, *Indian Broadcasting*, 268.

because associating Urdu with Pakistan would point to the fact that Hindi was not being adopted for internal service broadcasts.[112]

Patel's reluctance to change the AIR official language to Hindi did not continue under Keskar, who did change the official language policy from Hindustani to Hindi. To be fair, because of the way Hindustani was defined during the 1940s, the language was already too tainted to be defined as national or common. Ideologically, Keskar argued that, as with the question of nationalizing the radio, the nation needed to be directed toward a national language; and AIR's status as a government broadcaster was to make Hindi a site of common ground. The problem that Keskar still faced was that although Hindi was the "National language," it was not spoken by much of the population, especially in the south of the country. Indeed, the south was somewhat outraged by the emphasis placed on Hindi as a way to create national unity. During parliamentary debates in early 1950, ministers from the south took to responding to questions posed in Hindi by telling the body they refused to answer, but making this response in their own regional languages.[113] Even AIR listeners in the "Hindi belt" of Northern India had some trouble understanding the pure, Sanskritized Hindi preferred by the Hindi language supporters.

Hindi may have been designated the national language, but it was not widely accessible enough to be AIR's primary outreach language. The shift to Hindi as AIR's primary language was accompanied by complaints about the

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[112] NAI, F. No. 4/83/1948.
[113] "Questions in Hindi" *The Hindu*, February 24, 1950, page 5.

indecipherably "high" Hindi spoken on AIR.[114] In his discussion with Kamla Bhatt, Ameen Sayani, the host of the popular radio show *Geet Mala*, argued that in addition to the AIR banning film and popular music, the oppressive language standards of pure Hindi radio broadcasts made Radio Ceylon, with its "street Hindi," more popular in India than All India Radio.[115]

In 1950, as an effort to encourage non-Hindi speakers to an appreciation of Hindi, AIR instituted mandatory fifteen-minute Hindi language lessons for stations in non-Hindi speaking areas of the country.[116] The lessons were then printed in regional editions of the *Indian Listener*, AIR's journal. The goal was to encourage listeners to learn the national language and was structured as both part of AIR's educational mandate and as a way to make the "national" language more common. The problem was that the Hindi language lesson was both ignored and despised. Hindi as a national language reminded non-Hindi speaking parts of the country of their relative unimportance in the definition of India. Moreover, the language lessons, while based on the radio dictionary, did not seem to increase the listener numbers for Hindi language programs in non-Hindi speaking areas.

The attempt to push Sanskritized Hindi onto the radio in the name of national unity was unsuccessful because it managed to alienate both Hindi speakers and non-Hindi speakers by making AIR Hindi broadcasts inaccessible to much of the listening public. The complaints forced AIR to announce the

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[114] Indian Social Reformer was particularly sharp on AIR's failure of language. See "All India Radio," *Indian Social Reformer*, March 14, 1943, 281.
[115] Ameen Sayani, interview by Kamla Bhatt, *The Kamla Bhatt Show*, March 25, 2007. See http://kamlashow.com/podcast/2007/03/25/in-conversation-with-ameen-sayani-part-i/
[116] "Hindi Lessons on the Radio," *The Hindu*, March 25, 1950.

rethinking of the AIR language policy. AIR argued that "since the national language is Hindi, not what was known before partition as Hindustani, a reversion to that convenient, sometimes laboured mixture of Hindi and Urdu is not being attempted. Nevertheless, a move toward greater simplicity is evident."[117] The quote makes clear the problem with which AIR was faced. The problem was that, for Keskar, the national common needed to seem be pure, and not a mixture; and it needed to be ideal rather than constructed. The national concept, as identified by the national language was a unified, fundamentally preexisting thing; and Sanskritized or "pure" Hindi represented this single influence, the naturally-existing language for many nationalists. Hindustani, with its mixed origins and the labor required to keep it current and available, could never be the national language. For Bokhari, who seemed to believe that the common national ideal was one that was crafted, mixed, and labored, Hindustani and commonly spoken regional languages were good representatives of what the nation could become; for Keskar, they were perversions of the national possibilities. That said, it was impossible for AIR to continue to broadcast programs in a language that no one could follow. "Pure" Hindi defined as the common vision was not commonly understood.

A.I.R.: Defining the Physical Nationalism of All India Radio

All India Radio— note the very appropriate initials, "A-I-R"— clearly expresses what we are trying to be. To us, India is a vast country, federalised as far as the *Air* is concerned and unseparated by provincial boundaries and ambitions.[118]

[117] "Reform in Official Use of Hindi," *The Statesman*, April 26, 1951, 7.
[118] K.S. Mullick, *Tangled Tapes*, 16

For English speakers, the initials A.I.R., for a broadcasting corporation, is an appealing acronym. Lionel Fielden, who was the Director-General when Indian radio broadcasting changed its name, was reported to have convinced the British governors of the change by pointing out the serendipity of a radio organization, whose content was transmitted through the air, being called AIR.[119] The radio play, in thinking about the way that AIR could translate into air, suggested that by being on the air, the radio found a way to bring out the fundamentally and naturally unified nature of the country. It contended that, although vast, the whole country was part of the network, and, though particular provinces might see themselves as different, they were all, through the air, Indian.

In 1940, it was argued that the unique quality of the radio was that it could be at the same time intimate and expansive.[120] As Lionel Fielden wrote in his 1939 *Report on the Progress of Broadcasting in India*, "broadcasting is both public and intimate: the voice addresses millions, but speaks only to the unit of two or three."[121] It was this dual mode of radio--appealing to the individual listener sitting by his radio while at the same time potentially speaking to the amorphous world– that gave AIR its most powerful tool for socializing the nation. The question that Bokhari and Keskar had to answer in their defining the radio's geography and concept was whether, by appealing to the individual, they created the public, or, by defining the listening public, they could eventually entice the individual.

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[119] Fielden, *Natural Bent*; Ziven, "Bent."
[120] In 2010 this quality is far less unique, being shared by every widely broadcast mass-media technology, and even being mostly supplanted by technologies like television, the worldwide web, and podcasts.
[121] Lionel Fielden, *Report on the Progress of Broadcasting in India*, 17

The radio play's emphasis on the unifying quality of the air, and the ability of AIR to connect the nation to itself, asks a question of how AIR defined the nation geographically. The radio play suggested that having a daily reminder of the nation would help to ease feelings of regional, provincial, or local identities. For Bokhari, the call to define the nation's borders by the production of radio meant building a larger technological infrastructure in order to reach more people well. But it also meant making the radio airways available to people. While the radio play seems to envision the same signal, the same program, reaching out to each Indian, Bokhari saw the chance to unite India under the idea of a national signal locally created and broadcast.

For Keskar, the reading of the geography was less clear. Keskar was not convinced by the need to extend the geography of AIR, instead focusing on providing high quality service to key areas, mostly urban. Yet, he very consciously played into the sense that regional and local identities could only be weakened and made truly Indian by replacing them with national sensibilities. For Keskar, the drama of people in Madras, Calcutta, Bombay, and Delhi all listening to the same musical program presented a united India and defined AIR's role in the bringing about that unity.

Still, both views, but especially Keskar's, relied on the idea that AIR, as a national broadcasting, would not have to compete with other radio in the definition of India through the air. Neither Bokhari nor Keskar approved of the idea of outside broadcasting services operating in the country. In 1954, Keskar gave a long

radio address arguing that commercial radio, even commercial radio that did not offer the same kind of news services as AIR, would undermine the national unification project that AIR was attempting.[122] As other broadcasting services, especially Radio Ceylon, began to take a large share of Indian listeners in the 1950s, the idea that India's air was an unassailable space that defined India's unified nature was also contested. Indeed, AIR's declining market share acerbated complaints that AIR's network was actually unable to achieve the goals of broadcasting India for the nation and of creating programs for the common person and for the common good.

Conclusion

> *Man*: To tell you the truth, I never much cared for the "Indian State Broadcasting Service." Long-winded and pompous, wasn't it?
> *Woman*: Well, perhaps it was. But why "*All* India Radio"? They don't say "*All* British Broadcasting Corporation" do they?
> *Man*: No, they don't. And that is precisely why *we* should. Ours is not just a country, it's almost a continent. Think of the scores of languages… and countless regional and local traditions. Unless our broadcasting system is truly *All* India in character and outlook…
> *Woman* (interrupting): All right, all right, *All* India. But why Radio? Somehow it sounds so…so…
> *Man*: So common?
> *Woman*: Yes, doesn't it?
> *Man*: But what's wrong with having a *common* word for something that which is meant for the common good?
> All India Radio— note the very appropriate initials, "A-I-R"— clearly expresses what we are trying to be. To us, India is a vast country, federalised as far as the *Air* is concerned and unseparated by provincial boundaries and ambitions[123]

[122] B.V. Keskar "Commercial Broadcasting: Not Suited to India," *Indian Listener*, September 13, 1953, 3,5, and 7.
[123] Radio play discussing the name change, as quoted in K.S. Mullick, *Tangled Tapes*, 15-16.

Changing the name of India's national broadcasting system in 1936 from the Indian State Broadcasting System to All India Radio was meant to signal a change in the function and the focus of radio broadcasts for India. Fielden and his second in command, Bokhari, wanted AIR to shift from a purely informational, technical organization, to a station that appealed to the listening public and responded to their needs and desires. The change in outlook for the station was doubly reinforced by the adopting of the motto *Bahujan Hitaya, Bahujan Sukhaya* (For the welfare and the happiness of the people). The name change and the new motto defined radio as the property and the guardian of the people of India. As this 1961 radio play, part of a retrospective about radio's growth in India, suggested, AIR's new name suggested three main goals to help it live up to its name and motto. It argued that the station needed to be a force that defined and responded to the nation and its citizens (it needed to be "All Indian"), it needed to be something that was common (Radio rather than Broadcasting), and it needed to be a federalized organization (like the air itself).

The role of AIR in each of these areas has been criticized, in terms of both their ability to produce programs that successfully fulfill their obligation, and their conception of what being a national radio network should mean. In recent years, AIR has been criticized most strenuously for the lack of autonomy from the government, overly nationalized programming, and the network's outdated technology.[124] One argument often made by critics is that since the name change in

[124] On lack of autonomy see, G.S. Bhargava, ed. *Government Media: Autonomy and After* (New Delhi: Institute of Social Sciences, 1991); Sonia Bathla, *Women, Democracy, and the Media: Cultural*

1936, AIR has made so few changes as to be fundamentally the same organization as it was when it was founded. Mehra Masani claimed, "[All India Radio] came into being under imperial auspices, in a form suitable for a colony, but, after three decades, during which vast political, economic, and social changes have taken place in the world and in India, the only change in AIR is an increase in the number of its installations."[125]

More commonly, however, scholars and former staff of AIR have pointed out that the network's attempts to create an India based on a singular vision and subject position were at fault for the network's decline.[126] Ameen Sayani argues that, before the 1950s, AIR "was one of the finest broadcasting organizations in the world… it had the best of our writers, thinkers, presenters, producers, musicians…it had everything."[127] This is certainly borne out by the impressive reviews the AIR network received at the conference for commonwealth broadcasting networks held in London in 1945. AIR was roundly seen as the second largest, second most technologically forward, and most diverse broadcasting service, comparable to the British Broadcasting Corporation itself. Bokhari, then the director-general, reported that many commonwealth countries,

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Representations in the Indian Press (New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1998). On nationalized programming see, Subramaniam Vincent, "Unshackle Community Radio," in *The Indian Media: Illusion, Delusion, and Reality: Essays in Honour of Prem Bhatia*, ed. Asha Rani Mathur (New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2006); Vinod Parvala and Kanchan K. Malik, *Other Voices: The Struggle for Community Radio in India*; P.C. Chatterji, *Broadcasting in India: Case Studies on Broadcasting Systems* (New Delhi/ London: SAGE Publications in association with International Institute of Communications, 1987); H.R. Luthra, *Indian Broadcasting*; Mehra Masani, *Broadcasting and the People*. On a failure of technology see, Partha Sarathi Gupta, *Radio and the Raj*, especially Lecture II.

[125] Masani, *Broadcasting and the People*, 1.

[126] Gangadhar Shukl, *Waqt Guzarata Hai* (Delhi: Sarmash Prakashan, 2005); P.C. Chatterji, "Wanted: a Communications Policy," in *Two Voices: Essays in Communication and Philosophy* (New Delhi: HEM Publishers, 1979).

[127] Ameen Sayani, *The Kamla Bhatt Show*.

especially Australia, asked if more programs from AIR could be transcribed for Australian Broadcasting.[128]

The key to AIR's success in those years before independence was the vision of Indian unity as both singularly and multiply defined concept. The diversity of programming and the emphasis on producing programming for people in their own languages and on a broad diversity of subjects not only allowed larger audiences but also gave artists, writers, and musicians latitude to define their styles and thoughts as part of Indian culture. In some sense, the Bokhari era took seriously the idea that the nation was a "vast nation *federalized*,"[129] seeking to emphasize the role of the parts of a nation, rather than valorizing an unattainable, totalizing vision of the Indian nation "unseparated by provincial boundaries or ambitions."[130] By taking differences of language, geography, culture, and interest seriously, Bokhari was able to make local stations part of the larger national network, while allowing local stations to create programming and ideas separately.

After Independence, and particularly when Keskar took over, the AIR network began to direct the national idea, by removing "unsavory" voices from AIR stations, by standardizing music and programs through auditions, by banning popular music from Hindi films and marginalizing folk music, by producing and directing the news from the central AIR offices, and by implementing a system that focused on the propagation of Sanskritized Hindi rather than the discredited

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[128] NAI, Department of Commonwealth Relations Overseas (I), F. No. 79/10 1945, A. Bokhari, *Report of the Director General, All India Radio on the First Commonwealth Broadcasting Conference* (Broadcasting House: New Delhi, 1945).
[129] K.S. Mullick, *Tangled Tapes*, 16.
[130] Ibid.

Hindustani. These efforts were attempts to define what being "Indian" meant, what India was "trying to be."[131] Unlike AIR's attempts under Bokhari, which attempted to make AIR national by interacting with people across the country, Keskar's AIR eschewed local differences, attempting to make the ideal Indian into the national citizen. The effect of many of these initiatives was that people felt less interested in AIR and more concerned that the station was merely a shill of the government.[132]

It is clear that both Bokhari and Keskar fundamentally believed in the promise of radio to be a nationalizing force for the common good of India and its citizens. The major difference between their two philosophies of radio was whether or not the citizens of India had any responsibility in the definition of the nation and its common good. For Bokhari, with his concept of dispersed unity, the nation was defined by local and regional participation in it. As such, an organization like the AIR network needed to be responsive to local stations and ideas, and flexible enough to understand that different-sounding radio strengthened, rather than undermined, radio's national status. The flexibility of early AIR encouraged it to be very broadly interesting and helped build its reputation as a source of both interesting information and entertainment. For Keskar, the strength of radio broadcast was its ability to draw the entire nation together by making it sound the same. Keskar determined that, in order to use the nationalizing potential of the radio effectively, a certain amount of rigidity in the

[131] Ibid.

[132] Even after the Prasar Bharati Bill passed in 1990, making AIR a public corporation and not part of the government, Indians still question how much influence the government has over its programming decisions. See Arvind Kumar, *Trends in Modern Journalism* (New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2002), 265-266.

definition of the nation was required. This idea of rigid national unity, directed from the central government worked against the ability of minorities and regions to identify with the nation effectively because it pitted their sense of self and of self within the nation against the "true" or ideal Indian citizen. The rigidity of this approach to directing the concept of India and its unity made AIR an effective government tool but failed to engage the imagination or interest of an Indian population–an effect AIR is still dealing with today.

Chapter 2: National Unity, Freedom of the Press, and All India Organizing: The Rise and Fall of the All India Newspaper Editors' Conference

Like many post-colonial nations, India used the press, and particularly the print press to help to define the content and construction of its national values.[133] In the case of India, newspaper coverage of the anti-colonial movement marked the nation as an appropriate object of each locality. Additionally, arguments about the potential structure of Indian democracy, minority rights, and India's participation in world conflicts were fought through the pages of the press.[134] For this reason the role that the press played in the anti-colonial movement and the immediate period after independence was not easily characterized as promoting Indian unity against a divisive colonial government. Still, the press, and its "All India" organization, the All India Newspaper Editors' Conference (AINEC), attempted to articulate a vision of Indian unity that was based on a limited number of shared ideological commitments. As a way to model this concept of unity, the AINEC defined their organizational unity through the editors' shared commitment to the protection and expansion of freedom of expression. At the same time, as with the definition of Indian unity against colonial divide-and-rule tactics generally, the AINEC

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[133] I am clearly indebted to Benedict Anderson's discussion of the role of newspaper print in the creation of modern national imaginations. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, Revised Edition* (London and New York: Verso, 1991)

[134] Mohandas Gandhi was perhaps the best practitioner of newspaper banter. Aside from acting as an advice columnist for the independence movement through his *Young India* and *Harijan* newspapers, Gandhi published numerous editorials in other newspapers. Gandhi and other Indian political leaders often used the newspapers to publish anguished letters to rivals explaining their reasons for political disagreements. One of the most interesting set of published letters was the letters exchanged between Gandhi and Mohammad Ali Jinnah during their 1942 meeting about Pakistan. The two wrote each other letters in the evenings after their meetings and published the results in newspapers throughout the country.

found it difficult to advocate the protection of these rights without a commitment to unified action.[135]

The All India Newspaper Editors' Conference was founded in 1940 in the early stages of World War II, as a way to counter the British colonial government's attempts to control dissent in India, against both the war and the British colonial mission.[136] While there were several regional, provisional, or politically-affiliated newspaper industry organizations, the All India Newspaper Conference was the first nationally-organized Indian Press organization.[137] As a protest organization during the final years of the movement for national freedom, the AINEC agitated for, and was moderately successful in coercing from the colonial government, protections against excessive government intrusion on the day-to-day operations of the newspaper industry. As such, the AINEC's

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[135] For a discussion of divide and rule, see the introduction of this dissertation.

[136] There were several national press organizations in independent nations, which were fighting against war-time censorship. The American Society of Newspaper Editors was founded in 1922 to fight against the kind of censorship American newspapers were subjected to during World War I. In WWII they actively called for greater press freedom in a repressive war context. During World War I, British Newspaper Editors formed a Joint Committee on Censorship to mediate with the government on censorship practices. Upon finding that the censorship remained in place after the conclusion of WWII, newspaper editors in Britain founded the Guild of Editors in 1946. See Deian Hopkin, "Domestic Censorship in the First World War," *Journal of Contemporary History* 5, no 4 (1970): 151-169. The All India Newspaper Editors' Conference came out of a different context where war censorship was mixed with colonial censorship.

[137] Newspaper and journalist advocacy groups had been founded on city and provincial levels and organizations devoted to promotion and preservation of particular vernacular languages had sections devoted to journalism. Bombay, Madras, United Provinces, and Bengal had particularly active organizations. *Anjuman Taraqq-e-Urdu* (The Association for the Promotion of Urdu) had a journalism section, as did the All India Hindi Sammelan (All India Hindi Association). These local journalism organizations' primary focus included working conditions for journalists, wages, and state and local registration requirements. Most provincial, city, and languages groups were interested in the promotion of press freedom and many of them supported calling the first AINEC conference and later acted as affiliate bodies to the AINEC. For information about some provincial press organizations, see Vinita Damodaran, *Broken Promises: Popular Protests, Indian Nationalism, and the Congress Party in Bihar, 1935-1946* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). There was a group founded in 1932, called the All India Journalists' Conference, which folded in less than a year. The All India Journalists' Conference has only been mentioned briefly in some printed and archival sources. It was organized around protesting the 1931 Press (Objectional Materials) Act. See A.S. Iyengar and Krishna Ahooja-Patel, *Role of Press and Indian Freedom Struggle: All Through the Gandhian Era* (New Delhi: APH Publishing, 2001), 253-54; Milton Israel, *Communication and Power: Propaganda and the Press in the Indian National Struggle, 1920-1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 17.

role as an oppositional organization cannot be denied or downplayed. Still, the AINEC aspired to a life outside merely protesting against government incursions into their particular industry. The AINEC argued from the very beginning that, as an organization devoted to the expansion and protection of freedom of the press, their goals were intimately tied to the expansion and protection of freedom generally.

Articles written about British colonial government censorship emphasized the connection between citizens and the press in India. One article in the *Hindustan Times*, stated the connection quite clearly, arguing that "[in India] as elsewhere the Freedom of the Press means nothing more and nothing less than that the press must be as free to function under the limitations of the ordinary law as the ordinary citizen."[138] The article argues that in democracies, the press does not have any special rights except the rights of citizens. Thus the freedom to dissent against the government and its actions in print was a manifestation of the personal freedom of citizens in a democracy. Not that this dissent can take any form imaginable, the author suggests that the press (and the citizen) labor under "ordinary" laws that protect the nation and its citizens.

As a colony, the Indian democracy and Indian citizenship were still as theoretical as the freedom of the press for which the AINEC argued. But the AINEC contended that there was a connection between the idea of freedom– a word often used to describe the call for independence– and the functioning of a successful democracy. The organization maintained cogently that a democracy that could be successful in India would require a significant investment in freedom of expression, especially the ability to express dissent. The AINEC argued that their role in the struggle to achieve Indian independence and

[138] "Freedom of the Press," *Hindustan Times*, November 10, 1940.

define the character of Indian national freedom was safeguarding the freedom of expression against governmental repression. Moreover, the AINEC held that the newspaper industry's role in the national movement had to be the creation of a space of Indian unity around a national call for and commitment to freedom. In their role as national guardians of press freedom, the AINEC's arguments for freedom of expression imagined an "Indian nation and Indian citizen" outside the realm of national recognition in preparation for full sovereignty. The AINEC saw itself as preparing the nation for democracy both by unifying the press around the concept of press freedom and by mobilizing the press to unanimously lobby for stronger government protections for press freedom.

In order to realize Indian nationhood and citizenship in a way that fit with the organization's ideas about the importance of freedom of the press and democracy, the organization named itself "All India," which suggested the organization's commitment to the idea of a unified Indian national concept. The organization's emphasis on freedom of the press as indicative of national freedom and citizenship also required that the organization be able to make claims from the point of view of a unified national idea. The problem that the AINEC had in defining their "All India" status was that the organization had two distinct goals that required "All India" commitments. First, in an effort to imagine an Indian democracy and an Indian citizen, defined by the freedom of expression that the organization was fighting for, the AINEC had to construct a unity that could encompass a breadth of Indian voices. The newspaper industry had a particularly diverse set of concerns, with papers representing every language, regional area, political position,

and religion. The best way that the organization found to define its commitment to the whole of India's newspaper industry was by pointing to a foundational ideology that any newspaper editor could espouse– freedom of the press. The organization argued that they could remain unified, despite differing on almost any position as long as each editor fundamentally believed in the preservation of freedom of expression through the press. This unity, which I call ideological unity, implied an expansive vision of the future of Indian democracy, a nation united by the belief in national freedom, despite other differences. Unlike the newspaper-reading citizen of Anderson's imagined communities, the AINEC's ideological unity was based on a clear articulation of difference, made national through a commitment to freedom of the press.[139]

The second reason that the AINEC needed to be seen as unified was that, pragmatically, in order to meaningfully oppose governmental attempts to censor the press the organization needed to speak with one voice. The AINEC proposed an organization that was able to present the industry's grievances to the government in a way that would be representative of the *whole* press in India and would be a powerful challenge to the government's attempts to increase censorship under the guise of the war. The idea of a single, unbroken voice from the newspaper industry, amplified by a claim that the organization was widely numerically representative, was a powerful foil to government intervention. Even before the first conference in 1940, the AINEC's leaders suggested that at least in public, unity needed to mean unanimity. Despite the knowledge that promoting unity on the basis of unanimity meant policing dissent, almost the antithesis of

[139] For discussion of the idea of reading the newspaper as tantamount to a public conversation, see Martin Convoy, *The Press and Popular Culture* (New Delhi: Sage, 2002).

their ideological unity based on the concept of freedom of the press, the AINEC argued that by presenting a unanimous unity, they were able to ensure a more vigorous defense of press freedom with the government. The organization's work with the government, where they maintained their "All Indian" commitment in the form of unanimous unity, protected the Indian press from untenable censorship when it could and the AINEC gave the Indian anti-colonial movement a champion when it could not. Moreover, the tenor of the discussion about unity as unanimity seemed to indicate that once India had an independent national government, the AINEC would no longer need to present itself as unanimously united in order to protect the freedom of press, and by extension freedom generally.

The dual ways of defining itself tapped into both the inclusive and exclusive sense of the naming strategy associated with the "All India" prefix. On the one hand, like the other constituency-based "All India" organizations, the AINEC tried to define Indian unity and their "All India' commitment through an emphasis on dissent and negotiation, but with a national commitment to some set of concepts, the ideological unity of the AINEC. On the other hand, like majority All India National Congress Party, the AINEC argued that they were representative organization of the newspaper industry and as such, their voice defined the fundamental Indian unity.[140] In this formulation, defined here as unity in unanimity, dissent was dealt with internally, but the organization's public face defined the unity of the Indian newspaper industry. Having two strategies to define the "All India" component of their name is indicative of the problems that the AINEC had in

[140] For a larger discussion of the different valences used in the "All India" naming strategy, please see the introduction to this dissertation.

defining itself. The AINEC's conceptualization of ideological unity seemed like a radical rethinking of democracy as it applied to Indian difference, because it argued that Indian unity could be founded upon a shared belief in tenets that described India most generally.[141] But, given that Indian democracy was not yet established when the organization was founded in 1940, unity as unanimity gave the AINEC enough clout with the government to fight for the preservation of press rights. Still, the failure to defend dissent inherent in the definition of a unanimous unity, running directly counter to the ideological basis the AINEC claimed to espouse, undermined the claim that the AINEC was interested in redefining unity based on a multiplicity of voices.

Because the AINEC defined its unity as both ideological unity and unity as unanimity, the organization was plagued by a series of crises that threatened to disband the organization, brought on by an uncertainty about what was expected of Indian editors. Although the AINEC ultimately became important as an oppositional organization during the fight for independence, the organization was never able to fully embrace the ideological unity that would have allowed it to retain relevance after national freedom and actual democracy were enacted.

This chapter will consider the AINEC at three pivotal points in the organization's conceptualization and explanation of its relationship to unity and representation in the course of its rise during World War II and fall after Indian Independence. First, I will discuss the events that led to the calling of the first AINEC conference. Then I will consider the founding of the conference in 1940 and the assurances crisis that happened after the conference, which shaped both the ideological and practical approaches the

[141] "Minorities Corner," *Dawn*, January 11, 1946.

organization would take toward unity and representation. In the next section, I will consider the events surrounding the second meeting of the AINEC in 1942. On the heels of the announcement of Congress's Quit India movement increasingly repressive stances by the government toward publication of news the AINEC had to redefine unity in light of the growing chasm between nationalist newspapers and the rest of the industry. Finally, in the fourth section, I will discuss the failure of the AINEC to resist government censorship after independence, and what that failure said about both the AINEC's claim to unity and the changing valence of the concept of freedom of the press after "freedom" of the nation was accomplished.

Contextualizing the All India Newspaper Editors' Conference

Nationalizing news

It would have been difficult for the AINEC to effectively argue that press freedom was constitutive or even indicative of a national public debate without shifts in the newspaper industry that made more news stories nationally focused. While news about the nationalist movement was widely published in both vernacular and English language journals, local protests and nationalist agitations, even those with implications for the anti-colonial movement, were often only reported in the city or province in which they took place.[142]

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[142] This is especially true for movements outside of cities or major nationalist hubs. Though the 1930s were rife with peasant uprisings and rural reinterpretations of nationalist rhetoric reported in local language papers, almost none of these issues were published in larger English language publications. Milton Israel talks specifically about the differing roles of English and vernacular papers in his *Communication and Power*, 5; Madan Gopal, *Freedom movement and the Press: The Role of Hindi Newspapers* (New Delhi: Criterion Publications, 1990). On local interpretations of nationalist rhetoric, but not in a newspaper context, see Shahid Amin, "Gandhi as Mahatma: Gorakhpur District, Eastern UP, 1921-2," *Selected Subaltern Studies*, ed. Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 288-342.

Several changes allowed for a wider conception of national news. One important move was the translation of and engagement with stories from vernacular language sources in English language journals. Although there had been a significant relationship between vernacular and English language news sources before the early 1930s, as the nationalist movement became more heated, English language news sources began to pick up and publicize stories of resistance from local language newspapers as indicative of growing support for independence. A clearer predecessor however was the broader publication of news about nationalist heroes, and specifically news related to Mohandas "Mahatma" Gandhi. In particular the 1939-1940 *Satyagraha* campaigns were reported as national news despite being enacted largely at the local level.[143]

Unlike earlier *Satyagraha* movements, the 1939-41 *Satyagraha* was initiated as a set of individual protests rather than mass civil disobedience, because Gandhi claimed he wanted the movement to be "non-embarrassment" *Satyagraha* in deference to the British war effort. [144] However, the limited nature of the program seemed to amplify local action into national news because the local *Satyagraha* protests were seen as a way for papers to define national events for a locally-situated audience. For this reason, unlike previous *Satyagraha* movements, the 1939-1941 *Satyagraha* campaign volunteers were solicited for action in their local area and acted locally, but were reported in detail across India.

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[143] *Satyagraha* was a term used by Gandhi and defined by him as soul force or life force. Early on in Gandhi's national movement, the term *Satyagraha* was used interchangeably with passive resistance, something Gandhi fought against. The 1940 *Satyagraha* movement was a nation wide movement of volunteers, chosen from among Gandhi's contacts (4 or 5 a month) to carry out actions of civil disobedience and get arrested.

[144] Several books point out the connection between the limited nature of the protests and the desire for a 'non-embarrassment' campaign. See Bipan Chandra, *Modern India* (New Delhi: National Council of Educational Research and Training, 1971); Kamala Sarkar, *Bengal Politics: 1937-1947* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Francis Hutchins, *India's Revolution: Gandhi and the Quit India Movement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973).

For example, in January of 1941, 10 men were chosen to protest in Calcutta, but their names and arrests were reported in the Madras newspaper, *The Hindu*.[145] Volunteers who were selected to participate in *Satyagraha* action were announced in lists published widely around the country, and the arrests of these volunteers were reported as national news.[146]

Local political news being reported nationally both pushed the colonial government to consider the need for stricter controls on the newspaper industry and made the need for a nationally unified and representative newspaper organization more clear. Because Gandhi carefully chose participants to act in a local way throughout the country as a national action, and because the newspaper editors wanted to report on the ongoing *Satyagraha* movement, these local actions became national news. The *Satyagraha* movement helped to reorient newspapers from local productions into a national industry with national concerns.[147]

Gandhi was also active in creating news nationally through his national journals, *Young India* and the *Harijan,*[148] and his near daily transmission of press releases directly to newspapers.[149] Both *Young India* and the *Harijan* journals were nationally focused,

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[145] "Satyagraha Report," *The Hindu*, January 30, 1941.
[146] Some examples of these can be seen throughout the year 1941 in *The Hindu*. The *Satyagraha* Report was a regular part of the paper, and each detailed local (Madras-based) *Satyagraha* volunteers along with lists of volunteers from other parts of the country.
[147] Of interest on this subject is Alon Confino, *The Nation as Local Metaphor: Wurttemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871-1918* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).
[148] Gandhi took over editorship of *Young India* upon his return to India until the journal closed in 1922. The paper *Harijan* and its language affiliates were nominally edited by Mahadev Desai, one of Gandhi's most trusted secretaries, but in reality, as Desai himself conceded, the papers functioned as Gandhi's mouthpiece. On Gandhi's place as a journalist, see Sailendra Nath Bhattacharyya, *Mahatma Gandhi as Journalist* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press Reprint, 1984).
[149] Statements sent by Gandhi and published by many different newspapers were not only on relevant issues, like *Satyagraha*, non-violence, and anti-war protesting, they were also on subjects like proper diet, train travel, and religious observance.

and *Harijan* had several language affiliates that published essentially the same material as the English language journal. These journals addressed readers on national topics, arguing for an interest and conception of Indian concerns. Thus, when these journals focused on what were often defined as local, or even individual concerns, the expectation was that they had some kind of national significance.

Because of his national stature, the government's attempts to censor Gandhi's press notes, newspapers, and articles were considered to be a bellwether measure for the level of repression on the industry in general. Therefore it was no surprise that when Gandhi and his *Harijan* newspapers were 'advised' by the central Government's Press Advisor to stop publishing anti-war arguments in *Harijan*, it was taken as a warning of future repression to many nationalist papers.[150] Moreover, Gandhi's reaction to the proposed censorship, closing the *Harijan* and all of its language affiliates "indefinitely," pushed newspaper editors not willing to follow his lead in closing down to propose other options of fighting increasing levels of government repression.[151]

As the nationalizing of the *Satyagraha* movement helped to create the conditions for a national news industry, the shutting of the *Harijan* and the pointed censorship of Gandhi's other publications and press releases stoked a national response that helped to create the conditions needed for a large scale meeting of Indian newspaper editors. More importantly, the shutting down of a legitimately national voice, suggested a much wider threat to the ideal of freedom of press in India.

Institutional Censorship

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[150] Specifically, the Press advisor asked Gandhi to stop publicizing a *Satyagraha* fast by Vinoba Bhave against both colonial domination and the forced participation of India in World War II.
[151] "Gandhi Suspends the '*Harijan,*'" *Indian Social Reformer*, November 2, 1940.

While the *Satyagraha* movement increased coordination between English and vernacular language journals and Gandhi's nationalizing influence laid the groundwork for thinking about the newspaper industry as a national body, a specific instance of increased governmental censorship pushed editors to create a national organization. On October 26, 1940, the Government of India (GOI) published a Press Note announcing an emergency provision under article 41 of the Defence of India Rules (DoIR)[152] that implemented rigorous pre-censorship of all news and banned the publication of news that is "detrimental to successful war effort."[153] The implementation of emergency powers by the government was an expansion of the accepted interpretation of article 41, which before the press restriction codicil regulated publishing more generally. The additional restriction of the modified article 41 was a burden on newspapers that had already been working under strict regulations in the form of the Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Act of 1931.[154] The outcry from newspapers at the announcement of the new restrictions, even among newspapers run by Anglo-Indian proprietors, was impressive. Though each paper had their own take on the increased censorship, the general stance primarily

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[152] The Defence of India Rules were a set of emergency powers justified by the need for stricter laws during World War I and II. The Rules were not repealed after WWI and many Indians found them oppressive. For more on the DoIR, see Rajnarayan Chandavarkar, "Customs of Governance: Colonialism and Democracy in Twentieth Century India," *Modern Asian Studies* 41 (2007): 441-470.

[153] "Check on News Publication: Fresh Order by Government," *Hindustan Times*, October 26, 1940, 1; "Fresh Fetters for Press in India," *Bombay Chronicle,* October 26, 1940. A Full copy of the Press Note can be seen in V.K. Narasimhan, *Kasturi Srinivasan* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1969). While it may seem strange that the news of changes to the law was announced in the form of a note published in the press, it was a fairly regular occurrence.

[154] Some prominent newspaper editors and proprietors argued throughout the forties that it would be better practice to write well-defined press laws, even if they were severely more restrictive than the permanent laws at the time, instead of using emergency powers. Throughout the 1940's, the AINEC lobbied the Government to use the hated Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Act, 1931 rather than prosecute papers under DoIR 41. Practically, the two laws had few differences, except that cases prosecuted under the Indian Press Act were disputed in court, while DoIR convictions were appealed directly to the government.

focused on the threat to "democracy" and the "freedom of the press" that the new restrictions posited.[155]

The Defence of India Rules had long been unpopular as "permanent" emergency measures.[156] Because they themselves were the targets of the new restrictions, the press had a particularly violent reaction to the announcement of the amendment of the Defence of India Rule 41. They ran editorials claiming that the British were actively undermining their own fight for democracy by attempting to resist speech even to the extent of threatening to jail editors who complained about repressive press measures.[157] The government defended their repressive move by arguing that despite being a fairly radical reinterpretation of a repressive emergency power, the press had already tacitly agreed with the new formation of the rules, and that they were merely a new interpretation of the old formulation that everyone had worked under since before World War II.[158]

The government's move to actively suppress the Indian press was in marked contrast to the early war commitment to press freedom in Britain. Several sources in the

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[155] Even the notoriously pro-Government *Statesman* ran an editorial the next day condemning the rule changes. See also Sanjoy Bhattacharya, "Review of Communication and Power: Propaganda and the Press in the Indian Nationalist Struggle, 1920-1947," *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 1 (1997): 221-223, which argues, counter to Israel's argument, that Anglo-Indian papers did not always side with colonial restrictions, citing the *Statesman* in particular.

[156] Elizabeth Kolsky, "Codification and the Rule of Colonial Difference: Criminal Procedure in British India," *Law and History Review* 23, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 631-683.

[157] The idea that the British, in even having colonies, but especially in enacting strongly repressive measures on those colonies during the war, were undermining their own argument for liberty was by no means new. Still, each new offence reminded the public of the argument. The press restrictions sparked an argument even from particularly staunch empire defenders like *The Statesman*. The criticism by *The Statesman* prompted a government spokesman to point out that if the editors knew what damage they were doing to the empire by participating in the AINEC, they would certainly not morally be able to join. National Archives of India (NAI), Political (I), F. No. 33/48/1943.

[158] The added restrictions were particularly surprising because, despite the increasingly positive press of nationalist actions, the newspaper industry had been cooperative with the GOI's call to not print news that would in any measurable way harm the war effort. Under the terms set by the government, it was clear that Indian newspapers' coverage of the war was largely supportive of British war efforts, demonizing the Axis powers and allowing a measure of secrecy when it came to news of deployment on India's eastern front near Burma.

newspaper industry at the time claimed that the British censorship of newspaper publishing was "a military rather than a political censorship."[159] While censorship certainly did exist in Britain during the war years, much of the censored material that did not directly relate to military issues was news from the colonies.[160] Still, as George Orwell argued in his (censored) preface to the 1945 version of *Animal Farm*, "We have not been subjected to the kind of totalitarian 'co-ordination' that it might have been reasonable to expect. The press has some justified grievances, but on the whole the Government has behaved well and has been surprisingly tolerant of minority opinions. The sinister fact about literary censorship in England is that it is largely voluntary."[161] This industry-wide, voluntary censorship, while obnoxious, was clearly different from the kind of censorship imposed on Indian news and literary organizations, which was both intrusive and involuntary.

Government Response to the Outcry

The government vigorously denied that the tightening of the rules against newspapers was intended to stifle news about the anti-colonial movement. Still because of the broad anti-war stances of Gandhi and the All India Congress Committee, the new amendment could easily be used to stifle discussions of these bodies. The outcry in the newspaper columns was so severe that one week after sending out the press note the GOI was forced

[159] Robert Justin Goldstein, ed. *Political Censorship* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2001), 149. This book is a collection of newspaper articles about censorship.
[160] Ibid 149. Goldstein points to an article that suggested that colonial news was automatically 'scrutinized,' no matter its subject matter. Although the reason for this is not stated, scholars like Uday Mehta have argued that there was a discomfort with the dissonance between colonial nationalism and the British understanding of the colonial mission. Uday Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).
[161] George Orwell, "Freedom of the Press," *Times Literary Supplement*, September 15, 1972.

to ask for a meeting with the Indian and Eastern Newspaper Society (IENS)[162] citing a need to assure the newspaper industry that the new rules were less invasive than the industry thought. Editorials in newspapers argued that although there was no other organization to choose, the choice of the IENS as negotiator for the Indian newspaper industry was flawed and self-serving for the government. The argument among editors was that the general functioning of "nationalist" newspapers, or even conservative newspapers run by Indians would be hindered more significantly than the Anglo-Indian newspapers that made up the IENS because these papers were seen as supportive of the colonial government.[163] Because of the relative latitude British papers had with the government, newspaper editors were not comforted by the thought of the British dominated IENS being the representative of Indian newspaper concerns with the government. Although, many of the members of the IENS became members of the AINEC, the IENS as an organization was not interested in unifying the Indian newspaper

[162] The Indian and Eastern Newspaper Society (IENS) was founded in 1927 in London to advocate for the British papers working in India, Burma, and Ceylon. In 1939, noting the difficulty of directing affairs from London, the IENS opened offices at the Statesman House in New Delhi. Originally only open to British owned newspapers, when the IENS changed their headquarters, they began to allow a limited number of Indian-owned, English-language newspapers to join. The IENS was a precursor to the AINEC model. The organization was nationally organized, and as an editor/proprietor organization rather than a journalist union, the IENS was interested in larger industrial questions. Although the IENS operated nationally, they did so within a circumscribed set of issues, relating to the needs of the British papers operating in India and on issues that affected the British opinion of colonial rule in India. Though the British government tried to use the IENS as a representative press at the beginning of the conflict that gave rise to the AINEC, the IENS neither claimed this responsibility, nor was ultimately able to be invested with it. After Independence the IENS changed its name to the Indian Newspaper Society. A short history of the organization can be found at http://www.indiannewspapersociety.org/history1.htm.

[163] The concern of Indian owners that their papers would be under greater suspicion was not unwarranted. Historically, Indian presses, especially vernacular presses, had been prejudicially closed. The intense scrutiny on language papers is one of the reasons that most of the preserved papers are in English. Vernacular papers worked on much smaller margins, and any loss of security deposits was likely to mean their closure. Vernacular papers were also the first to be shut down by the government and the least able to recover from a shutdown.

industry, nor did it make any sustained claims to be the representative of the Indian newspaper industry.

In addition to asking the IENS for a meeting, the government put out a statement that was meant to reassure the press that though the new restrictions seemed extensive, they would be taken as guidelines, which if followed would not result in a crippling of the press reporting on the national movement. Summing up the government's argument, the press release noted that,

> The desirability of trusting to the sense of responsibility of newspapers as regards the manner of presentation of news was stressed, and it was further pointed out that the object of the Government would not be served by the Government to restrict newspapers to news contained in official communiqués. It was, therefore, suggested that the matter should be left to the good sense of the newspapers acting in consultation with Press Advisors.[164]

The government argued that the restrictions, though seemingly wide-reaching, were necessary in order to regulate newspapers that were irresponsible or dangerous to the war effort.

The problem with the assertion was that it was not at all clear which segment of the national press would be labeled irresponsible and which responsible.[165] The power to

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[164] "Restrictions on Press: Home Member Explains Scope: Discussion With Newspaper Society," *Hindustan Times*, November 2, 1940, 4.

[165] Note that idea of temporary, emergency measures put in place to police the margins of the newspaper industry mirrors the assertion by the Nehru nationalist government that new national press restrictions, including amending to the fundamental rights section of the constitution to restrict press freedom, would be used only against irresponsible papers, despite the net being wide enough to snare even "responsible" papers. In both cases, the government argued that new emergency powers were necessary to the government in order to crack down on irresponsible, marginal papers. Moreover, each new restriction was described as a temporary measure. As with many instances of "extraordinary power," restrictive government power over the press soon took on a measure of permanence. For the time after the war that the British remained in power, war restrictions on the press remained in effect, despite lobbying by the AINEC. The national government took the idea even farther, eventually amending the constitution to include press censorship rights. Although many of the early national press laws were indeed quickly overturned, different laws and restrictions were passed in their place.

delineate the space between appropriate journalism and irresponsible publications that needed to be suppressed was the power to define the overall freedom of the press. In order to protect press freedom, the newspaper industry either needed to be part of the policing of the "responsibility line" or to attempt to discredit the idea that responsible journalism required self-censorship altogether. Part of the ultimate failure of unity in the AINEC was that on its founding, it attempted both to be the government's interlocutor in defining what was responsible journalism and fight against self-censorship as necessary to press freedom.

Censorship and the Call for the AINEC

Despite these communiqués and meetings, or perhaps because of them, many newspapers and their editors were convinced that the Government would use their new powers to suppress news about the independence movement. Several cases of particularly strenuous censorship were brought forward against nationalist identified papers, but none were more troubling than the cases against the *National Herald* and the *Sainak*, both of which had their security deposits seized and publication suspended indefinitely.[166] The *Sainak* case was particularly galling, since the article that caused the newspaper to be sanctioned was an Associated Press article reprinted without repercussions in almost

[166] Newspapers which seemed likely to print objectionable material were often asked by the government to supply money as a security deposit that the government could seize wholly or in part under circumstances where the paper erred grossly. During this period, one tactic the government employed to make it almost impossible for 'troublesome' newspapers to open or reopen was to levy exceedingly high security deposits. In the end both the *Sainak* and the *National Herald* ended up closing in the face of very high security deposits. The practice of levying security deposits was continued after independence.

every large paper in the country. Editorials about the *Sainak* case argued that the paper's only crime was being nationalist leaning.[167]

As a result of these distressing actions, several editors in Delhi, including the editor of the *Hindustan Times*, Devdas Gandhi, and the Delhi correspondent of *The Hindu*, B. Shiva Rao, both of whose papers were members of the IENS, suggested that a large emergency conference, separate from the IENS meeting, be convened.[168] Kasturi Srinivasan of *The Hindu* was commissioned to act as the public face for the conference, and he sent out messages to various large newspapers, both vernacular and English language, around the country calling them to Delhi for a "representative" conference. Citing a need for an Indian voice against increasing repression of freedom of expression by the government of India, the explanation of the conference suggested a new idea of the press as a vital, unified national industry, as opposed to an industry that displayed the instability of Indian unity, fractured by place, race, language, and politics. The conference invitations were meant to be national and representative in their breadth and depth. Even the Subjects Committee (convened to decide upon subjects and write resolutions for discussion at the plenary session) was constructed to represent both powerful and diverse constituencies.

As soon as the first conference was suggested, articles and editorials began speculating whether the new organization could effectively fight the trend toward governmental censorship and restriction. The fight between the Press and the government was spun as a larger parable about the dangers of fascism seeping into a society and

[167] Sanjoy Bhattacharya, "Wartime Policies of State Censorship and the Civilian Population: Eastern India, 1939-1945," *South Asia Research* 17, no. 2 (1997): 140-177.
[168] Narasimhan, *Kasturi Srinivasan,* chapter 9.

undermining democracy and its resultant freedoms. The pre-conference articles connected the idea of the diverse newspaper industry coming together to protect freedom of the press to the idea of a diverse country unifying through their shared belief in democratic values. The idea of an organization brought together by shared values was mirrored in the discussion of the newspaper industry as unified through the concern for freedom of the press.

While fighting the threat of collapsing freedom of expression and failing democracy, several editorials argued that unity unmarred by difference, or a fundamental unity, was a necessary tool in the fight to preserve freedom of expression. In one, the author points out that "The resultant position constitutes a grave threat not only to the Nationalist Press, but to the Press as a whole, Indian and Anglo-Indian, Congress and non-Congress. (…) Effective action is only possible if the Press stands united as a whole and does not disintegrate according to its political affiliations."[169] Oddly, the call for unanimous action was framed as a way to preserve the ability of papers to differ and present opinions at odds with each other. The early pre-conference press oscillated between the danger inherent to freedom if the press did not act unanimously and powerfully against the government and pro-uncensored news, and the goal of freedom to allow difference assuming certain shared fundamental tenets. In both cases, the idea that there would be a national organization that would unify the industry was supported, but the uncertainty about the structure of its unity could be seen even before the conference was called.

Founding the All India Newspaper Editors' Conference

[169] *Hindustan Times,* November 10, 1940, 7.

The first conference of the AINEC was convened on November 10, 1940, one day after a second meeting between representatives of the IENS and the government about the change to the Defence of India Rules. Although the conference was well-attended, several important provincial newspapers, especially vernacular newspapers, were not initially invited. The *Hindustan Times* pointed out that the invitations had been sent haphazardly, because of the need to be reactive, but, since the conference had invited the papers with the largest circulation and papers from most major political and language group, the article argued that the conference was still representative.[170] The conference organizers also argued that because the conference was organized with the intention of representing the newspaper industry the organization could be described as having a representative character. The organization's claim to represent the whole newspaper industry, and its proof of this assertion by unified action at the conference, allowed the organization to make both an ideological and oppositional case against governmental restrictions on the freedom of the press.

For an organization that prided itself on its ability to represent the entirety of the newspaper industry, the structure of the conference was far from modeling the kind of "democratic values" it claimed to hold. The Subjects Committee, appointed before the conference, decided the issues that were appropriate to the meeting and wrote the resolutions for the plenary session. The only debates on the resolutions, the agenda of the meeting, and the goals of the conference happened during the Subjects Committee meeting, held one day before the plenary session of the conference began. Members of

[170] "Newspaper Editors' Conference: A Representative Gathering Expected," *Hindustan Times*, November 8, 1940.

the Subjects Committee met with several government officials before the plenary session; the meeting resulted in the government agreeing to revoke the revisions to Defence of India Rule 41.[171] Establishing the work of the conference in a small group, like the Subjects Committee, meant that the conference was able to run smoothly and present an organized, unified resistance to the government's attempt to control the press. Still, if restricting debate on the actions of the conference to a very limited forum of editors of high circulating and/or politically important newspapers increased the formal unity to the point of unanimity, it also undermined idea of the organization's claims to be unified through support for freedom of expression and its importance for democracy.

The work by the Subjects Committee also brought up concerns about the AINEC's relationship with the IENS and the government, because so many editors were members of both the IENS delegation to the government and the Subjects Committee for the AINEC. The timing of the Conference with respect to the timing of the meeting between the IENS and the government also caused a good amount of suspicion among journalists that the new conference was merely a rubber-stamp organization for the IENS. Despite being advertised separately from the IENS meeting with the government, the Conference was often written about as a continuation of the newspaper industry's meeting with the government already in progress. The idea that the conference represented merely an open meeting of the IENS rather than a separate entity was

[171] Whether the meeting of the members of the Subject Committee with the government was under the auspices of the IENS or another separate meeting was never adequately determined.

reinforced by the deeply hierarchical structure and secretive manner in which the Conference was conducted.[172]

Despite the deeply secretive and hierarchical structure of the first meeting, the plenary session attempted to draw a clear trajectory from the values of the newspaper industry to the unity and democracy of the nation. Moreover, the link between unity and democracy was often defined as the ability to speak and express dissent, something that the AINEC tried to argue was the basis of their claim to "All India" representation. Speeches by the editors argued that the lack of a democratic national government was the reason that freedom of the press was under attack. The speech made by Mahadev Desai in the plenary session stressed the connection between fighting for freedom of the press and freedom for the nation, while Srinivasan pointed to the House of Common's stand against censoring British newspapers. Both editors pointed out that the British were asking colonial people to accept a measure of repression that would be unacceptable under the democratically governed Britain.[173] As the years went on, the AINEC would consistently stress the importance of freedom of expression for democracy and democracy for the founding of a stable and well-governed Indian nation.[174]

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[172] Even the name of the conference, officially and most lastingly, the All India Newspaper Conference, was unclear. Some of the confusion in the naming of the conference came from references to it in newspapers; the conference was alternately called the AINEC, the Editors' Conference (without the All India prefix), the Newspaper Editors' Society (a take off of the Indian and Eastern Newspaper Society), the Indian Newspaper Society, or the Delhi Editors Meeting. In Hindi the conference was called *Akhil Bharatiya Sampaadak Sammelan* (or All India Editors' Organization, see *Aj* from Banaras), while in Urdu the name of the conference was the English words "Editors' Conference" transliterated into the Urdu script (see *Daily Tej* out of Delhi).

[173] Mahadev Desai's speech was reprinted as "Censorship of the Press Must Go," *Hindustan Times*, December 16, 1940, 6; K. Srinivasan's speech was republished in several dailies, see *Hindustan Times*, November 11, 1940, 1.

[174] Even British members, accepted that democracy only worked in a nation that did not censor freedom of the press, "Fresh Fetters," *The Tribune,* November 10 1940, page 4. The article ended with the argument that "[The Government's] autocratic enactment may defeat its own purpose."

Both ideological unity and unity as unanimity were defined at the first meeting of the AINEC. The goal of the conference was defined by President Srinivasan's speech, in which he argued that the conference was called in order to "agree upon a common action," in response to government moves toward repression. But, according to Srinivasan, what made the conference worth supporting was the shared idea that freedom of the press was vitally important to the creation and support of a nation. Unity as unanimity gave strength to common action, but ideological unity created common cause. He said, "We in India are painfully aware of the many differences in the political sphere. But I am glad to feel that in regard to the liberties of the Press differences of outlook or opinion are not likely to divide us."[175] Although common action in the face of crisis was the cause for the founding of the AINEC, for Srinivasan loyalty to the concept of freedom of the press was the only way to hold the radically divergent subject positions in the industry together.

The potential of unity based on common ideology is entirely determined by its implementation. For an organization that structured the claim for unity around knowing, accepting, and promoting divergences, the AINEC was woefully unable to accept dissent. The AINEC, from the very beginning, was an organization devoted to unity defined by unanimous action defined by the elite majority. The plenary session was short, lasting only a day, with no room for speeches about the resolutions presented by the Subjects Committee. Further, the speeches at the first conference were solicited from major editors in advance of the conference, so there was no chance for editors with unexpected

[175] Reprint "Kasturi Srinivasan's Presidential Address to the Conference," *Hindustan Times,* November 11, 1940, 1.

opinions to speak. The President of the Conference read the Subjects Committee's resolutions aloud to the editors, because the conference did not pass out paper copies. The lack of paper copies of the resolutions meant that editors who were not members of the Subjects Committee could not review the resolutions before the vote, which followed *viva voce* directly after the resolutions were read, leaving no time for debate or amendment. The result was that the resolutions all passed unanimously.[176] In a letter to J.N. Sahni, published in the *Hindustan Times*, Manoranjan Guha, the editor of the *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, a Bengali language newspaper, argued that several editors, himself included, had voted for the resolutions despite feeling uneasy about the overall haste of the proceedings and the structure of the new organization. He wrote, "I think like myself they suppressed whatever feeling of dissatisfaction for the sake of formal unity."[177] Although the ideological foundations of the conference may have been the respect for a common belief in the freedom of the press, the functioning of the conference was based on the concept of unanimous action.

The resolutions at the 1940 AINEC conference were aimed at remaking the relationship between the press and the government. The most functional of these resolutions was the formation of a system of press advisory committees in each province and at the center that stood between the government and the newspaper editors in an effort to determine the appropriateness of news stories, to punish editors and publishers who were wanton in their publication of rumor, and to monitor the tone of news

[176] "Notes," *The Modern Review* 68, no. 6 (December 1940): 604.
[177] "'Was Any Assurance Given to Government?': Mr. Srinivasan relates what happened in Delhi: No Undertaking given by anyone," *Hindustan Times,* Dec. 26, 1940, 7.

stories.[178] This plan had been advocated by the IENS in the meetings with the government before the AINEC conference was called, and the Government finally accepted the proposal as backed and operated by the AINEC largely because of their "representative capacity." The government argued that because of "the recent All India Newspaper Editor's Conference, which was as fully representative as any such conference is likely to be," the new organization would be better able to set up representative advisory committees in each province and at the center.[179] The claim to represent the newspaper industry was based on both kinds of unity depending on who was asking it be proved. When speaking to the newspaper industry itself, the AINEC defined their representative claim based on the agreement that the industry had made to the ideological unity of their joint commitment to the protection and expansion of freedom of expression. When speaking to the government, the AINEC argued that their representative capacity was based on the unanimous agreement and commitment of the AINEC members to the actions taken by the organization.

Even before the end of the plenary session, the government agreed to repeal their amendments to Defence of India Rule 41. In the press note announcing the reversion to the previous rule 41, the Government wrote,

> As a result of friendly conversations in Delhi with representatives of leading newspapers, who have given them an *assurance* that they have no intention of impeding the country's war effort and that any deliberate or systematic attempt by newspapers to do so would be viewed with

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[178] The AINEC also passed resolutions calling for the government to treat Gandhi's writing with more latitude and admonishing the government about the unfair treatment of the *National Herald* and *Sainak*.

[179] NAI, Political (I), F. No 33/48/1943. The meeting also created a permanent structure for the AINEC that included yearly plenary meetings to assess the state of the newspaper industry, reaffirmed the organization's commitment to the goal of freedom of the press, and created an elected board called the Standing Committee, which would be the representative of the organization in negotiations with the government at times outside of plenary sessions.

> disapproval by the Press as a whole. Government now feels that the matter may well be left to the discretion of Editors, in consultation with Press Advisors in cases of doubt.[180]

The government also agreed to the setting up of Press advisory committees in each province and at the center with representatives appointed by the AINEC Standing Committee, so long as their choices were representative.[181] The agreement between the government and the AINEC, in which the AINEC supported a policy against anti-war propaganda and the government agreed to send disputes through the advisory committees, was publicized as the Delhi agreement.

The public response in the first days to both the concept and the effectiveness of the Conference was largely positive. The government had withdrawn its orders, and had endorsed the press-advising mechanism that the Conference had drawn up in Delhi. The AINEC's unified front and the large attendance was lauded as especially effective in influencing the government. The idea of the newspaper industry working unanimously to stop further restrictions seemed to be a promising tactic against government incursion in press freedoms. Still, the Associated Press article about the success of the conference was headlined "Indian Press Gag Not So Tight Now," and many editorials indicated a similarly tentative stance toward the success of the AINEC.[182] In part, there was a fear among several editors, especially once the text of the press note revoking the rule change was parsed, that the newspaper industry had traded government fetters for self-policing

[180] The note was published in every newspaper I was able to find, including translated in Hindi and Urdu papers; the emphasis is mine.
[181] NAI, Political (I), F. No 33/48/1943.
[182] "Government to Withdraw New Order, Editors' Conference Success," *Hindustan Times,* November 11, 1940; "By the Way," *Amitra Bazaar Patrika,* December 21, 1940; "The Press After the Delhi Conference," *Indian Social Reformer*, November 30, 1940, 149-150; "Sarkar 'Kala Firman' Vaapas Le Liya, Dilli main Akhail Bharatiya Sampadak Sammalen," *Aj*, November 12, 1940, 1.

policies.[183] The consensus was that the AINEC had made a good start in getting the government to reverse its decision, but that freedom of the press was by no means secured by the successes of the conference. Something about the way the conference was called (quickly and haphazardly), conducted (with all of the real discussion done behind closed doors with specific press elites), and closed (with the press note and the Delhi agreement) raised the hackles of even press editors positively disposed to the conference.

Those misgivings became even more pronounced when on November 26, 1940, the Bengal Provincial government banned newspapers from publishing news of threatened hunger strike by Subhas Chandra Bose without consulting the provincial (or central) press advisory committee, and the United Provinces government not only refused to return the security surrendered from the *National Herald*, but demanded an additional 10,000 rupees. The *Hindustan Times* argued, "When the news about the withdrawal of the order was conveyed to the Newspaper Editors' Conference, which met at New Delhi on November 10, some delegates voiced their misgivings that though the order had been withdrawn, the assumption of powers to prohibit publication of news of a certain kind and to subject publication of such news to pre-censorship was still there to be used by the government whenever they felt it necessary to do so. These misgivings have proved absolutely justified."[184] The confusion about what had been actually accomplished at the first meeting of the AINEC, added to the general feeling of sacrificing without any

[183] Several categories of papers, specifically news organizations associated with either the communist party or the All India Muslim League were hostile to the new organization. *The Modern Review* and *Dawn* were both ahead of the curve in pointing out the new organization's failure. See "Journalistic Triumph!," *The Modern Review*, 68, no.6 (December 1940): 603-604; "About the Editors'- Or Rather, Newspaper Proprietors' Delhi Conference" *The Modern Review* 69, no. 1 (January 1941): 13.
[184] "Rule 41 again," *Hindustan Times*, November 17, 1940, 4.

benefit, led to a series of public recriminations against and defenses of the AINEC that centered on the language of assurances in the government press note that was called the Assurances Crisis.

Policing Dissent: Defining Unity through the Assurance Crisis

The less than wholly confident reaction to the "success" of the AINEC among attendees was followed by a series of fundamental uncertainties that remained about the conference. Some questions were as mundane as a continued uncertainty as to the organizational aspirations of the conference, the name of the new organization, and the role of the newly-formed Standing Committee, all of which were answered within a few months after the conference. More troubling were the questions that continued to dog the conference until its fall from relevance just after independence in 1950. Most important among these were; what kind of responsibilities could the conference pledge in the name of its members and how much self-policing of ideas would be necessary to endorse the conference; that is, was unanimous support for AINEC required from members?

In part, these uncertainties stemmed from the failure to specifically outline the conference's aims at the outset. One group of editors saw the changes to Article 41 as the final attack on the freedom of the press, and thought that the AINEC conference goals were to fight against all press repression. Another group felt that the purpose of the conference was to fight specifically against Article 41, pushing for a return to the status quo with regards to press restrictions. This split persisted throughout the life of the AINEC, between the editors and journalists who argued that the organization was fundamentally about positive change (fighting for the expansion of freedom), and those

who were at least content with negative gains (pushing back against government encroachment on already ceded freedom.) The questions regarding the kind of unity required from the editors could partially map on to this distinction between positive and negative gains, where editors concerned with positive gains tended to be on the side of ideological unity, and allowing for a wider show of difference within the organization. While editors who were content with negative gains tended to support the more strategic unity as unanimity, following through on issues that the entire industry could support. These questions came to a head just after the government released the Press Note revoking the amendment to Article 41. The problem was specifically around the idea that the AINEC had given the government an assurance that the newspaper industry would self-police articles that dealt with the war effort. The idea that, without any mandate from the whole conference, some undefined group of leaders of the AINEC gave the government an assurance that the industry, under the auspices of the AINEC, would police its members' speech was galling to editors who thought they had signed on to an organization unified by their devotion to freedom of expression.

Several editors were dissatisfied with the language of the press note because it seemed to indicate to them that a backroom deal had been made. Specifically, the language of assurances as it bound "the press as a whole" led to speculation about specific obligations made on behalf of people who were not privy to them. The main issues of the assurance crisis were set in a public letter exchange in which the editor of the Ananda Bazar Patrika asked Srinivasan to explain the language of the Press Note. He specifically asked for clarification about what made the government feel that there was an

assurance, what the assurance was, and who was involved in the negotiations. The concern was that the assurance seemed to bind the whole newspaper industry to not only police their own news about the war, but also to actively disapprove of papers and responses that hindered the war effort.

Guha, the editor who wrote the open letter to J.N. Sahni, argued that under the press note's dictates, "the press as a whole is saddled with the duty of viewing with disapproval any 'deliberate or systematic attempt by a newspaper to do' what the Government calls 'impeding the country's war effort.' (…) Why should the 'Press as a whole' accept the task of ranging itself against a paper that is neither immoral nor transgresses any journalist etiquette?"[185] The problem with the idea of "the press as a whole" is fundamental discomfort with the more totalizing versions of unity and representation that the AINEC presented as necessary in dealing with a hostile government. Hence the most effective argument made in the initial open letter exchange between Guha and Sahni was about what the nature of assurances in the AINEC ideally was. Guha argued that the AINEC leaders had "stretched their representative capacity somewhat beyond its legitimate limit,"[186] because it forced upon the industry as a whole a responsibility for self-policing freedom of expression on certain topics. The claim that the organization unified and represented the ideological underpinnings of the newspaper industry meant that the AINEC had more responsibility not to police dissent out of their constituency.

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[185] "Was Any Assurance Given?," *Hindustan Times*, December 26, 1940, 7.
[186] Ibid.

Dissent has long been a partner to unity, either as an opposite, or as a key part of the equation.[187] In the case of the AINEC, the organization tried to have it both ways, where behind closed doors, dissent was necessary to the organization's conception of unity, but in the world the AINEC defined their organizational unity as without dissent. While the AINEC's unified action forced the government to recognize the organization as a force to be reckoned with, the way the conference's resolutions were accomplished struck some of the participants as overly disciplined and perhaps even contrary to the foundational idea of freedom of expression. Although the assurances crisis quickly moved from ideological issues of the conference to discussion of the failings of the conference, the question of when unity could be claimed was raised. Indeed, Guha, Desai, and other involved in the assurances crisis, in asking about what was promised in the name of "the press as a whole," questioned the applicability of a claim of unity in the case that the opportunity for dissent was not presented.

The AINEC's representative claim was the responsibility to be sure that dissenting voices were heard and acknowledged. The challenge to the organization that emerged during the assurances crisis, especially around the issue of the "press as a whole," was how to allow for dissent under the terms of unity that they had built their organization upon. Under a regime of unity as unanimity, a unified front against those papers that indiscreetly published prejudicial war news was the basis for leverage with the government against increasing restrictions on press freedoms. But, considered under the terms of an ideological unity in which the newspaper agreed to fight together on the

[187] This is certainly the case in the definition of the naming strategy "All India" whose two senses function as either making dissent into part of a unifying strategy or tamping down dissent to preserve unity.

basis of a commonly held belief of freedom of expression through the press, the idea that the organization would censor based on any other position besides freedom of the press, and that this decision was taken without giving the press as a whole a chance to voice their discontent, was antithetical to the original purpose.

By January 1941, the heated battle about the assurances had burned itself out amidst chides from editors that the fight was petty and undermined the ability of the AINEC to bill itself as unified.[188] But dismissing the immediate questions of who gave assurances, what were they, and when were they given, did little solve the real problems of the assurances crisis; that is, what kind of unity and organizational structure would be most appropriate for the AINEC? For the AINEC, the structure of claims of representative power through disciplined approval of undisclosed actions came to organizationally indicate unity of action and widely shared obligation. The sense of obligation seemed to be two-fold; the obligation to disown writing that seemed counter to the government's war effort and the more insidious obligation of the papers to stifle their own dissent and expression on the basis of the representative capability of the unanimous organization.

Defining Representation: Agenting, Mirroring, and Absenting

The AINEC articulated their representational claims in three ways, by claiming to be an agent of the press, by claiming to mirror the make-up of the industry in their membership,

[188] The to and fro of the assurances crisis is complex and well discussed in several books written about the history of the newspaper industry in India. For more information about it see S.K. Aggarwal, *Press at the Crossroads* (Delhi: UDH Publishing House, 1988); T.J.S. George, *Pothan Joseph's India: A Biography* (New Delhi: Sanchar Publishing House, 1992); M. Chalapathi Rau, *The Press in India* (Bombay: Allied Publishers Private Limited, 1968); J.P. Chaturvedi, *The Indian Press at the Crossroads: Saga of Fifty Years* (New Delhi: Media Research Associates, 1992).

and by creating a space between the press and the government through the press advisory mechanisms.[189] First, they argued that the resolutions at the 1940 conference had authorized the AINEC to speak and make decisions for the press as their agent. This claim of representation based on being the agent of the industry was based on the idea that the organization best suited to care for the core beliefs of the newspaper industry in its concern for freedom of the press. This first representational strategy was empowered by the claim of ideological unity, because it relied on the organization being trusted to act responsibly to preserve freedom of expression even if the editors acting as agents would not necessarily be able to act as stand-ins for their trustees.

Secondly, the AINEC argued that they were best suited to represent the newspaper industry because their large and widespread membership best mirrored that industry. This second representational claim that the AINEC mirrored the industry was argued based on the organization having members that could stand in for larger segments of the industry. By putting editors in positions such as the Madras editor, the Anglo-Indian editor, or the Hindi-language editor, the representational claim of mirroring allowed the AINEC to support the idea of an industry at its core undivided, and an organization that valued unity as unanimity.

The third representational claim, of creating a space between the industry and the government, is less straight-forward. In the advisory committees, the AINEC tried to find a way to define the representative goals outside of the industry by claiming to represent an idea– freedom of the press– and thereby making the organization's goal not industry

[189] On 'representational claims,' see Michael Saward. "The Representational Claim," *Contemporary Political Theory* 5 (2006): 297-318.

protection but national democracy. The goal was to absent the AINEC from the goal of representing the press to the government and the government to the press by offering a space through which the two could speak. The three representational claims supported different registers of meaning for AINEC's efforts to understand unity and its All India status.

Because the AINEC's vision of Indian unity was in part built on the idea that there was a set of fundamental beliefs that tied together the newspaper industry, the organization was freed in part from describing their representational capacity in terms of numbers and mirroring. In March 1941, V.S. Venkatraman, editor of *New India*, argued that "the Editors' Conference had in such a short time, done so much for the protection of the liberty of the Indian press,"[190] that the organization had already fulfilled its promise to be a strong voice against attempts to harness freedom of expression. As such, the AINEC in general, and the Standing Committee as the acting body of that organization, had shown that it was an appropriate agent for the newspaper industry.

Immediately after the first conference, B. Shiva Rao, an associate editor at the *Hindu*, argued that "the Conference stood for the interests of the Press as a whole, and he begged of the members not think in terms of vernacular press or territorial representation."[191] The AINEC argued that in pursuing an agenda of protecting– and in some cases expanding– the freedom of the press, the newspaper industry had a reliable agent in the organization. Indeed, Shiva Rao and others argued that the choice of editors with good reputations, skill as negotiators, and strong connections with both the news

[190] "Work of Editors' Conference: Nagpur Journalists' Tribute: Mr. Srinivasan Appeal for Cooperation," *The Hindu*, March 15, 1941, 5.
[191] Ibid.

industry and the government, meant that the AINEC was better able to represent the industry's main goals and ideologies.

The AINEC had problems sustaining this representational claim, because its validity was not entirely clear. Although the assurances crisis stopped being news after the first meeting of the Standing Committee in 1941, the questions about dissent, secrecy, and discipline left many newspaper editors wondering if the organization was the best agent to represent their commitment to freedom of expression. In order to allay the fears of some newspapers that the AINEC in general, and especially that the Standing Committee were too conservative and thus could not represent more nationalist papers, the Standing Committee began to argue that the AINEC was the organization that stood the best chance of having a cross section of the industry on its membership roles.[192] It was this representational claim that forced the government to see the AINEC as the industry's representative in negotiations. But this representational claim required constant work. At the first Standing Committee meeting, three new member slots were added to better represent language and minority newspapers. The Standing Committee also had to make sure that each of its members could be assigned to a discrete subject position.

Even with constant revision, this claim was flawed from the very beginning. The organization was not large enough to accommodate any particular newspaper's views. Attempts to fill slots for categories of newspapers that did not support the AINEC were particularly tortured. For example, in an attempt to represent "Muslim newspapers" the AINEC Standing Committee invited *Tej*, a Congress-supporting Urdu newspaper, and in

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[192] There were groups, like Muslim League papers, Gandhi's papers, and Communist run papers, which did not support the AINEC, but these papers would be unlikely to buy any representational claim that the AINEC made; and therefore, they are not useful for this argument.

an effort to keep the committee size within reason, proprietors of chains that included both language and English papers were slotted into language paper slots. Because of the agenda of unity as unanimity the AINEC standing committee was not able to fully admit the kinds of differences of opinion that would allow for representation to mirror the industry.

One of the ways the AINEC defended its suitability to represent the newspaper editors was the authorization granted to the AINEC by both the government and the industry to act as a mediator through the Advisory Committees. One of the most important, and surprisingly uncontroversial, resolutions to come out of the first conference called for the creation of a Central Advisory Committee (whose membership corresponded directly with the Standing Committee) and Provincial Advisory Committees.[193] These committees were technically separate from the AINEC, but they were staffed by AINEC leaders and were often conflated with the AINEC. Their role was to act as "a body of fellow-editors […] interposed between the journalist and the Government."[194] The Standing Committee suggested names of editors who would be good candidates to the Provincial governments and the Provinces were instructed by the government to accept the names, providing that they were "representative".[195] It is

[193] I say surprisingly uncontroversial here because of all of the resolutions to come out of the first AINEC conference, this advisory mechanism did the most work toward authorizing power to the group of editors on the Standing Committee. In light of the controversy that settled around these editors shortly after the conference about a breech of commitment to the newspaper industry, it is surprising that even editors who decried the rest of the conference hailed the advisory mechanism as a triumph.
[194] "The Press and Civil Liberty," *Indian Social Reformer* 51, no. 11 (November 16, 1940):121.
[195] NAI, Political (I), F. No 33/48/1943. While several provinces, especially Madras and Bombay agreed with the list of names provided by the Standing Committee, set up their Provincial Advisory Committees and worked productively with them almost immediately, other provinces, specifically the Central Provinces and United Provinces resisted any attempts to make the committees work. The committees were used primarily to replace the old Press Advisors, government operatives whose jobs were to advise newspapers

unclear what the government's criteria for being representative was, but the AINEC claimed to nominate people from their side who would represent the value of freedom of the press in a space that was institutionally between the government and the press.

The editor of the *Bombay Chronicle*, reflecting on the role of the advising bodies two years after its enactment, argued that the space provided by the Central and Provincial press advisory committees "enabled the Press, in some parts of the country, at any rate, to safeguard to a considerable extent what little liberties have been left to it."[196] By creating space between the newspaper editor and government punishment, the organization did help preserve some aspects press liberty. However, the space put the organization in a difficult situation in decoding its representative mandate. Clearly, newspaper editors, in opposition to specific restrictions by the government against the press, created the organization and, as such, the AINEC's main representational claim was as an advocate for newspaper concerns to the government.[197] On the other hand, the government argued that in agreeing to work with the AINEC in the form of Advisory Committees, the Standing Committee of the AINEC was compelled to also represent government positions to the newspaper industry. The AINEC was constantly fighting against claims by the organization's members that the Standing Committee was too willing to compromise to preserve some advising system and claims from the government

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when they were getting close to unacceptable material, censor newspaper stories, and recommend punishments for newspapers that did not comply with their advice.

[196] "Clear Breach of Gentleman's Agreement: Mr. Brelvi's Charge Against U.P. Government," *Bombay Chronicle,* August 1, 1942, 6. The article was a reprint of the speech made by Mr. Brelvi in the keynote address to the UP Press Conference (a subsidiary organization to the AINEC).

[197] At least, at first this is certainly true. After independence this line becomes trickier to follow because many important figures in the AINEC become part of the government.

that the organization was too willing to let newspaper editors who really did undermine the war effort off with a warning or less.[198]

All Indian or National: The Suspended Newspaper Conference and the Second AINEC Plenary Session

As 1942 progressed, the government attempted to more rigorously control the popular political situation by policing the mechanisms of public opinion about the war and the government- including speeches, meetings, and the press. The war was not going well in Europe, and the nationalist agitation was increasing. In an attempt to keep the press positive on the war and the government, the government threatened several times to discard the relationship with the AINEC. These feints away from the working relationship with the AINEC were generally quickly resolved, but their resolution generally included the AINEC agreeing to slightly more restrictive press censorship. Still, until May 1942, the general framework of the organization was largely static.[199] Despite continued wariness on the part of editors, newspapers tended to read the almost constant level of government censorship until summer 1942 as proof of the AINEC claims that

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[198] For examples of pushback against the AINEC, see "Press Censorship," *Amrita Bazaar Patrika,* February 4, 1941, 6; for examples of government complaints against AINEC, see NAI, F. No. 33/1/1942. Several scholars cite the conflict inherent in being both a representative for the press but also for the government to the press as one of the destabilizing aspects of the organization's early years. See Ranadhir Sarkar, *The Press in India* (New Delhi: S. Chand, 1984); N. Krishna Murthy, *Indian Journalism* (Mysore: University of Mysore Press, 1968); and Sharad Karkhanis, *Indian Politics and the Role of the Press* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1981).

[199] In an attempt to clarify the organizational structure, the Standing Committee wrote a constitution for the AINEC in January 1941. The president, K. Srinivasan, sent the Constitution as an open letter to the newspapers around the country, and it was published in most daily newspapers in February. The Standing Committee also continued to push the government to recognize and accept their resolutions about the importance of Gandhi's public statements and the *Harijan*, as well as their resolution about the unfair treatment of the *Sainak* and the *National Herald*. Finally the Standing Committee continued their attempts to set up Advisory Committees in each of the Provinces. Still, although the organization was attempting to make gains on censorship issues while clarifying their organizational structure, the uncertainty surrounding the organizational philosophy made it difficult for the AINEC to make positive gains in the promotion of press freedom.

they had some success in curbing the government's attempts to censor reporting of the nationalist movement under the cover or war necessities.[200] The caveat to these generally positive feelings regarding the successful operation of the AINEC was Bengali newspapers, which were buried under a series of ever escalating censorship demands from their provincial government.

The generally positive feelings changed in May 1942, a few days before a scheduled Standing Committee meeting, when the government, responding to an investigation of Congress party headquarters,[201] wrote an open letter to the AINEC arguing that despite the good work that the organization, the advisory committees, and the government had been able to accomplish together, they were no longer able to continue the relationship because of the "defeatist" rhetoric in many newspapers' coverage of the war.[202] The letter stated, "subject to discussion at the forthcoming meeting, it will no longer be possible for Government to maintain in full the procedure which was the subject of the understanding with the AINEC."[203] Almost immediately

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[200] Functionally the possibility of even acknowledging dissent in the Standing Committee, let alone allowing for a divided vote, was being clamped down. In early 1942, a member of the Standing Committee argued that all issues discussed by the Standing Committee should be recorded in minutes to present to members, regardless of whether the issue garnered the unanimous support required for a resolution. According to a letter written to the GOI by the Press Advisor, the suggestion was dismissed, and no mention of it was ever made in public statements from the AINEC. See NAI, Home/ Political, F. No 33/1/1942.

[201] In April 1942, operatives of the Government of India broke into the All India Congress Committee (AICC) headquarters to search their files for indications that the AICC had been circumventing the Defence of India Rules, especially rule 41 (the same rule that deals with newspaper publication), by publishing an illicit Congress newsletter. In addition to finding several newsletters, the government also found information about the Quit India resolution to be announced in August. The break-in the AICC office was not a secret, and newspapers published information about the break-in and theft, along with some information about the Quit India resolution and editorials admonishing the government.

[202] The problem of defining "defeatist" was a large conflict between the AINEC and the government, with the government defining most nationalist rhetoric as defeatist, while AINEC and the advisory committees defined defeatist rhetoric as being strictly about the war progress (or lack thereof.)

[203] As published in the *Indian Social Reformer,* May 16, 1942, 440. The procedures discussed are the Delhi agreements about the Advisory committees.

after the announcement was made, the government began censoring and closing newspapers, especially in provinces where Advisory Committees had been ineffective or had never been set up and on papers that ran radically nationalistic editorials. The AINEC met with the government in an attempt to reinstate the advisory committee system.

Although the negotiations were hailed as a partial success in renewing contacts between the government and the AINEC, the short break in relations highlighted the problems inherent in defining an "All Indian" organization from the center.[204] The national government was loath to force the provincial compliance with the AINEC and the advisory committees, and the AINEC's representative claims did not endow provincial AINEC branches with the power to assert themselves with provincial governments. As a result, the AINEC claimed successes that were never manifest in non-complying provinces. Provinces like Bengal and the United Province (later Uttar Pradesh), which were both fairly radically nationalistic, often failed to see any meaningful success from AINEC agreements with the government. The disparity in relief that the AINEC's meetings with the government was able to give and the expectations of the editors trying to avoid punishments left editors in provinces with tight censorship to ask whether they could be united in the ideology of an "All Indian" organization but still not be effectively represented by the same organization. While it made sense that the AINEC needed to negotiate and organize their national organization from a standpoint of

[204] The idea of center and periphery can be considered in the terms of national, centralized politics versus local, peripheral politics. The AINEC, in being organized with all the power at the top, in the Standing Committee and the Central Advisory Committee, was committed to thinking about their "All India" organization in terms of the industry as a whole, with undifferentiated and undivided members, rather than thinking about the industry as made up of newspapers which had discrete and individual subject positions. This position is quite different from several other "All India" organizations, specifically in this dissertation from either All India Radio (chapter 1) or the All India Women's Conference (chapter 3.)

the whole nation, some papers made it clear that it was a problem that the AINEC ignored local concerns.[205]

On August 9, 1942, the All India Congress Committee (AICC) met and ratified the "Quit India" resolution.[206] The resolution called for the British to leave the running of India to the Indians, and for Indians to declare themselves Indian citizens, completely free of British colonial rule. The Government of India promptly declared the AICC to be a criminal organization. Most of the visible leaders of the AICC were arrested within a week of the announcement, and the Government declared that any news about the AICC required approval by the censor before publication. Moreover the government published a press note that warned, "The editor of any newspaper who supports or encourages the mass movement sponsored by the bodies referred to above [Congress] or who opposes the measures take be Government to avert or suppress that movement will be guilty of an offense against the law."[207] Just before the announcement of censorship of material about the Congress, on August 8th, the Government formally cancelled relations with the AINEC and imposed a series of drastic censorship rules. They required the registration of correspondents; imposed strict censorship on all war news; declared compulsory pre-censorship of all news; and declared that they could censor any article without providing justification.[208]

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[205] "The Press Advisory System," *Indian Social Reformer,* November 15, 1941, 125.

[206] The Quit India movement can be read about in almost any textbook on Modern Indian History. See Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *From Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2004); Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, and Political Economy* (London: Routledge, 2003).

[207] "Mass Civil Disobedience and Press: Instructions Against Aiding Congress Campaign By Views or News: New Role of Advisory Committees," *Bombay Chronicle*, August 11, 1942, 4

[208] N. Krishna Murthy "August Revolution and the Press," *Indian Journalism.*

In May 1942, when the Government of India began a new campaign to impose pre-censorship on several categories of "factual news," several papers called for the calling of another AINEC plenary session. The calls became more strident as newspapers were punished for what seemed to be inoffensive news stories. The *Bombay Chronicle* was fined for publishing information about a riot in the city that was started by British soldiers, while the *Hindustan Times* was told to stop publication after the editor, Devdas Gandhi was jailed because of his publication of a story about a nationalist leader, J.P. Bhansali, who was fasting because of a mass rape in the village of Chimur, by soldiers.

After August 1942, calls for a new general meeting of the AINEC increased. Several member editors, especially those from provinces with particularly repressive provincial governments, no longer felt convinced that the Standing Committee was appropriately representative of the AINEC membership at large. On August 11, 1942, in a widely-published open letter, Ramnath Goenka (the owner and editor of the Indian Express Group) wrote:

> The Indian press have to determine the policy to be adopted in the conditions created by the latest activities of the Indian National Congress and the Government's policy of in retaliation thereto. (…) No decision can be taken by the present Standing Committee which has outlived its tenure and which can claim no representative character in the greatly changed circumstances of today will represent the opinions or interests of the members or even a majority thereof. It is therefore, essential that the President should call a meeting of the plenary session without any delay.[209]

The letter refutes the representative character of the Standing Committee both in terms of its organizational claim (by asserting that it was out of date) and in terms of its constituency (by asserting that it was no longer adequately representative of the industry).

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[209] Ramnath Goenka, "Plenary Session of Editors' Conference Suggested," *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, August 11, 1942, 4.

Goenka argued that the despite organizational mandates, the Standing Committee was not re-elected by a plenary session after its year-long tenure expired. Moreover, he argued that because the Standing Committee no longer seemed to speak to the values of most newspapers in the country, they no longer could claim ideological representative status. Still, his claim that the Standing Committee was no longer representative did not call into question the ability of the AINEC to represent the newspaper industry. In a way, this call by Goenka argued that the only way for the AINEC to remain representative of the newspaper industry was to disinvest the Standing Committee of representative power for the organization.

Despite calls for a plenary session, the Standing Committee decided to negotiate with the government to renew contacts rather than call a plenary session. The Government agreed provisionally to a meeting with the Standing Committee, but suggested that ties would not be renewed without significant concessions from the AINEC on war censorship. Without the option to express their grievances *en masse*, newspapers that had been the target of increased censorship began suspending publication (or were forced into suspension by the demands for high securities to be paid to the government). Many big nationalist papers, specifically *Bande Mataram* and the *National Herald*, suspended their operations almost immediately. Other papers including the *Hindustan Times*, *Hindustan*, and almost all of the large Bengali papers suspended before September.[210] Although some Anglo-Indian papers refused to fully comply with the government's new restrictions, they were left largely unmolested. The disparity in the

[210] Language newspapers were hit especially hard, with most of them suspended from August of 1942 until after January 1943. The Bengal Editors' Conference (a subsidiary organization of the AINEC) called for a mass suspension from August 22, 1942.

treatment of papers, from the standpoint of political affiliation and geographic context suggested that one of the problems with agreeing to a system of unity as unanimity meant that grievances were unlikely to be dealt with unless they effected the industry as a whole, or perhaps more tellingly, if they effected the leaders of the organizations.

At the AINEC Standing Committee meeting with the Government in middle August, a structure was agreed upon to provide "consultative scrutiny in certain categories of news,"[211] if the government would agree to repeal their August 8th press restrictions. In the meeting, the Government agreed to repeal the restrictions from the center, but allowed for broad leeway for provincial governments to continue heightened censorship measures. The AINEC called this agreement, which was never fully made public, a huge success, and encouraged suspended newspapers to begin publishing again. Many newspapers complied, including almost all of the suspended Bengali papers.

Despite the AINEC insistence that the "consultative scrutiny" was not the equivalent of pre-censorship, newspapers that defined themselves as nationalist found that their articles were being censored. Shortly after resuming publication, strict government censorship caused newspapers to question the exact details of the new AINEC Government framework, arguing that the AINEC had misled papers in urging them to begin publishing again. The discontent caused several papers to again suspend operations, but more importantly for the organization, several newspapers rescinded their membership in the AINEC. The board of *The Nagpur Times* pulled the representative from the AINEC arguing that the AINEC failed to protect its members against capricious

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[211] "Press Restrictions," *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, September 6, 1942, 4.

censorship.[212] The clear spilt between editors who suspended publication and those who did not was commented on as a break in the spirit of unity that had previously characterized the AINEC's self-image.

Suspended Newspaper's Conference: Unity and Representation Questioned

When it became clear that the AINEC would not immediately call a plenary session to discuss the August restrictions, Samaldas Gandhi began organizing a conference from September 14-16 in Bombay for editors of newspapers that had suspended operations to meet and discuss the national situation and the place of press freedom in it. The SNC was initially organized to protest the lack of response from the AINEC to the plight of certain sections of their constituency. Goenka argued that the nationalist papers had borne the brunt of the most recent set of regulations, and given the disproportionate restrictions, the nationalist press needed representatives who would take their plight into account separately from other sections of the press. Circumscribing issues that could be discussed by the ability to gain consensus meant that solutions that could solve the nationalist papers' troubles would often be discarded. He argued,

> The Anglo-Indian press as a body is totally unaffected by the situation created by recent events and happenings. Its counsel will therefore be of little avail to help us through the troubles that confront us. It is imperative that Nationalist newspapers in the country subjected to repression on political grounds should have a dependable organization for dealing with matters of common interests.[213]

Goenka, S. Gandhi, and several of the other participants in the conference were arguing that there were significant differences in not only the biases between various political bents of papers, but also in the way the context of colonial India affected their industry.

[212] "The Suspended Newspapers," *Indian Social Reformer,* September 12, 1942, 14.
[213] Ibid.

For this reason, they argued that an organization like the AINEC, which valued unity as unanimity, could no longer represent them.

Ideologically, the nationalist papers were forced to consider whether the agitation for freedom of the press could function as a proper articulation of the desire for the freedom that an independent, democratic government represented. The AINEC's emphasis on working with the government to secure press freedom had come to be seen as a way to continue to assert the colonial government's authority to regulate the industry. Moreover, the efforts of the AINEC for the year and half of its existence had not shown an increase in press freedom that could be leveraged toward national independence. Initially, part of the AINEC organizational image had been that in asserting unity under the ideological commitment to preserve freedom of the press they were building the conditions of possibility for freedom more generally. When Srinivasan argued that freedom of the press was essential for a democratic nation, the implication was that they were working toward even more significant freedom. But it was increasingly clear that advocating for freedom of the press was not the same as advocating for freedom in general. S. Gandhi argued that if the nationalist papers wanted independence, then they would need to break from the unity that the AINEC espoused.

The conference ended with the nationalist papers authorizing a new organization, the Indian National Press Congress (INPC), contingent upon what happened in October at the AINEC conference. Although the INPC never met again, the organization is interesting for its differences from the AINEC. The most important difference was in the

INPC's stated antipathy toward working with the government.[214] According to Goenka, the INPC's focus "would be turned not on securing the favor of officials, but rendering service to its people (nationalist newspapers) with care and dignity."[215] By maintaining themselves as unified around the difficulties of opposition journalism and not allowing themselves to be part of a larger project of negotiating with the government, the INPC fit well with a different model of nationalist organizations not aiming for a life past independence.[216]

The Second AINEC Conference: Unity and Representation Reasserted

When the AINEC met in early October 1942, it was under the cloud of the complete repudiation from the Suspended Newspapers Conference (SNC). The SNC had called for the AINEC to "desist from all undertakings purporting to be given in the name of and on the behalf of the Nationalist section of the Press. It also disowns all undertakings already given."[217] Given such language, in order to keep their claim to unity, the AINEC needed to justify the workings of the conference to nationalist section of the press, present actions for positive gains in press freedoms, and not alienate moderate, conservative, and Anglo-Indian newspapers in their attempts to appease the nationalist section. In order to

[214] Although discussing an earlier period, Margrit Pernau has argued that newspapers that were critical of the government had a fundamentally oppositional task in their attempts to delineate the failures of colonial rule that would be rectified by national independence. See Margrit Pernau, "The *Delhi Urdu Akhbar*: Between Persian Akhbarat and English Newspapers," *Annuals of Urdu Studies* 18 (2003): 105-131.
[215] "Suspended Newspapers' Editors meet at Bombay: Proposal for Constitution of Indian Nationalist Press Conference," *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, September 15, 1942, 4.
[216] During the debates about the IPNC, the editor of *Matrabhumi* (a Bengali language paper from Calcutta) argued that the new organization should remove the word nationalist from its name, because "a time might come when it was superfluous," to be called nationalist. The amendment failed ("Scrap the Press Advisory System," *Bombay Chronicle,* September 16, 1942, 5).
[217] Ibid.

do so, Srinivasan's presidential address pointed to the power of unity– specifically unity as unanimity.

Srinivasan argued that limiting debate and divided action on divisive issues had prevented the government from following through on threatened restrictions that were stronger and more odious even than the strictures the press worked under at that time. By being unanimous, the AINEC had preserved as much liberty for the press as could be had from the government.[218] Srinivasan's argument suggested that the unanimous aspect of unity created an opportunity for expressing (if not fully supporting) ideological unity, and that ideological unity transformed newspapers— fundamentally local things— into national objects requiring an "All Indian" organization to support their national aims.

The AINEC continued to define its power with the government through their unity presented in unanimity in voting. In his 1942 presidential address to the second AINEC plenary session, Kasturi Srinivasan described the structure of AINEC Standing Committee debates. He said, "I may next explain to you the procedure we generally follow in our discussion in the Standing Committee. Every member is allowed full freedom to express his views as strongly as he can; but every decision we come to is always agreed to unanimously and if there is any view that is likely to divide us we do not press for its adoption."[219] Srinivasan's argument about the importance of unanimity in resolutions was that despite differences the press, as represented by the AINEC, had "always acted as a team in the matter of resisting all attempts to circumscribe the liberty

[218] "Breach of Gentleman's Agreement: Indian Editors' Conference Chief's Charge against the Government," *Bombay Chronicle,* October 6 1942, 7
[219] Address published in, Ibid.

and freedom of the press."[220] The picture Srinivasan presented in his speech was of a unified front, which privately respected divisive arguments as part of its whole.

Arguing that the newspaper industry needed to resist the urge to divide based on political differences, Srinivasan argued that all newspapers fundamentally required freedom of expression and that working together would give the industry its best chance to thwart government attempts to stifle expression. Several editors pointed out that splitting into sections allowed the government a better chance to play the papers against each other, reprising the common argument about divide and rule. For example, in an editorial after the second day of the AINEC meeting, the *Bombay Chronicle* argued, "if these journalists work in a spirit of unism [oneness] in resisting all attempts to fetter the liberty of the press, it would be impossible for the Government to divide and crush them."[221] The meeting of the AINEC therefore argued that without the power of a united industry, unanimously represented by a central *national* organization, goals for freedom of the press, or an ideological unity based on a commitment to that freedom, would be impossible to honor.

Still, in order to maintain the idea of unanimity that had characterized their previous Conference, the AINEC leadership was required to take several controversial proactive steps. First, they had to promise to start working more provincially, especially in the set-up and management of Advisory Committees. The uneven implementation of the Advisory Committees had long been an area of grievance among moderate papers, and during the Suspended Newspaper Conference, it was brought up as an example of the

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[220] Ibid.
[221] "Liberty of the Press," *Bombay Chronicle*, October 7, 1942, 4.

AINEC being too focused on lobbying the national government to see the problems occurring in the provinces.

The Conference proceedings as a whole argued that in provinces where an effective Advisory committee was operating the Government was less likely to punish papers harshly.[222] The resolutions of the plenary session did nothing to correct the disparities in the workings of newspaper censorship across the country however. In practice, the conference ended with the announcement that the central government was willing to agree to the AINEC resolutions regarding revising "consultative scrutiny" but at the same time the government announced that it would no longer make policy for provinces regarding censorship, and it would stop encouraging provincial governments to work with the AINEC on Advisory Committees. Divorcing central government policy from provincial enforcement meant that the AINEC, from this point forward, would be responsible for working individually with local authorities.

The AINEC had warned the government that if it did not allow for factual information to be published, then the press would institute a press blackout of government information. On the strength of the promises made by the Standing Committee for strong action, Srinivasan, and most of the Standing Committee were unanimously reelected, and the Nationalist newspapers agreed to officially disband the INPC and rejoin the AINEC.

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[222] It is certainly the case that the causality also ran the other way; that is that in provinces less prone to strictly enforcing press laws, it was easier to set up Provincial Advisory Committees. However, the AINEC was invested in pointing out the success of the Advisory Committees, both in terms of the organizational goal of doing something to protect the freedom of the press and also in the sense that the Advisory Committees invested the organization with more bargaining power with the state.

In one of the most effective actions the organization ever took, the AINEC decided to punish the government nationally for the failure of the Central Provinces to lift the ban on news about Bhansali's fast. The AINEC declared a series of blackouts of Government news in all member newspapers. Participating papers would not publish the Government's New Year's Honours List, Government advertisements, or Press Notes. Moreover, the AINEC declared on January 6, 1943, newspapers would suspend nationally. Initially, the government refused to call an investigation into the matter, allowing Central Provinces to continue to assert that the story was not factual. But after 150 of 190 newspapers did suspend publication, the government relented and began an investigation into the atrocities, which forced the Central Provinces to allow press coverage of both the investigation and the hunger strike.[223] The policy shift was hailed as a win for the AINEC and for the idea of nationally united action. Moreover, the strong actions gained the AINEC some credit with the Nationalist papers, which despite some continued concern, supported the AINEC until independence.

The assertion of the Standing Committee acting as the guardian of the press liberty, and as such as an indivisible body was much more complex than the AINEC Standing Committee wanted to admit. The fact that the second plenary conference was held under the schismatic scare of the Suspended Newspapers Conference (and the possible new organization the SNC suggested to represent "nationalist" newspapers) indicated that the practice of only formally discussing and recording issues that would not lead to a divided vote failed to effectively take into consideration the concerns of several

[223] "Sharp Division of Opinion at the Editors' Conference?," *Bombay Chronicle,* January 21, 1943, 4.

sections of the press.[224] At the 1942 conference, the AINEC was only able to retain the tradition of unanimity by promising both an increased representation on the Standing Committee and a more direct approach boycotting the government. By pushing most significantly for a modified version of ideological unity that included unity as unanimity, Srinivasan was downsizing the AINEC's mission to represent the Indian newspaper industry broadly, instead creating a very limited number of subjects that the organization could formally discuss, despite the fact that at the same time the Indian newspaper industry was attempting to capture a broader range of ideas.

The AINEC had to wrestle with the problem that their power with the government depended upon a strict self-censorship of topics of discussion within the industry and did not allow for recognition of the difference among its members, which prefaced their stance as an "All India" organization. As they worked to create industrial (and by proxy a national) unity defined by a fundamental and or universal principle, the return to claims that allowed different political, geographic, or language practitioners to have distinct enough reading of the universal principle to require their own articulation in the organizational hierarchy damaged the ideal of a nation undifferentiated at some level. The flaw in their ideological unity, which Srinivasan obliquely recognized in his defense of it, was the failure to imagine that freedom of the press might mean something else to different segments of the newspaper industry.

Fractured Unity and Failed Representation: The AINEC after Independence

[224] In addition to the distress of the nationalist newspapers with the AINEC, Anglo-Indian papers were consistently uncertain about the lengths the AINEC seemed to want to go to protect Gandhi and the press statements he released.

The events surrounding the 1942 AINEC conference suggested a continued uncertainty among the organization's membership as to whether the AINEC, with its profession of ideological unity, was able to represent the industry effectively. Moreover, although the nationalist editors chose to rejoin the organization at the end of the 1942 session, the reasons for their rejoining were unclear. Did the nationalist editors rejoin the AINEC in an effort to fight *for* press freedom, or an effort to fight *against* colonial government censorship? While these two fights were combined, the AINEC could proclaim itself as unified in its desire for wider freedom; the organization could emphasize the connection between press freedom and national freedom.

Even directly after independence, the connection between press freedom and national freedom seemed unassailable; the government began to make the national press more open. In a widely quoted statement, Jawaharlal Nehru claimed, "I would rather have a completely free Press, with all the dangers involved in the wrong use of that freedom, than a suppressed or regulated Press."[225] More to the point, Nehru's government rescinded the Defence of India Acts in 1948, and repealed many of the long-standing bills that supported colonial censorship and restriction of the press. Moreover, when the national constitution was adopted in 1950 it included an unlimited freedom of expression in the fundamental freedoms section, explicitly preserving freedom of the press.

Still, despite these actions, the national government was not entirely friendly toward the unlimited exercise of press freedom. Several journals and newspapers noted that though the press restrictions were revoked, the government actively tried to "reserve

[225] Quoted in "Nehru on the Press," *Transition* no. 12 (1952): 29. But the quote is considerably older than this.

to themselves the right of pre-censoring and even suppressing news and comments."[226] Newspapers that were unhappy with the government credited the satisfaction with the national government's press policies to a desire to support the new national government at all costs. Indeed, there were several instances where newspapers appealed to the AINEC complaining of censorship and mistreatment by the government. Hori Lal Saxena, the editor of the right wing weekly paper, *The Nationalist*, wrote the AINEC to ask them to back his claims that the government had discriminated against his paper unjustly. He argued the repression was due to his paper's consistent criticism of the Nehru government. He wrote, "Either declare openly that [the government] is the Autocracy of Pt. Nehru… and as such nobody has the right to criticize his actions, or if it is asserted, as is done *ad nauseum*, that the present Government of India is a Democracy, then no one has a right to curtail my freedom of expression."[227] Saxena's argument was that the government of India was using laws against the incitement of communal violence as a way to stifle criticism of national policies. He was not the only newspaper editor to argue as much. The editor of *The Daily Pratap*, a newspaper that moved from Lahore to New Delhi after partition, made similar claims in a counter-suit charging the government with sedition after the government banned the newspaper on the charge of inciting communal violence.[228]

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[226] V.B. Kulkarni, "The Future of the Indian Press," *The Modern Review* 84, no. 5 (November 1948): 398.
[227] Hori Lal Saxena, *To Criticise the Government is my Birth Right. Why was "The Nationalist" Banned?: When so many Anti-National Communal Papers Thrive in the Indian Capital?* (New Delhi, 1947).
[228] *The Daily Pratap* is an interesting example of repression because its editors were active in the AINEC. The paper was one of the hardest hit by censorship under the colonial government, being a left-leaning nationalist paper. After independence, the national government essentially forced them out of business, claiming they were a communal paper.

In addition to the policing of newspapers, the government encouraged the AINEC to discipline newspapers that made "scurrilous" claims, participated in communal rhetoric, or supported causes that would destabilize the government— particularly papers associated with the Communist Party. Vallabhai Patel, an important nationalist figure, and the minister of Information, gave a speech at the 1947 AINEC conference, where he encouraged the organization to be particular vigilant against the "spread of the Communal virus" from Muslim community papers, and to work toward making the newspaper industry more "responsible."[229] The AINEC did take up the issue of journalistic ethics during the conferences immediately after independence, attempting to create a list of press values and a curriculum for schools to teach proper journalism.[230] But the celebration of independence, as well as a general feeling of mistrust toward Muslims, meant that the AINEC was unwilling to act decisively against slights, and weakened their claim to ideological unity in that any encroachment on freedom of the press would be unacceptable.

Revising the Fundamental Freedoms

By the end of 1949, the national stance on the protection of freedom of the press had materially changed. Under the pressure to stem a variety of "anti-social" movements--communal rioting, border disputes, militant communism, and price gouging of food staples especially in Delhi, Bengal, and Punjab--the government began to consider the

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[229] "Decision Reached for Pakistan," *Amrita Bazaar Patrika,* June 3, 1947. It is worth noting that far and away the majority of newspapers and journals charged with being 'communal' were Muslim papers. The question of what it meant to be an Indian Muslim, still a difficult issue, was particularly fraught in the first years after partition. See Gyanendra Pandey, "Can the Muslim be an Indian?," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41, no. 4 (October 1999): 608-629.
[230] "Editors Conference," *Indian Social Reformer,* March 21, 1949, 299.

advisability of reinstating some press laws as a way to control at least the image of the problem. In looking toward reinstating control of the press, the government came up against two major cased decided by the Supreme Court in 1949, Romesh Thapar v. the Government of Madras, and Brij Bhushan v. State of Delhi. In both cases, the Supreme Court struck down attempts by provincial governments to censor newspapers on the basic of protection of "public order." In Thapur, a communist journal *The State of Crossroads*, was banned from circulating the journal, and in Bhushan, *Organiser*, a conservative, Hindu Nationalist journal was asked to submit articles about Pakistan for pre-censorship before publication. In both cases, the Supreme Court argued that while the opinions professed by the newspapers were extreme, the constitutional standard for censorship, "security of the state," required a higher standard of threat than the standard of "preservation of public order," and therefore, the government could not constitutionally use the latter justification to restrict speech.[231]

In the course of debates about these decisions, Justice Sarjoo Prasad argued, "if a person were to go on inciting murder or other cognizable offences either through the press or by word of mouth, he would be free to do so with impunity because he could claim freedom of speech and expression."[232] Nehru took up this line of reasoning in arguing that an amendment of freedom of speech clause was necessary, if not to allow a full measure of "public order," then at least to prevent the incitement to criminal action. In 1951, Nehru's government called for an amendment to the Fundamental Freedoms

[231] S. K. Aggarwal, *Press at the Crossroads in India* (Delhi: UDH Publishing House, 1988); Glanville Austin, *Working a Democratic constitution: The Indian Experience*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999). See also Lawrence Liang. "Reasonable Restrictions and Unreasonable Speech," in *Sarai Reader 2004 Crisis/Media* (Delhi: Sarai Programme CSDS, 2003), 434-440.
[232] Quoted from Lawrence Liang, "Reasonable Restrictions and Unreasonable Speech," note 6, 440.

Clause 19 (which guaranteed the freedom of expression) to include "reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right conferred by the said sub-clause in the interests of the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence."[233] In addition to the move to change the Constitution, Nehru's government also advocated the passing of the Press (Objectionable Matters) Act, 1951, to give the government a stronger hand in suppressing overtly communal sentiments in newspapers.

The AINEC called a special plenary session in June of 1951 to discuss the amendment to the constitution and the possibility of a return to fight against government censorship. The president of the AINEC in 1951 Lala Deshbandhu Gupta argued in his plenary address that the organization needed to maintain its traditional unanimity in the passing of a resolution against the Government's amendments to the constitution, even if the resolution was a compromise. He appealed to the 1951 AINEC plenary session that he was "looking forward to a spirit of accommodation among the members and they would pass a resolution in a way that was acceptable to all. If the conference is divided in its resolution, we are starting with a very big handicap in the struggle."[234] The resolution that came out of the conference called for the AINEC to suspend the working of the Advisory Committees and to resist the passing of the amendment bill. Still even this mild of a resolution did not pass unanimously, with a group of editors publishing a statement

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[233] Constitution of India, http://indiacode.nic.in/coiweb/welcome.html. Incidentally, critics of this amendment do not fail to point out that the bill that instituted this change to the freedom of expression clause was titled "The Constitution (First Amendment) Act," making the restriction of the freedom of expression the First Amendment of the Indian Constitution.

[234] "Editors Take Steps to Fight for the Freedom of the Press: Editors' Conference Proceedings," *Bombay Chronicle,* June 25, 1951, 5.

saying, "it would be inopportune and hence unwise to start 'direct action against a democratic Government with a large public support."[235] The failure of unanimity was a heavy blow to the power of the AINEC with the government but more importantly it hurt the organization's credibility with its own membership. The organization's staunchest members, like the *Bombay Chronicle* and the *Hindu*, questioned whether, given the advent of national freedom, the organization would be able to support press freedom. The divided vote did more than merely give lie to claim of a unified, unanimous organization, it raised the question of whether the ideological stance of freedom of the press was still relevant.

The resistance of the AINEC to the press amendment was problematic in terms of the organization's commitment to "All Indian" unity. The amendment was billed as a chance to fight the kind of rhetoric that threatened national integrity. One of the AINEC's main supporters and a past president (and incidentally the author of the AINEC's resolution against the amendment bill), A.D. Mani wrote a few months after the passage of the amendment that while it was important to support freedom of the press in India, "when it is remembered that the Indian democracy was almost engulfed by communal fanaticism in 1947 and by external troubles like the war in Kashmir and the intransigence of the Nizam of Hyderabad, one can sympathize with the majority of Indian newspapers in their desire not to embarrass the government."[236] The amendment and the subsequent press act were both billed as ways that the Government could preserve Indian unity

[235] Ibid.
[236] A.D. Mani, "The Indian Press Today," *Far Eastern Survey* 21, no 11 (July, 1952): 112. The communal violence referenced by Mani is the violence surrounding the partition of the Indian Subcontinent into India and Pakistan.

against communal and communist calls to disunity and violence. The position of the government asked editor members to decide between the unity of the AINEC and the ideological position of freedom of the press on the one hand and the unity and preservation of the nation on the other. In the end, the AINEC could not even encourage enough support among its membership to ensure that the editors in parliament would vote against the measure.

Aftermath

After the failures of the AINEC to put together a unified or vigorous response to the constitutional amendment and the new press law, it was no surprise that the organization lost a certain amount of stature with the government. After the suspension of the Advisory Committees, Nehru's government decided to appoint a government division called the Press Commission that would work like the Advisory Committees. The AINEC was invited to become a member of the Press Commission on the same footing as smaller press organizations.

In addition to the loss of "sole-spokesman" standing for the newspaper industry with the government, the failure of the AINEC to take issues of journalist pay and working conditions seriously resulted in the loss of enough support among working journalists that an alternative in the Indian Federation of Working Journalists was founded in 1950. The Government took advantage of the new Working Journalists' organization to point out the variety of views on press issues, while the Working Journalists argued the emphasis of the AINEC on proprietors and editors failed to protect working people. In its loss of primacy with the government and some parts of the

newspaper industry, the AINEC lost its ability to claim that it was unanimously the representative of the industry.

Conclusion

The AINEC tied their organizational conceptions of unity to their definition of themselves as “All India” editors in a speculative Indian nation. The foundational ideological unity attempted to define common ground, in this case freedom of the press, which all members could claim to desire. Unity at a fundamental level meant that newspaper editors could point to something that defined their commitment to the nation and to each other, even when they disagreed about everything else. Ideally, the AINEC was “All Indian” *because* they differed, not in spite of their differences. The idea of an ideological unity that recognized and negotiated difference is appealing for a nation like India, whose differences are sometimes more manifestly obvious than its similarities.

The problem that the AINEC ran into was that in order to effectively work against the colonial government’s attempts to impose stricter restrictions on freedom of the press, they needed to appear unanimously in support of organizational action. As an oppositional organization, the AINEC needed to police dissent and difference in its members. This type of unity was both undesirable and untenable; once independence had been accomplished, the organization could neither convince editors that their support of the nation hinged on their opposition to national attempts to restrict freedom of the press, nor could the AINEC change organizational convention to accept open dissent as part of their organizational unity.

Ultimately the burden of two contradictory systems of defining unity and the loss of urgency in defining India's future democracy in the face of national independence caused the AINEC's sense of itself as All India in a constitutive way to lapse. But the organization's attempts to create an Indian democracy that was built on the right to speak, publish, and acknowledge dissent suggested a connection between the freedom and democracy not often considered.

Chapter 3: An All India Organization for All Indian Women: The All India Women's Conference and Federated Unity

Sporadic individual efforts had already begun for some time, but it was only with the emergence of the All India Women's Conference, just a little over a decade ago, that we can say that a truly coordinated, homogeneous All India Womanhood had been born.[237]
–Renuka Roy, prominent member of the All India Women's Conference (1941)

The All India Women's Conference (AIWC) originated in 1927, and was originally named the Women's Conference on Educational Reform in India, a one-time conference sponsored by the Women's India Association (WIA) to discuss the state of women's education in India. The conference was meant to be part of an education advocacy section within the WIA. However, the first Women's Conference on Educational Reform in India attracted women who saw issues like domestic abuse, widow poverty, women and children's health, prostitution, and alcohol consumption as tied together with discussions about the low rate of female education. The conference also included a large number of women who were not members of the WIA.[238] Although the first conference did focus on education-related issues, such as sharing local strategies for increasing literacy, it also veered widely from its purely non-political 'reform' mission in discussing plans for wide-ranging political activism on the issue of girls' education, contraception and women's

[237] Renuka Ray, "An Analysis of Our Movement," *Roshni* 2 (December, 1941), 17-18 Renuka Ray was an important member of the AIWC. She acted as the AIWC's representative in the Constituent Assembly and as 'the women's movement's representative on the Rau Commission, founded to revamp the Hindu personal law. Ray was a member of the AIWC standing committee during much of the 1940s and 50s, acting as it's law member, constitution member, and, from 1953-54, its President. Ray was also an active member of the Congress Party, joining the government after Independence as the head of the National Reconstruction Committee.

[238] Interestingly these issues continued to be a large part of the imagination of the Indian women's movement through even today. Some of the issues, like fighting against the practice of making young girls into *devdasis* (a particular kind of prostitute,) were more prevalent in the south, while issues like widow poverty and domestic violence were fought in many different ways across the country. Alcohol consumption as an issue became tied to women's participation in the anti-colonial movement, especially in the south.

health education, family support for adult women's education, and the debilitating effect of *purdah*[239] on educational opportunities for women and girls.[240]

By the third meeting of the Women's Conference on Educational Reform in India in 1929, the organization had voted to change its name to the All India Women's Conference to reflect its role as a women's advocacy organization that was active in issues including but not limited to education. In addition, the conference wanted to expand beyond reform efforts. By choosing the concept of reform to describe their organization, the AIWC connected itself with early attempts to improve women's lives by luminaries such as Ram Mohan Roy, among others. But an exclusively reform-minded approach limited the kinds of work available to women by asserting that women needed aid and society needed to recognize women's needs. The 'In India' of the old name defined Indian women's position as descriptive, the women were located in India, whereas the 'All India' prefix defined the women as part of a larger Indian project. The new name identified women as agents in the creation and redefinition of the nation without specifying the means of their action. The inclusive-ness of the "All India" prefix argued that women would and needed to be involved in negotiating the meaning of "India."

The new "All India Women's Conference" name offered the new organization more flexibility in terms of the issues that were appropriate to its mission, but also in the way that the organization imagined the role of women in India. While many other national and international women's organizations were already actively engaged with

[239] *Purdah* is the practice of keeping women out of sight of men who were not family members.
[240] Margaret Cousins, *Indian Womanhood Today* (Allahabad: Kitabistan, 1947).

similar issues in India, the AIWC sought to shape its national movement out of local initiatives and grassroots organizing efforts that better reflected the diversity of Indian women's concerns. The All India Women's Conference transitioned away from being an organization devoted entirely to the question of improving access to and the content of women's education, and toward becoming an organization with a series of wide-ranging concerns tied together only by the terms "All India," and "women." Thus, the structure and purpose of the organization relied on its ability to define the broad way that women belonged to and created the nation.[241] Renuka Ray's statement at the beginning of this chapter unconsciously confirms that as the All India Women's Conference gained increasing influence as a centralized, national organization the conference undermined its initial devotion to an All India unifying strategy, which was meant to preserve the coordination between locally and nationally focused women's organizations and projects.

This chapter argues that the AIWC's growing success and recognition as a centrally controlled and legislatively focused leader of the national women's movement caused it to lose sight of its earlier promotion of both local and national women's work in the creation and reconstruction of Indian-ness and its original goal of a federated women's organization to promote women's active citizenship. In the first section of this chapter, I will consider this shift in emphasis from local and national issues to primarily governmental issues by looking at how the relationship among the AIWC's local associative bodies, organized local branches, and central committee changed. The second section will consider how the AIWC's relationship with other nationally organized

[241] In her essay about organizing the women's movement, Geraldine Forbes argued that the AIWC was the "most truly Indian" of the All India movements. See Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Modern India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 64-91.

women's groups prompted a shift in the AIWC's focus from a mix of locally and nationally determined issues to a primarily top-down strategy of nationally determined, legislative-based change. The chapter will end with a consideration of how the shift to a legislative-minded organization, epitomized by the fight to revise the Hindu personal laws, undermined the concepts of federated unity and women's active participation in Indian rights.

Defining an All India Commitment

Although the archival records from the 1940s and early 1950s do not include any sustained discussion of difference between organizations that were "national" in character and organizations that were defined as "All India," the various writings by AIWC leaders, articles in the organizational magazine *Roshni*, and archival documents often refer to the status and commitment of the AIWC as an "All India" organization rather than a national one.[242] The term "national" was used more sparingly to describe the character of specific work that the organization wanted to do rather than the structure of the organization itself. I argue that the term "national" was paired with the term "local" in the AIWC's rhetoric as descriptions of locale, while "All India" was a modifier that connected national and local agendas. Women who participated in the All India Women's Conference *did* local and/ or national work, but they *were* All Indian women, and their commitment to their particular work—local or national—helped to rebuild and reconceptualize Indian unity. The AIWC's emphasis on its "All India-ness" rather than

[242] "Tides in the Affairs of Branches," *Roshni*, 2 no. 2 (August 1940), 16-21; "And this also," *Roshni*, 2 no. 8 (December 1941), 3-4; "The Future" *Roshni*, 1 no. 2 (March 1946), 4; "A Year Hence," *Roshni*, 2 no. 5 (June 1947), 3; Hansa Mehta "August 15 Address," Roshn,i 3 no.7 (August 1948) 3-8; "Our Movement," *Roshni*, 3 no. 11 (December 1948), 34; "1951 Grant Application," Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML), All India Women's Conference (AIWC) Papers, F. No. 263.

its national character did two slightly different things. First, it gave the organization a chance to ally itself with all kinds of women's agendas (both local and national projects, as well as locally and nationally organized women's organizations). Second, it allowed the AIWC to imagine a present and future definition of Indian womanhood that was inclusive of all of these women, projects, and organizations.

Thus, the stakes of their commitment to an "All Indian" rather than national character can be seen both in terms of representative claims and of negotiated involvement in the building of the Indian democracy. By naming themselves "All India," members of the AIWC challenged the representative claims of the nation and argued that the "India" under debate needed to encompass women who were not generally considered as being nationally positioned. The AIWC parlayed their "All India" commitment to transform the role of women working at the local level with no obvious national implications into a defining characteristic of Indian women and their commitment to the nation.

At the same time the "All India" commitment emphasized the AIWC's own need to maintain itself as separate from the women's wings of political parties. While useful national organizing tools, women's wings tended to ignore the specific goals for women defined by national agitation and local initiatives. Moreover, AIWC women argued that women's wings, while helpful for women's participation in the political arena, tended to undervalue both women's work for the party and the need for women to be recognized as active citizens rather than mere targets for welfare.[243] In a1946 article entitled, "All India

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[243] Interesting on this issue is Anuradha M. Chenoy, "Women and the Breakdown of the Public Sphere," in *Civil Society, Public Sphere, and Citizenship: Dialogues and Perceptions*, ed. Rajeev Bhargava and Helmut

Conference Day," a working woman demonstrates this distinction in articulating her objections to the calls by Congress leaders to close down the AIWC:

> Many people who regard the Women's Conference as a superfluous organisation, especially in view of the approach of freedom, do not realise that in social matters even some of our own political leaders are reactionaries. We request them to follow carefully the speeches in the Central Assembly on bills aimed at improving the status of women (...) it is necessary that pressure groups like the AIWC should continue their work with unabating enthusiasm.[244]

Seeing itself as separate from political parties, but with "All India" agendas that worked with those parties, the AIWC recognized that as an "All India" organization they were able to influence debate in ways that being attached to a specific *national* agenda would not allow.

Still the question of how the AIWC could create a connection between women's work and organizations already effective at the local level and a proposed national advocacy agenda, which would together embody the idea of "All India" remained salient. The solution for AIWC was to create a federalizing organizational structure that emphasized the unity of women workers whether they be interested in local or national agendas. From the very beginning, the AIWC leaders argued that affiliating already existing local women's organizations into a central organization would help to raise the profile of the women's movement in the wider dialogue of what it meant to be Indian. The idea of a federalized Indian women's movement under the auspices of the AIWC, but with affiliates ideally doing their own work throughout the countryside as well as in

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Reifeld (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005), 365-383. Chenoy's main concern is the role of women in war and conflict situations, but her discussion about women's citizenship is worth thinking through.

[244] "All-India Conference Day," *Roshni* 1 no. 10/11 (November/ December 1946), 4.

urban areas, resonated strongly with the Gandhian ideal of thousands of villages and neighborhoods that together made up the Indian national unity.[245]

Thus, the AIWC advocated a federalized organization that defined itself through both its national and local agendas. Scholars have described the AIWC's federal structure as an attempt to create an "umbrella women's organization."[246] Much has been written about the way that the Indian national discourse defined federalist ideas in the constitution and how the federalist relationship between states and the center was and continues to be implemented in India.[247] As a nation, most scholars argue that India is at best quasi-federalist. In an article tracing the shifts in the implementation of power in India, Amaresh Bagchi argued that in general, "federalism offers a way for diverse communities to come together and derive the strength of unity while retaining their identity." [248] Ideally, federalism works this way because it invests limited power with the central entity while allowing for ideas, enforcement, and agendas to propagate on a local level. The central federal institution is a set of minimum parameters that define and is defined by the organization's local bodies.

In advocating federation as an organizing strategy, the AIWC argued for an "All Indian" unity that was prefaced on locally and nationally determined issues fought for with equal emphasis within the organization. Ideally, federated unity meant that locally based women and women's issues were as important to the Indian concept as the women

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[245] On Gandhi's idea of a village India, see Mohandas Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, in *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, ed. Anthony Parel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
[246] Ila Patel, "The Contemporary Women's Movement and Women's Education in India," *International Review of Education* 44, no. 2/3 (1998): 159.
[247] In 2003, the journal *Publius* published a special issue entitled "Emerging Federal Process in India." *Publius* 33, no. 4 (Autumn 2003).
[248] Amaresh Bagchi, "Rethinking Federalism: Changing Power Relations Between the Center and the States," *Publius* 33, no.4 (Autumn 2003): 21.

with national connections who created the organizational superstructure. It also meant that divisive issues could be dealt with locally and not intrude into the national discussion. Indeed, the idea that women could "coordinate and cooperate and work silently towards attaining the goal of unity,"[249] was based on the idea that local women doing local work was the best stepping stone to the kind of Indian nation that the woman's movement desired. At least initially, an Indian woman was connected to the "All India" movement through the work that she did in her own locality as well as the way that work created the national agenda. As the AIWC began to consider issues that resonated in a more exclusively national way, especially as it began to focus on a strategy of legislative action to begin to solve the systemic social problems women faced, the organization became more centralized and less interested in supporting local work as politically constitutive of the nation.

Initially, the AIWC argued that local works created Indian womanhood—indeed even Indian national unity—because as women worked locally, they were improving the whole nation. The rhetoric argued that Indian women were potentially "All Indian" in scope if they were engaging in the kind of work that encouraged the uplift of All Indians through the improvement of their community. All Indian rhetoric built upon older arguments linking women's work to reform and social welfare by now arguing that this kind of work had a political and national effect. The AIWC argued that local movements created the kind of productive communities that were necessary to build a successful, independent nation even before Independence.

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[249] "Communal Unity," *Roshni* 2, no. 3 (October 1940), 13.

In a context where social work and political agitation were often sharply differentiated, the AIWC's stance was novel in suggesting that only by mutual infusion could political and social work be effective.[250] Purnima Banerji argued that too much of the national political understanding was tied into independence movements, while the women's movement offered the immediate alternative of political action through local action. Calling her article "Reconstructing India," Banerji argued that Indian nationhood should and would be based on social action, such that independence led to a nation that accepted and supported all of its citizens. She wrote, "Some means have to be found to help our people. Things cannot wait till the advent of political power, it may indeed be found awaiting individual and group action."[251] Banerji's observations fit well with the argument for women's local work being productive for nation building. Arguing that real independence and the attendant goods of communal unity, gender equality, and the removal of the caste system were dependent not on political independence but on the definition of the Indian nation through social and political work, Banerji suggested that

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[250] The historiography certainly emphasizes the distinctions that were made between women's organizations involved in social work and women's organizations involved in political action, with many arguing that the transition to national focus was of political agitation overtaking social work. At least for the AIWC, it seems clear to me that local action (the social work aspect of the divide) was seen as political work, but in a local context. I do agree however that there was a feeling that as the conference transitioned to more legal and national campaigns the idea of local work that influenced the national agenda became less clear. For explanations of the distinction between political and social work, see Radha Kumar, *The History of Doing: An Illustrated Account of Movements for Women's Rights and Feminism in India, 1800-1990* (New Delhi, Kali for Women, 2002); Janaki Nair, *Women and Law in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Kali for Women; 1996); P.M. Mathew and M.S. Nair, *Women's Organizations and Women's Interests* (New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House, 1986).

[251] Purnima Bannerji, "Reconstructing India," *Roshni* 2, no. 3 (October 1940), 26. An interesting coda to Banerji's article, is that Renuka Ray, one of the leaders of the AIWC who went on to a career defined by its attachments to national level agitations, claimed "Reconstructing India" and its local level focus was what convinced her to become active in the AIWC in the first place. *Roshni* is the All India Women's Conference magazine. Begun in 1938, *Roshni*, which means 'Light' in Hindi and is still being published. Throughout its history, *Roshni*, flirted with publishing in different languages. In 1946, the AIWC attempted to publish both Hindi and Urdu sections of *Roshni*, something which has fallen by the wayside. The connections to the All India Radio newsletters, and to their language debate are clear. For more on the language debates, please see the chapter 1.

women available for work were the subjects that could concretely define India's national character long before Independence defined the boundaries of India politically.

AIWC leaders argued that in leading by example, an individual's work—be it for women, *Harijans*, or neighborhood development—was dual-pronged in its ability to actively help the locality and the nation, which grew from local existences. Writing in a pamphlet called *Challenges to Women*, Amrit Kaur argued that of all the things the AIWC could accomplish, a guide to local service would be the most conducive to national reconstruction. Her pamphlet delineates advice to "towndwellers" from advice to village workers and in each section, she suggests areas in which work desperately needs to be accomplished in order to create a well-functioning Indian nation. Her contention is that a citizen of any nation, but especially of a nation yet to be independent, is required to earn her citizenship only insofar as she "helps to make it and maintain it," through a variety of forms of service.[252]

The emphasis on social work and the argument that women's work had an uplifting character for society more generally was based in the "tradition or image of feminine caring."[253] That is, these ideas were based on the traditional role that women played as family sustainers and care-givers, but instead of linking women to the family exclusively, local work was made to be seen as a woman's role in the production of the nation. Just as women's roles as caregivers qualified them for membership in the family

[252] Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, *Challenges to Women* (Allahabad: New Literature Press, 1946), 140.
[253] Mala Khullar, "Introduction," in *Writing the Women's Movement: A Reader*, ed. Mala Khullar (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 2006), 4. The trope of feminine caring is most clearly articulated in Geraldine Forbes, "From Purdah to Politics: The Social Feminism of the All India Women's Organizations," in *Separate Worlds: Studies of Purdah in South Asia*, ed. Hanna Papanek and Gail Minault (Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1982), 219-45.

(and created the family around their works), so too would local work outside the home constitute the nation and qualify women citizens. By connecting women's local activities to the fight for active citizenship and the nation, Kaur makes a clear connection between women's local service commitments and the rights and duties of an independent Indian citizen. Thus, local service (and by extension local work) was constructive of the All Indian community. In this way, the AIWC argued that both local women activists and their targets were All Indian in nature without being required to be national in scope. Similar claims had been made previously, especially during the nationalist movements, which posited that women and women's uplift were constitutive of the nation merely as the "keepers of tradition" or the marker of Indian readiness to be independent. Now, women were asked by the AIWC to earn their "All India" designation through constructive work.[254] These new conditions required for becoming an active citizen of the nation clashed with "traditional" nationalist movements that based the concept of citizenship on only broad national and legislative agendas.[255]

Several scholars have argued that the emphasis on "welfarist" women's activity can be characterized as a conservative form of women's organizations, because of their association with patriarchal notions of women and their abilities.[256] Purely welfarist organizations structurally functioned as an extension of the familial metaphor of the state,

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[254] Partha Chatterjee, "The Nation and its Women: The Paradox of the Women's Questions," in *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 116-134; Mrinali Sinha, "Refashioning Mother India: Feminism and Nationalism in Late-Colonial India," *Feminist Studies* 26, no.3 (2000): 623-644.

[255] Veena Das, "The Act of Witnessing: Violence, Gender, and Subjectivity," in *Life Worlds: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 59-78; Joanna Liddle and Rama Joshi, "Gender and Imperialism in British India," *Economic and Political Weekly* 20, no. 43 (Oct. 26, 1985): W72-W85

[256] Mathew and Nair argue that welfarist organizations were conservative in the sense that they replicated rhetoric around women's abilities to act in the public. See Mathew and Nair, *Women's Organizations*, 3-5.

which emphasized woman's role as a private actor rather than a public figure. Still, as Sangari and Vaid argued in their introduction to *Recasting Women*, conservative social rhetoric and methods were often tied to attempts to overturn the very patriarchal social structures that required the rhetoric in the first place.[257] Although the AIWC actively pursued women's participation in the public sphere, it was neither entirely progressive in its attempt to organize a women's social justice movement for active citizenship, nor was it fully conservative in its attempts to find a role for local women's work in the national dialogue about the character of a future India. Even though these attempts did recognize that women were often successful as private actors, it is not correct to say either that the movement became more progressive or more conservative as the AIWC become increasingly focused on national organizing.

As the name of the AIWC's journal, *Roshni* ("Light"), suggests, the role of the organization was to shine a light on the importance of local work done by women's organizations and later the AIWC branches. In the 1940s and 50s, the organization saw a shift whereby local work—still valorized—became less visible and indicative of the national AIWC project. Instead, the organization got caught up in a number of nationally focused projects, which had no clear local component, but rather were directed by national coordinating committees and dictated to local branches. In addition, as the central AIWC framework became stronger in its own right, its national leaders took more

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[257] Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, "Introduction," in *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, ed. Sangari and Vaid (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1986), 19. The concepts of conservative and progressive women's politics have often been tied to the reform versus political work debate. Reform or social work, often carried out in local areas has been seen as at least conservative if not regressive in its politics, whatever its actual effect, whereas political agitation especially national, legislative work has often been seen as a more progressive, social justice approach to women's politics.

liberty in directing branch action, working with other women's organizations on issues that resonated on a national but not local scale. As the central organization got stronger, the commitment to a federated movement defined by local work was less emphasized and less rewarded as the idea of an expansive local vision of Indian unity narrowed.

Creating an All India Organization through Affiliation

One thing that the women leaders of the AIWC struggled with was how to effectively grow their movement without encroaching on pre-existing local initiatives. From the very beginning of the AIWC in 1927, leaders jncluding Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Sarojini Naidu, and Margaret Cousins argued that only local organizations would be able to accurately assess the needs of women in their areas. Moreover, since the abilities and time commitment of women active in outreach organizations around the country varied, a central organizing committee that dictated specific goals and policies would have little chance of succeeding.[258] Still, without a more concrete center for the movement, there would be little chance for creating the feeling of urgency to address women's issues on a national scale. Moreover, the concept of local women working diligently but unheralded in their own localities prevented women from being recognized in a national context. The women of the AIWC were eager to derail the hierarchy that often defined national legislative campaigns as more important than local service initiatives and agitations, but needed to have an organization recognized across the nation to spotlight the work of local women.

[258] They felt this way despite the fact that their organizing body, the Women's India Association, worked as a central organizing committee directing the activities of its branches nationwide. Clearly there was more than concern about ability to function that was dictating their decision.

In their book about the AIWC, Aparna Basu and Bharti Ray argue that the women who attended the first conference "felt that active propaganda needed to be launched mainly by local organisations under the guidance of a central women's league in order to reach the message…to the people.[259]" As such, the first conference laid out the goal of creating a central body through which pre-existing (or newly created) local institutions could affiliate. Affiliating with a larger central organization offered local groups several things, including support for local service initiatives, ideas about programs to begin or suggestions for reforming or widening local programs, and most importantly, connection to other local women's organizations that could share experiences, resources, and programs. [260] Affiliation with a central body also built local institutions into a national discussion in a way that had not been previously possible. By the same token, the central AIWC was able to parlay the appearance of support from local women's groups into recognition as viable representatives of women's interests separate from political party agendas.

In her introduction to the edited volume, *Feminism in India*, Maitrayee Chaudhuri argued that this spirit of imagining the whole in parts, as a fragmented nation, only able to be federally located is a theme that has been followed throughout the history of the

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[259] Aparna Basu and Bharti Ray, *Women's Struggle: A History of the All India Women's Conference, 1927-1990* (Delhi: Manohar, 1990), 15.

[260] It seems worth noting that the AIWC only worked with women already organized or women who organized themselves into women's branches of the central AIWC. At the same time that this movement was underfoot, women were participating in grassroots movements and local agitations that were not defined as 'organized.' Denying that these women and their activities were part of the 'women's movement' would deny the importance of poor women's work for women's equality, as many of these movements were waged by poor women, dalits or adivasis, exactly the women that the organized women's groups were trying to reach out to, both as aid targets and less elite members. Much more research needs to be done on early articulation of marginal women's movements, but they are not the target of this investigation.

Indian Women's Movement. She suggests that the structure of locality, which was central to the movement's message, could be attributed to the societal recognition of women's power to affect change locally since the mid-nineteenth century, even despite continued blindness to women's issues nationally. Thus, she argues that for Indian women's movements, the "local is global."[261] The argument advanced within the AIWC in the 1930s and early 40s suggested that knowing the local landscape allowed women to more easily attain positions and reap benefits of their efforts.

Yet, the women leaders of the AIWC were also clear in their belief that the key to strengthening women's place as a citizen and political partner in India was national action and support carried out in local settings. As one example, the central AIWC mandated that branches across the nation attempt to sway regional and local officials into allowing married women to continue working as school inspectors, [262] demonstrating how the AIWC demanded that local women's groups be prepared to accept the articulated goals of the central body and that they formulate an independent plan for local action. Still, despite continued vocal commitment to the idea of Indian citizenship being constituted by local actions, as centralized control of the organization became more powerful, the AIWC began to focus on issues that were either nationally organized or rooted in national legislation. For example, Lady Irwin College was a university for Indian women organized and administered at the national level, and efforts at national legislation were made to enact rules to protect women in mines. After building a reputation based on the goal of federating local women's working strategies and

[261] Maitrayee Chaudhuri, "Introduction," in *Feminism in India*, ed. Maitrayee Chaudhuri (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 2004), xxxiv.
[262] NMML, AIWC Papers, 1945.

organizations to create an "All India" identity for women, the 1940s and 50s saw the AIWC turn its focus to national and legislative attempts to involve women theoretically in national reconstruction.

While internal ideological debates over the role of the national and the local continued throughout the 1940s and early 50s, the AIWC also struggled with more practical concerns that included modes of affiliation, the power and role of the central organization, and how independent the affiliated women's groups should remain after joining the umbrella organization were. The next section will consider the way the central organization of the AIWC, located first in Bombay and later in Delhi, thought about the politics of affiliating branches, the relationship between the branches and the center, and how the federalized approach was used to define what AIWC co-founder Margaret Cousins and others have since called "All India Womanhood."[263]

Branches of the All India Women's Conference Tree

The beginning of the 1940s marked a change in the overall structure of the AIWC central organization and its method of associating with local affiliates. Between 1929 and 1939, the central organization existed largely to organize the annual conference agenda and collect information and dues from the affiliated groups on its behalf. The goals of the center were limited and its location was not fixed, instead following with the elected General Secretary of the AIWC.

In 1939, the organization of the center changed. The AIWC registered as an associative organization with the Government of India (GOI). As the central organization of the AIWC was more clearly articulated, the way it imagined the affiliates changed as

[263] Cousins, *Indian Womanhood Today*, 30.

well. Originally, local groups were associated to the AIWC as constituent bodies. The constituency terminology was interesting in terms of how it defined the central organization.[264] Each local organization was defined as constitutive to, but separate from, the main body. This original format imagined the central AIWC as a conduit for the connections that could be made by the annual meeting for local organizations. As the central AIWC began to assert itself more by registering with the GOI and setting up offices, the terminology used to discuss the affiliated local groups changed from "Constituency" to "Branch." The branch is a very different metaphor from the constituent. Although both groups can be said to make up the organization, the constituent maintains a certain amount of autonomy from the larger idea, being a self-sustaining body in itself. The branch, using its "tree" metaphor (something that the AIWC did), is not able to exist without the AIWC trunk.

The shift suggested that the AIWC was trying to tweak its priorities, moving away from its image as merely an umbrella organization that let the constituent organizations determine its course, and toward more actively creating a national agenda that described women's work. The attempt to define central authority was most clearly displayed in new regulations for presenting resolutions at the national conference. These regulations introduced the new order for raising resolutions, "1. Urgent because of pending legislation, etc. 2. Starred resolutions—these of first class importance because of their all-

[264] The constituency organizations were given the opportunity to assign, either through vote or by appointment, official representatives to the annual AIWC conference and one member to the Standing Committee, the organizing body for the central organization. "On the Amendment of the Constitution," NMML, AIWC Papers, F. No. 211.

India application, 3. Local—for which the backing of the conference is desired."[265] Thus, legislation and resolutions with an inclusively wide effect were privileged over purely local activities.[266] The change did not completely reverse the previous emphasis on local issues since it recognized "All India" issues, that is those that had both national and local resonance, but it also placed the role of legislative and national agendas higher than resolutions that did not couch themselves in terms of some larger effect on the nation. Local affiliates found the new emphasis on national and especially legislative issues to be a demotion of sorts. A small number of previously affiliated organizations even began participating less actively with the central AIWC committee.[267]

The move from constituency to branch was followed by concrete changes to the organizational make-up of the branches. In 1941, the AIWC standing committee passed a resolution asking that each branch change their constitutions to put them "in conformity" with the AIWC constitution.[268] Once the AIWC registered as an associative organization with the government, it began to promote outreach in order to set up branch offices specifically for the AIWC. By 1941, a large number of new groups had organized specifically as AIWC affiliates, while fewer than expected came from previously existing or independently functioning organizations. The branches drew on the AIWC branch constitution language, which closely mirrored the central organization's language. As the number of branches organized exclusively for the purpose of becoming AIWC branches

[265] "Standing Committee Minutes," NMML, AIWC Papers, F. No. 211.
[266] It is also worth noting, that though the branches continued to send in reports of local activities, and these reports continued to be entered into the conversation about branches at the annual conference, the reports were no longer entered into the conference bulletins (ibid).
[267] The response of the Karachi branch of the AIWC, discussed below, is telling of this shift away from the central organization.
[268] "Standing Committee Minutes," NMML, AIWC papers F. No. 217.

increased, the Standing Committee recognized that there needed to be two paths to affiliating with the AIWC.[269] Branches organized through the AIWC branch committee were admitted once they had recruited fifty members; local, independent women's organizations co-opted as AIWC branches needed to have the requisite fifty members and were required to prove that their organization "ha[d] the same aims and objectives as the AIWC."[270]

Local groups that wished to affiliate with the AIWC had to send an application packet to the General Secretary that included its membership rolls, a copy of its constitution, an application for affiliation letter, and a list of the organization's activities. Using this information, the AIWC Standing Committee rejected groups that they felt did not have the same goals as the AIWC. This process suggested a vision of the AIWC that was independent of its affiliates and less of a federated, umbrella organization. Women's wings of political parties were the most common examples of organizations that were not acceptable to the AIWC Standing Committee.[271] Debate was fierce over how to deal with associations organized by the major political parties, especially in considering the women's wing of the Congress Party, with which many of the most active women workers in the AIWC were affiliated.[272] Still, the AIWC was wary of political parties in general and their commitment (or lack thereof) to women's politics. Even the many

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[269] The Standing Committee was the AIWC's central organizing committee. It included women elected from regional areas and the AIWC's official board.
[270] NMML, AIWC papers F. No. 337.
[271] Nearly every major political party organized a women's wing or a women's organization associated with the party. Certainly Congress, the Hindu Mahasabha, and the Muslim League had women's wings. Other parties included women's associations that were not wings of the party, but were still groups primary associated with the political party's work. The All India Democratic Women's Association is an example of this kind of party, organized originally by the Communist Party of India.
[272] Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, "Women's Development and the AICC," *Roshni* 2, no.1 (June 1940), 3-4.

women who worked for the Congress Party recognized that at its best, the party played lip service to women's demands for active citizenship. At its worst, the Congress Party ignored the demands of the women's wing entirely. Although the AIWC demanded that the organization not engage in party politics, it was by no means rejecting political action. Rather, it believed that an independent political womanhood, advanced by the women of the AIWC, would be more effective in truly paying attention to women's rights and responsibilities within the national ideal. For this reason, the final decision of the AIWC Standing Committee was that all women's organizations should be accepted under the previously stated conditions and "provided that they accept *primary allegiance* to the All India Women's Conference."[273] The ruling made it almost impossible for associations organized by political parties to join the AIWC because for the most part, the women's groups remained primarily attached to the party out of which they were formed. But the ruling also made it possible for the AIWC to assert more control over affiliated groups that were independently organized. As the role of the AIWC changed from a purely umbrella organization connecting local women's initiatives to an organization attempting to intrude in both national and legislative agendas, the AIWC Standing Committee, the central AIWC organizing committee, began to assert more central control.[274]

Despite the move to open branches that were centrally organized, the AIWC was clear about the importance of preserving its local ties. After being sent to Hyderabad

[273] NMML, AIWC papers F. No. 351. (Emphasis in original).

[274] This is true for both the Congress women's wing organizations (which emphasized national attainment before women's rights) and for the women associated with the All India Muslim League (which emphasized Pakistan and Muslim rights before women's rights.) Gandhi had a very public fight with the AIWC over whether they should be working for legislative women's rights or spend their time working on Harijan and national movement campaigns.

(Sind) to attempt to start an AIWC branch, Rameshwari Nehru found that it would be better in that case to try to repurpose locally available women's organizations.[275] She wrote, "Hyderabad having several women's organizations, it was pointed out that a new committee only meant a duplication of work. I explained the desirability of linking the local organizations with the All-India Women's Conference which will give an All India colour to the former and strengthen the latter."[276] For Nehru, associated with national women's agendas for more than twenty years, the importance of creating a large national discussion about women's rights was obvious.

Nehru begins her article by arguing that she was sent to the Sind because the AIWC had few branches in the province, and very little contact or reports of work from even those branches. She found that the organizations in Hyderabad (Sind) were in close contact with women's organizations in Karachi (Sind). The Sind women saw more of a benefit to working locally and regionally rather than joining the AIWC, which might attempt to enforce national level goals over regionally effective work. For the AIWC, both regional and national work were required in order to create an All India Women's organization.[277] The main ideological thrust for creating a unified federal movement was

[275] There were many Hyderabads in India. The one under discussion is not the Hyderabad in present day Andhra Pradesh, India, home to the booming computing industry, but in Sind province in Pakistan.
[276] Rameshwari Nehru, "Tour of the Sind," *Roshni* 2, no.4 (December 1940), 46. Rameshwari Nehru was an exemplary worker in the women's movement. She married a nephew of Motilal Nehru, and thus, was Jawaharlal Nehru's cousin. In 1909, she edited *Stree Darpan*, a women's journal. She was the president of the AIWC several times. After independence she worked with the diplomatic service, leading missions to Toyko among other places. For more about Rameshwari Nehru, see Om Prakash Paliwal, *Rameshwari Nehru: Patriot and Internationalist* (New Delhi: National Book Trust), 1986.

[277] An example of the ability to organize at both the regional and AIWC levels was found in Kolhapur, where the local AIWC branch asked permission to join a regionally organized umbrella organization, the Central Kolhapur Mahila Mandal. The AIWC agreed provisionally, assuming the Kolhapur branch remained primarily loyal to the central AIWC. Still the need for a regional coordinating body indicated that

that All India womanhood happened on several levels, national, regional, and local. In order to be effective as an All India body, as the AIWC aspired to be, work needed to be valued at all of these levels.

Nehru argued that what was on display in Sind was the claim that all around the nation, women were doing work for India without any recognition nationally. In her opinion, all that the organizations needed to add to an Indian women's agenda was their work already in progress and a gloss of All India color available through association with the AIWC. The iteration of women's work on local scales all over the country—separately and unrecognized—was the core of the rationale for the AIWC's importance as a nationally recognized organization that made local nation building activities visible to the whole country. In this sense, the benefit of the Sind women gaining a little "All India colour" was part of a push to make women's work a national issue for the benefit of the national AIWC. In the end, this line of argument resonated with at least one of the women's groups in Hyderabad and led to a very active AIWC branch there.[278] However, it did not resonate with the organizations in Karachi, who argued that affiliation meant money sent to the central office and national attention that was neither desired nor useful to their work. The problem was that the AIWC failed to explicitly explain, even to itself, how "All India colour" benefited any local group's labor. The AIWC had articulated a way for the local to become All Indian by uniting local issues with a federating

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the AIWC was unable to coordinate local work in any meaningful way("Standing Committee Minutes," NMML, AIWC papers F. No. 337, 15-16).

[278] The Hyderabad (Sind) branch hosted a small but successful annual conference in 1946. The conference was held less than six months before Britain announced its plans to partition India, leaving the Hyderabad (Sind) branch to become a member of the Pakistan Women's Conference.

organization and agreeing to tenets that could be used to organize national initiatives, but it failed to imagine the reciprocal benefits to local organizations in local terms.

The central AIWC organization became even more markedly national in its orientation from 1945 onward. The AIWC opened a central office with a paid staff in Bombay in 1945.[279] The founding of permanent offices was timed with a shift to a more centrally organized set of suggested work projects, including the organization of nationally important work often done in collaboration with other national women's organizations. In her presidential address in 1945, Hansa Mehta suggested that the AIWC branches should focus on the same two or three major issues: women's health, girls' education, and local political participation, as a way to make the work of the conference more uniform. More importantly to Mehta, however, was the central branches main job of the crafting the Charter of Indian Women's Rights. The charter was to define women's rights and responsibilities as active citizens in an independent India. In an attempt to gain a certain amount of uniformity, the conference's suggested issues tended toward national agitations with enough space to insert some local character, such as legal challenges (i.e. the Hindu Code Bill agitation),[280] health initiatives (i.e. the Kasturba Gandhi Hospital and the "Skippo" Mobile Health Van),[281] or education work (i.e. Lady Irwin College and

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[279] The office shifted to New Delhi in 1953, where there is still a large AIWC campus.
[280] Mithan Lam, *An All India Civil Code* (Bombay: All India Women's Conference, 1947).
[281] "Helga Seligman had founded the Skippo Fund in Great Britain by donating all of the royalties from her children's book on the antics of a goat called Skippo. In 1946, she presented a van to the AIWC from this fund. Dubbed the Skippo van, it was used for the AIWC health projects" Basu and Ray, *Women's Struggle,* 112. Throughout the 1940s and 50s the AIWC added several additional 'Skippo' vans. The Kasturba Gandhi Hospital was built with money from the Kasturba Gandhi fund in honor of M.K. Gandhi's wife.

creation of adult learning curriculums).[282] By as early as 1946, the AIWC resolved to change the organizational constitution to emphasize the ideas laid out in the Charter of Indian Women's Rights. The new constitution emphasized structures that prioritized national legislative issues over local work even more than before as the foundation of the AIWC's All India commitment.[283]

After Independence, the AIWC emphasized funding for women's work through national grants given to projects with an "All India character". The AIWC applied the funding lines they received in the national economic plans to continue work on national initiatives, especially around education and health issues, but neither applied for nor were allocated money to their village outreach or local initiatives programs. Several of the important AIWC leaders took position in the national government or in India's foreign service. Mathews and Nair have suggested that the AIWC lost a good portion of its radicalism, and much of its character after Independence because the leaders chose to take positions in the government rather than carry on the movement independently.[284] At least initially, the AIWC women believed in the promise of the government to create the conditions for gender equality in India and their sense of possibility was heightened as the new national government placed women in positions of authority. Unfortunately, their hope was somewhat misguided; the *Towards Equality* report published in 1974 showed

[282] The Lady Irwin College opened in 1932 was one of the first initiatives of the AIWC. It is a women's college in Delhi devoted to teaching Home Science and, from 1945, a teachers training curriculum. For more information about Lady Irwin College, see Basu and Ray, *Women's Struggle,* 21-24
[283] NMML, AIWC papers F. No. 425.
[284] P.M. Mathew and M.S. Nair, *Women's Organizations and Women's Interests*, 14.

that by many measurable factors, women's position in India had declined rather than improved in the decades after Independence.[285]

Bad Branches

One of the ways that the AIWC went about defining the borders of its control over branches was in their negotiations about how to discipline branches that were not following the lead of the central organization. As the AIWC began to consolidate their hold over the kinds of issues that were put forward in the organization's name, it became more strict in punishing branches that strayed from the path. Still, each individual "bad branch" case raised its own concerns about the goal of federal unity, as established by the AIWC. Using three test cases, I argue that the disciplinary actions taken against erring branches by the central AIWC organization indicate the limits of the AIWC message that local work and local agitations were both constitutive of and principal to the national representation of All India Women's Movement. I will discuss the Andhra branch for participating in political action with the Congress Party in 1945, the Chittagong Branch for defying the goals of national unity by supporting partition in 1947, and the Baroda Branch for calling the central AIWC committees to task for not adequately supporting and recognizing local work in 1949.[286]

In 1945, the Andhra branch of the AIWC (located in the then Central Provinces, now in Andhra Pradesh) affirmed that while it was affiliated with the All India Women's Conference, it had the right to dictate the terms of its local work and in the course of

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[285] *Towards Equality: Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India* (New Delhi: Govt. of India, Ministry of Education & Social Welfare, Dept. of Social Welfare, 1974).

[286] Each of these branches were AIWC specific branches, not previous organizations that were co-opted into the AIWC.

doing local work had the right to affiliate itself with other women's organizations. The central office of the AIWC received a letter from the previous president of the Andhra branch, which complained that the branch had used its members to engage in political canvassing for Congress candidates and had unofficially attached itself to the local Congress Party.[287] When the AIWC was first established in 1927, the organization decided to ban politics as subject of discussion. But in 1940, the constitution was amended to allow for political discussion, arguing that the AIWC was "free to discuss and contribute to all questions and matters that affect the welfare of the people of India."[288] The 1940 constitution still limited the Conference from engaging in political activity targeted at advancing the agenda of any particular political party, but it was much more open to understanding political work as AIWC work. [289] As mentioned above, the AIWC was rightfully skeptical of political parties because the parties seemed to undervalue the work of women and their role in a future nation. The AIWC also wanted to avoid engaging in feuding over specific party affiliation when none of the major parties had strong women's rights agendas. So the question posed by the Andhra branch work with the Congress party was whether and/or how to discipline the branch.

After many attempts to get the Andhra branch to be more sensitive to the extensive role that political parties were playing in their work, Margaret Cousins, who had been asked to investigate the branch, admitted that the Andhra branch was asserting more local control than was expected. Both the Andhra chapter and Cousins asked the

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[287] NMML, AIWC papers F. No. 351. The controversy is more complicated because most of the AIWC leaders were also Congress members.
[288] 1940 AIWC constitution as quoted in Basu and Ray, *Women's Struggle,* 69.
[289] Ibid.

AIWC to clarify who directed branches local work. Ultimately, the AIWC attempted to walk a very fine line between granting local control and dictating the lengths that women workers could participate in party politics as AIWC representatives. They argued that as a centrally organized institution, the AIWC did not support any political party, but branches should be given discretion in all local matters, including what kinds of work to engage in.[290] In other words, branches were in theory still able to affiliate with political parties to carry out work in the interests of women and children at the local level, but branches were not to engage in party politics on the national level, including all national AIWC commitments led by the central committee, which in principal could extend even into local work.

The Andhra branch's incongruous behavior forced the AIWC central organization to question what the role of the central committees actually was. In theory, the AIWC wanted to exert more strenuous control over the action of branches. In parsing the agreement on the Andhra branch problem and the debate over local control that it prompted, it was agreed, "until the AIWC has secured marked influence over women all over India, rigid control by the Central organization should be postponed."[291] This comment suggests both some ambivalence toward the federalized structure that the AIWC had been building and an ambition to having the kind of national presence that easily allows control over local situations. While federation required reckoning with local control, the desire for national influence over branch activity needed to effectively rein in the Andhra branch did not seem to necessarily negate the more locally based federalized

[290] NMML, AIWC papers F. No. 354, 96.
[291] Ibid

approach. Ideally, every branch would ask for permission before taking organizationally complicated steps, but this kind of appeal to a central body required soft power of regard and influence that the central AIWC could not yet assert.

One of the reasons that it was easier for the AIWC central committee to assert the provisional rights of the Andhra branch to direct its own work was that almost all of the women leaders of the AIWC central committee were Congress women themselves, and while the work with the Congress Party pushed the non-partisan stance of the AIWC very close to the edge of a cliff, it did not, in their opinion, violate any fundamental AIWC objective. In the case of the Chittagong branch, the AIWC had to deal with divergence from commonly held AIWC beliefs.[292] In 1947, during the Muslim League's final push for partition, the Chittagong branch of the AIWC passed a resolution supporting the proposed partition of Bengal and the creation of the state of Pakistan.[293] The resolution did not explicitly support the All India Muslim League, but in essence the branch was supporting the Muslim League by supporting its call for partition. The AIWC central committee was incensed that the branch thought that it was possible to remain members of the AIWC and still support something like partition. The reporting of the crisis was filtered through letters between the general committee and Renuka Ray, who was in Bengal working on the AIWC's children's homes and famine relief project.[294]

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[292] Today Chittagong is the second largest city in Bangladesh, after Dhaka. It has always been an important city on the bay of Bengal and is located in the south eastern corner of Bangladesh, near to Myanmar and the Indian states of Tripura and Mizoram.
[293] NMML, AIWC papers F. No. 415, 121.
[294] Renuka Ray, *My Reminiscences: Social Development during Gandhian Era and After* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1982). On the Bengal Famine, see Dan Banik, *Starvation and Indian Democracy* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

For the AIWC central committee, it was unacceptable that a branch would violate what they considered their most important objective, "to stand against all separatist tendencies and to promote a greater national integration and unity."[295] The AIWC had often articulated a very strong reading of this particular objective, which remains part of the AIWC constitution to this day. The AIWC saw a commitment to Indian unity as fundamental to its political identity as a women's advocacy organization. The women of the AIWC argued that the tendency to define women, or any group, as separate from an Indian identity was to decrease their ability to claim a right to national political negotiation, hence the idea of the All India in the name of the women's conference.[296]

In the eyes of the AIWC Standing Committee, which was distinctly politically hostile to the Muslim League and the partition argument, the move by the Chittagong branch had to be thought of as advocating the undermining of Indian unity.[297] Once the partition was effected, what the AIWC saw as a temporary concession to identity politics, while waiting for a more unifying national character, would become nearly irreversible. The national committee's approach to dealing with this seriously errant branch was defended by arguing that unlike the Andhra branch, where the issue was how much leeway did a local branch have in defining "local", the issue at stake in the Chittagong case was to what extent could local decisions affect (and derail) the character of an entire organization. More precisely, if the partition affirmation was allowed to stand, the central

[295] AIWC constitution, quoted in *All India Women's Conference Souvenir 1927-1970* (New Delhi: AIWC, 1971), back cover.
[296] "In the Light," *Roshni* 2, no.8 (December 1941), 1.
[297] On the Muslim League's ideas about the Muslim nation and Pakistan, please see Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, The Muslim League, and the Demand for Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

committee of the AIWC argued that the issue could permanently disrupt the All India character of the organization by allowing that some parts might be against a unified India. Ray was instructed to go to Chittagong and straighten out the situation in any way possible. When it seemed that many of the women were unwilling to void the resolution supporting the partition of Bengal and the creation of Pakistan, Ray met with the dissenting members, voided the earlier branch's charter affiliation, and created a new branch in Chittagong.[298]

The issue under question in both the Andhra and Chittagong cases was delimitating how far central control could actually reach without changing the character of the organization and what was properly under the purview of local branch influence. By contrast, the issue in the disciplinary action against the Baroda branch in 1949 concerned whether or not local branches could speak publicly against the working of the central AIWC organization. In 1949, the national committee was sent a report that the Baroda AIWC branch had published a pamphlet that criticized the AIWC central committee.[299] The AIWC Standing Committee immediately sent a letter to the Baroda stating, "The booklet published by the Baroda branch is a direct propaganda against the All India Women's Conference which no branch is permitted to do. Since the pamphlet contains material prejudicial to the All India Women's Conference, the standing

[298] The creation of a new Chittagong branch was troubling in its own way, as its members were largely made up of the non-Muslim women who had been members of the Chittagong branch. That is to say, the creation of the new branch was as implicitly communal as the passing of the resolution was explicitly communal. Since partition was effected shortly after this drama, I imagine that the anti-partition branch disbanded shortly after it was founded.

[299] I was not able to find the original pamphlet, and the AIWC papers did not include it, so I do not know exactly what the pamphlet said, or even what critiques were made in it. But, based on the content and tone of the correspondence between the central AIWC and the Baroda Branch, I suspect the pamphlet was advocating for a more democratic AIWC, or perhaps for an AIWC that encouraged more mass outreach.

committee takes a serious view of the matter and asks you to withdraw the matter immediately."[300] The branch wrote back to the AIWC standing committee promptly and argued that the AIWC had made an appalling decision with regards to the pamphlet. In her letter, the Baroda branch representative of the Standing Committee claimed that the decision of the AIWC to insist on the branch withdrawing their pamphlet was overreaching on the central organization's part and therefore, "absolutely wrong." As such, the branch was "not bound to withdraw the booklet."[301]

The Baroda branch representative further argued, "any branch of a mass organization has the right to criticize the parent body if they are not in the interests of the general masses,"[302] and finally,

> Such publications [as the Baroda booklet] are the only means to better effect a change from the existing state of affairs by the democratic means. We hold ourselves, in honor bound to safeguard and indicate this democratic right of every individual and a branch unit inside our organization.

The Baroda branch was effectively arguing that the members and branch members of the AIWC have a responsibility to make the organization into the kind of open, democratic organization that it claimed to be. Moreover, the branch seems to argue that *any* mass organization should, on account of their "mass" status, be accountable not only to their own membership, but to the masses, which they claim to represent. In essence, Baroda argued that the AIWC was only All India to the extent that it was made accountable to the masses. In an effort to create the kind of democratic, federated movement that the AIWC claimed to advance, Baroda argued that it was incumbent on the branches to

[300] NMML, AIWC papers F. No. 43, 23.
[301] Ibid., 24-25.
[302] Ibid., 25.

respond and remake the national organization when it was failing to recognize the needs of “every” member. The argument reflected a general organizational tension between locally controlled work and nationally dictated agendas. The former included the ability of each member, branch, or even each woman affected by the AIWC to define the organization. The latter recognized the right of the central committee to dictate organizational issues of concern and appropriate responses.

In the cases of Andhra and Chittagong, the AIWC central organization tried to imagine the line that when crossed meant that the local work of the branches substantially changed the national objectives of the AIWC as a whole. In dealing out punishments (in the case of Chittagong) or declining to (in the Andhra affair), the AIWC argued that local work helped to define the All Indian nature of the organization and as such actions by local branches had the potential to harm the national image of the AIWC. In these cases, the AIWC argued, the organization needed to delineate acceptable behavior. The Baroda branch was arguing almost precisely the opposite point. In a way, its argument was an attempt to bring the AIWC back to the point of federalization where it had started. The Baroda branch argued that the work of the individual woman member or collective branch activity—not merely their existence—was the way that the AIWC marked itself as All Indian. Any work undertaken by the national AIWC organization should come from the work at the branches, and as such the branches had a right and a duty to chide the national organizational committees when they failed to properly support local initiatives. For the Baroda branch, the central committees and national agenda were the places most fraught with the danger of becoming exclusive and undemocratic. The national AIWC

response brought the Baroda branch's fears to bear more concretely than they could have reasonably expected. The branch was disaffiliated. More repressively, the constitution committee officer of the Standing Committee suggested, "there should be a check on …Branches making statements and publishing magazines without consulting the Branch Central Committees. A clause to this effect might be added [to the AIWC Constitution]."[303] The AIWC's reaction to a call for more openness and local accountability was an attempt to further consolidate national level control.

One could attribute the escalating level of severity with which the central committee responded to the branches as a mark of the increasing ability of the central organization in exercising power over time. After all, the AIWC did write in response to the Andhra case that control and influence were linked. Yet, the change could also be attributed to independence and a growing sense in the nation that the local could no longer be expected to define the national good. By 1951, two years after the Baroda incident, many of the women leaders involved in the nationalizing of the AIWC agendas had been established in government or pseudo-governmental positions. Despite Jawaharlal Nehru's claims that the AIWC was less a women's advocacy group than a middle class women's tea party, his government routinely wrote to the president and general secretary of the AIWC for recommendations of women who would be qualified for a variety of government postings in India and abroad.[304] In 1953, the organization moved from Bombay to set up a huge campus in New Delhi to be closer to the

[303] NMML, AIWC papers F. No. 44, 122.
[304] This practice was so routine, that the AIWC had a letter from an anonymous woman member admonishing, "It is a much happier thing if those who are not already absorbed in various offices and legislative work are selected for commissions abroad instead of the same people people doing everything all the time as happens so often" (NMML, AIWC papers F. No. 38, 47).

government for advocacy purposes. It is not hard to see that the AIWC was becoming less interested in branches, except insofar as their number contributed to the general feeling of the organization's national character.

The All India Women's Conference in a National Context

> As India is such a vast country, with manifold problems to be solved, we do recognise the necessity of more than one All India body working for the welfare of the country. Such being the case, in order to conserve our energies and achieve the best results we feel the need for closer cooperation.[305]

The AIWC was far from the only nationally organized women's organization functioning in India in the 1940s and 50s. The AIWC joined the National Council of Women, India (NCWI) founded in 1925,[306] and the Women's Indian Association (WIA) founded in 1917, as a nationally recognized women's organization. Unlike the AIWC, the WIA and NCWI were organized to be defined as national organizations rather than All India ones. The WIA, the mother organization of the AIWC, was founded by British and Irish women associated with the women's suffrage movement. As such, their experience was of local activity being coordinated and directed from a national organization with an eye to the national agenda. The NCWI was organized by the International Council of Women, and was fundamentally organized with an eye on national agendas that lent themselves to international cooperation. All three of these organizations recognized the other two as similar institutions working on a national level for the uplift of women and children. Similarly, all three recognized the Young Women's Christian Association

[305] "Minutes of the Liaison Committee," NMML, AIWC papers F. No. 292, 41.

[306] The National Council of Women, India was set up in 1925 by the International Council of Women. Interestingly, the ICW subsequently made moves to affiliate with the All India Women's Conference. For more information on the International Council of Women, see Leila Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

(YWCA) as a possible national contributor, though only in a limited way due to its sectarian focus.

While the AIWC recognized these women's groups as nationally organized, they did not necessarily consider them to be "All Indian." Because the AIWC had organized its membership around federation and its ability to be broadly representative through the participation of its branches, the AIWC argued that its organization, with its umbrella-like qualities, would be best able to unite the work of women's organizations (large and small) around India. For this reason, the AIWC leaders wanted to imagine a way for the other two "national organizations" to exist within its own framework. There were several issues during the period of 1940-1956 that required joint effort on the part of the three major women's groups, and organizing that cooperation was complicated. This section will consider the ways that the AIWC tried to work with the WIA, the NCWI, and sometimes the YWCA to create a more unified national women's movement in India,[307] while also keeping a proprietary watch on AIWC branches.[308]

The understanding of the AIWC as a federated and unifying organization was at stake in its dealings with other national women's groups. As the AIWC began to engage with and lead joint ventures with these national organizations, it began to be more difficult to imagine the local driving the national affiliation in the AIWC. As national

[307] Ilina Sen has considered the role that coordination between large national players like the AIWC and YWCA (and connection between these groups and regional women's organizations) played in rejuvenating and recreating the women's movement in the early 1960's, but few people have considered the 1940's attempts at coordination. See Ilina Sen, "A Space within the Struggle," in *Writing the Women's Movement*, ed. Mala Khulla 80-97, esp. 84-86.

[308] Propriety jealousy was more of a mental problem than an actual one. There was an incident in which the National Council of Women India's central committee convinced AIWC's Travancore Branch to disaffiliate from the AIWC and join the NCWI taking all of the workers and funds with them, but this seems to be a singular experience (NMML, AIWC papers F. No. 268).

initiatives became the more important aspect of the AIWC's agenda, it began to work more closely with the large, nationally organized women's groups and to ignore its work coordinating local initiatives. With the national agenda becoming the focus of the AIWC's organizing, the concept of a federalized unity, which privileged local action as constitutive of Indian agendas, became more tenuous.

Most provinces and localities had their own province-wide organizations, but these organizations tended to affiliate loosely with either the NCWI or the AIWC when they took on agitations with national significance.[309] Of course, as was mentioned earlier, most of the political parties had women's wings. Many religious organizations had women specific sub-organizations. Particularly notable are the women's groups and schools organized in coordination with the Arya Samaj movement.[310] These organizations, tied to specific religions and social action movements, while considered commendable for their actions, were not considered "All India" enough to be invited to participate in joint action with the other three. In addition to regional and local organizations, there were several women's magazines and journals that thought seriously about the issues confronting women, but which were not associated with any particular organization. These outlets for women's organizing were closely linked with women in the AIWC, but also with regional workers who never rose to particular prominence outside of print.[311]

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[309] In her book *Indian Women and the Freedom Movement: A Historian's Perspective*, Geraldine Forbes talks about some of regional movements, especially in Bengal.
[310] The Arya Samaj movement was a movement devoted to the reform and reconstruction of Hindu practices. For a discussion of the Arya Samaj and its forays into women's organizing, see Madhuu Kishwar, "The Daughters of Aryavarta," *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 23 (1986): 151-86.
[311] Vir Bharat Talwaar, "Feminist Consciousness in Women's Journals in Hindi: 1910-1920," in *Recasting Women*, 204-233.

The other organization that was not particularly welcome in the All India club is the *Mahila Seva Samaj* (The Women's Service Society).[312] The society was founded in 1913, and had locations initially in Mysore and Pune. Still, the Mahila Seva Samaj is generally not considered by historians to be a national women's organization. Anup Taneja's remarks about the organization are somewhat typical of its place in the literature, "Branches of the Mahila Seva Samaj were established in Mysore and Pune in 1913 and 1916 respectively. But the first major attempt to organize women on an all-India basis took place with the Women's Indian Association (WIA)."[313] In part, it seems that the Mahila Seva Samaj gets excluded because it did not participate in the lobbying of the colonial state, nor did it publish in English. The Mahila Seva Samaj was certainly a women's group organized on more than a regional basis, but it was never associated with coordinated national work. The treatment of the Mahila Seva Samaj and other national women's groups that functioned in regional vernaculars indicates a strong preference both in governments during the 1940s and 50s (colonial and national) and present scholarship to exclude minority and marginal women's work.[314] The failure of the AIWC and the "women's movement" to recognize these organizations as anything more than potential federating partners provided fodder for the claim that the women's organizations failed to engage with the masses in any measurable way, which has been

[312] The Mahila Seva Samaj is not the only national women's organization that gets short shrift in the literature, but it was the most active one during the 1940s and 50s, and it was organized in the same period as the other three, which makes its exclusion more curious. Other organizations, like the Bharat Stri Mahanmandal founded in 1901, were forerunners to the women's organizations but were not still active in the late teens and twenties when these women's organizations were founded.

[313] Anup Taneja, *Gandhi: Women and the National Movement, 1920-1947* (New Delhi: All India Women's Conference, 2005), 37-38.

[314] This chapter is not excepted.

often used by political parties to deny the representative capacity of the "women's movement."

The problem in orchestrating cooperation with other "All India" organizations was with the AIWC's federated approach. On the one hand, the AIWC was at a structural disadvantage from the other organizations as so much of their rhetoric was tied to the idea of local work, which meant that the AIWC had to measure their collaboration with groups organized as national bodies in terms of the importance any issue had on the center and the local activity. On the other hand, the AIWC was a much larger body than any of the three women's organizations in 1940, with by far the most members, the largest network, and the largest body of active issues. As such, the AIWC often seemed to indicate that any work with the other national women's organizations was work that would ultimately lead to a more complete federation of the women's movement under their banner. The AIWC was not precisely interested in completely co-opting these organizations, but in creating an outlet in which close cooperation could be easily commanded. This section will consider two different ways that the AIWC tried to configure the relationship with other large women's organizations. First, I will consider the founding and working of the "liaison committee" founded by the AIWC, the NCWI, and the WIA and the organizational issues that surrounded its creation. Second, I will consider the AIWC's attempt to conduct joint work with these organizations on the specific issue of the Hindu Code Bill through the 1940s and 50s.

Organizing an All India Commitment

At the 1935 AIWC conference, it was resolved that a series of directories of women's organizations active in various cities be published in time for the 1936 conference. The impetus for the directories was that women, interested in working with women's organizations, should be able to find already functioning organizations to work with, rather than investing time and money in new committees. Also, the directory was meant to allow organizations with similar purposes to share work as seen fit. The preface to the directory states, "It is, therefore, essential that women who are interested in activities for the uplift and advancement of their sisters should know what is being done in that behalf and who are doing it. That will also enable them to find out what remains to be done."[315] The directories listed social work organizations, with their national affiliation if the organization had one, as well as a short precise of the purpose and activities of the organization. In many cases, it also listed the last major work that the organization had done. The directories were suggested in part to make manifest that there were far too few women workers to succumb to organizational jealousy. The directory argued for continued work, especially by AIWC women, even if the kind of work they were interested in was not available through the AIWC branch.[316]

The directory also functioned as a way to continue the federating work of the AIWC. By pointing women workers to organizations in need of social work, the AIWC was putting work in to coordinating women's work even outside their organizational fold.

[315] AIWC Bombay Presidency, *Directory of Women's Institutions: Part I Social Section*, ed. K.J. Chitala (Bombay: Servants of India Society, 1936), ii. As far as the directories went, it is unclear if the remaining directories were ever published. Certainly the Bombay Presidency AIWC branch thought that at least two other volumes of their directory were going to be published (on Medical and Education organizations), but I found no evidence of these volumes' existence.

[316] Though the entry for the Bombay Women's Association, one of the official AIWC branches in Bombay, glowingly described the AIWC as the main organization to "bring women of different provinces together" (Ibid, 11).

Recognizing the work of women's organizations outside of the AIWC fold was a major theme of the 1936 conference. In an essay called "Random Thoughts on the Women's Conference," Hansa Mehta argued that in promoting women's work wherever it was successfully functioning and discussing it at conferences, like the AIWC annual conference, was productive work in the sense that conferences "bring together such workers who are connected with educational and social activities in order that they may exchange their experiences and their views on various problems that they come across in the course of their work."[317] By making the work of women in any form the focus of the AIWC conferences and organizational structure, AIWC workers spread the message of the organization, local work, and national vision more broadly. As the 1940s and 50s went forward, the AIWC and other national women's organization attempted to draw together resources more concretely with new organizing techniques and joint national legislative advocacy. But these new joint approaches with the NCWI and the WIA, which were self-consciously national in focus and organization, undermined further the AIWC's commitment to local work and defining the local into the Indian consciousness.

Late in 1940, the National Council of Women, India passed a resolution stating, "in order to ensure the fullest cooperation between the various All India Women's Associations and to prevent the overlapping and reduplication of work and to promote joint action in matters of All-India importance, especially those affecting the position and welfare of women and children, a joint standing committee of representatives, possibly three in number from every All India Women's Organization willing to cooperate and

[317] Hansa Mehta, "Random Thoughts on the Women's Conference," in *Indian Women,* ed. Sarala Jag Mohan (Delhi: Butala and Company, 1981), 177.

those whose aims and objects are similar should be speedily set up."[318] The proposed committee seemed to fit well with the AIWC's attempts to avoid reduplication of work, especially given the limited number of women who had the education, leisure, and inclination to do social work as far as possible.

Essentially, the committee that the NCWI proposed would work on a macro level like the kind of coordination done by publication of these directories and discussions at the AIWC conferences. Still, despite the connection to AIWC rhetoric and stated desire, the AIWC responded to the NCWI's proposed liaison committee tentatively. Instead of creating a permanent committee, the AIWC and the NCWI chose instead to appoint a study commission on all women's organizations, as a "move toward unity" of purpose and organization.[319] At the same time that the AIWC was moving slowing toward accepting a permanent alliance with the NCWI, it passed a resolution to extend "representation on the AIWC standing committee to organizations of an All-Indian character."[320] The NCWI and the WIA were able to appoint representatives to the main committees of the AIWC and were invited to send three representatives to the AIWC annual conference.

The preference for a study committee and seats on each other's standing committees over the creation of a separate committee was justified as a way to further cut down on administrative activities for already busy AIWC workers. A NCWI woman would be able to help direct the AIWC in terms of staying clear of reduplication of

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[318] NMML, AIWC papers F. No. 266. The resolution for the committee is also discussed at length in file 226, which includes official correspondence on the proposed standing committee between representatives of the NCWI, the AIWC, and the WIA.
[319] Ibid.
[320] Ibid.

NCWI work and would be able to tell the NCWI standing committee about the proposed AIWC work. However, the preference also reflected the terms of the AIWC idea about unity and All Indian work. The AIWC's ideological approach to women's work was based on the idea of local work being directed by local and regional actors with a structure that supported, engaged, and helped at a national level, while the national organization publicized the local and created national agendas around it.

In some ways, the liaison committee's focus on organizing responses on behalf of the "women's movement" to issues at a macro level, was hard for the AIWC to justify on the basis of its local commitments. Although the organization was becoming more focused on national organizing throughout the 1940s and early 50s, the idea of organizing a committee entirely around the national agenda seemed to represent a troubling disengagement from the local initiatives that formed the greater part of the AIWC rhetoric. In part, the problem was fundamentally about the organizational beliefs of the two main organizations.[321] The AIWC, organized around the idea of Indian federation of local women's groups, even amidst national and international work, was concerned with the way that organizing an All India committee would separate national work from local initiative. This is not to say that the AIWC was uninterested in nation building. As I discussed in the introduction, the AIWC saw itself as the best organization available to harness women's work to define and create the kind of unity that would sustain the

[321] Although the WIA was still a functioning, independent organization, and thought of as a major player in the world of the Indian women's movement, its close connection with the AIWC was solemnized in 1944 when it became officially affiliated with the AIWC. Thus, the NCWI and the AIWC were the two major organizations involved in discussions. After 1946, the national YWCA became a cadet member of the all India women's organization world, never quite given the respect it wanted, but allowed to play in the same sandbox.

promise of a differentiated nation that India seemed to be working toward. Still, the logic behind the AIWC idea was always that national work was created by local conditions and was meant to supplement the kind of local intervention that made Indian unity possible. Because of the NCWI's international connections and avowedly national focus, it more narrowly pursued national issues and directed its branches toward specific kinds of labor thereof. The AIWC was also wary of the NCWI's close ties to international women's associations out of concern that the organization was more interested in positioning India in the world than India in Indian life.

Once the AIWC decided to have an informal liaison committee in 1942, an organizational problem quickly arose in the appointing of the liaison committee to coordinate the activities of the All India women's organizations—namely, who to appoint. The problem was not trivial. There were a limited number of women workers with a national presence. The AIWC first thought of appointing Lady Dhanvanthi Rama Rao and Rani Lakshmibai Rajwade to the committee, but found upon their invitation that both were already also active members of the NCWI. The NCWI had a similar problem as it considered appointing Shareefah Hamid Ali only to find that she was already an active member of the AIWC. Ultimately, the AIWC sent Lady Rama Rao, despite her joint affiliation, and the general secretary Urmila Mehta, a young but active worker.

The overlap in women working at the national level was troubling for the AIWC, in part because it gave lie to its claim to be focused on local level work as the basis for its All India agenda. It also brought up the question, more forcefully than before, about how close local women workers could get to national prominence. Indeed, many of the

women who were important nationally positioned workers were related to other women in power (like Sarojini Naidu's daughters), daughters of the royal families of Indian States (Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Rani Lakshmibai Rajwade, and the daughters of the Hyderabadi [Andhra] royal family), or family members of national leaders (Rameshwari Nehru, Indira Gandhi [then Nehru], Vijaya Laxshmi Pandit, and Kasturba Gandhi). While many women, such as Hansa Mehta, Renuka Ray, and Urmila Mehta, made it into national prominence through their own effort, the number of potential women activists who were in the situation to make it to national prominence (relatively wealthy, generally upper-caste, extremely well-educated, and with a forceful personalities) was vanishingly small. The average local AIWC worker, engaged in local and regional work, was never even able to attend an annual conference unless it was held in their city. Even important regional leaders were often unable to reach a national level of prominence unless they lived in a large city (specifically in Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, or Madras). Moreover, while most of these nationally important women did engage in actual local work, few privileged it over national agitation. Women like Lady Rama Rao, who eschewed national appointments to work with her local branch and on pet projects, were unusual among nationally active women.[322] This is not to say that many national women's activists were not interested in local-level work or did not participate actively in social work. Most of the women involved in national level work were absolutely interested in work at the local level, and most were active in promoting productive work. Still, many found their main commitments to be at the national level and on national issues.

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[322] Rao was the main driving force in the operation and spread of the Skippo mobile health vans.

Ultimately, the liaison committee failed to do much to combine the efforts of the NCWI, AIWC, WIA, and to a lesser extent the YWCA. The committee was short lived, with each of the organizations pulling away from it after a little less than two years. The organizations moved toward working jointly on issues directed to "the women's movement in general," such as the agitation around labor protections for women and children working in underground mines, which led to a jointly advocated bill against the practice of having women in underground mines. The organizations also worked together to found the All India Save the Children Fund in 1943 in response to the devastation of the Bengal Famine.[323] In an effort to actively renew connections to the NCWI and the YWCA in 1945, the AIWC created a membership class of the organization called an "associate body". The associate bodies could be "any All-India women's organization in sympathy with the policy, aims, and objects of the A-IWC…provided it has at least 250 members on its rolls."[324] While AICW archive does not follow up on the question of the whether the "associate body" plan was ever enacted, several other very large regional, vernacular organizations did join the AIWC as associate bodies. In many ways, the new classification was more apt for the vision of a federated women's organization focused on local work, for national agendas than the liaison committee.

Uniform and Hindu Code Bill Agitation

From the early 1940s, the AIWC argued that large-scale agitations that could have national effects needed to be brought to the foreground. Specifically, the call for legal and social equality, an overarching goal of the AIWC, needed to be sounded nationwide both

[323] Basu and Ray, *Women's Struggle*, 74. The two organizations worked together on many other issues, but these were two of the most successful.
[324] NMML, AIWC papers F. No. 342, 3.

in consciousness raising campaigns throughout India and through legislative action to remove institutional inequalities aimed at making women second class citizens. In this respect, the marquee battle was the fight to remove or reform the personal law system and to revise the Hindu Civil Code in particular. An especially perverse effect of the way that the British colonized India was the importance placed on "keeping" with the local laws and judicial traditions, which meant creating a system of laws for India that codified "indigenous" traditions defined by religion. This system manifested itself as a series of laws separate from the overarching criminal code called civil codes or personal laws, which were applied based on the litigant's religious affiliation.[325] There were two main personal law codes: the Hindu personal law code and Muslim personal law code with several less prominent personal law codes for other religious affiliations that did not match these two large categories.[326] All legal actions involved in "civil" proceeding, including but not limited to marriage, divorce and maintenance, widow remarriage, and inheritance were tried using personal law proceedings. Thus, a person's religious affiliation determined whether they could legally engage in polygamy, pass property to a

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[325] There have been many books written about the interpretation of the idea of 'local laws' as it was translated into the Indian context. See, for example, C.A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[326] Personal law is still functioning in India today. Recently cases, like the Shah Bano case, have been tried to dislodge the power of personal law, but the valence of personal law is very complicated. In the Shah Bano case for example, the idea of personal law as a barrier to uniform legal rights for divorced women, was tied into a discussion about whether or not Islam was fundamentally discriminatory against women. The question of minority rights, as a function of personal law is an important problem. For some discussion on debates surrounding the issues inherent in the personal law debate, see Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, "Women between Community and State: Some Implications of the Uniform Civil Code Debates in India," *Social Text* 65 no. 8 (2000): 55-82; Flavia Agnes, *Law and Gender Equality: The Politics of Women's Rights in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999); Zoya Hasan, *Forging Indentites: Gender, Communications, and the State* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1996).

married daughter, or the level to which they were required to maintain an ex-wife and acceptable manner of claiming the divorce.

The AIWC saw the existence of different personal law statutes for different communities as a way to codify disunity into the nation. Drawing on anti-colonial "divide and rule" rhetoric, the AIWC argued that the continuation of personal law codes based on religion was a tactic by the government to disable justices and discourage inter-communal participation in advocacy groups, especially among women, who were most affected by the lack of commitment to equality that the personal civil codes represented. Thus, as Rajeswari Sunder Rajan has argued, "women's organizations like the All-India Women's Conference stressed the need for a [Uniform Civil Code] mainly for the reason that uniformity of laws would unify a nation split along religious communitarian lines."[327] The failure to create a uniform civil code meant that no matter what legislative and local action the women's movement took, their work could be undermined by different community codes.[328] One simple example of this disability can be seen in the divergence between national criminal codes, which ban dowry, and personal civil codes, which lay out specific rules for the giving, receiving, and disposition of dowry. Taking the same example of dowry rules, the AIWC recorded that local branches around

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[327] Rajan, "Women between the Community and the State," 63. I agree that this was the key reason for the AIWC in calling for a uniform civil code, but I disagree that the AIWC did not consider the problems for women of discriminatory codes. The question of how to define the AIWC's relationship to the concept of uniformity is muddled at best. On the one hand, the AIWC clearly argued that separatist tendencies (and the resultant disunity) especially around religious affiliation were a bane to India's national identity. In this sense, the AIWC often argued that organizations that catered to one section of society (even including themselves) would ideally be useless eventually. On the other hand, the AIWC did argue that having a federated unity, in which women of all communities and ideally all strata of society interacted meant that people were better able to pool resources, make arguments, and understand the depth that was the Indian nation. It is in this sense that the uniform code arguments were made.

[328] "The Forces of Reaction," *Roshni* 3, no. 8 (September 1948), 2-3.

Lucknow had long protested against excessive dowry, but that local Waqf boards routinely ruled against changes the branches encouraged, making societal change less likely.[329]

The AIWC had (and still has) an official policy that actively sought the promotion and passage of a uniform civil code that would be favorable to women and children.[330] The organization argued that different codes made different levels of discrimination against women permanent, legal, and hard to determine, but that all were ultimately unfavorable to the rights of women. Moreover, discussions about the discrimination inherent in these codes often broke down to arguments about whether the Muslim or Hindu Code was *more* discriminatory against women rather than focusing on the ways both codes were discriminatory. The idea of a uniform code, written collaboratively between representatives of the women's movement, legislators, and concerned national citizens was the best of all possible worlds for the leaders of the AIWC because it would remove legal disabilities that allowed the Indian woman to be thought of apart from and inferior to the normative Indian. The AIWC argued that the Uniform Civil Code created the conditions of possibility for Indian women to be Indian citizens. As such, disabilities

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[329] The Waqf board is the organization in charge of cases of dispute with respect to the Muslim civil code. Zoya Hasan, "Minority Indentity, Muslim Women's Bill Campaign, and the Political Process," *Economic and Political Weekly* 24, no. 1 (January 1989): 44-50.

[330] There were many people involved in the Uniform Civil Code agitation over time. One of the driving forces in the debate was Mithan Lam, who wrote the book, *An All Indian Civil Code*, published by the All India Women's Conference. In it she argued that the situation of the civil codes made it almost impossible for people whose religion would put them under different codes to form meaningful relationships. She considers the example of an Indian woman who married a non-Indian citizen, claiming that that woman would be unable to retain her Indian citizenship. Similarly, she argued that women who wanted to marry out of their religious code would be striped of any protections under their original civil code and be considered, instead, to be of the religion of her husband. Her argument was that under the personal law system, no matter how generous the laws were, women would never be fully functional and equal citizens of the state, because their rights were tied to religion, and specifically to the religion of her father and then husband (Mithan Lam, *An All India Civil Code* [Bombay: All India Women's Conference, 1947]).

codified in communal civil codes—both in their separatist tendencies and in the way they disadvantaged women—were acted on as a necessary realm of national action beyond what was explicitly called for on a local level. Still, even on this issue, which as Gandhi pointed out was removed from the plane of individual intervention defined by the local, the AIWC attempted to institute a policy of federation, at least to the extent that they worked in coordination with the NCWI, the WIA, and the national YWCA to draft responses to questions asking them to clarify the Indian women's stance on the code issue. Moreover, in working to draft an All India women's movement response, the AIWC attempted to reframe the debate about the legislative changes to civil law codes about the effect that legislation would have, and indeed already had, on Indian women.

While the AIWC preferred to draft a uniform civil code for India, it was clear that the best chance to enact change would be to continue agitating for a uniform code, while at the same time attempting to legislate the revamping of the Hindu Personal Laws. Throughout the 1930s, the AIWC carried on a high level campaign to start the process of revamping the Hindu Law. Several women involved in the agitation were concerned that support for a revised Hindu Law Code would set back their more important goal of putting a uniform civil code, but the question of political expediency was called and settled on. While the AIWC members argued that there was a chance that the legislature might enact radical changes to the Hindu law, they agreed that political parties would not use the political capital required to support a uniform code, a change that would upset both Hindu nationalists, who formed an important part of the conservative wing of the

1940s Congress and would make minority religious communities more wary of central government overreaching.[331]

Ultimately the issue to take up Hindu Law reform rather than a concerted effort for a Uniform Civil Code was chosen for fear of two major splits: first, between secular women's organizations (like the AIWC and NCWI) and religious organizations, which were more invested in religious personal laws; and second, between women activists and male legislators.[332] Given the decision not to emphasize a uniform civil code, revising the Hindu Personal Law (as opposed to any or all of the other codes) was attempted for several reasons. As many authors have argued, the AIWC was largely made up of upper-class, upper-caste urban women.[333] Although more women from religious minorities were involved at the higher national levels, the largest segment of the AIWC membership was normatively national, which meant (and still means) caste Hindu.[334] Moreover, by 1946, the All India Muslim League had "banned" women involved in Muslim League politics from participating in the AIWC, which limited the number of politically connected Muslim women willing to be associated with the organization.[335] For the AIWC activists, the normative idea of the Indian woman as a Hindu woman (and more particularly a Hindu Wife) led to a near conflation of Hindu Law Reform and Uniform Civil Code

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[331] Janaki Nair, *Women and Law in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Kali for Women; 1996), 200.
[332] Maitrayee Chaudhuri, *Feminism in India* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 2004).
[333] Almost every scholar writing about the Indian Women's Movement has touched on this point.
[334] Many very important AIWC leaders were vocal about their religious minority status. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur was very vocal about the discriminatory practices against Christian women, while Begum Shareefah Hamid Ali spoke publicly about being an Indian Muslim. Still the vast majority of women in the AIWC were upper-caste Hindus. As far as normativity of Hinduism, see Madhu Kishwar, "Codified Hindu Law: Myth and Reality," *Economic and Political Weekly* 29, no. 33 (August 13, 1994): 2145-2161; Rochona Majumdar, "A History of Women's Rights: A Non-Historicist Reading," *Economic and Political Weekly* 38, no. 22 (May 31-June 6 2003): 2130-2134.
[335] "Well Done Begum Eshan Qadir," *Roshni* 1, no. 1 (1946), 2.

agitation. Indeed, in her discussion of the problems of Indian women, Hansa Mehta justified the agitation for changing the Hindu Law by thinking about women's status in general. She wrote, "The Hindu Law was twisted and turned against the woman. …Social deterioration went hand in hand with the decline of the states of women."[336] The Hindu law became the catalyst for causing the deterioration of women in general, and as such, the revision of Hindu Law, in particular, was important in raising the status of all women.

In 1941, largely because of the AIWC led agitation, the Government of India agreed to appoint the Rau Commission to consider a whole-scale revision of the Hindu Civil Code. While no women were appointed to the committee, it did issue a questionnaire to the major women's organizations in order to solicit suggestions on how the code should be rewritten. The AIWC tapped Kitty Shiva Rao to organize a committee with women's groups all over the country and to draft with a united response to the questionnaire. The questionnaire was translated into several Indian languages and sent each branch with directions to send them back to the AIWC central office. The branches were also instructed to tell their members to send individual telegrams to the law member of the AIWC.[337] Meetings were held between the AIWC, the NCWI, and the WIA to determine how best to respond to the Rau Commission and adopt a "women's movement" response to the question of how to reform the Hindu Code. In the end, the joint committee of the AIWC, the NCWI, and the WIA submitted a report about the kinds

[336] Hansa Mehta, "Role of Women in the Social Development of India," in *Indian Women*, 105.
[337] Basu and Ray, *Women's Struggle*, 50

of reforms that women around the country desired.[338] Under the auspices of all three women's organizations and led by the AIWC, the agitation was largely based on mass movement politics, but with a select group of women as their audience.[339]

The three organizations each allotted money to hold large rallies, in which women were brought out of *purdah* to talk about the repressive role of personal law in their lives, and the redemptive actions of agitation for revising the laws.[340] In *Roshni*, Rameshwari Nehru argued that the responses to the code bill questionnaire were fully representative of women, in fact, she wrote, "The answers do not merely represent the views of our members, because at public meetings held under the aegis our Branches, thousands of women attended and recorded their opinions."[341] These rallies were both about role-playing the effect that changing the laws would have on a large section of the female population and about creating a national demonstration to counter the argument that the bill was only applicable to women who, at least functionally, were better off than the majority of Indians. The idea of women coming out of *purdah* at the mere suggestion of legal reform pointed to the positive changes that would be much more widely effective if the legislation were to actually be adopted. The impact of thousands of women,

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[338] There is a clear connection between the kind of agitation that the AIWC engaged in with the Hindu Code bill and the attempts at mediation and representation that the All India Newspaper Editors' Conference attempted in negotiating with the government. See chapter 2 of this dissertation.

[339] I know that these rallies happened because there are mentions of them throughout the AIWC papers and in the journal *Roshni.* Still, mention of them in newspapers and other publications is slim. In spite of this, they must have been at least moderately effective, given that the commission was appointed, and a woman was placed on the commission after 1944. See, for example, Rameshwari Nehru, "The Half-Yearly Meeting of the All India Women's Conference," *Roshni* 2, no.6 (July 1941), 8-19.

[340] *Purdah* is the word used for the cloistering of women. The level to which the *purdah* was taken was somewhat variable, but in its strictest form, women did not go out in public without veiling and did not interact with men who were outside of their immediate family circle. Women tended to spend time in the interior rooms of the house, while visitors sat in the public parlors. Any kind of cloistering or veiling tended to be wrapped up in the idea of *purdah* however, so it is hard to know what kind of liberation these women actually enacted.

[341] Ibid., 30.

previously uninvolved in AIWC or any national body's work, expressing their opinions—both physically by attending the rally and vocally by actually speaking—demonstrated the effect of an all India movement, whereby national issues created interest in women's issues in local areas.

Despite the financial support and cooperative effort committed by the other "sister organizations," the AIWC—not the local branches, other national organizations, or unaffiliated women—was seen as leading the charge in both the committee that was founded and in the general mass extravaganza. The work of responding to the questionnaire was considered to be the AIWC workers' responsibility[342] even though the decisions that the committee came to were based on discussions with "representatives of sister organizations."[343] Moreover, when the legislature was bullied into appointing a woman for the reformed Rau Commission in 1944, they chose Renuka Ray, a prominent AIWC worker, and when the Cabinet Mission of 1946 wanted to speak to someone about the role of Hindu Code agitation and Women's Rights, they chose Hansa Mehta, another AIWC member. Ultimately, the Hindu Code Bill was broken into pieces and passed in a diluted form in 1955.[344]

The later association of the Hindu Code Bill agitations with the AIWC promoted the AIWC as the mouthpiece for the Indian Women's Movement. In addition to erasing the efforts of the other national women's organizations in the agitations, the conflation of

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[342] Ibid., 12.
[343] Ibid., 1.
[344] For an excellent discussion of the issues involved in passing the Hindu Code Bill and the legislative fight, see Reba Som, "Jawaharlal Nehru and the Hindu Code: A Victory of Symbol over Substance?," reprinted in *Women and Social Reform in Modern India*, ed. Sumit Sarkar and Tanika Sarkar (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press; 2008), 473-494.

the AIWC with the national movement paints over the (not entirely successful) contortions that the AIWC central committee undertook in its attempt to make the national program for Hindu Law Code part of its assertion to be a magnifying glass for local work and agitation.[345] The engagement required from the AIWC in moving the issue into the national consciousness, in organizing local (branch) support for their efforts, and in working with organizations more interested in national than local efforts and effects gave the organization more of a voice in the central government.

The fight to reform the Hindu personal law clearly indicated a shift in the way that the AIWC imagined their claims about unity and the definition of "All India." Throughout the 1940s, the organization was moving away from the advocacy of a wide range of solutions to problems that affected women and from making the claim that local and national solutions were both part of a larger All India definition of female equality, and rather toward becoming an organization that was largely focused on national, and especially legislative, solutions to inequalities in society. As the legislative mode became the preferred way to fight discrimination against Indian women, the AIWC's definition of both local federation and of women began to change. Localities became test cases and subjects for polling, as in the Hindu Code agitation, rather than partners helping to define the Indian woman's agenda. The organization became centrally and nationally directed, allowing local women's work to benefit the cause of AIWC legislative agendas, but no longer recognizing it as the source of women workers, women's agendas, and the cultivation of both active and passive citizenship. Perhaps more troublingly, the idea of

[345] Geraldine Forbes, "The Indian Women's Movement," in *The Extended Family: Women and Political Participation in India and Pakistan*, ed. Gail Minault (Delhi: South Asia Books, 1990), 49-81.

women changed in the definition of the organization. Previously, "women" referred to the group to be included in a definition of India, the group that was attempting to make this inclusion possible and the target of the former's aid. As the AIWC shifted to a national, legislative agenda, women became a merely category of concern and need for the organization. The change from local and national women's work making up a category that defined Indian women's active citizenship to a national women's movement focused on legislative change to safeguard women damaged the idea of women's active participation in the remaking of the Indian nation.

Conclusion: Being All Indian Women at Home and Abroad

After Independence, large women's organizations like the AIWC needed to reconsider the ability or political will of an Indian national government to continue to push for women's issues—both in terms of encouraging active citizenship and ensuring safeguards for women as minority actors. While older women activists from organizations, such as the AIWC, continued to fight for increased government participation, younger women felt that the national government offered little return for their work. The women of the AIWC had too much faith invested in the ability of the national government to properly assert itself on behalf of the needs of Indian women. As such, the AIWC invested too much of its time in central government initiatives that assumed the subject position of Indian women to be dependent. The evidence of the Indian government's actions toward women in the first several years seems to bear this claim out. The first three Five Year

Plans only address women in terms of welfare programs, rather than instituting suggestions that would have advanced the cause of equality.[346]

Indeed, the AIWC had not only faith invested in the first national governments, they had their workers invested as well. Almost every woman involved in the early national governments was an AIWC woman. In addition to the vast majority of women elected to national government as members of parliament, there were several AIWC women who were made part of the government. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur was appointed as India's first health minister, Renuka Ray was appointed to be India's head of reconstruction, and Sarojini Naidu was appointed Uttar Pradesh's first state Chief Minister. AIWC women were also appointed as diplomats internationally, Hansa Mehta was appointed the lead the Indian UN delegation, and in a Vijaya Laxshmi Pandit was named the Indian ambassador to the Soviet Union.

With so many of their senior workers members of the national government, it was difficult for the AIWC to maintain that it was more interested in local work as the agenda that created the All Indian woman. It was not only that Indian women were participating at home and aboard, but that the AIWC imagined these women's successes on the national stage to be indicative of success for the women's movement more generally. With Independence, the AIWC began to see the "All Indian" woman even more so as the woman on the national stage. Thus, the success of the women's movement generally and the AIWC specifically was measured almost entirely on a national rather than local scale.

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[346] Nirmala Banerjee, "Whatever Happened to the Dreams of Modernity? The Nehruvian Era and Woman's Position," *Economic and Political Weekly* 33, no 17 (1998): 2-7.

By investing faith and action primarily in the ability of national agitations for legislative fixes, the AIWC undermined its own claims that federated unity of local women doing local work claimed the right to active citizenship for All Indian women. Because local and individual women no longer had the means to contribute to the larger discussion about Indian citizenship through their work and their needs, the category of women became one of many groups of people that needed aid from the state rather than support in their own attempts to change their dependent position. Thus, the mode of the Indian Women's Movement was only slowly starting to reintroduce the concept of local and marginal women's participation and to question the value of legislative agendas for women's rights.[347]

[347] Since the 1970s, women's organizations have begun asking how to focus attention of women's actions rather than women's disabilities. There has also been a movement afoot to record women talking about women's struggles around issues of national upheaval and more widely to make a space for women's voices. See Stree Shakti Sanghatana, *We Are Making History…: Life Stories of Women in the Telengana People`s Struggle* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989); Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000); Urvashi Butalia, *Making a Difference: Feminist Publishing in the South* (Chestnut Hill, MA: Bellagio, Pub. Network, 1995).

Chapter 4: The Unmade Nations of the All India Progressive Writers' Association

The details of the founding of the All India Progressive Writers' Association are both often recounted and equally often contradicted. Late in 1934 or early in 1935,[348] a group of between twelve and thirty-five, mostly (or all) Indian students gathered in either the unventalized backroom or basement room of the Nanking Restaurant in the Bloomsbury neighborhood of London to discuss the formation of a new Indian literary organization devoted to literary realism, left-leaning politics, and the re-creation of the Indian nation. The meeting was held to either write or review the manifesto for the new organization to be named the All India Progressive Writers' Association. While we know that Mulk Raj Anand, Sajjad Zaheer, and Ali Sardar Jafri were there, most of the attendees were unknowns there to indulge their interest in literature, Indian politics, or both. The new organization had connections to the progressive (left) leanings of the Bloomsbury group in London, the Paris Progressives, and the Communist Party, and wanted to recommit Indian literature to the pursuit of meaningful resistance against what the gathered Indian student authors saw as the rising tide of reactionary politics—both on the side of the imperial British and the well-known anti-colonial movements.[349] According to Zaheer

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[348] Syed Akbar Hyder and Priyamvada Gopal come down on the side of 1935; Carla Coppola and Ali Husain Mir and Raza Mir suggest 1934; Sajjad Zaheer does not give a particular date for the meeting but suggests the manifesto was completed by 1935. See Syed Akbar Hyder, *Reliving Karbala: Martyrdom in South Asian Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 182; Priyamvada Gopal, *Literary Radicalism in India: Gender, Nation and the Transition to Independence* (London: Routledge, 2005), 25; Carla Coppola, "The All-India Progressive Writers' Association: The European Phase," in *Marxist Influences and South Asian Literature, vol. 1*, ed. Carla Coppola (East Lansing: Michigan State University Asian Studies Center, 1974), 5; Ali Husain Mir and Raza Mir, *Anthems of Resistance: A Celebration of Progressive Urdu Poetry* (New Delhi: I*ndia*I*nk*, 2006), 1; Sajjad Zaheer, *The Light: A History of the Movement for Progressive Literature in the Indo-Pak Subcontinent*, Amina Azfar trans. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1.

[349] Standford Patrick Rosenbaum, *Aspects of Bloomsbury: Studies in Modern English Literary and Intellectual History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998); Sara Blair, "Local Modernity, Global

and Ali Sardar Jafri, the draft of the manifesto was revised after the meeting at the Chinese restaurant and an "All Indian" movement was born in London and in English.[350] In January 1935, Zaheer traveled to India with copies of the manifesto in search of compatriots for the movement. He found a mix of Indian authors and friends who had spent their lives working in the Indian medium and reconnected with Indian friends he had meet abroad. The All India Progressive Writers' Association (AIPWA) manifesto was published in February 1935, in English in the *Left Review*. In September 1935, the famous Hindi language author Premchand published a Hindi language translation of the manifesto in his journal *Hans*.

By 1936, the organization had relocated to India entirely, held their first "All India" conference, and had begun to collect supporters and stories as well as reputations and animosities. Unsurprisingly, the AIPWA's mission of remaking Indian society, which included both strident political and literary calls for the end of British imperialism and sharp criticisms levied at the leaders of the main Indian anti-colonial movements, meant that the AIPWA was tarred and feathered as anti-imperialist by the British and anti-national by independence-based movements. The British saw the group as destabilizing with an insistently anti-colonial political stance for their literary pretensions. The anti-colonial movements saw their willingness to criticize the independence movement and especially their focus on the failures of the anti-colonial movements to

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Modernism: Bloomsbury and the Places of the Literary," *English Literary History* 71, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 813-838.

[350] About the influence of the Blommsbury group on his own Indianness, Mulk Raj Anand has said, "I became in London a more emphatically self-conscious Indian" (Cited in Gajendra Kumar, "*Untouchable*: A Manifesto of Indian Socio-Political Realism," in *Indian Writings in English, volume ix*, ed. Manmohan K. Bhatnagar and M. Rajeshwar[New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2000], 33).

address issues of poverty, caste and religion-based discrimination, and the foibles of power as prompting dissent and even disunity against the state.[351] The unease that powerful people in India felt about the AIPWA led to the group and its mission to be discredited as foreign to India.

Both the AIPWA's political tracts and its fiction forcibly state that the organization was devoted to the Indian nation and its unity. The politics of AIPWA, while generally considered left and radical, were far from uniform. The authors involved in the AIPWA had a wide range of definitions of what "progressive" meant and what the political commitment of the organization was. Although the AIPWA members generally agreed with Zaheer that the goal of the organization was to support a radically remade Indian nation, the meaning of that assertion was never fully clear. Ahmed Ali has argued part of the movement's political progressiveness was that the political commitment of remaking India was never simply about one ideal. Instead, it was "an intellectual revolt against the outmoded past, the vitiated tendencies in contemporary thought and literature, the indifference of people to their human condition, against the acquiescence to foreign rule, enslavement to practices and beliefs, both social and religious, based on ignorance, against the problems of poverty and exploitation, and complete inanity to progress and life."[352] The members of the AIPWA spanned a variety of political positions that broadly defined the Indian political left. Mulk Raj Anand represented members associated with

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[351] The sense of the organization's writing as largely dreary oppositional politics dressed up as literature is thought through in Alok Rai, "The Trauma of Independence: Some Aspects of Progressive Hindi Literature, 1945-47," *Journal of Arts and Ideas* 6 (1984): 19-34.

[352] Ahmed Ali, "The Progressive Writers' Movement and Creative Writers in Urdu," in *Marxist Influences and South Asian Literature, volume 1*, ed. Carlo Coppola(East Lansing: Michigan State University Asian Studies Center, 1974), 35.

center left parties like the Congress. Zaheer, Ismat Chughtai, and Krishan Chander were active in the Communist Party of India. Premchand professed a certain form of Gandhian ideology. Ahmed Ali argued that progress was the relentless and ever shifting push for the expansion of freedom. The common thread of the AIPWA was that the progressive author's politics, and by extension his or her literary output, should foreground Indians who the government and its more prominent citizens tended not to see, either because of their class, caste, religion, or gender.[353] Despite their differences, the AIPWA members all argued that the subjects considered in literature should challenge the simple and often exclusionary vision of India, with which citizens who identified with the political and social majority, felt comfortable.[354]

The AIPWA defined its "All India" commitment in terms of privileging a politics of recognition.[355] The organization argued that the realization of the unified Indian nation relied on the government seeing and responding to minorities, not only as people in need of help, but also as active participants in the national project. Given this political statement, from the first conference in 1936 through Independence in 1948, the AIPWA connected literature to the creation of an "All Indian" nation that disrupted the singular and static image of an ideal Indian, seen as an upper-caste, upper-class, male, with the

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[353] Although this chapter focuses on AIPWA members primarily interested in the first three of these designations, gender was an important focus of many of the AIPWA authors.

[354] The ideal Indian—upper-class, upper-caste, light-skinned, north Indian male—also tended to be the description of most of India's best known anti-colonial activists. For a longer discussion of the ideal Indian, see chapter the introduction and chapter 1 of this dissertation.

[355] The term "politics of recognition" is best known from Charles Taylor's argument for the importance of multiculturalism in the creation of national identities. I am certainly not arguing that the AIPWA was calling for multiculturalism, but I do think that Taylor's formation, if not his argument exactly, reflects some of the AIPWA concerns. See Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Charles Taylor and Amy Gutman(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 25-74.

wider recognition of Indian difference. Beginning with a discussion of contemporaneous and historiographic accounts of the AIPWA as somehow foreign to India, I will discuss the organization's national outlook and commitment. I will argue that from the first presidential address offered by Premchand, the AIPWA has focused on the way that progressive literature could be a critical depiction of the realities of life in India and push for both recognition of minorities in India and a catalyst for social change. In the next section, I will analyze a short story "*Do Furlong Lambi Sadak*" by the progressive author, Krishan Chander, which uses exemplary characters to depict the failure of the nation to recognize and support its minorities. By using characters as examples of minor groups in society, Chander argues that the minorities are the people of the nation, not just people in the nation, and that they need to be recognized. Finally, I will offer a reading of the novel, *Twilight in Delhi,* by the progressive writer Ahmed Ali, which creates characters who are irreducible to examples of types of national misfits in order to argue that the minority—even amongst the trappings of good fortune—is unrecognizable to the nation.[356]

Nationalism and the All India Progressive Writers Association

[356] When we think about all of the various groups who could be called minorities in India, including dalits (lower-castes), women, the poor, religious minorities, the adivasi (tribal) population, and people living under repressive Indian army martial law (the northeast, Kashmir), it becomes clear that nearly all the people in India could qualify as minor in one way or another. Indeed, merely considering dalits as minorities encompasses very nearly half of the population under that slightly strange term. But, in Indian history, the idea of minorities defined outside the confines of number has strong historic and historiographic roots. As early as 1930, and perhaps earlier, B.R. Ambedkar, the famous untouchable leader, asked that Untouchables be seen as minorities, because of the insufficient protections offered to them as part of Hindu society. In 1939 Congress President, Maulana Azad argued that a minority should be regarded as a group that could not claim to be represented equally in the attempt to build a nation. More recently members of the subaltern studies group of scholars have attempted to reformulate the idea of minority to encompass all of the meanings of the word, including the sense of childishness, the failure to adequately represent, the idea of particularity, and the inability to protect oneself. For a wider discussion of the term minority as it is used in this dissertation, see the Introduction.

The AIPWA's history has often been written using two main narrative frames, both of which are important to understanding its role in the anti-colonial movement and its place in the national aftermath of both India and Pakistan.[357] The first frame traces the association's international connections to left leaning literary movements in the 1930s, such as the Bloomsbury group in London and the Association of Revolutionary Artists and Writers in France. The AIPWA was initially formulated in London and it consciously modeled itself after international progressive authors organizations.[358] Descriptions of the AIPWA with an 'internationalist' angle often explain that many of the writers initially involved in the movement were members of the upper-class movement of Indian young men, who were educated aboard and therefore, focused on India as it related to itself and to the world.[359]

The second frame is the role that Communism, and perhaps more correctly the Communist Party of India (CPI), played in the production and articulation of the AIPWA.[360] The connection between the AIPWA and the communist party is undeniable. Several of the founders of the AIPWA were members of the CPI, while others in the organization were clearly sympathetic to the CPI program.[361] Indeed, the idea of radically

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[357] There are several other minor tropes that get discussed with regards to the AIPWA including the predominance of Muslim authors writing in Urdu and the question of regionalism.

[358] The movement for progressive writing, especially as it related to the Bloomsbury group, was fairly widespread, with progressives' writers' organizations in the United States, France, England and Ireland, as well as in many other countries.

[359] Gopal, *Literary Radicalsim*, 25.

[360] Historians of communism in the modern period have often described Indian communism as part of a larger world movement of "Third-Way" communism, together with communist movements in Yugoslavia, China, and many other places in an attempt to understand communism's wide spectrum as an ideological system. While this seems perfectly acceptable in terms of its definition of communism, communism in India, especially during the years directly before and just after Independence, was often seen as something foreign.

[361] Omar Qureshi, "Twentieth-Century Urdu Literature," in *Handbook of Twentieth Century Literatures of India*, ed. Nalini Natarajan (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 340-343. There certainly seems to be a

remaking the state structure of India was something that resonated with the agendas of both the Indian Communists and the AIPWA. Although many members of the CPI and the AIPWA stressed that the two groups were entirely separate from each other, their shared tendencies toward the goals of national reorganization and oppositional politics, the government crackdown on the Communist Party after Independence, and the deep connection between the AIPWA and the communist-directed Telangana movement tended to make nationalist scholars skeptical of claims that the two movements were really different.[362] Indeed, the resignation of several prominent writers from the movement was attributed to the feeling that the political character of the organization was overwhelming the literary goals and seemed to indicate that the communist party was deeply involved in later definitions of what "progressive" writing meant.[363]

Clearly, both of these frames are founded in a certain degree of historical accuracy, and more importantly, both highlight the ideas of minority and political engagement that structured the AIPWA's activist writing. At the same time, these narrative frames try to emphasize the AIPWA as something foreign and without a deep

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long-standing connection, perceived or otherwise, to Marxism, especially when one of the best collections of documents regarding the movement can be found in the three volumes of *Marxist Cultural Movements of India*.

[362] Starting in around 1946, peasants in the Telugu-speaking area of Hyderabad (now part of Andhra Pradesh) began to revolt against the land and taxation practices of the Nizam of Hyderabad. Partially directed by members of the Indian communist party, the peasants succeeded in controlling a large part of the land in what is still known as the Telangana region of Hyderabad. After Independence the peasant and communist movement had high hopes that the Indian government would support the land reorganization they had accomplished. Instead, the Indian army pressured the communist and peasant leaders of the movement to give up their struggle, used force to put down the peasants and communists, and reinstated landlord control over the lands the peasants had taken. The government's propaganda against the communists and the subsequent banning of the Communist party was taken as a betrayal even by many left leaning non-communists. See P. Sundarayya, *Telengana People's Struggle and Its Lessons* (Calcutta: Communist Party India: Marxist, 1972).

[363] Ahmed Ali "The Progressive Writers' Movement and Creative Writers in Urdu" in *Marxist Influences and South Asian Literature, vol. 1*, ed. Carla Coppola 35-44.

connection to the Indian nation. Focusing on the international origins of the association and its generally English-educated class of authors separates the AIPWA from the main focus of their literature: the potential Indian nation and its citizens—from both the majority and minority groups. While many active participants in the movement were internationally focused and had international educations, this is far from the case for all authors involved in the AIPWA. The AIPWA would have been unsuccessful without the help of writers, who were only associated with India rather than a broader international presence. Premchand published the AIPWA manifesto in his Hindi literary journal *Hans*, while authors in India effectively spread the movement to different language areas.[364] After the founding of the organization, authors including Krishan Chander and Faiz Ahmed Faiz, who at the time had no high-profile international ties, were the main producers and proponents of the AIPWA.[365]

While the Nanking Chinese restaurant anecdote emphasizing the English and International roots of the AIPWA at the opening of this chapter is both commonly heard and probably true, a large part of the AIPWA success as a literary movement was due to a sustained "progressive" style among writers working in Indian languages and in the Indian social milieu, like Premchand. Indeed, especially in the Urdu literary scene, to which most of the early members of the AIPWA belonged, the idea of realism and social

[364] In his memoir *Roshnai*, Sajjad Zaheer, one of the founders and most devoted communists, relates a comment at a meeting at his house, in which a famous Indian writer, who was neither rich nor English educated, upon leaving quipped, "If I owned such a valuable carpet I too would harp on about the peasants and the workers." The quip places AIPWA authors both in an Indian context and in different class brackets. Zaheer was wealthy, but many Indian writers, even very successful ones, were not. Sajjad Zaheer, *The Light*, 11.

[365] In *Roshnai*, Zaheer suggests that Faiz, with his strong connections to the Punjabi writers community, made the organizing of the AIPWA possible. Chander, who still maintains relative anonymity among western scholars and authors, organized the 1948 AIPWA conference and was one of the most prolific of the group.

change as the basis for literary engagement was well-established. In addition to the proclivity toward realism among Urdu writers before the AIPWA's manifesto, Shabana Mahmud and others have argued that the real beginning of the AIPWA was not the 1935 Nanking meeting and early manifesto, but the 1932 publication of *Angare,* a book of short stories with a realist and critical bent by Ahmed Ali, Sajjad Zaheer, Rashid Jahan, and Mahmuduzzafar.[366] All four authors became early members of the AIPWA, though only Sajjad Zaheer was suffering in the unventaliated back room (or basement) of the Nanking restaurant at the organization's founding in 1934/5.

In the second frame, the AIPWA was characterized as working as the literary wing of the communist party, which was also used to discredit the AIPWA as somehow foreign to India. Communism and the Communist party has been depicted as a non-national force in Indian nationalist history. The naming of communism as somehow both foreign and anti-national is largely based on the antipathy between the Communist party and the first Indian government. Although the Indian communist movement was largely theorized in India around the meaning of Indian poverty and society, Indian communists were often targeted as either duped peasants or students attempting to import Western ideas whole cloth into Indian society. Other ostensibly western ideas, especially democracy, were reengineered to be authentically Indian and came to be seen as integral in proving a person's claim of sympathy for nationalism; communism, however, failed to

[366] Shabana Mahmud, "*Angare* and the Founding of the Progressive Writers' Association," *Modern Asian Studies* 30, no. 2 (1996): 447-467.

translate into an authentically Indian movement because of its strong critique of the state structure and its criticism of early independent Indian governments.[367]

The AIPWA aligned with the communists in their organizational insistence that the structure of the nation be remade to help the poor, but was not an exclusively communist movement even though several important Progressive authors were members of the Communist Party of India, including Sajjad Zaheer, Krishan Chander, and Ismat Chughtai. Scholars have also disputed the claims of an established relationship between the AIPWA and the CPI, arguing for instance that "the history of the PWA is a history of struggles and contestation and not of the unilateral triumph of authoritarianism."[368] Pointing to the participation and endorsement of the AIPWA of Gandhian authors, including Premchand, Anand, and Tagore, scholars like Russell, have concluded that the movement's wide definition of progressive activism needs to be interpreted more broadly than a simple label of Communism.[369] However, most if not all of the writing by AIPWA authors had an element of revolt against a lack of freedom attached to strong class and caste barriers and an allegiance to difference broadly defined.[370] The AIPWA had much

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[367] For more on the translation of democracy for India, see chapter 1 of this dissertation. Communism did eventually get a national reorientation, though in the recent debate between Hindu nationalists and Indian historians over textbooks, Marxism has once again been tarred as anti-national, even a colonial holdover. See Mridula Mukherjee and Aditya Mukherjee, "Communalization of Education: The History Textbook Controversy, an Overview," in *Communalization of Education: The History Textbook Controversy*, ed. Mridula Mukherjee and Aditya Mukherjee (New Delhi: Delhi Historians' Group, 2002), i-viii.
[368] Gopal, *Literary Radicalism*, 4.
[369] Gandhi himself, and many people who described themselves as Gandhian, were specifically not swayed by the rhetoric or modernist plans of communism.
[370] A good example of a reading to this effect can be seen in Ben Conisbee Baer, "Shit Writing: Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*, the Image of Gandhi, and the Progressive Writers' Association," Modernism/ *modernity* 16, no. 3 (2009): 575-595. Anand is a good example of the Progressive Authors being conscious of the problems inherent in Indian class and caste distinctions, while still being firmly not part of the communist party. Indeed, when the communists were banned after 1950, Anand was one of the literary men who supported the move.

in common with the CPI in their desire to acknowledge the deficiencies of the Indian state, but the AIPWA was never a cadet association to the Communist Party of India.

Having acknowledged both the usefulness and disorienting effect of these frames, I argue that the AIPWA and its authors were deeply invested in India as both the ideal progressive nation and in their critique of the existing Indian state that informed their 'progressive' literature. What even scholars who recognize the deep national connection of the AIPWA movement fail to emphasize is that the organization named itself the 'All India' Progressive Writers' Movement, quite purposefully.[371] Indeed, Ali Husain Mir and Raza Mir's book *Anthems of Resistance*, a virtual love letter to the AIPWA and its national ideas, states in its early pages: "the attendees had resolved to formalize their group as an institution, which would be called the All India Progressive Writers' Association (henceforth, the PWA)."[372] Unlike any of the organizations highlighted in this dissertation, the AIPWA is very often talked about without its "All India" prefix, despite the fact that it was almost always used it as the official name of the organization. The problem, even for scholars who value the AIPWA's nationally grounded literary and social message, was that the organization was fundamentally focused on advocating for the Indian people rather than explicitly lauding the Indian state. The AIPWA's concept of national unity depended on a sustained concern for and recognition of those groups who failed to be recognized by the Indian state. If the state structure failed these Indians, then

[371] This becomes complicated, because as with several other All India organizations, the All India Progressive Writers' Association is only All India in English. Though the original translated manifesto transliterated the words All India, most of the time this literary movement in the various languages is merely the Progressive Writers' Association.
[372] Ali Husain Mir and Raza Mir, *A Celebration of Progressive Urdu Poetry*, 4. I had to find a copy of the manifesto and the constitution before I was sure that the AIPWA was in fact an 'All India' organization, so common is the abbreviation and name Progressive Writers' Association (PWA).

the organization's loyalty was with the people rather than the structure. One of the reasons that the AIPWA is often seen as only "questionably" "All Indian" is its focus on the minor voices of the nation.

For most of the authors of the AIPWA, the goal of "progressive" literature was to highlight the ways in which "the present in which we live is rotten."[373] Progressive writing, as such, often highlighted the troubles of the poor, religious minorities, and women, leading to some commentators likening it to literature in the reformist vein, a claim that was thoroughly rejected by the members of the AIPWA. The language of reform had a clear place in the anti-colonial struggle, as an acceptable way for minorities to raise grievances, first to the British and by the 1940s to the Congress Party, both of which came to stand in for the idealized Indian majority. But the language of reform was not a functional one for the authors trying to define progressive literature because reform only attempted to redirect the aid of the state rather than reimaging the nation's relationship with its minority citizens.[374] The politics behind the AIPWA (whether they were expressed in terms of Communism or not) called for a structural reinvention of what it meant to be Indian, rather than an attempt to make the situation better by degrees. As Ahmed Ali argued, "Without felling a rotten structure we can never build anew. It is only through opposition that our literature can acquire a new life."[375]

The problem with rejecting the label of reformist literature while embracing a pro-national stance was that the AIPWA did not fall into any readily available category.

[373] Ahmed Ali, "Progressive View of Art," in *Marxist Cultural Movement in India: Chronicles and Documents, vol. 1*, ed. Sudhi Pradhan (Calcutta: National Book Agency, 1979), 78.
[374] For a more detailed discussion of the politics of reform, see chapter 3 of this dissertation.
[375] Ali, "Progressive View of Art," 82.

Several members of the organization called the movement "oppositional,"[376] except unlike the Congress, the AIPWA opposed not only the colonial state but also the lack of proper recognition afforded to all Indian citizens. The best way to describe the AIPWA's stance is that it was a minority organization speaking in the language of the majority. By this, I mean that the AIPWA was staking out a claim to the discussion of the nation and emphasized its commitment to the nation by speaking in the language that the majority could recognize and support. At the same time, their advocacy of radically changing the system to include invisible Indians, who did not speak to the majority, meant that the organization could only speak from the minority position. That is, the AIPWA used their literature and activism to claim the right to speak back to both the colonial state and the post-independence Indian state, both of which they saw as failing to adequately address the entire nation.

The AIPWA saw itself as encouraging participation in the nation through the demand for systematic change—both politically and socially—for minorities of all sorts. As such, many of the most important stories and novels from the organization dealt with the problem of deeply set cultural, political, and national failures to see the reality of discrimination. Mulk Raj Anand's novella, *Untouchable*, follows a day in the life of its main character Bakha, a member of an untouchable caste, during the 1930s. In the novel, Bakha is offered several visions for getting away from his subjugation as an untouchable. He is presented with the emulation of white soldiers, the reformist desire of a Christian

[376] The idea of Progressivism as sustaining an oppositional politics is one of the few things that Ahmed Ali and Sajjad Zaheer agreed upon in later days.

missionary, the nationalist rhetoric of Gandhi, and the figurative language of poetry.[377] After hearing all of the various options for his "uplift," Bakha and the reader remain unconvinced by any of his options, but the experience forces reader to think about what kind of global change would allow for "uplift" of untouchables in India.[378]

Untouchable, one of the AIPWA's most influential novellas, spoke directly from the position of a lower-caste person.[379] The idea of the book was to see the life of an untouchable, who was struggling to reject his status, and to create discontent with the options available to untouchables in the contemporary society.[380] In the novella, as Bakha rejects religious conversion, British service, and nationalist, Gandhian rhetoric, he is critiquing both the quality and kind of recognition and active citizenship, which are available to a person of his caste. The novel ends with the sense that the available options all fail to create Bakha as a citizen of the Indian state, but in their presentation, prove Bakha as an Indian deserving of national recognition.

The AIPWA's attempts to use literature to point out sites of failure by the British, the nationalist parties and leaders during the anti-colonial fight of the 1930s and 40s, and after 1947 the independent Indian government caused the group to be criticized as anti-

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[377] Mulk Raj Anand, *Untouchable (New York: Penguin Classic, 1990).* For a discussion of the figurative language in the books, see U.S. Rukhaiyar, "Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*: A Triumph of Narrative Skill," in *Studies in Indian English Fiction and Poetry*, ed. U.S. Rukhaiyar and Amar Nath Prasad (New Delhi: Sarup and Son, 2002), 1-12.

[378] In her book, Priyamvada Gopal makes a similar argument around progressive writing on gender, highlighting the way in which several members of the AIPWA focused on the (lack of) position of women in society. Particularly in her chapter on Rashid Jahan she discusses how women's spaces (both purdah and the zenanna) were particularly suited to a discussion of women as an absent marker of the nation Gopal, *Literary Radicalism, 39-64.*)

[379] Gajendra Kumar, "*Untouchable*," 33. A notable exception is B.R. Ambedkar's writings about untouchability. From the mid-1950s until the present, a large movement of Dalit (untouchable) literature has emerged.

[380] Dr. A.K. Sinha, "Anand's Bakha: An Epical Character," in *Indian Writings in English, volume vii*, ed. Manmohan K. Bhatnagar and M. Rajeshwar (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2000), 19.

national by others associated with majority anti-colonial movements and as a threat to security by the British colonial government.[381] Moreover, the establishment of the Indian government and that government's failure to take material steps to alleviate poverty and recognize minorities effectively, as well as the commencement of governmental martial aggression against tribal and peasant movements in various areas of India, caused the AIPWA to push back strongly against repression whether the decision makers were British or Indian. In a real way, the AIPWA's opposition to the continuation of repressive political power defined its national commitment. The AIPWA was resolutely working toward national independence and was therefore unwilling to accept the political transfer of power as sufficient for the definition of that ideal. As Faiz's famous poem says, August 15th, India's independence day, did not represent the kind of national ideal that Indians had been promised.[382]

The nation, radically rebuilt, offered the kind of vague foundational site that allowed for the coming together of several different agendas and criticisms. In her book, Gopal borrows a term from Aijaz Ahmed to argue that the nation "was a 'terrain of struggle'" for the AIPWA,[383] by which she meant that the nation offered a key concept, upon which a series of important critiques could be levied. The AIPWA was nothing if

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[381] Criticism from the anti-colonial side includes, Rajendra Singh Ahluwalia, "Progressivism and the Poetry of Escape and Revolt," *The Modern Review* 81, no.1 (May 1952): 400-402; "On the Separation for Progressivism," *Indian PEN* 11, no. 1 (January 1946): 66; "On the Progressive Writers," *Indian PEN* 12, no. 2 (February 1947): 31.

[382] "The time for the emancipation/ Of enslaved hearts and minds/ Has not come as yet./ Continue your epic journey./ This is not your destination./ This is not dawn." From the last stanza of Faiz Ahmed Faiz "*Subh-e-azadi*" or "The Morning of Freedom" Faiz Ahmed Faiz, "The Morning of Freedom, August 1947," in *Selected Poems of Faiz in English*, Daud Kamal, trans., ed. (Karachi: Pakistan Publishing House, 1984), 10-11.

[383] Gopal, Literary Radicalism, 14; For a discussion of the original concept, see Aijaz Ahmad, *Lineages of the Present: Ideology and Politics in Contemporary South Asia* (London: Verso, 2000).

not deeply committed to the nation, but their national idea was not a simply agreed upon set of parameters that defined India, Indian unity, and the Indian citizen's responsibilities to the nation. Instead, the nation functioned as a mutually agreed upon set of circumstances that allowed for the opening of debate and discussion about the above issues. As the idea of the nation was discussed, it was almost a conceit, a placeholder word that paved a path to the discussion of what the word did and should mean. This discursive nature of the national idea meant that the AIPWA was deeply committed both to the nation as a concept, but also to a deeply democratic process to define that concept.

The AIPWA did align itself with the anti-colonial struggle in their 1935 manifesto. The manifesto's preamble called explicitly for supporting the struggle for independence from Britain, but not over the need to support radical changes in the structure of Indian society. The manifesto argued, "While claiming to be the inheritors of the best traditions of Indian civilization, we shall criticize ruthlessly, in all its political, economic, and cultural aspects the spirit of reaction in our country; and we shall foster through interpretive and creative work (with both native and foreign resources) everything that will lead our country to the new life for which it is striving."[384] The goals of the manifesto clearly stated that not only national independence, but more importantly a certain kind of nation was the goal of the organization. More specifically, the manifesto argued that the goal of nationalism had to be the best of what it meant to be Indian, without the accompanying social, political, and cultural repression, defined by the AIPWA authors as 'the spirit of reaction.' The AIPWA very specifically took care not to

[384] AIPWA manifesto 1935, cited from Coppola "The All-India Progressive Writers' Association: The European Phase," 7.

define what was Indian as good and what was foreign as bad, but rather pushed for defining the best of India as whatever made India a nation that could be defined as strong, democratic, and responsive to its population.

With the nation both as the common ground and the site of dispute, the AIPWA was very concerned about the production and sustainability of the "All India" ideal. Being a literary organization, the manifesto of the AIPWA pointed to two seemingly contradictory commitments needed to preserve unity. They argued that Indian democracy could only be sustained by a commitment to speaking to one another, while at the same time the manifesto stressed the importance of preserving and expanding literature in all Indian languages through the creation of regional AIPWA branches that corresponded to linguistic zones. In order to reconcile these two goals—both key to the production of Indian democracy—the AIPWA resolved "to produce and translate literature of a progressive nature and high technical standard."[385] In the language of the manifesto, the production and translation of literature were of equal value to the organization and the nation because they enabled progressive ideas to be established and spread, and perhaps more importantly: both production and translation created a vocabulary to define the change that progressive writing was aiming to produce without trampling on local and regional commitments that were equally important to the stance of foregrounding minority concerns.

The AIPWA sought to foster conversations about the nation and follow the progressive ideals of assessing life and recognizing the minority through the production and translation of literature. These goals were quite different from those of several other

[385] Ibid, 9.

literary organizations in India at the time because they were interested in supporting literature for India rather than defining a singular idea of Indian literature.[386] For the AIPWA, translation and the support of Hindustani in both the Hindi and Urdu scripts was meant to create a space that could define both the ideal and the shortcomings of the Indian system.

"The Object of Literature": Defining a Call to Action

Premchand is one the best known Hindustani language authors of the twentieth century.[387] He was born Dhanpat Rai in Lamhi, a village outside of Banaras[388] to a family of Kayastha recorders and postal servants in a village largely inhabited by lower-caste Kumari farmers.[389] In 1921, Premchand resigned from government posts in sympathy with the ideals of Gandhi's non-cooperation, and he became a full time author. Premchand founded both the Saraswati Press in Banaras and the literary monthly *Hans*, both highly influential in the production and promotion of literature in Hindi.[390] He was popular during his lifetime for his realistic portrayals of village life and his sympathy for the trials of the poor, women, and lower-caste people—albeit written from his position in

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[386] One other important group looking to define Indian literature was the All India PEN organization. Though the AIPEN was also very active in the translation of literature in Indian languages, it was primarily for the purpose of defining a singular idea of the Indian national literature.

[387] Although Premchand is often described as an exclusively Hindi language author, he did write in Urdu as well as Hindi. See Alok Rai, *Premchand: A Life* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1982). Still, both his style and content are associated with the village and 'everyday' language, often described as Hindustani. For a longer discussion of the Hindustani debate, see the All India Radio chapter of this dissertation.

[388] Alok Rai, *Premchand*, 10. The village of Lamhi, now very accessible from Banaras, still has a well-attended annual reading of Premchand's most famous stories on his birthday.

[389] Francesca Orsini, "Introduction," in *The Oxford India Premchand*, ed. Francesca Orsini (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), ix.

[390] On these ventures, see Francesca Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). For a more general discussion of print culture in India, see *Print Areas: Book History in India*, ed. Swapan Chakravorty and Abhijit Gupta (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004).

the city of Banaras. Premchand died shortly after delivering the Presidential Address at the first AIPWA conference.[391]

In the presidential address at the first Indian conference of the All India Progressive Writers' Association (AIPWA) in 1936, Premchand attempted to define the goals of the new organization through a sustained consideration of the object of literature.[392] Over the course of the speech, "The Object of Literature," Premchand defined the main terms of the organization: progressive, literature, and the role of the author in the context of India's historical needs and the social situation in the late 1930s. The speech presents progressive literature as an imperative for authors, whose duty it is to make clear the failures of national and social justice. Premchand argues for the importance of literary representations of the indignities of contemporary life, pointing out that beauty—a primary concern of literature—can only be promoted by not turning a blind eye to ugliness of modern life.

The speech and the meeting were important for representing the AIPWA as more than a cadet branch of the global trend toward progressive writing, but rather as a progressive writing movement for South Asia in general and for the current moment in Indian society in particular. The choice of Premchand to give the first presidential address

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[391] Orsini, "Introduction," xi.

[392] Ralph Russell has argued that Premchand getting on board with the All Indian Progressive Writers was one of the most important keys to their success. See Ralph Russell, "Leadership in the All-India Progressive Writers' Movement, 1935-1947," in *How Not to Write the History of Urdu Literature and Other Essays on Urdu and Islam*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 76-77. I will be relying on my own translation of the Hindustani text, which can be found in Premchand, "*Sahitya ka Uddashya*," in *People's Art in the Twentieth Century: Theory and Practice*, ed. Shehla Hashmi Grewal, Brijesh Sharma, Ashok Tiwari, Moloyashree Hasmi, Brijendra Singh, and Sudhanva Deshpande (New Delhi: Jana Natya Manch, 2001), 74-87. A new translation of this pivotal speech has been prepared by Francesca Orsini. See Premchand, "The Aim of Literature," trans. Francesca Orsini, in Oxford English Premchand, Appendix.

forwarded this agenda. He was an early supporter of the AIPWA,[393] he printed a Hindi translation of the AIPWA manifesto in his influential magazine *Hans*, and he was one of the first high profile authors to sign the manifesto. Perhaps even more importantly, Premchand was deeply associated with Hindi literature and with the kind of realism and socially responsible writing that the AIPWA supported.

Premchand began his address ruminating on the historical place of literature and literary organizations in India, connecting various literary movements to their historical period and to their authors and audiences. Specifically, Premchand argued, "literature is a reflection of its time,"[394] and as such, literature reflects the class status and societal values of the authors and readers. He argued that because literature is always about the production and exploration of beauty, Indian literature, which had been dominated by upper class and high Hindu caste writers and readers, had imagined beauty around themes of love and in the form of magic and spiritual stories. Premchand argued that these stories acted as both escapist pleasure written for the wealthy and as attempts to consolidate power in the political elite and in religious teachings.

For Premchand, the extreme gap between the life of the rich and powerful and the life of the everyday person in the middle of the twentieth century required a different kind of literature. He argued that authors and readers needed to think beyond escapism and reinscribing power with authorities like religion and the political elites, who had failed to recognize the dire position of the population. This did not mean giving up on the presentation of beauty, but rather thinking about the kind of beauty that they wanted to

[393] Sajjad Zaheer has an account of soliciting Premchand's support for the AIPWA in his memoir *Roshnai*, 8-11. Zaheer described Premchand as humble, unassuming, and more than willing to join the cause.
[394] *Sahitya apne kaal ka pratibmab hota hai.* Premchand, *Sahitya ka Uddashya*, 76.

support. He asked whether it was enough to describe a beautiful garden with the clear understanding that the description merely propped up a system that perpetuated the most ugly tendencies of society. Premchand argued that progressive writers needed to recognize that continuing to define beauty outside the experience of “real life” was supporting the oppression and willful ignorance of the state, and as such is “ugly, is indecent, is a deprivation of the human.”[395] Instead, Premchand wrote that literature, history, and the nation were best served when authors described the life of the least, as these descriptions forced recognition on those with power and in the end, could spark change.

Given this position, Premchand argued two strongly related points that helped to define the goals of the progressive writer. First, he argued that “the best definition of literature is ‘an assessment of life.’ …it should explain our life’s assessment.”[396] For Premchand, literature that could be called such was both a reflection of life and a critical analysis of its broader scope. This critical nature defined progressive literature as more than merely stories in the realist style without a clear sense of purpose. Instead, Premchand placed literature that merely parroted situations back to the audience without meaning in the same category as escapist tales of well-heeled wealth and pleasure or religious morality plays.[397] Critical assessment meant that authors should express the world with its follies and miseries and suggest, at the very least, the empty place where a solution may exist, if not the solution itself.

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[395] Ibid., 77.
[396] Ibid., 75.
[397] Premchand may be one of the best examples of following through on his word. His best stories are both a mirror into the suffering of poor Indians as well as complicated thought pieces that detail the injustices of society that create the kind of poverty that his protagonists suffer under.

Premchand's related argument was that authors, by their own self-assessment, had a progressive character because they perceived themselves "as lacking inside…and outside."[398] The lack that authors feel in themselves and their writing is "his imagination of a person and a society that is not visible to him."[399] Using the author's ability to see the society, person, or reality that did not yet exist gave the author a chance to imagine society's flaws and the way to suggest action and change. Indeed, for Premchand, the job of literature is to project a "message of action"[400] that defines the world, assesses the spots that are lacking, and offers action by way of making the loss clear. Literature that creates this message of action is necessarily based on the kind of critical assessment of life that progressive writing demands.

Premchand's call to name progressive literature as literature that responds and reacts to failures, absences, and casual evil in everyday life, defined the quality 'progressive' for the organization. For Premchand, the progressive quality in literature was based on a belief in the ability of recognition to prompt solutions, and ultimately to create a society, if not a government, that placed more value in caring for those most in need of care. For authors, it was a political act to point to casual mistreatment of the poor, lower caste, or women either through neglect or willingness to turn a blind eye to suffering. The minor status of the poor village dweller or neglected woman was exacerbated by the failure of those witnesses to suffering to notice that suffering was happening. In turn, Premchand defined beauty as the ability to see the people that the

[398] Ibid., 80.
[399] Ibid., 80.
[400] Ibid., 80.

state failed to see and progressiveness as the characteristic that made the minority part of everyday life.

In connection with the AIPWA manifesto circulated and translated into Hindi in 1935, what Premchand argued for was a literature that defined the nation through the notice of and response to minor characters in the national story without associating the organization with any particular minority *community*.[401] In general, authors associated with the AIPWA followed Premchand's exhortation to assess and act by presenting societal lapses and representing the effect of the failure to notice. These stories point to their characters as examples of society's indifference, with a common theme in the life of these characters being the sense of being passed over. But not all of the AIPWA's members saw the politics of progressive literature as the chance to increase the society's ability to care for the unrepresented.

The AIPWA used the idea of greater India as a way to define both the ideal and the failures of a just society. The goal of the AIPWA was always to prod the nation—though not necessarily the national government—into recognizing the casual exploitation of people meant to be under its care. As such, the literary goals of the organization were always to create high quality short stories, essays, poems, and novels that depicted Indian life. The question of how best to understand the exhortation to represent Indian life was answered in two different ways. First, authors created "national" characters to act as

[401] This point is extremely important in any discussion of the AIPWA. The organization's ties with the Communist Party of India have been debated incessantly. Several of the main organizers were members of the Party, but others, as Priyamvada Gopal has pointed out, were not. More scurrilously, the organization has been linked with Muslim community politics, in large part, because of the large number of Muslim authors in the group. As Shabana Mamhud has pointed out, Muslim Community leaders often found authors in the organization vexing because of their critiques of the organization.

examples of the injustice of modern life in the Indian subcontinent. These characters were meant to stand in for particular categories of minority life. Their stories while often quite moving, were also written to tap into what could be generalized as a national failure to care for the minorities within it. Some examples of this kind of writing include Budhiya, the dying/dead wife of Premchand's "*Kafan*" (The Shroud) or the courtesan in Saadat Hasan Manto's "A Girl from Delhi," or the All India Radio singer in Qurratulain Hyder's *Agle Janam Mohe Bitiya Na Kajo* (In My Next Life Don't Let me be Born a Daughter).[402] In the next section, I will look at how Krishan Chander, one of the most popular authors in the AIPWA created an example where the story was entirely meant to expose the national unconcern by presenting the reader with examples of national neglect.

Do Furlong Lambi Sadak: Creating an Allegory of National Indifference

Krishan Chander was a prolific writer of fiction and an early member of the AIPWA. He completed an English language education, though unlike many of the other early authors in the movement, he was not educated aboard. Like many Indian authors of fiction, Chander worked as a journalist after college and was invited to join the All India Radio as a 'features' writer, where he produced many well-regarded radio plays.[403] After Independence, Chander became wary of the national government, and consequently left

[402] Premchand, "The Shroud," Matt Reeck and Aftab Ahmad, tran., *Annual of Urdu Studies* 19 (2004): 398-405; Saadat Hasan Manto, "A Girl From Delhi," in *Mottled Dawn: Fifty Sketches and Stories of Partition*, ed, and trans. Khalid Hasan (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1997), 123-131; Qurratulain Hyder, *The Street Singers of Lucknow and Other Stories* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1996).

[403] Chander was a participant in the first All India Radio drama festival and produced several of the first of the "National Programme of Plays" and the "National Programme of Features." See "A Festival of Drama," *The Statesman*, March 19, 1950, 6.

All India Radio to become a screenwriter for Bombay films.[404] Although Chander has never been as critically acclaimed as many of the better-known authors of the AIPWA, he was one of the most popular and prolific of the group.[405] Chander's stories were often written in a simple street style, which was accessible to a wide population, and his association with both radio and films showed he took seriously the progressive admonishment to reach the people and make changes with literature. In her set of autobiographical sketches, Ismat Chughtai, another member of the AIPWA, said that in response to the violence of partition, Chander "became a rectifier of wrongs. At a time when we needed a leader more urgently than an artist, he did what was necessary, what was proper."[406] Though extremely popular in South Asia—both in India and in Pakistan—as well as being a key and lifelong member of the AIPWA, very little scholarly material has been written about Chander in English.

Chander's short story, *Do Furlong lambi sadak* (A Street Two Furlong Long), is a prime specimen of the genre of stories where the characters were mostly meant as exemplars of national indifference to poverty and minorities, who focused instead on the faulty machinery of the state, the courts, the army, and the political class. Written after independence, the story shows the nation failing its minorities from the British times through the emergence of an Indian government. The story is told about the street that connects the law courts to the law college. The story is told by an unseen narrator, who

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[404] Gopi Chand Narang, "Introduction," in *Krishan Chander: Selected Short Stories*, ed. Gopi Chand Narang, trans. Jai Ratan (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1990), 7-12; Ali Jawad Zaidi, "Modern Fiction," in *A History of Urdu Literature* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1993), 400-402.

[405] Chander produced "more than thirty collections of short stories and more than twenty novels" (Narang, *Krishan Chander,* 8).

[406] Ismat Chughtai, "Communal Violence and Literature," in *My Friend, My Enemy: Essays, Reminiscences, Portraits*, trans. Tahira Naqvi (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 2001), 9.

lives "in the neighborhood of the College"[407] and travels each day along the title street to his office "near the Law Courts."[408] The narrator recounts some of the people and events he has seen in the nine years that he traveled the road. Using this frame, Chander lays out an array of stock characters including: a line of poor beggars who are all injured in some way (either physically or hampered by children); a wealthy man in a car who fails to notice the beggars, focusing on a rich woman and her servant; a rickshaw driver who first is forced to give all of his earnings as a bribe to a policeman and then is savagely beaten by an Englishman; two men who are thinking of going into the army to get food and medicine from the *hakim*[409] for their families; two poor women: a mother and daughter who are both working too hard and have become hard on each other; three middle class girls who are planning to go to the movies; and a group of schoolboys who are lined up along to road without water for several hours, waiting to greet a short procession of VIPs. The story is short and each characters appears only briefly, yet each story lingers on long enough that the "unseen and unheard" members of society in the story speak, and the reader is forced to focus on them. Still, without a plot or consistent characters, the real main character of the story is the street itself, and more clearly, the national structure for which the street stands as a proxy.

"Do Furlong Lambi Sadak," was written after independence and highlights many of the main critiques that the AIPWA focused on in defining their commitment to the

[407] Krishan Chander, "*Do Furlong Lambi Sadak*," in *Urdu: Readings in Literary Urdu Prose*, Gopi Chand Narang (New Delhi: National Council for the Promotion of Urdu, 2001), 231. There is an excellent translation of "A Street Two Furlongs in Length" in *Krishan Chander: Selected Short Stories*, Gopi Chand Narang ed., Jai Ratan, tran. (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1990), 13-19.
[408] Narang, *Urdu*, 231.
[409] A doctor, sometimes associated with traditional Indian medicine.

nation. Specifically, the story calls for the nation to be more attentive to its minor characters and highlights the way that the Indian system directly after independence, a hold-over from the British system, functions not only by ignoring its minorities, but by creating unbridgeable gaps between them. In the story, Chander puts forward characters whose lives were exactly the kind of lives that often went unregarded and argued that these lives should be seen. His story is both a critical assessment and a call for the remaking of the nation to better respond to its citizens. As such, Chander's story describes the oppositional literature that defined the AIPWA's commitment to India and its minorities.

The street is perhaps the most completely described character of the story. Chander begins his story by musing about the street's visual and tactile sense. The road is described as "level, straight, and hard,"[410] built by a "Eurasian contractor."[411] It is utterly unchanged and unaffected by the people and events that use it. Later in the story, the street is described as a silent witness by the narrator saying, "what event and accidents [this street] must have seen. But no one has seen it smile, nor has it cried."[412] At the end of the story, the narrator imagines himself as a madman blowing up the road and breaking its indifference apart. He describes himself ranting, "I don't want the freedom of these roads."[413] In the end, however, the narrator describes the road as continuing completely unaware and indifferent to the narrator's feelings.

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[410] Ibid., 229.
[411] Ibid., 231
[412] Ibid., 231, 233.
[413] Narang, *Krishan Chander*, 18.

It is obvious that the street is a proxy for the national government. The street's location as the path between national justice (in the form of the courts) and civil service education (in the form of the college) structures the street as the infrastructure of the nation. Moreover, the description of the road, and its creation by a Eurasian contractor clearly delineate it as the structure of the government. Therefore, the nation stands as the silent witness in the story to innumerable struggles of its citizens. The action of the stories stretches from about 1938 to after independence in 1947, but the character of the road, and by implication the nation, pointedly does not change despite the transfer of power from the British to an Indian national government.[414]

Thus, the nation is described and condemned in the description of the road for its inability to recognize the needs of the inhabitant. It has no shade, water, or sympathy. In addition, the story clearly delineates the people who are meant to be on the street because they are interacting with the nation, such as the VIP politicians at the end of the story, or the narrator, whose job forces him to interact with the structures of the nation (in the form of the courts and the college). Then, there are the beggars, who are there hoping in vain to get some kind of relief from the nation, and women going home with the fuel, whose situation is so desperate that they are merely passing through the nation. While the street almost participates in the welcoming of the VIP politicians by housing the students there

[414] There are no dates mentioned in the story, but the narrator tells us at the beginning that he has been observing the street for nine years. I put the beginning of the time at either 1938 or just before, because of the deferential treatment of the white soldier at the beginning of the story and the comment by the two men talking about joining the army that war seems imminent. I know that the story ends after independence, because the flags that the boys are waving during the VIP incident are Indian national flags and because of the statement at the end of the story rejecting the kind of freedom that the street represents.

to welcome them, the structure of the nation is unable to recognize the needs or desires of everyone else. In other words, the nation is resolutely separate from its citizenry.

If the nation is represented by the character of the street, the nation's failure to protect and care for its minorities is witnessed over and over by the hardships endured by the characters populating the street. Chander is careful about his character's space, drawing them in sufficient detail that the reader does not merely pass over their individuality and giving almost all of them a chance to speak, but at the same time not dwelling on their stories, assuming that the reader will be able to imagine the wider details of the life depicted. In this way, the characters are both stock characters, depicting discrimination based on wealth, race, and gender, while at the same time not reinscribing the national silencing of minorities the story is built to fight against. At the end of each vignette, the narrator returns to sum up the failure of the nation, the inability to recognize and help its citizens whether they be the victims of poverty, gendered discrimination, race, or status.

The body of the story begins and ends with voice of a beggar begging for some small change. At the beginning of the story, the beggars are all starving, malformed, or crippled in some way. While they are described in a way to make the reader sympathetic, the response from the only people to notice them is derision. For the most part, however, the structure of poverty and wealth in the nation, defined by the street, does not force or even allow for contact between those with money and power and the beggars. A rich man who comes through the street "idly" watches the beggars, but fails to notice that he has crushed a street dog under the wheels of his car, and is easily distracted by a wealthy

woman.[415] By the end of the story, a beggar is lying dead on the street, with no one noticing.[416] The ability to see the poor is severely curtailed by a systemic difference between wealthy people who are able to move quickly and without difficulty through the road, and the poor who need the most help, but receive the least benefit.

Indeed, the worst vignettes in the story are the three in which the poor come into contact with the state machinery directly: the story of the beating the tonga driver for declining to take an English man to the Cantonment for a reduced fee,[417] the two poor laborers who were forced into the army because they have no money to live on,[418] and the schoolboys who have no access to water while waiting for hours to 'greet' the VIP politicians.[419] In each of these vignettes, the poor person is at the mercy of the nation and its representatives, in the form of the police, army, and the government servants, and in each, the poor person is less well off because of the interaction. The tonga drive is savagely beaten by the Englishman for declining the unfair rate and is then forced by the police apologize for audacity of claiming fair treatment.

In the case of the army-bound laborers discussing the clearly imminent World War II, they correctly point out that they are being recruited because of the coming war. Speaking of the war, one suggests, "I only know that it is us, the poor, who'll get killed."[420] Still, at the end of their conversation, despite the clear knowledge that they are

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[415] *Urdu*, 235.
[416] Ibid., 249.
[417] Narang, *Krishan Chander*, 14-15. A tonga is a horse drawn carriage; Cantonment was the area of Delhi where the British soldiers were housed.
[418] Ibid., 15.
[419] Ibid., 16-17.
[420] Ibid., 15.

being asked to be cannon fodder, the two men agree that the army is their best chance at keeping their families alive.

In the third instance seemingly set around 1947/48, schoolboys are being kept at the roadside in such conditions that they are unable to make a connection between their being there and the goals and conditions of the nation. They are thirsty, unable to understand their role in the proceedings, and completely disconnected from the nation. Even their flags, clearly representative of the nation, fail to connect them to the nation in the form of the VIPs they are there to greet. Indeed, the VIP does not look at them, and as soon as he is passed, the boys are "crumpling up and throwing away the paper flags."[421] The nation is not responsive to their needs for water and for connection, and in the end they are uninterested in the nation.

What draws these cases together is the disregard that people have for each other, and that the government has for its citizens. While the road is well-kept, it fails to provide necessities for the people who are forced to look to it for some kind of support or shelter. In many cases it produces indifference or even malevolence in people who ask for help, as with the beggars, or in a later case of a mother and daughter attempting to bring home cowdung cakes for fuel. The daughter, seeing her own burden of cooking the dinner for the family, fails to recognize her mother's inability to shoulder her burden of cowdung cakes.[422] The problem is that the daughter, so burdened by her responsibilities, cannot care for another set. As with the other minorities mentioned, there is no help forthcoming

[421] Ibid., 17.
[422] Ibid., 16.

for these two. In the end, one of the successes of the story is that it highlights the way that the nation failing to help the minor makes them unable to see and support each other.

The unspoken idea behind the story is two-fold. First, the nation as it stands is no different from the pre-independence nation in the sense that it fails to care for its minorities in precisely same way. Second, the nation under its current governmental system will never be accountable to its minorities without the kind of momentous change that the narrator suggests at the end. The story's vignettes urge the reader to see more, feel more, and work harder toward being sympathetic, while stressing the futility of making smaller changes. In addition, the story points to the way that the current government system splits people apart by making burdens too burdensome and not allowing dialogue between people.

For Chander, a committed communist, the unseen—even invisible—minority is the poor. Much like Premchand's progress, Chander is committed to the problem of creating a situation in which the public sees and cares for those left without opportunities. Unlike Premchand, Chander points to the failure not only of the society and neighbors to see and care, but also to the failure of the state to provide an equal playing field for the minority—mainly the poor—to succeed. For Chander, recognizing that the callousness of everyday life hinges particularly on recognizing the complicity of the state in failing to bring the poor into the nation in a real way.

In stories like "Dani," Chander points to societal barriers that the poor faced in their attempt to gain a measure of recognition—let alone equality—from the state. Dani, a pavement dweller is promised a house by a government swindler, and through a series

of losses while waiting on the street for his house to be built, he loses his wife, child, all of his belongings, and ultimately his mind. When the state finally looks in at Dani, he has defined his pavement spot as his 'house,' rendering him nothing more than a crazy pavement dweller too far gone for rescue.[423] Similarly, in his story "The Jamun Tree," Chander recounts how a famous but poor poet dies after being trapped for days under a Jamun tree on the premises of a government building. Government officials worry about the effect of cutting down a tree in the midst of a "Grow more trees" campaign and mourn over the loss of the delicious jamun fruit, but fail to recognize the agony of the poet under the tree. After having his file studied from all sides, the man is presented with a membership to the Sahitya Akademi, but not saved from an agonizing painful death.[424] The government, unable to contemplate the life of the poor, fails not only to include them in the system, but fails to see them as citizens of the nation.

***Twilight in Delhi*: Reading the Individual Citizen**

Although the more common tool used by progressive writers in establishing the state and its failure to see or respond to the minority character was by creating an example, there was another less common tact of creating a character or world that could not be reduced to an example. In this genre of progressive writing, the author consciously crafts characters who are not stock characters to draw attention to the multitude of ways that people are unseen in the nation or unsure of the national context.[425] Ahmed Ali's novel,

[423] Krishan Chander, "Dani," in *Krishan Chander*, 109-120.
[424] Krishan Chander, "The Jamun Tree," in *Krishan Chander,* 138-143.
[425] It could be argued that Ismat Chughtai's main character in *The Crooked Line* is a good example of this kind of political writing. See Ismat Chughtai, *The Crooked Line*, trans. Tahira Naqvi (New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2006).

Twilight in Delhi, published in 1940, is of this type of fiction.[426] Ali separates his characters from the reader by setting the novel in the early 1900s and by making it clear from the introduction that the world of Delhi depicted in the novel is no longer existent. He argues that the changes that Delhi went through between the turn of the century and the 1940s rendered Delhi utterly changed. In 1993, Ali wrote, "Since its publication, the Delhi of the novel had changed beyond nostalgia and recognition."[427] The distance in time and recognition between the time of the novel, the time of the author, and the reader forbid the reader from pushing their ideas about the nation and national minorities onto the characters of the novel. The use of a historical perspective is also important in placing the events of the novel in a personal space, but outside the reader's own memory.[428] By cutting the clear connection between the characters and their class, racial, and religious status in the India of the 1940s, Ali is able to explore deep ambivalences about the issues of nationalism, the nation, and the system of the government under debate as he was writing the novel by allowing the reader to engage with 1940s themes through the 1900-1920 setting.

Placing the novel outside the realm of the contemporary fit well with Ahmed Ali's ideas of a progressive art form. For Ali, as with Premchand, the goal of progressive literature was "the betterment of our social life."[429] Therefore, the kind of art appropriate to the title of progressive in any society necessarily changed as the society moved. However, Ali believed that progressive literature took on a particularly historical view of

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[426] Ahmed Ali, *Twilight in Delhi: A Novel* (New York: New Directions Books, 1994).
[427] Ahmed Ali, "Introduction: The *Raison d'Etre* of *Twilight in Delhi*," in ibid., xix.
[428] Alistair Niven, "Historical Imagination in the Novels of Ahmed Ali," *The Journal of Indian Writing in English* 7, no. 1/2 (January-July 1980): 3-13.
[429] Ahmed Ali, "Progressive View of Art," 78.

the world. He argued that in order to be effective, progressive writers needed to comprehend, "what we are, what we were, and what we should or can be."[430] The past plays two distinct and contradictory roles for Ali. Looked at directly, the past is the "outmoded" precedent for the present pain and as such needs to be discarded in favor of new solutions. At the same time, the idealized past suggests a time when "we were not in the mire."[431] The reconciliation between these seemingly contradictory positions is the requirement for both continuous change toward a goal of more complete freedom and the retention of memory for consciousness of society without nostalgia. Consciousness of the past, especially in the novel *Twilight in Delhi*, represents the failure of the present to really see the present and future of the Muslim minority that made up the Delhi of the past. As such, it is impossible for the minority group to be part of the vision for the future the state.[432] Indeed, the novel presents the failure of the representative claims made by the nationalist movement, especially by the Congress, as a failure to see the Muslim minority by relegating their status to past and gone.[433]

Ahmed Ali joined together with Sajjad Zaheer, Rashid Jahan, and Mahmuduzzafar to write the short story collection *Angare*, often considered the first publication describing the ethos of the AIPWA. Ali argued that the publication was meant to speak to the Indian Muslim community as a way to rouse them from their deeply conservative traditions, kept in reaction to the failure of the nation to recognize

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[430] Ibid., 79.
[431] Ibid.
[432] Mulk Raj Anand, "Letter on Ahmed Ali," *The Journal of Indian Writing in Englis*h 23, no. 1-2 (1995): 50.
[433] Leela Gandhi, "Novelists of the 1930s and 1940s," in *A Concise History of Indian Literature in English*, ed. Arvind Krishna Mehrotra (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan: 2009), 210.

their difference. Ali also joined the first conference and wrote a foundational essay, "A Progressive View of Art," for the organization's founding document, *Toward a Progressive Literature*. While Zaheer and some of the other founders were declaring their manifesto over Chinese, Ali was teaching literature at the University of Lucknow.[434] After Independence, Ali migrated to Pakistan.[435] However, even before he migrated, Ali broke with the AIPWA, claiming that the organization had failed to keep its faith in the pluralistic progressive politics, opting instead in for ideological conformity to the Communist Party of India. Ali's migration to Pakistan has caused problems for the classification of his most well-known novel, *Twilight in Delhi*. While Pakistani authors claim Ali as a founder of their own literary movement, the loving discussion of Delhi in the novel marks it as geographically specific. At the same time, Ali's critique of the failure to recognize the Muslim community as an integral part of Indian nationality and his subsequent move to Pakistan make him a controversial figure in the nationalist history of Indian literature.

Twilight in Delhi focuses on the life and death of an old Delhi Muslim family headed by Mir Nihal. The family history is such that it had ties with the old Mughal empire, and Mir Nihal sees himself and his friends as emblematic of a time and place that have slipped away. The novel is set in four parts: the first part follows the drama of the family's youngest son, Asghar, who wants to marry a woman, Bilqeece, who because of

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[434] Leela Gandhi, "Novelists of the 1930s and 1940s," 209.

[435] The anecdote about Ali's move to Pakistan is that in 1947, Ali was working as a diplomat for British India in China. After Partition, Ali was transferred to the Pakistani diplomatic service, still in China, based on an assurance that he had no future in the Indian diplomatic corp. I have not been able to find documentation on the assurance as of yet, though Ali was certainly in China at Partition and the assurance seems to be in line with the treatment of other Indian non-Congress Muslims in high government positions. See chapter 2 of this dissertation on the treatment of All India Radio Governor- General A.S. Bokhari.

her family's class status, his father find unacceptable. The second section focuses on a series of deaths affecting Mir Nihal, including his prize pigeons, his mistress, and his sense of the city and the world. The third section again follows Asghar through his wedding to Bilqeece and Asghar's growing indifference to his new family. The third section also focuses heavily on changes being made to the city and the nation, especially in the announcement of Delhi as the new imperial capital in 1911, and the unease that it creates among the long-time residents of the city. The final section focuses on the effects a fever epidemic that swept through the city in 1918, which killed one of Mir Nihal's sons and Asghar's wife Bilqeece, and left Mir Nihal in a comatose state.

In the end, the novel is uncertain about the state and place of the Muslim minority in the nation. The city of Delhi is being restructured and its distinctive Muslim culture is being changed from the top down. The unique character of the city is being undermined by the push to make Delhi emblematic of the nation. The failure of the state in Krishan Chander's short story, where exemplars of various groups fail to be recognized by the state, is different from the failure in *Twilight in Delhi*, in which the state's attempt to change without recognition of the present and past fails to recognize and retain the change. The novel suggests that the Indian nation and national unity forged through forcing people to be examples of categories fails to recognize the differences that make up Indian life. *Twilight in Delhi* is as much an effort at remembering difference as it is a lament of the loss of it. The distinction between Chander's street and Ali's Delhi is texture. For Chander, the street represents the utter failure of the state to recognize and aid, drawn back in time through the present. Chander's street does not change, except in

the apocalyptic moment of mad destruction. Ali's Delhi is ever changing, often against the will of the its inhabitants, whose visions of past and present do not preclude the imagination of a future different from that or any other moment. Moreover, the novel was written approximately twenty years after the time it describes, which suggests not only the necessity of knowing the past, but also of the uncertainty of the claim to know the present.

The novel opens with a wide framing device, describing the history and present state of the city, Delhi. The city is described as lying in a state somewhere between sleep and death. The patronage and stately grandeur of the city has disappeared under the neglect of the British rule and loss of status of the previous Muslim rulers. In the introduction to the novel, Ali writes that the mood of the novel tries to capture a moment of rebellion in the life of the city, in that it shows the moment in which the Delhi culture attempted to fight against the coming changes. He writes, "my purpose in writing the novel was to depict a phase in our national life and the decay of a whole culture, a particular mode of thought and living, values now dead and gone before our eyes."[436] Still, even as he regards the old Delhi of the novel dead, Ali points to the possibility not only for renewal, but also for reconciliation. He explicitly discusses the myth of Delhi's mutability. He writes, "Seven Delhis have fallen, and the eighth has gone the way of its predecessors, yet to be demolished and built again. Life, like the Phoenix, must collect the spices for its nest and set fire to it, and arise resurrected out of its flames."[437] Thus, Ali sets *Twilight in Delhi* at the point in which the conflagration of the 'old' city seems to

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[436] Ali, "The *Raison d'Etre* of *Twilight in Delhi*," xix.
[437] Ibid., xx.

be necessary for the future to be built. For a novel from a progressive writer, the emphasis on loss and retaining older traditions seems odd, but the emphasis on the lack of finality even in death makes the novel both present and oppositional. Still, the general tone of loss and the slipping away of tradition makes Ahmed Ali's novel an uneasy addition to the AIPWA canon.

In Krishan Chander's story, the state is described as one static thing, even going as far as to point out that the title street remained the same as it was from the day it was built. By contrast, the city, the families, and the nation of *Twilight in Delhi* are all in a permanent state of change. Despite Mir Nihal's lament, "what is done cannot be undone,"[438] even events with a degree of finality are consistently undermined by Ali. The novel's structure itself seems to mirror the subversion of completion as each section and the novel itself ends with an ellipsis rather than a full stop. Attempts to subvert the permanence of loss and change are peppered throughout the novel. One of the best examples is the scene at the 1911 colonial darbar parad, in which he watches the procession Mir Nihal remembers from 1857 and the call to arms in the Jama Masjid. He remembers the bravery of the Muslims at the moment in which the choice before them seemed to be submission to the regime or death. In choosing death, he reasons with himself, the Muslims were able to remain alive. "The Mussalmans had no guns and most of them lost their lives, the rest came away…"[439] The choice to stand up and fight against what was seen as an outside force, a repressive regime, allowed for a societal reprieve. The decision to fight meant that those who did not die were able to come away, and those

[438] He responds to his daughter's (Mehro) concerns over his giving up pigeon flying with this phrase. He thinks it to himself upon the reflection of the story Kambal Shah tells about the fall of the Mughal empire.
[439] Ali, *Twilight in Delhi*, 107.

that did die lived on as martyrs. In the happiness around the parade, Mir Nihal sees a different kind of death. He feels that the procession viewers are too ignorant to know the meaning of the sacrifice they are making by choosing not to fight. They do not burn with a flame that consumes them, and as such, "they feel dead, so dead."[440] Still, the scene ends on a note of hope and life as Mir Nihal attempts to reassure both himself and his crying grandson that in the future colonial oppression will be "driven out of the country."[441] Though he knows that he will not be alive to participate, Mir Nihal assumes for his city a life beyond what he can know.

Despite the optimism of the possibility of a future resistance against imperial domination, Mir Nihal and many of the characters in the novel feel uncertain about the place that the city of Delhi and Muslim culture will have in the new India. The novel references the growth of the Indian anti-colonial movement several times pointing to the growth of the "terrorist" Swadeshi movement in Bengal in 1912[442] and the beginning of the home rule movements in 1917.[443] Mir Nihal feel disconnected from each of these movements, recognizing they are both for the best of the nation and not part of his ethos. Mir Nihal places his rejection of these movements in terms of a sense of displacement. It does not seem that there is a place for a unique Delhi in terms of imperial rule, which threatened to turn Delhi into New Delhi with its building projects, or in nationalist rhetoric, which wanted one united nation—not many differentiated states. Similarly, the character of Delhi in the novel feels oppressed by the plans to remake the city out of fear

[440] Ibid., 107.
[441] Ibid., 108.
[442] Ibid., 143.
[443] Ibid., 181.

that the 'new'-ness of New Delhi would uproot the city's life. The city would become full of living people, essentially living in a different Delhi. The site of Delhi, important as a marker of history—personal and national—loses its ability to represent Mir Nihal and his interests by losing its specificity.[444]

Ahmed Ali's *Twilight in Delhi* should certainly be considered a progressive novel because of its sustained engagement with the feeling of oppression, loss, and misrecognition. The novel's care in defining the city of Delhi through both the characterization of the city and its characters is something that is both mutable and in danger of being overrun, which illustrates the deep ambivalence that Ali had about the ability of the anti-colonial movement to make changes that respected people and their lives. Clearly, imperialism and the changes it wrought were an ill in the novel, but the anti-colonial movement seemed unable to move forward while embracing the difference of the national context. If Krishan Chander's "*Do Furlong lambi sadak*" operates as a blunt instrument in "assessing and critiquing life" and showing in graphic detail the ways that the state fails its minorities as a whole, *Twilight in Delhi* is wary but unsure of its outcomes, even asking whether it is possible to embrace the past while moving forward. The inability of any character to represent even themselves means that the reader is forced to question traditionalism, imperialism, and nationalism without a clear answer as to any of their merits. In many ways, this open-ended assessment is as fundamental to the project of the AIPWA as the strictly oppositional *Do Furlong lambi sadak*.

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[444] Ibid., 144. For more discussion of the national importance of the capital city of New Delhi, see Narayani Gupta, "Kingsway to Rajpath: The Democratization of Lutyens' Central Vista," in *Perceptions of South Asia's Visual Past*, ed. Catherine B. Asher and Thomas R. Metcalfe (New Delhi: Oxford & IBH Publishing Co., 1994) 257-269.

Conclusion: Defining A Variety of Radical Politics

The definitions of progressive literature for Premchand, Krishan Chander, and Ahmed Ali were all quite different. One way to consider the implications of their progressivism is to look at the target of their critique. For all three, the goal of a radically remade—not just reformed—society was a main concern, yet their definition of the source of that redefinition was not the same. For Premchand, the target of his critique was the society in general. He argued through his stories and his speech that the goal of progressive critique was to increase society's care and recognition of the poor, as well as women and lower caste people. For Premchand, authors should feel the lack of concern in society most acutely and were also more responsible to make the circumstances of these often unseen characters visible. Authors who focused on frivolities in the face of suffering failed in their duty to create and represent beauty while continuing society's casual cruelty toward those who could not change their situation.[445]

Krishan Chander represented a different kind of radical politics through his writing. Targeting his critique mainly at the workings of the government and its failure to recognize and encourage the citizenship of minorities in general, and poor people in particular, Chander's stories often focused on the failure of the government to act equally in the interests of its citizens—poor and wealthy.[446] Krishan Chander's *Do Furlong Lambi Sadak* emphasizes how the nation inscribes its minorities, especially its poor, as peripheral, almost unrecognizable to the nation by placing the minor characters outside the notice or care of the street, which stands in for the government. Chander's critique

[445] In this case, Premchand had a lot in common with Gandhi, who preached personal responsibility as a tenet of swaraj.

[446] Chander was actively involved in communist agitations in India throughout the 1930s and 40s.

was most biting when it showed the indifference of the state to its most vulnerable. Although not without a critique of society's willful indifference to each other, Chander's stories tended to focus on how the failure to have adequate food, drink, and health led people to disregard the needs of others, perhaps even those worse off than themselves. The politics of progress for Chander emphasized the remaking of the government as the best way to adequately address the needs of the society.

For Ahmed Ali, the purpose of progressive literature was to critique the system, both as it had grown and what it seemed like it could become. Ali's novel, *Twilight in Delhi,* emphasizes the role of history, place, and time in Ali's critique of the social and political system. The main characters, Mir Nihal and his family, are central to the construction of their time and place, but because of the historical setting and the overall ambivalence and feeling of loss, the novel emphasizes the way that difference was glossed over in the creation of a modern nationalist movement. Ali believes that not only the minority (in this case, the religious minority) are unrecognized, but also the relationship between the past, present, and potential future in the creation of a more free society. Thus, Ali suggests, "progressive should not be taken as synonymous with revolutionary," but rather as a consideration and rejection of "that which stands in the way of attaining freedom."[447] For this reason, Ali argues that progressive politics can never be tied something as static as a set political ideology, but rather needs to be free to be oppositional as it sees fit.[448]

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[447] Ahmed Ali, "Progressive View of Art," 79. It is clear to me that, in his discussion of the past, Ali is not nostalgic for something , but rather interested in the way that time creates a dynamic vision of progressive action.

[448] Ahmed Ali, "The Progressive Writers Movement," 52-53.

By placing the unheard, unseen, or unrecognizable at the center of their ideas about the value of a progressive literature, albeit with different techniques of doing so, Premchand, Chander, and Ali argue for the creation of an oppositional literature that responds to the national failure to recognize its minorities. The political differences among what variations of progressive literature critiqued and how those critiques benefited the nation made the AIPWA more—rather than less—able to articulate a vision of "All Indian" unity. Because progressive authors like Premchand, Chander, and Ali all made their critiques of the state and its people from a desire to remake the nation into a body that recognized, cared for, and included minorities of all kinds, the AIPWA was able to articulate a vision of the nation that promised unity based on the politics of recognition.

Although the AIPWA has often been described as somehow not Indian enough, the organization has been focused throughout its life on the creation of an Indian nation that better reflected its citizens. While supporting the anti-colonial movement's call for independence from Britain whole-heartedly, the AIPWA argued that the nation needed to be entirely remade in order to be a just society for its vulnerable citizens. As such, the AIPWA defined its commitment to the ideal nation as a commitment to be critical of ways that the current nation failed to adequately respond to its minorities and the realities of life for those who were not recognized by the nation. Thus, for the AIPWA, the Indian nation and Indian unity functioned as a representation of the life of the nation's minor characters.

Conclusion: The Goals and the Ends of Indian Unity

In 1961, during the height of the fight for linguistically organized states, enduring communal tensions, and regional independence movements in the Northeast section of India, Jawaharlal Nehru instated the National Integration Council. The National Integration Council was charged with "review[ing] all matters pertaining to national integration, and to make recommendations thereon."[449] Since its original inception the National Integration Council has met twelve times, each time after an incident of particular violence.[450] In April 2010, Manmohan Singh reconstituted the National Integration Council.[451] Although Singh's reasons for reinstating the National Integration Council have not been disclosed, its recall is almost certainly linked to the recent surge in the violent confrontations between Indian Maoists and the Indian State. Indeed, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has recently declared that the Maoists, often called Naxalites, were the "greatest internal security threat to our country and that… the government was taking adequate steps to deal with the menace."[452] The fight between the government and

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[449] Ministry of Home Affairs, "National Integration Council Materials," *mha.nic.in/pdfs/NICmaterial020707.pdf,* 1.

[450] Interestingly, the National Integration Council has only ever been constituted during times when the Congress party was in power in the national government. It was called after Indira Gandhi's assignation and the retaliatory anti-Sikh riots in Delhi. It was also called after the riots following the Ayodhya crisis, in which Hindu Nationalists leveled a nearly 500 year-old mosque, supposedly on the site of the god Ram's birth. The riots throughout India were particularly violent in Bombay, killing many hundreds of people. The National Integration Council was noticeably not called after the massive riots in Gujarat, in which more than a thousand people were killed. The Gujarat riots happened when the right-wing National Democratic Alliance was in power, and the NDA government in Gujarat has been implicated in leading the violence against the Muslim population. The National Integration Council was called immediately after the 2004 elections that returned the Congress-led, center left-leaning United Progressive Alliance to power, ostensibly to discuss the textbook controversy.

[451] Vinay Kumar, "National Integration Council Reconstituted," *The Hindu*, April 13, 2010, National Section, National Edition.

[452] Rahi Gaikwad, "Manmohan: Naxalism the greatest internal threat," *The Hindu*, October 11, 2009, National Section, National Edition. It is worth noting that Naxalism, once actually associated with a particularly situated movement for land rights and poverty reduction in Bengal has become a catch-all word describing almost any act of violence. Some movements have actively embraced the connection to the

the Maoists rages on in part because the Maoists, since their Naxalbari days, have argued that the national government was only as good as its recognition of India's poorest citizens.

At the same time that the government focuses on the Maoist movement in some of India's poorest regions, India's minorities are still looked on with suspicions that have recently turned into violence. In early 2009, several women in Mangalore, a city in Andhra Pradesh, were attacked for going to a bar, drinking, and wearing western style clothes. The leader of the group who claimed responsibility for the attack, the Ram Sena, argued that it was against Indian values for women to go into bars.[453] Similarly, women on college campuses, especially in Delhi and Bombay, have been threatened and attacked for wearing western-style clothing and drinking. College women's hostels have reacted to the threats by instituting curfews to protect women's safety. The government response to attacks like these has been broadly dismissive, with government officials largely unwilling to comment. The questions that Indians protesting these and other attacks pose are, "Who gets to define India, and Why?[454]" Certainly the Hindu right, in this case the Ram Sena, have argued that their commitment to conservative Hinduism gives them right to police behavior that they find objectionable, and police it violently if necessary. At the

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original naxalite movement, especially adivasi movements for land rights. However, the term has been applied to all manner of groups that had little or no connection to the political and social uprising in Bengal, associating the term naxalite with the sense of indiscriminate violence. Many of the crimes termed, 'naxal violence,' and automatically associated with the Maoist movement, are nothing more than random crminal violence. As such, the term naxalism has lost any particular association with politically motivated, peasant/ student collaboration. For that reason I use the term Maoist instead, though that term is also fraught with connections to the Chinese Maoist movement, which it resembles very little. For more on the naxalites, see Sumanta Banerjee, "Naxalbari and the Left Movement," in *Social Movements and the State*, Ghanshyam Shah, ed. (New Delhi: Sage, 2002), 124-192.

[453] "Underwear Protest at India attack," *BBC news*, February 10, 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7880377.stm. The women responded by instituting the Pink Chaddi Campaign, asking women to send pink underwear to the leaders of the Ram Sena.

[454] See the Pink Chaddi Campaign website, http://thepinkchaddicampaign.blogspot.com.

same time, women and their allies have been arguing for an Indian national identity that includes their rights and participation.

On the surface the government's fight against the Maoists and the attack on women wearing jeans and skirts in bars have very little in common. But what they both point to is a narrowing of the acceptable ways to explain Indian national difference and belonging. At least part of the government's decades-long fight against the Maoist is an attack on the Maoist idea of regional and local participation in the nation.[455] The Maoist concept of the nation, and their place in the nation, directly contradicts a concept of Indian national identity, where the state, derived from formative traits held in common by all Indians, can both represent and define the national culture of India. The fact that the government, in response to growing strength of the Maoist rhetoric, reinstated the National Integration Council suggests that the government sees the threat from the Maoists in terms of a threat to the structure of Indian unity, commonly defined. In a different way, the men who are part of the Hindu Nationalist party, the Ram Sena, asserted that their party and its affiliates knew what defined Indian-ness and that they needed to impose it. In their policing of women acting against their reactionary ideals, the Ram Sena and other Hindu Nationalist groups loosely associated with them have argued that there is a singular concept that underlies any definition of Indian womanhood, and by extension, Indian-ness in general. These two attacks by very different sources, the Ram Sena and the Indian Government, waged in the name of Indian national life, both indicate a continued discomfort with Indian unity and the threat posed to it by vocal minorities.

[455] The Maoist movement has been violent, but even relatively mainstream media have argued that attacks like the one in 2010 where 76 Indian soldiers were killed have been relatively rare. Maoist violent protest has most often been more subtle, aimed at commercial targets, or not deadly.

The struggle over how the Indian nation and Indian unity is defined is by no means only a present day struggle. The historical precedents, both for the assertion of a single fundamental concept of Indian unity and for the fight for a wider definition of Indian-ness by national minorities inform the present day struggle.

During the 1940s and early 1950s, India and Indians who cared about independence and nationhood experienced a crisis of unity. Fearing that a potential Indian nation was unattainable and unsustainable without a clear and definable unifying factor, mainstream anti-colonial actors, especially those associated with the All India National Congress Party, argued that there was a fundamental unity in India that would manifest itself once the nation emerged from colonial domination. The idea behind the claim was that upon being freed from colonial meddling that attempted to convince Indians that they were fundamentally different from one another, Indian unity would emerge, albeit Indian unity superimposed with a set of superficial diversities. This claim of fundamental Indian unity was an important stance against the colonial power, but it also served to emphasize the relative uniformity of the Congress party's vision of India and a future Indian state structure. Regional, religious, gender, caste, and class minorities all worried that a belief in a fundamental, natural, or organic Indian unity would leave them as at best second-class, and at worst as permanent outsiders.

Alternatives to the Congress approach concerning the viability of Indian unity were posited by influential and interested citizen's organizations. One of the most interesting responses to the claim of a fundamental Indian unity with superficial diversity was the strategy of using the "All India" prefix in the names of organizations, especially

in groups organized by or for minority interests. The “All India” naming strategy is interesting both for its prevalence and for its commitment to the nation. During the 1940s and 50s hundreds of organizations took up the “All India” name. Given the sheer number of organizations claiming “All India” affiliation, it is impossible to think that each of these groups saw, or attempted to see, themselves as encompassing the whole of Indian life.[456] What does seem to be clear is that these groups formulated the idea of “All India” as ways to participate in both the definition and continued negotiation over the claim of Indian unity. The commonality between the groups that used the “All India” name was a commitment to participating actively in the way India defined itself as a nation and the attendant goals of that nation. One thing many of these organizations did not seem particularly attached to was rendering of a final answer to the question of what defined Indian unity and the Indian nation.

This dissertation has examined four of these “All India” organizations to explicate their claim about their “All India” status and the radical politics behind their argument about Indian unity. Each organization had a distinct way in which they defined their “All India” commitment, and all of them contradicted the simple idea that “All India” was a totalizing way to describe Indian unity. Each of these organizations was devoted to an idea that both encouraged thought and discouraged authoritarian solutions about the way Indian unity incorporated difference.

Two of these organizations, All India Radio and the All India Women’s Conference, tried to redefine the idea of national participation in the construction of

[456] This is especially true given the fact that there were several “All India” organizations whose goals for the nation entirely contradicted each other.

Indian public life and citizenship. Both organizations attempted to imagine local and national life as equally influential in defining the stakes and requirements for Indian unity. All India Radio attempted to imagine a nation where each locality literally heard the nation differently, but in which each iteration was equally part of the overall Indian vision. The All India Women's Conference similarly argued that both local and national agitation by women on behalf of women's rights and responsibilities to India helped to create a place in India for women's active citizenship. In both instances, the idea of Indian unity was a fractured one where the hierarchical relationship between local and national was disrupted, making both local and national action part of an Indian definition of itself.

The other two organizations highlighted, the All India Newspaper Editors' Conference and the All India Progressive Writers' Association, defined their commitment to Indian unity in terms of contingent or incomplete unity. Both the organizations argued that national citizenship was contingent on a commitment to India prefaced on a national state structure that was built on the ability, even a responsibility, to express dissent. The All India Newspaper Editors' Conference argued that as long as each citizen was able to agree on a limited set of fundamental principals, actual pragmatic Indian unity could be built on debate and negotiation. The All India Progressive Writers' Association argued that the concept of a nation that recognized its citizens should be the basis for constant redefinition of national identity and Indian unity.

In the end, each of the more radical solutions to the problem of Indian unity and the meaning of "All India" failed these particular institutions. In the transition from

colonial state to national government, the importance of asserting a nationally unified country intensified, while at the same time the space for redefining the nation became slimmer. Support for concepts like democracy and nationalism came to mean support for the Indian state government and its policies. In part the problem was the intensification of the crisis of unity after independence, as anti-colonial activists realized that the departure of the colonial government and the moment of partition did not erase caste, class, gender, religious, and regional conflicts. In this new climate, two of these four "All India" organizations, All India Radio and the All India Women's Conference, became more centralized and focused on governmental actions. The All India Newspaper Editors' Conference, started in opposition to colonial government repressions, had fought its own idea of ideologically defined unity since its founding in 1940, but after independence, it was unable to either support unity based on ideology or unity based on pragmatic unanimity. Finally, the All India Progressive Writers' Association fell victim to a combination of partition and increasingly dogmatic political expression.

Together these four organizations, which were all well-known and important groups in their fields, suggested some of the many ideas for redefining Indian unity and democracy in the decade just before and just after Indian national independence. These four organizations were far from the only "All India" organizations proposing radical solutions to the crisis of Indian unity, and they were not necessarily the organizations proposing the most radical solutions. Instead, these four organizations are case studies of ways that Indian unity was thought through outside the most commonly described "Congress" model. None of these "All India" organizations initially supported a single,

fundamental characteristic that described India or Indian unity definitively. Instead, they all argued that the Indian nation and Indian citizenship should be constituted by a commitment to India and continued negotiation about the Indian state. The Indian nation was the space set aside to draw Indians into a relationship, and not an uncontested one, with each other.

Since the 1950s in India, the national dialogue has often centered on tapping into the fundamental Indian unity, that elusive Bharat Mata moment that Jawaharlal Nehru described so enduringly in his *Discovery of India*.[457] Failures have been attributed to, among other things, internalized definitions of colonial difference, an explanation often used in nationalist historiography, insufficient Indian-ness, an explanation favored by the Hindu Nationalists, or a general adoption of western culture and attitudes, an explanation used by both groups among others. Whole scale failures of unity, like the anti-Sikh riots after the death of Indira Gandhi, have prompted countrywide stock-taking and blame assigning, and have often resulted in central government committees of experts, like the National Integration Council, to make suggestions on ways of exposing the innate national unity.

What is not often explored in these countrywide soul-searching missions is the possibility that national unity might be better defined through negotiation and recognition of Indian difference. Non-governmental organizations from the 1940s and 1950s through

[457] Jawaharlal Nehru, *Discovery of India* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2004), 52-54. In the most famous scene of the book, Nehru is greeted by villagers shouting "Bharat Mata ki Jai" which translates to Victory to Mother India. In the scene he baffles the 'poorly educated' crowd, by asking them to define Mother India. After eliciting stares and insufficient answers, Nehru tells the assembled crowd that Mother India is made up from all the land and all the people of the land that makes up India. The story ends by claiming that as he told the crowds this, "their eyes would light up as if they had made a great discovery (54)." The discovery is, of course, their integral connection to Indian unity.

today have tried to rethink Indian unity and the Indian nation in ways that make it more accessible to more and different kinds of Indians. However, the results of their attempts are, by design, less totalizing, less ideal, and less finished that the exclusive style of Indian nationalism often favored by the state machinery. Although all four of the organizations profiled in this dissertation failed at instituting their ideals in state, they did succeed in raising debate about active participation, national inclusion, local and regional determination, and recognition of minorities, that continue to be sites of debate in the Indian public through today. Moreover, the continued popularity of the "All India" naming strategy indicates that the pull toward active citizenship and negotiated unity has lived through the state's attempt to unilaterally define the Indian nation. This dissertation, in thinking through the question of the meaning of "All India," democracy in India, and the concept of Indian unity, is an attempt to imagine committed Indian negotiations around a definition of the nation as themselves a legitimate definition of the Indian nation.

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Unprinted Primary Sources

Unprinted Primary Sources used in this dissertation came from three archives, the National Archives of India, the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, and the All India P.E.N. Archive.

At the National Archives of India I consulted files from the External Affairs, Commonwealth Relations, Home, and Political collections between the years of 1938 and 1956.

The Nehru Memorial Museum and Library housed the All India Women's Conference Archive, which included the organizational papers, correspondence, and meeting notes of the All India Women's Conference. I consulted these papers from 1935 through 1960.

The All India P.E.N. keeps an informal archive. I consulted the correspondence and organizational records from 1936 through 1960.

Newspapers and Organizational Journals

Below is a list of newspapers and organizational journals, the cities of their publications, and the date ranges consulted for this project. I looked at newspapers and journals at four periodical archives.

All India PEN Private Archive
Indian PEN, Bombay, 1940-1956.

Nehru Memorial Museum and Library Periodical Archive
Aj, Banaras, 1940-1941
Amrita Bazar Patrika, Calcutta, 1940-1942, 1944-1946, 1949-1953
Bombay Chronicle, Bombay, 1940-1953.
Daily Tej, Delhi, 1940-1941.
Dawn, Delhi, 1946-1947.
Harijan, Ahmedabad, 1940.
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