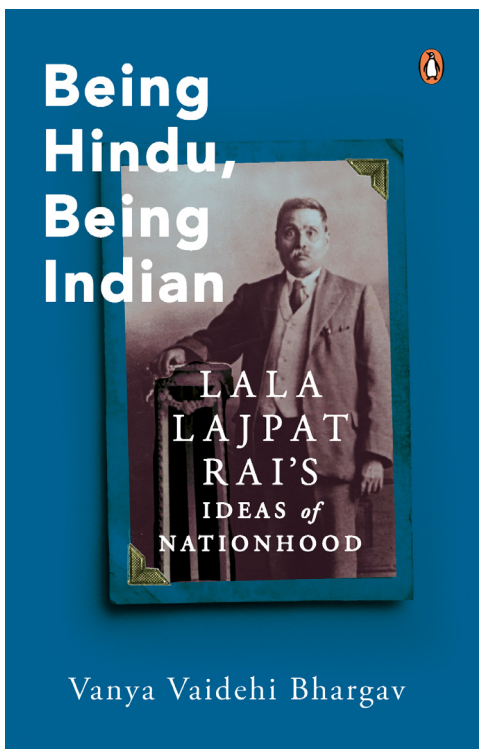


Departmental Colloquium - History Department Summer Semester 2024

Being Hindu, Being Indian: Lala Lajpat Rai's Ideas of Nationhood

Dr. Vanya Vaidehi Bhargav
(University of Leipzig)



Being Hindu, Being Indian undertakes a systematic intellectual study of Lala Lajpat Rai's nationalist thought through four decades of his active political life, lived between 1888 and 1928. It contests the dominant scholarly interpretation of Lajpat Rai's nationalist thought as the nascent stage of Savarkarite Hindutva, and highlights the internally differentiated nature of 'Hindu nationalism'. Showing that, by 1915, Lajpat Rai moved towards 'Indian' nationalist narratives, it challenges the assumption that all ideas of Hindu nationhood necessarily culminate in Hindutva. An examination of Lajpat Rai's final nationalist narrative as a Hindu Mahasabha leader in the 1920s confirms the revisionist historiographical rejection of the oppositional binary that was long drawn between Hindu communal politics, on one hand, and secular Indian nationalism and secularism, on the other. Lajpat Rai organised a Hindu politics in service of a secular Indian nation-state. Nevertheless, the book pushes back against revisionist assumptions that Hindu communal politics and secularism can be championed together comfortably, and that the articulation of a Hindu politics alongside a vision for secularism reduces that secularism to little more than Hindu majoritarianism. *Being Hindu,*

Being Indian argues for the need to take the analytical tension and contrast between 'Hindu politics' and 'secularism' seriously. Methodologically, the book constitutes an argument to resist reductionism and respect the nuances, complexities, fluidity, and internal tensions in an individual thinker's thought.



More
information

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16:15 CEST

Image: Book Cover 'Being Hindu, Being Indian: Lala Lajpat Rai's Ideas of Nationhood' (2024) - Penguin Random House India