



RESEARCH PAPER

Hindutva: Impacts on Indian Muslim Community

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Introduction

Pakistan “The term *hindutva* is central to their claims that religion is the defining characteristic of the Indian nation. V.D. Savarkar, leader of the Hindu Mahasabha, the most important Hindu nationalist party before independence, advanced the term *hindutva*, which equates religious and national identities. According to this Hindu *rashtra*, or ‘Hindu nation’ theory, Indian culture has its roots in the Hindu past. ‘India is God’s chosen land; it’s the abode of Hindus. Hence, the ethical and spiritual values of all Indians who have ancestral roots in India derive from the Hindu culture. In essence all Indians are Hindus. Irrespective of their mode of worship, Christians and Muslims are culturally Hindus. Hindu revivalists seek to incorporate Indians of various faiths into Hinduism” (Savarkar, 1969).

In modern times, it is difficult to ignore the role of religion in modern society, and most of the violence that occur and seem to have a certain religious

depth, implicitly or explicitly. This means that the majority of the states of religious violence and the Indian society are not free from religious extremism. So fundamentalism and religious extremism is not a new phenomenon in India and that political goal and the state is responsible for separating the company into sectarian lines, Hinduism has many faces connected with fundamentalism. (Hassan, 2008) The current situation in India shows that Hindus are fundamentalists and the development of fundamentalist ideologies. Thus, the forces of Hindutva and the main Hindu parties, including Shuseena, consistently undermine the spirit of secularism in India. In this regard, the BharatiyaJanata Party (BJP) and specific Narandra Modi regime proved that Hindu fundamentalists have openly encouraged the Hindu right to violence and declare Hindu rule. They gave the right hand of Hindu extremist parties "Indianization" based on anti-Muslim rhetoric. In this way, Christians, Dalits and other lower castes are also victims of crime caste.(Hindutva, BharatiyaJanata Party) (BJP)

Historical background of Hindutva Ideology

In the state of India, like any other nation-state, nationalism is at the core a nation requires nationalism, without it the nation cannot exist. There are many forms of nationalism that can be classified as religious, ethnic, cultural and social, and all these represent the respective inclination of the people in a state. The historic basis of this nationalist ideology can be traced back to centuries. However, in contemporary India the ethnic, cultural and religious form of nationalism are incorporated into the political ideology. Hindutva nationalism, which is used as an umbrella term. This political ideology is associated with the conservatives, namely the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The promotion of this as a social and political ideology is the self-proclaimed responsibility of the Rashtriya SwayamsevakSangh (RSS). The process of 'Saffronisation' as is referred to, is the retelling of Indian nationalist stories, by completely sidelining the contribution of other religions or races living within India. By practicing cultural nationalism to this extent the most damage has been done to the secular policies adopted by the predecessors. This conservative party still shows resentment towards achievements like the Mandal Commission Report that provides opportunities to the lower classes and scheduled tribes that are 400 in India.

Indian nationalism is based on primordialism theory that an ideology of nationalism that is based on ancestral roots and religious bases. Indian nationalism identifies "India as an ever-ever land – emerging from an ancient civilization, united by a shared history, sustained by pluralist democracy" (Tharoor, 2012). However, it is important to note that Hindu nationalism has greatly hampered the pursuit of social pluralism and religious pluralism, because its activities have not been thwarted by the state structures. (Subramanian, 1999).

Historically, religious violence in India is not a new law because Hinduism is not an intellectual or philosophical concept rather than a rigid set of beliefs. The main Hindu law parties have generally used religion as an instrument of power over other religions, including the Muslims and other minorities. In this regard,

there are indications that Hindu seems a seemingly impossible situation fundamentalists, in which the possibility of a unified principle of direction seems to have been made inaccessible. If they are not willing to integrate, they would be in India (Rao, & Roover, 2013).

India has a carefully knitted constitution that caters to the needs of the population by providing them rights based on a multi-level federalism modeled on ethnic, linguistic and religious affiliations especially after the amendments. This presents a very rosy picture of external political orientation of India towards the international community. The internal political dynamics under the current fascist leadership reveals the gloomy picture of conservative Hindutva India as it tries to impose an aggressive cultural nationalism on the minorities. Hindu nationalism has swept the Indian politics off its feet. The insistence on calling every Indian, a Hindu man or woman, attacks on mosques and churches, the killings of Muslims on sacrificing cows, oxen and buffaloes by Hindutva forces unveil the true face of intolerant India. (Robinson, 1999)

Hindutva Ideology and its impact on Muslim Society

The Indian society is fragmented between Hindutva practitioners and the ones advocating a secular atmosphere. The conservative majority rules India today and unfortunately they are the ones who breed hate politics. The Muslims that are 13.4 percent of the population of India, BJP is the torch bearer of the Hindutva ideology. It is worth noting that the relations of Hindus and Muslims have not been peaceful even in the post-independence era, with incidents like the Babri Mosque and the Gujrat riots being the most prominent ones. As BJP's candidate, Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power, it was expected that communal riots would become a norm between Hindu and Muslims, and such has been the case (Varshney, 2014). With incidents like force feeding a Muslim in Ramadan and the staged conversion of 57 Muslims in Agra which was labeled as the "homecoming" are many of such examples. The aims of BJP are the prevention of globalization by becoming a dominant force in India and making India a global economic power by the means of a Swadeshi approach as pointed out by Rajnath Singh in the BJP's National Executive meeting in 2009.

Following the change in behavior in India with the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its slogans from Hindutva, the discourse against Muslims in India has deteriorated significantly. Prime Minister Modi's government came to power in 2014, and in the next four years, law enforcement and some of the most worrying crimes against Muslims and other minorities that have tackled community issues have been enforced. As a result, violence and discrimination have increased, as has the rhetoric of right-wing Hindu organizations, which are somehow supported by leading BJP politicians. This article examines and analyzes the current state of the Muslim minority based on current sources, including human rights reports from international organizations, which claim that Hindutva forces and BJP ideological support have promoted and integrated extremist

mindsets into society. This means that even apparently Congress political actors have resorted to Hindu rule in an environment in which history is rewritten and minorities in India are considered foreign. (Reddy, & Zavos, 2009)

Nehru's Secular Vision

The precipitous rise of Hindu nationalism and the communalization of Indian politics can be explained in large measure by the changing attitude of state leaders toward the secular ideals of the Nehru period. The Indian government, led by its first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, promoted a secular vision of modernity. The government's support for secular norms and identities was premised on a belief that an elusive understanding of the nation was necessary for integrating India's diverse ethnic and religious groups into a common political framework. A secular vision of nationalism was thus institutionalized in India's first constitution. This commitment to a nonsectarian social order, however, was not universally shared. There were those who believed that national identity was more properly defined in religious terms. This reflected the desire among Hindu nationalists to create a *Hindu Rashtra* (a Hindu dominated political order or Hindu state) and to place control of state power exclusively in the hands of the Hindu majority. (Sullivan, 2011). Nehru and his supporters were concerned about the conflict and division that would result from marginalizing minority populations. Particularly in the aftermath of Partition, Pakistan from India in 1947, the politicization of religion was discouraged, particularly any form that might fan the flames of sectarian violence. (Esposito, 1984). "In the first fifteen years, led to attempts to develop village economies, and increased production of food and industry. Indeed, by 1966, India was the seventh most industrially advanced nation in the world and by 1989" (Clothey, 2007).

The early Congress Party leadership subsequently campaigned against efforts to institutionalize preferential status for the majority population or otherwise to link civil status to religious identity. Unlike Nehru, Indira Gandhi and her son, Rajiv Nehru's daughter and grandson appealed to the religious sentiments of the majority population and portrayed the Congress Party as the one true and able defender of the Hindu nation. (Gyanendra, 1996)

The religious politics of the Indira and Rajiv Gandhi era, in short, was part of a new strategy to mobilize support along communal, instead of class, lines. Although this majoritarian strategy worked for the Congress Party in the short term most spectacularly in the party's 1984 electoral landslide it had dire consequences in later years. By overturning the Nehruvian consensus, the Congress leaders helped to dissemble the secular norms that had governed Indian public life for most of the post-Independence era. This contributed greatly to the communalization of local governments and police forces and to an increase in communal violence. It also cost Indira her life and the Congress Party its dominance. By invoking the themes of Hindu communalism, the Congress Party leaders gave the organizations associated with this ideology a credibility that they had historically lacked. Congress thus helped to normalize what was previously

seen as a sectarian and discredited ideology and paved the way for the rise of the BJP (Hasan, 2000 & (Deol, 2003).

Roots of India's Religious Politics

The roots of India's religious politics go back to the religious reform movements of the late nineteenth century. As in the Middle East, there was a conscious effort among colonized populations to reevaluate their religious traditions as part of a broader effort to understand and respond to British colonial rule. This reevaluation entailed a variety of responses. For some, the central issues were the cultural stagnation of the region and the need to adapt religious tradition. For these liberal and "modernist" reformers, religion was dominated by superstition and legitimized a dysfunctional social order characterized by caste and gender discrimination. What was required, then, was to retain the positive elements of religion while shedding the accretions that had come to distort it. (Bipan, 1988) however, were less concerned about reconciling religion with Enlightenment norms than they were with preserving the centrality of religion in social life. From this perspective, religion was central to cultural identity and was worth preserving in whatever form. Ironically, both groups perceived religious reform (and revival) as a necessary means of revitalizing the political community and confronting the West.

Religious Nationalism

The internal political dynamics under the current fascist leadership reveals the gloomy picture of conservative Hindutva India as it tries to impose an aggressive cultural nationalism on the minorities. Hindu nationalism has swept the Indian politics off its feet. The insistence on calling every Indian, a Hindu man or woman, attacks on mosques and churches, the killings of Muslims on sacrificing cows, oxen and buffaloes by Hindutva forces unveil the true face of intolerant India. The Indian society is fragmented between Hindutva practitioners and the ones advocating a secular atmosphere. The conservative majority rules India today and unfortunately they are the ones who breed hate politics

The efforts to organize and reform the various communities began in the late nineteenth century, but it was only in the 1920s that extreme forms of religious communalism became entrenched in Indian politics. Differences of caste, class, region, and language divided followers of both Islam and Hinduism and made it difficult to regard these groups as genuine communities with shared interests. Moreover, while many Muslims and Hindus opposed British rule in India, others supported it. The colonial rulers played on these differences and frequently allied with landowning elites, tax collectors (the *zamindars*), princes, and minority leaders to undermine the Indian National Congress. The British government also encouraged the communalization of Indian society as a means of maintaining its rule. Through such "divide and rule" policies, the British empowered communalist organizations at the expense of liberal reformers (Jaffrelot, 1999).

The defining features of the early RSS were its military organization, its anti-Muslim sentiments, and the asceticism of its followers. It also sought to inculcate a martial Hindu spirit among its youth cadres. Although the RSS was more of a social movement than a political party, it shared with the leaders of the Mahasabha a communalist vision of national identity. This was evident in Golwalkar's 1939 book, *we, or Our Nationhood Defined*. Although both the RSS and the Mahasabha ostensibly appealed to tradition, their ideas were consistent with the right-wing politics of the 1930s. The conservative elite (both Muslim and Hindu) had historically been reluctant to engage in mass-based politics, since such movements were typically associated with leftwing radicalism. In the 1930s, however, the nationalist movements in Germany, Italy, and Spain provided a model of right-wing populism that both Hindu and Muslim communalists emulated. This led Nehru to conclude that the Hindu nationalists represented "an Indian version of fascism (Savarkar, 1969).

Nehru's Secularism and Muslim Minorities

Primary obstacle to Nehru's secular vision, however, was the continuing support for communal preference associated with organizations such as the RSS and the Mahasabha. For these groups, constructing an organic Hindu nationalism and establishing a Hindu state were seen as prerequisites for the self-actualization of the community.

Although the priority given to economic development reflected Nehru's desire to create a more egalitarian society, it was also seen as a key component to the resolution of India's many social issues. Rapid economic growth would help eradicate poverty, while the development of a welfare state would address the considerable needs of the population. A key premise of these policies was the belief that caste discrimination, gender inequality, illiteracy, and communal division were associated with economic deprivation and poverty. By raising living standards, it was assumed, many of these problems particularly the communal problem would become less pressing. In short, creating a more egalitarian society would also mean building a less divided one. Thus, the early efforts to restructure landlord tenant relations, provide workers' rights, and reform the landownership structure were all meant to have social as well as economic effects. National integration and nation building was, as a result, very much intertwined with issues of social justice and economic reform. A third feature of the Nehruvian consensus was its secular orientation. For Nehru, the new order had to be nondiscriminatory in its treatment of minority populations. The key to such tolerance, from his view, was state neutrality in matters of religion and belief. The government was not intended to be irreligious or otherwise hostile to religion but rather *equidistant* to all religious traditions. Civil status would not be linked, either positively or negatively, to membership in one religious community or another. In this sense, secularism meant nondiscrimination. As Nehru described it, "We call our State a secular one. The word 'secular' perhaps is not a very happy one and yet for want of a better, we have used it. What exactly does it mean? It does not obviously mean

a society where religion itself is discouraged. It means freedom of religion and conscience, including freedom for those who may have no religion. It means free play for all religions, subject only to their not interfering with each other or with the basic conceptions of our state.

Implicit in Nehru's secularism, however, was a suspicion of religion and an underlying belief that many of the social ills the caste system, denigration of women, and poverty were associated with the religious outlook so prevalent in India. Thus, despite the overt support for an idea of secularism as neutrality, lurking within Nehruvian secularism was the belief that religion as a social force ought to be diminished. According to this view, the economic and social *religious Politics and Secular States* development of society that is, its modernization depended on relegating religion to the private sphere and actively constraining those organizations that promoted communalist ideas. (Smith,1991).

The response by the Hindu community was one of shock and horror. In areas such as Maharashtra, it sparked anti-Brahman violence because of the close association of the Hindu Nationalists with the Brahman upper caste. The assassination also strengthened the hand of the secularists. Nehru long wary of the RSS and its sectarian beliefs immediately banned the organization and had many of its leader's arrested. Hindu militancy represented a threat to the new republic; the government prohibited any organization that openly advocated communal hatred and violence. The Mahasabha was temporarily forced out of party politics, and the RSS's standing was greatly diminished. The tensions between the secular leadership and the various communal forces, however, continued. One area of contention involved repealing the ban on the RSS. Golwalkar, the RSS leader, had written to both Nehru and Patel, urging an end to the ban, arguing that there was no direct evidence linking the organization to Gandhi's murder. Moreover, in one letter he implored Patel to recognize their common interests and urged an alliance between Congress and the RSS in opposition to the left.³⁸ Although Patel was sympathetic to Golwalkar's position, Nehru remained adamantly opposed. Nehru was deeply concerned about the militant character of the RSS, seeing it as a threat to the government (Golwalkar, 1939).

Nonetheless, secret negotiations between Patel and the RSS leadership continued, and a Congress working committee voted in 1949 to lift the ban and allow RSS members to join the Congress Party. The vote, undertaken while Nehru was out of the country, sparked a dispute between supporters of Patel, who endorsed the vote and those of Nehru, who opposed it. The vote was ultimately reversed.(Wickham, 2002).

Conclusion

In fact, and this is an important point, the Muslims both in India and their supporters from outside, while being aware of the specific circumstances and particularities of each minority group or community, have suffered by the

extremist narratives and the violence emanating from the extremist Hindu right-wing. This means that while women, Dalits, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and other oppressed communities in India have their own legitimate grievances resulting from the discrimination faced by Hindu extremists under the BJP, they also have a collective cause. Recognizing this will enable better advocacy to emerge for human rights. In particular, the conclusions reached here about the figure of the Indian Muslims who are bearing the bitter attitude of Hindus such as V D Savarkar in the 1920s and 1930s.

The policies being followed by the current Modi regime favor only the Hindu majority and not the minorities of India that are as ancient to these lands as the soil. The sharp turn in Indian domestic politics has left the notion of inclusive pluralist nationalism in shambles.

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