



Hindu Nationalism in Theory and Practice

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Abstract

Nationalism suggests that the majority community gains the upper hand in setting the nationalist and patriotic agenda while expecting compliance from the minority groups. In India, Hindu nationalism, also known as Hindutva, seeks to establish a Hindu India (Hindu Rashtra) that visualizes a Hindu “self” and the minority (Muslim & Christian) “other.” Hindutva is an ideology propagated by the Hindu rightwing elements that aspire to establish India as a Hindu state by uniting the Hindus who are divided along the lines of caste, class, language and other differences. Hindutva is on the ascendance in India in the last 25 years. What strategies and tactics have the adherents of this chauvinistic, sectarian movement employed in order to gain an ideological, cultural, organizational and political foothold in a caste-ridden, multi-religious, multi-linguistic, secular, pluralist and democratic society dependent on coalition politics?

This research is an attempt to understand the various facets of Hindutva in India, where violence has become central to India’s socio-political order. It will investigate the multiple ways in which the discourses of nationalism, the self and the other, social unity, insecurity, identity, gender and violence manifest in the society. The origins of Hindu nationalism in the socio-political mainstream can be traced back to the pre-independence era struggle. However, in the last two decades or so, the Hindu nationalist movement in India has become a dominant cultural and political movement that on the surface presents itself as

an inclusive and pro-development establishment, but at the core seeks to sustain Hindu upper-class hegemony in a nation with heterogeneous identities not only within the Hindu community but with other minorities such as Muslims, Christians and Sikhs.

This project takes the form of an academic essay that relies on secondary sources but also use primary sources. In it, I discuss Hindutva through the various definitions of nationalism and the ways in which majority and minority communities are imagined in a nation-state. This essay assumes a framework in which majoritarian discourse self assigns to one people the authority of the “self” and views minorities as the “other.” I will examine how the national, religious and cultural symbols are used to mobilize the public opinion and consolidate the self behind a certain agenda where myths form an important factor in the theory and practices of Hindutva establishment. Within this framework, any drive to homogenize the society will result in creating a stigmatized other, whose loyalty is always questioned.

This research is a qualitative study with historical orientation, complimented by anthropological, sociological and political science dimensions. It is an attempt to understand the ideology, history, discourse, religion, culture and politics in shaping perceptions about the Self and the other. It focuses on the formative assertions, challenges in its imagination of Hindu

collective, its discourse on the threatening other and how violence against the other is normalized which requires examining its fascist roots.

Chapter 1: Introduction

India is the largest democracy, and a secular republic with a Hindu majority that is known for its religious, cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity. The general impression for a foreigner is that India is a secular, pluralist and tolerant state where Hindus are a homogenous entity and Hinduism a monolith. I lived in India until the age of 25, and I too carried the impression that, despite caste differences, there was a religious uniformity among the Hindus. The Indian caste system, commonly known as a system of stratification, allows members of “higher” castes to enjoy many social and economic privileges while the “lower” castes are socially excluded and relegated to doing menial jobs. This discriminatory caste system may be known worldwide, but not many denounce it in the way critics reviled South Africa's Apartheid system. To the surprise of many, the Indian ruling establishment comprising mostly Hindu upper castes, regardless of which political party is in power, have been successful in preventing the caste discrimination issue from becoming a topic of international debate.¹

India has a long-established history of hypersensitivity to the caste-based discrimination issue being raised in the international forums. The ruling establishment is known to reject any criticism of caste related practices as

¹ "India's Dalits Still Fighting Untouchability." BBC News. Accessed April 21, 2016.

human rights violations by international forums including the United Nation's annual reports. The "lower caste" groups often self-identify as minorities (and in many situations they are indeed clearly religious or ethnic minorities in classic terms) and have historically used the minority rights framework to claim their rights. One of the major reasons to discuss caste in this paper is to inform the readers that preserving caste hierarchy is integral to the Hindu nationalism agenda and there is more rhetoric than substance to the calls for Hindu unity.

Hindu nationalism emerged at a time when the movement to free India from the British rule was gaining ground. The freedom movement was led by Mohandas Gandhi who recognized the need for an all-inclusive movement to take on the might of the British. As such, it had leaders representing diverse ethnicities, faiths and ideologies (such as the communists) under the banner of Indian nationalism. Some of the prominent leaders who joined the freedom movement include Bhagat Singh, Ambedkar, MK Gandhi, Subhash Chandra Bose, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Jawar Lal Nehru. Their values mainly revolved around Indian Nationalism based on the founding principles of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. A variety of organizations were formed to represent the industrialists, businessmen, workers and educated classes in the freedom movement. These organizations subsequently formed Indian National Congress

in 1885 as they recognized the need for a strong all-inclusive political organization to combat the colonial power.²

At the same time, the feudal elements (land lords and elites) amongst the Hindus and Muslims forged an alliance and formed United India Patriotic Association in 1888. These elites anticipated the decline in their social status and power, with the decline of British power. However, this alliance could not last for too long and split due to British machinations. This resulted in the formation of Muslim league by the Muslim elites in 1906, while the Hindu elites first formed Punjab Hindu Sabha in 1909 and later on Hindu Mahasabha in 1915.³ The Hindu Nationalists in the form of Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS (National Volunteer Organization), which became the ideological fountainhead of Hindutva, gradually started asserting themselves, beginning with the murder of Mahatma Gandhi as they did not agree with his pluralist view of post-colonial India. The Hindu nationalists' view of post-colonial India was one where religious minorities must be relegated to second class citizens.

This paper aims at analyzing the dynamics (discourses and practices) of Hindutva or Hindu ethno-cultural nationalism ideology. The first chapter discusses in brief Hindutva's formative assertions, chronology of political rise of BJP and its homogenization agenda with the larger goal of establishing India as a Hindu nation. In the second chapter, I discuss the composite makeup of India and the

² "Hindu Nationalism versus Indian Nationalism by Ram Puniyani. Accessed April 23, 2016.

³ "Hindu Nationalism versus Indian Nationalism By Ram Puniyani. Accessed April 23, 2016.

associated fragilities that poses problems to the homogenization agenda. I also inform the readers that it was the British who created the Hindu monolith notion in order to establish its authority and deal with Hindus as a collective. The Hindu nationalists not only appropriated the notion of Hindu monolith but continue to assert it. The fact is that Hindus have no central organization, no single religious reference point and the majority do not share the same rituals and practices, deities or beliefs and in some cases there are contradictory beliefs and practices among the lower caste and upper caste Hindus.

In the third chapter, I discuss the Caste System to highlight the divisions in the Hindu community and substantiate the point that the Hindu monolith claim is a myth. The caste system also validates the point that Hindu nationalism agenda is not about establishing a Hindu collective by liberating the lower castes people from the centuries old oppressive caste system; instead it seeks to entrench the upper caste hegemony under the rubric of creating a Hindu unity. As such, the immediate resistance to the homogenization agenda will come from within the ranks of Hindu community i.e. the lower-castes. Hence, it becomes imperative for the Hindu nationalism agenda to locate it's the threatening other in its discourse and use it as a tool to unite the Hindus.

Another important reason to discuss the caste system is to create awareness among the international audience and unmask the hidden agenda of Hindutva supremacists who have monopolized the narrative on India. The

image they present to the world is that India is world's largest democracy, Hinduism is a tolerant religion and Hindus are very accommodative of religious minorities.

The fourth chapter closely examines the Hindutva ideology, speeches and writings of the founding figures. It is aimed at substantiating two key points that Hindu Nationalism is an upper caste Hindu phenomenon whose real agenda is to perpetuate Brahminical hegemony i.e. caste structure through the rubric of Hindu unity by representing the Muslims as the dangerous other. Such tactics will help mobilize the Hindu majority behind its agenda and keep the lower castes from asserting for their rights and demand reparations for centuries of discrimination. Analyze how Hindutva fabricates the myths to perpetuate the fear and prejudice towards Muslims in the society.

The fifth chapter discusses some of the recent myths manufactured by Hindutva such as the Cow myth, Love Jihad and witch-hunt of Muslims through terror conspiracies and harvest political and electoral gains. This chapter also exposes how Hindutva deploys Islamophobia and contextualizes the framing of Muslims as "terrorists" with the connivance of the social, political and state machinery, the police, the mass media and the judiciary.

I conclude by arguing that Hindu nationalism has all the attributes of leading the nation toward a totalitarian state. Because Hindu nationalism puts the nation above the people, it does not conform to Ignatieff's definition of civic

nationalism which puts the people above the nation-state. This paper also argues that the homogenization agenda is irreconcilable with the Hindu nationalism agenda. This agenda is not really about unifying the Hindus by addressing the issue of caste hierarchy; rather it seeks to retain hierarchy by continuously fabricating the Muslim danger. Violence and anti-Muslim rhetoric is an integral component of the Hindutva discourse and operation. This is how it tries to maintain the notion of a Hindu monolith.

The May, 2014 general election was a watershed moment for post-colonial India, as it witnessed the landslide victory of the Hindu nationalist party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), also known as India's People Party. Another highlight of this electoral verdict was that a single party was able to get a clear majority of seats, winning 282 from a possible 543 seats in the Parliament after thirty years. Although the party enjoys a majority in the lower house, it has formed a coalition government respecting the pre-election electoral understanding with other parties. This coalition government includes some Hindutva affiliates that espouse militant political Hinduism and Hindu supremacy, while other coalition parties call for regionalism. This Hindu nationalist victory led by BJP had heralded new politics in India, and hence warrants international attention and close scrutiny of its divisive politics.

The BJP led National Democratic Alliance on May 26th, 2014 installed Mr. Narendra Modi as India's Prime Minister, a controversial figure who was banned

from entering the United States when he was the Chief Minister of the state of Gujarat. The BJP achieved unprecedented electoral successes in the last three decades. The party had only two seats in the lower house of the Parliament in 1984. Its tally increased to 88 in 1989, 120 in 1991, 161 in 1996, and 178 in 1998 -- and made a huge leap to win 282 seats in the 2014 elections. (The term of the lower house is five years; however, mid-term elections were held in 1991 and 1998). Hence the rapid rise and spread of Hindu nationalism needs to be brought to the attention of the international audience (governments, media, think tanks, academic institutions and policy makers). It is important that the international media, leaders and policy makers thoroughly scrutinize BJP's ideology, operations, political agenda, and support base. Its real political and cultural agenda and modus operandi needs to be unmasked so that the common man does not remain oblivious to its hidden agenda.

The 21st century Hindutva nationalists have become more mainstream as they gained power, "respectability" and influence through participation in the government at the federal level as well as in various states (such as Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh) allowing them to gain access to the resources of the state. The one time ideologues and firebrand orators are now ministers, lawmakers and state appointed officials. They use the state apparatus for mainstreaming the Hindutva narrative as the school children are taught a history

where militant Hinduism is normalized and minority religions such as Islam (and as a corollary, Indian Muslims) are alienated.⁴

The politics of polarization has been the *modus operandi* of Hindu Nationalism – which has operated by raising divisive issues, disturbing the communal harmony, manufacturing myths such as “Cow as our mother”, building a Ram Temple, raising the bogeyman of Islamophobia, demanding the Abolition of article 370 of the Indian Constitution (a “temporary provision” which grants special autonomous status to the state of Jammu & Kashmir) and application of the Uniform civil code so that the Muslim community loses the option to reference religious scriptures in matters of marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption and maintenance. I have witnessed several sectarian riots closely growing up in India and have been monitoring the Hindutva surge remotely from US; the violence against the minorities (Muslims and Christians) has increased in intensity, and the discourse become more vitriolic since the political ascendancy of the Hindu nationalist movement in the late 1980s. The situation has become even graver since Mr. Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister of India in May, 2014.

This situation raises the question of how the Hindu nationalists sustain themselves as a viable socio-political alternative through such a narrow agenda of divisive politics, myth manufacturing and creating insecurities amongst the

⁴ Anand, Dibyesh. "The Violence Of Security: Hindu Nationalism And The Politics Of Representing 'The Muslim' As A Danger." *Round Table* 94.379 (2005): 203-215. *Political Science Complete*. Web. 7 Mar. 2016.

majority community while the masses demand civic nationalism that can build schools, universities and factories for employing the youth, rural development and poverty reduction.

Chapter 2: *Hindu Nationalism Explained*

Hindu nationalism (Hindutva) finds its origins in Hinduism, the major religion in India. It is a blend of ethno-nationalism, religious fundamentalism and fascism. Hindutva seeks to establish India as a Hindu nation and perpetuate the idea of a homogenous national identity in a pluralist and largely diverse society with more than 4,600 communities. This ideology attempts to replace the notion of a composite India that comprises different cultures and faiths. It promotes an Indian identity of Hindu pride, monopolizes the narrative on patriotism and loyalty to the nation, and establishes Hindu fundamentalism and chauvinism in India. It manufactures the notion of “self” and the “other” through a complex and creative definition of “who belongs” or “does not belong” to the Indian nation. Deepa Reddy defines Hindutva in her article “Hindutva: Formative Assertions”:

It is organically linked to Hinduism, though the nature of its relationship to religious practice remains indefinite. Its politics are strategic, calculating, instrumentalist, troubling, polarizing, and seem routinely to precipitate intense debate, at best, rioting and violence, at worst. Its modalities of operation, its reliance on state complicities, and particularly its use of theories of primordiality liken it variously to ethno-nationalism, religious fundamentalism, and fascism.⁵

Further, its politics is not only pragmatic but also opportunistic. Christophe Jaffrelot argues that the Hindu nationalism phenomenon, with its amalgamation of religion, culture, language, and a sacred territory, appears to be the result of

⁵ Reddy, Deepa S. "Hindutva: Formative Assertions." *Religion Compass* 5.8 (2011): 439-451. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 7 Mar. 2016.

a perfect recipe for ethnic nationalism. Its motto, "Hindu, Hindi, Hindustan", is also echoed in many other European nationalisms based on religious identity, a common language, or even racial feeling.⁶

The Hindutva agenda of a homogeneous India is spearheaded by an umbrella of 38 organizations called Sangh Parivar (family of organizations) that provides institutional infrastructure to represent every aspect of sociopolitical life in India. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS, or the Sangh", -- literally "National Volunteer Corps"), founded in 1925, is considered the ideological fountainhead of Sangh Parivar. RSS is also the BJP's muscle and provides the cadres and foot soldiers that are indispensable at the time of elections. As an organization, the RSS is elusive and shadowy—it is only open to Hindu males – primarily upper caste. It maintains no membership records; it has resisted being registered with the government of India as a public/charitable trust; it has no bank accounts and pays no income tax.⁷

It is reported that the RSS organizational network is virtually unparalleled in the world. Today, it has over 5 million active members assembling in 40-50,000 shakhas (chapters) on a daily basis across India and coordinates its activities through 100 affiliate bodies created to perpetuate its Hinduization agenda.⁸ While there is no formal membership, an analysis of data on the number of

⁶ Jaffrelot, Christophe. *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2007. Print.. page 15

⁷ *The Foreign Exchange of Hate: IDRF and the American Funding of Hindutva*. Rep. Mumbai: Sabrang Communications, 2002. Print.

⁸ Gandhi, Priti. "Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh: How the World's Largest NGO Has Changed the Face of Indian Democracy." *Daily News and Analysis*. 15 May 2014. Web. 27 Nov. 2015.

shakhas (chapters) conducted each year over the last five years shows a nearly 29% increase in daily shakhas, 61% increase in weekly shakhas and 40% growth in monthly shakhas across India from 2010-11 to 2014-15.



Figure 1 RSS chapter assemblies⁹

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) represents the political arm, the Bajrang Dal along with several other new groups represents the paramilitary front, the Akhil Bharatiya Vidhyarti Parishad (ABVP) represents the student wing and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) represents the religious and cultural sphere.

The following organizational chart illustrates Sangh Parivar (the Family of Associations) family tree and its US equivalents:

⁹ Equip Ideologically to Challenge the Anti-national RSS. Muslim Mirror. Web. 10 Nov. 2015.

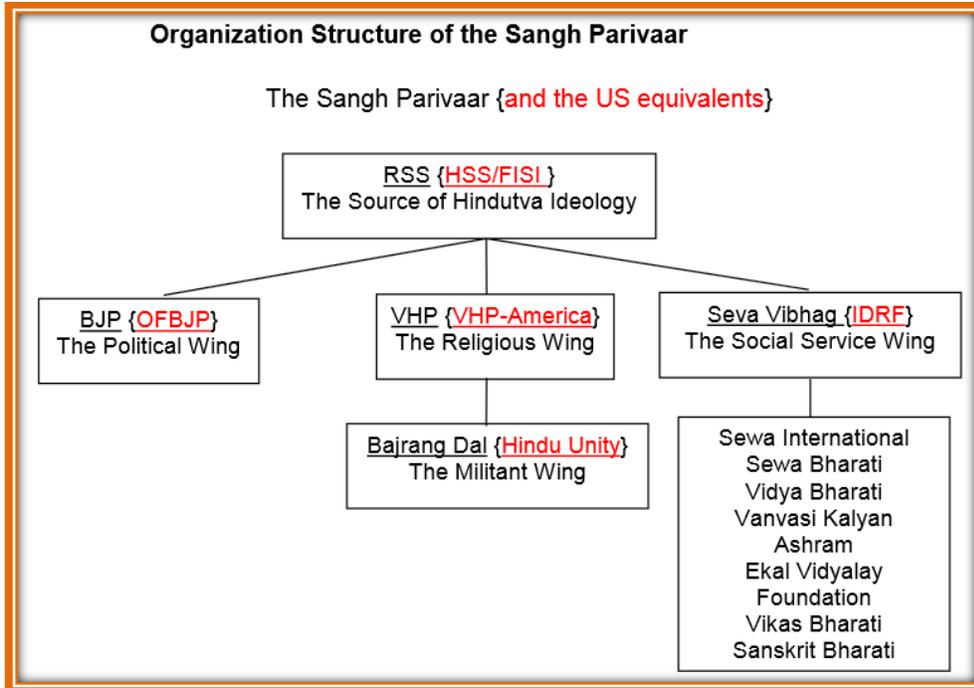


Figure 2: Sangh Parivar¹⁰

In the next chapter we will discuss Hindu nationalism within the context of India's composite framework.

¹⁰ Organization Structure of Sangh Parivar. Coalition Against Genocide. Web. 19 Nov. 2015.

Chapter 3: *Hindu Nationalism and Composite India*

The Hindu nationalists aspire to present a worldview of India as a Hindu nation by arguing that the majority of the inhabitants are Hindus regardless of the cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity. Their discourse on India as a Hindu nation seeks to create a cultural and religious uniformity based on the premise that Hinduism is a monolithic religion. It expects conformity from the diverse "Hindu" groups divided along the caste, ethnicity and linguistic lines. In this section I will highlight the multi-cultural and composite makeup of India which not only poses to the homogenization agenda but also contradict the Hindu monolith notion promoted by the Hindu nationalists. Gellner and other contemporary social scientists establish a link between ethnicity and the state where the largest ethnic group usually becomes dominant in a nation state. This dominant ethnic group attempts to maintain hegemony through identity politics, through its population proportion, and through its language or religion, and works to integrate and assimilate the citizens around national symbols. Gellner's discussion of nationalism suggests that the majority community gains upper hand in setting the nationalist and patriotic agenda while expecting compliance from the less dominant groups. The Hindu nationalists are making a case for Hindu majoritarianism by fabricating the notion that Hindus are the largest ethnic group so it is perfectly legitimate and "democratic" to become the dominant group.

India is the most diverse country in South Asia with, a multi-cultural, multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic people who for the most part lived in harmony through mutual understanding and respect because of the common, languages, cultures, classes, castes and livelihood while safeguarding their unique identities. As noted by William Dalrymple: "In the nineteenth century, India was still a place where traditions, languages, and cultures cut across religious groupings where people did not define themselves primarily through their religious faith."¹¹ India has over 200 main languages and 1600 dialects, which developed into diverse cultural segments. The culture, language, customs and even physical features vary at every few hundred miles while there are distinct cultural difference between the Northern and Southern India. However, in some cases the distinct cultural identities overlap religious communities i.e. people belonging to the same region but different faiths have common culture, language, food and other habits.¹²

Concern for the homogenization agenda imposed by the Hindu nationalists on a nation with such a broad diversity was also highlighted by the Vice President Hamid Ansari at the inaugural address of the 75th session of Indian History Congress, where he warned against the dangers of imposing a homogenization agenda on India's complex social fabric. He asserted that "Our 4,635 communities, according to the Anthropological Survey of India, is a terse

¹¹ Dalrymple, William. "The Great Divide." *New Yorker* 25 June 2015. Print.

¹² Basar, Asiful. "How the Indian Government Has Dealt with Multicultural Issues? A Comparative Perspective on These Strategies and Policies." *Academia.edu*. Web. 20 Nov. 2015.

reminder of the care that needs to be taken while putting together the profile of a national identity."¹³

As per the latest government report (the first set of final data) from the population enumeration (Census 2011) held in February 2011, also called the Primary Census Abstract, India has world's second largest population, with 1.2 billion people. 966.3 million Hindus make up 79.8 per cent of its population, and 172.2 million Muslims make up 14.23 per cent.¹⁴ Among the other minorities, Christians make up 2.3 per cent of the population and Sikhs 1.72 per cent. Of the 79.8 percent who are Hindus, the Dalits comprise 25 percent; they are referred to as "Minorities" as they have been traditionally kept outside the Hindu-based caste system.¹⁵ The "Other Backward Classes" is an umbrella term used for a range of castes and communities that are socially and economically disadvantaged. Together, the groups make up between 41% and 52% of the country's population. If we go by the lowest number of 41%, the upper castes Hindus are less than 20% of India's population.

Here we will explore the caste makeup of the Hindus to argue against the validity of a monolithic Hinduism claim by the Hindu nationalists. The Hindus are divided into three communities: caste, outcaste (Dalit), and indigenous (Adivasi). while the Dalits are now included into the general category of Hinduism, they have been a victim of exclusionary politics, treated with overt

¹³ "Idea of 'homogeneous' Nation Problematic: Hamid Ansari." *The Hindu*. PTI, 29 Dec. 2014. Web. 10 Oct. 2015.

¹⁴ Singh, Rukmini S. Vijaita. "Muslim Population Growth Slows." *The Hindu*. 25 Aug. 2015. Web. 20 Nov. 2015.

¹⁵ "SCs, STs Form 25% of Population, Says Census 2011 Data." *The Indian Express*. 1 May 2013. Web. 24 Nov. 2015.

hostility and repression, and have been oppressed by the majority community. Novelist Arundhati Roy recognizes the fragmented social fabric of India from a caste perspective by asserting that there are approximately 4,000 endogamous castes and sub-castes (jatis) in Hindu society, each with its own specified hereditary occupation divided into four varnas—Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (soldiers), Vaishyas (traders) and Shudras (servants).¹⁶ There are unique beliefs, customs and practices within the Hindu community along with some commonalities as confirmed by Doniger:

It is not a simple matter of listing things that "all Hindus" believe or, even, that "all Hindus" do. We need something rather more like a Venn diagram, a set of intersecting circles of concepts and beliefs, some of which are held by some Hindus, others by other Hindus, and still others shared not only by Hindus but also by believers in other South Asian religions, such as Buddhism or Jainism.¹⁷

Ashraf cites Walter K. Andersen's argument dividing India into Hindu, Muslim and Christian identities is basically unthinkable. Anderson asserts that homogenization is non-practical due to the complicated social boundaries, as the Hindu community has distinct internal linguistic groups, so do the Christians and Muslims. Anderson also credits the British for imposing a Hindu-Muslim division of the subcontinent.¹⁸

Gail Omvedt in *Dalit Visions* confirms the non-homogeneity of Indian society, and argues that a large majority of people traditionally did not identify

¹⁶ Roy, Arundhati. "India's Shame." *Prospect Magazine* 13 Nov. 2014. Print.

¹⁷ Doniger, Wendy. "Hinduism by Any Other Name". *The Wilson Quarterly* (1976-) 15.3 (1991): 35–41. Web...

¹⁸ Ashraf, Ajaz. "'The RSS Has Become Far More Political over the Last Two Decades': US Academic Walter Andersen." *Scroll.in*. 6 Dec. 2015. Web. 25 Dec. 2015.

with Hinduism. There were multiple local gods and traditions that existed side by side, forming the base of popular culture. There is not a single religious text such as Qur'an or Bible in Hinduism that is considered a common reference point. The Hindutva nationalists are now pushing for the government to adopt Geeta as the national scripture (as a single common reference point for all Indians regardless of their religious beliefs) while knowing fully well the secular character of the Indian State with a national constitution. It reflects the emphasis of the Hindutva nationalist agenda on creating a homogenous majority community in India.

The Brahmins and the upper caste Hindus were the chief architects of "monolithic Hindusim" by virtue of their advantageous position as they were highly educated, enjoyed caste privileges and were employed by the British authorities to perpetuate Brahminic Hinduism.¹⁹ Gail Omvedt's work further validates that the homogenization agenda is closely linked to the entrenchment of the caste hierarchy by the upper caste Hindus.

Thapar, while challenging the monolithic Hinduism notion, argues that Hinduism was divided into two major religious categories called Brahminism and Shramanism. Thapar calls it a "Syndicated Hinduism" that aims to protect and promote the interests of a powerful urban middle class and the "feudal" power centers in rural India -- the landlords, rich peasants and other sections of the social elite -- who stand to profit from a uniform, monolithic Hinduism discourse.

¹⁹ "Deepa Reddy | University of Houston Clear Lake - Academia.edu." Deepa Reddy | University of Houston Clear Lake - Academia.edu. Web. 13 Mar. 2016. P. 441

The attempt of this exercise is to present a modern reformed religion where the final product is a repackaged Brahminism.²⁰

As Thomas B. Hansen, a Danish anthropologist and leading contemporary commentator on religious and political violence in India notes in *The Saffron Wave*:

This process of codification tended to “freeze” Indian society by turning negotiable boundaries of caste and community into timeless, cultural features of precolonial past. Communities were produced as ever more coherent and objectified groups even as they were competing for legal recognition, enfranchisement, preferential schemes, and collective social mobility through education and bureaucratic employment.²¹

The political landscape of India highlights the huge diversity, competing regional-ethnic (provincial) interests and center-state tensions. There are six major national political parties with representation in Indian parliament across the country, 36 state level parties mostly formed to serve the respective state's interests and as a response to perceived threat from the national parties. There are as many as 657 regional and vernacular parties such as the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in the state of Andhra Pradesh formed in March primarily on an anti-Congress party platform in 1982. It did not espouse any specific ideology except for its commitment to safeguarding “the political, economic, social, and cultural foundations of Telugu-speaking people.”²² Similarly, the Dravida Kazhagam (Dravidian Organization) was one of the first Dravidian parties founded by E. V. Ramaswamy. Its original goals were to eradicate the ills of the existing caste

²⁰ Ram, P. R. "Hindutva Offensive Social Roots: Characterisation." *South Asia Citizens Watch*. Web. 15 Dec. 2015.

²¹ See Hansen

²² Routray, Bibhu Prasad. "Telugu Desam Party (TDP)." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 22 Sept. 2015. Web. 10 Oct. 2015.

system including untouchability and on a grander scale to obtain a "Dravida Nadu" (Dravidian nation) from the Madras Presidency.²³ There are several other regional parties formed to serve the interests of particular ethnic and linguistic communities. There are some issue based parties formed to pursue specific issues such as to fight corruption and to safeguard natural resources belonging to specific area.²⁴

This diverse and complex framework of Indian multiculturalism presents huge challenges that any ruling establishment must take into consideration as it poses a real test for democracy and pluralist character due to the competing interests of different ethnic and social groups as emphasized by Samuel Huntington:

In the post-cold war period, the most important distinctions among peoples are not ideological, political or economic. They are cultural. People define themselves in terms of ancestry, religion, language, history, values, customs and institutions. They identify with cultural groups: tribes, ethnic groups, religious communities, nations, and at the broadest level civilizations (Huntington, 1996: 21).²⁵

It is evident that the notion of a homogenous Hindu community is a new phenomenon as the language of majoritarianism and unified Hindu community is an orientalist fabrication, later absorbed and promoted by the Hindutva

²³ "Dravidar Kazhagam." *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*. Web. 15 Oct. 2016.

²⁴ "Political Parties in India." *Elections.in*. Web. 15 Dec. 2015.

²⁵ Mukherjee, Jhumpa. *Conflict Resolution in Multicultural Societies: The Indian Experience*. Print.

ideologues.²⁶ It drew legitimacy when it was contextualized with the discourse of the self.

As Bhatt states "... its clear purpose was to create, strengthen and consolidate the idea of distinct nationwide imagined community of Hindus..." (Bhatt, 76). Hence it is important to analyze how the Hinduization agenda manifests itself in such a complex framework.

Caste System in India

In this chapter, I will discuss the caste hierarchy in India, how the Hindu nationalist agenda seeks to preserve it in order to perpetuate upper caste Hindu hegemony. The discussion on the caste system is critical to deflate the monolithic Hinduism myth. The caste apartheid poses a challenge to the homogenization agenda hence compelling the Hindutva nationalists to pursue the polarization politics under the rubric of social unity among Hindus.

The caste system in India has ancient roots since the second millennium BC Sanskrit texts. It is a social structure that classifies different groups into a caste hierarchy where members of "higher" castes enjoy many privileges over the "lower" caste people. This hierarchical caste system of discrimination is deeply rooted into the society across India's religious boundaries and caste boundaries and very much prevalent till this day.

²⁶ Bhatt, Chetan. *Hindu Nationalism: Origins, Ideologies, and Modern Myths*. Oxford: Berg, 2001. Print.

The following figure illustrates the caste hierarchy that is prevalent in India for centuries:

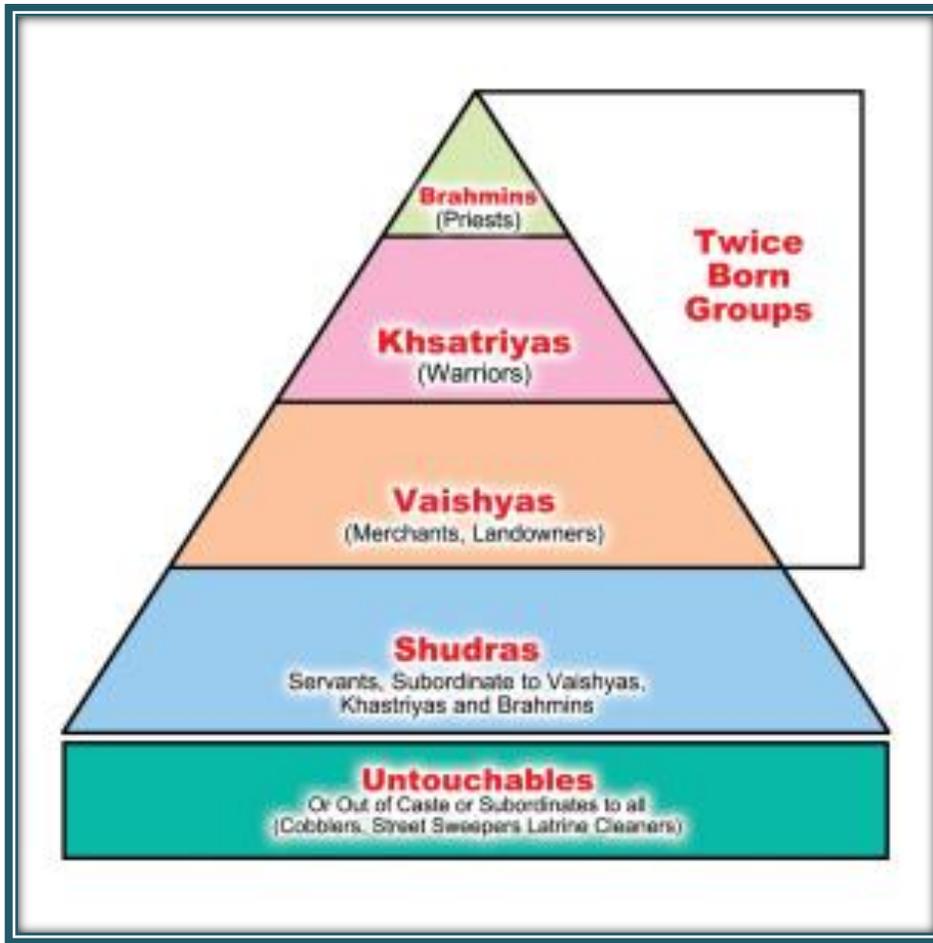


Figure 3 Caste Pyramid ²⁷

Roy states that the caste system in India is one of the most brutal modes of hierarchical social organization that human society has known as it continues to escape rigorous international scrutiny and censure. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was the most prominent leader of the lower caste Hindus and described them as “untouchables”. He struggled for their rights all his life, severely criticized the

²⁷ *Origin of the Caste System*. Web. 19 Nov. 2015.

Varna system, which has not only subjugated Dalits but also degraded the status of Hindu women in the society. The caste system is an instrument successfully used by the upper caste Hindus to sustain their hegemony over a large section of India's populace. Some of the practices are very brutal and in some cases unimaginable that they exist in a modern India. Roy, in her article titled "India's Shame," cites Dr. BR Ambedkar's observation about caste practices to the effect that "Hinduism is a veritable chamber of horrors."²⁸

The term "Dalit" implies a condition of being underprivileged. It refers to people who are deprived of basic human rights and are suppressed on account of their lowly birth. They are downtrodden and oppressed people who used to be identified by virtue of hereditary occupations that were considered to be impure. The common notion is that the Dalits and the Scheduled Castes are synonymous terms. But the fact is that there are many people outside the Scheduled Castes who can also be termed as Dalit. As noted by Kumar, "In the broader sense of the term, by "Dalit" here, we mean all the lower classes in the Hindu caste hierarchy, the Scheduled Tribes, lower class Muslims and Christians."²⁹

Ambedkar states that the root causes of suffering of women in India is to be found in the Hindu religious books such as Manusmriti, Atharva Vedas and many others. He identifies Manusmriti to be the most socially discriminatory as it

²⁸ Roy, Arundhati. "India's Shame." Prospect Magazine 13 Nov. 2014. Print.

²⁹ Barman, Rup Kumar. "CASTE VIOLENCE IN INDIA: Reflections on Violence Against the Dalits of Contemporary India." Voice of Dalit 3.2 (2010): 193-1. ProQuest. Web. 14 Mar. 2016.

stratified people into a caste hierarchy and promotes patriarchy. Ambedkar felt that women were victimized on the basis of superstitions and could never escape from the stranglehold of irrational customs and rituals. Following are a few infamous edicts enshrined in the ancient Hindu Law book, the Manusmriti and its related texts:

Woman is an embodiment of the worst desires, hatred, deceit, jealousy and bad character. Women should never be given freedom. (Manu IX. 17 and V. 47, 147).

A Brahman, Kshatriya, or Vaishya Man can sexually exploit any shudra woman. (Manusmitri IX.25).

Killing of a woman, a Shudra or an atheist is not sinful. (Manu IX. 17 and V. 47, 147).

If the Shudra intentionally listens for committing to memory the Veda then his ears should be filled with molten lead... (MS III-4).³⁰

Ambedkar attacked Manusmriti as a major source which legitimizes the denial of freedom, self-respect, right to education, property, divorce etc. to women. The Laws of Manu justified the treatment of women as sex objects and promoted child marriage. In 1927 Ambedkar could not tolerate the injustices anymore and, along with his followers, set fire to a copy of Manusmriti to protest its misogyny. But the Hindutva ideologues continue to uphold Manusmriti as a sacred text. Savarkar, the founder of Hindutva proclaimed that the Manusmriti

³⁰ Patwardhan, Anand. "How the Sangh Parivar Systematically Attacks the Very Idea of India." Scroll.in. 13 Nov. 2014. Web. 13 Dec. 2015.

was the most sacred scripture to be followed after the Vedas and considered as the driving force for the spiritual and divine march of the nation. Golwalkar called Manu “the first, greatest and the wisest lawgiver of mankind.” The RSS while opposing the Indian Constitution in 1950 demanded that Manusmriti’s law be made the supreme law of the land.

Dr. Ambedkar’s continued his struggle to rescue the lower caste people and restore the status and dignity of the lower caste women in the society. In 1948, as a law minister he drafted the Hindu Code Bill, also referred as the Uniform Civil Code, that called for Hindu women’s rights to be on par with Hindu men, which resulted in strong opposition from the Hindutva ranks. It sought to abolish different marriage systems prevalent among Hindus and to establish monogamy as the only legal system.

Defending the Bill, Ambedkar pointed out the various forms of oppression against women and that the recommendations in the Bill are based on the Constitutional principles of equality, liberty and fraternity. The Hindutva proponents opposed the Bill, arguing that the Bill was an attempt at the demolition of the founding pillars, the structure and fabric of Hindu Society. However, the real reason the Bill was opposed because it was a perceived threat to patriarchy. Therefore, on the eve of the first elections in 1951 Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru dropped the Bill by saying that there was too much opposition, which led to Dr. Ambedkar’s resignation as Law Minister.

As caste apartheid continued to persist despite Gandhi's assurance that the upper castes could be transformed from within, Dr. Ambedkar in 1956 with more than a 100,000 Dalit followers renounced Hinduism for Buddhism. It was the largest mass conversion in history.



Figure 4 Manual Scavenging³¹

According to a recent survey conducted jointly by the US based University of Maryland and National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), caste discrimination is most widespread among Hindus, Sikhs and Jains.³² (NCAER is India's oldest and largest independent, non-profit economic policy research institute). The following chart illustrates the caste and religion based practice of untouchability and other forms of discrimination. It is important to

³¹ *Scraping Dry Toilets with Their Bare Hands: Shocking Survey Shows 1.56 Lakh Rural Households Ignore Ban on Manual Scavenging.* By Darpan Singh.

³² Chishti, Seema. "Biggest Caste Survey: One in Four Indians Admit to Practising Untouchability." *The Indian Express*. 29 Nov. 2014. Web. 27 Nov. 2015.

note that the practice was most prevalent among Brahmins (52 per cent) and substantiates the point made earlier that Hindutva is primarily a repackaged Brahminical Hinduism and their main agenda is to preserve the upper caste domination vis-à-vis the caste hierarchy. The Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) are official designations given to various groups of historically disadvantaged people in India. It should also be noted that Hindutva nationalists are predominantly upper class Hindus.

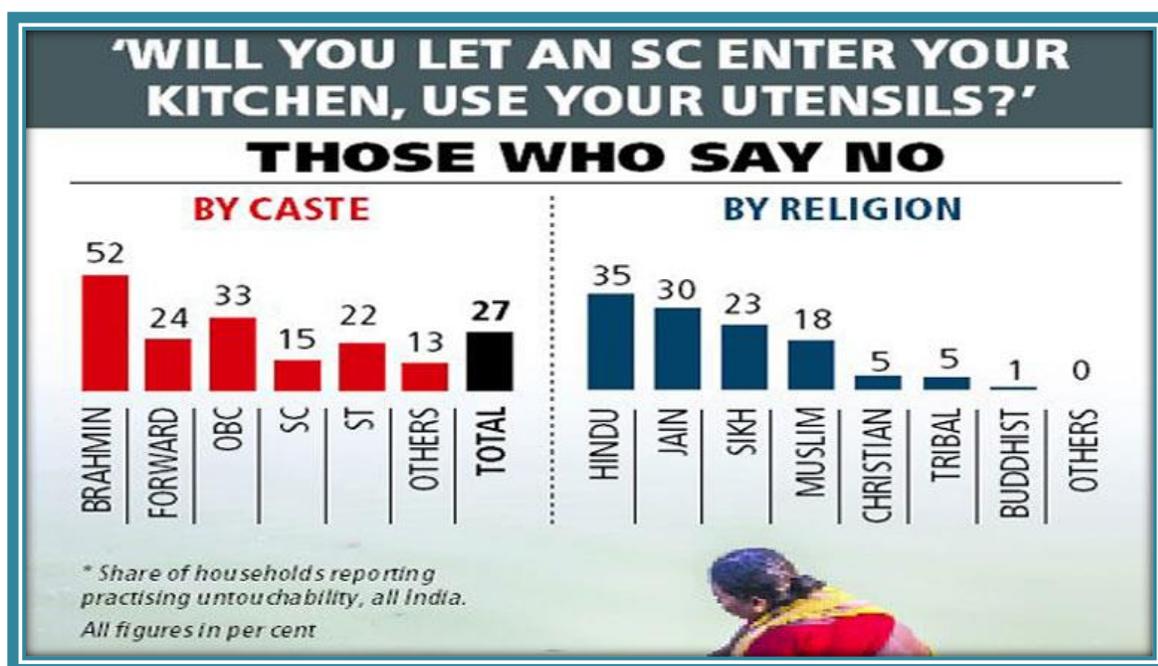


Figure 5: India Caste Discrimination³³

Across India, 27 per cent respondents agreed that they did practice untouchability in some form. 24 per cent of non-Brahmin forward caste respondents admitted to it — lower, interestingly, than OBC (other backward classes) respondents, 33 per cent of whom confirmed its prevalence in their

³³ Will You Let an SC Enter Your Kitchen, Use Your Utensils? The India Human Development Survey (IHDS-2). *The Indian Express*. Web. 27 Nov. 2015.

homes. 15 per cent of Scheduled Caste and 22 per cent of Scheduled Tribe respondents admitted to the practice.

“Hidden Apartheid: Caste Discrimination against India’s ‘Untouchables’” is a 2007 report based on in-depth investigations by The Center for Human Rights and Global Justice (CHRGJ), Human Rights Watch, Indian non-governmental organizations, and media sources. It details the pervasiveness of abuses against Dalits corroborated by the reports of Indian governmental agencies, including the National Human Rights Commission, and the National Commission on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes made the following observation about the Dalit crimes:

... More than 165 million Dalits in India are condemned to a lifetime of abuse simply because of their caste... Dalits endure segregation in housing, schools, and access to public services. They are denied access to land, forced to work in degrading conditions, and routinely abused at the hands of the police and upper-caste community members who enjoy the state’s protection. Entrenched discrimination violates Dalits’ rights to education, health, housing, property, freedom of religion, free choice of employment, and equal treatment before the law. Dalits also suffer routine violations of their right to life and security of person through state-sponsored or state-sanctioned acts of violence, including torture.³⁴

Some of the reasons for this brutal inhuman practice to have escaped international condemnation is that the largely upper class “Brahminic” Hindu establishment of India associated it with some positive rituals and habits such as mysticism, spiritualism, non-violence, tolerance, vegetarianism, Gandhi, yoga,

³⁴ "India: ‘Hidden Apartheid’ of Discrimination Against Dalits." *Human Rights Watch*. Center for Human Rights and Global Justice and Human Rights Watch, 13 Feb. 2007. Web. 27 Nov. 2015.

backpackers, the Beatles— making it difficult to attract the curiosity of outsiders or help them try to understand it.³⁵ The caste practice is defined by the Bahminical syndicate as an issue of fate or destiny resulting from the lower caste people's evil actions in the previous life. The caste system was also endorsed by Gandhi who believed that caste represented the genius of Indian society. In 1921, in his Gujarati journal *Navajivan*, he wrote:

I believe that if Hindu society has been able to stand, it is because it is founded on the caste system... To destroy the caste system and adopt the western European social system means that Hindus must give up the principle of hereditary occupation which is the soul of the caste system. Hereditary principle is an eternal principle. To change it is to create disorder. I have no use for a Brahmin if I cannot call him a Brahmin for my life. It will be chaos if every day a Brahmin is changed into a Shudra and a Shudra is to be changed into a Brahmin. ³⁶

As shown in figure 3, the Brahmins sit at the top of the caste pyramid, considered as pure, and enjoy numerous entitlements over the lower caste. The Dalits (untouchables), placed at the bottom of the caste pyramid, are considered polluted ones and enjoy no entitlements but are burdened with plenty of menial duties such as manual scavenging. Beyond these four varnas, there are those who are called the Ati-Shudras, or subhumans. They are arranged in hierarchies of their own—the Untouchables, the Unseeables, the Unapproachables—whose presence, whose touch, whose very shadow is considered to be polluting by the privileged-caste Hindus. On June 16th, 2015, a

³⁵ See Roy. "India's Shame"

³⁶ See Roy. "India's Shame"

shocking incident took place in which a minor Dalit girl was allegedly beaten up by “upper caste” women after the victim's shadow fell on a muscleman belonging to their family according to the police report.³⁷

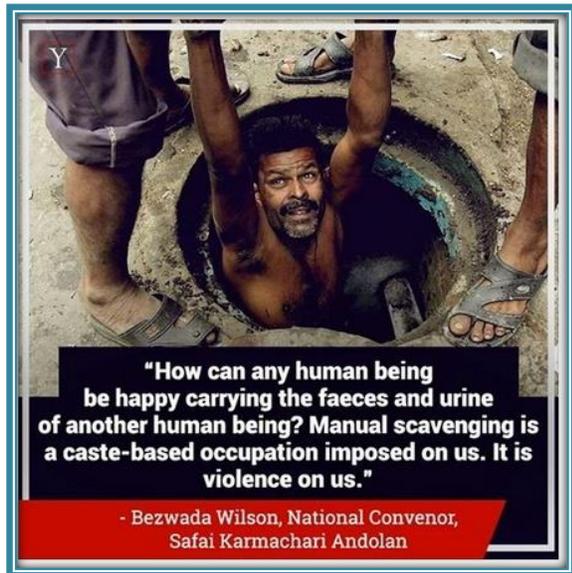


Figure 6 Manual Scavenging³⁸

The mix of Brahminical Hinduism with nationalism, reflecting the interests of upper castes was defined and later refined on the exclusionist principles that are so basic to Brahminism. Vinayak Savarkar's initial anti-British struggles were very impressive. However, after assuming the role of the Hindutva protagonist, his major energies were channeled into strengthening the politics of hate, the formation of sectarian Hindu Mahasabha, and helping RSS from distance. This fabrication through continuous reinforcement of the narrative of India as unitary

³⁷ "Dalit Girl Beaten up in MP as Her Shadow Falls on 'upper Caste' Man." *The Hindu*. PTI (Press Trust of India), 16 June 2015. Web. 27 Nov. 2015.

³⁸

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1091475924205467&set=a.877056735647388.1073741838.100000292101514&type=3&theater>

Hindu society has obscured the ground reality of a segmented society, with Brahmins and other upper castes exercising a monopoly of power, fabricated Hinduism is found everywhere.

In order to substantiate the argument made in the beginning of this chapter that the Hindu nationalists embark on politics of hate to perpetuate its homogenization agenda I cite the infamous event in Indian history where BJP's supreme leader Lal Kishan Advani embarked on a chariot to mobilize support in favor a temple by demolishing the Muslim mosque. According to many political pundits this journey was undertaken by the Hindu nationalist to derail the awakening and empowerment of the lower caste people through the implementation of the Mandal commission report in 1990 by the National Front government as an affirmative action toward the lower castes for the ongoing injustices against them. The former Prime Minister Mr. V.P. Singh while deposing central government-appointed Commission, set up to inquire into the events that led to the demolition of the historical mosque (Babri Masjid), Singh stated that "I feel that it was Mandal which triggered off the rath yatra (chariot journey)."³⁹ The upper- caste establishment could not openly oppose the Mandal report as it not only needed the backward class and Dalit votes but also It had to build a Hindu monolith. The BJP withdrew its support to the National Front, a coalition government led by V.P. Singh once the chariot was stopped and subsequent arrest of Advani to maintain law and order. This resulted in mid-

³⁹ "Of Ayodhya and the Congress." Of Ayodhya and the Congress. Accessed April 24, 2016.

term elections and BJP gained significantly in the next elections and was successful in polarization along religious lines and the caste issue was pushed to the back burner temporarily.⁴⁰

That the Hindutva use anti-Muslim narrative to perpetuate the agenda of upper caste hegemony is also confirmed by Amit Rai as he elaborates on the Mandal Commission benefits that reserve 52% in government jobs for the backward caste people, which means less opportunities for the upper caste. It was strongly opposed by the upper caste youth and exposed the myth of Hindu unity. To stave off such a catastrophe, the nationwide chariot tour was begun as a way of taking back control of the nationalist discourse and promoting the fabricated Hindu unity. According to Rai, the BJP positioned the "Hindu" in opposition to the "Muslim": "Thus the BJP used Muslims as their scapegoats -- in their rhetoric, the Muslim minorities becomes those dangerous criminals that help mobilize the Hindu majority."⁴¹ Rai reiterates that the Brahminical Hindu fundamentalism cannot tolerate affirmative action (government concessions) to the lower caste people as it would forever fracture an identity that was never there to begin with.⁴² The Hindutva would not openly oppose granting of reparations and benefits by the state to the lower caste people for the injustices committed against them nor have they ever proposed such measures.

⁴⁰ Shrivastava, Rahul. "BJP Journeys On, Forgets Yatri Advani." *The Best of Media*. 27 Sept. 2015. Web. 15 Dec. 2015.

⁴¹ Rai, A. (1993, Feb 28). Fighting india's new brahmanism: Exploring the curious connection between caste-based oppression and religious strife in india. *India Currents Magazine*, 6, 18.

⁴² See Amit Rai.

This summary discussion on Hindutva's construction of a monolithic Hinduism myth should be sufficient and provides supporting evidence to establish a linkage between Hindutva, Brahmanism, and upper class Hindu hegemony in a composite India.

Chapter 4: *Hindutva Construction*

In this section we will closely examine the Hindutva ideology, speeches and writings of the founding figures. It was constructed along the lines of the majoritarian nationalism first popularized in 1890 in Bengal by Chandranath Basu that was later revived and articulated by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in 1920. The language deployed by the Hindutva ideologues is centered on the theme that Hindus constitute a nation by virtue of their identity being located within the confines of national geographical boundaries. Savarkar states that “The Hindus are a no treaty nation – but an organic National Being... --while the Indian Moslems are on the whole more inclined to identify themselves and their interests with Moslems outside India...”⁴³ The Hindu nationalists aspire to imagine the Hindu community that comprises all castes, subcastes, outcastes along with other religious minorities such as Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains, and consider all religionists as “indigenous” except for Islam and Christianity, which are considered as foreign. However, in practice, their relationship to Sikhism, Buddhism and the lower caste Hindus has been problematic.⁴⁴

The other major theme deployed by the Hindutva actors during the formative stage was to instill fear, despair and defeatism by indulging in certain anti-Muslim or anti-Christian rhetoric. One such rhetorical trope is that Hinduism was under siege and Muslims were the treacherous “fifth column” in the nation,

⁴³ Bhatt, Chetan. *Hindu Nationalism: Origins, Ideologies, and Modern Myths*. Oxford: Berg, 2001.

⁴⁴ Anand, Dibyesh. "Hindutva: A Schizophrenic Nationalism." *THE REPUBLIC OF IDEAS*. Web. 22 Dec. 2015.

who carry anti-national designs because they identify and maintain solidarity with Muslims outside of India. Another rhetoric centers on the fear of conversions of Hindus -- primarily the lower caste Hindus -- to Islam or Christianity. In order to perpetuate these themes, the Hindutva founders started forced conversion to Hinduism campaigns (shuddhi movement), they denounced the alternative anti-colonialist discourse on Indian nationalism, and branded those who advocated for a pluralist India as pseudo-secularists who were trying to appease the minorities (mainly Muslims and Christians) for political gains. The Hindu nationalists played on the fears of Hindu masses to distract them from aligning with the alternative narratives. In order to rally the majority community behind its homogenization agenda through the discourse of insecurity they demonstrated the urgency to correct the historical "wrongdoings" by the foreigner. The pluralists who challenged the Hindutva narrative were condemned as the betrayers of the Hindu solidarity movement.

The Hindutva discourse exhorts Hindus to be proud of their Hindu identity amidst the call of militarization by fabricating fear about the Muslim culture and political ideology in reference to Quranic injunctions of jihad and Muslim nationhood. The discourse seeks to undermine the Hindu-Muslim unity and calls for purging history books that reference the Hindu-Muslim divide as the legacy of British rule. The hatred for the Muslims and Christians is central to their ideology

and they fabricate myths about a thousand years of Muslim aggression by “evil invaders.”⁴⁵

Veer Savarkar is the founder and leading figure in the “Hindu Mahasabha” (Great Society of Hindus), a Hindu nationalist organization and political party. He coined the term “Hindutva” and codified its ideology before he joined the Hindu Mahasabha. The ideology seeks to fuse all the distinct identities (culture, language, faith and tradition) of the religious minorities (Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and Jains) and ethno-cultural minorities (Dalits and Adivasis) into its Brahminic construction of an Indian nation.

The next few paragraphs will focus on how the notion of a monolith Hindu community was constructed. The popular perception that exists today about India as a nation where a vast majority is adherent to a monolithic Hindu religion emerged from the scholarly works and colonial administrative interventions in the seventeenth century. It was a myth constructed by the colonial power that Hindus form a single unitary and homogeneous community which was later absorbed and promoted by the upper caste Hindus. It was in late eighteenth century, the colonial administration fabricated the notion that Hindus are the original inhabitants and the essence of India is found in a number of key Hindu classical scriptures such as the Vedas, the codes of Manu, and the Shastras, etc.⁴⁶ Note that all these religious texts are revered and considered divine by the Brahminical Hindus. The lower castes that form a significant percentage of

⁴⁵ Bhatt, Chetan. Hindu Nationalism, page 78

⁴⁶ Ram, P. R. "Hindutva Offensive Social Roots: Characterisation." South Asia Citizens Watch. Web. 15 Dec. 2015.

India's population do not have the same respect for these texts. However, Jaffrelot cites Louis Renou to contradict the colonial construction of a Hindu monolithic nation: Moreover, Hinduism has often been described not as a religion but as a "conglomeration of sects".⁴⁷ Later on, during the colonial period, this monolithic Hindu identity was constructed for all the inhabitants of this land except those who were followers of Islam or Christianity.⁴⁸

This colonial agenda of manufacturing Hinduism as a monolithic entity aligned well with the Brahminical ideology and practices for centuries. The Brahmins and the upper caste Hindus eagerly endorsed this fabrication of Hinduism as a monolithic religion for several reasons. First, it allowed them to maintain caste and religious supremacy and enjoy spiritual and material privileges both in the private and public sectors. Second, it placed Hinduism along with other Semitic religions (Islam and Christianity) on the global scene. Third, it superficially blurred the caste divisions and competing identity discourses on the basis of language and culture.

The Hindu nationalists' informal partnership with the colonial administration predates the inception of Hindutva:

From the outset Europeans were fascinated with the local intelligentsia as the East India Company in Bengal used the services of the local literati, who came from the Hindu upper castes Brahmins and, as a result, a new elite of upper-caste British-trained white-collar workers took shape. This new elite often admired Britain for its remarkable scientific, technical, legal, and social achievements.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Jaffrelot, Christophe. *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2007. Print.

⁴⁸ Ram, P. R. "Hindutva Offensive Social Roots: Characterisation." South Asia Citizens Watch. Web. 15 Dec. 2015.

⁴⁹ Jaffrelot, Christophe. *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2007. Print.

Wendy Doniger describes this fabrication of a unified Hinduism in terms of orientalism: "... the love-hate relationship between Orientalists and the Orient existed for both the right and the wrong reasons; she describes the relationship between the orientalists and the orient as "it is exotic, it is erotic, it is spiritual, and it never changes. Like many of the Indian branch of Orientalists, Europeans picked up this assumption of timeless, unified Hinduism from some Hindus, and then reinforced it in other Hindus..."⁵⁰

As colonial governance in India evolved gradually, it devised a complex set of policies of cooptation, complicity, transformation, fabrication and imposition of authority as necessary. The colonial establishment was faced with the challenge to accommodate the rapidly emerging new elites: the newly educated, the landed who are mostly upper-caste Hindus who considered themselves qualified enough to deserve positions into government structures. But it also had to bring into submission through firm governance the huge non-elite masses of the lower caste, peasants and labor class who were seen as irrational, passionate and traditional. The colonial administration co-opted the upper class Hindu elites through acts of investiture by a select group of officers as their interests converged with the interests of the colonial masters. These elites were amenable to what the British saw as the reasoned persuasion and

⁵⁰ Doniger, Wendy. "An Alternative Historiography For Hinduism." *Journal Of Hindu Studies* 2.1 (2009): 17-26. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 14 Mar. 2016.

negotiation that later become the pillars of colonial rule in India.⁵¹ These elites were playing the role of social agents of the colonial project acting as middlemen between the colonist and the masses. They were placed in a position of subordination to the colonizer while gaining a position of dominance over the lower caste, uneducated, poor and labor class people. They were aligned with the colonial administration in controlling territories and populations, and as a result gained new power and increased legitimacy from the masses to consider themselves as “natural leaders” of the “fuzzy” and incoherent Hindu community.⁵² These elites will later become the proponents of Hindutva nationalism spearheaded by RSS, the dominant Hindu nationalist organization. It is important to mention here that most of these so called “nationalists” were conspicuously absent from the freedom movement against the colonial administration.⁵³ (Some of the reasons for the Hindu nationalists not to join the national movement will be discussed in the Hindutva Modus Operandi section.

The legal system framed by the colonial administration to manage the different communities with varying customs and traditions also facilitated the Hindu uniformity agenda. This new legal framework would override local customs on matters of property distribution, religion and family law, etc. The Brahmins were recruited as cogent interpreters of jurisprudence in accordance of Hindu scriptures, giving them authority and legitimacy to advance the

⁵¹ Hansen, Thomas Blom. *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1999. Print. page 32

⁵² Hansen, B. Thomas. *Saffron Wave*, page 36

⁵³ Chetan, Bhatt. *Hindu Nationalism*, page 78

Brahminization and scripturalization of certain customary laws such as family matters, marriages and inheritance among Hindus. Thomas B. Hansen in *The Saffron Wave* notes that, in 1858, once India came under direct control of the Crown, British interpretation of the Manusmriti, the ancient Hindu (Brahminical) law code, became the basis for identifying Hindus as a unified legal entity.⁵⁴

The British adoption of Manusmriti gives credence to the argument the colonial administration is the original architect of the monolithic Hindu imagination and along with it the strengthening of the upper class hegemony. Bhagvan further substantiates the class divisions that existed during the colonial rule and the empowerment of the Hindutva nationalists by the colonial administration especially during the formative stages of Hindutva:

Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, the colonial state had radically transformed various land and labor relationships throughout the subcontinent. On the south-western Malabar Coast, such intervention had produced a highly oppressive landlord system, delineated along religious and caste lines. Upper caste Hindus comprised the British-controlled property managers, while Muslim peasants, Moplahs, toiled under ever-harsher conditions.⁵⁵

The Hindutva ideologues promotes a worldview that Hindu civilization is superior to Western civilization and its viability is based on its resiliency, philosophy, spirituality and the scientific character. They rejected any criticism of Hindu society, especially from foreigners, concerning caste divisions and the

⁵⁴ (Hansen, B. Thomas), *Saffron Wave*, page 33, 34

⁵⁵ Bhagavan, Manu. "The Hindutva Underground: Hindu Nationalism and the Indian National Congress in Late Colonial and Early Post-colonial India". *Economic and Political Weekly* 43.37 (2008): 39–48. Web...

status of women while emphasizing about its ability for internal reform.⁵⁶ While analyzing the Hindutva formative discourse, it becomes clear that the primary objective of the founders, who are predominantly upper caste Hindus, is to transform an India that has historically been intensely plural and diverse into a Hindu nation. Through the discourses of Hindu nationalism, it aims to nationalize and normalize the upper caste Hindu religious and cultural practices. It is reactionary and premised on the imagination of “Us” and “Them” such that those who are not with Us are against Us.

The composite and diverse makeup of India that poses problems for homogenization agenda is in the admission of the Hindu nationalists about the lack of organization and cohesion in the Hindu community, which necessitated a systematic effort to organize the Hindu communities on the basis of a predominantly anti-Muslim agenda. The Hindu nationalists' challenge in uniting the Hindus is also mentioned by Anand:

While Hindu nationalism claims to represent the Hindu nation, Hindu nationalists also lament the absence of a united Hindu collective...The Hindu nation does not exist as a conscious corporate body and a Hindu nationalist seeks to create one. In this sense, while claiming to be a mere representation of the pre-existing nation, Hindutva's main emphasis is on creating this imaginary nation. This process of representation-creation is intimately connected with the question of Self-Other.⁵⁷

Chetan Bhatt in *Hindu Nationalism* discusses some of the reforms proposed by the Hindu Nationalist groups such as the Arya Samaj to unite and organize Hindus as a response to the manufactured threat presented by the

⁵⁶ See Hansen, page 75 on Hindu-society

⁵⁷Anand, Dibyesh. “Hindutva: a schizophrenic nationalism”

“Muslim” other. Lajpat Rai, the president of Hindu Mahasabha delivering a speech at Bombay Hindu Provincial Conference in 1925 asserted “If organizing Hindus is considered as ‘anti-Muslim or anti-national’ then I frankly confess that Hindu Mahasabha movement is both.”⁵⁸ The theme of the conference was “Hindus in Danger” which aligns well with the agenda of achieving Hindu unity on the basis of anti-Muslim hostility. The Hindu nationalists found it much easier to consolidate the diverse Hindu communities on an anti-Muslim platform than rationalize the Hindu beliefs and practices such as the caste system, idolatry and popular ritual traditions.⁵⁹ Also noted by Anand “Hindu nationalism is a

⁵⁸ Chetan Bhatt, page 74

⁵⁹ See Hansen, page 71 on Arya Samaj opposition to aspects of caste system, idolatry.

celebration and affirmation of the Hindu Self, but it derives its meaning only from a negation of the minority Others and their allies (the Communists, Secularists, and Westernized elite)."⁶⁰

Furthermore, Banerjee highlights the ideological and philosophical challenges faced by the Hindutva founders in creating a homogenization discourse and the methodology adopted in locating tradition in a truncated manner, emphasizing on the inimical traits of Hindu religious myth and imagery while disregarding the presence of both the atheistic and materialistic beliefs in Indian philosophical heritage and the existence of other religious streams like Buddhism, Islam and Christianity in the Indian tradition.⁶¹

. The formative discourse exposes major contradictions and intrinsic problems in imagining Hindutva consciousness. It was aimed at securing upper-caste domination without taking any concrete measures to undo the injustices against the lower caste people. As Anand states "It should be noted that

⁶⁰ See Anand "Hindutva: a schizophrenic nationalism"

⁶¹ Banerjee, Sumanta. "'hindutva': Ideology and Social Psychology". *Economic and Political Weekly* 26.3 (1991): 97–101. Web...

Hindutva seeks to create a unified Hindu samaj (society), not by removing hierarchies nor by redressing the historical and contemporary injustices suffered by many Hindus, but by shifting the blame for all ills onto the 'foreign' other."⁶²

The Hindutva contempt for the lower-caste is found one of the speech by the President of Hindu Mahasabha, Lajpat Rai, at the Bombay Hindu Provincial Conference in 1925 (as) in reference to the upsurge in non-Brahmin movement argues that "the Brahmins must destroy the movement for separate political existence of the non-Brahmins" and bring them into the fold of Sudras, the lowest layer in the caste hierarchy. Rai states that a nation is doomed if the Sudras (lowest and largest caste) become a majority and the dvija (twice-born) castes were a minority.⁶³ The theme of this conference was "Hindus in Danger" but the calls were made to preserve Brahminism.

Hansen Blum in *The Saffron Wave* notes that the nationalist vision was distinctly Hindu, which was informed by strong anti-Muslim undercurrent. Further validation that Hindu nationalism was established on an anti-Muslim platform is found in the works of Sawmi Vivekananda, which assumes a philosophy and practice of transforming Hinduism from a religion to a nationalist ideology. Vivekananda's works in promoting Hindu nationalism were fed by a certain animosity toward Islam.⁶⁴

⁶² Anand "Hindutva: a schizophrenic nationalism"

⁶³ See Bhatt, page 74 on Hindu unity and the issue of caste

⁶⁴ Hansen, page 70 on Vivekananda's animosity toward Islam

Vivekananda portrayed Islam as doctrinal and intolerant-- and hence incompatible with the tolerance and inclusiveness of Hinduism -- while other political radicals depicted the nation as a cohesive unit. They classified the Muslims into elites and the ordinary. The Muslim elites in particular were depicted as dangerous "other", as foreigners who rallied for safeguarding of religious doctrines written in Urdu and Persian. These elites resisted conformity with the native vernaculars and cultural rituals. The ordinary Muslim masses were not seen as a national threat because a large number of them were converts from Hinduism to Islam who were culturally and linguistically closer to the natives.

Another aspect of the formative stages of Hindutva was the attempt at homogenization on the basis of common language, culture, social, political and demographic threat. The movement also developed a political language to assert for securing Hindu rights and interests in public sphere. One can notice the paradox of the Hindutva actors who on the one hand attempt to unite Hindus by promoting the notion of a monolithic Hinduism through the language of insecurity and their lament for the internally weak nation, while on the other hand wanting to secure upper caste hegemony. They made calls to the lower caste people who converted to Islam or Christianity to return to the fold of Hinduism. The movement to convert the Muslims and Christian to Hinduism is called Shuddhi movement. As Bhatt mentions:

By and large Hinduism was conceived as problematic and in need of strengthening and reform, not principally to remove its injustices or irrationalities,

but Hindus were weak, disorganized and disunited in the face of religious minorities.⁶⁵

Even though the language of internal reform was used but the real agenda was to consolidate diverse communities as one indigenous “Hindu community” idealized as an organic, ancient Vedic Varnashrama i.e. to impose Hindu upper class agenda. Thus, the idea of Hindus constituting as a “nation” has become an expression while no serious attempt was made to redress the issues of caste, gender and other social inequities. The differing perspectives within the ranks of Hindu Mahasabha on the caste issue are reflected in Rai’s statement that the orthodox Hindus opposed eradication while another section favored its abolishment.⁶⁶ The attempts to eradicate untouchability were also met with resistance from within the ranks of Hindu Mahasabha, which resulted in alienation of a certain section. Additional internal reforms proposed within the Hindu religious structure to achieve cohesion such as allowing child widows to remarry, changing the minimum marriage age for male and female, allowing widowers of upper castes to marry a virgin, condemning polygamy and polyandry, and establishing separate schools for boys and girls be opened.

M.S. Golwalker is another Hindu nationalist whose writings revolve around the idea of cultural nationalism. In *We, Our Nationhood Defined*, he identifies five different levels of “unities” that will define nationhood “Nationality is to the social group what personality is to the individual.” This theory obviously regards

⁶⁵ See Bhatt, page 76

⁶⁶ Jaffrelot, Christophe. “Hindu Nationalism” page 75

environment, culture, language, religion and political institutions as the causes that contribute to the formation and development of nationality.⁶⁷

Golwalker's homogenization agenda calls for linguistic unity along with the admission that every province has its own distinct language distinct language hence each state (province) represents a nation along linguistic boundaries. However, he suggests the idea that Sanskrit "mother of all languages" be utilized as a unifying language.⁶⁸ Golwalker emphasizes that cultural unity is a precondition for a viable state. The book for the most part attempts at standardizing the nationhood definition under which "Hindusthan, the Hindu race with its Hindu religion, Hindu culture and Hindu language completes the Nation concept..."⁶⁹ Golwalker's definition of the nation and classification of the "Hindus" as the Self and the religious minorities who do not conform to the above definition of the nation as the Other. Golwalker's definition of the nation corroborates the argument that Hindu nationalism agenda is exclusionary that calls for marginalization of the religious minorities. The minorities must be content to not only live as second class citizens but they will be classified as the enemy within:

Those only are nationalist patriots, who, with the aspiration to glorify the Hindu race and Nation next to their heart, are prompted into activity and strive to achieve that goal. All others are either traitors and enemies to the National cause, or, to take a charitable view, idiots.

⁶⁷ Golwalker, Madhav Sadashiv. *We or Our Nationhood Defined*. Nagpur: Bharat Prakashan, 1945.

⁶⁸ See Golwalker, page 98

⁶⁹ See Golwalker, page 99

Golwalkar's draconian view about the minorities that the religious minorities must adopt Hindu culture and language and learn to respect and revere Hindu religion, glorify and assimilate into Hindu race or remain as subordinates "They deserve no privileges, far less any preferential treatment – citizen rights."⁷⁰ Thus, the Hindus-first ideology takes roots in the nationalist discourse during the formative stages while attempting to achieve social unity amongst the Hindus on the basis of anti-Muslim and anti-Christian rhetoric.

Golwalkar is using fear as a political tool as he does not limit his construction of the Muslim "other" but goes on to portray Muslims as hostile elements and a threat to the Hindu existence by reminding them of past Muslim rule "Our children, our country, our wealth, our God, our temples and our holy worshippers, are all in danger of existence... It is a matter of supreme wonder that a handful of Mussalmans should establish supremacy over this vast country."⁷¹ Fear is usually deployed to compel masses to align with the state or a movement or an agenda which is otherwise difficult to rationalize. Corey Robyn in *Fear: The History of a Political Idea* calls fear "a political tool, an instrument of elite rule or insurgent advance, created and sustained by political leaders or activists who stand to gain something from it."⁷²

Golwalker, in order to sharpen the polarization along the sectarian lines deploys the partition (division of India) scare to drive the point that Muslim

⁷⁰ See Golwalkar, page 105

⁷¹ See Golwalkar, pages 128-139

⁷² Greenberg, David. "An Uneven Look at the Use of Fear as a Political Tool." *Chicago Tribune*. 09 Jan. 2005. Web. 18 Dec. 2015.

loyalty will always remain questionable. He argues that a good portion of Muslims actually supported the partition of India along religious lines and that they cannot remain loyal to India. He cited the example that those Muslims living in Hindu-majority areas in the state of Uttar Pradesh spearheaded the movement for Pakistan. He cites two examples where Muslims chose to vote in favor of the Muslim league's Muslim candidates and rejected the Muslim candidates from the Congress party. Another charge made against the Muslims was that they committed murder, arson and riots – and hence cannot be patriotic to India. A third charge concerns possible cross-border aggression from neighboring Pakistan, and is based on the premise that the proponents of Pakistan called for direct action in their pursuit of a separate nation. Hence similar aggression ought to be expected from them post-partition of India. A fourth charge is made that the failed attempts by Muslims to convert masses from Hinduism to Islam during the twelve hundred years of rule and political domination indicate that the desire to convert still exists.⁷³

⁷³ Jaffrelot, 118

Chapter 5: *Hindutva Modus Operandi*

In this chapter we will discuss the tactics deployed by Hindutva to perpetuate its agenda. It continuously fabricates new myths, revives old myths, appropriates national icons, mobilizes masses around cultural and religious symbols, instigate riots, distort facts and rewrite History and education curriculum as part of an ongoing campaign to consolidate Hindu support base by sharpening social boundaries. The purpose of this chapter is to substantiate the arguments made in the preceding chapters about Hindutva's divisive agenda vis-à-vis the upper caste hegemony and formative assertions by establishing linkages with its practices.

There have been extraordinary developments in India in the last three decades that have drastically changed the socio-political order that resulted in the mainstreaming of Hindutva discourse and practices. According to Reddy, "The result is a recognition of Hindutva as a politics that is integrating — 'entrenching' or 'vernacularizing' — itself into a rapidly widening and increasingly influential range of contemporary political practices."⁷⁴ Some of the major developments that contributed to the meteoric rise of Hindutva in last three decades include the 1992 Babri Masjid (Mosque) demolition, the 2002 Gujarat pogrom, Muzaffarnagar riots in 2013, several small scale riots, decline of the India's advances in weapons technology as it acquired about 100 nuclear

⁷⁴ Reddy, Deepa. "Hindutva As Praxis." *Religion Compass* 5.8 (2011): 412-426. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 14 Mar. 2016.

weapons, and the economic growth. India is one of the fastest growing, most populous and developing economies. The primary beneficiaries of the economic growth have largely been the richest few and the upper middle class sector. The number of known billionaires in India increased from two in the 1990s to 65 in early 2014.

What factors facilitated the upper class Hindu nationalists to retain their authority and monopoly on the British-constructed narrative of monolithic Hinduism, and how is the othering of Muslim community embedded in Hindutva nationalism's ideology and practice? The othering discourse has served well to consolidate Hindu upper class power and monopolize the narrative on nationalism and patriotism, as Deepa Reddy notes: "...Hindutva was in good measure a defense of Brahminical hegemonies that anticipate the development of caste tensions in later decades."⁷⁵ An attempt is being made to discuss several discursive strategies through which the Hindutva nationalism is perpetuated. In addition to identifying the Hindutva practices, I will also point out inherent contradictions.

Brahminical Hinduism is the basis on which the Hindutva discourse remains pervasive till this day through manipulative interpretations of history and myth manufacturing by articulating grievances vis-à-vis the Muslim community. The Hindu nationalists ensure that the perception of Muslim community as an existential threat remains integral to its discourse. Cleverly upping the ante

⁷⁵ Reddy, Deepa. "Hindutva: Formative Assertions"

against the Muslim other seems to help divert the attention from serious issues such as caste divisions, poverty, corruption, unemployment and gender violence that are prevalent in the society. It also enables Hindu nationalists to stifle the increasing demands for justice through affirmative actions (positive reservations in jobs and educations) from becoming a mainstream debate. One might ask the question for the necessity or heavy reliance on myth manufacturing by the Hindutva establishment and the extensive anti-Muslim discourses, imagery and rhetoric. The paradox in Hindutva ideology and practices can be noticed in its lament for the lack of Hindu collective while on the other hand it wants to perpetuate the caste division. These pseudo-Hindu nationalists will never allow the lower-caste people to achieve social and political progress to challenge the Brahminical social order. As Bhatt cites a RSS leader's viewpoint on the political rise of the lower caste people: "It is instructive that Hegdevar viewed the political rise of the non-brahmin, 'lower' caste movements as 'evil' ..."⁷⁶

The idea of racial purity is entrenched in Hindutva ideology as Jaffrelot asserts:

Thus, in the Hindu nationalist ideology, the idea of decline is not related to loss of racial purity. And the quest for revival does not imply any racial purification ... The conception of decline expressed by the Hindu nationalist leaders of the 1920s and 1930s confirms a certain indifference towards racial purity compared to social unity.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ See Bhatt, 118

⁷⁷ Jaffrelot, Christophe. "Religion, Caste and Politics in India", Page 139

It is clear that the Hindutva ideologists' response to the issue of social unity is ambivalent, as there is no real intent to dismantle the caste barriers. Rather they expect the lower castes to live as subservient to the upper-caste Hindus. Jaffrelot describes the Hindutva attitudes and practices as nothing but a form of upper-caste racism.⁷⁸

Racism is not limited to prejudices alone; it is a systematic oppression that defines two communities the "self" and the "other" and it pursues the agenda where the powerful "self" seeks to perpetuate its hegemony over the powerless "other" whose loyalty is treated with suspicion and citizenship is always questioned. As such, the othering discourse is critical to achieve social conformity by masking the various levels of differences in the Hindu community such as caste, class and ideological under the garb of cultural unity. As Udaykumar states:

Thus, the primary preoccupation of Hindutva is the unitary (not all-inclusive) nation on the basis of cultural unity that is automatically transformed into political unity by the ancient-nation arguments. This unitary understanding is reinforced by the consolidated highlighting of the Other and the careful and calculated hiding of the divisions of the self.⁷⁹

One of the several ways the Hindutva nationalists try to perpetuate the caste system is by locating it as a positive feature provided the designated tasks regardless of its nature if performed in harmony then there shouldn't be any eruption of caste fights among the Hindus. This justification of the discriminatory hierarchical order is ratified in Golwalker's assertion that the Hindus remain

⁷⁸ See Jaffrelot, page 140

⁷⁹ See Udaykumar, page 35

victorious in spite of the caste differences. Our weakness is not due to the caste divisions but the absence of national feeling which keeps us from rising to the fullest potential. It is also interesting to note that the resistance against Brahminical hegemony by the lower castes is construed as anti-national and an impediment to national revival. Golwalkar states "...it grieves us to see how we fritter our energy in anti-national work and lay the blame on social order and such other things as have nothing to do with national revival."⁸⁰

Golwalkar's assertion that any form of resistance against the existing social order is anti-national is resonated in the recent death of a lower caste scholar of merit in one of the premier universities of India. On January 17th 2016, Rohith Vemula, a doctoral student at Hyderabad University in India committed suicide due to the caste prejudice that has existed in Indian society for centuries. His death has unleashed a storm of protests across several universities in India and also sparked global outrage. It has become a major political crisis for the Hindu nationalist government of Mr. Narendra Modi. Rohith Vemula and his associates were targeted for raising issues that were directly challenging the Hindu nationalist ideology and its core values. They were celebrating beef festivals on campuses to mark their protest against the beef ban and also raising issues that were ideologically and politically inconvenient for Hindu nationalist government. These students were branded as "casteist, extreme and anti-national" by the federal ministers of Mr. Modi. This indicates that upper caste hegemony is at the

⁸⁰ See Udaykumar page 36

heart of the Hindu nationalists and they will not shy away from using government apparatus to brutally suppress those who resist.⁸¹

It is also important to recognize the legitimacy deficit of the Hindutva establishment, as they were not only missing in action during the freedom movement; instead they were working closely with the British. There are numerous writings exposing the negative role of the RSS during the freedom struggle. The RSS was not engaged in any mass movement or took the lead in launching any form of struggle against the British. The major focus of the Hindutva organizations during the freedom movement was to carry on a hate campaign against the minorities.⁸²

Shamsul Islam states that there is barely any evidence or documented material that shows Hindu nationalists participating in or leading any anti-colonial movements. He had to rely exclusively on the primary sources produced by RSS propagandists in their publications. He questions whether the RSS is able to produce even a single volume containing documents that discuss its role in the freedom struggle. Instead, he finds that the RSS publications discuss its zealous opposition to Hindu-Muslim unity and to a united anti-imperialist people's movement. The RSS portrayed Gandhi as villain and a hurdle to the establishment of Hindu nation. This sense is only reinforced by the absence of any evidence of it challenging, exposing, criticizing or confronting the inhuman

⁸¹[Read the letters HRD ministry sent Hyderabad University about 'anti-national' activities on campus](#)

⁸² Islam, Shamsul. *The Freedom Movement & the RSS: A Story of Betrayal*. First ed. New Delhi: Joshi — Adhikari Institute of Social Studies, 1999. Print.

and brutal rule of the British masters in the entire literature of the RSS from 1925 to 1947.

Shamsul Islam goes on to argue that to preserve itself from restrictions and a ban, the RSS did little that would antagonize the British and jeopardize its agenda of establishing a Hindu nation. As such, it becomes imperative for the Hindu nationalists to replace, within the collective memory, this legitimacy deficit as it cannot show freedom fighters in its ranks as such it relies on various anti-Muslim myths -- such as the idea that there were seven hundred years of humiliation under Muslim rule, that Pakistan represents an external threat and to deploy in its service the latest anti-Muslim content available in the domestic and international media.

National history and the nation-state are essential considerations in defining groups and legitimizing the groups' actions. As Udaykumar in *Presenting the Past* mentions "The nation-state has come to symbolize what 'we' are and it is the site of the most fundamental division between inside and outside, us and them, domestic and foreign."⁸³ Udaykumar further argues that history is an inevitable prerequisite in creating a collective consciousness where the esteemed self is always delineated in relation to the threatening other.

Udaykumar states that it was in the nineteenth century that the British historians divided Indian history into Hindu, Muslim and British periods and facilitated the sectarian interpretation of Indian history that was further

⁸³ Udaykumar, 19

expanded by the Hindu nationalists. The Indian nationalists' historiography was a counter to the narrative of European superiority and Indian inferiority promulgated by the British historians as "the dominance of reason over superstition and civilization over barbarism." The nationalist Indian historians of the twentieth century glorified the Hindu period (about 1000 B.C.E to 1200 C.E.) in an effort to erase the inferior narrative. This new discourse located India's glory in indigenous origins and called the Gupta Empire (350 – 540 C.E.) the "Golden Age," while India's decline and failures were credited to the entry of Muslims in India in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.⁸⁴ Udaykumar identifies the Hindu nationalist historians as communal historians whose communal interpretation of Indian history is notorious for being cunningly selective and crudely misleading. He describes Hindutva's sectarian politics as a condition of suspicion, fear and hostility between two religious communities. This type of politics is also referred to as organized political movement to serve the interests of a religious community, usually in response to a real or imaginary threat from another religious community.⁸⁵

The sectarian historians build upon the British historian's narrative that the Hindu-Muslim divide has always existed and these two communities were distinct sociopolitical entities and never integrated into cohesive units. They also ignored caste-based divisions and rejected the notion of Brahmin domination. They

⁸⁴ Udaykumar, S. P. *Presenting the Past: Anxious History and Ancient Future in Hindutva India*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2005. Print. page 29

⁸⁵ Udaykumar, S.P. " page 30

reserved praise for Hindu heroes and painted Muslims as villains. The divisive politics is embedded in the Hindutva agenda as noted by Udaykumar "Thus, the colonial divide-and-rule theory has been effectively appropriated by the Hindutva forces to further their political agenda."⁸⁶ This contextual background gives rise to another question as to how it is practically possible for the Hindutva establishment to lay its claim to being hyper-patriots that deserve the allegiance of the majority community while it is clear that minorities are excluded from the nationalist agenda and the caste divisions exposes the myth Hindu monolithic?

The Hindutva's hyper-patriotic claim begins with positioning themselves as the true patriots and the legitimate guardians of the Hindu society and by promoting the worldview of the Hindu golden age that was destroyed by the foreigners. In order to gain legitimacy and support for such a claim, numerous myths have to be fabricated and perpetuated. One of the early founding myths was to portray the emergence of the Hindutva nationalism vis-à-vis the RSS as a positive development, a phenomenon to safeguard majority community's interests against the internal and external threat. The RSS was faced with a series of bans in the aftermath of Gandhi's assassination. Gandhi was assassinated by a hardcore Hindu nationalist. The ban followed with a series of publications portraying the Hindutva leaders as selfless heroes along with an unmediated praise of the many virtues of its thousands of selfless volunteers who were engaged in spectacular works and their silent devotion marks the greatness of

⁸⁶ See Udaykumar, page 33

the organization. The publications discuss the biographies of the founding members described in flowery and passionate language and locate them as historical personalities rivaled by Gandhi.⁸⁷ The Hindutva advocates are continuously engaged in creatively manufacturing myths to promote themselves as the true saviors and pioneers of the nation-state. As Hansen states “Tales and conflict of Heroism under adverse circumstances -- successive bans on the RSS by the Indian state – make it possible to restage, re-narrate, its founding myth and favorite tale of representing the inconspicuous ‘Hindu society’ against a hostile or arrogant state.”⁸⁸

In the Hindutva discourse and practices, the myths are originated at many levels starting from history, education, culture and politics. We will discuss some of the myths to substantiate the argument that myth manufacturing is embedded in the Hindutva ideology and practices. It is a powerful instrument to maintain its hegemony and monopolize the nationalist and patriotic narratives. As confirmed by Udaykumar “Building on this British heritage of colonial education, the communalists have continued self-colonization in full earnest by adding concoctions and falsehoods to textbook writing.”⁸⁹ He goes on to cite the example of a communalist historian Har Prasad Shastri in 1928, who claimed in one of the history text books in Calcutta University that three thousand Brahmins committed suicide to escape forced conversion to the fold

⁸⁷ See Hansen, page 86-87

⁸⁸ See Hansen, page 86

⁸⁹ See Udaykumar, 76

of Islam by a Moghul ruler Tipu Sultan. However, another historian B.N. Pande proved that the three thousand Brahmin suicide claim is a falsehood, upon which the book was withdrawn. However, the same myth was reintroduced in a junior-high-school textbook in 1972 in North Indian state.⁹⁰

The Hindu nationalists' demand for withdrawal of certain history textbooks from the school education curriculum because these books did not portray the Muslim rule in a negatively nor regarded the Hindu nationalists as the heroes. The books under were authored by reputed historians such as Romila Thapar's Ancient India by, Bipan Chandra's Modern India and A.Tripathi, Barun De and Bipan Chandra's Freedom Struggle by.⁹¹

The Hindu nationalists use the massive infrastructure they have established to promote their ideology, culture, history, education, and to co-opt the lower caste into their ranks and brainwash them about the threatening other and keep them from developing their own agenda to liberate from caste oppression. The infrastructure establishment includes transforming temples into 700 Vidya Bharti (Indian Knowledge) schools in 1977 which increased to 14,000 schools by 2003 with 73,000 teachers and 1.7 million students. According to a recent news report, the group Vidya Bharati runs 12,363 formal schools in the country with a combined strength of 32,06,212 students (3.2 million) and 1,35,500 teachers, and there are 12,001 single-teacher schools. 11,143 teachers impart

⁹⁰ See Udaykumar, page 78

⁹¹ Jaffrelot, Christophe. "Hindu Nationalism"

education to 2,45,403 (2.5 million) in remote impoverished locations.⁹² Hindu nationalists imagine history from a narrow and sectarian perspective as they not only target the Muslims and Christians. There are other targets are women, Dalits and those who preach and practice non-Vedic traditions. While resisting such the saffronization of education agenda, the civil rights groups' "Committee for Resisting Saffronization of Textbooks" argued that the saffronization of the education will strengthen stereotypes of Muslims and Christians and subdues the voices of women, Dalits and non-Vedic traditions.⁹³ This representation and dehumanization of the other through various tactics such as education, iconography, historiography, violence and culture is discussed by Anand. He argues that the representation of the other as a source of danger to the security of the self is closely linked with the abstraction, dehumanization, and depersonalization and stereotyping of the other. Once the image of a Muslim is established as the threatening other, self then the other becomes a legitimate target for surveillance, framing, control, and policing, illegal detention and in some cases extra-judicial killings.⁹⁴ We will bring to light in the next few sections how this discourse of othering manifests through fabrication of myths and unjust targeting, victimization and marginalization of the citizens (not just Muslims) through interference and abuse of state machinery to infringe on food habits and terror conspiracies, and encroach into private space and individual

⁹² "Modi to Address Education Meet of RSS-affiliated Body." Business Standard. IANS, 9 Feb. 2016. Web. 12 Feb. 2016.

⁹³ Kumar, Raksha. "Writing Indian Textbooks." *Al Jazeera*. 2 Nov. 2014. Web. 18 Jan. 2016.

⁹⁴ See Anand, page 207

freedoms. I plan to discuss three myths: The Cow, Love Jihad and Terror Conspiracy as these are the latest issues that have taken a center state in the Hindutva discourse and are adversely impacting the minority communities.

The Cow Myth

The Cow has been one of the major instruments deployed by the Hindu nationalists to politically and culturally mobilize Hindu masses who revere the cow as a sacred animal while antagonizing a large number of minorities (Muslims and Christians) and lower caste Hindus, as beef is an integral part of their food culture. The Hindu nationalists perpetuate the notion that the cow assumes an important part in Hinduism, claiming that the sacredness of the cow finds its origins in the ancient Hindu holy texts. As such the `sacred' cow is considered to be a symbol of community identity of the Hindus. However, there is plenty of discussion in the Hindu ancient texts of cow slaughter and beef consumption, as reported by Smitha Rao. She cites Jha's work "Contrary to popular historical belief of the cow being the most revered animal among Hindus, never to be slaughtered or consumed, Jha (2002) argues that cow slaughter and beef eating were part of ancient Hindu traditions".⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Rao, Smitha. "Saffronisation of the Holy Cow: Unearthing Silent Communalism." *Economic & Political Weekly*. 9 Apr. 2011. Web. 26 Feb. 2016.

The Hindu nationalists present the cow and Hindu religious values as being threatened by the minorities who are known to slaughter cows and consume beef. This is a tactic deployed in order to make this cultural myth gain broader acceptance among the Hindus who are not ready to accept the myth and some Hindus especially the lower castes and farmers affected by the beef ban actually challenge the myth. There are a large number of farmers who revere cows but also want to sell them to butchers once they stop giving milk. These are poor farmers surviving in difficult conditions, so every penny they can earn and save will be cherished. They can also reinvest the money to purchase a younger cow to earn a living by selling milk. The same is true for the bulls (oxen) which were also banned from slaughter in some states ruled by BJP. These farmers traditionally sell off the old oxen and replace them with the younger ones that they can use for farming. Verghese Kurien, known as the milk man of India, was the chairperson of the National Dairy Development Board, and also served for years as a member of a high powered government-appointed committee to look into the much contested issue. For the Hindutva nationalists the cow myth was a political issue and not a religious one as Kurien states that M.S. Golwalkar (a Hindu nationalist) inquired about how meat and milk were made in the body of the cow. Kurien informed him that both meat and milk are byproducts of basically the same process which left Golwalkar extremely angry

and agitated. Kurien goes on state that, off the record, Golwalkar admitted to Kurien that the cow issue was actually just politics.⁹⁶

A ban on slaughtering cows had been in place in several states in India for a long time. However, there are some states where more draconian laws were enacted by extending the ban from slaughter of cow to other bovine animals such as bullock and oxen. One can be punished on the grounds of storing or eating beef. Violation of these laws will result in hefty monetary fines and imprisonment up to 7 years.⁹⁷ These laws are enacted not only to alter the food habits of Muslims, Christians and Dalits but also to widen the sectarian divide between the minority and the majority communities. However, the impact of such policies and social cleavages engulfs the poor and farmers from the majority community to which the Hindu nationalists give scant consideration. The beef ban contributed to the already increasing unemployment in India as it adversely impacted the livelihood those involved in selling and trading cattle, and those who work at commercial slaughter plants and tanneries etc. As Rao states, this beef ban phenomenon is strikingly similar to the animal protection laws in Germany which was perceived by the people as a blow to the dietary practices of the Jews and to marginalize them by the government rather than emanating from any compassion towards animals. Rao cites the example of coming together of Foucault's concepts of governmentalized localities and regulatory communities albeit towards a subversive agenda (Agrawal 2005:

⁹⁶ Naqvi, Saba. "Golwalkar Told Kurien That It Was Actually Just Politics." *Outlook*. 20 Oct. 2014. Web. 26 Feb. 2016.

⁹⁷ "The States Where Cow Slaughter Is Legal in India." *The Indian Express*. 8 Oct. 2015. Web. 26 Feb. 2016.

92).⁹⁸ Such a law gives protection to the vigilantes and provides assurance that no legal action shall be instituted against any authority or any individual for enforcing the beef ban. Rao further argues that such a clause can be acceptable for the public servants but becomes problematic if it gives immunity to the private citizens or volunteers enforcing the ban.

Any criticism of this draconian law by the political opposition is branded by the Hindu nationalists as sheer politics of minority appeasement. Instead of rationalizing the beef ban through historical facts, religion, culture or constitution the Hindutva brigade defy criticism through political rhetoric. Rao further states how some of the provisions in the beef ban law in certain states encourage vigilantism and mob justice to the point that rightwing mobs can take the law into their own hands by breaking into houses and stores, or even search food containers of people for beef and harass them merely on grounds of suspicion. It is assumed that such provisions will grant the vigilantes personal immunity. The right wing vigilantes can now search and raid any place or individual. There have been several incidents of Hindu mobs killing and lynching Muslims suspected of slaughtering, stealing or smuggling cows. In some cases, the BJP administration would come to the rescue of the violent mobs, as New York Time reports:

The recent killings are occurring against a backdrop of intensifying political conflict over laws and policies aimed at protecting cows from slaughter and consumption. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu

⁹⁸ Rao, Smitha. "Saffronisation of the Holy Cow: Unearthing Silent Communalism." *Economic & Political Weekly*. 9 Apr. 2011. Web. 26 Feb. 2016.

nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, or B.J.P., has pushed aggressively to pass state beef bans.... Several recent cases of violence have involved Hindu nationalist vigilante groups dedicated to protecting cows. The groups, including some with ties to the B.J.P., mobilize members to confront those suspected of slaughtering, eating or stealing cows, sometimes with catastrophic results.⁹⁹

There have been several incidents in which the government has come to the rescue of the vigilantes or security agencies, or turned a blind eye to their activities. In one such example, the central ministry of home affairs (MHA) issued orders to the state police to revoke criminal charges from one of the rightwing activists who harassed one person from the minority community on the suspicion of stealing a cow:

The *TOI* report said that the Shamli district magistrate OP Singh had confirmed that he got instructions from MHA to revoke NSA charges against Premi. The report added that VHP, encouraged by this "success", was now planning to ask Home Minister Rajnath Singh to demand that NSA be revoked against Hindu ascetic Acharya Jasbir Singh. Jasbir Singh is an *ashram* head who was detained under NSA for allegedly making hate speeches.¹⁰⁰

Thus, the cow myth was perpetuated via a systematic campaign with the aid of state machinery. For a large section of the Hindu majority, the beef issue became a religious symbol but it also took away from the minority communities' access to low cost protein and interference into their food habits.

Love Jihad Myth

⁹⁹ BARSTOW, DAVID, and SUHASINI RAJ. "Indian Muslim, Accused of Stealing a Cow, Is Beaten to Death by a Hindu Mob." 4 Nov. 2015. Web. 26 Feb. 2016.

¹⁰⁰ "Revoke NSA Charges against Right-wing Leader: Home Ministry Reportedly Issues Diktat to UP Govt." 6 Jan. 2016. Web. 26 Jan. 2016.

The myth of Muslim boys luring Hindu girls into marriage with the ultimate goal of converting the girl is perpetuated by the Hindutva protagonists. This is yet another tactic to ensure the social tensions remain active and to maintain the discourse of insecurity and fear mongering. There have been cases where such rumors have led to major sectarian riots. The love jihad notion has not been heard of in large parts of India until very recently, when the BJP decided to make it a key electoral issue for the mid-term elections in 2015 in the northern state of India called Uttar Pradesh. This is the largest Indian state with 80 out of 545 elected members of parliament, so it is a crucial state from the perspective of electoral politics. But ever since the BJP formed the national government in May 2014, the term "love jihad" has become a part of the popular discourse across India. It is seen as part of a sustained campaign across India to homogenize the Hindu community and consolidate the support bases for BJP to reap electoral gains. The love jihad issue has not gained prominence in academic circles as yet; hence, I have to rely on numerous reports in the media that discuss the love jihad issue.¹⁰¹ So, one might ask how real is love jihad?

The India Today report suggests it as a controversial campaign with historical links to the Shuddhi movement (religious conversion movement). The *India Today* report references one of the rightwing newspapers run by Durga Vahini, the young women's wing of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), which launched a campaign to reconvert Hindu women married to Muslim men, as

¹⁰¹ Kumar, Sanjay. "The Politics of 'Love Jihad' in India." *The Diplomat*. 17 Sept. 2014. Web. 27 Feb. 2016.

stating that the Ghar Wapasi (home coming) campaign must also include "love jihad". The image below is a cover photo of the rightwing news magazine published by Durga Vahini that features popular film actress, Kareena Kapoor who is married to a Muslim, with her morphed face half covered with a naqab (veil).

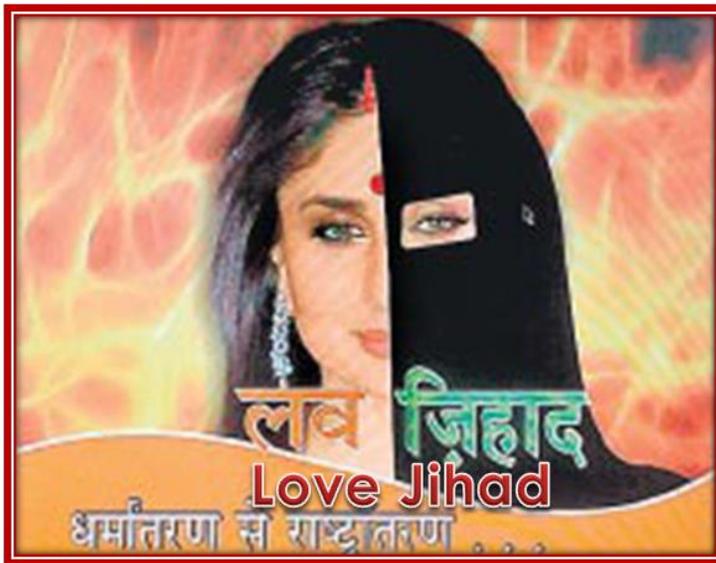


Figure 7 Love Jihad ¹⁰²

The caption in Hindi at the bottom of the picture says "conversion of nationality by religious conversion" (my translation). It attempts to depict the plight of Hindu women not only losing their identity and nationality, but also ending up being suppressed, with the veil as a symbol of suppression.¹⁰³

A close investigation of the "love jihad" campaign reveals the ideological and operational consistency of the Hindu nationalists' heavy reliance on anti-Muslim agenda, as well as the patriarchy embedded in its ideology and

¹⁰² Kareena Kapoor Is Now the Face of VHP's Love Jihad Campaign. 2014. Himalay Dhwani (Magazine). IndiaToday.in. Web. 28 Feb. 2016.

¹⁰³ Kareena Kapoor Is Now the Face of VHP's Love Jihad Campaign. 8 Jan. 2015. Web. 28 Feb. 2016.

practices. It continues to push the notion of existential threat to the Hindu community from the Muslim other, this time not through acts of violence but through acts of love. Through this fear-mongering tactic, it fraudulently claims to rescue Hindu women from the traps set by Muslim men. They seek shelter in the usual discourse of stereotyping the Muslims as fanatics, foreign evil invaders who forcefully converted the Hindus, the violent beef-eaters who marry four wives, suppress their women and breed like rabbits. The Hindutva ideologues seek to discreetly promote the notion that the Hindu women are naïve, do not possess the intellectual capacity to think and act independently in life matters such as choosing partners, and can be entrapped into relationships with Muslim boys. The ancient Hindu customs and traditions are invoked to locate the daughters with family and community honor but in reality the desire of male dominance over the family, specifically the women, is reinforced.¹⁰⁴

Gupta Charu locates the love jihad myth with the Hindu patriarchy and also establishes a linkage with a similar campaign in 1920 against alleged abductions. Whether 1920 or 2009, Hindu patriarchal notions appear deeply entrenched in such campaigns: images of passive victimized Hindu women at the hands of inscrutable Muslims abound, and any possibility of women exercising their legitimate right to love and their right to choice is ignored.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Punwani, Jyoti. "Myths and Prejudices about 'Love Jihad'" *Economic & Political Weekly*. 18 Oct. 2014. Web. 27 Feb. 2016.

¹⁰⁵ GUPTA, CHARU. "Hindu Women, Muslim Men: Love Jihad and Conversions". *Economic and Political Weekly* 44.51 (2009): 13–15. Web...

In another instance, the Hindu vigilante group “Hindu Rakshak Samiti” (Hindu protection committee) in its propaganda material appeals to the emotions of the Hindu community claiming that the group is formed to protect the Hindu daughters thus safeguarding the Hindu religion by breaking up the relationships between Hindu-Muslim couples and returning them to Hindu fold. A booklet on Love Jihad has been circulated in Marathi language in the state of Maharashtra in Western India. It shows a picture of Muslim boy riding the Motor bike, with Hindu girl riding pillion. The myth has been so much popularized that it found support from an unexpected section of the society, a Christian group from the state of Kerala which is in alliance with the VHP demanded an end to this non existing phenomenon. Gupta points to the Muslim population explosion myth deployed by the Hindutva groups to create insecurity in the self by arguing that the conversions of Hindu women is linked with increase in Muslim population.¹⁰⁶

The campaign draws on the fears of the Hindu community by constructing the image of a Muslim male as aggressive, the sexually charged and the threatening “other” seeking the pure bodies of the passive Hindu women. Thus, it is inconceivable for the Hindu groups to entertain the thought that a Hindu woman can voluntarily choose to marry a Muslim and move out of Hindu faith. These constructions by the Hindutva are associated with grave anxieties of

¹⁰⁶ Gupta, page 14

Hindu women adapting to Muslim ways and find such relationships as deeply troubling.¹⁰⁷

The Love Jihad myth allows Hindu male virility and prowess to reassert itself in a public-political domain in more forceful ways while the converted Hindu woman is a potential site of outrage for family, society and religious sentiments. Thus, patriarchal assertions are strengthened amid claims of restoration of honor and dignity of the family and the community.¹⁰⁸

One of the flyers used in latest campaign makes outrageous and unverified claims that 4,000 girls have converted to Islam till date. While another flyer distributed by the Hindutva organization called Janjagruthi Samiti (Hindu public awakening committee) in the state of Karnataka claims the number to have reached 30,000 within a year, without substantiating any proof. With the Hindu nationalist government at the center, it has become easy for the vigilantes to make such generalizations and deploy government resources in targeting and victimizing the other. The Karnataka High Court while hearing the case of a 23-year old woman who had converted to Islam to marry a Muslim man from Kerala, ordered her to return to her parents' home until the case was investigated. This reflects the increasing bias in the judiciary and police as they creates hurdles for the couples. The magistrate observed that there can be national ramifications to the interfaith marriage and it can evolve into a security

¹⁰⁷ Gupta 13 -14

¹⁰⁸ Gupta 14

issue i.e. it can vitiate the atmosphere and instigate riots and it may be a subject of unlawful trafficking of women.¹⁰⁹

The *NDTV* investigative report on Love Jihad cites a police report that exposes the Love Jihad myth. The report claims that the police investigations did not find any evidence of an organized "Love Jihad" campaign. The Police report says sporadic cases of trickery by unscrupulous men are not evidence of a broader conspiracy. In Uttar Pradesh, police found no evidence of attempted or forced conversion in five of six reported Love Jihad cases. "In most cases we found that a Hindu girl and Muslim boy were in love and had married against their parents' will," said state police Chief A.L. Banerjee. "These are cases of love marriages and not Love Jihad."¹¹⁰

The expose by *Cobrapost* and *Gulail* (both investigative portals) confirms Love Jihad campaign to be a fabrication. The video clips captured Hindutva leaders engaged in false propaganda that Hindu girls are in danger and needs to be rescued from Muslim boys. *Cobrapost* and *Gulail*, both investigative journalism networks, published a report *bogey of Love Jihad*, based on a year-long investigation called *Operation Juliet*, it exposes how the Hindutva outfits (Sangh Parivar) and its splinter groups use violence, intimidation, emotional blackmail, duplicity and drugs to split the married couples. The report reveals a systematic effort across pan-India, engaged in the campaign to spread

¹⁰⁹ Gupta, 15

¹¹⁰ "'Love Jihad' and Religious Conversions in Uttar Pradesh." Reuters. *NDTV*, 5 Sept. 2014. Web. 28 Feb. 2016.

sectarian hatred between two religious communities with the objective to win elections.¹¹¹ One of the interviewee in the video report is a BJP central minister Sanjay Balyan, whose version of love jihad aligns closely with a typical movie script where (Muslim) boys romantically attract the Hindu girls as they drive through the schools and colleges on motorbikes disguising as Hindus by wearing a sacred thread (kalawa) around their wrists. The year log investigation also records fantasies of key figures from BJP, RSS and VHP discussing their role in stoking fears about love jihad and influencing the Hindu girls to break the relationship with Muslim boys. The investigation also reveals widespread use of state apparatus by the love jihad proponents namely the security and judiciary agencies to create hurdles and harass Hindu women and their partners who dared to marry outside of their faith.¹¹²

The following paragraph summarizes the modus operandi of the campaign *Love jihad Bogey to Fuel Communal Polarisation* published by the online news portal *The Wire*. It proves that Hindutva thrives on anti-Muslim agenda:

The forcible “rescue” of girls who are branded victims of “love jihad”, despite the fact that not a single woman they claimed to have rescued ever sought their help. There is a widespread misuse of public support to influence and abuse police and local administration to nullify such inter-religious

¹¹¹ Nigar, Shazia, and Shishupal Kumar. "Operation Juliet: Busting the Bogey of “Love Jihad” ." *Cobrapost*. Oct 04, 2015, 4 Oct. 2015. Web. 26 Feb. 2016.

¹¹² Bhatnagar, Gaurav Vivek. "BJP, RSS Leaders Caught Using ‘Love Jihad’ Bogey to Fuel Communal Polarisation." *The Wire*. 10 Oct. 2015. Web. 28 Feb. 2016.

marriages. False cases are filed against Muslim youth alleging rape and kidnapping of the Hindu women who chose marry the Muslim man. Forging documents to show girls as minor to falsely implicate Muslim boys and use of emotional blackmail and physical coercion to force Hindu women abandon their husbands. Use drugs to induce temporary amnesia on "love jihad" victims and pressurize them to pull out of inter-religious marriages. The campaign relies on distribution of inflammatory pamphlets and books to propagate the myth. Engage Counseling centers and "Hindu Helplines" to brainwash Hindu women who marry outside their community into giving up on their love life and settle for the man chosen by the Hindutva Brigade. The "Counseling sessions" involve denigration of the character of the Muslim partner, his religion while invoking the fears of family and community honor, instilling a sense of insecurity about the future and threat of physical harm to the couple.¹¹³

¹¹³ See Bhatnagar, Gaurav Vivek "The Wire" story

Hindutva Terrorism and Muslim Witch-Hunt

In the last two decades, there have been several acts of terror in India which resulted in mass casualties. In most of the blast incidents police investigations and individual confession in the court exposed the complicity of the Hindutva affiliates. These acts of terror with Hindutva complicity were September 2008 bomb explosions at Modasa in Gujarat, September 2006 bombings in Malegaon outside a crowded mosque after the Friday prayers, the February 2007 bombings on the Delhi- Attari-Lahore (Pakistan) Samjhauta Express train, the May 2007 bombings at the Mecca masjid (mosque) in Hyderabad also after Friday prayers, and the October 2007 blasts in the Ajmer Sharif tomb. At least 149 people were reported to be killed in these blast incidents.¹¹⁴

In the case of 2002 Akshardham temple blast in the state of Gujarat, Supreme Court delivered a verdict which coincided with Mr. Narendra Modi becoming the prime minister of India in May 2014. The Supreme Court acquitted all six persons including two on death row stating that their (accused) confessional statements being invalid in law and also said that the prosecution could not establish they participated in any conspiracy theory. The Gujarat police was under the administration of Narendra Modi, the Chief Minister of Gujarat in 2002 who was reprimanded by the supreme court:

¹¹⁴ Bidwai, Praful. "Confronting the Reality of Hindutva Terrorism". *Economic and Political Weekly* 43.47 (2008): 10–13. Web...

India's top court also pulled up the Gujarat Police for shoddy investigation in the case in which all the accused faced prosecution under the stringent anti-terror law POTA. The court also came down sharply on the Home Minister of Gujarat -- Narendra Modi himself -- and blamed him for "'clear non-application of mind...in granting sanction," since it was based neither on an informed decision nor on an independent analysis of facts..."¹¹⁵

The conspiracy theory fabricated by the Gujarat police claimed that the "terrorists," from Pakistan were planning to kill Narendra Modi and other BJP leaders sent to India after having been trained in Pakistan to unleash terror. The site of the blast (Hindu temple) was very close to the official residence of Mr. Modi. The Supreme Court verdict was a major setback for Mr. Modi and his party, the BJP:

That their release coincides with Modi's ascension to Prime Minister is somewhat embarrassing -- though it is likely to be lost in the media din around his new government. But it should be noted that unlike the Godhra riots, Modi cannot offer lack of knowledge or resources as a defense for his actions.¹¹⁶

This case illustrates how dangerous myth manufacturing phenomenon can be extended by the Hindutva with state to create insecurity for the self. In this case, the self is indirectly targeted via the threatening other and it exposes the fascist characteristic of the Hindutva. The major casualties from the temple blasts belonged to the Hindu community and it exposes the Hindutva's claim to provide security for the very self from the threatening other. One must remember that Modi's popularity increased significantly after the 2002 pogrom of Gujarat in

¹¹⁵ "The SC Release of Akshardham Suspects Raises Questions about PM Modi." *FirstPost*, May 21, 2014. Accessed February 18, 2016.

¹¹⁶ "The SC Release of Akshardham Suspects Raises Questions about PM Modi." *FirstPost*, May 21, 2014. Accessed February 18, 2016.

which more than 2000 Muslims died, more than hundred thousand displaced, another thousand were reported to be missing and hundreds of women were brutally raped. Modi was banned by the state department from entering the United States for his alleged involvement or mishandling of the riots.

In some cases, the Hindutva fabrication of terror conspiracies could not hold. These cases exposed the nexus between the conspirators, the Hindutva nationalists and various elements from the security and lower courts. In the of Akshardham temple blast case, Supreme Court noted that fake letters were planted into the pockets of the supposed "terrorists" who were shot dead. There were bullet holes on the trouser pockets of the supposed "terrorists" and the clothes were soiled and blood stained but the letters recovered were clean, without any tear or crease. The high court had admitted the letters as evidence thus drawing on the adage that "truth is stranger than fiction". The Supreme Court in its counter argument pointed out this epithet of Mark Twain is not applicable as "Fiction must make sense." The Supreme Court observed there was "perversity in conducting this case at various stages, right from the investigation level to the granting of sanction by the state government."¹¹⁷

In these blasts cases, several Muslim men were arrested. However, later investigations found that the blast was the handiwork of activists from various Hindu extremist organizations. The first expose came from the Maharashtra state ATS (anti-terrorism squad) chief Hemant Karkare, after extensive investigations,

¹¹⁷ Mitta, Manoj. "Akshardham Attack Case: Decoding the Other Verdict of May 16." *The Times of India*India. Manoj Mitta | TNN | Jun 2, 2014, 05.01 AM IST, 2 June 2014. Web. 03 Mar. 2016.

brought forth the startling fact that members of the RSS and its affiliates were engaged in creating terror modules at different places in the country and were also able to successfully penetrate the India military.¹¹⁸

The political landscapes post 9/11 unleashed vindictive, wounded feelings of nationalism that provided an excuse for the security establishments to transform the nation-state along the lines of military-industrial complex. The 9/11 incident also contributed to a climate of generalized anxiety, subsequently galvanized by other "terrorist attacks" and the accompanying political responses to such attacks complicating the debate on terrorism as it acquired anti-Muslim overtones across the globe. The alleged complicity of Al-Qaeda in the 9/11 attack developed into a stereotype where most narratives depicted that the Muslim extremists have developed the tendency to explode themselves in public places to make a political statement.

The Hindu nationalists in collision with the Indian security apparatus have extensively incorporated the counter-terrorism narrative to portray the Muslim as terror suspects. It was easy for the security establishment to abuse anti-terror laws to target the Muslim and those non-Muslims who challenged the state policies. It also brings to light the how deeply compromised and prejudiced the state apparatus and media has become. The prima facie evidence, both forensic and circumstantial, pointed to the involvement of Hindutva groups. Yet, the security and media ignored the evidence and refused to follow open, clear

¹¹⁸ NOORANI, A. G. "Sangh Parivar's Bluff." *Frontline (India's National Magazine)*. 22 Oct. 2011. Web. 1 Mar. 2016.

leads pointing to Hindutva groups. As Gatade mentions, "... it cannot be denied that the law enforcing and investigating agencies entertain institutional bias against Muslims in very many ways."¹¹⁹ Furthermore, the "special" agencies established to investigate terror acts were forthcoming in implicating innocent Muslim youths, engage in communal witch-hunts and extra judicial killings and make a case for promotions and gallantry awards.¹²⁰

The media has also become a vehicle in pushing forward the "Muslim terrorist" narrative and slow poisoning of the civil society. The media played a critical role in producing the communal witch-hunt of Muslims, manufacture conflict situations by distorting events and denigrate the civil rights activist and political leaders who challenged the state and media narrative. The same media agencies would shy away from give due coverage to the stories where the innocent victims were acquitted by the courts not it demanded action against security agencies for fabrication and in its failure to nab the real culprits.¹²¹ These complex links between communal witch-hunts and acts of violence is a product of widely existing forms of originating from the Hindu nationalist discourse which is amplified by the rhetoric that is consistently deployed against the other.

¹¹⁹ Gatade, Subhash. *Godse's Children: Hindutva Terror in India*. New Delhi: Pharos Media & Publishing, 2013. See Page 285

¹²⁰ See Gatade, page 285

¹²¹ Gatade, Subhash. *Godse's Children: Hindutva Terror in India*. New Delhi: Pharos Media, 2013. Print. page 287

In another historic and startling revelation, Swami Aseemanand, a high profile figure in the Hindutva terror network admitted to his complicity in the planned terror attacks on Ajmer Sharif, Mecca Masjid, Malegaon and the Samjhauta Express. Aseemanand, in his confessional statement made before Metropolitan Magistrate in a court in Delhi, confessed that he and other Hindutva activists were involved in bombings at Muslim religious places because they wanted to answer every Islamist terror act with “a bomb for bomb” policy.

Following is his statement:

Indreshji met me at Shabri Dham sometime in 2005. Many top RSS functionaries accompanied him. He told me that exploding bombs was not my job and instead told me to focus on the tribal welfare work assigned to me by the RSS. He said he had deputed Sunil Joshi for this job (terror attacks) and he would extend Joshi whatever help is required.¹²²

The Hindutva activists were exposed in another incident due to an accidental explosion while manufacturing the explosives. The local police decided to cover up the act and ignored crucial evidences such as the conspirators sporting fake beards to that the bomb-makers were Muslims. It was after the various civil society groups - including Secular Citizens' Forum and People's Union of Civil Liberties, Nagpur, accompanied by a forensic expert went on site and interviewed several people who lived close the site. The civil society group met the chief doctor at the local hospital, fire brigade officials and senior police officers during the independent investigation. Their preliminary findings contracted the tentative conclusions of the police administration. The

¹²² Gatade, Subhash. *Godse's Children : Hindutva Terror in India*. Edition: 2nd Ed. ed. New Delhi: Pharos Media &, 2013. Print. Page 32

fact finding team concluded that it was an unplanned impact explosion due to the handling of large stock of explosives possibly to transport to another location. They found several contradictions in the police and victim statements regarding the type of explosives. They specifically warned of an imminent attack by Hindutva militants, but those warnings were ignored.¹²³

The point being made through the discussion of terror acts committed by the Hindutva activists is that the demonization of the Muslim “other” is integral to the ideology and practices of the Hindutva with the aid of security agencies. We discover from these terror acts, a larger conspiracy of the Hindutva to continually reinforce the perception that the Muslims are barbaric and inhuman that they can kill themselves to terrorize the society. The Hindutva leaders including the former prime minister of India, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, of the BJP stated that "all Muslims may not be terrorists, but all terrorists are Muslims". This view has been openly aired innumerable times in all types of media (newspapers, TV channels and social media). The underlying motive here is to create hatred, increase the sectarian divide and shift the blame from the Hindutva forces to Muslims for all acts of terrorism and most importantly consolidate Hindus.¹²⁴

It has always been the case that a select few officials in the establishment rise above communal prejudices to uphold the law and the Maharashtra ATS chief Hemant Karkare was one such police officer. Jaffrelot references Hemanth

¹²³ Bidwai. Page 11

¹²⁴ Bidwai, page 11

Karkare's report claiming that it includes factual information about the actors, the plot (Hindutva terror) and their motivations. Karkare's investigation of the terror acts conclusively exposed the dangerous plans of Abhinav Bharat (Young India Society) and its foot soldiers of hate such as the (Sadhvi) Pragya Singh of the ABVP, serving army officer Col. Purohit, and Sunil Joshi, Indresh and Swami Aseemanand belonging to the RSS. The Abhinav Bharat (Young India Society) was named after the movement started by Veer Savarkar in 1905 in Pune while at Fergusson College. Its name and inspiration are drawn from Mazzini's "Young Italy". However, Abhinav Bharat was also influenced by Thomas *Frost's Secret Societies of the European Revolution (1776-1876)*, a book dealing mostly with the Russian nihilists. This brings to light Hindu nationalists' fascist roots and how the fascist ideology manifests in their practices. Abhinav Bharat believed in revolutionary violence and was, indeed, responsible for the assassination of several British officers to be eventually disbanded in 1952.¹²⁵

To understand militant Hinduism requires examining its domestic roots as well as foreign influences. In the 1930s Hindu nationalism borrowed from European fascism to transform "different" people into "enemies". The Hindu nationalist leaders often shared in public their admiration for authoritarian leaders such as Mussolini and Hitler and their desire to imitate the fascist model of society. Marzia Casolari presents archival evidence from the diary of Hindutva leader B.S. Moonje. It is an interesting account of Moonje's trip to Italy captured

¹²⁵ JAFFRELOT, CHRISTOPHE. "Abhinav Bharat, the Malegaon Blast and Hindu Nationalism: Resisting and Emulating Islamist Terrorism". *Economic and Political Weekly* 45.36 (2010): 51–58. Web...

from the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML). The first Hindu nationalist who came in contact with the fascist regime and its dictator was B.S. Moonje, a politician closely affiliated with the RSS. Moonje's European tour included a long stop-over in Italy where he visited some important military schools and educational institutions. The highlight of the visit was Moonje's meeting with Mussolini.¹²⁶

Moonje, during his stay in Rome from March 15 to 24, 1931, visited the Military College, the Central Military School of Physical Education, the Fascist Academy of Physical Education, and, most important, the Balilla and Avanguardisti organizations. According to Moonje's notes, these two organizations were the keystone of the fascist system of indoctrination of the youths. Their structure is very much similar to that of the RSS as they recruited boys at an early age from 6, up to 18. These youths attend weekly meetings where they receive physical and paramilitary training and also perform drills and parades. As per the RSS literature, it was Moonje who played a crucial role in shaping the RSS along Italian (fascist) lines. The deep impression left on Moonje by the vision of the fascist organization is confirmed through his diary:

The Balilla institutions and the conception of the whole organisation have appealed to me most, though there is still not discipline and organisation of high order. The whole idea is conceived by Mussolini for the military regeneration of Italy. Italians, by nature, appear ease-loving and non-martial like the Indians generally. They have cultivated, like Indians, the work of peace and neglected the cultivation of the art of war. Mussolini

¹²⁶ Marzia Casolari. "Hindutva's Foreign Tie-up in the 1930s: Archival Evidence". *Economic and Political Weekly* 35.4 (2000): 218–228. Web...

saw the essential weakness of his country and conceived the idea of the Balilla organisation...Nothing better could have been conceived for the military organisation of Italy...The idea of fascism vividly brings out the conception of unity amongst people...India and particularly Hindu India need some such institution for the military regeneration of the Hindus: so that the artificial distinction so much emphasised by the British of martial and non-martial classes amongst the Hindus may disappear. Our institution of Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh of Nagpur under Dr Hedgewar is of this kind, though quite independently conceived. I will spend the rest of my life in developing and extending this Institution of Dr. Hedgewar all throughout the Maharashtra and other provinces.¹²⁷

The fascist character and the Hindutva plans for a totalitarian India are confirmed by the British sources. An Intelligence report published in 1933 entitled "Note on the Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh", that assigns Moonje the responsibility of the reorganization of the Hindutva affiliates in the Marathi (language) speaking districts in the Central Provinces in 1927. The report, details the activity and the character of the RSS, warned that Hindutva affiliates hope to be what the "Fascisti" are to Italy and the 'Nazis" to Germany (NAI, Home Poll Department, 88/33, 1933).¹²⁸

From the Hindutva terror attacks, emerged the name of a militant organization called Abhinav Bharat that appears to strictly follow the fascist model. According to Jaffrelot citing various testimonies, the real architect of Abhinav Bharat was Col. Purohit, who established Abhinav Bharat Trust in June 2006. As per the Economic and Political Weekly (EPW) report on Malegaon blast, the longest excerpt posted on its web site alongside the text of this article is a transcript of parts of this meeting. The motive of the Malegaon blast was to

¹²⁷ See Casolari page 220

¹²⁸ See Casolari, page 221

seek revenge against Muslims by exploding a bomb in densely populated areas to cause maximum casualties. The accused Purohit took the responsibility of providing explosives while another accused Pragma Singh Thakur offered to provide men to commit the terror acts. In this meeting all the participants agreed and consented to move forward with their plan.¹²⁹

Subhash Gatade in *Godse's Children: Hindutva Terror in India* mentions that there were five blasts in five cities (Parbhani, Purna, Jalna, Nanded and Malegaon) in the state of Maharashtra. All the explosions occurred between 1:45 PM and 2:00 PM near the most prominent mosques during or just after the Friday prayers when the congregation is at its peak.¹³⁰

Col. Purohit had close proximity to Hindu nationalist leaders and made no secret about his admiration for Hindutva ideologue Savarkar and his obsession with the militant brand of Hinduism. The police interrogation establishes him as a strong proponent of Hindu extremism that is grounded on an anti-Muslim agenda.¹³¹ The centrality of Muslim antagonism in the Hindu nationalist agenda is also conveyed by Anand in *Hindu Nationalism in India and the Politics of Fear*: “This process of essentializing and stereotyping antagonistic identities (Self versus Other) is central to the Hindu nationalist project; a benign and pluralist

¹²⁹ See Jaffrelot, page 52,

¹³⁰ See page 250, Gatade, Subhash. *Godse's Children: Hindutva Terror in India*. New Delhi: Pharos Media, 2013. Print.

¹³¹ JAFFRELOT, CHRISTOPHE. “Abhinav Bharat, the Malegaon Blast and Hindu Nationalism: Resisting and Emulating Islamist Terrorism”. *Economic and Political Weekly* 45.36 (2010): 51–58. Web...See page, 54

imagination of minorities on equal terms will take the wind out of the sails of Hindutva.”¹³²

Jaffrelot discusses a conversation with B L Sharma, who has been an RSS worker since 1940. Sharma had successfully contested parliamentary elections in 1991 and 1996 as a BJP candidate. However, he later resigned as a member of parliament and also from the primary membership of the BJP in 1997. Sharma realized that the larger goal of establishing a Hindu nation cannot be achieved through the electoral politics of BJP nor it can be achieved through the democratic process. Instead, he believed that a military coup and some violent shock to awaken the people were needed: he would prefer a military takeover of the country.¹³³ It can be inferred that Sharma is confident that the military establishment will toe the Hindutva line upon assuming state control. It also exposes Hindutva’s disregard for the constitution of India.

It is not a secret that some Hindutva organizations observe Republic Day as “black day,” while taking an oath to make India a “Hindu Nation”. Its activists owing allegiance to the Hindutva group wave black flags on the streets as a symbolic gesture to “boycott” and “mourn” the Constitution of India. One of the agenda of Abhinav Bharat is to rewrite the Indian Constitution and replace it with rulings from traditional Hindu scriptures

For ruling techniques and ways we have some Puranic treaties. Our traditions and memories are the constitutional basis of our society. We

¹³² See Anaand, page 16

¹³³ See Jaffrelot page 55 “Abhinav Bharat, the Malegaon Blast and Hindu Nationalism: Resisting and Emulating Islamist Terrorism”

must all agree to collect and adopt all the 14 treatises in our country. Purohit asserts for the need to establish this country as “Hindu nation” in accordance with their religious principles.¹³⁴

The Hindutva nationalism’s formative principles are echoed in Abhinav Bharat’s priorities as it seeks to use “Islamist terrorism” as a pretext to define and redefine Hindu nationalism as a response to the perceived Muslim danger. It also lament the weak Hindu community and points to lack of social collective. As Anand states “Hindu nationalism fantasizes potency (of a Hindu collective), yet it fears impotency. Nationalism, for Hindutva, is a politico-cultural project to create, awaken, and strengthen a male dominant body politic.”¹³⁵

Purohit further pushes the envelope of feeding insecurity into the self. His diabolic designs include first terrorizing the Muslims so that they can be represented as one cohesive threatening unit which makes it easier to terrorize the Hindu community. He states that geographically dispersed, linguistically and culturally separated Muslims cannot be imagined as a threat and for him the greatest victory will be the day Muslims get united to form a single entity. ¹³⁶ His enemy composition is extended to include the Christians and Maoists (leftists). Purohit’s logic is to present the Muslims and any dissent that challenges Hindutva ideology as hostile elements which makes it easier to imagine them as the other and label them as anti-national elements. It serves many purposes: first, it is aimed at consolidating the Hindus behind the Brahminical agenda despite; and

¹³⁴ See Jaffrelot, page 55

¹³⁵ See Anand, page 152

¹³⁶ See jaffrelot, page 66

it provides legitimacy to use violence against the threatening other. This has become a new normal for Hindutva to feed insecurity as Anand states:

As pointed out earlier, according to Hindutva, the minority Others, in alliance with secularists and communists, are waging a war against the Hindus. The stereotyped Muslim figure is represented as a danger to Hindu security at different levels – individual Hindu (especially female) bodies, Hindu neighborhoods, Hindu India, as well as the entire world...political organization of Hindus to ensure that they form a vote bank; capturing the state to reflect the Hindutva interests; and using violence against minorities in the name of securing the Hindu body politic. The aim is to create a potent Hindu nation.¹³⁷

The immediate response from the security agencies to the terror acts is the recurring phenomenon of arrests of Muslim youth, raids in Muslim-dominated localities and torture, charge sheets and prosecution based on custodial confessions and minimum factual evidence. The media steps into conduct trials and stereotyping of the Muslim youth. It has become normal that no further proof of guilt is furnished by the security agencies than just the mere fact that the accused belonged to the minority community justifies the arrest.

A large number of arrested Muslims would eventually be acquitted after several years of imprisonment only to find their families shattered because these were the bread winners and in some cases the elderly parents succumb to permanent disabilities and death as they could not bear the shock and the stigma that comes along with it. The rehabilitation of these victims once they are released is an extremely difficult process as the society continues to treat them with suspicion while friends and neighbors sever their ties due to fear of being

¹³⁷ See Anand, page 156

questioned and harassed by the security agencies. Their former employers will not reinstate them nor can they find a new job easily.

Another report published by a civil rights organization “JAMIA TEACHERS’ SOLIDARITY ASSOCIATION (JTSA)” titled “Framed, Damned, Acquitted: Dossiers of a ‘Very’ Special Cell” brings to the fore systematic targeting and profiling of Muslim youth. This report is based on a study of the 16 legal cases that were taken up in various courts. Following is a summary of the report:

The findings of this report counter and contest the complacency of such all too familiar commonsense. We document here 16 cases, in which those arrested, in main by the Special Cell of Delhi Police, were accused of being operatives and agents of various terrorist organizations (Al Badr, HUJI, Lashkar), and charged with the most heinous of crimes: sedition; war against the state; criminal conspiracy, planning and causing bomb blasts; training of terrorists; collection of arms, ammunition and explosives and the transfer of funds for terrorist activities. The penalties demanded by the police and prosecution in these cases were also, correspondingly, the most severe: in most cases, life sentence or the death penalty. However between 1992 and 2012 a large number of those arrested were acquitted of all charges by the courts. Acquittals were by no means the end of their tragedy for they returned from their experience to a different world: Businesses were destroyed; family members were broken having suffered the humiliation and trauma of being associated with “terrorists”; children had to abandon their studies and the normality of everyday life, while parents passed away in grief and despair. Some cases like that of young Md. Amir Khan, which was a practically open and shut case, where the prosecution had virtually no leg to stand on, got drawn out for 14 painful and long years.¹³⁸

Just to corroborate the above findings of JTSA, the following is an excerpt from National Crime Record Bureau, a government agency, which shows the disproportionate figures of Muslim undertrials compared to their population ratio:

¹³⁸ "Framed, Damned, Acquitted : Dossiers of a "very" Special Cell." *Jamia Teacher Solidarity Association*. Sept. 2009. Web. 3 Mar. 2016.

As per figures released by National Crime Records Bureau 80,721 Muslim prisoners were lodged in various jails spread across the country in the year 2013. This is out of a total of 411,992 prisoners confined in all jails. The number of Muslim undertrials was 57,936 out of a total of 278,503. This comes to 21 percent whereas their percentage share in population is far below. Out of 19,331 undertrials lodged in jails of Maharashtra Muslims count upto 6,182. This comes to a little over one-third and is highest among all the States and Union Territories. In other States like UP the number of Muslim undertrials is 15,477 out of a total of 58,100; Bihar has 4,489 undertrials belonging to Muslim community out of a total 26,609; and Delhi is reported to have 2,199 Muslim undertrials against a total of 10,154.¹³⁹

As such, the image of the Muslim as the threatening other is to instill fear, fantasy, distrust, anger, envy and hatred in the self. This self becomes an easy prey to the propaganda machinery of the Hindutva to not only condone but also participate in acts of violence against the Muslims. The desire to instigate and justify violence is not limited to the Hindutva cadre rather it is very much prevalent in the wider society especially the educated and upper class Hindus.

¹³⁹ Shah, Abid. "Why and How so Many Muslim Undertrials Rot in Jails." *Tehelka – Investigations*. 21 May 2015. Web. 3 Mar. 2016.

Conclusion

The objective of this research has been to gain a deeper understanding of Hindu nationalism as an ideology and in practice by examining its agenda of transforming a pluralistic society into a Hindu nation through the discourse of the homogenization of a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society. Michael Ignatieff, in the book *Blood and Belonging*, asserts that, in civic nationalism, "... what holds a society together is not common roots but law. By subscribing to a set of democratic procedures and values, individuals can reconcile their own lives with their need to belong to a community."¹⁴⁰ Hindutva discourse does not conform to Ignatieff's definition of civic nationalism because it is based on a negative agenda. It places nation-state above the people and pursues a divisive agenda that aims at constant sharpening of social boundaries.

The Hindutva homogenization agenda based on common ethnicity is problematic, as the distinct communities wish to assert their identities and safeguard their culture, language and traditions. As Ignatieff observes "common ethnicity, by itself, does not create social cohesion or community, and when it fails to do so, as it must, nationalist regimes are necessarily impelled toward maintaining unity by force rather than by consent."¹⁴¹ Hindutva's historic links to fascism and its fascination for these totalitarian

¹⁴⁰ Ignatieff, Michael. *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism*. London: Vintage, 1994. See page 7

¹⁴¹ See Ignatieff, page 8

regimes is well-known (some of the prominent figures of RSS deeply admired Mussolini and Hitler). The fascist manifestations of Hindutva have been on display through their complicity in recurring sectarian riots, terror acts, the destruction of the Babri mosque in 1992, and in perpetuating the caste hierarchy.

The totalitarian characteristic of Hindutva was in full display in India recently as the nationalism debate took center stage as a result of excessive interference of the BJP government into the university campuses to stifle dissent by students who raise issues that challenge the Hindutva ideology and practices. Of the several universities where students protested BJP government's interference in student affairs, the protests at two prestigious universities -- Hyderabad Central University and the Jawaharlal Nehru University -- sparked global outrage. At Hyderabad Central University (HCU), a bright young scholar of merit, Rohith Vemula, and four other lower caste students, were targeted for challenging and resisting the Hindutva by celebrating beef festivals and raising issues that were politically inconvenient for Hindu nationalists (such as opposing capital punishment and screening a documentary on sectarian riots). The university administration which happened to be from the upper caste, acted at the behest of BJP ministers and harassed the students on flimsy grounds by stopping monthly stipends and suspending them from the University. Rohith Vemula, a Dalit student, committed suicide as he could not bear the humiliation meted out by the

prejudiced university administration. Vemula's death sparked nationwide protests, especially by the student community. His death was termed as institutional murder by many civil rights activists and opposition leaders.

At Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), the student union President Kanhaiya Kumar and two other students were arrested under the colonial era Act of Sedition which triggered intense debate on nationalism. The BJP government attracted international condemnation from high profile academicians and activists:

Eminent professors from prestigious universities worldwide, including Noam Chomsky and others, have written condemning the arrest of Jawaharlal Nehru University student leader Kanhaiya Kumar, and expressing solidarity with the students and faculty protesting the government action on campus. The signatories also condemn "the culture of authoritarian menace that the present government in India has generated."¹⁴²

These incidents hint at the totalitarian tendencies of Hindu nationalists. Dr. Prabhat Patnaik while delivering a lecture on nationalism at JNU as a mark of protest against the use of sedition laws makes a distinction between Hindu nationalism and Indian nationalism. Hindu nationalism, according to Patnaik, replicates the European nationalism that originated during Britain's 100 years' war in the 17th century. It is a form of aggrandizing nationalism that manufactures an internal enemy. Hindu nationalism is also a form of crony capitalism, as it puts the nation and its capital above the people. Patnaik elaborates:

¹⁴² "JNU Events Signal Culture of Authoritarian Menace." *The Hindu*. 16 Feb. 2016. Web. 12 Mar. 2016.

This, according to him was an aggrandizing nationalism motivated by financial interest and finance capital. It had three main characteristics. First, it searched for the enemy within like the Jews, Catholics in northern Europe, etc and was not inclusive. Secondly, it was imperialist in nature. Ireland became the first colony acquired in the struggle for power. Lastly, this nationalism put the nation above people. It was not about the people living there but the power and the prestige of the nation.¹⁴³

The Indian nationalism was constructed to be more civic because it parallels other anti-colonial struggles that were taking place in the third world at the same time. Thus, Indian nationalism in contrast to Hindu nationalism had to be inclusive as it was dependent on social unity across religious and ethnic communities to resist the might of the colonial power. The Hindu nationalism could not be inclusive because it was motivated by caste and sectarian considerations, it was founded on the Brahminical order, and its essence is to preserve the caste hierarchy.

Hindu nationalism thrives on exclusionary agenda and divisive politics. A recent study conducted by Yale University finds that BJP makes electoral gains immediately after communal riots. The three Yale scientists examined the relationship between riots and the vote share of Hindu nationalist parties. The study saw a 0.8 percentage point increase in BJP's vote share following a sectarian riot in the year prior to an election. There is sharp polarization of the electorate induced by riots which puts the Congress party at a disadvantage.

¹⁴³ Binju, Gargi. "Prof Prabhat Patnaik on 'The Different Types of Nationalism'." THE INFORMER JNU. 10 Mar. 20-16. Web. 11 Mar. 2016.

The Congress party has been the major opponent of BJP in many constituencies.¹⁴⁴

The “nationalism” narrative is accompanied by the increasingly authoritarian tendencies of the BJP government, as anyone who challenges the ideology and positions of the government are branded as anti-national, and hence as posing a serious threat to the pluralist and democratic makeup of the Indian.”¹⁴⁵ From a grassroots support perspective, this movement is among the largest nationalist movements in human history, and the West cannot afford to ignore it.¹⁴⁶ Ignatieff also shares the concern about the threat to India’s constitutional framework by the Hindutva as he argues “In India, forty-five years of civic democracy have barely contained the ethnic and religious nationalisms that are currently tearing the country’s federal system apart.”¹⁴⁷

It should be noted that such excessive reliance on fear mongering obfuscates serious problems the country is facing -- such as the increasing gap between the rich and the poor, hunger, inflation, poverty, farmer suicide and corruption -- that are contributing to an unequal economic and social order. As Anand posits:

¹⁴⁴ Nellis, Gareth, Michael Weaver, and Steven Rosenzweig. "Do Parties Matter for Ethnic Violence? Evidence from India." Steven C. Rosenzweig. 25 Sept. 2015. Web. 10 Mar. 2016.

¹⁴⁵ Ghosh, Jayati. "Techno-fascism in the 21st Century." *Frontline Print Edition : March 18, 2016*. India's National Magazine from the Publishers of THE HINDU, 11 Mar. 2016. Web. 12 Mar. 2016.

¹⁴⁶ Howard, Thomas Albert. "The dangers of Hindu nationalism: Thomas Albert Howard reports on threats to religious freedom in India." *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life* 261 (2016): 35+. *Academic OneFile*. Web. 28 Apr. 2016.

¹⁴⁷ See Ignatieff, page 9

Hindu nationalism's politics of fear and imagination implies that it is a serious attack on the ideas and practices of secularism, unity in diversity, and democracy in India. A Hindu nationalist India may become a militarily stronger country, but it certainly will not be the country Indians had fought for during the anticolonial struggle.¹⁴⁸

In closing, it can be inferred from the Hindutva discourses, images and practices that it operates from a sense of inferiority, as they fear the decline of the Hindu population because of the conversion of large number of oppressed sections (lower castes) from "Hinduism" to Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. As Ram cites Romila Thapar's assessment of Hindutva:

This is to overcome the sense of inferiority and cultural insecurity which they experience in their life. Thapar goes on to say " Syndicated Hinduism claims to be re-establishing the Hinduism of pre-modern times; in fact it is only establishing itself and in the process distorting the historical and cultural dimensions of indigenous religions and divesting them of the nuances and variety which was a major source of their enrichment."¹⁴⁹

Additionally, there is no evidence of Hindutva taking a lead role in calling for social reforms, such as reducing poverty, ending corruption, improving literacy, rural development, addressing the issue of farmer suicide and reducing unemployment. Hence Hindu nationalism is an ethnic nationalism that caters to the interests and privileges of a powerful minority, i.e. the upper caste Hindus of India. It seeks legitimacy by manufacturing fear and disseminating misinformation about the Muslims. It creates insecurity in the "Hindus" by constantly portraying the Muslims as the threatening other with the ultimate goal of perpetuating Brahminical hegemony.

¹⁴⁸ See Anand, page 159

¹⁴⁹ Ram, P. R. "Hindutva Offensive Social Roots: Characterisation." South Asia Citizens Watch. Web. 15 Dec. 2015.

Appendix A: Glossary

Term	Definition
ABVP	All India Student Council, a right-wing all India student organization affiliated to the Hindu nationalist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)
Abhinav Bharat	Young India Society is a right wing Hindu extremist organization of the pre-Independence era that was revived in Pune, Maharashtra in 2006 and now has a large base in Madhya Pradesh.
Arya Samaj	Society of Nobles, vigorous reform movement of modern Hinduism, founded in 1875 by Dayananda Sarasvati, whose aim was to reestablish the Vedas, the earliest Hindu scriptures, as revealed truth.
Bharat	Also another name for India
BJP (Bharatiya Janata party)	India's People Party, political party that is currently the leading party in the ruling coalition in India
Brahmins	A Brahmin is a member of the highest caste in the hierarchy also called varna in Hinduism. Hindu priests are drawn from Brahmin caste and are responsible for teaching and maintaining sacred knowledge
Caste	Each of the hereditary classes of Hindu society, distinguished by relative degrees of ritual purity or pollution and of social status.
Dalits	Dalits were considered by upper castes to be outside the Varna or caste system. The word "Dalit" comes from the Sanskrit root dal- and means "broken, ground-down, downtrodden, or oppressed

Dharma Shastras	The Dharma Shastras include the law codes of Hinduism, both secular and religious (since both were very much inseparable). They deal with three main subjects: codes of conduct, civil and criminal law, and punishment and atonement.
Hindi	One of the major languages in India
Hindu	In the Constitution of India, the word "Hindu" has been used in some places to denote persons professing any of these religions: Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism or Sikhism.
Hindu Mahasabha	Hindu Grand-assembly is a Hindu nationalist political party in India.
Hindustan	Another name for India, the term "Hindustan" has been historically applied to the Gangetic Plain of North India, between the Himalayas and the Vindhyas and the Indus river basin in Pakistan.
Hindutva	Hinduhood or Hinduness
Hindutva terror	Often referred in the media as the doctrine of hate and terror, 'Hindutva'.
Khilafat (Caliphate) movement	The Khilafat movement (1919–26) was a pan-Islamic, political protest campaign launched by Muslims in British India to influence the British government
Love Jihad	Also called Romeo Jihad, is an alleged activity (fabricated myth) under which young Muslim boys and men are said to reportedly target young girls belonging to non-Muslim communities for conversion to Islam by feigning love
Manusmriti	The Manusmriti also known as Manav Dharam Shastra, is the earliest metrical work on Brahminical Dharma in Hinduism

NDA (National Democratic Alliance)	The current ruling coalition in India
RSS (Rashtriya Swayam Sevak)	National Volunteer Organization, a cultural, organization that advocates a Hindu nationalistic agenda under the banner of Hindutva
Saffronisation	Saffronization (American English) is an Indian political neologism (named after the saffron robes worn by Hindu priests) used by critics and others to refer to the policies of right-wing Hindu nationalists
Sangh Parivar	Family of organizations, also refers to the family of Hindu nationalist organizations which have been started by members of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) or drew inspiration from its ideology
SC/ST	The Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) are official designations given to various groups of historically disadvantaged people in India.
Vedas	The most ancient Hindu scriptures
VHP	World Hindu Council, abbreviated VHP, is an Indian right-wing Hindu nationalist organisation based on the ideology of Hindutva

Appendix B: *TIMELINE*

- 1858-1947: India under British rule and Indian *Freedom Struggle* (1857-1947). The Non-Cooperation Movement.
- 1885: Indian National Congress is founded by A.O. Hume
- 1906: Muslim League was founded at Decca on 31st December
- 1915: Mahatma Gandhi arrived in India on 9th Jan
- 1920 Non-cooperation movement & Khilafat Movement
 - The non-cooperation phase was a significant phase of the Indian independence movement from British rule. It was led by Mahatma Gandhi and was supported by the Indian National Congress.
 - The Khilafat movement (1919–22) was a pan-Islamic, political protest campaign launched by Muslims in British India to influence the British government. It was endorsed by Gandhi
- 1913: Savarkar, the father of the BJP's Hindutva ideology, had actually sought clemency while lodged in Andamans' Cellular Jail. Savarkar's letter asking for forgiveness from the British (dated November 14, 1913)
- 1925: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS, or the 'Sangh,'-- literally 'National Volunteer Corps'), founded in 1925, is considered the ideological fountainhead of Sangh Parivar
- 1927: Ambedkar along with his followers, set fire to a copy of Manusmriti (Hindu religious book) to protest its misogyny (Hatred or mistrust of women)..
- 1947: Indian Independence Act 1947 by British Raj. Partition of India and Pakistan becomes an independent state on 14 August 1947.[25]
- 1948: Mahatma Gandhi assassinated by a right wing Hindu nationalist Nathuram Godse.

- 1948: Ambedkar, as a law minister drafted the Hindu Code Bill, also referred as the Uniform Civil Code that called for Hindu women's rights to be on par with Hindu men.
- 1950: India became Republic
- 1950: The RSS while opposing the Indian Constitution in 1950 demanded that Manusmriti's law be made the supreme law of the land.
- 1951: Ambedkar resigned as Law Minister after Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru dropped the Hindu Code Bill by saying that there was too much opposition
- 1956: Ambedkar with more than 100,000 Dalit followers renounced Hinduism for Buddhism.
- 1989: National Front (India) Headed by V. P. Singh and led by Janata Dal formed and stormed into power with outside support from BJP and CPI.
 - Indian National Congress (INC) party defeated following widespread allegations of corruption.
- 1990: V.P. Singh implements Mandal Commission Report
 - BJP president L.K. Advani decided to go for a padyatra to educate the people about the Ayodhya movement.
- 1991: V.P. Singh's National Front government falls as BJP withdraws support following the arrest of BJP president Advani.
- 1991: BJP's tally increased from 85 in 1989 to 120 seats in parliament in the general elections
- 1992: Babri mosque demolished by Hindutva forces
- 1996: BJP emerges as single largest party in Parliament. Its tally increases from 121 to 161
- 1998: BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) forms the national government. Its tally increases from 161 to 182 seats

- 1999: BJP gets 182 seats
- 2004: BJP gets 137 seats loses to INC
- 2008: 2004: BJP gets 130 seats loses to INC
- 2013: Sectarian violence in Muzaffarnagar, the state of Uttar Pradesh that led to death of 47 people and mass exodus from villages. A research Centre from New Delhi, in a fact-finding report on the Muzaffarnagar clashes, has questioned the role of the ruling Samajwadi Party and opposition BJP.
- 2014: Historic win for NDA with 336 seats, 282 for BJP. Narendra Modi elected as prime minister of India on 16th May, Congress was routed in the general elections.

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