

Transition from Civic to Ethnic Identity: Dissecting the Changing Landscape of Majoritarian Politics in India

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ABSTRACT

The Nehruvian brand of secularism made its place in socio-political space of India against the overarching tradition of Hindu nationalism and continued to define the contours of civic identity of the Indian nation state. Hindu nationalist tendencies and Hindutva ideologues in the guise of correcting the nation-ness of India and saving the dominion of "Hindu, Hindi and Hindustan" made their formal entry through the BJP coming from a long ideological impetus of the RSS and the Jana Sangh. The trivial fact for the state of secularist traditions and pluralistic fabric of society has been directly challenged since 2014 and major steps are being taken under the Hindu Rashtra regime of Modi to make India a majoritarian state, steering India's identity to ethnic identity. Modi regime is altering the course of state and society and this fact is no longer covert since India has witnessed the

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aftermaths of CAB, NCR, farmer rights protest and revocation of the Article 370. It is no more ambiguous to decide either Hindutva has been a hegemonic discourse now or secular traditions are retrograding in the very fabric of the society.

Introduction

India has survived the democratic governance in the realm of ethno-religious and linguistic diversity in its post-independence history. The early years of Indian independence witnessed the struggles of Nehru and his party—Indian National Congress—to introduce the very fabric of the society with Indian brand of secularism to unite the country under one banner and defy the religious and separatist tendencies of the post-independent society. Nehruvian secularism considered India's composite culture as the foremost strength of society to keep all the communities faithful to constitutional secularism. The incorporation of Hindu nationalist views through the political rule of Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) has reshaped the multicultural Indian nation-state to majoritarian one and their Hindutva ideology has rallied the debate over the source of Indian nationhood. The BJP's ideologue of Hindutva is imprinting its predominant impacts on state and society of India while reflecting the shift in political landscape as well. The reality of these imprints is the Citizenship Amendment Bill and revocation of the Article 370 on special status of Kashmir. The ascendance of Hindu nationalism is detaching India from its main assets and guiding the domestic fabric of state and society under the BJP regime which is transitioning the Indian polity from secularism of acceptance towards non-accommodative approaches. These undercurrents have challenged the Nehruvian idea of India's composite culture and mutual co-existence and consequently reshaping Indian politics and polity into parochial society. This research study attempts to analyze the historical evolution of Political Hindutva and its overarching impacts on the polity and politics of India. This study propounds the imprints of Hindutva on the secular traditions of India and that how the

BJP drives its strengths from ethno-symbolism and cultural nationalism? The paper further dissects the contemporary imprints of the Hindutva and the BJP regime and delineates the religious nationalism making home in India.

Theoretical Context

Ethno-symbolism is the argument revolving between modern and pre-modern social realities while considering and underlying the debates of modernity.¹ The theory of Ethno-symbolism emphasizes the role of myths, symbols, values, traditions and memories in the permanency and development of national identities. The role of myths in Ethno-symbolism, as referred by Smith, is myths of ethnic origin and myths of splendid past.² The interpretation of Smith's arguments in his theory placed a significant position for intellectuals to create and invent ideas since their proposition of knowledge expounds the nation's ethnic past and links the debates to their splendour golden age.³ Ethno-national debates are not completed without sufficient interplay of historians, archaeologists, literate, novelists, sculptors, and intellectuals since they are the ones conveying the idea and endorsing strategic use of national symbols instead of mere production of knowledge and nationalist ideologies, thus holding a significant connection between splendour past of nations and their present.⁴ These entities have been helping the modern nation relive their belongings from the past and provide them a sense of

1 A. Leoussi & S. Grosby, *Nationalism and Ethnosymbolism: History, Culture and Ethnicity in the Formation of Nations* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd 2007).

2 A. D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (UK: Oxford University Press).

3 A. D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (UK: Oxford University Press, 1999).

4 D. Miller, *On Nationality* (Oxford University Press, 1997); <https://doi.org/10.1093/0198293569.001.0001>

ownership with their ethnic communities; thus, Smith makes it evident that modern nation survival depends on its historical understandings of ethnic foundation.

Intellectuals do not belong to high culture, and they set the perquisite and codifications for the idea of nation and its history just like in modern India today, the BJP and politics of RSS are extended to the theoretical and intellectual discourse. These nationalist intellectuals hold the capacity to express the credible national identity. However, there is no defined criterion and sophistication pre-decided to be nationalist intellectual. Still, they needed to be literate enough to dissect and reinvent the ethnic and ancestral myths leading to mobilization and instrumentalizing the masses based on their reinterpretation.⁵ Ethno-symbolists see the nationalist intellectuals as foundation providers for greater mobilizations by connecting the past and present, bridging the explanations of past ethnic realities and existing interpretations, political affiliations and intelligible identities.⁶

Theory of Cultural Nationalism

Theory of cultural nationalism is the contribution to Ethno-symbolism from Smith's student Hutchinson which defines the nation based on shared culture and explicating the national identity through common cultural values and traditions.⁷ The cultural nationalists use organic myths and symbols evolving from common descent to redefine nation or labelling it as community running on civic principles. Hutchinson's account of cultural nationalism aligns with the procession model and makes contributions in the debates of defining nation and its characteristics. In his analysis, it should be noted that Hutchinson himself and proponents of

5 J. Hutchinson, *Nations as Zones of Conflict* (London: Sage, 2005).

6 J. Krejci, "Reviews: Anthony D. Smith, The Ethnic Origins of Nations," *European History Quarterly* 20, no. 2 (1990): 301-304. <https://doi.org/10.1177/026569149002000208>

7 J. Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987).

his ideologue express this struggle as faithful to one character only while relating it to pre-modern ethnic stimulations. It can be religious or secular, liberal or regressive, pluralistic or majoritarian and at some points, it incorporates pre-modern myths and values to emphasize modernity in cultural nationalism.

Setting the Context: Case Study of India

Considering the colonial and post-colonial dynamics of India, cultural nationalism has been employed by various moments at various historical junctions, but evident case was made by Hindu nationalists struggle against the British Raj. Apart from historical events, forces of Hindutva in the name of political activism are endorsing grand exploiting "Hindu cultural symbols, values, understandings and narrative" against Nehruvian secularism by demonizing other majorities and minorities in the country. Political Hinduism of the RSS and BJP is evident and effective case of cultural nationalism in the statecraft of India. The BJP and its parent organization the RSS never accepted the core Indian culture that is composite culture and religious pluralism, and this case is quite evident from the policies and attitude pursued by the political rule of BJP in the last few years.⁸ The BJP has been quite successful in selling the idea of religious nationalism and pseudo secularism in the name of cultural nationalism which only considers "Hindus" as real citizens of India, and every other identity cannot endorse and carry Hindu values and culture.

The ideological discourse of Hindutva even defines faithful Indian citizens. The hatred of BJP against the secular and composite culture of India is evident in the communal violence, harassment of secular writers and academics and censoring critical books. The trivial fact in the debate of cultural nationalism is adoption of secular democracy and religious pluralism in Indian post-independence history to

8 A. Athreya, "Cultural Nationalism in India," *Anthropology* 4 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.4172/2332-0915.1000165>

battle the cultural and ethnic conflicts while ensuring equal religious freedom for every religious identity living there. The post-colonial statecraft tried to secure its pluralism by constitutionalizing the freedom of speech and expression. Hindutva surfaced itself in Indian politics as parallel ideology to Nehruvian secularism in its post-independence journey and vehemently signifies the majoritarian politics instead of equal play of all religions. Nehru wanted to segregate religion and politics to make the better way for communalism developing into modernization which eventually did not happen.⁹

Religiously conscious communities were already capitalizing the communalism as a tool of political mobilization and at the right moment, these right-wing groups marked their political appearance from various religious nationalist groups turning into Sangh-Parivar or appropriately redefining the nation by using cultural orientations and pre-modern understandings of values.

Sangh family is the evident force in reclamation and redefinition of Hindu and Hindustan as argued by Hutchinson in his core text regarding cultural nationalist that these forces are the one putting efforts to alter the course of nation.¹⁰ The similar cultural nationalism in the case of Hindu nationalists is objected to re-establish Hindu rule and revitalize the core Hindu values and traditions to glorify the spectacular Hindu past and cultural dogmas. It is actively altering the course of India by endorsing the politics of organic myths and values of past and renaming the Muslim named places with Hindu names and trying to rewrite the history and text by evidently proclaiming struggle against theoretical and scholarly

9 S. K. Nanda, "Cultural Nationalism in a Multi-National Context: The Case of India," *Sage Journals* 55, no. 1 (2006).

10 G. Gerson & A. Rubin, "Cultural Nationalism and Liberal Values: An Elusive Synthesis," *International Political Science Review* 36, no. 2 (2015): 197-213. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512113507829>

discourse since it is not just a political wing in the country¹¹. The Hindutva discourse, the RSS and the BJP are defining the nation by evoking and resuscitating its past to develop a new sense of uniformity on terms of believes traditions and religious homogeneity.

Cultural artefacts are essence of nationalism, and these artefacts give meaning and birth to nation by affiliating meanings in its history, myths, legends, and traditional past. Hindu nationalism is born out of cultural imaginations and realities combining religion (classic Hinduism and reformism) and nation-ness (modern nationalism) to explicate the Hindu supremacy, stresses the pre-eminence of Hindi culture and standing against non-Hindu influence.¹² The evident case of Ethno-symbolism is Hindu nationalist leaders referring to myths and symbols mentioned in holy texts for political mobilization and the ancient texts in their political analysis.

Political mobilization and national identity by manipulating myths and values has been done enough through tv serials like *Mahabharat*, Ram-Leela play, *Ramayana*, which makes a prominent example out of Ethno-symbolism and capitalization of religious and cultural discourse by Hindu nationalists' ideologists. These kinds of discourses and activities have been imprinting long-standing influence on the politics of India by polarizing the masses on religious consciousness and damaging the foundations of pluralism and co-existence. Nationalism does not awake nations rather it is the invention of their nation-ness at the point where they never existed before as the idea is vehemently argued by Ernest Gellner, the most prominent and primary scholar starting the debate of cultural nationalism in the

11 A. Singh, "Hindu Cultural Nationalism and its Implication for India," *Asia Portal*. Asia Portal: A Nordic Information Resource Portal for Asian Studies. <https://www.asiaportal.info/hindu-cultural-nationalism-and-its-implication-for-india/>

12 D. D. Pattanaik, *Cultural Nationalism in Indian Perspective* (New Delhi: Serials Publications Pvt. Ltd., 2016).

discourse of identities and nations.¹³ Hindu nationalism surfaced itself as a counter political culture or appropriately it has been invented to make its cause in independence movement against British Raj to march the slogans of "Hindu, Hindi and Hindustan". The originator of Hindutva; V. D. Savarkar defines Hindutva in his book "Hindutva ideology developed" as a history of the religious communities which regard to Hindustan as their *pitribhoomi* (fatherland) and *punyabhoomi* (holyland). Logically analyzing this claim results in considering the Muslims, Christians and Parsis as aliens for Hindustan is not their *punyabhoomi*.¹⁴

The case of Ethno-symbolism and cultural nationalism through Hindutva policies and their ideological principles of Hindu nationalism is becoming parcel of Indian polity and politics making it a banal nationalism by hitting common sense of every Indian.¹⁵ The Biling's idea of banal nationalism is bought by majority belonging to middle class and professionals because of its affiliations with Hindu fundamentalism, which unveils India's educated urban class and sense of belongingness to the BJP's discourse of cultural nationalism and Hindu religiosity. The case is a trivial matter to discuss after the back-to-back victory of Hindutva forces in the National elections where the aftermath of Modi 1.0 was still under digestion. Cultural nationalism and Ethno-symbolism revive the importance of splendour past, affiliations to values and myths but extremist tendencies mobilizing it for their political dominion and ending up masses for the war frenzy. Hindu reformism is nowhere to be seen in the dreams of peaceful co-existence; rather "us" versus "others" debate is always given heat whenever socio-

13 E. Gellner & J. Breuilly, *Nations and Nationalism*, 2nd ed., (NY: Cornell University Press, 2009).

14 A. G. Shivamurthy, "Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?" *The Kootneeti* (Sep 14, 2020), <https://thekootneeti.in/2020/09/14/book-review-hindutva-who-is-a-hindu-savarkar/>

15 "Everyday Nationhood: Theorising Culture, Identity and Belonging after Banal Nationalism," (May 5, 2018) British Politics and Policy at LSE. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/everyday-nationhood/>

political or economic fallout of the BJP is questioned. The resounding victory of BJP in 2019 elections is an alarming situation for the state of secularism, religious pluralism and tolerance in India after considerable analysis of political Hindutva, its ideologies and Modi 1.0 from the standpoint of scholarly debates on the issues of identities and nation-ness.

The Historical Tryst of Indian Secularism

The independence of India started the debate on decisive questions regarding the navigation of religious diversity, multiple ethnic and cultural identities and idea of secular nationalism was halted by personalities holding the reign of power to manage the terrain of diverse society. The newly born state witnessed the two competing ideologies to manage its statecraft and people.¹⁶ These competing ideologies were religious nationalism and Hindu traditionalism where religious nationalism was referred to as the principal idea of Hindu-nationalism whose competing claim is Hindu ownership of India being majority community. The later ideology held the importance for cultural features and linguistic dominion of Hindi over another foreign language and constituent assembly did not incorporate any representative of former ideology while drafting the constitution of India. Meanwhile, traditionalists were given representation in the right wing of Indian National Congress.¹⁷ Nehru and his companions made secularism and composite culture an integral essence of Indian statecraft to pave the pluralistic way for polity and politics irrespective of pressure they faced from religious tendencies.

Nehruvian brand of secularism propagated Indian nationalism where all citizens were equal and uniformly

16 W. J. Grant, "The Space of the Nation: An Examination of the Spatial Productions of Hindu Nationalism," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politic* 11, no. 3 (2005): 321-347. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537110500255387>

17 T. B. Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), <https://press.princeton.edu/books/paperback/9780691006710/the-saffron-wave>

contributed to political identity of sovereign India being its rightful citizens.¹⁸ During that time, the political lexicon of modern India started forgetting what communalism could have done to India's composite culture but secessionist forces were readily struggling to imprint the nation's sub-consciousness by hitting the religious fault lines. Nehru believed that secularism could only save the narrative of "akhand Bharat" [Hindi: undivided/greater India] since partition had already happened because of the communalistic divide (Hindu versus Muslim) and newly born state could not give a chance to any other secessionist movement to flourish.

The foremost reason to introduce the very fabric of society with Indian brand of secularism was consideration of "religious/Hindu communalism" a threat to composite culture of India as India was hosting numerous civilizations for years and this time is crucial to save the further division of Indian civilisation roots. The fears became real when murderer of Gandhi was found associated with Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh.¹⁹

The timeframe of 1950-1970 did not witness any problems with India's secular policies proving no harm to state and society and providing equal political opportunities to every religious identity. Negligible cases of religious and communal violence were reported during first thirty years of independence and policy of departure from religion for political mobilization and exploitation was adopted and to practically implement the policy, Nehru started sanctioning the politicians involved in promotion of religious riots and polarizing society. Opposite forces tried making the Nehruvian idea of secularism as anti-religious notion for

18 M. Juergensmeyer, Review: *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*, *History of Religions* 41, no. 1 (2001): 84-86.

19 L. Frayer & F. L. Khan, "The Powerful Group Shaping the Rise of Hindu Nationalism in India," *NPR* (May 3, 2019).
<https://www.npr.org/2019/05/03/706808616/the-powerful-group-shaping-the-rise-of-hindu-nationalism-in-india>

which he cleared that he had no intention of separating politics and religion rather he is fighting against the communalism and making India a country who honours its every citizen irrespective of his religious and ethnic identity.²⁰ He clearly mentioned that our brand of secularism is not about zero attachment and involvement of government in religious matters but favouring few over others because of their religious identity is not what our government would want in any possible case.

One of the prominent Indian political scientists, Rajeev Bhargava expounded the Indian secularism not as something complete divorce of government from religious matters rather there are prominent cases where government has been drafting policies on religious issues like accessing Dalits/untouchables to Hindu temples and outlawing the animal sacrifices.²¹

India's journey of secularism was never smooth since Nehru government verbally assured the behaviour of equality with every religious community but practical grounds proved something else about Nehruvian secularism. Indian national Congress modified and reformed Hindu personal laws and did not even touch the sharia laws or codes of life for other minorities which exhibited its different level of interference in different religions. The state did not opt for principled distance rather it sponsored the religious celebrations of Hindus while subsidizing religious pilgrimages of Muslims and Sikhs.

The political era of Indira Gandhi played a decisive role for the image of Secular India since Indian national Congress in her time started favouring religious groups for political mobilization and fuelling communal violence opportunistically. Some of the prime incidents of her

20 R. Bhargava, "What is Indian Secularism and What Is It For?" *India Review* 1 (2002): 1-32. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14736480208404618>

21 J. A. Ahanger, "Revisiting Nehru: The Politics of Nonalignment and Secularism," *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues* 22, no. 2 (2018): 24-33.

government to fuel the religious conflicts were sponsoring the destabilization of the Akali Dal, declaring the Aligarh Muslim University a minority educational institute, and partnering with the World Hindu Council or the Vishwa Hindu Parishad for the Bharat Mata Mandir.²²

The turmoil of Nehruvian secularism clearly agitated in 1984 when Rajiv Gandhi headed the government and mishandled the case of Shah Banu. His attempt to appease the Indian Muslims by invoking Communal law of their religion gave a green signal to Hindu nationalists. They capitalized this political opportunity to bash the pseudo-secular agenda of the Indian National Congress. The political tenure of Indira and Rajiv proved to be decisive factor in eroding Indian brand of secularism and handing over the very fabric of society to emerging voices of right-wing religious nationalism.

Hindutva Ideology: Historical Pretext

Hindutva movement is not solely related to political struggle of the BJP and its ideas of religious nationalism rather this ideology has been there for hundreds of years and evolving through different terrains of eras. The Vinayk Damodar Savarkar is known to be the forefather or the originator of this Hindutva ideology along with other ideologues including the Keshav Baliram Hedgewar and Madhiv Sadashiv Golwalkar who systemized this ideology.²³ *Encyclopaedia Britannica* defines Hindutva as “an ideology that aims to define Indian culture in terms of Hindu values”. According to the definition of an ideology by a *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, “the integrated assertions, theories and aims that constitute a socio-political program” which assures that Hindutva is an ideology.

22 S. Daniyal, “History Lesson: How ‘Bharat Mata’ became the Code Word for a Theocratic Hindu State,” *Scroll. In.* (March 17, 2016), <http://scroll.in/article/805247/history-lessons-how-bharat-mata-became-the-code-word-for-a-theocratic-hindu-state>

23 G. Flood, “Hinduism: History of Hinduism,” *BBC News*, August, 24, 2009, http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/hinduism/history/history_1.shtml

The originator of Hindutva; V.D Savarkar defines Hindutva in his book "Hindutva ideology developed" as "a history of the religious communities which regard to Hindustan as their *pitrabhoomi* (fatherland) and *punyabhoomi* (holy land)".²⁴ Logically analyzing this claim results in considering the Muslims, Christians, and Parsis as aliens for Hindustan is not their *punyabhoomi*. Hindutva is a nationalist ideology that directs and depicts the today's intolerant and aggressive Hinduism. This ideology of Hindutva is being injected in the society through certain organizations that include the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (National Volunteers Association), the *Bhartiya Janata Party* (Indian Peoples Party- political front), the *Vishva Hindu Parishad* (World Hindu Council), the *Shiv Sena* (the fascist one) and many others. The whole umbrella of these organizations is known as *Sangh-Parivaar*.²⁵ The *Sangh-Parivaar* has its roots established in almost every segment of the society that includes political, occupational, economic, social, feminist, religious, educational and socio-ethnic.

The *Parivaar* has also operationalized numerous think tanks that analyze the progress and functioning of the *Parivaar*. Its political journey started in response to the growing popularity of other religions in the subcontinent and forces of Hindutva wanted reformation for Hinduism to ensure its survival.²⁶ Arya Samaj and Brahma Samaj came forward for the reformation of Hinduism to revise the Hindu culture greatness and Vedic golden age.

The Hindutva is an ideology in terms of describing the Indian cultural values and norms. The roots of Hindutva can be

24 C. Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), <https://pk1lib.org/book/769193/2aee45>

25 C. Jaffrelot & I. Therwath "The Sangh Parivar and the Hindu Diaspora in the West: What Kind of 'Long Distance Nationalism'?" *International Political Sociology* 1 (2007): 278-295. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-5687.2007.00018.x>

26 C. Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India* (Columbia University Press, 1998), 360.

traced back to an ancient past. Considering the facts for a historical analysis and review of the existing religion of Hinduism, the prominent facts support the argument that Hinduism did not emerge immediately as a religion, but it got its name by inclusion of all customs, traditions and beliefs of people living across the River Indus also commonly known as Sindhu. This is from where the concept of Hinduism was derived.²⁷ The emergence of Hindu expression was found in the late 17th and 18th centuries in the rule of Shivaji followed by the Maratha Empire. Later on, this concept was taken over by the Brahmins, which later turned into an upper-caste of Hindus.²⁸

The Ascendancy to Power

The construction of Hindu nationalism as an ideology emerged with the efforts of Brahmins and after the emergence of the Arya Samaj. The primary aim of such organizations is to maintain traditional elements of social and cultural order. Hindu nationalist glorification must be interpreted in context of Hindus trying to claim them as a majority community. However, this ideology gained a significant rise during the British colonial period. A large part of its credit goes towards the British rulers and their strategy of divide and rule.²⁹ According to some analysts, another reason for the concept of Hindutva gaining momentum during this period was that the Hindus felt that their glorious past needed to be revived as it had always been either the Muslims ruling over them in the shape of Mughal Rulers, or it was the British ruling over them in the shape of colonial

27 M. Mag, "Rising Hindutva & Its Impact on The Region," *Melange Magazine* May 16, 2019. <https://www.melangemagazine.biz/rising-hindutva-its-impact-on-the-region/>

28 A. Green & V. Viaene, ed., *Religious Internationals in the Modern World: Globalization and Faith Communities Since 1750* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137031716>

29 A. Ray & I. Banerjee-Dube, *Nation, Nationalism, and the Public Sphere: Religious Politics in India* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2020) <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=2522640>

rulers. They had felt degraded and like second-class citizens.³⁰

In 1923, the term "Hindutva" was popularized by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, an independent Indian politician and lawyer, who wrote the book "Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?" The communal atmosphere provided a platform to communal minded people which led them to creating a difference between the Hindus and the Muslims, stating that the Muslims and people of all other religions are 'invaders' and 'foreigners' and it is only the Hindus that are the sons of soil.³¹

Hedgewar was a medical student, who read the book of Savarkar in which he had exploited the term of Hindu Rashtra. Impressed by the book greatly, he met with Savarkar and discussed the weaknesses of Hindu society, which, according to them, was dominated by foreign powers since a very long time.³² Moreover, it is interesting that the founding member of the ideology of Hindutva was not a religious man.

Hedgewar took an active part in anti-British societies. Gandhi made an alliance to start Non-Cooperation Movement aimed at Hindu-Muslim unity which turned out to be a failed attempt due to an outbreak of violence between Hindus and Muslims in 1921. It was incidents like this that led the Hindu nationalists to gaining benefits from the situation and creating a large following for the concept of Hindutva. After realizing that these revolutionary campaigns alone are not enough to get freedom, people like Hedgewar started discussing the weakness of the Hindu nation to

30 P. K. Chhibber & R. Verma, *Ideology and Identity: The Changing Party Systems of India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190623876.001.0001>

31 J. Sharma, *Hindutva: Exploring the Idea of Hindu Nationalism* (Noida: Harpercollins, 2016). <https://pk1lib.org/book/3683364/6520ee>

32 S. Jain, "Hedgewar: A Native Vision of Nationhood," *Daily Pioneer*, Oct, 2018. <https://www.dailypioneer.com/2018/columnists/hedgewar--a-native-vision-of-nationhood.html>

create awareness. As a result, they founded the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS: National Volunteer Society), an organization to strengthen the objective of Hindutva. The RSS was designated to propagate the Hindutva ideology and basically strengthen and bring together the Hindu community. It has somewhere near 20 wings forming the Sangh Parivaar. Golwalkar was a young and energetic person when he joined the RSS. The RSS was made an influential party during this time but the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi put immense pressure and Golwalkar changed the strategy. He helped Dr. Shyam Parsad form the first political wing of Hindutva—Jan Sangh in 1951. Jan Sangh provided a shelter to the members of RSS after the assassination of Gandhi. Golwalkar found an enemy in Muslims, Christians and Sikhs along with communists. This provides enough evidence that the RSS formation had an anti-minority background. Aggressive campaign against communist and hatred against Muslims were visible during this period. After the assassination of Gandhi, Indira Gandhi came into power. During this period, the RSS merged Jan Sangh with the Janata Party movement. Their top leaders of Jan Sangh party become minister of JP³³. This paved way for the RSS to come up openly to form a new political party called the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee.³⁴

During the 1980s, India was slowly and gradually shifting its economy towards private sectors and this initiative increased the unemployment ratio to a great extent. During this period, middle class gave acceptability to the RSS. During these circumstances, the murder of Indira Gandhi by her own Sikh

33 S. P. Udayakumar, *"Presenting" The Past: Anxious History and Ancient Future in Hindutva India* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2005).

34 A. Nilsen, "Trajectories of Change in the World's Largest Democracy: From Inclusive Neoliberalism to Authoritarian Populism (India, 2014-2019)," Retrieved August 22, 2021, from https://www.academia.edu/36270820/From_Inclusive_Neoliberalism_to_Authoritarian_Populism_Trajectories_of_Change_in_the_Worlds_Largest_Democracy

bodyguard further created a divide in the society, and a prominent political gap in Indian politics. At that time the BJP came at the forefront as an influential political party. This was the period when the BJP was at a stable rise in the country and took complete benefit of the situation. In 1998, the BJP along with its allies managed to form a government in Lok Sabha.

During this time period, communal violence could be seen at an all-time high.³⁵ Later, in 2014 the BJP managed to come out as a victorious party in the Lok Sabha elections once again with Narendra Modi as the Prime Minister. And in the recent 2019 elections, Modi again won with a clear majority.

The effects of having the BJP in power started to come into action among the masses right after the landslide victory of the party in 2014. The government itself began rewriting the history books which, like all other concepts taught at an early stage, goes on to inculcate the extremist ideas among the masses which has dire consequences on the stability among the different religious groups of India. These ideas are inculcated at a very tender age, which is why it becomes harder to get rid of Hindu sentiment later in life and goes on to show how these religious nationalists are instilling the minds that will come into light in the future as well.

The Contemporary Landscape under Hindutva Regime

India has always been a haven for numerous civilizations and proved it a diverse landscape in sheltering every religious identity. The post-colonial landscape and its political figures struggled against Hindu nationalists and traditionalists to constitutionalize the Nehruvian idea of secularism to maintain the polity and politics of country on just principles. Jawahar Lal Nehru declared that newly born state did not have any official religion and would not associate itself with any faith or mystical belief while ensuring the pluralistic co-existence of every religion and

35 Ray & Banerjee-Dube, "Nation, Nationalism, and the Public Sphere,"

identity impartially.³⁶ However, the current realities of polity and politics in India discredit the above facts and exhibit the picture otherwise. The "secularism" seems a utopian idea under current regime crumbling the world's largest secular democratic franchise and propagating the way from pluralistic society of composite culture towards majoritarian Hindu nation.³⁷

The current BJP-led regime is on its way to fade the image of "secular India" and openly expound the religious beliefs, values, myths, traditions and glories of the Hindu past to make a statement from the essence of Ethno-symbolism cultural nationalism to exploit the sentiments of public. Government has been using religious tools openly by favouring one religious' group over another and these under-currents are quite prominent in the regime of BJP.

The political representation of minority groups has been declined systemically while witnessing the events of NRC, CAB, massive execution of Muslims in Gujarat, detention camps of Assam, decision of Ram temple over Babri Masjid dispute, revocation of the Article 370 and altering the discourse of nation by rewriting the Hindu history. The future and fate of secularism in India is under grave threat from the RSS, BJP and their discourse of Hindutva since massive steps have been taken to change the landscape of country from polity to politics. The policies have become quite evident ever since Narendra Modi took the reins of Indian government and Modi 1.0 and 2.0 has been an exemplary era of obvious marginalization of Muslims and other religious identities. Religious nationalism is making home in India under the government of BJP and Modi has been driving the socio-political order as sole representative of society. Since

36 S. Gupta, "Desecularization in India: The Resurgence of Religion under Modi," <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/southasia/2019/12/19/desecularization-in-india-the-resurgence-of-religion-under-modi/>

37 P. Vijayan, "Time to Defend India's Secularism," *The Hindu*, Dec 18, 2019. <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/time-to-defend-indias-secularism/article30332647.ece>

the Citizenship Amendment Bill got passed from the Lok Sabha where opposite parties have been there, and his ideologue of Hindutva is now hegemonic discourse in India imprinting every part of the society.³⁸

The political power given to the Hindutva and RSS by the government of BJP has made their notions quite clearer against the secular traditions and their actions are speaking louder in the favour of Hindu Rashtra deriving its roots from cultural nationalism of Hindu culture. The political matrix of Modi 2.0 has witnessed greater surge in hate speech and hate crimes against Muslims even the election results of 2019 made Hindu masses to attack on non-Hindu citizens making a history of unacceptance and majoritarian society which once has been a safe home to many religious factions.³⁹

The secular India has witnessed a legislative step to discriminate the Muslim and non-Muslim migrants in the name of Citizenship Amendment Bill, revocation of special status of Kashmir and cutting the Kashmir from across the world by shutting down its services and housing the non-citizens or names not found on the NRC (majority Muslims) as per new CAB in detention camps in Assam. The historic silence of Modi government over the heightened cases of communal violence and hate crimes against one religious community poses a blatant question over BJP's positive secularism. Modi regimes has been a frightening force in reshaping the Indian landscape introducing everyday a new policy to bring the gap in society and receding the secular traditions of India by polarizing and dividing the society on religious identities.

38 J. Rehman, "India's Saffronisation and Hindutva: A Threat to India's Secular Posture," *Daily Times*, March 28, 2020). <https://dailytimes.com.pk/584388/indias-saffronisation-and-hindutva-a-threat-to-indias-secular-posture/>

39 Y. Zaman, "Hindutva: A Looming Threat to Minorities in India," *The Express Tribune*, Jan 31, 2021. <http://tribune.com.pk/story/2282129/hindutva-a-looming-threat-to-minorities-in-india>

Emerging Contours of State and Society in India

The abrogation of Article 370 on the special status of Kashmir has raised the concerns of international community regarding the face of democracy and human rights in India alarming the liberal and leftist faction of society. The policies of Hindutva regime have compelled the Indian liberal voices to reach international platforms and unveiling the BJP's attempt to dividing and polarizing the Indian society.⁴⁰ The repercussions and resistance from the liberal and leftist public are seen to be massive since the BJP has left no stone unturned to alter the country's secular liberal socio-political order towards non-accommodative Hindu nationalist social order. The BJP has been mobilizing and struggling to rally the support of socio-political apparatus of the country to attain its long-standing ambitions but leftist or liberal alliance and state apparatus of federal versus states is its biggest barrier to achieve so.⁴¹ The political apparatus in second tenure of the BJP government has started working more apparently on hardcore Hindutva, non-accommodative policies and steering the socio-political affairs towards narrow and parochial polity. The revocation of Article 370 is the first prime non-accommodative effort of BJP government and its discriminatory behaviour against non-Hindus.

This decision is clear manifestation of Modi's majoritarian policies and to satisfy his hardcore Hindu vote bank who has incited this news as some victorious elation.⁴² The emerging

40 A. Ahmed, "Kashmir and the Abrogation of Article 370: An Indian Perspective," *Future Directions International* (August 20, 2019). <https://www.futuredirections.org.au/publication/kashmir-and-the-abrogation-of-article-370-an-indian-perspective/>

41 U. Hameed, "Footprints of Fascism in India: Implications for Local Muslims," *Policy Perspectives* 17, no. 2 (2020): 27-46. <https://doi.org/10.13169/polipers.17.2.0027>

42 R. R. Kumar & M. Rizwan, "Hindutva Philosophy Reinforcement by the RS/BJP against Minorities and the Economic Performance of Narendra Modi's Government in India," *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 28, no. 2 (2021): 351-366. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15718115-bja10021>

reality of secular India was unveiled after looking at euphoric announcements on pro-government news outlets as they violated international law and violated very humane essence in curfew. The proponents of Hindutva always considered Kashmir the part of Akhand Bharat by narrating the beauty of Kashmir as landscape of Hindu gods and goddesses.⁴³

The BJP's sentiments against Kashmiris and its Muslim majority is not a political event rather an ideological one and their agitation against special status of Kashmir derived its aspirations from Jana Sangh and idea of Hindu Rashtra since 1951.⁴⁴ The website of BJP even honoured the dead founder of Jana Sangh as martyr who struggled for the integration of Kashmir as lands of Hindus which prominently signalled the long awaiting agenda of BJP. The BJP is not even willing to explain its undemocratic decision or to pay any lip service for which the unconstitutional step was preceded rather signalling a situation of India on its way to Hindu majoritarian state.

Citizenship Amendment Bill: Transition from Civic to Ethnic Identity

Until Modi government started achieving its dream of Hindu Rashtra, India used to be a country of its every citizen living there and constitutionally ensuring the equality and fair play of every identity. The BJP blew this fact into the face of world's largest democracy by passing citizenship amendment bill in Lok Sabha and discriminating the migrants on the basis of their religious identities.⁴⁵ This step

43 J. Lunn, "Kashmir: The Effects of Revoking Article 370," (2019).
<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/kashmir-the-effects-of-revoking-article-370/>

44 M. Bhagavan, "Princely States and the Hindu Imaginary: Exploring the Cartography of Hindu Nationalism in Colonial India," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 67, no. 3 (2008): 881-915.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911808001198>

45 E. Roy, "India's Citizenship Amendment Bill: A Descent into Theocracy," Dec, 2019. <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/india-citizenship-amendment-bill-descent-theocracy>

is clearly a succession of Secular India to a theocratic state that will not provide amnesty to religious minorities which once used to be the prominent factor in India of Nehru. The discrimination of Muslims in CAB is no incident since it provides amnesty to every other migrant from neighbouring countries including Parsis, Jains, Sikhs, Christians but not Muslims to be the rightful Indian citizen.⁴⁶

Since the implementation of CAB, the majoritarian policies of BJP were limited to political fringes but this bill has directly attacked the image of Secular democracy that is unjust to one "religious identity" and steering its way out to Hindu nation state.⁴⁷ This step has explained the face of BJP that defines its every executive and legislative decision from religion and considers this state a home to one civilization that is Hindu and every other civilization or religious identity should leave "Hindustan" thus upending the notion of liberty, equality and casteless society.

These hardcore policies are derived from the bible of Hindutva which as argued for the fact that Muslims and Christians were converted and rightfully their religious identity is "Hindu". Basing on this belief of RSS and Jana Sangh, the BJP has now declared NRC nationwide which once was limited to Assam to detain and deport illegal migrants of Bangladesh. The public outrage over this legislation and specifically the student protest has given the loud and clear message that they do not want majoritarian Hindu Rashtra that is only working to protect cows and instil hatred against one religious identity. Government had to shut down its internet services and stage a curfew to stop the circulation of images in which effigies of PM is on fire

46 T. Board, Editorial, "India's Citizenship Bill Puts Secularism at Risk," Dec 11, 2019.

47 J. M.Kakkar, "India's New Citizenship Law and its Anti-Secular Implications," *Lawfare* Jan 16, 2020. <https://www.lawfareblog.com/indias-new-citizenship-law-and-its-anti-secular-implications>

("Citizenship Amendment Bill," 2019).⁴⁸ Most of the migrants in Assam are illiterate and government has given them whole burden to prove their citizenship just because they are Muslim migrants and if Bangladeshi government would not accept them, it is going to be the biggest human crisis staged by the the world's largest democracy.

The unilateral dismantlement of special status of Kashmir and all set to put illegal migrants into detainees' camps is evidently unveiling the theocratic face of BJP government that abrogated the Article 370 because of religious myths attached to goddess of that land by leader of Jana Sangh. All these policies are vindication of finding meanings in organic myths and symbols and justifying them from past stories and redefining the nationhood from cultural affiliation and this is what BJP is doing to make "Hindustan" a home for "Hindus" speaking "Hindi" and targeting other religious identity to validate that idea of redefined nation-ness.

More than 1000 intellectuals have openly challenged the Modi's idea of defining citizenship of secular India based on religion since it is detrimental to the pluralistic and composite culture of the country. Despite every remark, Indian government has received from international forum, Citizenship Amendment Bill and NRC is on its way to rewrite the fate of secularism in India and shifting the course of nation from secular nationalism to religious one aspired to protect its Hindu culture and values.

Every step taken by the BJP government is posing an open challenge to secular foundations of India and staining its democratic franchise. The Citizenship Amendment Bill by granting the Indian citizenship to one religion against another is red flag for pluralistic composite culture because the Hindutva ideology of BJP and Modi has already staged its agendas to transform the course of nation-ness into a

48 A. Veeraraghav, "Indian Government's Response to Protest Violates Human Rights," *The Daily Campus*, <https://dailycampus.com/2021/02/03/indian-governments-response-to-protest-violates-human-rights/>

majoritarian Hindu Rashtra. Although, these steps are received with massive reaction from protestors that is crumbled aggressively by government but these protests have expounded the will of masses for sovereign, socialist, secular, pluralistic and democratic republic for every citizen irrespective of its religious and cultural identity.

In September 2020, the BJP government passed controversial agricultural acts which resulted in the massive flow of farmers from all over India to New Delhi to peacefully protest the laws. The BJP, as per its nature, called it an anti-India movement led by the people of Khalistan and dealt aggressively with it.⁴⁹ The internet was terminated at the protest sites and even in Uttar Pradesh and Haryana. Water and electricity supplies were suspended to force the protestors to leave. Journalists were also not given access to the site and after the 100th day of the protest, 248 people were found to have died in this protest.⁵⁰ The government response over this protest was typical feature of right-wing governments defaming its own masses and calling out the agenda of protest as anti-national and grace threat to the consolidation of the state because of its alleged association with the Khalistan movement.

In the wake of this entire episode, the government response and senior party leader's statements were quite a disappointment calling out their own citizens' goon and not even sparing international analysts commenting over the situation. The concerns posted by international icons on their twitter accounts exposing the authoritarian face of Modi government against protestors were responded by government officials as international propaganda against India. The so-called positive secularist and reformist government of BJP filed FIR against "Thunberg's tweet"; the

49 R. Kurup, "Why Are Farmers Protesting in India?" *Lawfare*, Feb 18, 2021. <https://www.lawfareblog.com/why-are-farmers-protesting-india>

50 S. J. Singh, "The Farmers' Protests Are a Turning Point for India's Democracy—And the World Can No Longer Ignore That," *Time*, Feb, 2021. <https://time.com/5938041/india-farmer-protests-democracy/>

situation explicating the understanding level of senior leaders that are demanding investigation over a child tweet.⁵¹

This time the whole world is witnessing the oppression of BJP government against non-Hindus or any other force that does not comply itself with their narrative either and evident examples of this authoritarian oppression is censoring media freedom, journalist detention, shutdown of internet services and aggressive crackdown on peaceful protestors. Government suspended hundreds of twitter accounts for referring the murder of protestors a genocide violence of 1984 when Hindu nationalists were the first in row to call for the violence. Not just human lives are endangered who are non-Hindus but anyone pursuing free speech or writing over government atrocities is not safe anymore since nine journalists are being jailed for witnessing the police shooting unarmed protestors.

Situation has alarmed international human rights activists to protect journalists and unveiling the government actions that are clearly discrediting the voice of protestors. The time is speaking for itself that Modi's actions are no more about superiority of Hindus or Ethno-symbolism or cultural nationalism rather a socio-economic gap rooted in Punjabi Sikh experiences and now validated by the support of masses standing with protestors. This is no more about caste and religion rather a movement demanding their due rights who has always been pushed in the name of secessionist agenda negating the trauma they suffered in partition (Sikh and Punjabis suffered the most since the division of Punjab) and atrocities they faced in 1984.⁵² It is high time to question the actions of government against their

51 "Farmers' Protest: Unprecedented Reaction By Government To Tweets By Rihanna, Other Celebs," 2021. <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/farmers-protest-government-says-temptation-of-sensationalist-comments-especially-by-celebrities-others-not-accurate-2362280>

52 M. Mashal & S. Yasir, "Modi's Response to Farmer Protests in India Stirs Fears of a Pattern," *The New York Times*, Feb 3, 2021.

majority vote bank because anytime soon, the unasked questions can redefine the fate of farmers in the agricultural country. The fears of Dalits, Muslims, Christian farmers, and Kashmiris are not something coming out of hypothetical situation rather a history of communal violence against them since "Hindutva" even negate the contribution of Persian and Islamic civilizations to Indian culture. Right-wing nationalism of the BJP has always discredited them. However, the series of protests targeting CAB, revocation of the Article 370, NCR and standing hands in hands with farmers is a fight for survival: the survival of pluralism, democracy and secularism in India.

From Soft Hindutva to Hard Hindutva

Modi government in the halls of power has managed to stay for another term of five years and the BJP's politics is more about mobilization and electoral campaigns. The impressive victory in 2019 elections has manifested the ideological hegemony of Hindutva extending its social base from competitive ideology in India towards voice of majority and redefining the qualities of system just the way Congress did redefine nation-ness of India at historical junction of partition. The answer to the hegemony of ideologue of the BJP lies in the fact that every single political party campaigned together from one front to counter the foreseen landslide victory of BJP and popularity base of its narrative. The way every single political front wanted to counter the BJP's influence speaks its popularity base from politics to polity since its ideological dominance is pretty much obvious from the mainstreaming of "banal Hindutva".

The BJP has pretty much normalized the incorporation of Hindu nationalist views in the mainstream Indian politics evidently receding the traditions of secularism that once does not want the government or politics to associate itself with religious nation-ness.⁵³ The ideological discourse of

53 John Harris, Craig Jeffrey and Stuart Corbridge, "Is India Becoming the 'Hindu Rashtra' Sought by Hindu Nationalists? *Simon Working Papers 60* (Dec, 2017). [https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Is- India-Becoming-](https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Is-India-Becoming-)

BJP has not only alerted the other political parties to use soft Hindutva but its qualitative impact also comprises the fact that secular parties have understood that full scale secularism is no more political advantageous in socio-political fabric of the country. The subtle conflation of BJP between nationalism and Hindutva has never been under the rug in Modi 1.0 and it is more obvious and intentional in 2.0. The rallying of BJP and Modi is more than evident now for the objective of New India and redefining its ambitions for civilizational greatness of Hinduism and Hindustan. The socio-political fabric has been filled with so much of pro-Hindu rhetoric that equating nationalist with Hindu is a normal fervour and vice versa.

The definitions have been coming since forever to define the "Hindu" against the identification of Muslims and other minorities to exhibit the cultural dominance of Hindus but this time, the hegemonic discourse has extended its realm to reconstruction.⁵⁴ The BJP and its sister institution RSS is openly up for the agenda of reformation against secularism and to assert Hindu nationalism as sole pivot factor of polity and politics in India.

Secularism in India: A Retrogressive Transition

The two consecutive governments of BJP evidently manifest the receding state of secularism in India and prominent ascendance of Hindu majoritarianism. The BJP has always been of the view that congress party never committed to genuine secularism and acted like they are above religious considerations but they always politicized opportunities to gain the Muslim vote bank. The *modus operandi* of Congress cannot discredit the pluralistic India their political tenure ensured irrespective of opportunistic policies that party opted. But their policies hanged the very fabric of

the-%E2%80%98Hindu-Rashtra%E2%80%99-Sought-by-60)-Harriss-Corbridge/00c609c2595814c5e0f8dfb1a8b642590afa567

54 M. Vaidya, "RSS Doesn't Need Glasnost," *The Indian Express*, Oct 17, 2018. <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/mohan-bhagwat-rss-lecture-series- conclave-bjp-5405271/>

society in between secular arrogance and secular ignorance. Indira Gandhi did so in the incident of Akali Dal to persuade Sikh extremists and accommodated extremist leader Bhindranwale but the invasion of Golden Temple by Indian army escalated the situation to the murder of prime minister Indira Gandhi and anti-Sikh exterminations across the country.⁵⁵ The case of secular ignorance can be seen in the case of Shah Bano and Rajiv Gandhi passing the law on rewriting Indian Civil Law to comply with Shariah on the debate of divorce and alimony after facing pressure from hardliner Muslim clerics on the decision of Supreme Court.⁵⁶ This very incident paved the smooth way for Hindu mobilization, Ram temple and demolition of Babri Masjid. The comments are reserved on the intentions of these self-claimed secular politicians but their actions either for political interests or practical distancing from any religious affiliations falling for the pressure of another has always stained the reputation of secularism in contemporary India.

The situation has taken the lead to the point that politicians running their election campaign are no more concerned about debate and state of secularism in political agendas. Political leaders are fearful of the Hindutva frenzy masses to label them minority appeasers and even the biggest champion of secularism in India, the Congress Party is also politicizing over its Hindu vote bank to counter the BJP's appeal in a classic manner. The situation speaks for itself narrating the state of secularism in India. The Congress has come to the point of agreement with Hinduism claiming that it is compatible with liberalism and protecting the minorities rather party has problems with Hindutva that is a grave threat to democracy and secularism. The political pandering of Congress with soft Hindutva to appease the masses

55 P. Van der Veer, "The Ruined Center: Religion and Mass Politics in India," *Journal of International Affairs* 50, no. 1 (1996): 254-277.

56 G. Shahane, "How the Indian Left Lost the Plot on the Uniform Civil Code [Text]. *Scroll. In*; (2016, May). <https://scroll.in.http://scroll.in/article/808289/how-the-indian-left-lost-the-plot-on-the-uniform-civil-code>

shows the state of Hindu majoritarianism and demand of Hindutva among public and subsequent success of RSS's agenda. The abandoning of Nehruvian brand of secularism by its own secular party is evidently unveiling the situation of "Hindu majoritarianism" and possible fate of secularism in India which is on its way to legitimate the politicization of religion. This might be a political tool of the congress party to gain vote bank by very same sentiment the BJP has gained but the situation has escalated to the point that Indian secularism and its identity in the world is eventually corroding.

Politics of Marginalization and Identity

The political fabric of country is leading towards intolerance and violence where masses are following the course set by the political leaders who defame and demonize their opponents and appease one religious group to gain the popular political base. The cases of majoritarian mobs attacking minorities have been seen in rising numbers ever since the positive secularism of BJP has stopped paying even lip service to these human rights crimes. According to the *New York Times*, another phenomenon that has come up since the BJP came into power is the proliferation of cow protection groups also known as "Gau Rakshak".⁵⁷ The cow vigilantes have been violently beating and killing Muslims accused of either smuggling cows or slaughtering cows, as cows are considered sacred in the religion of Hinduism. According to a research conducted by *India Spend*, 52 percent of the attacks carried out were based on pure rumours.⁵⁸

57 A. Patel, "Gau Raksha Vs Minorities: What are BJP's Priorities?" *Deccan Chronicle* (July 2, 2017). <https://www.deccanchronicle.com/opinion/columnists/020717/gau-raksha-vs-minorities-what-are-bjps-priorities.html>

58 D. Abraham & O. Rao, "86% Killed in Cow-related Violence Since 2010 are Muslims, 97% Attacks after Modi Govt Came to power," *Hindustan Times*, June 28, 2017). <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/86-killed-in-cow-related-violence-since-2010-are-muslims-97-attacks-after-modi-govt-came-to-power/story-w9CYOksvgk9joGSSaXgpLO.html>

According to the Human Rights Watch, attacks by these cow vigilantes have increased a great fold since the BJP came to power. Just in between May 2015 to December 2018, at least 44 people were publicly lynched by these very cow vigilantes, which are supported by the BJP members that have continuously used communal rhetoric to incite violence amongst religious groups (*Violent Cow Protection in India*, 2019). Since 2014, the BJP has been passing laws to provide even more strict laws for the protection of cows, but no one has batted an eye to the innocent people being killed, mostly because of mere rumours. PM Modi has often been criticized for not actively speaking up against these cow vigilantes, it is his third tenure and there are only a couple of recorded statements where Modi has weakly opposed the vigilantes.

The so-called pursuance of "Hindu, Hindi and Hindustani" has failed to consider Dalits the part of Hindu religion and violence against them is on surge since India started its journey from society of composite culture and pluralism towards Hindu Rashtra. Political figures of the BJP have always been appreciative towards these crimes then how can one expect the mob lynching to be in control under this regime. Another emerging state of realities in the pursuance of Hindu nationalism is marginalization of minorities in political institutions and violence and crimes they face. The marginalization in state institutions is contributed by structural inequalities and almost nil consideration of issues reported from the Muslim communities. It has become more evident since Modi is controlling the reins of India. The BJP, ruling the world's biggest democratic franchise, has failed to incorporate any single Muslim member in its 303-member representing the mass choice in Lok Sabha.

Identity politics is more than evident now, and opposition parties got no choice but to visit Hindu sacred places to be the center of attention and embrace soft Hindutva to ensure their political life and attract Hindu nationalist vote bank against the BJP campaign. Political parties are now afraid of Majoritarian society for which they have stopped defending

religious minorities. This policy clearly reflects how Hindutva has altered the course of polity and politics that secular political leaders are compelled to adapt to it for the survival of political life in Indian statecraft. Leaders in government institutions from opposition has stopped paying lip service on crimes registered against Muslims and accepting the *de jure* state of ethnic democracy in India, thus setting the fate of Hindu right-wing politics in very socio fabric of state. Regional parties that have managed to stay in political competition have done so by accepting the course of nationness in India as explained by the BJP and RSS. The evident victory of BJP after parochial policies of Modi 1.0 and defeat of defenders of secularism is evidently manifesting the BJP's success in steering the course of India towards a majoritarian position on identity issues, leaving a question mark for the state of composite culture and pluralism.

Conclusion

Majoritarian politics has never been the essence of Indian statecraft until Hindutva and Hindu cultural nationalism made its political entry and altered the course of polity and politics in the world's largest democracy. The post-independent political apparatus of the country tried to conserve the composite and pluralistic tradition of Indian civilization. They constitutionalized the Nehruvian idea of secularism until Indira Gandhi took the country's reins in her hands. Her decisions made an open invitation to right-wing tendencies that have been there for years and years. The RSS and its sister organizations were already working to redefine Hindu and Hindustani identity and steer the country towards religiously inspired manifestations.

The close association of BJP with RSS has always been evident and working hands in hands to reclaim the equation of Indian culture as Hindu culture only and betraying the influence of numerous civilizations that did grow in the cradle of India. The BJP's success in elections of 2014 and reins of government in the hands of Modi has challenged the image of secular India that always took pride in its unity in diversity.

The rewriting and redefining the course of nation-ness and instilling the very scholarly debates and arguments through systemic populist discourse has been the evident reason for sounding victory of the BJP in 2014 and 2019 elections apart from getting legitimacy by capitalizing ethno-religious mobilization. Revocation of the Article 370, Citizenship Amendment Bill and NRC, government's crackdown on student's protest and indifferent response of senior political leaders manifests the government's intentions about the country and how it is and would deal with non-Hindus in its Hindu Rashtra.

The BJP has successfully created the ideological hegemony of Hindutva and reclaims the historical myths and traditions to decide the course of polity and politics to fade the image of secular India. The BJP is not even committed to its ideology of positive secularism but its mass popularity is evident from its vote bank received in the 2019 elections has made opposition to accept the softer version of Hindutva. The more than evident reason for INC members divorcing secularism and accepting softer Hindutva is ideological hegemony of Hindutva and amalgamating Hindutva, Hindu culture and Indian nationalism to the point that any person is against Hindutva is seen as "anti-state" or "anti-nation". Secularism is long lost in the *modus operandi* of state irrespective of the mass protestation against Modi policies since vote bank of BJP is far greater in number against those mass protestors.

Hindutva has stained India's composite and pluralistic culture by instilling the notions of identity politics and its ideological hegemony is directing the pathway of self-claimed "Hindustan for Hindus". Ethno-religious mobilization, redefining Hindu and Indian identity through ethno-symbolism and fascist Hindu nationalism is not safe for Hindustanis let alone non-Hindus and minorities in the country under the truculent rule of Prime Minister Modi. It is utterly hard and highly unsafe for a state of secularism to survive in India under a Hindutva-driven government that only works for "Hindu dominion."