



# THE INFLUENCE OF HINDUTVA IN INDIAN POLITICS

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## INTRODUCTION

Hindutva or Hinduism? In order to answer the question of the influence of Hindutva in Indian Politics, one must first differentiate between the two concepts of Hindutva and Hinduism. Hinduism is the oldest religion in the world persisting most predominantly in the Indian Subcontinent. On the other hand, Hindutva can be defined as the political ideology of the Hindu right wing seeking for a complete transformation of India with Hindus at the helm of it. So, does it mean that every Hindu is an advocate for the Hindutva propaganda? No! At least those with any basic understand of the 'Sanatana Dharma' or the 'True rigorous duties of any Hindu' don't. A religion which has always talked about great virtues ranging from purity, goodwill, mercy, patience to self-restraint, refraining from injuring any living organisms etc. all have been wasted away from the ideology of Hindutva or Right-Wing Hindu Nationalists. In order to comprehend how the Hindutva is nothing but a propaganda to draw a general divide in the Union of India by splitting the majority Hindu voter from the Muslim, Sikh, Christian and other religions voter, polarize the Hindu community by making them believe, that even after being the majority, their numbers are depleting and they are threatened, and finally capitalizing this fear to sit at the helm of the positions of power; we must first comprehend and analyze the origins of this ideology.

## THE INITIAL PHASES OF HINDUTVA

The Arya Samaj and Brahmo Samaj founded by Swami Dayanda Saraswati and Raja Rammhan Roy respectively saw the radical nationalist movements in order the search of identity. However, unlike Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj movement focused radicalizing Hinduism. This can be said to be the founding of the ideology of Hindutva, back during the colonial period. Through religious rituals, radicals created a Hindu civil religion that was anti-Islamic. These roots and Vinayak Savarkar's Hindutva manifesto helped to reignite anti-Islamic sentiments in India during the 20th century. The revival wave has given rise to organizations like the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) that defend Hindu interests against Muslims. One of the most active and dangerous armed groups with Hindutva ideology was the RSS. They not only promoted their philosophy within society but also gave military instruction and disseminated it throughout India by continually building new offices. Prior to Mahatma Gandhi taking office, things were going smoothly for organizations like the RSS. He was a

politician who worked effectively with Pakistan and supported Muslims when he was killed by an RSS member, Nathuram Godse in 1949. Then there was horrible Muslim-Hindu bloodshed, which resulted in the deaths of about a million people.

## THE PERSISTANT QUESTION

Therefore, it can be concluded it was leaders like Vinayak Savarkar and organizations like the RSS which acted as the steppingstones for the rightist and extremist Hinduism ideology of Hindutva. But the real question which concerns this paper is that, if the members of the RSS claimed it to be more of a social movement, defining for a way to live life for a Hindu, how did the movement turn political? Secondly, how does it affect modern day politics and the decisions of the current Bhartiya Janata Party government at the central level under the leadership of patriarchs like Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP National President J.P. Nadda?

## THE RISE OF THE BHARTIYA JANTA PARTY

After seeing the results of landslide victory of Left-centralist Indian National Congress in the first general elections of India, the Rashtriya Sewa Sangh changed gears, they stepped into the Indian political landscape the first time with a right-wing party Bhartiya Jana Sangh. This party was revamped into the modern-day mammoth, the biggest political organization in the world, with the greatest number of members and the highest funding, i.e. the Bhartiya Janata Party. After initial setbacks, the Bhartiya Janata Party saw a prominent rise due to two major factors. Firstly, the complex structure of the Janata Dal due to multiple coalitions failed to provide as a viable alternative to the ailing Indian National Congress. And secondly, rather more importantly, the Ram Mandir- Babri Mazid issue escalated rapidly, and the BJP capitalized on the issue. Prominent BJP leaders like Lal Kishan Adwani took out rath yataras and professed across the nation for the successful demolition of the Babri Waspi Mosque and it being replaced by a temple considering that it is believed to be the location of the Hindu Lord Rama's birthplace according to the Hindu Epic Tale of Ramayana. This saw the party gain the highest number of seats in the central government Lok Sabha elections in the late 1990's and early 2000's thus leading to a formation of government under Shri. Atal Vihari Vajpayee. Since the victory of the central elections in 2014, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the BJP have never looked back. From making of laws against make belief fears like- Love Jihad in states like Utter Pradesh, to banning of the meat of the holy animal in Hinduism, cow (beef) across the nation including states like Karnataka and Union Territories like Lakshadweep wherein eating beef was an important part of culture and heritage, the BJP has spread its ideals and virtues of Hindutva. Even though, the leadership talks about a progressive society, the ground reality is a complete contrast, considering the fact that no society can be socially progressive without being inclusive. The Hindu-Muslim debate has reached new heights, wherein prominent BJP state leaders across the nation, like T. Raja of Telangana and Sakhsi Maharaj of Utter Pradesh are calling for a complete social, economic, educational, cultural boycott of the Muslims leading to civic unrest in particular regions of the country. The increase the cases of mob lynching doesn't come off as a surprise when the top leadership itself has unanswered questions over the horrendous conditions of Gujarat in the 2002 Hindu-Muslim Riots. To give a perfect synecdoche to the condition of India

under a Political Variant of a Right Wing Armed Organization, two examples of the ex-Law and Telecom Minister of India, Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad and the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh Shri Yogi Adityanath can be taken. Mr. Prasad in a press conference as the Law Minister claimed to remove the word 'Secular' from the preamble of India, calling it unrepresentative of Indian Core Values and Mr Yogi, in his first interview post the Pledge taking ceremony was asked a question about his links to the extremist ideas of Hindutva claimed, "Bharat to Hindu Rashtra hi hai." which roughly translates to India is a Hindu Nation and there are no doubts about it. Furthermore, he claimed that Hindus will rule India, so the others must better behave. But, what is more important to understand is that, if the BJP is the central force in Indian Politics and the main leader of the Right Wing Hindu thought in India, it still maintains some sort of diplomacy, at least at the top end. Therefore, to understand the actual influence the theory of Hindutva has had on the Indian Society, we must look at smaller extremist Hindutva groups.

## REGIONAL PARTYS AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Even though the general consensus puts the BJP at the forefront of the Hindu Nationalist Movements in India, it is actually the smaller regional parties and other social organizations which have been capturing support in smaller towns and cities. So, the primary question to be asked is, what is the purpose of these parties? And whom do they actually benefit? Shiva Sena, founded by Bal Thackeray can be one of the primary examples of propagating Hindutva as its primary political entourage. The party was actively involved in the Bombay Riots of 1992, the breaking of the Babri Masjid, the hoisting of the Indian flag at Lal Chowk through force etc. Maharashtra is the hub of Hindu castes of Maratha-Kumbi (31.2%) and Hindu OBC's (28%) in India. So, when it comes to Shiv Sena, the ideology of Hindutva is not only restricted to that of Hindu supremacy, but also adds a layer of Maratha caste supremacy. When it comes to social groups, the Vishva Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal can be considered as the best prototypes of aiding in the development of a saffron wave in India. These groups have been formed with only one objective, to organize, consolidate the Hindu society and to serve and protect the Hindu Dharma. They envision to re-convert the people of other religions to Hinduism, with the argument that before the Muslim invasions and the propagation of Buddhism and Jainism, all the people in the Indian subcontinent were Hindus. One of their other prominent schemes include, 'Beti Bachao, Bahu Lao' under which they claim to protect the sanctity of Hinduism by preventing any Hindu girl from marrying into a Muslim family and on the other hand, force the Muslim girls to marry Hindu boys. Post the prominence of the Bhartiya Janata Party at the central level and its coalitions forming governments in over 18 state assemblies, smaller right wing Hindu organizations have seen a drastic increase in presence, support, and funding in the aim to create a Secular India into a Hindu Rashtra. Such activities have led the Indian voter to think about their religious identity first and their overall national impact second, thus creating a deficit in the percentage of voters, voting on the basis of what is best for the country as a whole, and thinking about how to protect their religion and what lies best for it. Therefore, it becomes very important to analyze the impact of the role of these organizations in combination with the Bhartiya Janata Party on the overall political wave in the country and how that will affect the nation in the long run?

## THE AFFECTS ON A NATIONAL SCALE

When noticed at a pan India level, the effects of 8 years of Hindu dominance is already showing its menace. The government is pushing for a Uniform Civil Code for the nation which will replace all the religious personal laws and provide a unified law for the matters of family law like marriage, adoption, divorce, etc. However, in the manifestos of various BJP state governments pushing for a UCC, the dominance of Hindu personal laws over the other religions laws is clearly evident. Similarly, the Citizenship Amendment Act brought about in 2019 endangers the lives of millions of Muslim refugees from the nations of Pakistan, Bangladesh, and China. While the government's reasoning was the treatment of other religious communities as a second-class citizen in these nations, they failed to address the concerns of Ahmadi Muslims and Rohingyas who have been thrown out of their countries and forced to take a refuge in India. The influence of the Hindutva nationalism is also evident in the fourth pillar of democracy or the Media, which has started shows with Hindu Spiritual Gurus and instead of questioning the government have started questioning the opposition and acting as the advocates of the central BJP government schemes. The Home Minister Amit Shah has often called for treating Hindi as the National and Official Language of communication and official works in India since 2019, ignoring the language diversity of various states, communities, and religions. There have been changes in the history textbooks of school students in various state and central boards like CBSE and Karnataka state board which have cut down the parts of the Delhi Sultanate, the Mughal Empire and the Tiger of Mysore Tipu Sultan's influence in Indian culture and their impact on Indian history. The revamping of constituencies in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir after the removal of Article 370, reducing the number of electoral constituencies in Muslim dominant Kashmir and increasing them in Jammu, non-proportional to the population structure can all be considered as a clear indication of the preference of Hindus over all other religions by the Right-Wing Hindu Nationalist Political Party currently ruling and dominating India. At a Micro individual level, it can clearly be noticed that the propaganda politics of 'Hindu Khatrey Mein Hai' or Hindu's are in danger has led to a mass fear in the mind of the masses which has framed the Bhartiya Janta Party as the messiah of Hindu, with Narendra Modi at its helm. The irony is, the influence and success rate of the Hindutva politics is so high, that even the opposition leaders like Rahul Gandhi and Arvind Kejriwal have started publicly visiting heritages temples to gather the support and assert themselves as Hindu supporters.

## CONCLUSION AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

All the arguments supported with relevant evidence supported above provide a horrifying yet a rather realistic picture of the modern-day Union of India and its condition with a Hindutva professing patriarch at its head. But if a similar situation is imagined, *ceteris paribus*, what could be India's condition at the end of the 'Amrit Kaal' or the next 25 years? With the rapid flow of Hindu heritage, all the cities, monuments with even a remote relation to Islam might lose all their relevance. The education courses, which are only facing minor editing's as of now, might face a complete cut out of any sign depicting Muslim invasions of India or the influence of Indian National Congress leaders in the Indian freedom struggle. Beef would be banned across the nation. People of other religions would be allowed to practice their religion but only if they follow the central Hindu laws under the UCC and no conversions to such religions would be allowed. Hindi would be adopted as the national language, the words like

Secular and Social would be replaced to Hindu and Capitalist in the constitution. And all of this combined would be the death of the very soul of India for which the Indian Freedom Fighters gave their lives and envisioned India to be a Republic with equal rights and opportunities. The largest democracy in the world is today no farther than the Germany of the 1930's wherein the extremist rightist groups took control of the country and mobilized it into a disaster for the whole of human race. It is only the people of India who can make an active choice of not supporting extremist ideas and revolutionizing the country into a safe haven for everyone, as promised by its founding fathers and constitution drafters. In a nutshell, Hindutva has not only influence Indian Politics, but has become its central managing force and this has led to a complete sociological change of the country.

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