

Hindutva: Myths and Reality

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Abstract

Since the 1970s, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has been widely applied to the examination of various discourses. This paper utilizes CDA to investigate how the ideology of Hindutva undermines the concept of nationhood and threatens racial and gender harmony in India. Specifically, this article critiques monumental grand narrative texts such as Manu's *Manusmriti*, Golwalkar's *We or Our Nationhood Defined*, and Savarkar's Hindutva. These texts propagate a public discourse designed to convey specific political agendas and ideologies, influencing the opinions of their adherents. Using Fairclough's Three-dimensional Model as the theoretical framework, this study analyzes both classical and modern Hindutva texts, thereby exploding the pervasive myths and exposing reality. The analysis focuses on how these texts attempt to marginalize and displace racial, cultural, and religious minorities in India. The findings of this study reveal that proponents of Hindutva ideology, particularly organizations like the RSS and BJP, are steering the nation towards intolerance. This trajectory is resulting in the repression of minorities and marginalized groups within India. Through this examination, the study highlights the pervasive influence of Hindutva discourse and its detrimental impact on the social fabric of the nation, emphasizing the need for critical engagement with such ideologies.

Keywords: Hindutva, repression, minorities, myth, reality

Introduction

This essay responds to a demand from friends across the globe for a primer on the toxic ideology of Hindutva, based on its archives for ready reference. The term Hindutva originated with the publication of V. D. Savarkar's book titled *Hindutva* in 1923. Savarkar's *Hindutva* was declared the Holy Book of a Hindu *sangathan* or organization. M. S. Golwalkar, who headed the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) after K. B. Hedgewar, also regarded Savarkar's *Hindutva* as a great scientific book that fulfilled the need for a textbook on Hindu nationalism (Keer, 1988, p. 527). According to the biography of a founder of the RSS, *Hedgewar* published by the RSS, "Savarkar's

inspiring and brilliant exposition of the concept of Hindutva marked by incontestable logic and clarity struck the chord of Doctorji's [Hedgewar's] heart" (Seshadri & Hedgewar, 1981, p. 65).

Despite such statements glorifying Hindutva as a priceless contribution in defense of Hindu nationalism, the contents of the book did not attract many Hindu leaders and remained beyond the comprehension of politically inclined Hindus. Even the title of the book seemed to have been an afterthought. A perusal of the original edition (1923) shows that the booklet was initially printed with the title Hinduism, but subsequently, a separate piece of paper with Hindutva printed on it was pasted on the title page. Since the term remained alien even to the

Savarkarites, by the fourth edition of *Hindutva*, the title was dropped and it was published under a new title, *Who Is A Hindu?* In 1963, the Maharashtra Provincial Hindusabha published it as part of Savarkar's collected works with the title *Essentials of Hindutva*. Another notable fact about this book is that it was published under the pen name "A Maratha," signifying the regional identity of the author, whereas the book stressed only the Hindu identity of the country and its inhabitants.

Savarkar admitted at the outset that the term *Hindutva* defies all attempts at analysis (Maratha, 1923). He began by trying to make a clear-cut distinction between his theory of *Hindutva* and the religion of Hinduism. However, a few pages later, it became clear that *Hindutva* was nothing else but political Hinduism. According to his definition, a Hindu

is he who looks upon the land that extends from Sindhu to Sindhu, from the Indus to the Seas, as the land of his forefathers—his *pitribhu*, who inherits the blood of that race whose first discernible source could be traced to the Vedic *Saptasindhs* [seven holy rivers] and which on its onward march, assimilating much that was incorporated and ennobling much that was assimilated, has come to be known as the Hindu people, who have inherited and claims as his own the culture of that race as expressed chiefly in their common classical language Sanskrit and represented by a common history, a common literature, art and architecture, law and jurisprudence, rites and rituals, ceremonies and sacraments, fairs, and festivals...These are the essentials of *Hindutva*—a common *rashtra* [nation] a common *jati* [race] and a common *Sanskriti* [culture, though in later editions it is translated as civilization] (Maratha, 1923).

According to Savarkar, these were the Hindus with Aryan blood who established the Hindu nation of the day:

When the Horse of Victory returned to Ayodhya unchallenged and unchallengeable, the great white Umbrella of Sovereignty was unfurled over that, Imperial throne of Ramchandra the brave, Ramchandra the good, and a loving allegiance to him was sworn, not only by the Princes of the Aryan blood but Hanuman—Sugriva—Bibhishana from the south—that day was the real birth-day of our Hindu people. (Maratha, 1923)

Savarkar's book *Hindutva* was haphazard, confused, incoherent, monotonous, contradictory, and repetitive compared to his other works. In fact, in *Hindutva*, propagated as the primer of Hindu nationalism, less than one-quarter of the space was devoted to the theme. Major parts of the book contained repetitive discussions on the origin of nomenclatures like Hindu/Hindusthan, folk literature, the evils of Buddhism, how Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists were Hindus, and descriptions of perpetually raging conflicts between Vedic and non-Vedic sects in Hinduism.

The concept of the Hindu Nation, as elaborated in *Hindutva*, remained a fringe thought despite Savarkar, while presiding over the 19th session of the Hindu Mahasabha in Ahmedabad in December 1937, declaring it to be the goal of the Hindu Mahasabha. There were not many takers for the book. The dismal reach of the book can be gauged by the fact that after the publication of its first edition in 1923, the second edition appeared only in 1942. With the last edition appearing in 2003, only seven editions of the book were published in more than eight decades.

However, with the ascendancy of the RSS-BJP in Indian parliamentary politics in the late 1990s, the idolizing of Savarkar began. While renaming the Port Blair airport after V. D. Savarkar on May 4, 2002, the then Home Minister L. K. Advani declared that "*Hindutva* propounded by Savarkar was an all-encompassing ideology with its roots in the country's heritage." The glorification of the prophet of *Hindutva* did not stop there. On February 26, 2003, a portrait of Savarkar was

unveiled in Parliament. Savarkar thus came to share the eminence accorded to Gandhi and other prominent leaders of the freedom struggle in the Central Hall of Parliament.

However, we need to have a convincing answer to the question: if Savarkar, with his eternal love for the two-nation theory and his conscious aloofness from the Indian freedom struggle, can be glorified as an Indian nationalist and patriot, then who can stop Mohammed Ali Jinnah from claiming this status? The present RSS-BJP rulers, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, keep publicly declaring that they are committed to ushering India into a Savarkarite model of a Hindu nation. We will evaluate the claims made on behalf of the flag-bearers of *Hindutva* in the following sections.

Myth 1: Hinduism and *Hindutva* Are Synonymous

According to the flag-bearers of *Hindutva* politics, every Hindu must be committed to *Hindutva* politics, which involves converting India into a Hindu Rashtra.

Reality 1:

The RSS-BJP rulers continue to attempt to equate Hinduism as practiced by common Hindus with *Hindutva*. An honest study of the *Hindutva* ideology reveals that mainstream Hinduism has nothing to do with the *Hindutva* that preaches hatred for followers of other religions, especially Muslims and Christians. Even the proponents of Hindu nationalism in the latter half of the 19th century, while speaking of Hindus as an exclusive nation, did not demand the cleansing of Muslims and Christians from India. In contrast, the main agenda of the *Hindutva* followers has been to forcibly exclude the aforementioned minorities from Indian nationhood.

The difference between Hinduism and *Hindutva* can be exemplified by the *Hindutva* group's attitude towards M. K. Gandhi. Despite following mainstream Hinduism, described as Sanatani Hinduism, Gandhi was murdered because he did not subscribe to *Hindutva*'s hatred towards an all-inclusive Indian nation. According to *Hindutva* logic, if you do not subscribe to *Hindutva*, you are not a Hindu.

Myth 2: *Hindutva* (Hinduness) and Hindu Nation Are Primordial/Sanatani/Eternal

M. S. Golwalkar, echoing this popular claim amongst the Hindu nationalists said: "Long before the West had learned to eat roast meat instead of raw! And we were one Nation—Over all the land from sea to sea one kingdom!" (Golwalkar, 1939).

Reality 2:

Ancient Hindu scriptures like *Vedas*, *Purans*, and *Upanishads* do not mention these terms. Moreover, many great Indian thinkers, most of them being Hindus, too, dismissed the idea of the antiquity of the Hindu nation. In this context, Vivekananda asserted:

This word 'Hindu' was the name that the ancient Persians used to apply to the river Sindhu. Whenever in Sanskrit there is an 's', in ancient Persian it changes into 'h', so that 'Sindhu' became 'Hindu'...for all the people that live on this side of the Indus no longer belong to one religion. (Vivekananda, 1997)

Rabindranath Tagore, Bipin Chandra Pal, and R. C. Majumdar, who is regarded as a true "Bhartiye" historian by the *Hindutva* fraternity, all agreed that the word "nation" did not occur in "our" language, and one and a half centuries ago, "our" ancestors were not familiar with this term.

B. R. Ambedkar, who closely witnessed the twilight days of British rule in India and played a significant role in the formation of the polity of an independent Indian nation, also did not believe in the antiquity of the Indian nation. According to him, "The Hindu provinces have no common traditions and no interests to bind them" (Ambedkar, 1990).

It is a modern construct. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, in his Bengali work *Anandmath* (1881–1882), created the idea of "Mother India." The concept of a Hindu nation was propounded by Bengali high-caste intellectuals in the aftermath of the failure of the 1857 Rebellion (Islam, 2019).

Myth 3: *Hindutva* Unites Hindus

Reality 3:

(a) *Hindutva* being synonymous with Casteism decrees a Hindu society where inequality would be

the law of nature. Casteism was a natural integral part of Hinduism. Golwalkar went to the extent of declaring that Casteism was synonymous with the Hindu nation. According to him, the Hindu people are none else but

The Virat Purusha, the Almighty manifesting himself... Brahmin is the head, Kshatriya the hands, Vaishya the thighs, and Shudra the feet. This means that the people who have this fourfold arrangement, i.e., the Hindu People, is [*sic*] our God. This supreme vision of Godhead is the very core of our concept of 'nation' and has permeated our thinking and given rise to various unique concepts of our cultural heritage. (Golwalkar, 1996)

Golwalkar as an ideologue of *Hindutva* was also a bigoted Casteist. For him, the Varna system was the essence of Hindu society and nation. In his sermon to the faculty and students of the School of Social Science of Gujarat University in 1960 in which he enlightened the audience with his cross-breeding theory for Kerala Hindus, he was unequivocal in defending the Varna system. He declared:

Today we try to run down the Varna system through ignorance. But it was through this system that a great effort to control possessiveness could be made... In society some people are intellectuals, some are experts in production and earning of wealth and some have the capacity to labour. Our ancestors saw these four broad divisions in the society. The Varna system means nothing else but a proper co-ordination of these divisions and an enabling of the individual to serve the society to the best of his ability through a hereditary development of the functions for which he is best suited. (Golwalkar, 1961)

(b) *Hindutva* is nothing but justification of Untouchability. The RSS and its brother organizations who wanted to enforce a *Hindutva*

rule in India hated the Constitution of India which was drafted under the guidance of Ambedkar. The Constituent Assembly of India finalized the Constitution on November 26, 1949. The RSS was very angry; 4 days later its English organ, *Organizer*, in its editorial on November 30, 1949, complained:

But in our constitution, there is no mention of the unique constitutional development in ancient Bharat. Manu's Laws were written long before Lycurgus of Sparta or Solon of Persia. To this day his laws as enunciated in the *Manusmriti* excite the admiration of the world and elicit spontaneous obedience and conformity. But to our constitutional pundits that means nothing. (p. 5)

The originator of the idea of *Hindutva*, Savarkar remained a great protagonist of Casteism and worshipper of *Manusmriti* throughout his life. The institutions of Casteism and Untouchability were the outcome of Manu's thought about which Savarkar said the following:

Manusmriti is that scripture which is most worshipable after Vedas for our Hindu Nation and which from ancient times has become the basis of our culture-customs, thought and practice... Even today the rules which are followed by crores of Hindus in their lives and practice are based on *Manusmriti*. Today *Manusmriti* is Hindu Law. (Savarkar, 2000)

What kind of civilization the RSS and *Hindutva* camp want to build by enforcing the laws of Manu, can be known by having a glimpse of the laws prescribed by Manu for the lower castes/Untouchables and women. Some of these dehumanizing and degenerate laws, which are presented here, are self-explanatory.

(c) **Laws of Manu Concerning Dalits/Untouchables**

1. For the sake of the prosperity of the worlds (the divine one) caused the Brahmana, the Kshatriya, the Vaisya,

and the Sudra to proceed from his mouth, his arm, his thighs and his feet. (I/31)

2. One occupation only the lord prescribed to the Sudras, to serve meekly even these (other) three castes. (I/91)
3. Once-born man (a Sudra), who insults a twice-born man with gross invective, shall have his tongue cut out; for he is of low origin. (VIII/270)
4. If he mentions the names and castes (jati) of the (twice-born) with contumely, an iron nail, ten fingers long, shall be thrust red-hot into his mouth. (VIII/271)
- 5- If he arrogantly teaches Brahmanas their duty, the king shall cause hot oil to be poured into his mouth and into his ears. (VIII/272)
6. With whatever limb a man of a low caste does hurt to (a man of the three) highest (castes), even that limb shall be cut off; that is the teaching of Manu. (VIII/279)
7. He who raises his hand or a stick, shall have his hand cut off; he who in anger kicks with his foot, shall have his foot cut off. (VIII/280)
8. A low-caste man who tries to place himself on the same seat with a man of a high caste, shall be branded on his hip and be banished, or (the king) shall cause his buttock to be gashed. (VIII/281) (Manu, & Muller, 1886)

As per the *Code of Manu*, if Sudras are to be given the most stringent punishments for even petty violations/actions, the same *Code of Manu* is very lenient towards Brahmins. Shloka 380 in Chapter VIII bestowing profound love on Brahmins decrees: “Let him never slay a Brahmana, though he have committed all (possible) crimes; let him banish such an (offender), leaving all his property (to him) and (his body) unhurt.”

(d) Laws of Manu Concerning Women

1. Day and night woman must be kept in dependence by the males (of) their

(families), and, if they attach themselves to sensual enjoyments, they must be kept under one’s control. (IX/2)

2. Her father protects (her) in childhood, her husband protects (her) in youth, and her sons protect (her) in old age; a woman is never fit for independence. (IX/3)
3. Women must particularly be guarded against evil inclinations, however trifling (they may appear); for, if they are not guarded, they will bring sorrow on two families. (IX/5)
4. Considering that the highest duty of all castes, even weak husbands (must) strive to guard their wives. (IX/6)
5. No man can completely guard women by force; but they can be guarded by the employment of the (following) expedients:
6. Let the (husband) employ his (wife) in the collection and expenditure of his wealth, in keeping (everything) clean, in (the fulfilment of) religious duties, in the preparation of his food, and in looking after the household utensils.
7. Women, confined in the house under trustworthy and obedient servants, are not (well) guarded; but those who of their own accord keep guard over themselves, are well guarded. (IX/12)
8. Women do not care for beauty, nor is their attention fixed on age; (thinking), ‘(It is enough that) he is a man,’ they give themselves to the handsome and to the ugly. (IX/14)
9. Through their passion for men, through their mutable temper, through their natural heartlessness, they become disloyal towards their husbands, however carefully they may be guarded in this (world). (IX/15)
10. (When creating them) Manu allotted to women (a love of their) bed, (of their) seat and (of) ornament, impure desires,

wrath, dishonesty, malice, and bad conduct. (IX/17)

11. For women no (sacramental) rite (is performed) with sacred texts, thus the law is settled; women (who are) destitute of strength and destitute of (the knowledge of) Vedic texts, (are as impure as) falsehood (itself), that is a fixed rule. (IX/18)

The Code of Manu Story: Not a Matter of Bygone Days

The RSS bookstores stock and sell titles like *How to Lead a Household Life* by Swami Ramsukhdas, which openly preach violence. This title is part of low-priced anti-woman literature published by Geeta Press. Here is a glimpse from this book, presented in a question-answer form and available in English, Hindi, and other regional Indian languages:

Question: What should the wife do if her husband beats her and troubles her?

Answer: The wife should think that she is paying the debt of her previous life and thus her sins are being destroyed and she is becoming pure. When her parents come to know this, they can take her to their own house because they have not given their daughter training to face this sort of bad behavior.

Question: What should she do if her parents don't take her to their own house?

Answer: Under such circumstances, what can the helpless wife do? She should reap the fruit of her past actions. She should patiently bear the beatings of her husband. By bearing them, she will be freed from her sins, and it is possible that her husband may start loving her (Swami, 1999, p.43).

There is blatant preaching in favor of the inhuman practice of Sati, as seen in the following excerpt:

Question: Is 'Sati Pratha' (i.e., the tradition of the wife being cremated with the dead body of her husband on the funeral pyre) proper or improper?

Answer: A wife's cremation with the dead

body of her husband on the funeral pyre is not a tradition. She, in whose mind truth and enthusiasm come, burns even without fire and she does not suffer any pain while she burns. This is not a tradition that she should do so, but this is her truth, righteousness, and faith in scriptural decorum. (Ramsukhdas, 1999).

Notably, a copy of *Manusmriti* was burned as a protest in the presence of Ambedkar during the historic Mahad agitation on December 25, 1927. It was also decided that this day would be commemorated as "*Manusmriti* Dahan Divas"—*Manusmriti* to be set on fire day—in the future.

According to *Hindutva*, South Indian Hindus Belong to an Inferior Race. The most prominent ideologue of the RSS, Golwalkar, was invited to address the students of the School of Social Science at Gujarat University on December 17, 1960. In this address, while underlining his firm belief in the Race Theory, he touched upon the issue of cross-breeding of human beings in Indian society's history. He said:

Now let us see the experiments our ancestors made in this sphere. In an effort to better the human species through cross-breeding the Namboodri Brahmanas of the North were settled in Kerala and a rule was laid down that the eldest son of a Namboodri family could marry only the daughter of Vaishya, Kashtriya, or Shudra communities of Kerala. Another still more courageous rule was that the first offspring of a married woman of any class must be fathered by a Namboodri Brahman and then she could beget children by her husband. Today this experiment will be called adultery but it was not so, as it was limited to the first child. (Golwalkar, 1961)

The above statement by Golwalkar is highly concerning in many respects. Firstly, it proves that Golwalkar believed Indian Hindus were divided into a superior race or breed and an inferior race that needed to be improved through cross-breeding.

Secondly, a more worrying aspect was his belief that Brahmins of the North, especially Namboodiri Brahmins, belonged to a superior race. Due to this perceived superiority, Namboodiri Brahmins were sent from the North to Kerala to improve the breed of inferior Hindus there. Interestingly, this argument came from a person who claimed to uphold the unity of Hindus worldwide.

Thirdly, Golwalkar, as a male chauvinist, believed that only a Namboodiri Brahmin male from the North, belonging to a superior race, could improve the inferior human race in the South. For him, the wombs of Kerala's Hindu women had no sanctity and were merely objects for improving the breed through intercourse with Namboodiri Brahmins, who were in no way related to them. Thus, Golwalkar confirmed the allegation that, in the past, a male-dominated high caste society forced newly-wedded women of other castes to spend their first nights sleeping with superior caste males.

Myth 4: Hindutva Ideology Keeps India United

Reality 4:

(a) It Is a Toxic Formula to Undo Democratic-Secular India

Importantly, the RSS publication entitled *Organizer* in its issue on the very eve of Independence, dated 14 August 1947, rejected the whole concept of a composite nation (under the editorial title 'Whither'):

Let us no longer allow ourselves to be influenced by false notions of nationhood. Much of the mental confusion and the present and future troubles can be removed by the ready recognition of the simple fact that in Hindusthan only the Hindus form the nation and the national structure must be built on that safe and sound foundation ... the nation itself must be built up of Hindus, on Hindu traditions, culture, ideas and aspirations.

(b) Muslims and Christians Are Not Part of the Hindu Nation

According to the proponent of *Hindutva*, Savarkar, Muslims, and Christians remained out

of this nationhood because they did not assimilate into Hindu cultural heritage or adopt the Hindu religion. Savarkar decreed:

Christians and Mohamedan [*sic*] communities, who were but very recently Hindus...cannot be recognized as Hindus; as since their adoption of the new cult they had ceased to own Hindu *Sanskriti* [culture] as a whole. They belong, or feel that they belong, to a cultural unit altogether different from the Hindu one. Their heroes and their hero-worship, their fairs and their festivals, their ideals and their outlook on-life, have now ceased to be common with ours. (Maratha & Savarkar, 1923)

Concurring with Savarkar's *Hindutva* definition of the Indian nation, Golwalkar declared:

Thus applying the modern understanding of 'Nation' to our present conditions, the conclusion is unquestionably forced upon us that in this country, Hindusthan, the Hindu Race with its Hindu Religion, Hindu Culture, and Hindu Language (the natural family of Sanskrit and her off-springs) complete the Nation concept.... (Golwalkar, 1939)

(c) Muslims and Christians as 'Internal Threat'

The holy book for the RSS cadres, *Bunch of Thoughts*, the compilation of the writings of MS Golwalkar, the ideologue of the RSS, has a long chapter titled, "Internal Threats," in which the Muslims and Christians are described as threats number one and two respectively. The Communists get the honor of being "Internal Threat" number three.

While treating the Muslims as hostile element number one, he goes on to elaborate,

Even to this day there are so many who say, 'Now there is no Muslim problem at all. All those riotous elements who supported Pakistan have gone away once for all. The remaining Muslims are devoted to our country. After all,

they have no other place to go and they are bound to remain loyal'...It would be suicidal to delude ourselves into believing that they have turned patriots overnight after the creation of Pakistan. On the contrary, the Muslim menace has increased a hundredfold by the creation of Pakistan, which has become a springboard for all their future aggressive designs on our country. (Golwalkar, 1996)

While deliberating on the "Internal Threat" number two, he says,

Such is the role of the Christian gentlemen residing in our land today, out to demolish not only the religious and social fabric of our life but also to establish political domination in various pockets and if possible all over the land. (Golwalkar, 1996, pp. 36-37).

So led by this ideology of hatred, the RSS cadres are working overtime to exterminate minorities like Muslims and Christians. What dangerous direction democratic-secular India was taking under Modi's rule was made clear within one year of the RSS/BJP government's coming to power by none other than Julio Ribeiro. Julio Ribeiro a retired senior police officer, former Mumbai police commissioner, director-general of police Gujarat and Punjab, and former Indian ambassador to Romania in a signed piece on March 17, 2015, expressed his anguish in the following words:

Today, in my 86th year, I feel threatened, not wanted, reduced to a stranger in my own country...I am not an Indian anymore, at least in the eyes of the proponents of the Hindu Rashtra. Is it coincidence or a well-thought-out plan that the systematic targeting of a small and peaceful community should begin only after the BJP government of Narendra Modi came to power last May? 'Ghar wapsi,' the declaration of Christmas as 'Good-Governance Day', the attack

on Christian churches and schools in Delhi, all added to a sense of siege that now afflicts these peaceful people.... It is tragic that these extremists have been emboldened beyond permissible limits by an atmosphere of hate and distrust. The Christian population, a mere 2 percent of the total populace, has been subjected to a series of well-directed body blows. If these extremists later turn their attention to Muslims, which seems to be their goal, they will invite consequences that this writer dreads to imagine. (Ribeiro, 2015)

(d) Sikhism, Jainism, and Buddhism Are Not Independent Religions

The *Hindutva* ideologues do not treat Muslims and Christians as part of the Indian nation because they follow foreign religions; their holy places are situated outside of India. However, *Hindutva's* attitude towards indigenous religions—Sikhism, Jainism, and Buddhism—is no better. The most prominent ideologue of the RSS, Golwalkar, who is also regarded as a 'guru of hate,' declared that "the Buddhists, the Jain, the Sikh are all included in that one comprehensive word 'Hindu'" (Golwalkar, 1974). These Indian religions are treated as part of Hinduism, causing them to lose their right to be independent religions. It is difficult to determine which category of religions—foreign or indigenous—is worse off.

Myth 5: Hindutva Believes in Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam/World Is One Family

Reality 5:

Hindutva Believes in the Cleansing of Non-Aryans As Done By Hitler and Mussolini

The RSS as flag-bearer of Hindu nationalism always believed in the superiority of the Aryan race like Hitler and the Nazis. Racism is a common tie, which binds them. Hindus happened to be Aryans belonging to the National race whereas Muslims and Christians were foreigners because they followed religions, which took birth in non-Aryan foreign lands. The RSS divided religions professed in India into two categories, Indian and

foreign. Interestingly, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism were declared to be of the Indian variety but were not accorded the status of independent religions. These were simply treated as part of Hinduism. Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar (1906-1973), the most prominent ideologue of the RSS who came to head the organization after Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, naturally, inherited deep love for Fascism and Nazism from his seniors and stood for cleansing of the followers of religions that originated in foreign lands. He idealized the Nazi cultural nationalism of Hitler, which was nothing else but 'ethnic cleansing' of non-Aryans, in the following words which appeared in his book *We or Our Nationhood Defined* (1939); a book which became Geeta of *Hindutva* politics:

To keep up the purity of the race and its culture, Germany shocked the world by purging the country of the Semitic races: the Jews. Race pride at its highest has been manifested here. Germany has also shown how well-nigh impossible it is for races and cultures, having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindusthan [sic] to learn and profit from. (Golwalkar, 1974)

While outlining the constituent elements of the Hindu Nation Golwalkar raised a significant question,

If, as is indisputably proved, Hindusthan, is the land of Hindus and is the terra firma for the Hindu nation alone to flourish upon, what is to be the fate of all those, who, today, happen to live upon the land, though not belonging to the Hindu Race, Religion or culture? (Golwalkar, 1974)

He answered his query in the following words:

can have no place in the national life, unless they abandon their differences, adopt the religion, culture and language of the Nation and completely merge themselves in the National Race. (Golwalkar, 1974)

Golwalkar unhesitatingly glorified the Aryan Race theory propagated by Hitler and Mussolini

and the subsequent cleansing of non-Aryans or minorities. According to him both Muslims and Christians who were 'foreign elements',

There are only two courses open to the foreign elements, either to merge themselves in the national race and adopt its culture, or to live at its mercy so long as the national race may allow them to do so and to quit the country at the sweet will of the national race. That is the only sound view on the minorities [sic] problem. (Golwalkar, 1974)

Golwalkar as the most important ideologue of the RSS and *Hindutva* brand of politics forcefully argued for adopting the models of Hitler and Mussolini for getting rid of minorities from the Hindu nation in the following words:

the foreign races in Hindusthan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence the Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but those of the glorification of the Hindu race and culture, i.e., of the Hindu nation and must lose their separate existence to merge in the Hindu race, or may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu Nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment, not even citizen's rights. (Golwalkar, 1974, p. 171)

Myth 6: Hindutva Organizations Are Loyal to India

Reality 6

Bharat Mata of the *Hindutva* Gang Is Not Our Democratic-Secular India

(a) Against Secularism

The RSS demands total loyalty to the Indian Nation from minorities. It is another thing that it does not feel proper to be loyal to the constitutional-legal setup of this very Nation. The study of *Prarthana* (prayer) and *Pratigya* (oath) as practiced in the *shakhas* of the RSS is an example

of how Indian nationalism has been equated with Hinduism, in the same way as the Muslim League had combined Islam with nationality. Significantly, both *Prarthana* and *Pratigya* are in direct contravention of the existence of an Indian Secular State which is an important 'Basic' feature of the Constitution of India. Just imagine PM Modi and most of his ruler colleagues who took an oath to uphold the integrity of a democratic and secular India were also committed to the task of creating a Hindu Rashtra as per the texts of the Prayer and Oath as essential for the RSS cadres.

(b) RSS Prayer

Affectionate Motherland, I eternally bow to you
O Land of Hindus, you have reared me in comfort
O Sacred Land, the Great Creator of Good, may this body of mine be dedicated to you
I again and again bow before You
O God almighty, we the integral part of the Hindu Rashtra salute you in reverence
For Your cause have we girded up our loins
Give us Your Blessings for its accomplishment.
(1997)

(c) RSS Oath

Before the all-powerful God and my ancestors, I most solemnly take this oath, that I become a member of the RSS in order to achieve all round greatness of Bharatvarsha by fostering the growth of my sacred Hindu religion, Hindu society, and Hindu culture. I shall perform the work of the Sangh honestly, disinterestedly, with my heart and soul, and I shall adhere to this goal all my life. Bharat Mata Ki Jai. (1997)

Thus they were not faithful to the Indian Nation as it existed as a legal entity but wanted to subvert it into a theocratic state like the Muslim League which created Pakistan in the name of Islam.

(d) Against Democracy

The RSS contrary to the principles of democracy has been constantly demanding India to be ruled under a totalitarian regime. Golwalkar while delivering a speech before the 1350 top-level cadres of the RSS in 1940 declared: "RSS inspired by one flag, one leader and one ideology is lighting the flame of *Hindutva* in each and every corner of this great land." (Golwalkar, n.d.)

This slogan of one flag, one leader, and one ideology has directly been borrowed from the programs of the Nazi and Fascist parties of Europe.

(e) Denigration of the Tricolour; India's National Flag

The Tri-colour is our National Flag which represents a Democratic-Secular India. Shockingly, just on the eve of independence when the Indian Constituent Assembly adopted the Tricolour as its National Flag, the English organ of the RSS, *Organiser*, in its issue dated August 14, 1947, denigrated this choice in the following words:

The people who have come to power by the kick of fate may give in our hands the Tricolour but it will never be respected and owned by Hindus. The word three is in itself an evil, and a flag having three colours will certainly produce a very bad psychological effect and is injurious to a country.

The RSS and its *Hindutva* gang denigrate the National Flag in such foul language but want to pose as custodian of the Indian Nation often threatening minorities for being disloyal to the Tricolour.

The bitter reality is that *Hindutva* is nothing but an ideology that stands for totalitarianism, Casteism, and injustice. We must remember the following prophetic words of Ambedkar about the critical danger that *Hindutva* politics poses to our country. According to him:

If Hindu Raj does become a fact, it will no doubt, be the greatest calamity for this country...It is a menace to liberty,

equality and fraternity. On that account it is incompatible with democracy. Hindu Raj must be prevented at any cost. (Ambedkar, 1990, p. 358.)

What Is The Way Out?

The way out was suggested by one of the greatest martyrs for the cause of secularism and multi-culturalism in the Indian sub-continent, a dear friend, John Joseph, Bishop of Faisalabad (Jhang, Pakistan). Six days before he sacrificed his life at the altar of bigotry being indulged in the name of Islam in Pakistan, John Joseph wrote an open letter to his friends the world over. He shot himself to death on May 6, 1998, while leading a protest march against Blasphemy Laws in the Sahiwal (Montgomery) town of Pakistan. His letter titled, "The challenge of religious fundamentalism and violence to social harmony" was a well-researched paper on religious sectarianism in Pakistan and how to confront it. (Islam, 1998) With India turning to the *Hindutva* route under Modi, the issues which he raised in it are of significance not only for Pakistan but also for India.

According to him, the main characteristics of religious fundamentalism are; the rejection of rationality, human co-existence, and the absolute belief that only one particular religious sect or group is on the divine path. The Bishop also finds that the fundamentalists have an unending supply of cadres because they control school education. He described the majoritarian religious bigots as "ruthless violent power mongers". In his letter, the Bishop highlighted the fact that the

first victims of the fundamentalist parties are the religious minorities. They direct their full wrath on these minorities and depict them as dangerous to society and country. The second victims are women. They believe women are inferior to men, root of evil, weak and stupid. The third victims are those people who have secular, liberal and enlightened outlook, specially the intellectuals and human rights activists.

As if talking about the present India he wrote:

Under the fundamentalist influence publication of religious books increases and secular literature rapidly decreases. It also greatly affects music, painting, sculpture, and dancing, and also as a whole, the society loses its glamour, and violence and dullness reign supreme.

Bishop Joseph's letter is important in another sense. He did not believe in responding to communal challenge in the same sectarian way but also warned that we should not "close our eyes and think that the blood thirsty cult of religious violence will go away by itself. No, each one of us has to get involved and play our role...."

He concluded his letter with the following words:

At the end, I appeal to all my brothers and sisters in the name of Christ please let us leave our places and position of safety and comfort and go to the people. I shall count myself extremely fortunate, if in this mission of breaking the barriers, our Lord accepts the sacrifice of my blood for the benefit of His people. This is the only effective response to the ever growing phenomena of violence around us. Are we ready to take up this challenge and follow Him carrying the Cross on our own shoulders?

The wisdom of Bishop John Joseph and the story of his sacrifice hold great significance for us in India where despite a democratic-secular polity India the *Hindutva* juggernaut is running amok. We must learn about the phenomena of *Hindutva* in-depth as has been attempted in this paper, and respond by fighting to save the Preamble of our Constitution. In this scenario, Bishop Joseph does not become a martyr of the cause of secularism in Pakistan alone but of the entire Indian sub-continent. Moreover, his analysis of the majoritarian religious bigotry and suggestions for confronting it remains fundamental to our fight against *Hindutva* fascism too.

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