

Understanding Modi's Hindutva

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Abstract

Narendra Modi has completed more than three years in office as the Prime Minister of India. He had emerged as a strong but controversial leader from right wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) after the gruesome Gujarat riots of 2002, in which 1500 Muslims were massacred. Though, the idioms of management, economic excellence, national security and civilizational glory swayed the Indian public opinion in his favor during 2014 elections, yet the communal crescendo is continuing from his close aides. They speak of Muslims and terrorism in the same breath. The other communities are also not secure in the emerging desecularised socio-political manifestations of India, since the recent past. Modi's own interpretation of Hindutva resonates with political compulsions and its inherent limitations towards religious minorities, particularly Muslims, as also sections of backward classes and Dalits. More than 200 temples and other religious institutions have been vandalized in Delhi, along with the churches and a Catholic school. Modi is considered as a lightning rod on faith and tolerance. India has so far failed to come up with any clear guarantee to give way to the primary identity of Indian non-Hindu citizens despite Modi committing that his government "will not allow any religious group, belonging to the majority or the minority, to incite hatred against others, overtly or covertly."¹ In the absence of concrete measures, the challenge of intolerance towards diversity is providing more of a conceptual framework to the radical

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¹ Annie Gowen, "Narendra Modi's remarks on religious tolerance spark national debate in India", *The Guardian*, February 24, 2015. www.theguardian.com

enthusiasts in the region. It rekindles debate on ideological issues and national identities on foreign policy fronts as well since secularism is strictly confined to politics in India. As a result, Pakistan's threat perceptions are also shifted even further afield, given its Muslim stature.

Keywords: Communal Rift, Hindutva, De-Secularization, Indus Valley Civilization, Hinduism, Nationalism, Democracy, Terrorism, Regional Integration

Introduction

The persistent and growing communal heterogeneity is making Hinduism a fast growing political and socio-cultural force across India. It is likely to be of great influence for the future and a threat for India as a modern secular democracy. In a secular society, there is no control of the religion on social institutions since morality is kept fundamental.

The Indian demography is very diverse: a composition of 78.5 percent of Hindus, 14.2 percent Muslims, 3.6 percent Christians, 1.9 percent Sikhs, 0.8 percent Buddhists and 0.4 percent Jains.² However, while quoting, in his article 'Modi and Conversion Trap', Ravi Shankar unveils that there would be only 23,000 non-Hindus (as in Parsis) left in India by 2020.³ On the contrary, the recent claims of the Pew Research Centre envisage the number of 1.3 billion Hindus and 311⁴ million Muslims by 2050, making it the largest Muslim country in the world.⁵

In either case, it may enlarge worrisome conjectures for the socio-political scenarios. India is expected to be the most plural country of the world. The resurgent right-wing Hindu radicalism in India has regrettably anti-secular foundational ideology inundated with the ingredients of social and communal split, particularly between the Muslims and the

² The World Factbook, www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2122.html

³ Ravi Shankar, 'Modi and Conversion Trap', *Indian Express*, Delhi, March 29, 2015.

⁴ "Culture of India", *Revolvy*, www.revolvy.com

⁵ Jack Detsch, "India's growing Muslim population: A Political Challenge?" *The Diplomat*, Asia Pacific, May 1, 2015.

Hindus. The religious and communal antagonism carries a tendency of deterring long-desired socio-cultural affinity.

On the contrary, politics benefits from the stability of the societies. For example, culture has historically bonded the societies since "it promotes more coherent and acceptable behaviors between the individuals" says Satyajee Ray.⁶ In India, the communitarians unfortunately hold the views in sharp contrast and express no desire for communal and cultural integration. They wish to stop "thus far and no further"⁷ and aspire to have 'India for Hindus' only. This would posit the divergent thoughts of Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Gandhism, nationalist, secularists, Maoists, Stalinists, liberalists, democrats and many more living in India on a path to collision.

The ascendant role of pugnacious Hindutva, and a noticeable radical religious argument of fanatics is polarizing India's secular ethos and is weakening India's national identity as a secular state. The resulting socio-political and strategic effects on the South Asian region, populated by thirty percent Muslims would be colossal. Pakistan as an ideological Muslim neighbour is likely to face the brunt. Pakistan and India already have perpetual animosity in their relationship ever since the partition of the sub-continent in 1947. The combination of religious particularism and xenophobic polity would give space to non-state actors to influence peace efforts. Furthermore, South Asia is already at crossroads where radicalism and militancy is continuously an evolving threat since 9/11. It has made terrorism a very relevant factor in foreign policy perceptions of each country of the region which calls for a cooperative approach to collectively deal with the issue.

The paper speculates India's leap forward in this direction, and argues whether in a secular country religious beliefs may have socio-political

⁶Amartyasen, *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian Culture, History and Identity* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005).

⁷ Ibid.

implications beyond their individual domains. The paper analyzes the philosophy of Hindutva in the politically deviating views of both BJP and Indian National Congress (INC); its fracas with secularism and composite nationalism; and the challenges for Modi's Hindu nationalism as a lifelong member of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). The possible threat of radicalism hoisted by non-state actors on the Hindutva bandwagon may have long-term security imperatives for India. Their substantive imprints for regional neighbours, with thirty percent Muslims living in the South Asian region, could damage largely shared socio-cultural homogeneity. Its prevalence and almost unstoppable rise to country's corridors of power is a specter of tremendous ramification for all.

Modi's Hindutva

The journey of Modi from a humble tea boy to the Prime Minister of India is perhaps the most valiant upshot of Indian parliamentary democracy in a class and caste-ridden society. BJP's electoral success with 248 out of 548 parliamentary seats breaks the electoral records, which no Indian political party has ever held before. The results were more personality driven. It equally resounds the exclusive but controversial 'Gujarat Model' pitch for Delhi. Modi is the emblem of both economy and religion. He is referred to by many as a 'poster child' for India's development with a double digit growth rate in view, and is applauded as a leader of Hindutva.⁸ Modi is accredited for his scientific planning and its flawless execution, adroit micro-management, his charisma and mass appeal during his long period of chief minister ship. Although, he is quite careful of his pronouncements ever since the massacre in Gujarat to dispel being branded as the 'Milosevic of Gujarat', yet his religio-economic bet in the liberal democracy of India show more signs of prejudice and alienation of minorities.

⁸Pankaj Mishra, "Narendra Modi and the new face of India", *The Guardian*, UK, 16 May 2014.

Modi's BJP, as an off-shoot of Hindu Mahasbha, pioneered the 'New Hindu Movement'. It regards Muslims as "foreigner" or "outsiders" or non-Indians. For them, Muslims are sheer blood thirsty Turks, who had not only conquered 'Mother India' but also lured vulnerable lower-caste Hindus into a non-Indian religion. Hindu Mahasbha was banned, since Nathuran Godse, a follower of Veer Savarkar, assassinated Mahatma Gandhi for his conciliation with Muslim majority State of Pakistan. For them, Pakistan was carved out of Bharat Varsha,⁹ although Jaswant Singh, the former BJP leader and an Indian Foreign Minister, during the times of A.B. Vajpayee, had accepted that large scale conversion in India was mainly because of the peaceful movements of Muslim mystics of the Suharwardia, Chishtia and Qadriya traditions. They still hold great attraction for the people of India.¹⁰ Later, Jaswant was thrown out of BJP for his pro Muslim stance.

An extravagantly chivalrous notion of Hindu Nation started from the times of Ayodhya by the BJP. The silence of Modi on increasing incidents of communal hysteria all across India along with Hindutva statements given by his ministers to declare India a Hindu State by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), and demanding a uniform civil code for the entire nation, are all distressing developments for a long known secular state of India. The ideology of Hindutva has regrettably fallen prey to nationalist doctrine. It is notoriously described by its Hindu supporters such as Shiv Sena, Bajrang Dal, Sangh Pariwar, BJP and the VHP all associated with the mother organization of the RSS who regard India and Hinduism as synonymous.

Inter-faith relationship is already considered a taboo in some parts of India in the social arena. In a recent incident in Uttar Pradesh, a Hindu

⁹ Fr. Sunny Jacob. *SJ, Reflection: The Birth, Growth and the Ideology of Hindutva.* - <http://sunnyjsj.blogspot.com/2008/09/hindutva-growth-and-strategy-closer.html>. February 27, 2015 12:40 IST

¹⁰ Jaswant Singh, *Jinnah: India – Partition – Independence*, Rupa & Co. New Delhi, 2009

girl, who had earlier eloped with her Muslim friend, was brought on the national television forcibly to accuse him of abduction and rape.¹¹ In the absence of affable inter-faith relationship, the fear of marginalization and the rise of majoritarianism are promoting a culture of chauvinism. The burning of five churches in a month's time in Delhi during the first half of 2015, the molestation of a nun, and forcible conversion of non-Hindus are all the result of the belief that India belongs to Hindus.

Secularism, when first introduced in 1851, was meant for the harmonious functioning of the society. It had to uphold both reasoning and sensitivity to accept the general values of tolerance. Today, Indian history also sadly anchors more on the Hinduist subscription. It tends to promote modern day centralized intolerant Hinduism driven more towards a theocratic state. The judicial Hindu dominated process, for both the 1998 anti-Christian violence in Dangs region of Gujarat, and the 2002 violence across Gujarat, have already run aground without proceeding to sentence.

The 'politics of beef' in India is simply appalling for all those who believe in a secular ethos. It highlights the inclusion of 'otherness' with a view of suspicion and/or fear. The lynching of Mohammed Akhlaq by a Hindu mob for keeping beef in the fridge and later sent for forensic testing by the government officials is a reflection of right-wing Hindu nationalist agenda meant to homogenize the entire nation of India. Later, the same year in 2015, engineer Rashid, Member Legislative Assembly (MLA), was beaten by the co-members for serving beef in his party. The oppression endorsed by Modi's close aides had gone to the extent of saying "people who desire to consume beef should go to Pakistan"¹² said Mukhtar Abbas. Similarly, the 'Ghar Wapsi' movement by Hindu nationalists and fundamentalists is yet another side of bigotry for

¹¹ Sanjay Nirupam. "Slippery Grounds of the Secularism Debate". *Indian Express*, New Delhi, 15 September, 2014.

¹² Aprita Mandal, "The Politics of Beef in India," November 12, 2015. www.warscape.com.

achieving predominance under Modi's rule mainly and is hosted by RSS. The forced conversion of Muslims and Christians is bribed with the offer of a choice of caste in a caste-based Hindu India.

Further, the false propaganda against Jihad by the saffron outfits is largely meant to gain political mileage. Jihad is for the good cause, as declared by the Board of Muslim Personal Law, India. In fact, the RSS is the one which insists that India's non-Hindus must adopt Hindu culture and wholly subordinate themselves to the Hindu nation.¹³ Their insistence on 'GharWapsi' (return to Hinduism) programme, with a promise of better living conditions, casts a destabilizing feature through religious particularism. Similarly, the retraction of 'Love Jihad' in recent times is casting a longer shadow on its emergence in 2009, when a Hindu extremist Janajagrati Samiti claimed that some 30,000 women in southern Karnataka state converted to Islam.¹⁴

The overjoyed fantasy of Indian economic ascendancy also holds several misgivings rooted in communal discrimination. The Moradabad brassware industry exports Rs. 2,500 billion worth products. Muslims constitute a majority of the labour force in this industry while the factories are mostly owned by the non-Muslims. Similarly, Saharanpur, the traditional business centre for wood and furniture, has a majority of Muslim artisans while the shops and factories are owned by Hindus and Sikhs. In August 2014, the business loss was reported to the tune of Rs. 244 billion in 10 days during communal riots.¹⁵

The Indian Planning Commission Report on Human Development 2011 and the Sachar Committee Report already suggests that 'Muslims lag behind all social groups except scheduled castes and in all economic and

¹³ Abhaya Srivastava. "India Love-Jihad claims fuel Hindu-Muslim tensions", *Dawn* (Islamabad), 26 October 2014

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Sanjeev Sabhlok. Revolutionary Blog. P.3. www.subhlok.city.com.

social indicators'.¹⁶ Taking from the National Sample Survey 2004-2005, an economist Michael Walton of Harvard's Kennedy School, has given the statistics to establish the discrimination and poverty of the Muslims in India with incidence of 35.5percent, ahead of scheduled caste at 38.5 percent. Poverty incidence among Hindus is 26.9 percent.¹⁷

History has proven that communalism permeates serious socio-economic discrepancies. It happened in Italy and Germany, where Fascism and Nazism gained roots respectively in the first half of the twentieth century. In India, the combination of high-class and high-caste had been controlled both the economy and politics. The rise of Modi owes itself to the moneyed class and high castes. Just after three months of Modi's electoral victory, a member of his own coalition protested against the discrimination and distrust of the Muslims and for bringing the 'hands out of the gloves' so overtly. Though, President Obama, in his January 2015 visit to India, had identified the religious divisions in India by showing his apprehensions during his farewell dinner, nevertheless, under the circumstances, the continuing inappropriate support for Modi's saffron policies by the West is a push to yet another fall of the region to communal and ideological extremism.

Indian Occupied Kashmir & Modi's Hindutva

Kashmir is rampaged by Modi's Hindutva policies and seven hundred thousand occupying forces of India. It was immobilised for more than two months by long protracted curfews and blackouts, ever since the gunning down of a 22-year old freedom fighter, Burhan Wani, in July 2016. Even those who had come out to offer funeral prayers spontaneously were victimized at point-blank range, several have been blinded by the use of pellet guns, and more than 10, 000 have been seriously injured.

¹⁶Rupa Subraman. "Economics Journal: A Theory Why India's Muslims Lag?" *Wall Street Journal*. 3 October 2012.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Already, enforced on July 5, 1990, Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) shields soldiers from prosecution in IoK. It gives unbridled facilitation to the Armed Forces in the most militarised region of the world to detain, harass or kill civilians on mere suspicion or sometimes just on the whims of the personnel of the forces. The abuses range from mass killings, forced disappearances, torture rape, and sexual abuse to political repression by legitimizing the barbarism. This is even endorsed by the global human rights group Amnesty International in its report titled "Denied Failures in accountability for human rights violations by security force personnel in Jammu & Kashmir". It also discloses the presence of mass graves. Article 8 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, The Basic Principles and Guideline on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law, and Article 2(3) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)¹⁸, to all of which India is a state party and therefore, is bound to follow in letter and spirit.

In fact, Indian Occupied Kashmir has an inopportune history under the rule of Modi and has become even graver under the rule of the coalition government of Peoples Democratic Party of Mehmood Mufti and BJP, who have agreed to settle tens of thousands of non-Kashmiri Hindus in the Muslim dominated disputed territory of Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK). Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has long vowed to settle 200,000 to 300,000 Hindus in (IOK). The three disclosed and two undisclosed composite Hindu townships for the non-Kashmiris, to be made on the acquired lands of the farmers, would be self-contained and heavily guarded. Modi's government is well aware that demography has a potential to reshape politics. It redraws the boundaries of populations in a way that is not possible with biological populations.

¹⁸ Christian Tomuschat, "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: New York, December 16, 1966", *Audio Visual Library of International Law*.legal.un.org accessed September 23, 2016.

Modi called Sardar Valbhbhai Patel an ardent secular leader and appreciated his efforts in integrating 562 Princely States into India. He insists that India needs Patel's secularism and not vote bank secularism.¹⁹ He is now building the world's tallest statue of Patel at a cost of about \$340 million in Gujarat.²⁰ Modi has forgotten that on 21 August 1948, Patel had threatened to resign if the Army was not sent to Hyderabad, which was also a violation of India Act 1947. 'Operation Polo' against Hyderabad led to the complete destruction of Hyderabad's army, and the massacre of 40,000 people, with the help of an entire Armoured Division,²¹ "They had split the responsibilities. Nehru did the running on the Kashmir question while consulting Patel who disagreed with his policies. Patel did the running on Hyderabad".²² Congress is also no secular angel and has compromised with several communalists.

Understanding the Origins of Hindutva

Going back to the history of the term Hindutva, it was first coined in the early 1800's by Hindu nationalist Veer Savarkar, and was used as an ideational force by leaders like Lajpat Rai, HarDayal and others. Linked with movements such as Shuddhi and Snagagathan, it could be seen as a blowback for the forces of modernity.²³ It is derived from the two terms "Hindu Tattva", which means Hindu Principles or "the way of life of the Indian people and the Indian culture and ethos".²⁴ Hindutva is based on diverse Hindu principles articulated for the continuation of the freedom of thought. It is, therefore, neither individual specific nor time, but is a compilation of human wisdom. It encapsulates multifaceted departments

¹⁹" Modi's Patel Statue Project. Legacy, politics, and controversy". www.ndtv.com, February 28, 2015.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ A.G.Noorani. "The Destruction of Hyderabad", Hurst & Company, London. 2013.

²²HenrikBergland, "Religion and Nationalism". *Economic & Political Weekly*. vol. 39, no. 10. (6 March, 2004).

²³ Ram Jethmalani, "Hindutva is a secular way of Life", *The Guardian*. UK. www.sunday-guardian.com, accessed on 11 May 2015.

²⁴Saif Khan, "Understanding Hindutva: The Supreme Court Judgement" [Part 3]. 30 May, 2013. saifahmadkhan.wordpress.com

of thought evolving continuously. It sums up the activity related to Hindu community adaptable to all times. Gandhi certainly was a practicing Hindu, but his politics still stopped short of making it into a 'hegemonic majoritarianism'. In the same vein, Nehru's idea of India, despite its historical celebration and romantic wherewithal, felt uneasy in bringing in religion into politics in a plural India.

Though, in all its various incarnations, Hindutva contains assorted yet rich, powerful and vivid ideas and ideals, all aimed at systemic and societal 'engineering', it has however come to symbolize multi-polarization in the Indian society in the early 1990's. The rise of BJP is also seen during the same period. The reasoning or rationale given in its communal relationship has exerted more of its controversial notions and carry ambiguity. For example, the outlook of Hindutva is plaintiff of righteousness in its Satguna and reprehensive attitudes Dur-guna,²⁵ but is in clash with the concept of righteousness in other religions living in India. This makes it evolve with weaker political, social, and religious interpretations.

Historically, different sub-groups and individuals representing a range of religious persuasions found it to their advantage to accentuate or diminish the importance of Hindu and Muslim identity. The ideologies that supported the construction of such identities in the Indian Sub-continent were also reduced.²⁶ RSS was formed in 1925 with the aim of spreading Hindu culture.²⁷

Savarkar in the Essentials of Hindutva underlines the requirement of identity to gel the nation by the redemption of Indus Civilization through Hinduism; otherwise it might meet the same fate as the Roman, Egyptian

²⁵Khushwant Singh, *The End of India*. (India: Penguin Books, 2003), P.69.

²⁶James W. Laine, *Shivaji: Hindu King in Islamic India* (New York: Oxford Press University 2003) P.104?.

²⁷Henrik Bergland, "Religion and Nationalism". *Economic & Political Weekly*. vol. 39, no. 10. (6 March, 2004).

and Greek civilizations and eventually disappear from the face of the earth. His followers believe that the feelings of insecurity were created under the Muslim rulers and during the British colonial period through missionaries. The deluge of Western culture has necessitated the resurgence of Hindutva.²⁸

Originally the term Hindu is also not mentioned in Vedas (classical Hinduism) or Santana Dharma (original name of Hinduism/ Hindu Dharma) in the Vedas, Puranas or any other religious text. The term is the modified version introduced by the Greeks of the term Sindhu, used for the people living beyond the river Sindhu. The Persian explorers dropped the letters for their pronunciation rules and started calling them Hindus. It was meant for the geographical and cultural identity of the people living around the river Sindhu.²⁹

Similarly, the term Hindusthan was also first used in the 12th century by Muhammad Ghori, who dubbed his new subjects as Hindus. On the other hand, Encyclopedia Britannica accepts Hinduism as a civilization with no last messiah. It is commonly called 'Living Idea', without being embodied in one book. Hence, the convergence through adaptation to evolutionary process makes it ever changing, and sometimes even for the religious or political objectives of individuals, organizations, societies and the nations.

Hindutva: From the Recent Past

i. The BJP's Hindutva

The most virulent form of Hindutva was exposed in 1992, when Babri Masjid was raised to ground by the Hindu preachers with a pretext of its construction on the site of a temple and the birth place of their god, Rama. L.K. Advani, a BJP leader, urged villagers throughout the country to hold religious ceremonies to sanctify bricks made out of the clay used by

²⁸Jaswant Singh, *Jinnah: India – Partition – Independence*, Rupa & Co. New Delhi, 2009

²⁹Ram Jethmalani, "Hindutva is a secular way of Life", *The Guardian*. UK. www.sunday-guardian.com, accessed on 11 May 2015.

the Hindus only and send them to be used in the construction of the Ramjanmabhumi Temple in Ayodhya.³⁰ BJP is the political wing of RSS, which has graduated into a charitable, educational, right-wing Hindu nationalist group. Modi is one of the swayamsevaks trained in one of the shakhas of RSS, meant exclusively for Hindus. It is RSS which chose Modi for premiership.

In 1984, Advani, rode in a chariot across India in a Hindu supremacist campaign against the mosque in Ayodhya. Interestingly, a transformed Advani hailed Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah as a "great man" during a visit to Pakistan in 2005.³¹ He had to face humiliation both from within the party and the Hindu voter. The space thus provided Modi to fulfil his ambition of filling the gaps of Hindutva with firebrand rhetoric. Similarly, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, another prominent leader of BJP, celebrated for his liberal views all through the 1970's, became aggressive during his 1983 election campaign in Assam and thundered "foreigners have come here, and the government does nothing. What if they have come into Punjab instead, people would have chopped them into pieces and thrown them away".³² The prejudice remained fundamental to all BJP leaders with the change of optics only.

The consequent chasm between the majority and the minority communities, particularly Hindus and Muslims, widened with the rise of Hindutva support base. Other than hostile attitudes towards Pakistan and occasional Hindu-Muslim riots, which have become more frequent during the current regime, the demolition of Babri Masjid, and making the Muslim Personal Law controversial, are all the manifestations of this ideology. Muslim Personal Law allows the Indian Muslims the Code of Shariat to apply in their personal affairs.

³⁰ Iftikhar Haider Malik, "Modi Machine Moves On: India at its Watershed", *Strategic Outlook*. 2014.

³¹ Ajaz Ashraf, "Vajpayee, Advani, Modi: Every leader has given Hindutva a twist", June 17, 2013. www.firstpost.com.

³² Ibid.

Currently, the ideational threshold of secularism and the socio-political construct on the basis of nationalism is experiencing tremors in India. The controversial conversion of Hindutva into a smokescreen for vote bank communalism is pushing it fast into 'an eye of storm' and confronts the idea of India itself. India had a liberal history and was always recognized for public deliberations from the times of Ashoka (269 BCE-232 BCE), and carried forward by the Mughal Emperor Akbar (1556-1605) only four hundred years ago. Interfaith dialogue was the spirit of Akbar's rule. The relations and attitudes were radically predisposed during the imperialist time of two hundred years and subset of individual thinking and the policy of divide and rule was pursued ruthlessly. The growing religious extremism and its increasing influence in the Indian society perturb even the Western scholars, who regard it as a threat to Indian stability.

The ideology is ostensibly seeking sustenance in the religion while exacerbating identity crisis for the non-Hindu nationals in these times of Modi government. The Indian External Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj has demanded that Bhagwat Gita, a religious text held sacred by Hindus, should be declared the national scripture.³³ Bhagwad Gita is considered as an accurate fundamental knowledge about god, the ultimate truth, creation, birth and death, the results of actions, the eternal soul, liberation and the purpose as well as the goal of human existence expressed in spiritual terms. The conviction, however, abet the belief system of non-Hindu community living in India.

Bhagwad Gita reasserts Hindus as Aryans, the supreme race with monolithic beliefs,³⁴ which sometimes are taken as indignation by other communities. On the other hand, the proposition politically contradicts the democratic constitution for declaring it a 'Holy Book'. It propels

³³ "Bhagwat Gita Must be Deckared National Scripture: Sushma", *Indian Express*, December 7, 2014.

³⁴ Jaswant Singh, *Jinnah: India – Partition – Independence*, Rupa & Co. New Delhi, 2009

antagonism by the resurgence of chauvinistic movements called Hindutva. Furthermore, the body politic complexities of India are already compounded by caste based squabbles, poverty, and institutional weaknesses due to communal imbalance and corruption. The socio-cultural segregation is enhanced thereby; "worst form of bondage is the bondage of dejection, which keeps men hopelessly chained in loss of faith in themselves", said Rabindranath Tagore.³⁵

ii. Hindutva and Nationalism in India

Nationalism in India is largely contextualized with the fanatic religious belief in a profound blend of Hinduism. As a result, the humanitarian aspect of nationalism is experiencing a sharp slide. Nationalism originally does not hold a religious matrix in a largely secular world. It emphasizes on human rights. The national divisions are required to promise human community as much as a religion would do, with a different perspective.

Nationalism is subservient to multi-layered and multi-dimensional diverse cultures and religions living in India with contrasting ideologies. They cause several ethnic and religious conflicts. The size and diversity of India by itself is impregnated with several difficulties, while spawning their own trajectories but strongly influencing the politics of India. Their interaction with the Indian overarching nationalist paradigm looks monolithic.

Historically, nationalism often imbibed the consciousness of Indians prior to 1947 when India embodied the broader Indian Subcontinent, and influenced a part of Asia, known as 'Greater India'. The territorial sovereignty of India still derives its nationhood from its ancient history as a birth place of the Indus Valley Civilization and Vedic Civilization. Similarly, the four major world's non-revealed religions namely, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism are stretching across the Indian Sub-continent. In either of the beliefs of nationalisms, there is a

³⁵Jaswant Singh, *Jinnah: India – Partition – Independence*, Rupa & Co. New Delhi, 2009

dichotomy of accepting the territorial sovereignty in the post nation-state era and thereby the partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947. Contrarily and to the ironic stance of BJP, Sharif, Pirpur and Fazl-ul-Haq Reports have already indicated that Pakistan was the only answer to save the Muslims of India from the tyranny unleashed during Congress rule 1937-39. The reports also provide a reply to the questions of extremist Indians.³⁶

Political Parties and Religious Nationalism

India enjoys a multi-party political status at the national and state levels. Since the last six decades, the two national political parties, Indian National Congress (INC), representing the left of centre, and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), representing the right of centre political stream, have been ruling India in gaps. Between 1989 and 2014, India had seen a series of coalition governments with a national party holding the reins. However, there remained a dichotomy even within INC of Jawaharlal Nehru, who was unsure of any unanimous definition of nationalism, and of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, his successor and daughter. Nehru had declared:

When we talk loudly of our nationalism, each person's idea of nationalism is his own brand of nationalism. It may be Assamese nationalism, it may be Bengali, and it may be Gujrati, Uttar Pradesh, Punjabi or Madrasi. Each one has his own brand in mind. He may use the word nationalism of India in mind, [but] he is [still] thinking of that nationalism in terms of his own brand of it. When two brands of nationalism come into conflict, there is trouble.³⁷

Whereas, Indira Gandhi considered the nation as a family and used to treat minority community as her own children, she believed if one of my sons is weak then I need to take more care of that son. And if for taking

³⁶Jaswant Singh, *Jinnah: India – Partition – Independence*, Rupa & Co. New Delhi, 2009

³⁷Shamsa Nawaz, "Civil-Military Relations in India: Riding the Tiger", *Strategic Studies*, vol13, Issue no. 2, Summer 2013.

care of that son who is weak, if someone is angry with me, I am not bothered".³⁸ Though, the Blue Star Operation on Golden Temple in 1984 during her own regime leaves many to believe otherwise.

Today, the BJP is the largest political party of India. It has the majority representation in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha and State assemblies. BJP has close ideological and organizational links with the RSS. A Danish scholar, Thomas Blom Hansen, has very comprehensively captured the BJP's concept of Hindu Nationalism. Hansen's study is based on his field work in Maharashtra, which has the most communally non-fractured society. There are three perspectives of the Saffron Wave, highlighted by him:

- i. Imaginative political strategies.
- ii. Reserves of religious nationalism.
- iii. The public culture, which is neither in the political system nor in the religious field as such.³⁹

Although, BJP had dropped most of the sensitive issues prior to 1999 Lok Sabha elections, such as the demand for the construction of Ram Temple at Ayodhya, the implementation of common civil code, and revocation of Article 370 of the constitution (which gives a special status to the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir, having majority Muslim population) yet, in its 2009 manifesto, BJP very clearly stated that "Article 370 poses a psychological barrier for the full integration of the people of Jammu & Kashmir with the national mainstream".⁴⁰ Modi personally campaigned for the last state elections in held Kashmir to get 44+ seats for BJP to amend the constitution and drop Article 370 from it.

³⁸Pankaj Mishra, "Modi: A New Face of India", *The Guardian* UK. 16 May, 2014.

³⁹Henrik Bergland, "Religion and Nationalism". *Economic & Political Weekly*. vol. 39, no. 10. (6 March, 2004).

⁴⁰"Article 370: Why BJP fear to say Modi, party are not on same page", *FP Politics*, December 3, 2013.

The current wave of demographic transformation by the use of settlements of non-Kashmiris is an articulate perspective in this context. The Article does not allow non-Kashmiris to own the land. The decision is akin to Israeli style settlements in Palestine. It perpetuates the cycle of endangered and unlawful politics and gratifies the Indian acts of human rights violations in IoK. The Muslim population, which was 63% in Jammu in 1941, has come down to 30%.⁴¹

The Hindutva centric political movement also threatens democracy and civil rights. BJP offers a forensic transformation of majoritarian rhetoric for both the deprived and 'plebeian' or working class, seeking identity around cultural pride, order, and national strength, through the introduction of 'ancient' Hindu polity. According to BJP predicament, the conservative populism through Hindu nationalist movement also ensures security to the privileged groups against any encroachment.

The controversial affirmation on Indian nationalism has its basis in the debate between Nehru and Patel's contempt of secularism. It is evidently disclosed in the diary of his daughter Mani ben Patel, quoted by A.G. Noorani in his book 'The Destruction of Hyderabad'. Patel had even argued that the Muslim officials were bound to be disloyal even if they would opt for India and therefore, should be dismissed from their official status.⁴²

L.K. Advani, the former 'iron man' of Hindu nationalism has warned of a bumpy ride ahead for the country's democracy. He had hinted at his former protégé, Prime Minister Modi's policies as autocratic.⁴³ VHP and RSS had often been involved in the banning of books written on Gandhi and Hinduism. A biography of Gandhi, written by the editor of the New York Times, Joseph Lelyveld was banned by the Modi government in

⁴¹Riffat Hussain, "Resolving the Kashmir Dispute: Blending Realism with Justice", *Criterion Quarterly*, April 21, 2012.

⁴²A.G.Noorani. "The Destruction of Hyderabad", Hurst & Company, London. 2013.

⁴³Javed Naqvi, Who can crush Indian Democracy?, *Dawn*, 23 June, 2015.

Gujarat and the books by Wendy Doniger on Hinduism were withdrawn and pulped by Penguin Books, India.⁴⁴

Similarly, there are several historical evidences, which speak loudly on Indian non-democratic assertions. For example, B.R. Ambedkar, the main architect of Indian Constitution, had warned in 1950 that "Democracy in India is only a top dressing on an Indian soil, which is essentially undemocratic".⁴⁵ The term 'secular' was missing from the original Constitution of India of 1950. It was added when amendments were incorporated in connection with the 1976 emergency.⁴⁶

Conclusion

Whether protecting Indian civilization or defending the conservative populism through Hindu nationalist movement to transform democracy or using Hindutva smokescreen for vote bank communalism, the regional congruities on ideological issues and national identity in South Asian countries are worrisome. The aggressive salience of Hindutva poses grave security challenges both to bilateral and regional diplomacy. For example, an antagonistic debate on ideology and Hindu nationalism, rekindles the anxieties of the migrants on both sides of India and Pakistan borders by reincarnating the long-settled ideological conflict, and may unleash another human tragedy in future. The resurgence of belligerent Hindutva enlivens the agonizing memories of communal breakup of 1947.

India needs to initiate a collective positive vision which can correspond with the threat perceptions of not only the regional states but also various identities living in its neighbourhood to ensure regional stability. Any formidable departure of Indian society from an inclusive,

⁴⁴ Iftikhar Haider Malik, "Modi Machine Moves On: India at its Watershed", *Strategic Outlook*. 2014.

⁴⁵ Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*, (Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1999).

⁴⁶ Henrik Bergland, "Religion and Nationalism". *Economic & Political Weekly*. vol. 39, no. 10. (6 March, 2004).

liberal, and pluralistic polity towards a non-tolerant, right-wing pro-Hindu vision is a challenge not only for its own secular identity but polarizes the region.

The long-standing conflicts have locked both India and Pakistan into enduring enmity since the time of partition in 1947. The continuing enmity between the two, with several challenges, keeps their relationship vulnerable to instability. Pakistan is already fighting a War on Terror on its western borders against the violent extremist forces. It needs a robust regional security thinking and support from all countries including India to reinforce its counter-terrorism strategies. According to international law, it is an obligation for the whole of international community to come to the assistance of those states that are fighting terrorism.

Pakistan certainly wants to normalise its relationship with India, and therefore resists any new perspective like Hindutva to its threat perceptions. An inter-faith regional forum under the umbrella of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) would help reduce the tension, and enable the member countries to collectively work together to reduce the space provided by radical communal forces for any misunderstandings.