



HINDUTVA AND THE RISE OF THE CONTEMPORARY HINDU NATIONALISM (WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ISLAMIC THOUGHTS AND MUSLIM OF INDIA)

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ABSTRACT:

Muslims and Hindus are living with each other for hundreds of years. During this time many kinds of historical, political, cultural and religious conflicts occurred. The impact and the consequences of these conflicts are very much. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Hindu traditions have been followed and understood in new ways. Many changes took place in Hinduism and it faced many challenges in different aspects. These changes were of political as well as well as cultural and traditional. Many reforms took place in these periods. In result, a particular crystallization of Hinduism-based Ideology occurred.

KEYWORDS: Prophet, Muslims, Hindu, Hindutva, Hindustan, Islam, Savarkar

Introduction:

Islam is the religion of peace and coherence revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as a true guidance and mercy for the mankind. Message of Islam spread in Arabia as the Prophet preached the

guidance revealed to him by Allah the Almighty, which later on spread in almost all the corners of the globe resultantly Muslims interacted with the adherents of different religions, cultures, civilizations, ethnicities and creeds. The faith reached Hindustan (India) through expeditions by the commanders of Muslim Army as well as through the preaching of the true message by the Sufi Saints. Hindu resurgence is not a new phenomenon, neither is it unfamiliar to the Hindu religion. Hindu nationalism can be traced back to 14th century¹. Reforms and revivalist movements in Hinduism developed gradually. This new movement of reforms gradually developed in the shape of Hindu nationalism, when some of the Hindu intellectuals wanted to reinterpret some of the elements of their religion which invoked some Hindu revivalists and they involved in the movement of Hindu revival movement. That was reprioritization of some of the elements of Hinduism, and because of this reasons, new elements emphasized was made to Upanishads, Vedas and Vedic culture and idol worship. Arya Samaj movement played a vital role in the revival of Hindu nationalism movement. This movement formed a 'new other'. This new other was not the west who entered India as colonialist but the Muslims. The other for Hindutva was and is the Muslims of India. Veer Savarkar

¹ Mallick, S. (1994). Hindu Revivalism and the Indian Muslims. Lahore, Royal Book Company

was the person who first invoked the idea of Hindu , Hindi and Hindustan, which later on transformed into a new idea of which is named ‘Hindutva’.Savarkar ,an atheist, pointed out four elements for the propagation of his ideas. Race and geography which developed the term Hindu, another element was the language that is Sanskrit and Hindi, lastly the religion which is one aspect of these elements. Jafferlot mentions it as “His book was the first attempt at endowing what he called the Hindu Rashtra (the Hindu nation) with a clear-cut identity: namely Hindutva, a word coined by Savarkar The first criterion of the Hindu nation, for him, is the sacred territory of Aryavarta as described in the Vedas, and by Dayananda, whose book *Satyarth Prakash* Savarkar read extensively. Then comes race: for Savarkar the Hindus are the descendants of ‘Vedic fathers’ who occupied this geographical area since antiquity. In addition to religion, land and race, Savarkar mentions language as a pillar of Hindu identity. When doing so he refers to Sanskrit but also to Hindi: hence the equation he finally established between Hindutva and the triptych: ‘Hindu, Hindi, Hindustan’. Hindu nationalism appears for the first time as resulting from the superimposition of a religion, a culture, a language, and a sacred territory—the perfect recipe for ethnic nationalism.”²

² Jaffrelot, C. (2007). *Hindu Nationalism A READER*. Princeton and Oxford, Princeton

Hindutva was basically a response to Pan Islamism. Muslims were confined in India as 'Others'. It is mainly the reconstruction of national identity of the people of India. It is a conflict between 'Self' and the 'Other'. When the British government gave Muslims of India some privileges like separate electoral and the formation of their separate organization that is the Muslim league, this lead the Hindus against the Muslims. These issues irritated the Hindus which in result lead them to Hindu nationalism movement. But because of the policies of M K Gandhi, Hindu nationalists were not succeeded till the last two decades of the 20th century.

The inculcation of Hindu religiosity in the Indian politics was done by one of its prominent leaders that was Savarkar. This is pointed out by Ashby. He says, "One organization that has continued to perpetuate the religious and political ideals and the fervor of the Arya Samaj , and of the leaders such as Tilak ,is the Hindu Mahasabha. One of its early spokesman, V.D. Savarkar(1883-1966), a youthful protégé of Tilak, played a leading role in expressing the thought still at the foundation of the prominent examples of Hinduism in politics in India."³

University Press.

³ Ashby, P. H. (1974). Modern Trends in Hinduism. New York, Columbia University Press.

In 1923, Savarkar, a revolutionary Indian politician, developed the idea of Hindu nationalist political ideology which later on defines as Hindutva or Hinduness. This idea gained support by fanatic Hindus which resulted the formation of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh(RSS) in 1925. But this ideology came to prominence in the political realm of India in the second last decade of the 20th century when two different events took place in India; the first one was the Shah Bano case and second was the dispute over Babri Mosque on Ayodhya. These two events attracted a large number of Hindus to support this movement.

This is pointed out by Jaffrelot, “For the first time in Indian history, Hindu nationalism had managed to take over power. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its allies remained in office for five full years, until 2004. BJP returned to power in 2014 and 2019 as Modi sworn in as prime minister. The general public discovered Hindu nationalism in operation over these years. But it had of course already been active in Indian politics and society for decades; in fact, this *ism* is one of the oldest ideological streams in India. It took concrete shape in the 1920s and even harks back to more nascent shapes in the nineteenth century.”⁴

⁴ Jaffrelot, C. (2007). Hindu Nationalism A READER. Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press.

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The idea of Hindutva is a racial as well as national phenomenon as stated by Jaffrelot. He says, "...but in fact the doctrine that was to become known by the name 'Hindutva' fulfilled the criteria of ethnic nationalism. Its motto, 'Hindu, Hindi, Hindustan', echoed many other European nationalisms based on religious identity, a common language, or even racial feeling. Hinduism has often been described not as a religion but as a 'conglomeration of sects'.⁵ Hindu nationalism and its development is a modern phenomenon that has developed on the basis of strategies of ideology. As mentioned before, it was Savarkar who gave the concept of Hindutva means Hinduness. For the propagation of his idea he wrote a book namely *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* "Unlike the title" says C.Ram-Prasad , " by itself might suggest to a student of religion , the book was not about the doctrinal essence of a religion called Hinduism; it was not a contribution to that literature ,so standard in later twentieth century academia , on the definition of a religious tradition. It was the articulation of a certain form of nationalism."⁶

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Prasad, C. R. (2005). Contemporary Political Hinduism The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism. G. Flood. Oxford, Blackwell.

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The development of Hindu nationalism has a long history which very clearly indicates that the movement of Hindu nationalism was and is not against any of the communities but against the Muslims. This idea is very much elaborated by Jaffrelot. He says “The Hindu Mahasabha was rekindled in the 1920s. At this time the ideology of Hindu nationalism was codified and acquired its distinctive features. This development followed the same logic as the initial stages of socio-religious reform movements: Hindu nationalism crystallized in reaction to a threat subjectively felt if not concretely experienced. This time the threatening ‘Other’ was neither Christian missionaries nor colonial bureaucrats, but Muslims, not only because of their special equation with the British, as evident from the separate electorates issue, but also because of their mobilization during the *Khilafah* movement (restoration of Ottoman Empire movement). The wave of riots which spread over India in the early 1920s fostered a Hindu reaction that resulted in a re-launching of the Hindu Mahasabha.⁷ There were organizations and political parties which supported the idea of Hindu nationalism , some of them are very briefly as under:⁸

⁷ Jaffrelot, C. (2007). Hindu Nationalism A READER. Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press.

⁸ Smith, D. (2003). Hinduism and Modernity. Oxford, Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

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1. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh(RSS)

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (National Volunteer Corps, RSS), founded by K. B. Hedgewar in 1925 after reading Savarkar's works and meeting him in person, sought to bring cohesion and strength to Hindus.

2. The Bharatiya Janata Party

The RSS is not a political party, but it has close connections with the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, founded in 1951 by S. P. Mookerjee and renamed the Bharatiya Janata Party (both names meaning 'Indian People's Party') in 1979. 'The BJP advocated Hindutva ("Hindu-ness"), an ideology that sought to define Indian culture in terms of Hindu values, and it was highly critical of the secular policies and practices of the Indian National Congress (Congress Party). The BJP began to have electoral success in 1989, when it capitalized on anti-Muslim feeling by calling for the erection of a Hindu temple in an area in Ayodhya considered sacred by Hindus but at that time occupied by the Babri Masjid (Mosque of Bābur).'⁹

3. The Vishva Hindu Parishad

Neither the BJP nor the RSS includes the word Hindu in its name. That omission was remedied in the creation of another organization affiliated to

⁹ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Bharatiya-Janata-Party>

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the RSS. The Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), was founded in 1966 to counter secularism, with Swami Chinmayananda as president and S. S. Apte of the RSS as general secretary.

4. The Bajrang Dal

In July 1984 the youth wing of the VHP, the Bajrang Dal ('The Force of Strong-Bodied Hanuman') was formed to implement the policies of the VHP.

The Hindutva Ideology mostly has its effects on the Muslims of India. The resurgence of the religious forces which became more politically helped the Hindu revivalist to increase their popularity. The Hindu –Muslim relation is being very much worse than ever. There is a very bad impact of this movement of Hindu nationalism over the Muslims of India. In the 80s of the 20th century, the support for Hindu nationalist was no longer limited to the RSS, BJP and the Arya Samaj circles but now had spread among the masses especially in the population of northern India. Hindu nationalists portrayed the picture of Islam and Muslim as a serious problem for Hindus. The extremist Hindus believe that the people belonging to separate cultures and races cannot reside together.¹⁰ Dr Sohail while

¹⁰ Mahmood, D. S. (2003). Hindu Extremism, Indian Muslims and the Issue of Human Rights. The Rise of Hindutva Fundamentalism. I. o. R. Studies. Islamabad Institute of Regional Studies

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quoting in his article says that Hitler drove out the Jews from Germany so that the 'purity of the German race and culture' could be maintained. Similarly, the Hindu extremists asserts that the non-Hindu do not merit living like equal citizens in the country.¹¹ Because of this mentality and approach of the Hindus towards the Muslims of India, many Hindu-Muslim communal riots took place in many places of India. For example riots in Bombay, Surat and Gujrat are some of the instances in this regard in which discrimination against Muslims can be seen and human rights violation can easily be observed and traced out.

One of the severe incidents of Hindu nationalism and fanaticism took place in December 1992 when the Historic Babri Masjid (Mosque) in Ayodhya was demolished by the Hindus. This was the most significant manifestation of the Hindu nationalism movement. The destruction of the Babri Masjid and the consequent communal frenzy was the culmination of a well orchestrated campaign by the Hindutva forces. These riots did not stop for over two months and engulfed the whole country¹². About 1800 persons were killed during the communal riots and thousands were injured. The *Masjid-Mandir* (Mosque-Temple) issue is one of the major

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Perveen, F. Ibid. Communal Violence in India. Islamabad, Institute of Regional Studies.

controversies to be exploited by the Hindu extremists after the independence of India. This issue arises hatred and disgust among Hindus and Muslims which shattered the national integration.

Conclusion

The Muslim presence in the subcontinent India dates back to early 8th century. Muslim traders from Arab came to the Southern coasts of India. Muslims were the Rulers and Islam is considered to be the state religion. Islam was dominant Muslims were the rulers and under their rule, the believers and followers of different religions were allowed to practice their religious beliefs and teachings with complete autonomy. The current wave of Hindu nationalism basically revolves around the Hindu domination and attempt to take control over the politics of India. Because of the aggression shown by the Hindu nationalist, extremists and fanatics, many communal riots took place all over India. The most affected and the target group of this aggression is the Muslims of India. They were and are in a very poor condition economically, politically and so on. The issues like Babri Majsid and the riots in Gujrat and many other parts of Uttar Pradesh (UP) province of India grew hatred and makes distance between Muslims and Hindus. Although India claims to be a secular state but it is a matter of fact that the Muslims are suffering. They are far behind in every field from their counterpart Hindus. One major problem which is now being faced by

the Muslim of India is the new generation of the Muslims who are integrated with the Hindu community leaving many of their religious and cultural traditions. Marriages between Muslim girls to Hindu boys and vice versa are also a big issue for the Muslims. The constitution of India guarantees the rights of Muslim but the governments whether they are of Congress or BJP have not taken steps in this regard. The rise of Hindutva is also a challenge to this so called multi-cultural democracy. (Smith 2003). Further in the current scenario one can observe the threats to Islam and the Muslim of India. Islam is a religion of peace and coherence. The message of Islam could only be disseminated if the existing tough political and religious biasness lessened. Otherwise, the lives of Muslims of India would be more harsh and Islam as a belief and system will be challenged and try to be eliminated.



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