



INDIAN JOURNAL OF LAW, POLITY AND ADMINISTRATION

STORMY TIDES OF SAFFRON WAVE: RISE OF HINDUTVA IN THE 21ST CENTURY

***Debmallya Sinha**

ABSTRACT

Secularism has been a crucial and elemental part of Indian Constitutional and Political History. However, in recent years, various activities of different political affiliations and politicians have made a threat to the secular nature of our state. 'Jai Shri Ram' is more of a kind of war-cry than being a chat remembering Lord Ram. Infact, ironically few members of the Parliament, while taking the oath of their duty ended their swearing-in-form of 'Jai Shri Ram', taunting not only the opposition but also the secular state. Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) believes that there has been an "erosion of the nation's integrity in the name of secularism" and the reason behind them is none other than appeasement of the Muslim population. Minorities have been a victim of such Hindu appraisalment, there have been numerous instances of mob lynching and brutality due to ignorant reasons. Babri Masjid, Citizenship Amendment Acts, and frequent changing of the name of Muslim towns and places are few examples of the Rise of Hinduism. Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, while spreading Islamophobia addressed the crowd in 2017 by saying that if a single Hindu is killed or a Hindu girl is raped, revenge will be taken by killing 100 Muslims or raping 100 Muslim girls, in 2015, he said that if provided with a chance, he will install idols of Hindu gods in every mosque. While on one side, the Saffron color is a symbol of the strength and vigor of our country on the other hand it has become a symbol of Hindutva and has caused fear in the mind of non-Hindu minorities. As quoted by famous historian Ramachandra Guha, "*It has again become India and Pakistan, and like Pakistan, we are being seen more and more as a major, inward-looking state. If the hegemony of Hindutva continues, it will damage and destroy us*". In this article, I have made a humble effort to explain the toxic Hinduism that is being promoted and has concluded by defining what truly Hinduism stands for.

Introduction

In recent scenarios, primarily the activities of the current government have questioned the idea of secularism and reportedly tried to explain such activities as the salience of religion.

The unattained belief of the Liberals that interference of religion into the mainstream politics will hamper and dismantle the nation certainly cannot be questioned as there are ample examples to make it stand as corresponding truth. Article 25 of our Constitution¹ serves as a guardian of religion and it allows everyone to freely profess and practice religion concerning certain checks and restrictions. The concept of Hindutva emerged from the concept of Fascism in Germany and Nazism in Italy, supporters of such kind of movement have always believed in the hegemonic political endeavor. However, to divide deep and dissect, the idea of Colonial Rulers to divide and the rule is the primary reason for the birth of such orthodox religious movement.

In response to British Rule, three major political movements were born, these are anti-colonial secularism, Muslim separatism, and opposing that, Hindu nationalism. The concept of Hindutva was first penned down by Mr. Chandranath Basu who later found the famous Calcutta University Magazine, his work on Hindutva was hardly recognized and is still least known in the public domain. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, widely considered as the father of Hindutva, during his prison life in Ratnagiri Prison, penned down "Essentials of Hindutva in 1922, an elaborated version was later published in 1928 in a form of an essay titled "*Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?*", Savarkar described Hindutva as a way of life and amalgamation of cultures, ethnicity, political identity, and civilization².

In 1925 Dr. K. B. Hedgewar, being inspired by Davarkar writings founded Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the world's largest voluntary organization, majorly of orthodox carrying saffron flags and creating false alarms of the Hindu community being at the stage of extinction. Stringent follower of Hindutva equates Hinduness with Indianness, they consider Muslims as an immediate threat and other religions as foreigners or invaders. They have voluntarily undertaken *'The mission of reorganizing the Hindu society on the lines of its unique national genius which the Sangh has taken up is not only a great process of true national regeneration of Bharat but also the inevitable precondition to realize the dream of*

*ICFAI LAW SCHOOL, HYDERABAD

¹ The Constitution of India, Article 25.

² Damodar Savarkar, Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?.

world unity and human welfare. Our one supreme goal is to bring to life the all-around glory and greatness of our Hindu Rashtra'.³

The Concept of Secularism

The dissociation of religion and state is the core foundation of the principle of secularism. It makes sure that the state doesn't show any favoritism and affiliation to any particular religion and also it makes sure that the state doesn't interfere in any religious affairs. The Preamble of the Constitution of India declares India as a Sovereign, Socialist, Republic, and Democratic state. The terms Secular and Socialist was added to it by the 42nd Amendment, 1976. This Amendment is often regarded as one of the most important amendments to the Indian Constitution and hence also known as 'Mini Constitution'. After the case of Kesavananda Bharati⁴, the Basic Structure Doctrine came into force, and the Secular nature of the Constitution also become one of the elements of the doctrine, which means, any law in effect or introduced, goes against the Secular nature will be declared as null and void. One such important case which defined the Secular nature of the state is S.R. Bommai v. UOI⁵, in which it was held that "Religious tolerance and equal treatment of all religious group and protection of their life and property and the places of their worship are an essential part of secularism enshrined in our constitution. while the citizen of this country are free to profess, practice and prorogate such religion, faith or belief as they choose, so for as the state is concerned i.e. from the point of view of the state, the religion, faith, or belief of a person is immaterial to it, all are equal and all are entitled to be treated equally".

Promoting India as 'Hindu Nation'

India from the very beginning has been a remarkable example for protecting and managing the unity in diversity through various dynamic formula, our concept of Secularism has always believed in critical respect of all religion, any action reflecting religious biases have been

³ Thomas A. Howard, 'Hindu nationalism against religious pluralism—or, the sacralization of religious identity and its discontents in present-day India', in Kaye V. Cook (ed.), Faith in a Pluralist Age (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books 2018), 62–78 (67).

⁴ Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala, AIR 1973 SC 1461

⁵ S. R. Bommai v. Union of India, AIR 1994 SC 1918

regarded as *contra legem*. Renowned Indian Historian, Professor Romila Thapar, in a recent session explained how India is on the edge of becoming a Hindu Nation and further explained India's Nationalism vs Hindu Majoritarianism as "*Nationalism is the reflection of how people in a society think about their collective self. The collective means that everyone that constitutes the nation should be included as equal citizens. But when nationalism is defined by a single identity, which can either be language or religion, or even ethnicity, then nationalism gets derailed into majoritarianism. And majoritarianism is not nationalism.*"⁶

The intrusion of Hindu Nationalism into national politics has reached its zenith during the two successive terms of Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), NRC and CAA stand as a strong example of Hindu favoritism. Recently, the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has downgraded the status of India and marked it as "countries of particular concern" in terms of freedom to practice and profess a religious faith. USCIRF even stated that the current government "used its strengthened parliamentary majority to institute national-level policies violating religious freedom across India, especially for Muslims"⁷.

The current government envisages the plan of Sang Parivar, whose primary ideology is to transform Indian society from a Hindu-majority society into a Hindu majoritarian society and eventually into a Hindu Nation. Top leaders of the current government are or have been a member of RSS, such an organization that has frequently taken part in communal violence and has been continuously working on a new brand of aggressive Hindutva, today's political leader consider RSS founders as veer and regards RSS leaders as luminous. Dr. Subramanian Swamy, not only a renowned BJP leader made a controversial statement on Twitter in 2018 that "If any Muslim citizen of India identifies with or glorifies Islamic rule in India, he should be declared a defeated alien since Hindus braving gross brutality uprooted Islamic rule from India. Muslims of India should instead accept based on DNA, that they are descendants of Hindus". The RSS, in 1951 teamed up with the Hindu Mahasabha which lead to the foundation of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh political party—the precursor to the BJP. RSS Chief, Mohan Bhagat, in a recent rally or Hindu Sabha as they call, stated, ironically on Christmas

⁶ Romila Thapar, India on edge of becoming Hindu Nation (Dec. 01, 2020, 11.35AM), <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-on-edge-of-becoming-hindu-nation-romila-thapar/article32349191.ece>.

⁷ United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, <https://www.uscirf.gov/countries/india> (last visited Nov. 25, 2020).

Day that, “Every Hindu is my brother. In India, one may follow different eating habits, ways of worshipping the gods, philosophy, language, and culture. But all of them are Hindus. Many are Hindu, but they are not aware of it. Only those who consider Bharat Mata his mother are true Hindus.”⁸ Mohan Bhagat, during the launch of a book, "RSS, a roadmap for the 21st century", authored by Sunil Ambedkar" publicly stated with an assertiveness that "India is a Hindu Rashtra and it is non-negotiable". Founding member of Rastriya Swayamsevak Singh and also a prominent ideologue of Hindutva, M.S. Golwalkar in his book *Bunch of Thoughts*⁹ dedicated a chapter titled ‘Internal Threats’ in which he has considered Muslims, Christians, and Communists as major threat to India. He quoted that “the hostile elements within the country pose a far greater menace to national security than aggressors from outside”. He never believed the Muslims can be also be patriotic and has considered it as suicidal to believe that they have turned patriots overnight after the formation of Pakistan. He even takes a leap and declares Masjids are mere prototype of ‘Miniature Pakistan’

Facets of Hindutva

Hon’ble Justice P.N. Bhagwati once quoted that “All powers are likely to be abused. That is inseparable from the nature of human institutions. The wisdom of man has not yet been able to conceive of a government with power sufficient to answer its legitimate ends and at the same time incapable of mischief”¹⁰. Recently Justice Vikramjit Sen while deciding on a case¹¹ orally observed that Secularism is under threat in India and expressed concern upon continuity of India as a Secular State. “Use of Religion is a Potent Threat to Secular Democracy; politics has often interfered with religion”¹², this statement can be proved in the lights when Prime Minister Narendra Modi performed ‘Bhoomi Puja’ of the much-disputed

⁸ Staff Reporter, Everyone living in India is a Hindu: Mohan Bhagwat, The Hindu (Dec. 03, 2020, 12.13 PM), <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/everyone-living-in-india-is-a-hindu-mohan-bhagwat/article22852200.ece>.

⁹ 3rd Edition, M. S. Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, Page 148 (Sathitya Sindhu Prakashan 2017)

¹⁰ ADM Jabalpur v. Shivakant Shukla, (1976) 2 SCC 521.

¹¹ Clarence Pais & Ors v. Union of India, AIR 2001 SC 1151.

¹² Dr Hans Raj Bhardwaj, *Politics, Religion and Judiciary in India*, (Har-Anand Publications Pvt Ltd 2019).

Ayodha land and international media portrayed it as a victory for Modi¹³. Nowadays ‘Jai Shri Ram’ is not just a mere chant remembering Ram but in reality, has become a murder cry. To name a few, Ayub Khan Lynching Case, Harpur Lynching Case, Alwar Lynching Case are some spine-chilling case when innocents are beaten to death with any proper reasons. Human Rights Watch in its 104- page report stated how there has been a massive surge in Cow Vigilante Violence since 2015¹⁴. Recently a Muslim taxi driver named Gaffar was chased and thrashed in Rajasthan after he did not readily agree to chant ‘Modi Zindabad’ and ‘Jai Shri Ram’¹⁵.

Bajrang Dal, another religious militant organization that represents the youth wing of Vishva Hindu Parishad has involved themselves in moral policing, logically speaking in an immoral way. They rebuff couple holding hands in public and non-Hindu taking part in Hindu festivals, they even advise Hindu girls not to make any friend with Muslim or Christian person. They often beat couples and consider valentine's day as ‘Anti-Bharat Culture’. Hindu Janajagruti Smriti considers Valentine Day as Western Perversions and defines it as immoral, lust, pervert love, and obscenity¹⁶. Pre-Marriage affair is still an ignominy and couples are frequently harassed, thrashed, and even killed¹⁷.

Understanding true Hinduism

The true meaning of Hinduism is a way of life, a peaceful and respectful way of life without causing any harm to anyone. Moreover, Late Ram Jethmalani argued and explained is Hinduism is not a religion but a geographic location and culture¹⁸. The true Hindu is always a liberal and never an extremist. During Ram Rajya, Lord Ram never differentiated its subject

¹³ Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, International media calls Ayodhya verdict a victory for Modi, The Economic Times, (Dec. 05, 2020, 6.37pm) <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/international-media-calls-ayodhya-verdict-a-victory-for-modi/articleshow/72000125.cms?from=mdr>.

¹⁴ Jayshree Bajoria, Violent Cow Protection in India, Human Rights Watch (Dec 09, 2020, 10.49 PM) <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/02/18/violent-cow-protection-india/vigilante-groups-attack-minorities>.

¹⁵ Muslim taxi driver beaten up in Mumbai suburb, asked to chant Jai Shri Ram, (December 09, 2020, 11.40 PM) <https://theprint.in/india/muslim-taxi-driver-beaten-up-in-mumbai-suburb-asked-to-chant-jai-shri-ram/255403/>.

¹⁶ Beware of Valentine's Day- A cultural conversion of Hindus!, Hindu Janajagruti Samiti, (Last visited Dec 22, 2020) <https://www.hindujagruti.org/hindu-issues/western-influence/valentine-day>.

¹⁷ Aindrila Halder, Live and Don't Let Live: Moral Policing and its Harmful Impacts on Women in India, Globus by University of San Francisco (Dec 30, 2020, 10 PM) <https://www.usfca.edu/journal/globus/winter-2020-7>.

¹⁸ Manohar Joshi v. Nitin Bhaurao Patil & Anr, 1996 SCC (1) 169.



INDIAN JOURNAL OF LAW, POLITY AND ADMINISTRATION

based on religion, it was a kingdom of divine nature instilled with ethics of justice and equality. Hindu Extremist has falsified the true idea of being a Hindu and has raised a false alarm of danger from other communities. Secularism is not a western concept as claimed by RSS, but a concept inherited from Ram Rajya. A true Hindu believes in the oneness of everyone and strives for the betterment of everyone.

