

THE RISE OF HINDUTVA: IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIAN MUSLIM MINORITIES

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ABSTRACT

Since Narendra Modi entered office and became India's prime minister, atrocities against minorities have increased, and the concept of 'Hindutva' has emerged as a frightening danger to the country's minorities. This research paper will examine the evolution of Hindutva ideology which took place in Indian society and will take into account the recent government of Narendra Modi as a supporter of Hindutva. It will make use of qualitative content analysis to evaluate the reason behind inter-religious conflicts. This study will also examine how Hindutva is associated with Hinduism and has antagonistic behavior towards other minorities especially Muslims in India. In addition to that this research will also focus upon the implications of adopting Hindutva policies upon Muslims, using the lens of social constructivism.

Keywords: Hindutva, Qualitative Content Analysis, Indian Muslim Minorities, Social Constructivism.

INTRODUCTION

India is the world's biggest democracy and a secular country as per its constitution. It consists population of over 1.35 billion people 2nd largest country after China. India is the birthplace of several religions and diverse cultures which makes it a pluralistic country. At the time of partition in 1947 when Pakistan got separated from the rest of India based on religion. Indian National Congress (INC) decided that character of India will be of secularistic nature. Indian society has been always basically religious; therefore, the makers of the constitution couldn't keep the state away from the matters of religion. In India, the constitution was made to protect every religion enacting laws following every religion's basic principles. Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, one of the founding fathers of Indian nations, was a staunch advocate of democracy and secularism, and all of his life he struggled for that. He knew that the unity of India lies in secularism; therefore he laid the foundation of India based on modern democracy and secularism (Vaishnav, 2019).

The biggest challenge for secularism in India is Hindutva ideology. An ideology that was professed by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in 1923. He was of the view that India belongs to only those who consider India as their Pitribhu (fatherland) and Punyabhu (Holy land) which means India belongs to only Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, and Sikhs. Therefore, Muslims, Christians, and Jews don't belong to India because their Punyabhu is in Arab and Palestine. Hindutva ideology was composed in the reaction to Khilafat Movement which was basically a Pan-Islamic movement, started to keep Khilafat alive, therefore it was an ideology created as a reaction towards the Muslim movement. A significant development occurred when a new right-wing Hindu Nationalist organization Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) was established in 1925 by Keshav Baliram Hedgewar in Nagpur. It provided a proper organization to the right-wing Hindus to keep

their Hindutva ideology alive. Secularism in India has been always questioned by Hindu religious parties under the umbrella of Sangh Parivar (Family of RSS) which includes political wing Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), religious wing Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), youth wing Bajrang Dal and other organizations like Shiv Sena, etc (Anthony, 2014).

RSS and other Hindu nationalist parties gained some support and popularity through various communal riots and those riots cast a dark shadow upon the secularist nature of India but they could not transform that support into any solid political power until RSS' political wing, BJP took up the issue of Ram Janam Bhoomi (Birth Place of Lord Ram). Ram Janam Bhoomi's issue and demolition of the Babri Mosque made BJP popular among right-wing Hindus. In 1984 BJP was able to hold only two seats but in 1991 BJP jumped up to 119 seats (Malji, 2020).

Eventually, in 2014 and then again in 2019 BJP has won elections and adopting Hindutva ideology in the Parliament by legislating issues that support Hindutva. Since BJP has risen on the horizons of Indian politics, communal violence has mounted as well. The hatred between Muslims and Hindus has escalated. BJP politicians, which are mostly former members of RSS or follow the same ideology as RSS, have openly maligned Muslims in their public processions. Inciting hatred through speeches calling them Pakistani agents, traitors, anti-nationals and physical assaults have become the norm under the BJP government which is horrifying. Moreover, BJP led government has encouraged cow vigilantism in the name of Cow protection which has led to several incidents resulting in mob lynching and killings of innocent people in the presence of Police. In addition to that Triple Talaq Law and uniform civil code is an attack on the basic feature of the Indian constitution, freedom of religious rights of the Muslims (Balashankar, 2018).

BJP's success in elections is widely credited to the one person: the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Damodardas Modi. Modi is a former member of RSS and is notorious for Gujrat riots. In 2002, Modi was chief minister of Gujrat when an incident of Sabarmati Express burning happened along with 59 Hindus in it. It led to a well-planned execution of Muslims openly in the streets. Hindu rioters looted, burnt the properties of Muslims. They killed several Muslims, raped women and girls, attacked their houses and the state government let that happened without taking any concrete action toward preparators. Pogrom in Gujrat and later on the economic success of Gujrat made Modi popular among right-wing nationalists (Maizland, 2020).

In the elections of 2014 BJP spent a huge amount in projecting and marketing Modi as the only saviour of India. Resultantly, BJP won the elections in 2014 and 2019. Being a former member of RSS, Modi advanced the agenda of Hindutva. Modi, having majority seats in parliament and with a weak opposition, is running the government in an authoritarian style and all his policies are aligned with the agenda of RSS. Modi's majoritarian style of government is a challenge for Indian democracy and secularism. This research paper aims at assessing the rise of Hindutva and Narendra Damodardas Modi played a vital role in the success of the BJP and how the policies of BJP are leading India towards and Hindu Rashtra while compromising the rights of minorities especially Muslims. What are the implications of Hindutva policies on minorities especially Muslims in India? How did the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's policies and preferences proliferate the Hindutva Ideology in state's practices?

Social Constructivism Theory

According to Social constructivism world we know is the world of our own making which means whatever reality we perceive or understand about the world is socially constructed. Social constructivism argues that the social construction of this reality involves many factors such as the interplay of agency and structure, identities and interests, and social norms. Alexander Wendt (1995) illustrated this phenomenon with the example of 500 British nuclear bombs that are less threatening for the USA compare to the 5 nuclear bombs of North Korea. He further explained that identifications of these bombs are not based on their material structure but are based on meanings given to them (the ideational structure). It is important to notice that the relationship between the USA and Britain and North Korea is perceived by shared beliefs and ideas.

Constructivists argue that agency and structure are mutually constituted and both can influence each other simultaneously. Agency can be understood by someone's ability to act and structure refers to the international system which is made of ideational and material elements. As per Wendt's example enmity

between the USA and North Korea is the result of shared beliefs and ideas (ideational structure) of both states and the ability of both countries to act is agency. If these shared beliefs and ideas change then the relationship of enmity will turn into friendship.

Similarly, states can have multiple identities and interests according to their interaction with other states. These identities and interests are socially constructed and can be changed. According to their identities, they shape their interests. A smaller state will follow its interests to survive whereas the identity of a stronger and bigger state implies a set of interests' global domination etc.

Social norms are also central to constructivism. Social norms mean states adopt appropriate behaviour according to their identities. This is also called the logic of appropriateness where a country acts in a certain way because that is appropriate behaviour. (Stephen Mcglinchy, 2017)

Why this theory, why not other theories

Social Constructivism explains the whole rise of Hindutva while other mainstream theories such as Liberalism and Realism cannot. If we talk about Liberalism it deals with liberty and freedom of individuals along with democratic values. Especially Liberalism is an advocate of secularism by providing liberty to individuals to practice his/her religion without any interference of government. But in the case of India and rising Hindu nationalism, Liberalism fails to elaborate the Hindutva phenomena. Despite there have been consecutively democratic regimes since 1947, democratic values of secularism have failed to infest themselves permanently in India. Similarly, realism is much of an advocate of a state's power and influence and it deals mostly outside of the boundaries of a country. Realism gives much importance to the state's power over the individual therefore it fails to explain Hindutva ideology. It would be quite appropriate to say Realism is less interested in domestic problems. Social Constructivism, on the other hand, justifies in detail how a secular country turned into a religion-based nationalistic state and how over the period people adopted the Hindutva ideology.

Keeping social constructivism's tenets in view recent wave of Hindu Nationalism can be explained very well. The rise of religious nationalism in India has been socially constructed through continuous propagating the Hindu identity as the superior identity in India and through speeches, books, media, movies, and newspapers this ideology gained popularity which resultantly made (BJP) the majority party in Lok Sabha (Indian Parliament).

Implications of Hindu nationalism upon Muslims

Hindutva ideology derives its power through hatred and violence and victim of this violence has been mainly Muslim community. Hindus and Muslims had been living in peace and harmony in India and there was no notable incident of clash until the 90s. Hindu nationalistic parties such as BJP and some others remained on the side-line of Indian politics. The rise of BJP began with the Ram Janam Bhoomi movement, a promise to rebuild the Ram Temple in the place of Babri Mosque. Hindu nationalistic leaders claimed that a temple existed on the site of Babri Mosque which was built by Mughal King Babar in 1528 A.D. BJP did an aggressive campaign throughout India, a Ram Rath Yatra, Leaders of BJP traveled all around India to gather the support of masses (Mander, *Between Memory and Forgetting: Massacre and the Modi Years in Gujarat*, 2019).

Eventually, a violent mob, led by many BJP leaders attacked the mosque in December 1992. The demolition of mosques stirred an unending series of violence and triggered the polarization of society. The demolition of the Babri Mosque caused hundreds of innocent lives mainly Muslims and again in 2002 the Gujrat riots caused the deaths of thousands of innocent lives again mostly were Muslims. In 2002 when The Gujrat riots happened, the Chief Minister of Gujrat was Narendra Modi, now Prime Minister of India. There were many reports accusing Modi of deliberately not using government powers to stop violence. The Gujrat riots enhanced the gulf between Hindus and Muslims and Modi appeared to be a Hero of Hindu Nationalists. There were breaks in these violent incidents but since 2014 the Modi government has taken over it has become a norm (Balashankar, 2018).

Grave Violations of Human Rights

According to Human Right Watch report, since 2014 Modi regime has come to power violence in India has

been risen proportionally to the next level. BJP leaders have openly encouraged Hindus to take action against Muslims. Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath is notorious for making derogatory remarks against Muslims in his public demonstrations. He explicitly provoked Hindus to take one Hundred Muslim women if a Muslim man weds one Hindu girl. Moreover, he incited Hindus to kill at least 10 Muslims if one Hindu is killed. (World, 2019) Inciting such violence in the masses has resulted in several communal violent events since 2014.

Cow Protection Bill

Cow is a sacred animal for Hindus but Muslims eat cows for food. Therefore, several BJP-ruled states have adopted policies to protect cows. According to the new bill, slaughtering a cow is a cognizable and nonbailable offense and the burden of proof will be upon the accused person. Such laws emboldened many Hindus to play vigilante groups. Since 2015, at least 50 people have been killed by these vigilante groups and the majority of dead people are Muslims. Police have been stalling to capture attackers and even in some incidents police were witnessing the act but did nothing to stop it. And BJP politicians have overtly justified these violent murderers. (Human Rights Watch, 2021)

Prohibition of Unlawful Religious Conversion Ordinance

The biggest state of India, Uttar Pradesh has passed a law named prohibition of unlawful religious conversion ordinance. The base of passing this law is a lousy theory of “Love Jihad”, which means that Muslim men lure Hindu girls to fall in love with them in order to convert their religion to Islam. According to law, anyone who wants to convert to another religion requires local district authorities and there will be a punishment of 10 years of prison if a person found forcing others to convert his or her religion through fraud, coercion, misleading, or misrepresentation. Although this law supposedly applies to everyone, however, majority of victims belong to Muslims. 86 Cases were filed, mostly by the family of the girl, not the girl herself and among them, 79 belonged to the Muslim community and the rest belonged to the Christian community. This law now has been adopted by almost all states where BJP has won the elections. (Human Rights Watch, 2021)

Fueling Islamophobia

During the Covid-19 pandemic, BJP accused the international Islamic missionary movement Tablighi Jamaat of spreading the Corona Virus deliberately. Fake videos of Muslims spreading the virus were made viral which led to a boycott of buying products from Muslims. In-state of such an international emergency when businesses were already in turmoil, such boycott was a horrendous act. Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh demeaned Muslims as a ‘Green Virus’ in a public procession. (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

Systematic Discrimination against Minorities

Since the Modi regime has come to power it has adopted policies to systematically discriminate against minorities especially Muslims. There have been several laws enacted to tight grip Muslims and other minorities making their lives harder in India. BJP led government is not only adopting policies against the constitution but also changing it through amendments that are passed against the constitution itself and Kashmir is the classic case study for that.

Violation of Constitution: Abrogation of Article 370 & 35A

On August 5, 2019, the Indian government announced the revocation of Article 370 and Article 35A. According to this Article, the autonomy of the state was revoked, the state was divided into two (Jammu and Kashmir, And Ladakh) and that state will be directly governed by the center. It was an open violation of the constitution because Article 370 was the only Article that gave autonomy to the people of Kashmir and revoking it without the consent of Kashmiri people created a sense of insecurity in the valley. According to Article 370 the constituent assembly and state government had the authority to make any decision about the status of the state, what BJP government has done is passing a constitutional order (C.O.) 272 which made Article 370 inoperative.

Article 35A was to empower Kashmiri people the right of the ownership of the land but with the revocation of Article 35A, now it would be possible for any Indian to buy property in Kashmir. This is a larger design to alter the demography of the only Muslim majority state in India. Revocation of Article 370 and 35A actually made the instrument of accession null and void because it was the only article 370 which allowed India to keep a hold on Kashmir. (Medha, 2019)

Pellet Guns and Killings of Civilians

The killing of civilians in Kashmir is not something new to describe but according to the United Nations (UN) report for Human Rights, there has been a sudden increase in killings between 2016 and 2018. An estimated 130 to 145 civilians were killed by Indian security forces in this period of time. Indian forces use to open fire on protestors for instance on 27 January 2018, there were three civilians killed and several were injured in Shopian district when Indian forces opened fire at protestors. Another weapon used by Indian forces in Kashmir is Pellet Gun. According to human rights organizations, one cartridge contains 500 to 600 pellets similar to ball bearings, made of lead alloy. When fired, these pellets spread around with high velocity making several people injured at the same time. It can be lethal for life if the distance is close. According to Jammu and Kashmir State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) in 2016, 1,726 people were injured from 10 districts and in 2018 stated by Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti 6,221 people were the victim of pellet gunshots. (United Nations, 2018)

Torture and Enforced disappearances

Unlawful arrests and detentions have become the norm in Kashmir under the suppressive acts as rightly stated by Indian Supreme Court. But these arrests and detentions lead towards another horrific chapter of violence and that is torture. Being a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, India is obliged to make sure that no person should be tortured or treated with cruelty and inhumane punishment. But in Kashmir torture is another tool in the hands of Indian forces to suppress Kashmiris. A lecturer in college, Shabir Ahmed Mangoo was died in Police custody due to torture in 2016. Another terrible video emerged in 2017 of a Kashmiri, Farooq Ahmed Dar who was strapped with a moving jeep in which soldier is heard shouting this will be the punishment of those who throw stones. Another example of Nasrullah Khan who was tortured by Indian forces. And there are many more incidents like that but because of strict control on journalists these stories hardly come out. Along with torture, another horrific experience has to face families in Kashmir of the disappearance of their family members. According to the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons, since 1989, 8000 to 10000 Kashmiri persons are enforced disappeared. (Habeel Tang, 2019)

Media Blackout and Harassment of Journalists

Unfortunately, Kashmir has not so bright a history in freedom of the press as well. All governments throughout the time somehow kept journalists on their tooth and nail for the freedom of the press. But since the BJP government has revoked the special status of Kashmir, freedom of the press has been strictly suppressed and violated. Journalism in Kashmir has been always a challenging task for journalists because they have been jailed, beaten, and tortured. With the oppressive policies and laws adopted by the BJP government, freedom of the press has been systematically silenced and the elimination of truth has become a constant feature of Kashmir. Fake news and misreporting of incidents in Kashmir are the usual cases for mainland media, for instance, the case of Junaid Ahmed Khoro in 2001 was declared a militant committing suicide inside the mosque in the famous newspaper 'The Hindu' which later on was discovered that it was cold-blooded murder.

Moreover, Journalists have been target killed in the name of militancy, renowned journalist Sujhat Bukhari was murdered but never was reported in mainstream Indian Media. If any journalist takes the courage to write some truth, he or she has to face multiple charges and even jail too. Asif Sultan, the winner of the John Aubuchon Press Freedom Award, has been jailed for more than one year for writing a piece. Harassment of journalists has a long list in Kashmir, another case of a journalist named Aquib Javed, a reporter of Kashmir Observer was called to Police station for questioning, later on, was summoned to New

Delhi for taking interviews of separatist leaders in Kashmir.

In addition, a photojournalist named Kamran Yousaf was arrested for being accused of stone-pelter which after six months got bail from court because of lack of evidence. After the revocation of Article 370 there was a complete media shut down in the valley and there was no source of communication outside the world. International Media such as British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Aljazeera managed to get some interviews and then released them on their respective channels and websites.

Citizen Amendment Act (CAA)

On 11 December 2019, the Government of India passed an act which was the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. It basically amended the citizenship act of 1955 in which religious persecuted minorities were welcome from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan. According to that act Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Christians, Jains, and Parsees who were mistreated or victimized in those countries could come to India and get citizenship. But after the amendment followers of one religion, Islam was excluded. So, the new act provides a pathway to citizenship to all Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Christians, Jains, and Parsees who arrived in India from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh before December 31 2014. (Affairs, 2019) So, if there is a person belonging to any of these six religions, and has entered India before 31 December 2014 but has no citizenship documents will be not considered an illegal immigrant. Before the amendment to get citizenship, any immigrant had to live in India for 11 years but after the amendment that immigrant will have to live in India for only five years in order to get citizenship of India. CAA is connected with the National Register of Citizens (NRC). As Minister of Home Affairs mentioned in his many interviews that CAA should be seen attached with NRC.

National Register of Citizens

The National Register of Citizens (NRC) was established in 2003 by amending the citizenship act of 1955 in which all Indian citizens have to get registered. For getting registered, the BJP government purposed to show documents that can prove the holder of documents is an Indian and if otherwise that person will be considered an illegal immigrant and can be expelled from India. But the problem that is most or at least half of the population has no birth record. According to UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund) report of 2012 65 % of rural and 40 % of urban births are not registered which will create a huge problem when applying NCR to all over the country. (Shylashri, 2019)

The basic purpose of this NRC was to curtail the illegal immigrants from other countries, especially from Bangladesh to Assam. When BJP got into power, they speeded up the process and applied NRC to the whole of Assam in August 2019. The idea was to expel illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, which were mostly assumed to be Muslims. But when results of NRC came out, it showed that from 1.9 million illegal immigrants, the majority belonged to the Hindu religion. Now, this was a tough call for a party whose base ideology was revival and support of Hindus all over in the world not to expel them. It became the base cause of the amendment in the citizenship act of 1955. Therefore, they excluded Muslims from that act. So, combining both CAA and NRC mean that if any Non-Muslim illegal immigrant who has entered India before 31 December 2014 from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan should be considered a citizen of India. There will be no need to show documents as the requirement. (Jafferlot, 2020)

BJP government is considering to apply NRC all over in the country and the only targeted community will become Muslims as CAA provides security to all Non-Muslims whether they are illegal or not, but even if a Muslim family has been living in India for hundreds of years but cannot provide documents of their citizenship they will be considered as illegal immigrants. BJP government has already built detention camps where illegal immigrants are being kept and according to Amnesty International, these camps are overcrowded and affecting the health of detainees. Moreover, there is no segregation of detainees if the detainee is a criminal or a civilized citizen. Such inhumane behavior in camps is causing mental and physical health deterioration of detainees. These all tactics used by the BJP government are to make the lives of Muslims in India harder than ever (Jafferlot, 2020).

Narendra Damodardas Modi: Face of BJP and Hindutva

In the election of 2019 in India BJP won the election for the second consecutive time and gain even more seats from the previous election. It is said that these two elections were not contested between Congress and BJP but Congress and Modi. In this chapter, we will discuss how a man, Narendra Damodardas Modi, became the center of attention in these two elections and how he was able to capture the mood of the Indian masses. Moreover, how the role of leadership became important and played a vital role in the victory.

Modi as a Chief Minister of Gujrat

In Gujrat, BJP had won the election and Chief Minister was Keshubhai Patel but there was great concern about his administration. His administration was accused of corruption and ill governance in Gujrat. BJP's leadership decided to represent a new face in Gujrat and offered Modi as deputy chief minister which he declined by saying either he will be fully responsible for Gujrat or not at all. L.K. Advani was not in favor of this due to Modi's lack of experience but eventually, he had to give up his stance (Anthony, 2014).

On 7 October 2001 Narendra Modi became the Chief Minister of Gujrat by replacing Keshubhai Patel. Right after his entrance into the Gujrat State legislature, a horrible incident happened and that incident played a significant role in his upcoming successes. On 27 February 2002, some pilgrims were returning on the Sabarmati Express train from Ayodhya after performing some religious ceremony on the site of Babri Mosque demolition. An argument erupted between passengers which quickly turned into violent and meanwhile for some uncertain reason train caught fire. It led to the death of 57 people including 25 women and 14 children and this became the reason for Gujrat Riots (Mander, *Between Memory and Forgetting: Massacre and the Modi Years in Gujarat*, 2019).

Another episode of Hindu-Muslim violent riots took thousands of innocent lives. Gujrat has been infamous for its communal riots between Muslims and Hindus. In 1969 there were riots in Ahmedabad which left 630 people dead. In 1990 Ram Rath Yatra of L.K. Advani brought violence into the state of Gujrat which caused 220 people dead. And after the demolition of the Babri mosque riots erupted again taking 325 lives of innocent people. In all these killings majority had been always Muslims. One constant factor of all these incidents was Hindu Nationalism. The Incident of train burning and the death of 57 people soon turned into state-level issue and Narendra Modi was chief minister of Gujrat a former member of RSS (Anthony, 2014).

Gujrat Pogrom

Modi stated his official version of the event as a "pre-planned violent act of terrorism". According to BBC News, Modi told officials not to act against Hindu reactionaries and that Muslims need to be taught lesson of their action. In order to inflame the situation, dead bodies were taken to the hospital in the form of a public ceremony. It was broadcasted on television which deeply caused agitation among the masses. The next day Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) called out to shut down the whole Ahmedabad city. And then an organized string of violent attacks started. Members of RSS wearing RSS uniforms attacked Muslim populated areas in a military manner (Majumder, 2011).

In addition, they were well-disciplined and in high numbers carrying lists which were to identify Muslim homes and shops. Having BJP on the steering wheel of state government, Hindu nationalists had the full support of the administration. Police had clear instructions not to intervene in any kind of attack or criminal activity. There were organized looting and destruction of Muslim property in the leadership of BJP's local political leaders. In order to inflict maximum atrocity upon Muslims, there was no evident effort made by the government to stop this senseless violence in the state, on the contrary, it was deliberately prolonged (Jafferlot, 2020).

These riots were not limited to urban areas only, but also in the rural areas' attacks were very organized. In Gujrat's villages, the Muslim population was mostly of well-off families they had well-established businesses there. They were moneylenders which mostly poor Hindus used to lend money from and well-established shopkeepers. These Muslims were the prime target of Hindus. Hindu nationalist attackers were divided into three groups, destroyers, looters, and Burners. They went through several villages where Muslims resided. Only in the district of Sabarkantha there were 2,161 houses, 1,461 shops, 71 factories, and workshops, and 38 hotels were looted, and partly or entirely destroyed and burnt. (Jafferlot,

Communal Riots in Gujarat: The State at Risk?, 2003)

This pogrom was not confined to killing people and destroying the properties of Muslims but the horrors of the Gujrat riots had more to it. Women, young girls, and children were subjected to the most sadistic and vicious forms of violence. As per the tribunal report, women suffered the most inhuman form of violence, such as sexual violence, rape, gang rape, molestation, striping of clothes, and inserting objects in their bodies and after such brutality, most of them were burnt alive. Those who were not burnt stayed silent in order to save their families from such unspeakable horrors and atrocities. (Mander, One thing was distinctly rotten about 2002 Gujarat riots: use of rape as a form of terror, 2019) This mayhem was state-sponsored and Narendra Modi was the chief minister of Gujrat.

According to Human Rights Watch report in 2002, a police official described that they have no orders to save Muslims, and the report also mentioned that social activists who voiced up for justice were threatened by government political supporters. Gujrat riots resulted in near deaths of 2000 people, nearly 150000 people were forced to take refuge in camps, and losses of millions of worthy properties. This pogrom under Narendra Modi made him popular as a strong Hindu leader in Hindu nationalists. Later on, investigations were stalled and those who were involved in the investigation were harassed and threatened. Commenting on investigations of Gujrat Riots South Asian Director of Human Rights Watch, Meenakshi Ganguli expressed, “The 2002 violence against Muslims in Gujrat persists as a dark blot on India’s reputation for religious equality. Instead of persecuting senior state and Police officials implicated in the atrocities, the Gujrat authorities have engaged in denial and obstruction of Justice” (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

Cult of Narendra Modi and Premiership

In 2014 and 2019, BJP won the elections and was able to form a government under the leadership of Narendra Modi. Some analysts suggest that these two elections were not contested between parties BJP and Congress but the central locus of elections was Modi and the way BJP campaigned these elections were based upon either you vote for Modi or against Modi. How, Modi becomes a symbol of success and even larger than the party, answer to this question lies in a massive campaign of projecting Modi as the only saviour of India. Modi as Chief Minister of Gujrat turned out to be a success story as BJP projected Modi as ‘Vikas Purush’ (development man) in election campaigns of Gujrat.

He led Gujrat’s growth rate to double-digit, he was able to capture investments of billionaires of India in Gujrat who were facing problems in other parts of India. For instance, Ratan Tata (Owner of TATA group) who was facing public reaction in Bengal for his new project TATA Nano Car, Modi capitalized on the moment and invited him to invest in Gujrat. Similarly, other business tycoons such as Ambanis, Mittals, and Adanis were invited to invest in Gujrat with so many reliefs. This strategy was very successful for the growth rate of the state. Although critics of Modi claim that Gujrat was already on the path of high growth rate and Modi did nothing extraordinary but BJP spent a lot of money to project the image of Modi as the sole responsible for such development. Now Modi had an image of a developer and also had baggage of Gujrat pogrom with hindsight was a negative affiliation but for Hindu Nationalists he was the hero of Hindus. With this kind of imagery, Narendra Modi was elected as the candidate of BJP for Prime Minister of India (Mander, Between Memory and Forgetting: Massacre and the Modi Years in Gujarat, 2019).

The congress-led coalition had a decade-long government in the centre but they were failed to address the issue of the economy which was deteriorating rapidly and were unable to eliminate rampant corruption. People of India needed a change on which BJP capitalized perfectly in every stratum of society. BJP hired professionals from all around the world and contested elections on the presidential style. Modi was placed at the centre of elections as an Iron man of India. But along with the branding of Modi, he himself successfully captured the mood of the public wherever he went his speeches were according to his crowd. Whenever he was in the area of Hindu dominance, he repeated the rhetoric of Gao Mata (Mother Cow) and referencing Hindu mythology to get religious Hindu support.

In order to create a ‘Modi wave,’ BJP spent a huge sum amount of Rs 27000 crore in the elections of 2019. Media houses, billboards, merchandise, posters, and direct payments to voters were the places where money was spent, and everywhere u would see only one face and that was of Modi. (Scroll, 2019)

Congress lacked in every section in contesting these elections.

There was a burden of bad governance of two consecutive terms, and there was no strong leader who could stand tall in front of Modi. Moreover, it seemed throughout the elections that Congress had already accepted the defeat and there was no strategy and little effort compare to BJP. A strong aggressive campaign combining with huge investment and a well-orchestrated strategy led BJP to two consecutive victories.

CONCLUSION

The Hindutva ideology is mostly embodied in the BJP political party. The Bhartiya Janata Party came to power in 1996 and won an outright legislative majority in the 2014 elections. Furthermore, India's current Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, has been a lifelong supporter of the RSS, which has always focused on imposing its own rigorous view of dharma on the entire country. As a result, since Modi took office as Prime Minister, Hindutva has been on the rise in India, with disastrous consequences for minorities. However, Indian constitution has established India as a secular state but it has failed to transform India into a secular society. Rise of Hindutva is a serious threat to Indian secularism. India is the biggest democracy in the world with 2nd largest population of mixed religions and cultures. A country with such heterogeneous society can only thrive if the freedom and equality is offered to every person regardless of his affiliation to any religion, caste or creed.

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