

## **Hindutva in India: Rise of Bigotry against Muslims**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The preface of the Indian Constitution declares India a sovereign, democratic, republic, and socialist state. Later on through the 42nd amendment, socialist and secular terms were incorporated into the constitution. Indian social order is known to be a multi-cultural and multi-religious society on account of an assortment of castes, religions, and cultures. Within all that disparities, Muslims form the main minority in the state. However, a clear-cut pluralistic discrepancy between the theory and practice of the Indian constitution is obvious. Indian Muslims are deprived of cultural, religious, and political rights due to the escalation of Hindutva policies throughout the Modi reign. The continued Kashmir dispute and the recent Pulwama attack intensified India- Pakistan animosity and the root cause seems to be the rise of Hindutva in India. For that reason, the authors delve into the matter and strive to present a descriptive analysis on the rise of Hindutva in India and the illicit silence of the international actors on this grave Indian fanaticism.

**Key words:** Hindutva, Secularism, Constitution, International Actors.

### **Introduction**

Secularism is the belief that religion should not interfere, or be involved in the organization of society, education, government, etc (Oxford Dictionary, n.d). It is a principle that segregates the elected governing bodies and the government institutions from religious institutions and personages. Donald E. Smith, in his study *India as a Secular State* (1963), defines a secular state as “a state which guarantees individual and corporate freedom of religion is not constitutionally connected to a particular religion nor does it seek either to promote or interfere with religion” (Smith, 2016). Secularism is a school of thought espoused by various states to guarantee the religious freedom of their peoples and refrain the

government from obstructing the peoples' religious beliefs; hence permitting them to practice their religions without restraint (National Secular Society, n.d). In secularism, there is an absolute separation between religion and government and the state has gotten nothing to do with the religion of the individuals, and everyone stands equal in the eyes of the state (BBC, 2009).

It is generally presumed that the individuals of a secular state must be secular-minded and should not follow any particular religion. 96 countries in the world claim themselves as secular states (Sawe, 2018). Speaking of Indian society as a whole, we can see that the mainstream population be it majority or minorities are the followers of a specific religion and therefore are not secular. Despite this fact, the constitution of India declares itself secular. As India declares itself a secular state so it is anticipated that every individual regardless of the religion should be treated equally within a secular declared state, but unfortunately this is not the case with India which follows the policy of Hindutva, which means the dominance of Hindus in every walk of life. This is harmless for a state to follow one religion, but when that ideology encourages policies that put the rights of minorities at stake and they are suppressed by the leading extremist entities and serve the interests of the hegemonic power instead, it becomes dangerous. In 2014, BJP in the leadership of Modi carried on this regime vigorously and made all possible efforts to employ its agenda of promoting Hindutva in India (Malik, 2019).

### **Being secular India was a compulsion, not a choice for Indian leaders**

Soon after independence in 1947, India without delay proclaimed itself a secular state. The Constitution of India commences as: 'We the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a Sovereign Socialist secular democratic republic' (Constitution.org, n.d).

Below are the different articles of the constitution dealing with the equality of every individual. Article 25 of the Indian constitution advocates that every citizen has the freedom to follow and practice the religion of his/her own choice. Article 16 of the constitution says that all the citizens of India shall receive equal rights in terms of employment or any other selection under the state and no citizen will be differentiated or discriminated with the other person based on gender, creed, religion, caste or citizenship as far as the employment is concerned. Whereas article 15 talks about the equality of all human beings residing in India before the law (Singh, 2020). Article 29 is concerning the right to preserve the divergent language, customs, and traditions of individuals of India. According to article 26, every individual has a right to set up and administer their institutions for any religious or charitable reason. The right for individuals in establishing the educational institutions of their own choice is mentioned in article 30 (Vaishnav, n.d). The aforementioned facts reveal that the Indian constitution certainly grants equal rights to every individual, but it is yet to be scrutinized whether these articles

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are being practiced in India or the constitution is just a piece of paper for the Indian state. In this article, we will delve into the facts to figure it out.

According to the 2011 census which is the latest census held in India, Hinduism is the chief religion of India and the Hindus are 96.62 crores making the prime religious entities in India. Whereas Islam is the 2<sup>nd</sup> popular religion in India and Muslims are (17.22) Crore in numbers and make a considerable minority in the Indian state (Census, 2011). India had two major reasons to declare it a secular state despite having a large number of Hindu majority; (a) their internal division and (b) the international scenario. Despite having Hindus as the majority, there are a large number of followers of various other religions. To secure their votes, and garner their support, different amendments in the constitution were introduced to eventually declared India a secular state in 1976. Since Independence, it is the first time that the Hindu population has dropped below 80 percent. According to the census, now Hindus are up to 79.8 percent of the total population. In 2001 Muslims were 13.4 percent but now they are 14.2 percent of the whole residents making them the largest minority of India. Christians are 2.3 percent and Sikhs are 1.7 percent residing in India (AlJazeera, 2015). This data shows how many Indian minorities are living in India, which does have their significance as far as votes are concerned. Every person can be considered as one vote. At the international front, India plays her cards wisely by portraying itself as a secular country and successfully grabs the attention and support of international actors. The secular strategy represents a soft image of India that they have respect for every religion and politics have nothing to do with the Religion of an Individual. Being an affirmed secular state, India is emerging as an economic giant by engaging in various actions and spreading a confirmatory image in the rest of the world (Rehman, 2017).

The historical standpoint of India's need to become secular cannot be disregarded. At the time of the Independence movement, Indian National Congress strived for freedom in the framework of United India under the slogan of Indian Nationhood unlike All India Muslim League (AIML) which was struggling for an independent state on the foundation of the two-nation theory. For this reason, religion was the pivotal point for AIML, unlike Congress which was not labeled for any particular religion and claimed to strive on the behalf of all Indians. That was the reason; Congress was joined by a large number of Muslims as well as other religious minorities alongside the Hindus albeit the Muslims had their representation in the form of a separate party. As a result, even for its survival and existence, it was inevitable for the Congress to declare India as a secular state (with plenty of non-Hindus in its fold) even though the Hindus were in majority (Rehman, 2017). No doubt there were quite a few reasons for India to become a secular state, but now the main concern is to practice and implement all the principals of secularism. Regrettably, the current situation of Indian minorities reveals a huge difference between theory and practice in Indian policies as India appears to be a Hindu society, not a secular one. There is a dichotomy of what

Indian constitution preaches and practices about secularism and guaranteeing equal rights to all.

### **Neo-Hindu fundamentalism challenging the secular and pluralistic Indian state**

Hindutva is the central ideology of the Sangh Parivar, a group of dozens of Hindu nationalist organizations in India, known as Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) (Visweswaran, Witzel, Manjrekar, & Bhog, 2009). Hindutva, a Hindu nationalist political ideology, was introduced in India in the 1920s (Malik, 2019). The Hindutva ideology demanded to endorse the Hindu way of life and its cultural symbols in India to establish Hindu hegemony. In the current scenario, it seems like Hindutva is adding fuel to the extremism. The extremist Hindu, who has absorbed the Hindutva in themselves, suppresses Muslims by all means in all spheres of life be it religious, politics, trade, military, or any social field (Yasir & Perrigo, 2003). The desire to completely turn India into a Hindu state is deeply rooted in the minds of RSS members for long. These hopes have surfaced once again after the success of the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) in elections and now the RSS members are certain that they can fulfill their dream and make India a Hindu state. It was evident that the success of BJP would result in reviving Hindu Nationalism and the RSS activists have demonstrated it by behaving violently against the Muslims such as by hunting, disgracing, hurting and thrashing them on mere excuses (Mohmand, 2019). Initially, there was mostly the social discrimination of Muslims, but slowly and gradually it encompassed all the other aspects, as well. Hindutva factually was a cultural philosophy, not a political one (IPS, 2019). Hindus were culturally and socially dominant in India but as soon as the cultural supremacy turned into a political majority, it got problematic since it sought authoritarianism to stay in power. In academic circles, people are taught that society and economy as two different disciplines but they must be considered as one since the economic and social change have the same and equal effect on people's life One-third of the overall population of the Muslims resides in South Asia (Cornell University Library, 2017). Muslims in India are the largest religious minority. Being the largest religious community, Muslims can extensively influence the course of regional assimilation in South Asia.

### **India under Modi: a breeding ground for radicalism**

Hindu radicalism and refusing the rights to minorities in India have deep roots in history. For instance, the Muslim massacre in Gujarat in 1969 claimed hundreds of lives but still after several decades, there is no successful judicial processing against the perpetrators of this mass killing which brings to light feeble India's judicial system and its incapability in providing the rights to minorities. Such

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weakness has been demonstrated by the judiciary in the past as well, especially towards Muslims who have always been the direct target of Hindu nationalists. The role of Indian security forces is also obnoxious in this regard. In 1983, three thousand Muslims were assassinated in just one day in Assam and the armed forces of India failed to control the situation (Ahmad, 2015).

Manmohan Singh (2004 to 2014) the president of India is eminent for his excellent and moderate behavior in the minds and perception of the public. If we analyze through idiosyncratic approach, he always exhibited positive conduct towards Muslims. He also aspired and strived to improve the relations with Pakistan, a Muslim state, by starting a peace process (Misra, 2007). Both the states exchanged multiple official visits and meetings, and during his governance, less state terrorism and more prosperity in India occupied Kashmir was observed (Vidani, 2015). Being moderate in his approach, he perceived Hindu and Muslim equivalent, at least in front of the world, and to win the votes of the minority. He once stated in a 52 meeting of national development that Muslims must have the first claim on the resources so that they can also enjoy the development equally (Times of India, 2006). In 2014 elections Narendra Modi launched two slogans; one main slogan was Hindutva and second was the development and progress (visas), but it was mainly because of the Hindutva policies that he is now in power. During his 2014 election campaign, the supporters of Modi strode in the streets and urged people to vote for Modi because he is the only one who would eradicate all the troubles of Hindus. This made way for the famous slogan 'Modi ko vote, Hindu Ekta ko vote (vote to Modi means the vote to Hinduism) (NDTV, 2014). Hence this is above speculation that, Modi came into power because of the Hindutva slogan.

As Hindutva was the main tool of Modi's popularity so he did not miss any single moment to use his Hindu card. Subsequently, there were two approaches that Modi needed to cater, one was to keep his popularity which is only possible through Hindutva policies, his hard lining towards minorities and others is the maintenance of India's international image, so the BJP government is struggling to balance these two approaches. In the past 10 years, approximately 76 percent of victims in India were Muslims and ninety percent of these hate crime incidents happened after the Modi came in power (Ayub, 2018). Even in the 2019 election, the Modi government continued with the same policies of Hindutva to draw Hindu votes because it is the only way that could make them win this election. The leader of BJP, Subramanian Swami says while doing campaigns in the 2019 elections that: as they are the advocates of Hindutva; their important voters are the supporters of Hindutva so that's why they do not have any fear to lose in the forthcoming elections. He further added that Indian people are sensitive and emotional on the issues of community, religion, and caste so BJP will exploit this agenda to obtain votes (sharma, 2018). Role of media in propagating the Hindutva policies is also very disturbing.

## **Violation of Muslim rights in India**

In 2005, the Economic and Social Council of the UNO decided to sign an expert who would look after the minority's issues and the government of India formed a commission accordingly, which was headed by the former chief justice of Delhi high court Rajinder Kumar Sachar who was assigned the task to make a report regarding the social, economic status of Muslims in India. This High-Level Committee, consisting of seven members was formed by the former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in March 2005 and Delhi High Court's former Chief Justice was appointed as its head. The committee prepared a 403-page report which was presented in 2006. On 30 November 2006, that report was made public. The report contained recommendations and provide solutions on how to improve the situation of Muslims in India. As Muslims were in a state of backwardness, hence they were put below Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in this report. The report also mentioned, in particular, that important decision-making posts such as IAS, IPS, and the police lacked sufficient representation from the Muslims (GKtoday, 2017). That report is also known as the Sachar report (Ahmed, 2018). As stated by the report, Muslims in India are still lagging in every sphere of life and needs special attention from the government to uplift their socio-economic conditions. The report also revealed that the exclusion of Muslims from the development would bring severe consequences in the long run which should be addressed with a thought-out strategy (Jamil, 2015).

### **a. Deprivation of religious and cultural freedom**

Article 25 talks about equality of freedom to practice and proliferate the religion of an individual's choice but on the other hand, the terminologies like Ghar wapisi and love jihad are evolved in the era of Modi to suppress the minorities' rights (IPS, 2019). Ghar wapisi (returning home)program is initiated by the VHP to coerce the minorities of India to convert into Hinduism.They also stated that they had helped almost 33,975 individuals to convert in Hinduism just in the short span of 2014 to 2015 (Rajeshwar & Roy, 2019). There was another program to convert Muslims brides into Hindu, initiated by VHP "Bahu Lao, Beti Bachao" ("Bring a Daughter-in-law, Save a Daughter"). This program has also been instigated in Uttar Pradesh and West Bangal but later this campaign was suspended to avoid any controversy. Muslims are facing the ban on slaughtering the cows which are Hilal for Muslims but 24 states of India have imposed sanctions on butchering and eating cow's meat (United States Department of State ,Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor., 2015). If any unfortunate Muslim is caught slaughtering or eating cow, he can be imprisoned for 6 months to 2 years and in Rajasthan and Jammu and Kashmir, the punishment is 2 to 10 years. The hate speech against Muslims is still high in number. During a speech, the chief minister

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of Haryana said that Muslims are allowed to stay in India but they have to sacrifice eating beef (Safi, 2017).

BJP government also introduced certain changes in the curriculum of school books. Muslim Mughal emperors who embroider India's culture have been removed from the syllabus and if there is a need to have a discussion about Muslim emperors in the curriculum, they are being called evil and corrupt invaders of India now in the revised syllabus. The government of Maharashtra state also followed the footsteps by removing all the Muslims from history. Roads and towns which were on the name of Muslim emperors have also been replaced by the Hindu names to induce more Hindu like look (trtworld, 2018).

### **b. Political segregation of Muslims**

Article 2 of the UN human rights and the commission resolution 47/135 talk about the freedom of minorities in participating in cultural, religious, social, economic, and public life India being a secular state claims that there is no room for religion-based allocation of seats in the elections. Rather it offers reservations to lower castes to encourage and improve their financial position. For instance, their secular identity presumes that Muslims are a community in the multicultural assortment, and they will have a chance to empower themselves equal to the others while working effectively in India's political ring. On the contrary, the electoral report card has been bleak. Having examined the data closely, it is known that the Muslim representation in the Indian Parliament is just 4 percent (Shabbir & Mian, 2015).

By evaluating the results of the 15th and 16th Indian elections, it's observed that regardless of being the chief minority, the Muslim representation, is at the lowest point. With only 23 seats makes 4 percent representations for a community that comprises 14 percent of the population. There have been only 20 to 30 Muslim MPs in Lok Sabha except in 1980 when it was the maximum 51 Muslim MPs and 48 in 1984 (huda, 2014). From 1984, the representation of Muslims in Lok Sabha is declining as in 1984 it was 10 percent, but in 2014 it was just 4 percent (Wolfe, Koph, & Thaker, 2019).

The Sachar committee presented numerous suggestions to improve the situation of Muslims in India. Some important suggestions include the formation of an Equal Opportunity Commission which would inquire the complaints made by the underprivileged groups, for example the minorities in public organizations, There should be an introduction of a nomination procedure so that more people from minorities can join in public bodies, formation of a delimitation procedure is a necessity, according to which, the constituencies, where the minority population is in greater number, must not be reserved for SCs, There is a need to develop a mechanism where Madrasas can be connected with higher secondary school board, the employment share of Muslims must be ameliorated, the degrees which are issued by madrasas, should be acceptable in the job examinations related to defence, civil and banking, set up a National Data Bank and maintenance of every

important data of different socio-religious communities in that National Data Bank, a system must also be developed by UGC in which a portion of the allocation given to colleges and universities is used to ensure the enrollment of students with diverse background. 10 years after the release of that report, several articles have been written in newspapers to examine the current situation of Muslims and whether their situation has changed or not. However, their situation has not changed much and has aggravated even more (GKtoday, 2017).

### **Hindutva ideology squeezing Kashmiris and freedom struggle**

Kashmir issue is an issue of national security for the moderate Indians but for the extremist Indians and the Hindutva influencers, Kashmir is another form of Islam and to fight against Kashmiri people's will is to fight against Islam. The Muslim suppression in India occupied Kashmir is also a description of the Hindutva policies of the BJP government. Every day is a challenge for Muslims. Radical and extremist Hindus target them from time to time. Kashmiri youth is at the mercy of the Indian army who kill them mercilessly. Curfew has become a routine matter for the Kashmiris. Curfew has no withstanding in democratic states since it reminds the monarchic mindset that violates human rights. Since the occupation of Kashmir, India has failed in establishing its writ in the valley, therefore it is now using barbaric tactics to crush the freedom movements. Pallet guns are used freely and frequently against unarmed civilians. The escalating number of rape cases and chopping off braids is alarming (Syed & Shaheen, 2019). But the world is turning a deaf ear to the cries of the Kashmir's and India's rising economic status has blinded the international powers. The global interest in the Indian economy, geopolitical position, and other attractions are obvious and the personal interests have sealed the lips of the world. Article 370 was the article in the constitution which gives special and autonomous (temporary) statuses to the Jammu and Kashmir, the provision which applied to the other states were not relevant to Jammu Kashmir. But the Indian President Ram Nath Kovind signed a presidential order and revoked the Kashmir's special status in the Indian constitution. This amendment was supported by the Indian parliament who celebrated the nullification of article 370. This article forbids the non-Kashmir's to purchase property and land in the disputed valley. This revoke of the article will alter the demographics of Kashmir. To serve the interests of the Hindus, the Indian government is targeting minorities. This is a clear depiction of the extremist Hindu mindset (Syed & Shaheen, 2019). Article 37A is also abolished by the Modi administration. In 1954, through the presidential order, the article 37A comes into existence under article 370. It prohibits the residents living outside the Kashmir from permanently settling, holding local government jobs, purchasing property, and gaining educational scholarships inside the Kashmir (Aljazeera, 2019).

Indian Government is declining Kashmir's individuals' rights to have self-determination, which is the root cause of all the contentions and it motivates the



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Kashmir's individuals to fight for themselves. We can analyze this from two diverse perspectives. One is from top to bottom and the second is the bottom to top. The first one talks about the role of the state and how the actions of the state compelled an individual to take the law on his own hands. Second, it refers to the historical background of an individual which forced him to turn into a rebel. In both cases, India is responsible for creating freedom fighters in the region. This frustration and the state terrorism by India are turning them extremists which resulted in the Pulwama attack. As already there was negative peace and lack of confidence measures buildings between India and Pakistan, former immediately blame Pakistan for this attack and did an airstrike, which Pakistan also retaliated and caught an Indian pilot but later returned it to the Indian government for de-escalating the mounting stress between both the states. Now the question arises here what is the root cause of the hostile relations between these two states and the answer is, Kashmir dispute which is getting intricate with time because of Hindu extremism and the increase of Hindutva in Indian government. It is direly needed to allow Kashmir to self-determine its fate rather than manipulating the situation and declaring it religious extremism in Kashmir (IPS, 2019). UN human rights released their report for Kashmir issue in 2018 and confirmed that the Indian soldiers abused the Kashmiri protestors in Kashmir but the Indian government declared the report misleading and motivated (United Nations human rights,office of the high commissioner., 2018).

### **Role of the international community in resolving human rights violations in India**

The international community's role in resolving the Kashmir dispute is quite disappointing. Issue of east Timor was sorted out as priority but Kashmir issue is still impending and waiting to be resolved according to their wish just because it's related to the Muslim minority. Adopted by General Assembly resolution 47/135 of 18 December 1992, Article 1 of the United Nations human rights commission, declares that it is the prime responsibility of the states to safeguard the religious, ethnic, lingual, cultural identities of the minorities inhabited within their states. Also, the government must endorse those identities. Whereas Article 4 also affirms the rights of minorities declaring that they can completely enjoy every right without any discrimination and states ought to take measures if there is a slight room of prejudice with any minority (United Nations,Human Rights.Office of the high commissioner, n.d). The current situation minorities are enduring in India is entirely against the Int.bodies as well but Int.institutions are still incapable to mitigate this issue. The indifferent and callous attitude of international actors towards the Kashmir dispute is questionable. For more than 70 years, the relationship between India and Pakistan has been hostile. Both countries have engaged in three wars and numerous skirmishes against each other and both of them are facing the issues of terrorism and involved in human rights abuses too. However, it is now time to make a serious attempt to solve the Kashmir dispute

and the international community must get involved to resolve it. The people of Kashmir are the real sufferers in this crisis who have been deprived of enjoying their human rights time and again. Although, this has not been an easy situation for Pakistan and its economy has also been negatively affected by this dispute since independence due to its military expenditures. India is also in a difficult situation due to this dispute as it is also facing criticisms from international human rights organizations. This dispute has tarnished India's secular image and hurt its global ambitions as well (Grant, 2019). Community needs to understand that both the states possess a nuclear weapon and if the issue of Kashmir does not resolve, it can lead towards the nuclear war and this will not only affect India and Pakistan solely, but it will create destruction at the international level. All the other states will get affected by it mainly by nuclear winter.

Several reasons can be identified behind this sinful silence. One of the colossal reasons appears to be Hindutva which is playing tactfully than one can imagine when compared with all other right-wing elements. All the gigantic business tycoons like Jindals, Ambani, and Tata are the staunch supporters of Modi and leaving no stone unturned in endorsing the Modi's economic policies. Indian media is absolutely pro Modi/Hindutva and can be easily observed all praising Modi and BJP. Collaboratively all the state pillars are proponents of Hindutva and ably presenting a soft image of India worldwide. The inclusion of Indian scholars in international think tanks is another major factor. The influential Indian intellectuals have paved the way for Indian plausible reflection globally. Some banners display that 'the person who will slaughter a cow, we will slaughter him' (kumar, 2017). The international media puts a deaf ear to the lynching of Muslims like Pehlu Khan and Muhammad Akhlaq in India and seems to be blinded by all the Indian glitters which are not gold (Giri, 2018).

## **Conclusion**

Over time, Hindutva has now turned out to be the Indian custom and chief means of expression for the recognizing of its immense supremacy ambition. Muslims, as well as every other minority dwelling in India, have been subject to ill-treatment as a result of the spread of the Hindutva policy. If truth be told, Hindutva is plaguing the entire Indian society and the state of affairs has deteriorated with the arrival of Prime Minister Modi. India's disgoring hatred against Pakistan is an instance of the external demonstration of Hindutva. It can be hoped that the tolerant and unbiased Indian people not only acquainted with the mounting menace in India but also make an effort to bring it to a halt. India needs to understand the severity of the situation by suppressing the Kashmiris and minorities for long can result in the failure of its fake secular and soft image and can ultimately seclude it from the **mainstream global politics**. All the aforementioned discordant factors in one way or the other are profoundly influencing the situation and if not tackled vigilantly it can intimidate the harmony and integrity of the Indian nation and it can have a

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spillover effect on the entire region. It is the time that Muslim countries and international actors need to wake up and play their role in resolving the Kashmir dispute and the rise of Hindutva in India as their role can help bring this scenario into an end.

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