CHAPTER - III
THE HINDU RIGHT: HISTORY, IDEOLOGY AND STRATEGY

The evolution and consolidation of the Hindu Right in India has been a theme of serious academic debates and discussions since 1980s. The ideology and strategy of Hindutva also came in for extensive analysis. The emergence of the Hindu Right in the 1980s and 1990s, however, needs to be understood within a broad framework of the trajectory of Hindutva—starting from the early part of the twentieth century, or even earlier in the late nineteenth century. Significantly, a major running theme of the evolution and consolidation of the Hindutva has been ‘how to secure’ the Hindu identity and the ‘self’ against the perceived threats from ‘others.’ Plausibly, all ideologues of the Hindutva as well as the organisational programmes of the Sangh Parivar underlined the importance of this ‘self/other’ dichotomy. This is crucially significant in articulating a political doctrine with ‘difference’ in order to mobilise people and set a track for, eventually, capturing power. This chapter mainly examines the manner in which the Hindu Right organisations tried to articulate Hindutva within a frame of both realist as well as constructivist points of view of ‘security/insecurity’ through the realm of civil society. It also outlines the nature and functioning of some of the major Sangh Parivar organisations such as the Hindu Mahasabha, RSS, VHP, Jana Sangh etc.

Locating Hindutva

The emergence of the Hindu Right and its implications for India are often understood as relatively recent phenomena, starting from the 1980s—perhaps with the decline of ‘Congress System.’ But while some scholars would argue that the phenomenon in question—Hindutva—could be traced back to the decade of 1920s (Anderson and Damle 1987; Graham 1990; Hansen 1999; Jaffrelot 1996), others would locate the rise of religious politics as a part of modern nationalist identities that were emerging in India in the nineteenth century (Raychaudhuri 1995; Lal 1995; Nandy 1983; Chatterjee 1993; van der Veer 1994). Scholars of Euro-American origin, including Lochtefeld (1996), Smith (1989), van der Veer (1994), Daniel Gold (1991), Stanley Wolpert (1993), and Juergensmeyer (1996) et al. have dealt with the issue in a variety of ways. However, in India, the debate surrounding the concept of Hindutva was basically a
debate over the viability of cultural nationalism. Juergensmeyer (1996: 129) here poses a set of questions: How do we respond to this emergence of religious politics in India? Is it a relatively ‘benign’ force or a ‘demonic’ one? Does it have legitimate roots in Indian tradition or is it a ‘virus’ imported from some sort of world-wide fundamentalist plague? Is it a symptom of social and economic problems or is it purely a religious aberration? Is it a cynical use of religion by politicians or a corruption of politics by religious activists? Juergensmeyer offers an interesting stock-taking of the existing literature on Hindutva in the journal Religion (1996) which also carried several related themes.

The debate over Hindutva is itself historically and socially located. Indian scholars often emphasise issues specific to the Indian subcontinent and their own colonial past, whereas non-Indians tend look at global issues, especially those similar or related to Euro-American concerns. Within the Indian perspective there is a split between the secularist and non-secularist camps, and within the Euro-American points of view there are differences between classic liberal and relativist positions (Juergensmeyer 1996). Another question which has given rise to debate is whether the current form of Hindutva in India is native to Indian tradition or an import from outside. Curiously, few scholars seem willing to accept it as indigenously Indian. Those who have held to the notion of a world-wide fundamentalist uprising have seen it as an Indian infection of a near-global plague. But the Indian scholars who opposed this view and insisted on explaining the rise of religious politics from within an Indian frame of reference also saw it as essentially an alien phenomenon (Raychaudhuri 1995; Lal 1995; Nandy 1983; Chatterjee 1993; Anderson and Damle 1987; Graham 1990; Hansen 1999; Jaffrelot 1996). Raychaudhuri, for instance, has presented an explanation for India’s religious revivalism that is at once external and distinctively Indian: the experience of colonialism. In his analysis, the current Hindutva politics of the BJP is an extension of what used to be called communalism—the rivalry between Hindu and Muslim communities. And he has asserted what is commonly accepted in Indian academic circles, that communalism was created by the British colonial policy of divide and rule. Even today’s communal hatreds, Raychaudhuri averred, are a part of India’s “damned inheritance”—the “end product” of the “historical contingencies of the colonial era” (Raychaudhuri 1995).
Lal agrees with Raychaudhuri’s assessment of the effects of British policy, but stopped short of labelling the current religious politics in India as a product of colonialist-induced communalism. Rather, Lal has castigated those who analyse the Hindutva and BJP movements as communalist, claiming it is their analyses as much as the movements themselves that have perpetuated a colonialist mentality. In this regard he shares the perspective of Partha Chatterjee and Ashis Nandy, who have also been concerned with how ways of thinking about contemporary politics in India constitute what Chatterjee has called ‘a derivative discourse’—and what Nandy has called an extension of colonialist ‘consciousness’ and ‘psychology’ (Lal 1995; Nandy 1983; Chatterjee 1993). Both have regarded the recovery of pre-colonial cultural roots as the unfinished business of the nationalist movement, and both have longed for a culture-based sense of national identity that is unifying rather than divisive. In that sense they, like Raychaudhuri, have seen the extreme religious movements in contemporary India as perpetuating the colonialist attitude of communalism.

Peter van der Veer, while agreeing with Chatterjee and Nandy, in general, about the effect of British colonial policies, questioned two assumptions of Nandy and other Indian scholars regarding communalism: that there was a unified, syncretic cultural base preceding (or underlying) communal identities, and that current communal hostilities are the direct result of colonial rule. van der Veer called the ‘syncretism’ thesis a trope in the discourse of ‘multiculturalism’ and claimed there was no reason to argue that India lost its tolerance as the result of the colonial construction of communalism. Instead, van der Veer located the rise of religious politics as a part of modern nationalist identities that were emerging in India in the nineteenth century at about the same time they were emerging in Europe and other parts of the world. They were parallel histories, albeit interactive ones, and van der Veer asserted that the peculiarities of Indian society and history were indeed peculiarly its own. India’s forms of religious nationalism, therefore, could not easily be “reduced to the master narrative of European modernity” (van der Veer 1994).
There are similar contending positions on the nature and dynamics of the phenomenon of Hindutva. Sumit Sarkar viewed Hindutva as ‘traditional’ and ‘religious’ (S. Sarkar 1993). By contesting his arguments, Raghuramraju saw it as a ‘modern phenomenon’ (Raghuramraju 2006: 66-91). However, when the political Hinduism is examined in its present variety, one has to look at the movement in its totality. It seems to be very important to look at the transformation that took place in the Hindu society towards more ritualistic patterns of life and how the Hindutva has been appropriating these changes in spite of its ‘commitment’ to the Vedic tradition which prohibits superstitious rituals. The attempts to invent a unity in spite of rich diversity are the peculiar feature of the Hindutva. This has been ensured through various organisational networks.

By coming into terms with Western modernity, the Hindutva wholeheartedly accepted the Western science and technology, its political institutions, military power and, most importantly, they were so fascinated by the Western model of nation-state. This constitutes the basic premise of Raghuramaraju’s argument who said that the Hindutva is a ‘modern phenomenon.’ Though at the institutional level it is ‘modern,’ it tends to disrupt the path of development of a modern-secular democracy. Hindutva has been deployed by the Sangh Parivar to crystallise the pluralist Hindu identity in their attempt to formulate a Hindu nation. And, in this process, many ‘others’ are constructed both within and outside the nation. This provides little room for the dialogue between the ‘self’ and the ‘non-self’ because enmity/threat/insecurity is all essential pre-requisites for Hindutva.

The lineage of the Hindutva is traced back to the period since the nineteenth century, in the writings and activities of Dayananda Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, V.D. Savarkar, M.S. Golwalkar and others. Two streams of thought can be located here, according to Jyotirmaya Sharma—the ‘soft version’ of Hindutva and the ‘hardcore version’ (Sharma 2003). Raghuramraju, however, expresses his concern over Sharma’s attempts to link Hindutva with the prominent personalities of the nineteenth century Indian thought. He viewed that this might provide a fertile ground for the Hindutva to appropriate those figures and would theoretically weaken the position of those who are opposing the
Hindutva (Raghuramraju 2006: 87-8). This argument is based upon the premise that Hindutva starts with Savarkar. It is true that the concept of Hindutva was first coined by Savarkar and that he remained its prime ideologue. But it is always contestable whether the very notion of Hindutva was a spontaneous one. Historically, it was the culmination of the process of communal mobilisation in the nineteenth century British India. The nineteenth century Indian thought itself was a response to the logocentric view of the Indologists who tended to see India as a “dark, static and superstitious” social formation. Thinkers like Vivekananda and Dayananda Saraswati defended themselves by re-invoking the Indian tradition by which they illustrated an Indian past characterised by its rational order, and vehemently criticised the present Indian society for obscuring this ‘glorious past’ with the present ‘superstitious’ belief system. Thinkers like Vivekananda were strong supporters of humanism.

Richard G. Fox viewed that communalism is “the hyper enchantment of religion.” In his own words, it “is a local instance of how modernity—once it had disenchanted the premodern world—built new forms of identity.” Given the new means of communication and transportation that traveled along with modernity, these emergent enchanted identities were much more powerful and much more extensive (or ‘massive’) and therefore potentially much more destructive and violent” (Fox 2005: 239). This contradicts with the modernity’s basic values and functioning within its frame. The Britishers introduced an ‘institutional modernity’ and legitimated their regime in the colony by comparing the past with the present. Peter van der Veer puts it: “In the eyes of Orientalists, the civilizations of the East were great in the past but are decadent at present” (Van der Veer 1996 56-57). These Orientalist perceptions and criticisms very much influenced the formation of new enchanted identities.

During the nineteenth century a new middle class emerged in India. They had initiated religious reform movements across the country. As far as the Hindu society was concerned, they found that the lack of unity was the root cause of its vulnerability. The comments from the Indologists and the unequal colonial practices prompted them to rethink about a version of ‘modernity’ which must have ‘indigenous’ (Hindu Brahminical) root. This amalgamation of the ‘tradition’ with the ‘modern’ practices was the core
of the Hindu religious movements led by Dayananda Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda and others. Raja Ram Mohan Roy’s ‘Brahma Samaj’ was the first attempt to purify Hinduism and make it competent with the monotheistic religions like Christianity and Islam. For instance, Roy had questioned the idol worship in Hinduism. Like Ram Mohan Roy, Dayananda Saraswati strongly underlined the importance of Hindu unity. They found that the only panacea was the revival of the ‘Vedic rituals and institutions’ (Majumdar 1981:110). Dayananda viewed:

Hinduism in its Vedic formulation possessed the light of truth. The puranas and the rise of a whole constellation of sects had eclipsed that essential truth. For India to regain its glory, it was essential to clear the fog created by the Vama Margis, the Shaivites, the Vaishnavites and several other sects and restore the pristine light of truth that emanated from the Vedas (Sharma 2003: 14).

He was trying to demystify popular Hinduism and restoring the Vedic religion. The popular myths and legends were to be discarded, and instead of worshiping idols the Hindus should have worshiped heroes and brave men (ibid.: 33). So what was needed was unity in worship. He also put forward the notion of ‘Brahma.’ According to Lala Lajpat Rai, the Brahman “may not be god, but he is at all events god like, a subject not only of veneration but of actual worship.... the first great criterion by which a Hindu is determined is that every Hindu must acknowledge the Brahman’s superiority and his omnipotence in spiritual and social matters” (Lajpat Rai 1991: 67-68). Shashi Ahluwalia sums up Dayananda’s vision of India as “purged of her superstitions filled with the fruits of science, worshiping one god, fitted for self-rule, having a place in the sisterhood of nations and restored to her ancient glory” (Ahluwalia 1987: 221). It seems to be the inception of the idea of an anticipating ‘Hindu nation,’ which would retain its past glory.

The ‘cow protection movement’ led by the Arya Samaj and the Sanatana Dharma Sabha were attempts to establish an ideological hegemony among the pluralist Hindu folk. In Hinduism cow was portrayed as the mother goddess. The Brahmminical notion of cow was that a human being from his cradle to grave would depend on cow, just like a child depends on her mother. The symbols like ‘Kamadhenu’ (fulfills every wish of the
human being) ‘Lakshmi’ (good fortune) were attached to the cow. The ritual of ‘Parikrama’, ‘circumambulation’ of cow clockwise and respectfully touching its four feet with one’s forehead had greater importance in the Brahminical belief system. The milk products were regarded as the vegetarian food and it was labelled as the ‘Sattvik food’ (pure). The combination of milk, curd, butter, urine, and dung (panchagavya, five products from cow) was an inevitable part of the Brahminical rituals. The mythical life of Lord Krishna, especially his childhood days and his life with Yeshoda (Krishna’s mother), and the role of the cow in their relations had greater influence in the Indian Society (van der Veer 1996: 87-89). Along with the portrayal of cow as the all-giving mother goddess there was another image of goddess, the image of dangerous Durga on her tiger. When the order of Hindu society was threatened, the goddess assumes her aggressive character. And also the Shiva, symbolized by the bull, which produces an image of the independent, self sufficient male, was always set free by its owners (Ibid.:89-90). Peter Van der Veer observes:

It is a crucial image, since as a mother the cow signifies the family and the community at large. She depends on the authority at large. She depends on the authority and protection of the male of the family. While mother cow refers to patriarchal authority and to the Hindu state, the rightful kingdom of Rama (ramarajya). It is within the logic of religious discourse that the protection of the cow becomes the foremost symbol of the Hindu-nation state (Ibid.: 90).

The most observable fact in this analysis is the selection of the symbol for mobilisation. The symbols have a common appeal among the people, those who are aimed to be mobilised. The symbol has also wide acceptability beyond the cultural divisions. In the present context, the Hindutva is also applying the same technique.

In 1882 Dayananda founded the first Gaurakshini Sabha (Cow Protection organisation) in Punjab. It grew up in many urban centres, in small towns and ‘qasbas’ (market centres). The urban and rural centres were linked by the organisational networks of stump orators, especially sadhus. They used to collect money and ‘Chutki’ (usually handful of rice) for the establishment of cow shelters. The cow thus became a symbol of unification. But the meaning behind the shared symbol varied from people to people. This ambiguous symbolic representation was the strength of
the movement. It enabled them to mobilise the local structures towards ideological pathways. Thus it had the ability to link the local identities with the broader ideology which distinguished the cow protection movement from other localised collective action of the period. In the meetings led by the orators printed posters were distributed which used to tell the stories of the importance to protect cow. In some areas, Sabha targeted Muslims and in some other areas they targeted the untouchables and the lower caste people generally (Freitag 2005:215-16).

In 1888 the High Court of the North Western Provinces decreed that cow was “not a sacred object.” This had boosted up the cow protection movement. There were many attempts to prevent the Muslims to sacrifice the cow on the occasion of the festival of Id. It was argued that the state’s hesitation to protect the cows had legitimated the individuals to take initiatives (Ibid). This movement sought to portray the Hindus as distancing themselves from the colonialists as well as from the Muslims (Ibid.: 219) Van den Veer observes: “The movement created a rift not only between Hindus and the British but also between Hindus and the Muslims since the latter acted as butchers and also used the cow as a sacrificial victim in their celebration of Bakr-Id, a festival commemorating Abraham’s offering of Ishmach” (van der Veer 1996: 86). Freitag viewed that the cow protection movement was not nationalism but it had an impact on the development of nationalism (Freitag 2005:219-20). He said that its impact was on the nature of the mental and social space carved out for the emerging civil society, on nationalism and the competing community identities that emerged in the early twentieth century helped to shape a very differently configured civil society (Ibid.: 220).

Indeed, an identity was woven with the logic of ‘self/other.’ In this sense, the cow protection movement was an attempt to crystallise the Hindu religious identity on a nationalist scale. This resembled more with ‘political’ than with the religious. This had produced a dichotomy of ‘inside – outside’ in which the British, Muslims and the Christians were viewed as the ‘outsiders’ and glorified a native Hindu religious body which was ‘pure’ and had originated from the Vedas. Those ‘others’ were ‘polluted.’ This was an inception of the religious nationalism in India. The mainstream nationalism that became widespread in the first quarter of the twentieth
The century was more inclusive, especially under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Yet, the religious nationalism had some impact on the mainstream nationalist movement though it was overshadowed by the Gandhian mobilisational tactics, which aimed to include broad sections of the masses. However, the militant Hindu nationalism progressed in parallel with the mainstream nationalism and the former, in turn, twisted itself towards a more political one, the Hindutva, over years.

Apart from Dayananda Saraswati who propounded a Hindu nationalist revival, Swami Vivekananda was also influenced by the gaze of the Orientalists. But, unlike Dayananda, his attitude towards other religions was ambiguous though he was not antagonistic to them. For example, “Dayananda modelled Christ in the image of the missionaries. Swami Vivekananda had, at least, made a distinction between the spirit of Christ and the practice of Christianity as an organised faith. Not so with Dayananda. Christianity was condemned to falsehood because it had not partaken of the light of the Vedas” (Sharma 2003: 38-39). Vivekananda equated the West with the material prosperity and the East with the spiritual superiority. His reading of the Indian society was based on the glorification of India’s spiritual tradition, especially the ‘Advaita Vedanta.’ He had criticised the Hindu society because of its weak, superstitious, corrupt, priesthood nature. He recommended that the Hindu race to be dehypnotised with the Advaita. Vivekananda also emphasised the importance of the adoption of the Western material civilisation by India in its positive terms. And also, the “Occident should learn the lessons of spiritual life” from India. This must be on an equal footing (Raghuramraju: 2006: 40-45). Vivekananda’s Chicago Speech was an astonishing representation of this ‘politics.’ Jyotirmaya Sharma viewed: “In a masterful way, Vivekananda addressed these major concerns of nineteenth century India: Hindu identity, Hindu nationalism and an equal ‘dialogs’ between Hinduism and other faiths” (Sharma 2003: 76).

On 11 September 1893, Vivekananda delivered his first speech in Chicago. Here he emphasised the high value of ‘Hindu tolerance.’ He said:

I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a
nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth.

I am proud to tell you that we have gathered in our bosom the purest remnant of the Israelites, who came to Southern India and took refuge with us in the very year in which their holy temple was shattered to pieces by Roman tyranny. I am proud to belong to the religion which has sheltered and is still fostering the remnant of the grand Zoroastrian nation (Vivekananda 2007:135-37)

Jyotirmaya Sharma asserts that by saying that tolerance is the core value of Hinduism, Vivekananda becomes the ‘prisoner of history.’ He had to illustrate that Hinduism had never persecuted. The Hindu violence against the Buddhists was concealed in his statement (Sharma 2003: 84). However, Vivekananda was much more concerned about the Hindu identity because of large scale conversions and the criticisms from the Christian missionaries. He rejected the triumph of any religion with the destruction of the rest. He says:

The seed is put in the ground, and earth and air and water are placed around it. Does the seed become the earth, or the air, or the water? No. It becomes a plant, it develops after the law of its own growth, assimilates the air, the earth, and the water, converts them into plant substance, and grows into a plant. Similar is the case with religion. The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet reserve his individuality and grow according to his own low of growth (Vivekananda 2007: 137).

The forces of Hindutva appropriated Vivekananda’s ideas because of their high assertive potential, and also because he was more or less acceptable to everyone. It may be noted that a peculiar feature of Vivekananda’s version of nationalism was the celebration of the Hindu spirituality and, in a pragmatic sense, accepting the inevitability of the Western material science for the development of the Indian society. Inculcating spirituality by dismantling the material prosperity or well-being of the people would not make a nation strong, he believed. However, Vivekananda totally discarded the Western political models. Following Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo also vigorously attacked the very notion of modern state. He viewed that the law of life was diversity not uniformity (Dalton 1982: 180). For Aurobindo, nationalism was a religion: “the passionate aspiration of
the religion of the divine unity in the nation” (Aurobindo 1965: 15). Aurobindo viewed that the “Indians were weak and unmanly and therefore required the ‘Kshatriya’ impulse; they had grown feeble and had to appropriate the ‘shakti’ of science; to win the ‘shakti’ of science they had to re-Aryanise themselves. Re-Aryanising, among other things, meant a rediscovery of Occidental impulses already present in the Indian blood” (Sharma 2003: 59). His vision of nationalism was the rebirth of the ‘Kshatriya’ in India. Sharma linked the Hindutva with Aurobindo’s notion of ‘Kshatriyahood.’ In his own words: “Aurobindo’s contribution to the rise of political Hindutva is second to none. His notion of Kshatriyahood has slid into ‘asuratva,’ his ideals of Santana dharma and re Aryanisation have been turned in to political slogans. Religion, indeed, has become politics, perhaps the only politics we know today” (Ibid.: 69).

Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, a Bengali novelist and literary theorist had a greater influence on the Hindutva mobilisation. Tanika Sarkar has divided Bankim’s literary carrier into two phases. Until the end of the 1870, he had given greater importance to the oppression based on caste, class and gender in the pre–colonial India. In the second phase, especially in the last five years of his literary carrier, Bankim composed three historic novels on Hindu–Muslim antagonism – *Anandamath*, *Devi Chaudhurani* and *Sitaram*, and also had written two polemical essays respectively *Dharmatattva* and *Krishna Charitra* (T. Sarkar 2005: 162–3). Tanika Sarkar identified the components of Hindu revivalism in this later stage of Bankim’s literary career. He viewed it as a link between two transitory periods – one, the nineteenth century Hindu revivalism in Bengal, which was not primarily against the Muslim, the other, the assertion of the aggressive Hindutva in the 1920s—which was implicitly anti–Muslim(Ibid: 164).

Sumit Sarkar viewed two historic transitions in the genealogy of Hindu communalism:

The first is a transition from a relatively inchoate Hindu world, without firmly defined boundaries, to the late-nineteenth–century construction of ideologies of unified Hinduism, in the context of integrative colonial communication, administrative, and economic structures. The second transition, roughly datable to the mid–1920s, is a move in some quarters
toward an aggressive Hindutva postulated usually upon an enemy image of a similarly conceived Islam (S. Sarkar 2005: 273).

The first period was characterised by its religiosity, defensive discourse and less militant. The second period beginning with 1920 was notable in its politically oriented nationalist aspirations, less religious, more offensive and militant. Bankim’s famous hymn Bande Mataram is an example of the construction of a new militant Hindu patriotism. He had composed this song in 1875 and later inserted it in Anandamath, his influential novel. The hymn became popular in the nationalist struggle and later in communal riots (T. Sarkar: 172–73). The song portrays two images of the mother goddess, Durga, the demon-slaying goddess and Kali, symbol of destruction and revenge (Ibid.: 173). The nationalists used the image of Durga against the exploitative regime of the colonialists and the song as an ‘abbreviated history’ of colonial rule in India and the parallel patriotic struggle for liberation. The RSS employed the image and the song for representing the so-called ‘historical’ struggle against the Muslims. The image of an ‘other’ was clearly set by the political Hindutva of the twentieth century. According to Tanika Sarkar, “Bankim made a distinction between the historical experience of the Muslim rule” and “Islam as an organized religion and Muslim as a personality type.” In Bankim’s view, the Muslim rule did not bring either material or “spiritual improvement” to India. But the Hindus had much to learn from Islam as an organized religion and also from Muslims’ “supposedly violent commitment to his religion and his desire for power…” Tanika Sarkar quotes Bankim’s words: “By imbibing these principles... the Hindus will be... as powerful as the Arabs in the days of Mohammad” (Ibid.:177).Those who aspired to reform the Hindu society during the late nineteenth century were very much influenced by the power of the Semitic religions, especially Islam. They had equated the Hindu plurality with backwardness and the unity of worship with strength.

Savarkar and Hindutva

The Hindu religious revivalism of the nineteenth century had culminated into an extreme Hindutva posture in the 1920s. V. D. Savarkar was the prime ideologue of this version of politics. The Hindutva emerged as a political phenomenon and it had very little to do with the religious practice
of the Hindus. Savarkar described that he had coined the word ‘Hindudom’ when he offered the definition of the word Hindu. Hinduism was concerned with the religious system of the Hindus, their theology and dogma. But this was precisely a matter which left entirely to individual or group conscience and faith (Savarkar 1984: 10). Thus, it seems that he was recognising the plurality of the Hindu religion at one point and, at the same time, trying to invent uniformity by incorporating the Western political model into a rigid cultural frame.

Savarkar distinguished ‘Hinduism’ from ‘Hindutva.’ Hindutva was, according to him, not a mere term but a history. He coined the word Hindutva to denote the political history of the Hindu people. Hinduism was only one aspect of the Hindutva (Savarkar 1984: 11). Hinduism was a derivative of an alien growth. Hindutva, in sharp contrast, was a composite term that embraced “all departments of thought and activity of the whole being of our Hindu race.” Here, Savarkar was trying to wrap the Hindus with the notion of a ‘nation’ which he extended to the days of Lord Rama (the central figure of the Indian epic Ramayana). In his Hindutva: Who is a Hindu, first published in 1923, Savarkar argued that “we must move away from the label ‘Hinduism’ and exchange it for the label Hindutva.” According to him, "we should not allow ourselves to be confused by this newfangled term.” Besides, the term Hinduism was associated only with religious dogma; thus it excludes other religions of the land of Saptasindhu i.e. Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism.

For Savarkar, the notion of Hindutva adequately addresses three of the main problems with the term Hinduism. First, Hindutva underlines a sacred geography. "The first image that it rouses in the mind is unmistakably of our motherland and by an express appeal to its geographical and physical features it vivifies it into a living Being. Hindustan means the land of Hindus, the first essential of Hindutva must necessarily be this geographic one." This sense of motherland is fervently portrayed. Unless one "has come to look upon our land not only as the land of his love but even of his worship, he cannot be incorporated into the Hindu fold." Second, Hindutva unites all those of the motherland by a common blood. Savarkar puts this categorically:
The Hindus are not merely the citizens of the Indian state because they are unified not only by the bonds of love they bear to a common motherland but also by the bonds of a common blood. They are not only a Nation but also a race-jati. The word jati, derived from the root Jan to produce, means a brotherhood, a race determined by a common origin - possessing a common blood. All Hindus claim to have in their veins the blood of the mighty race incorporated with and descended from the Vedic fathers, the Sindus (Savarkar 1989).

Third, Hindutva asserts that as a result of this biological community, all Hindus (must) share a common culture: "the brave and loving defense of the Hindu culture have been incorporated with and bound to us by the dearest of ties - the ties of common blood." In a longer passage Savarkar expresses this third essential characteristic of Hindutva clearly:

[W]e Hindus are bound together not only by the ties of love we bear to a common fatherland and by the common blood that courses through our veins and keeps our hearts throbbing and our affections warm, but also by the ties of common homage we pay to our great civilization -- our Hindu culture, which could not be better rendered than by the word Sanskriti suggestive as it is of that language Sanskrit, which has been the chosen means of expression and preservation of that culture of all that was best and worth-preserving in the history of our race. We are one because we are a nation, a race and own a common Sanskriti (civilization) (Ibid).

By using the word Hindutva as distinct from Hinduism, as well as exhibiting it as the "triumphant history of a nation," Savarkar was trying to respond to the two main comments from the Indologists that Indians had 'no sense of history' and that 'India could never be a nation.' Apparently, the attempts to historicise India's past and reconstruct a new vision of a glorious ancient civilisation was the net result of the overwhelming influence of the Western Enlightenment (Jaffrelot 1993: 517–24). In the aspiration to catch up with the modern West, Savarkar envisaged a 'Hindurasstra (Hindu nation–state) which seemed to be exclusionary. In the beginning of Hindutva: Who is a Hindu, Savarkar defines a Hindu as a...

... person who regards this land of BHARTVARSHA, from the Indus to the Seas as his Father-Land as well as his Holy-Land that is the cradle land of his religion. To the converted Christians and Muslims the Hindustan is the Fatherland as to any other Hindu. Yet it is not to them a 'Holy land' too. Their holy land is in Arabia or Palestine. Their mythology and Godmen, ideas and heroes are not the children of this soil. Their names and
outlook smack of a foreign origin, so, their love is divided (Savarkar 1989: 113).

Savarkar asserts:

ye, who by race, by blood, by culture, by nationality posses almost all the essentials of Hindutva and had been forcibly snatched out of our ancestral home by the hand of Violence – ye, have only to render whole-hearted love to our common mother and recognize her not only as Fatherland (Pitribhu) but even as a Holy and (Punyabhu); and ye would be most welcome to the Hindu fold (Ibid.: 115).

According to him, “Swarajya to the Hindu must mean only that ‘Rajya’ in which these ‘Swatva,’ their ‘Hindutva’ can assert itself without being overloaded by any non- Hindu people, whether they be Indian territorial’s or extraterritorial” (Savarkar 1984: 81). The Christians and Muslims are outside the boundaries of the ‘Hindu- nation.’ “Savarkar notes that the Western historians had tainted the Indian history by obscuring the ‘greatest resistance’ by the Hindu Kings against the alien powers. Elsewhere Savarkar describes the resistance of the Maratha Kingdom. He had equated it with the ‘Hindu revival.’ Savarkar asserts: Although the Hindu revival that was ushered in with the rise of the Marathas, it had necessarily to assert itself first in the political and military spheres of Hindu life and create a powerful and national state, which must ever remain the sine qua non of a nation’s progress in all other departments of life, yet it did not fail to manifest itself in these as soon as the categorical imperative of national political independence was achieved under the aegis of the Maratha Power (Savarkar 1971: 225; Savarkar 1942). To Savarkar the Indian “history is antagonistic.” The Hindus and Muslims were “locked in a life and death battle for centuries.” There were no possibilities of cooperation between the self and the non-self. The defining and distancing of the ‘self’ possibility led to the caricaturing of the non-self. As Jyotirmaya Sharma notes: “Desecration of Hindu temples, conversions by ‘force or fraud’, corrupting of Hindu girls and the overall destruction of Hinduism – these themes were to forever remain Savarkar’s short – hand symbols for characterizing Islam” (Sharma 2003: 126-139). By perverting history for political purpose, Savarkar spread hatred and the spirit of revenge. To him the Gandhian notion of non-violence was ‘non-self’ like Islam (Ibid.: 148-49).
In his critique of Mahatma Gandhi, Savarkar said: “Throughout the Palaeolithic and Neolithic periods, the bronze age and the iron age, man could maintain himself, multiply and master this earth chiefly through his armed strength. In all honesty, the defensive sword was the first saviour of man” (Savarkar 1998: 311). Thus by distancing the ‘self’ from the ‘other’ in a rigid frame, Savarkar was trying to militarise the ‘Hindu nation’ on a Spartan line. Savarkar was a practicing atheist (Chandra 1984: 60) and he had over emphasised the importance of the modern science. He was a fierce critique of the irrational religious practices of the Hindu society; and identified it as the major hurdle on the path of the material progress of the Hindus. At the same time he underlined the importance of worshiping the achievements of the Hindu forefathers (Navalgundkar n.d: 180-81).

Savarkar also said that “Unity of the people, their modernization and their militarization are the fundamental dimensions of Hindu nationalism: Every nation should be equipped with update arms and army so as to be ever prepared to face the danger of civil war within the country and aggression from without” (Ibid.: 181). The war-anticipating nation of Savarkar was, therefore, subjugating the individual to the level of the ‘Spartan soldier.’

Regarding the nature of the Hindu nation, Savarkar said: “the Hindus, being the people, whose past, present and future are most closely bound with the soil of Hindusthan as Pitribhu (father-land), as Punyabhu (holy-land), they constitute the foundation, the bedrock, the reserved forces of the Indian state”( Savarkar 1989). Therefore, he argued that the Hindus are a nation by themselves because of their religious, cultural, racial and historical affinities and geographical unity and these bind them together to form a homogenous nation (Savarkar 1940: 84).Savarkar sought to build a Hindu nation that would be founded on pseudo- secularism, force, violence, threat of the ‘Other’ and military might. He said: “our State must raise a mighty force exclusively constituted by Hindus alone, must open arms and ammunition factories exclusively manned by the Hindus alone and mobilise everything on a war scale”( Savarkar 1993: 177). He asked the Hindus to elect only Hindus to represent them in the legislatures as they alone can, according to him, safeguard, defend and promote the interests of the Hindus (Savarkar 1967:1). Hence he urged the Hindu Sanghatanists to capture political power wherever possible – in municipal boards, legislatures, provincial and central governments – and boycott the
Indian National Congress (Savarkar 1967: 21-22) and vote only for confirmed Hindu nationalists(Savarkar 1940: 101-103).

But Savarkar knew that this would not happen as long as Gandhi, Nehru and other secular leaders were at the helm of affairs of the national movement. Nehru categorically said: “if you think in terms of any kind of a communal state, a Hindu Rashtra, etc. you are not going to get it, however much you may try” (Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, vol. 7: 404). This led Savarkar to assert that as “neither the Gandhistic ideology nor the pseudo-nationalistic ideology of the Congress can ever cope with this Islamic offensive and as the Hindu Sanghatanist ideology alone can and will be able to fight out this danger successfully, the Government should consist of such Ministers alone who are pledged to the Hindu Sanghatanist ideology alone” (Savarkar 1993: 177).

Savarkar cherished a nationalism based on Hindu religion and Hindu culture. He said: “To us Hindus, Hindustan and India mean one and the same thing” (Savarkar 1940: 83). The resolution No.13 passed by Hindu Mahasabha session held from 17 December 1936 to 7 January 1937 spoke of Savarkar as one who was engaged in the cause of Hinduism. It read: “It [Hindu Mahasabha] notes with gratefulness the splendid services which Savarkar has been rendering to the cause of Hinduism and urges the government to remove all restrictions imposed upon him at present so as to enable him to serve more fully and completely his religion, community and country” (File 50 Hindu Mahasabha Resolutions passed at the 18th session, held at Lahore, Kuruvachira 2006).

Savarkar accused Nehru saying that he had been indulging in furious denunciations against the demand for a Hindu nation as if the mere demand for a Hindu nation constitutes a danger to his Government (Savarkar 1993: 170). He said: “Pundit Nehru swaggers on that if the Hindu Sanghatanists persist on in their efforts to establish a Hindu Raj, they would meet with the fate of Hitler and Mussolini” (Ibid.: 171). He questioned those who stood for a secular nation saying: “How is it then that the very mention of the name of Hindustan or the Hindu State alone takes your breath out as if you were smitten by a snake bite?” (Ibid.: 172).
But after he became the chief advocate of the Hindutva ideology, he gave hints on several occasions concerning the impossibility of a co-existence of Hindus and Muslims. He accused the Indian Muslims of being anti-Hindu, anti-Indian with extra-territorial allegiance (Savarkar 1940: 17, 23). According to him, the entire Muslim community in India is communal (Ibid.: 76). In 1939 he said that nationality did not depend so much on a common geographical area as on unity of thought, religion, language and culture. For this reason the Germans and the Jews could not be regarded as a nation. Later in the same year he made a statement in the 21st session of the Hindu Mahasabha that the Indian Muslims were on the whole more inclined to identify themselves and their interests with Muslims outside India than Hindus who lived next door, like the Jews in Germany. He said: “I warn the Hindus that the Mahommedans are likely to prove dangerous to our Hindu Nation” (Ibid.: 31).

M.S Golwalkar and Hindu Rashtra

Like Savarkar, M.S Golwalkar, the second Sarsanghchalak (supreme chief) of the ‘Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh’ (RSS), also used the same methodological and analytical tools to define the ‘Hindu nation.’ In an attempt to crystallise a militant Hindu identity, Golwalkar used his own version of ‘culture,’ ‘history’, ‘nation’ etc for securitising the majority community, thereby making a sharp distinction between the Hindu civilisations and other cultures and religious systems. In his Bunch of Thoughts, Golwalkar makes an attempt to distinguish the Hindus from others:

The origin of our people, the date from which we have been living here as a civilized entity, is unknown to the scholars of history. In a way, we are ‘anadi,’ without a beginning. To define such a people is impossible, just as we cannot express or define reality because words come into existence after the reality. Similar is the case with the Hindu people. We existed when there was no necessity for any name. We were the good, the enlightened people - the rest of humanity were just bipeds and so no distinctive name was given to us. Sometimes, in trying to distinguish our people from others, we are called the enlightened – the Aryas – and the rest ‘Mlechas’ (Golwalkar 2000: 54-55).

Romila Thapar notes that around 800 BC the word ‘Mlechha’ was used in Vedas to denote the people who were unable to speak Sanskrit properly.
Later on, the word achieved a social meaning. It was coined to call the people who were living outside the illustrated ‘Varna System’ of the ‘Darmashastra.’ It was a reference to the ‘impurity’ of the language and customs, used by the upper caste people to characterise a vast chunk of the population including the Muslims (Thapar 2001: 47-48).

Like Savarkar Golwalkar also territorialised the Hindu nation. He asserts: “... this entire stretch of land from the Himalayas in the north to the oceans in the south inclusive of the numerous major and minor islands alongside its coast, and known to all as Bharath constitute the geographical basis of our national life” (Golwalkar 1968: 6). In an attempt to historicise the Hindu nation, back to thousands of years, he portrayed the history of the Indian Muslims and Christians as ‘short’ and called them as ‘aggressors’ because they came here to build their empire. So they were alien people, ‘outsiders.’ In his definition of the Hindu nation, Golwalkar viewed the ‘Motherland’ as ‘Dharmabhoomi,’ ‘Karmabhoomi’ and ‘Punyabhoomi’ (Golwalkar 2000: 81 – 96). He symbolised the emotional attachment of a child towards its mother with the nationalist imaginations (Golwalkar 2008: 55–58). Golwalkar envisaged two types of devotion to the ‘Motherland.’ One is ‘inactive devotion’ – religious worshiping of the Motherland, and the other ‘active devotion’: - cent per cent dedication to the protection of the Motherland. In this illustration, the Muslims and Christians were outside the boundaries of the nation who looked to some foreign land as their ‘holy places.’ Constructing the Hindu ‘self’ and the Muslim ‘other,’ Golwalkar says:

(Muslims) have also developed a feeling of identification with the enemies of this land. They call themselves ‘Sheikhs’ and ‘Syeds’. Sheikhs and Syeds are certain clans in Arabia. How then did these people come to feel that they are their descendants? That is because they have cut off their ancestral national moorings of this land and mentally merged themselves with the aggressors. They still think that they have come here only to conquer and establish their kingdoms. So we see that it is not merely a case of change of faith, but a change even in national identity. What else is it, if not treason, to join the camp of the enemy leaving their mother-nation in the lurch? (Golwalkar 2000: 96).

Discouraging any division of devotion to the envisaged nation, he noted: “For the progress of any country, nation, or society, what is needed
foremost is to inculcate intense devotion in every individual towards his
country, nation and society, towards its traditions, and an urge to work for
its progress and readiness to dedicate everything for its sake without any
reservations” (Kurukshethra Prakasan 2008: 270). Golwalkar insisted that
the other religions in India must subordinate themselves to the Hindu
nation:

..the foreign races in Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu culture and
language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion,
must entertain no idea but those of the glorification of the Hindu race
and culture, i.e., of the Hindu nation and must lose their separate
existence to merge in the Hindu race, or may stay in the country, wholly
subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no
privileges, far less any preferential treatment not even citizens’ rights.
There is, at least should be, no other course for them to adopt. We are
an old nation: let us deal, as old nations ought to deal, with the foreign
races who have chosen to live in our country (Golwalkar 1939: 47-48).

In Golwalkar’s thinking there was no possibility for a composite culture
(Golwalkar 2000: 59). Apparently, the mutual antagonism between the
‘self’ and the ‘other’ was the strength of the ‘nation’ propounded by
Golwalkar. This antagonistic posture resulting from the process of
homogenisation “make friends and enemies.” The attempt to distance the
‘non-self’ was a way to protect ‘the self’ and makes it strong. According to
Golwalkar,

(Muslims) had come here as invaders. They were conceiving themselves
as conquerors and rulers here for the last twelve hundred years. That
complex was still in their mind. History has recorded that their
antagonism was not merely political. Had it been so, they could have
been won over in a very short time. But it was so deep-rooted that
whatever we believed in, the Muslim was wholly hostile to it. If we
worship in the temple, he would desecrate it. If we carry on bhajans and
car festivals, that would irritate him. If we worship cow, he would like
to eat it. If we glorify woman as a symbol of sacred motherhood, he would
like to molest her. He was tooth and nail opposed to our way of life in all
aspects-religious, cultural, social, etc. He had imbibed that hostility to the
very core. His number also was not small. Next to the Hindu's, his was
the largest (Golwalkar 2000).

He said that the “exhortation of the leaders” for the Hindu-Muslim unity
was too hypocritical. “The Hindu was asked to ignore, even to submit
meekly, to the vandalism and atrocities of the Muslims,” he alleged. Golwalkar ridiculed that “self-forgetfulness was taught to the Hindus.” The Hindus “were taught to forget their glorious history, to forget Rana Pratap, Shivaji, Guru Govind Singh and all such inspiring names and, if at all their memory did intrude, to call them 'misguided patriots.' In fact, history was 'invented' to suit their slogans of Hindu-Muslim unity” (Golwalkar 2000).

Apparently “influenced by Hitler’s ideology of racial purity (Frankel 2008: 700), Golwalkar wrote in his We, or Our Nationhood Defined:

German national pride has now become the topic of the day. To keep up the purity of the nation and its culture, Germany shocked the world by her purging the country of the Semitic races—the Jews. National pride at its highest has been manifested here. German has also shown how well-nigh impossible it is for races and cultures, having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindustan to learn and profit by (Golwalkar 1939: 39).

Writing on the ‘Fascism of the Sangh Parivar,’ Sumit Sarkar said that the “Muslim here becomes the nearest equivalent of the Jew—or the Black (more generally, immigrants felt to be inferior for one or another reason) in contemporary White racism. The Muslim in India, like the Jew in Nazi propaganda, is unduly privileged—a charge even more absurd here than it was in Germany…” (S. Sarkar 1993: 165). However, Golwalkar continued to project the image of Muslims as a community enjoying undue privileges in the country in spite of their ‘defiance’ and ‘rebellion.’ This was given a high communal colour too. He says:

In fact, all over the country wherever there is a masjid or a Muslim mohalla, the Muslims feel that it is their own independent territory. If there is a procession of Hindus with music and singing, they get enraged saying that their religious susceptibilities are wounded. If their religious feelings have become so sensitive as to be irritated by sweet music then why don't they shift their masjids to forests pray there in silence? Why should they insist on planting a stone on the roadside, whitewash it, call it a prayer spot and then raise a hue and cry that their prayers are distributed if music is played?....Even today, Muslims, whether in high position of the Government or outside, participate openly in rabidly anti-national conferences. Their speeches carry the ring of open defiance and rebellion. A Muslim Minister at the Center, speaking from the platform of one such conference, warned that unless the Muslim interest was well
protected the story of Spain would be repeated here also, meaning thereby that they would rise in armed revolt (Golwalkar 2000).

The nature of the ‘Hindu State’ Golwalkar conceptualised was not only of an authoritarian type but it necessarily possessed aggressive characteristics in views of ‘threats’ and ‘dangers of disruption.’ Hence he sought to “change the present ill-conceived federal structure (of India) to the only correct form of government, the unitary one.” His notion of security was therefore increasingly associated with national defence and military capability. For instance, in the wake of the India-China war of 1962, Golwalkar said that the “foreign aggression afforded (India) “a golden opportunity” ...“to purge itself of corroding tendencies like selfishness...and to recast itself into a single unified and purified entity.” The “sense of imminent danger” led the individuals in the nation “to rise above all other petty feelings, to merge their interests in the supreme national good and stand as living limbs of a colossal national personality” (Golwalkar 2000: 313). When China conducted nuclear explosions in 1964, he said:

The first and foremost sphere where we have to achieve self-dependence is defence. For this we must build up our own war-potential and free ourselves from dependence on foreign aid. The Government should appeal to all the industrialists, scientists and technicians and with their co-operation manufacture, at the earliest, weapons superior to those available to the enemies. The possession of atom bomb by Communist China has made it imperative for us to manufacture the same. That alone will ensure confidence in the minds of the people and the armed forces about our ability to achieve ultimate victory (Golwalkar 2000).

Thus, by perpetuating and reinforcing an enemy image of the ‘Other,’ Golwalkar was trying to politicise and militarise the Hindu identity. However, the selfless devotion of the individual to the service of the society was the core of the Hindutva that the Sangh organisations held fast. Here the individual has been subordinated to the nation, and the partaking of the individual with the Sangh (RSS) would bring forth national unity. The non-political character of the Sangh would curbe the nation getting divided. In his talk with Saifudin Jeelany, Golwalkar said: Hitler’s movement centred round politics. We tried to build life without being wedded to politics. It was found that many were gathered for political
purpose. But when that purpose failed, unity was lost. We did not want any temporary achievement but an ‘abiding oneness’ (Ibid.: 519).

**Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)**

Among all the Sangh Parivar organisations working in the civil society, the RSS holds sway because it acts as “the main driving force of Hindu Rashtra” (Vanalk 1990). Though Savarkar was instrumental in bestowing Hindu nationalism with an ideology, he did not chalk out any a plan of action by which the Hindus could organise themselves. This mission was taken up by K.B. Hedgewar (1889–1940), who had come into contact with Savarkar in the mid-1920s and then founded the RSS in his home town, Nagpur in 1925 (Jaffrelot 2007; Deshpande and Ramaswamy 1981; Sangh Parivar 2010). The RSS—which emerged as the largest Hindu organisation in a few years’ time—sought to propagate the Hindutva ideology as well as “to infuse new physical strength into the majority community” (Jaffrelot 2007: 16). Since its establishment in 1925, the RSS has been active throughout India and abroad as the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS, *Annual Report* 2010; Sangh Parivar 2010). It is the chief motivator and the core organisation of the Sangh family. The strength of the RSS lies in its ability to develop close bonds among its members and to sustain these links when members join the various RSS affiliate groups (Anderson and Damle 1987; Curran 1951; Goyal; 1979). Each and every organisation of the Sangh Parivar has been inspired by the RSS which provides an ideological base for their actions (Advani 1990: 9). The Sangh consists of BJP (its predecessor, BJS), ABVP, BMS, VHP, Seva Bharati, and Kalyan Ashram. The RSS has also strong influence on various Hindu scholastic centres across the country. The Vivekananda Kendra based in Kanyakumari is an example. In many ways, the RSS has been trying to penetrate into the civil society and maintaining an ideological hegemony through its regular programmes and activities (RSS, *Annual Report* 2010).

Though it became a powerful Hindu movement, it could not have much impact on public life in India as it remained out of politics for long. M.S. Golwalkar, who became the *Sarsanghchalak* (head) in 1940 had made “apoliticism a rule.” Savarkar, who revitalised the Hindu Mahasabha after his release from prison in 1937, sought the support of Golwalkar — when
the Hindu Mahasabha left the Indian National Congress and became a full-fledged party— but in vain (Jaffrelot 2007; Anderson and Damle 1987).

The general philosophical outlook of the RSS, as it proclaimed, is cultural nationalism manifesting through “integral humanism, aimed at preserving the spiritual and moral traditions of India.” The aim of the organisation is "serving the nation and its people in the form of God - Bharata Mata (Mother India) and protecting the interests of the Hindus in India" (Sangh Parivar 2010). The RSS has been engaged in numerous social, service charity, and relief works, as well as actively participated in the political process after 1948. It is well-organised and has a hierarchical structure with the Sarsanghchalak being the highest rank. The RSS was banned in India thrice during periods in which the government of the time considered them a threat to the state: in 1948 after Mahatma Gandhi’s assassination, during the Emergency in India (1975-77), and after the 1992 Babri Masjid demolition. The bans were subsequently lifted (Sangh Parivar 2010). RSS’s entry into politics, way back in the late 1940s and early 1950s, was the result of the negotiations held by a section of its leaders who were favourably inclined towards involving in politics. Though initially reluctant, Golwalkar let them to discuss the issue with Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, who had been President of the Hindu Mahasabha. These negotiations eventually led to the creation of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (the forerunner BJP) in 1951, on the eve of the first general elections (Jaffrelot 2007; Anderson and Damle 1987).

Over years, the RSS developed a systematic framework and a very specific modus operandi. Hedgewar called for efforts to work at the grassroots in order to reform Hindu society from below: he set up Shakhas (local branches) of the movement in towns and villages according to a specified pattern. Young Hindu men were expected to assemble every morning and every evening on a playground for games with martial connotations and ideological training sessions. Golwalkar illustrates how Shakhas work everyday:

    An open playground. A saffron flag is fluttering in the centre. Groups of youths and boys are absorbed in a variety of Bharatiya games. Resounding shouts of joyous enthusiasm often fill the air. The sight of the daring young men pressing forward with the cry ‘Kabaddi’ ‘Kabaddi’ on
their lips thrills the heart. The chief’s whistle for order had a magical
effect on them; there is instant perfect order and silence. Then exercises
follow: wielding the lathi, soorya-namaskar, marching etc. The spirit of
collective effort and spontaneous discipline pervades every programme.
Then they sit down and sing in chorus a song charged with patriotism.
Discussions follow. They delve deep into the problems affecting the
national life. And finally, they stand in rows before the flag and recite the
prayer ‘Namaste Suda Vatsale Matrubhoome’ whose echoes fill the air
and stir one’s soul. ‘Bharat-mata-ki-jai’- uttered in utmostearnest
furnishes the finishing and inspiring touch to the entire programme
(Golwalkar 2000: 511-12).

The men in charge of the Shakhas, called Pracharaks (preachers), devoted
themselves to the work of the Sangh; as a part of RSS cadres they could be
sent anywhere in India to develop the organisation’s network. At the time
of India’s independence there were also about 600,000 Swayamsevaks
(volunteers) (Sangh Parivar 2010; Jaffrelot 2007: 16; Anderson and Damle
1987). The RSS has now over 4.5 million members, according to Sangh
organisations (Sangh Parivar 2010).

Shakha is the basic unit of the RSS. By giving a psychologically-oriented
rigorous training to its cadres, the RSS has been trying to unify the
character of different individuals towards a proposed collective entity
‘Hindu Rashtra.’ One of the many games that played in the Shakha is Nau
Mat Ka ek ma (amalgamation of nine in to one, in which nine
Swayamsevaks lift one person off the ground by using only one finger
each). This is a symbolic expression of the ‘power of unity’ (Mishra 1980:
54; Sangh Parivar 2010). The Sangh has been functioning through informal
networks. As Mishra observes, “The work of the Sangh is through
personal contact. These contacts lead to close ties, friendship and
personal cooperation, mutuality in personal relations and a desire to work
together to solve the problems of a particular area” (Mishra 1980: 55-56).
This socialisation process brings forth (bonding) social capital in civil
society. The investment in social capital feeds back to the political capital
through mobilisation.

The RSS is a hierarchical, rigid and patriarchal organisation. The boys are
recruited at a very tender age. The girls are prohibited to join the RSS. The
leaders of the Sangh prefer not to invest time and energy on the higher
age groups, who already have well-formed opinions. They are focusing on the ‘freshets’ (Kanungo 2002: 71). The young people are attracted to the Sangh because of their interest in games and sports and, most importantly, its martial arts tradition. The impressive personality of the pracharaks (the self-devoted cadres, who are indulged in the spreading of the Sanghs’ message among the people) is important. They always get away from their family and said to be following celibacy. Their physical fitness and performance in martial arts are great inspiration for the youngsters. Their style of narrating stories is another aspect of attraction (Froerer 2007).

The learning system in Shakhas is ‘non argumentative.’ Thus, in the younger stage the individual may not be influenced by any ideology. And the inception of an ideology in a very informal manner through Shakhas is expected to produce results. This learning system produces cadres, who are subjugated to the Sangh ideology. The Sangh does not tolerate independent individual initiatives. As Golwalkar pointed out, every Swayamsevak “must be aware of the fact that each one should be for Sangh and not vice versa.” He emphasised the total subordination of the individual for the sake of the Sangh (Golwalkar 2008: 319-25). Golwalkar had given guidelines for the functioning of the Shakhas. The assembly in each Shakha should be held every day. It should commence at the exact time. There should be perfect understanding, love and affection among all Swayamsevaks and ensure a congenial atmosphere. After the completion of Shakha assembly, the cadres should sit together and make enquiries about who all attended and who all were absent (Kurukshetra Prakasan 2008: 281-82). The discussions were portrayed as ‘character building.’ But, most often, the theme of the discussion focuses on various aspects of ‘Hindu Rashtra.’ Anti-Muslim propaganda and the glorification of the Hindu warriors were common in Shakhas (Kanungo 2002:72). In a pamphlet, the RSS states:

... We have to find out a proper ideal which beats in our hearts, throbs in our blood, and which has been with us for generations. It is no use placing before the people a formless spirit as an ideal. It may be all right for the enlightened. But ordinary men like us require an ideal which we can easily see, understand and experience. Then only will everyone develop in himself devotion or ideal, and the ambition to lead a life of
pure character will be roused in his heart. Such an ideal is our Nationhood – the great ‘Hindu Rashtra’ (RSS 1964: 23-24).

In another pamphlet, the RSS viewed that the ideal of the Sangh “is to carry the nation to the pinnacle of glory, through organizing the entire society and ensuring protection of Hindu Dharma” (Sahitya Sangama 1992:14). In these pamphlets an urge for emphasising the importance of a modern ‘Hindu Nation-State’ can be seen. A shift is also discernible here from the spiritually-oriented Hindu belief system to a more politically-oriented conglomeration, ‘Hindu Rashtra.’ The glorification of the ‘self’ is ensured through caricaturing the ‘non-self’ or the ‘other.’ Through constant propaganda, the Sangh sought to imagine a nation, ‘Hindu Rashtra,’ by portraying the Muslims and Christians as ‘enemies.’ This ‘enemy’ image has been perpetuated through the Shakhas (Golwalkar 2000; Anderson and Damle 1987; Mishra 1980).

To the RSS, the Muslims, Christians and the communists are ‘outsiders’ who misinterpret history by denouncing the history of Hindu heroism, which had frustrated the invaders. As such they are portrayed as engaged in protecting their ‘imperialist interests’ (Goal 1984:1-2). The other issue related to this is “the extra-religious and extra territorial aspects of missionary work.” The RSS strongly believes that “the evangelisation in India appears to be part of the uniform world policy to revive Christiandom for re-establishing Western supremacy and is not prompted by spiritual motives.” It argued that as a result of conversions, the converts’ sense of unity and solidarity with the rest of the countrymen is affected and this, in the end, undermines his loyalty to his country and the state (Sheshadri 1985: 16). However, in an interview Shripaty Sastry stated:

RSS is not preaching hatred against any religion... it just cannot even afford to be so for the simple reason that within the Hindu fold numerous religions flourish. Religion is not the concern of the RSS at all. The attitude of RSS towards any individual or group is based upon: What is your attitude towards this country, towards the people of this country, towards the integrity, towards the welfare and domestic happiness of the millions and millions people of this country? It is on this basis that the attitude of the RSS towards you is determined (Sastry 1983:18-19).
This fosters an image that those who believe in ‘Hindutva’ are the true ‘nationalists’ and those ‘others’ are the ‘enemies’ of the nation. This position necessarily undermines the cultural pluralism and the coexistence of different communities. However, the RSS argued that “the Christians/communists/Islamists had been perverting India’s political scene. The only remedy is to revive the Hindu nationalism” (Goel 1984a; Goel 1984b; Sangh Parivar 2010). The implications of this nationalism are: 1) Bharatvarsha is an indivisible whole and that its present division into Afghanistan, Pakistan, Hindustan and Bangladesh brought about by Islamic imperialism, must go; and 2) the closed creeds like Islam and Christianity which are not in accord with the spirituality of ‘Sanatana Dharma’ have no place in India. ‘Sanatana Dharma’ was explained as “the beginning less and the endless”; and this feature distinguished this religion from the other religions. Bharati Krishna Tirtha writes: “...If there be any religion which can hope to remain forever, it can and must be the one and only religion, which was at the very beginning of things and which continues to exist to the present day, our own beloved ‘Sanatana Vaidika Dharma.’ It, on this account of being ‘anadi’, (ie beginningless) and ‘ananth’ (ie endless), in as much as it began with the world, continues to exist and can only end with the world itself” (Tirtha 1985). This sort of conceptualisation has been put in place by the Sangh in all its campaigns.

Another major feature of the RSS campaign was the promotion of the ‘Swadeshi’ against the systems of capitalism and socialism (Sangh Parivar 2010). And, most importantly, it advocated that “a strong structure of a central state should emerge in order to preserve the national heritage and protect the national homeland without inhibiting the multiple expressions of regional, provincial and local autonomies” (Goel 1984a; Goel 1984b; Sangh Parivar 2010). In sum, establishing a ‘Hindu Rashtra’ is the leitmotif of the RSS. With this end in view, the RSS has been appropriating various cultural spheres across a wide spectrum of the civil society in India making room for the Swayamsevaks to work in those organisations and associations, thereby legitimising the RSS ideology.

The RSS employs a cultural strategy to mobilise people through festivals. It observes six major festivals in a year. The very nature of these ‘utzavs’ brings forth an image of politics which transcends the diversity of religious
systems in the Hindu fold without contradicting any of the worship systems within itself. Some of the festivals are: Varsha Pratipada, observed in the first day of the new year, in memory of those who gave a new direction to Indian history; ‘Hindu Samarajya Dinotsava’, observed on the thirteenth day of Jyestha (Second months) of the Vikrami calendar to commemorate the Hindu rule in India; ‘Guru pooja’, the festival to worship the teacher celebrated on the full-moon day in the month of Asadha (vikrami Calendar; ‘Vijay Dashmi’ the festival in commemoration of the tradition of victory over evil was the day Lard Rama defeated Ravana, the Sangh celebrate; ‘Makar Sankraman’, celebration to emphasise the importance of the ‘process of change’ and Raksha Bandhan,’ celebrated to underline the importance of brotherhood (Mishra 1980: 60). The RSS had been celebrating these festivals on a nationalist level. The basic thread that is going through these celebrations is the notion of ‘Hindu Rashtra,’ its unity and pride beyond the sectarian divisions. Till twenty years back, the festivals like ‘Raksha Bandhan’ were unknown to the south Indians. Through Shakha’s intense campaign they have become popular in the south. In colleges and schools tying ‘Rakhi’ the thread that is used in the ‘Raksha Bandan’ has become a fashion and this has been popularised by the RSS and ABVP cadres. Curiously, this had been used in north India in a much wider scale. Both Muslims and the Hindus used to celebrate this festival, and it had become a celebration of ‘brotherhood’ in the true sense of the word. But, over years, this has been appropriated by the RSS with a more political objective. Naturally, it distances the Muslim identity from the Hindu ‘self.’

The RSS Shakhas are the ‘akhadas’ (gymnasia) of the Swayamsevaks. They get physical as well as mental training to become self-devoted cadres for the Sangh. The purview of Sangh activity is not restricted to the Shakha alone, but it cuts across all the branches of the Sangh Parivar coordinating the activities of the whole for a particular goal that they described ‘Hindu Rashtra’ (Sangh Parivar 2010). Apart from the Sangh family the RSS also establishes links with the scholastic institutions (for instance, Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari). This centre in the name of Swami Vivekananda was established in 1972. In a pamphlet issued by the centre for branch centres shows how much its programmes and visions are fit into the RSS frame. This pamphlet offers the guidelines for the branch centres. It emphasises
the importance of celebrations. ‘Utsava’ comes from the root word ‘Utsarati’ means ‘elevating.’ The ‘Utsavas’ are for taking the organisation upward towards its goal and for ‘Shaktiparikshan’ – testing of the organisational capacity to bring as many persons as possible for the well-organised function, ‘Shaktisamvardhan’ – to enhance the strength as an organisation by involving as many ‘karyakartas’ – in the organisation of the celebration; and ‘Shaktipradarshan’ – the invitees as well as ‘karyakartas’ intensely getting the insight into the ideology and functioning of Kendra (Vivekananda Kendra n.d.: 31). The Kendra observes ‘Samastha Bharat Parva’ during December-January, ending on 12 January, birth the anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. The aims of this celebration are: to bring the focus of the youth to the dynamics of the Motherland, her great present strength and also her destiny to guide the world; to worship ‘Bharatmatha’; to spread the message of Swami Vivekananda; focus on the cultural traditions; to pay homage to all those who laid their life for the protection of the Motherland. Schools, colleges, youth organizations and like-minded associations are invited to join the celebrations. The RSS has been very active in all such programmes, thereby penetrating into civil society. The primary duty of the RSS is said to be providing ‘selfless service’ to the society (Golwalkar 2000: 57). During the time of natural calamities, the RSS provide a helping hand to the victims. Most of the details of its activities are published (RSS, Annual Report 2010) with a view to inspiring others. Such civil society activities provide plenty of space for the RSS to come into contact with the public which it gently appropriates.

**Hindu Mahasabha and Jana Sangh**

During the 1920s and 1930s the Provincial Hindu Sabhas, which were formed in the years before the First World War, had changed its from a voluntary character to a somewhat political party. In 1937 V.D. Savarkar became the President of the Hindu Mahasabha. Under the leadership of Savarkar, the Sabha took a direct interest in elections and party politics (Graham 1993: 6). In his Presidential address on the 19th session of the Hindu Mahasabha in 1937, Savarkar emphasised the importance of Mahasabha becoming political. He observed: “The independence of India means, therefore, the independence of our people, our race, our nation. Therefore, Indian ‘Swarajya’ or Indian ‘Swatantra’ means, as for as the Hindu nation is concerned, the political independence of the Hindus, the
freedom which would enable them to grow to their full height” (Savarkar 2007:306). He also called for “vote in defense of Hindutva” (Ibid.: 310).

The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi in 1948 was a setback to the Hindu Mahasabha and RSS. The RSS was banned and the Sangh lost its glamour among the people. The ban on RSS was lifted by the Central government on condition that it would write a constitution that was accepted by the Sangh. According to the RSS Constitution: “The Sangh as such has no politics and is devoted to purely cultural work. The individual Swayamsevaks, however, may join any political party, except such parties as believe in or resort to violent and secret methods to achieve their ends; persons owing allegiance to such parties or believing in such methods shall have no place in the Sangh” (Graham 1993: 15). However, the Hindu Mahasabha resumed its political activities soon. The issues concerning the ‘national language’ and the ‘Hindu Code Bill’ made the Sabha a central figure in the national political scene (Mookerjee 2007: 393-96; Graham 1993: 18-19) The insecurity complex generated from the central Government’s decision to implement the ‘Hindu Code bill’ had prompted them the need for strengthening their influence in party politics (Graham 1993: 19). The division between the Hindu traditionalists and the liberal secularists in the ruling party (Congress) became widened on the issue of the outbreak of communal violence which occurred in Bengal during the 1949-50. On this issue Mookerjee and Nehru had differences and Mookerjee resigned from the cabinet in 1950 (Ibid.: 21-23). Mookerjee was also against the ‘Delhi Pact’ signed by Nehru and Liaquat Ali Khan in 1950. Obviously, Nehru’s Pakistan policy was not acceptable to Mookerjee. On 21 October 1951 the Bharatiya Jana Sangh was founded in Delhi. Mookerjee was appointed as its first President and also most of its leaders were from the Hindi-speaking belt (Ibid.: 28-29).

Hindu Mahasabha, which accentuated the Hindu-Muslim animosity, tended to dismantle the unity of both communities propagated by the Congress (Joshi and Josh 1994: 308). The Jana Sangh also aimed to re-establish itself in a tension-bound society. It followed a party model in the image of RSS. As Jaffrelot notes:

The traversing of social and political space by means of a network largely borrowed from the RSS and the implementation of social welfare act
vision were to be the two complementary wings of the Sangathanist strategy. This strategy of penetration of the body of society, according to those who conceived it, would, in the long term, naturally bring the Jana Sangh to power...the Hindu nation would eventually recognize it as its appointed political representative (Jaffrelot 2002: 20).

Indeed, its policies and programmes show its natural affiliation with the RSS. Contrary to the Nehruvian idealism on matters of national security, the Jana Sangh stood on the RSS position: ‘militarise the nation.’ In 1958, at its Bangalore session, the ‘Pratinidhi Sabha’ of the Jana Sangh had adopted its manifesto and programme, in which it stated clearly on matters of national security: (a) compulsory military training to all young men; (b), nationalization of all the wings of the armed forces in their inspiration as well as form; (c), immediate establishment of defence industries; and (d) organisation of vast territorial army (BJS 1961). In its Vijayawada session the party emphasised the importance of manufacturing the nuclear weapons (BJS 1965).

The Jana Sangh stood for a unitary state, contrary to the Indian federal system. Balraj Madhok viewed that the only effective way to curb the fissiparous forces and trends and ensure a stable and strong centre was to have a unitary structure instead of the present federal structure of the Indian Government (Madhok 1966: 13-14). Jana Sangh severely criticised the special status granted to Jammu and Kashmir and called for enacting a common civil code for both the Hindus and Muslims (Mookerjee 2007b: 665-675). Indeed, the position of the Jana Sangh was rooted in the RSS methodology. B.D Graham pointed out that the Jana Sangh lost its glamour because of its tie up with the RSS (Graham 2002: 154). The increase in the communal riots and the number of people killed during 1967-70 (209 in 1967, 346 in 1968, 519 in 1969, and 521 in 1970) and the allegations against the Hindu nationalists as shown in the reports of the riots of Ranchi, Ahmedabad and Bhiwandi put the Jana Sangh in a defensive position (Jaffrelot 2002: 214–16). The Ranchi riot occurred in August 1967. At that time a United Front (UF) government was in office in Bihar. In February 1967, a 31-point programme was adopted by the UF Government, which included a clam on agrarian reforms. The Janna Sangh was against this cause, but the mass sentiments immediately following the general election were so strong that the Jana Sangh had to agree to it
(Jana Sangh had two ministers in the cabinet). Further, the Revenue Minister Indradeep Sinha had introduced the Bataidavi Bill, which was against the interests of the big landowners’ interests. There was strong presence of this lobby in Jana Sangh. This was the background of the Ranchi riot. The Srinagar riot occurred in September 1967. It was worked up on the basis of religious conversion and marriage of a girl of the Pundit community by a Muslim Youth. Ashwin K. Roy and Subash Chakravarthy’s report on Meerut riots in January 1968 says that “the responsibility of these riots falls on the local leaders of the majority community. The events show that the plans of the riot were made long ago. This plan was put into execution relentlessly in utter disregard of the loss of lives of human beings” (Vyas 1969: 1-8).

Jaffrelot says that the Jana Sangh “waivered between two strategies: one, moderate, involved positioning itself as a patriotic party on behalf of national unity, as the protector of both the poor and of small privately-owned businesses, deploying a populist vein.” The second one, “more militant, was based on the promotion of an aggressive form of ‘Hinduness’, symbolized by the campaign to raise Hindi to the level of India’s national language and protecting of cows (by banning cow slaughter), the cow being sacred for Hindus but not for Muslims.” The militant faction, in fact, was “the implicit target of an agitation against slaughtering cows set off in 1966, in the context of the fourth general elections campaign “(Jaffrelot 2007: 19; Jaffrelot 2005 ).

**Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP)**

The failure of the Jana Sangh to promote the RSS ideology in the general public prompted them to think about a new organisation which culminated it into the formation of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) in 1964 (Jaffrelot 2001). Unlike the RSS the VHP has propounded the ‘theistic Hinduism’ in a monotheistic slant (Nandy, Trivedy, Mayaram, Yagnik, 1995: 87-88; Nandy: 1998). Ashis Nandy notes that in some northern Indian states the temples at the VHP offices have icons of Ram-Sita-Laxman-Hanuman, along with the “plaster-of-Paris Bharat Mata spread eagled across a map of India.” “True to the Hindu nationalist tradition though, the Bharat Mata dwarfs the icons and the temple is called Bharat Mata Mandir. And the new greeting, ‘Jai Shri Ram’, has to accompany the

The decision to form the VHP was taken in the Bombay session, headed by the RSS leader Golwalkar. According to him the leitmotif was “to unite the pluralist Hindu on a single platform for the safeguarding of their common interest.” The prominent religious leaders who participated in the session included Dalai Lama, Sikh leader, Master Tara Singh et al. The VHP was formally registered in 1966 with Swami Chinmayananda as its working president and S.S. Apte as its General Secretary. After the formation of the VHP, a Marg Darshak Mandal was constituted in order to direct its activities. It was aimed to ‘rejuvenate' the Hindu society, like the nineteenth century Hindu reform agenda (Jaffrelot 2001; Nandy 1998: 89-90). Peter Van der Veer viewed that the VHP is modern. Instead of rejecting capitalist development, science and technology, the VHP attempted to nationalise these signs of modernity and what it did reject was the secular state, yet, its arguments were based upon the modern democratic principle of ‘majority rule.’ It argued that the ‘majority community’ should rule the country, while the minority communities such as Muslims and Christians, “should accept it as a political reality” (Van der Veer 1996:133). Thus, the VHP and the RSS shared the same views on many issues.

Through its wide networks all over India and abroad, the VHP has been mobilising Hindus on a wide range of issues from the cow protection, Ram temple, jihadi terrorism, to the use of Sanskrit (VHP 2003). It has also networks among the backward castes and Dalits. The VHP has offices and activities in foreign countries too. For better co ordination of its functions, the VHP divided the world into four regions – USA, Europe, Africa and Middle East, and South Asia. The activities of the VHP in these regions have been growing rapidly (Nandy et.al 1996). The ‘Dharma Sansad', a synod of saints and seers of all faiths within the Hindu Society has been helping the VHP. It has also set up two trusts: 1) Bharat Kalyan Pratishthan, which provides education and medical aid to the poor; 2) Vishwa Hindu Parishad Foundation, which has been working for “uplifting the rural poor” (VHP 2003; Nandy et.al 1996: 92-93).
Other Sangh Organisations

As discussed before, the RSS’s aim was not merely to penetrate into the civil society through Shakhas. It also sought to establish organisations working within specific social categories. Way back in 1948, the RSS cadres based in Delhi founded the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), the students’ wing, whose primary objective was to combat the communist influence on university campuses. In 1955 the RSS established its workers’ union, the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) whose major role was also to counter the communist unions in the name of Hindu nationalist ideology. Besides these unions, the RSS created more targeted organisations. In 1952 it founded a tribal movement, the Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram (VKA) which aimed to counter the influence of Christian movements among the Adivasis of India, proselytism and priestly social work having resulted in numerous conversions. The VKA developed a counter strategy by imitating missionary methods and thus accomplished a number of ‘reconversions’ (Jaffrelot 2007).

Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram has been an integral part of the Sangh conglomerate working among the Adivasis. The Kalyan Ashram has been providing infrastructural facilities and financial assistance to the Adivasis. It has been running social and educational programmes among the Adivasis. The educational activities include single teacher schools, primary, middles and high schools, free hostels, Bal Sanskar Kendra’ Balawadi, informal schools, Libraries etc. The Kalyan Ashram is also active in areas of economic development, women empowerment, self-help groups etc (VKA 2010a). The Shraddhajagaran is providing awareness about the Hindu customs and tradition to the Adivasis. Through the voluntary activities, the Sangh has been trying to communalise the Adivasi space and mobilise them against certain ‘threats.’ The Sangh is following a different cultural strategy among the Adivasis and Dalits. It is not directly imposing one meta-narrative of the past among the various caste groups. Rather it tries to “recreate, reproduce and revise the various forms of pastness” and linking it with an imagined past, which they called – the Ramarajya. Badri Narayan writes:

In this entire project, history and past have become essential components since the sense of pastness of these communities is being
evoked through the process of finding similarities with mythical or historical heroes belonging to these castes who suit the political ideology of the party concerned and with whom the caste members can easily identify themselves. These heroes, picked out from the myths, histories and legends present in the oral culture of these castes, are reinterpreted, recreated and reconstructed to suit the political ideologies of the party concerned, and are then transmitted back to the people as symbols of their caste identities (Narayan 2009:5).

Thus, the Sangh has been pursuing a policy by which it started penetrating into the local cultural celebrations of the Dalits and Adivasis and gradually bonding those cultural communities on the basis of Brahminical value system. They have been celebrating the mythical characters of those traditional communities in a colourful manner and adding Hindutva flavours to those celebrations. The heroes of these communities are imagined as the chivalrous warriors of the Hindu mythology (VKA 2010b). The Hindutva claimed that the Dalits and the Adivasis were the saviors and protectors of the Hindu religion, and they become detached from the Hindu religion because of the Muslim invasion. The leaders of the Sangh are propagating the notion that before the invasion of the Muslims, untouchability did not exist in the Hindu society. The conclusion derived from such stories spread by the Sangh Parivar combine is that the practicing untouchability and the existing pathetic condition of the Dalits are not because of the Brahminical social order but because of the domination by the Muslims (Narayan 2009:49-51).

The other Sangh organisations that began to make headway in the civil society were ‘Vidya Bharati’ (Indian Knowledge) established in 1977 to coordinate a network of schools, first developed by the RSS in the 1950s on the basis of local initiatives, and, Seva Bharati, (Indian Service) created in 1979 to penetrate India’s slums through social activities such free schools, low-cost medicines, etc. (Jaffrelot 2007: 19; Jaffrelot 2005). Perhaps the most recent and controversial one emerged in the Sangh family is Bajrang Dal. The VHP was instrumental in the creation of the Bajrang Dal, which is a militant organisation based on the ideology of Hindutva. Established in October 1984 in Uttar Pradesh in the background of the Ayodhya movement, it began to grow in other states in the country. This militant outfit is claimed to have more than a million members of whom nearly a lakh are workers, and is functioning through its akhadas
(like RSS Shakhas). The word ‘Bajrang’ connotes the Hindu deity Hanumān. The Dal’s main slogan is "service, safety, and culture." The major agenda of the organisation has been protecting India’s Hindu identity from the perceived ‘dangers of communism,’ Muslim ‘demographic growth’ and ‘Christian conversion,’ preventing cow slaughter, building the Ram temple in Ayodhya, the Krishna temple in Mathura and the Kashi Vishwanath temple in Kashi Varanasi. Bajrang Dal, like VHP and RSS, generated fear-psychosis about Islamic jihad in India and declared that they were engaged in the campaign across the nation. Bajrang Dal differs from the 60-odd other affiliates of the RSS in that it is not directly controlled by the Sangh. It has no organic all-India structure and is federalised to the point of being anarchic. Loosely put, it is a banner under which gangsters with Hindutva leanings have gathered in state after state. Prevention of both cow slaughter and Hindu-Muslim marriages apart, the Bajrang Dal was at the forefront of the anti-beauty contest agitation, anti-Valentine’s day etc (Singh and Mahurkar 1999). As an organisation within the fold of the Sangh Parivar, it has come to be handy for channelling the fury of an underclass whose utility as ‘foot soldiers’ is useful on occasion while allowing BJP to promptly dissociate itself from any outrageous act of violence(Bajrang Dal 2001). However, the reports established that the Bajrang Dal was in the forefront of the demolition of the Babri Masjid and the related riots in the 1990s.

In sum, the Hindu Right in India has been deeply involved in mobilising the masses through extensive network of organisations. The ideology of Hindutva has been propagated by the Sangh organisations through its aggressive interventions in the civil society realm. The focal point of mobilisation is ‘self/other’ dichotomy and its inevitable cultural logic of securitisation. The process of Hindu Right assertion further gathered momentum in the 1980s and 1990s in the wake of the social dislocations caused by economic liberalisation and neoliberal reforms.