CHAPTER-IV

DEFINING HINDU NATIONALISM

This chapter examines the philosophical bases of Hindu Rashtra or Hindu nationalism. Five major ingredients of Hindu nationalism are the land race, religion, culture and language. The Hindu nationalists make an attempt to equate democracy and majoritarianism, that is the persuance of 'a permanent unbeatable majority which would place (large groups) in power for ever'.

The ideas, philosophy and theoretical perspective have been developed by its founders like Veer Damodar Savarkar, Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, Madhav Rao Sadashiv Golwalkar and Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay.

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar was one of the founder members of 'Abhinav Bharat', a revolutionary organisation. He was quite active during freedom struggle and wrote the famous book entitled 'Indian War of Independence 1857'. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar was one of the founders of RSS in 1925. Madhav Rao Sadashiv Golwalkar was the prominent member of RSS and the noted ideologue of 'Hindu Rashtra' who wrote two major books concerning Hindu nationalism. The first work is 'We or our Nationhood Defined' and the second is 'The Bunch of Thoughts'. Deen Dayal Upadhyay

---

another important member of the RSS who wrote the book called *Integral Humanism*, which is based upon the philosophical basis of Hindutva.

The concept of Hindu nationalism conceived and understood as, "The philosophy based upon a broad agreement that the majority should set the goals of Indian state."\(^2\) The attempt is to translate a religious majority into a political majority. Proponents are of the view that Indian territory is known as the 'Hindusthan'-(the land of Hindus); secondly, the race is Hindu and so is the case with religion, culture and language. Therefore, India fulfils all the five basic requirements of any modern concept of nationalism namely: (i) land, (ii) race, (iii) religion, (iv) culture, (v) language, which are in their essence 'Hindu'.

Hence, they argue that there is no question of redefining India as 'Hindu Rashtra'. It has already been there since time immemorial. It is the territory which can be termed as 'Asetu-Himachal' meaning thereby the land or territory between the Himalayas in the North and ocean in the South of it. Since the land has been visited by God in its different incarnations. Ram and Krishna took their births here on this holy land; sages and saints came and preached for the betterment of mankind. People made their supreme sacrifices in the interests of the community. It is the greatness of this ancient culture and civilisation which compels us to equate it with the Goddess; it must be worshipped.

The proponents consider India as their Matribhumi (motherland), Pitribhumi (father land) and Devabhumī (the land of God). It is sacred. The advancement made in the field of scientific discoveries, i.e., in mathematics and medical sciences, values and philosophy of humanities is something unparallel in the entire human history. We believe in 'Vasudhaibakutumbakam' (the whole world is one great family). However, over the centuries degeneration took place after foreign invasions particularly by the two great religious groups, i.e. (i) Islam and (ii) Christianity. Consequently, it becomes the bounden duty of each and every Hindu to rediscover his/her glorious past and once again establish the lost honour and dignity of mother India. Precisely, this is the crux of Hindutva philosophy.

The major forces of Hindutva included upper strata of Hindu society. Traditionally, it has been categorised as its political support base in terms of 'Brahmins and Banias' concentrated in urban areas. There have been several socio-religious and political formations like Hindu Mahasabha, RSS, Bharatiya Jan Sangh, again as the part of Janata Party during emergency and later on, the formation of Bharatiya Janata Party after the split of Janata Party in 1980.

The major social forces of Hindutva included upper strata of Hindu society, the land owning class in the rural areas, traders and largely the business community in the urban areas. Its political support base has been categorised as the 'Brahmins and Banias' concentrated in the urban areas.
Several socio-religious and political formations have been associated with the idea of Hindu Rashtra and some of them are: Hindu Mahasabha, the RSS, Bharatiya Jan Sangh, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Shiv Sena and the merger of Jan Sangh in the formation of Janata party and finally the split on the issue of dual membership, i.e., the membership of both the Janata Party and RSS at the same time, which led to the new incarnation of Bharatiya Jan Sangh in the form Bharatiya Janata party in 1980.

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar wrote *The Indian War of Independence of 1857*, and before the publication of this book he wrote an article in *Talwar*, an organ of the Abhi Nava Bharat Revolutionary Society. It was started by him and published in Paris. The objective of his writing was to inspire his followers with a burning desire to rise again and wage a second and successful war to liberate their motherland.

The central crux of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's appeal is meant for the revitalization of Hindu Rashtra, Hindu Dharma which he calls 'Swadharma' and writes a chapter on 'Swadharma and Swarajya'. In this chapter on 'Swadharma and Swaraj', Vinayak Damodar Savarkar rejects the thesis regarding the revolt of 1857, which says, "Foolish people went mad simply at the rumour that catridges were greased with cows and pigs fats. Did anyone inquire as to whether the report was true? One man said another

---

believed because the second became disaffected, a third joined him, and so like a procession of blind men, 'a company of inconsiderable fools arose and rebellion broke out.' For him, it was not the product of such trifling incident and those who participated in that revolt of 1857 certainly did not belong to 'a company of inconsiderate fools'. Something more than that has to be explored.

Savarkar is of the view that the real causes of the French Revolution were not simply the high prices of grain, the Bastille, the kings leaving Paris or the feasts. These might explain some incidents of the Revolution but not the revolution as a whole. The kidnapping of Sita was only the incidental cause of the fight between Ram and Ravana. The real causes were deeper and more inward principles involved in it. Sarvarkar continues, "The great principles were Swadharma and Swaraj. In the thundering roar of 'Din, Din', which rose to protect religion when there were evident signs of a cunning, dangerous and destructive attack on religion dearer than life, and terrific blows dealt at the chain of slavery with the holy desire of acquiring Swaraj, when it was evident that chains of political slavery had been put round them and their God-given liberty wrested away by subtle tricks – in these two lies the root principle of the Revolutionary war."
He explains the relationship between 'Swadharma and Swaraj' as complementary to each other. He says, "Our idea of Swadharma, too, is not contradictory to that of Swaraj. The two are connected as means and end. Swaraj without Swadharma is despicable and Swadharma without Swaraj is powerless." Here, one can say the separation between religion and state power structure is simply impossible within this scheme of thought.

Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar is another important proponent of Hindu Rashtra. Taking one from Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's 'Swadharma and Swaraj', Golwalkar writes: "Apply the modern understanding of nation to our present conditions, the conclusion is unquestionably forced upon us that in this country, Hindusthan, the Hindu race with its Hindu 'Religion', Hindu language (the natural family of Sanskrit and her offsprings) complete the nation concept, that, in fine, in Hindusthan exists and must need exist the ancient Hindu nation and nought else but Hindu nation."

Golwalkar writes in his book, We or our Nationhood Defined and said, "we repeat", in Hindusthan, the land of the Hindus, lives and should live the Hindu nation-satisfying all the five essential requirements of the scientific nation concept of the modern world. The five essential requirements, are as follows:

---

6 Ibid., p.10.
7 M.S. Golwalkar, We or Our Nationhood Defined (Nagpur: Gopal Printing Press, 1939), p.44.
8 Ibid.
1. Land of Hindus (Hindusthan)

This is our sacred land, Bharat, a land whose glories are sung by the gold – Gowalkar quotes a Sanskrit 'Shloka' which says – "The men both in the land of Bharat, the gateway to heavens and salvation are more blessed than the gods themselves – so sing the gods – a land visualized by Mahayogi Aurobindo as the living manifestation of the Divine Mother of the Universe, the Jagmata, the Adishakti, the Mahamaya and the Mahadurga, who has assumed concrete four to enable us to see her and worship her." 

'Asetu-Himalaya' – from the Setu to the Himalayas – has been our clear concept all down these ages. Gowalkar further explains long ago our forefathers sang: "the land to the north of the oceans and south of the Himalayas is called Bharatvarsha, and Bharatis are her children" (it's a translation of the Sanskrit Shloka). Therefore, Hindu Rashtra fulfils the criteria of its own geographical territory. That for any race to live the life of a Nation it is essential that it should have a territory of its own, delimited as possible by natural geographical boundaries, is an unquestionable truth. Indeed such a piece of land is the physical basis of any National life. "Hindustan is the land of Hindus and is the terra-firma for the Hindu Nation alone to flourish upon." 

---

9 M.S. Gowalkar, Bunch of Thoughts (Bangalore: Vikrama Prakashan, 1966), p.79.
10 Golwarkar, n. 7 p. 44.
2. Race (Hindu)

Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar writes, "A race is a hereditary society having common customs, common language, common memories of glory or disaster in short, it is a population with a common origin under one culture. Such a race is by far the important ingredient of a Nation."\(^\text{11}\)

Again for the outsiders or foreigners, he advocates, "even if there be people of a foreign origin, they must have become assimilated into the body of the mother race and inextricably fused into it... if the mother race is destroyed either by the destruction of the persons composing it or by loss of the principle of its existence; its religion and culture, the nation itself comes to an end."\(^\text{12}\) He further emphasizes the point, "we will not seek to prove this axiomatic truth, that the race is the body of the Nation, and that with its fall, the nation ceases to exist."

For Golwalkar, only those movements are 'National' which aims at rebuilding, revitalizing and emancipating from its present stupor, the 'Hindu Nation'. Those only are nationalist patriots who, with the aspiration to glorify the Hindu race and Nation next to their heart, are prompted into activity and strive to achieve that goal. All others are either traitors and enemies to the National cause, or to take a charitable view idiots.\(^\text{13}\)

\(^\text{11}\) Ibid., p.45.
\(^\text{12}\) Ibid., p.21.
\(^\text{13}\) Ibid.
3. Religion (Hindu)

Here, the claim that is being made is the specificity of Hindu Religion. "The first special characteristic that strikes the eye of an outsider is the bewildering variety of sects and sub-sects like Shaiva, Vaishnava, Shakta, Boudha, Jain, Sikh, Lingayat, Arya Samaj etc., obtaining in the elastic framework of our Dharma."14

The great masters and sponsors of all these 'Upasanas' (religious practice) founded these various forms of worship to suit the various mental aptitudes of our people, but in the last analysis referred them all to the same goal of realizing the 'ultimate truth' - variously called Brahma, Atma, Shiva, Vishnu, Ishwara or even Soonya or Maha Shoonya.15

Here, 'Dharma' is a determinant of the conduct of groups and individuals. Dharma lays down a synthesis of the claims of conflicting parties. Proponents of 'Hindu Rashtra' appeals for 'Prakrama-vad'. To quote from 'Bunch of Thoughts', "we must revive once again the Prakramavad. For who lives here was a 'Rashtra Dharma' (national responsibility), a Samaj Dharma (duty to society), a Kula Dharma (duty to ancestors), his Vyakti Dharma (personal faith), Raja Dharma in which the state is treated as the agent of common good and now it may be designated as the Rajya niti or Rajya

14 Ibid., p.101.
15 Ibid.
Dharma.\textsuperscript{16}

4. Culture (Hindu)

Hindu culture is the basis of 'Hindu Rashtra'. Golwalkar says, "we have a current of life, which we call 'Sanskriti' (culture) which instils sublime qualities of (a) purity, (b) character, (c) fortitude and (d) self-sacrifice in the individual, enabling him to attain the highest goal of human existence. That stamp of culture is the manifest even in our day-to-day life sublimating the mundane into the transcendant.\textsuperscript{17}

5. Language (Hindu)

Hindu language is the fifth essential element of 'Hindu Rashtra' (Hindu Nation). It is said, "every race living in its own country evolves a language of its own, reflecting its culture, its religion, its history and traditions."\textsuperscript{18} Supplementing it with another is dangerous for national existence.

In the context of 'Hindu Rashtra' the claim of multi-lingualism is rejected and it is said, "there is but one language, Sanskrit. Of which these many 'languages' are mere offshoots; the children of the mother language, Sanskrit, the dialect of the Gods, is common to all from the Himalayas to the ocean in the South from East to the West and all the modern sister languages

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p.xxii.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p.26.
are through it so much inter-related as to be practically one".\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p.43.}

Proponents make the claim, all those not belonging to the national, i.e. Hindu race, religion, culture and language naturally fall out of the pole of real 'National' life. Golwalkar emphatically says, "we respect, in Hindusthan, the land of the Hindu Nation – satisfying all the five essential requirements of the scientific nation concept of the modern world."\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p.44.}

The term Hindutva is not synonymous with Hinduism, V.D. Savarkar says, "Hindutva is not a word but a history." Hinduism is only a derivative, a fraction, a part of Hindutva. An "ism" is a theory, a doctrine or a code more or less based on spirituals or religious dogma or system. For Hindu nationalists, modern democratic laws and institutions do not make a nation. Emotions and loyalty do. A comparative study by Ashutosh Varshney in his article, "Contested Meanings" highlights the fact that pluralism of secular nationalism is embodied in laws such as personal laws and the protection of minority educational institutions and in political institutions such as federalism. On the contrary, Hindu nationalists would suggest that laws can always be politically manipulated,\footnote{Nanaji Deshmukh, \textit{Rethinking Secularism} (Delhi: Suruchi Prakashan, 1989); H.V. Sheshadri et. al., \textit{Why Hindu Rashtra} (Delhi: Suruchi Prakashan, 1990).} and a proliferation of pro-minority laws has not led to the building of a cohesive nation. Instead, fissiparious tendencies have regularly erupted. Therefore, rather than running away from Hinduism, which is the
source of India's culture, one should explicitly ground politics in Hinduism not in laws and institutions. "The Hindu Rashtra is essentially cultural in content, whereas the so called secular concept pertains to the state and is limited to the territorial and political aspects of the nation. The mere territorial-cum-political concept divorced from its cultural essence can never be expected to impart any sanctity to the country's unity. The emotional binding of the people can be furnished only by culture and once that is snapped then there remains no logical argument against the demand by any part to separate itself from the country."  

There is a clear fluctuation between the two meanings of Hinduism:

- Hinduism as a culture; and
- Hinduism as a religion.

Sometimes the proponent says, "Hindu is not the name of a religious faith like the Muslim and Christian, it denotes the national life here."  

L.K. Advani, the then President of BJP, once argued that "since Hinduism is the description of the nation, Muslims could be called Muslim Hindus, Sikhs could be called Sikh Hindus, and Christian could be called Christian Hindus."  

While making speeches for the liberation of Lord Ram's birth place, their phraseology is imbued with religious imagery and the rituals are sanatani

---


23 Ibid.

(religious in idol-worshipping sense). Hence, it is not at all clear what the intended distinction between religion and culture is for Hindu nationalists. They are correct that the term Hindu in its original meaning stands for those who lived in Hindustan (the everyday term for India in much of the north), over the last few centuries the term "Hindu" has become a religious term, and "Indian" has replaced Hindu, for the civilizational meaning. Hence, in the course of historical development labels acquire new meanings.

For a secular nationalist, the two specific terms – religion and culture are clearly separable. Syncretism and tolerance are the features of all religious communities in India, and not simply of Hinduism. A celebration of Indian culture does not require one to be a Hindu only. For a Hindu Rashtravadi (a Hindu nationalist), the two terms – India and Hindu are synonymous. They make no special attempts to incorporate Muslim symbols into their conception of culture. The Hindu nationalist's attitude to the great monuments such as the Taj Mahal remains unclear. Many people object even to the Muslim names of North Indian cities. Aligarh, they say, should be called Harigarh, Allahabad – Prayag, Lucknow – Lakshmanpur.25

Hindu Rashtra and its Social Structure

Hindu nationalists say that the Hindu society has evolved from 'Purush' (supreme person) and the four-fold social divisions to the mouth, arms, thigh

and feet of the supreme person or 'purush'. The analogy is based upon the organic conceptualization of Hindu society. There is a powerful persuasive argument for the specific purpose of Hindu social unity and harmony. It is on this basis that 'Hindu Rashtra' is invented and strengthened. The Hindu revivalists employed it to emphasize inter-dependence of all members of a hierarchical society where the domination and subordination are implicit, even then, they would suggest the necessity of a single political system at the national level. Therefore, Hindu Rashtra stands for an organic social body which functions properly when individuals perform their economic, social and religious duties (Dharma). Over the centuries it has been observed that Hindu society has become weak and disorganized, because people fail to understand 'dharma' clearly and observe it correctly.

The protagonists of 'Hindu Rashtra' perceived disintegration of the so-called united Hindu society. The malady of possible disintegration was traced back to Islamic invasions of India; approximately at 1000 A.D. The possible disintegration and degeneration has been there because of the primary reasons. Firstly, to M.S. Golwalkar, the creative Hindu thought ceased to inform Hindu society about new ways to respond to changing conditions. Secondly, the allegation is that Islam and Christianity have been responsible for the disintegration of the united Hindu society. Unlike this proposition a sociological inquiry would suggest that internal factors of disintegration have

26 The passage, explaining the origin of the caste system is found in the 12th verse of the 19th hymn of Mandala 10 of the Rig Veda.
always been stronger than any particular external factor. There has been an inbuilt hierarchical societal structure based on domination and subordination, superiority and inferiority, purity and impurity etc. The oppressed section of caste based Hindu society tolerated the unequal, inhuman, social structure and that cannot be treated as voluntary acceptance. It was really a case of 'powerless intolerance'. Therefore, the social base of 'Hindu Rashtra' which is claimed to be plural, open, tolerant and democratic may be philosophically true but not in actual practice. Philosophically it might have been open but socially closed. In brief, it was the tolerance of powerlessness.

In the opinion of Raja Shekhar Vundru, a civil servant, during the golden period of Hindu Rashtra, Dalits were feeding on carcasses, lurking like animals in the day with a status worse than an animal and conditions of life worse than a million genocides of a Hitler. "The greatness of Dalits lies in their confidence to accept the ultra-subhuman existence and breed dasyus, menials, slave, asuras, Chandals, untouchables, unparallel and unrecorded in the history of world civilizations".  

Therefore, the claim that external hostile forces have been there to plot against the Hindu nation is not true. Its seeds of self-destruction have always been there. Even then, the Hindu Rashtravadi (Hindu nationalist) would say that there were two types of identified potentially disruptive forces.  

1. Muslims and Christians who propagate values that might result in the
denationalization, and
2. The 'westernized' elite who proposes capitalism, socialism or
communalism as solutions for India.

The argument against Christian is that they are culturally different. In the
historical processes they have completely separated themselves from the
national soul, and 'Hindu Dharam' is the only repository of the 'nation's soul'.
Prof. Shankhdher goes a step further and suggests, 'Hinduise politics,
secularise the nation... in the sense that state would be rescued from the
clutches of pseudo-secularists.'

Way back in September 1963 the Organizer (the RSS ideological
mouthpiece) charged that subjects taught in the Christian schools of a tribal
area in North Eastern India are typically western with no relation whatsoever
to the Indian environment. It is these students who coming out of the
missionary institutions agitate for the creation of Nagaland. The claim is
that Christian converts were given psychological affinity with the people of
western countries, hence, they are completely isolated from the national soul.

The allegation against Islam is a similar one. For a Hindu nationalist
Islam is a more serious threat to national integration or the realization of
'Hindu Rashtra'.

---

29 Sankhdher, Organizer (New Delhi), 10 February 1991.
30 Organizer, 3 September 1963.
Firstly, it is a serious problem because of the size of Muslim community; secondly, the recent history of communal animosity because Hindus and Muslims; thirdly, the existence of Islamic states in the subcontinent. To quote Golwalkar, "Muslims look to some foreign lands as their holy places. They call themselves "Sheikhs" and "Syeds". These two major sects '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 all their ancestral and national moorings of this land and mentally merged themselves with aggressors. "They still think that they have come here only to conquer and establish their kingdoms." 31

Hindu Rashtra and Western Challenges

For Hindu nationalists, democracy, capitalism and socialism are western concepts that have failed to improve the human conditions. To them these concepts are contrary to the traditional principles of Hindu thought, and they are completely bereft of spiritual content. Each of these concepts limits itself to the premise that man is a bundle of physical wants. Although they agree with the notion that passion is natural to man; but foreign philosophies stimulate the quest for material gratification which results eventually in greed and 'class antagonism' attitudes that lead to exploitation, social warfare and anarchy. On the contrary, Hindu philosophy offers an alternative, a blue print that minimizes social conflict and functionally links the various units together.

31 Golwalkar, no.6, p.128.
Hindu nationalists are of the view that the transformation of man require revitalization of nation. Each and every number of the society should strengthen the nation itself. The ideal individual of a Hindu society has four virtues. The first is 'invincible physical strength'. Physical strength means calm resolve needed for commitment to disciplined activity. The second virtue is character, a personal resolve to commit oneself to a noble cause. These two virtues must be guided by 'intellectual acumen', i.e. the third virtue. Lastly, 'fortitude' is a virtue which permits the honourable person to persevere in virtuous life characterized by industriousness combined with a zealous and painstaking endeavour, i.e. Dharma. Here, the life is considered a struggle against disorder, anarchy and it requires organized calculation and systematicendeavour.

Hindu nationalists are of the view that disorder and anarchy in any society are strengthened by human passion. Therefore, the individual must diligently tame and discipline his energies. The inspiration for fundamental reform would have to come from a loftier source, i.e., classical Hindu tradition and character building training.

Critics would say that the aforesaid picture of the so called united Hindu society is not complete because the whole tradition of materialistic philosophy has been completely ignored. The philosophy of Lokayat and Charvaka has not been discussed, interpreted and understood in its proper context.
Sources of Hindu Rashtra

The sources of Hindu Rashtra are traced in the ancient scriptures. One of the important sources of Hindu Rashtra is the philosophical stream of 'Advait Vedanta'. It provided core concepts around which solutions for revolutionizing society have been constructed. Different sub-schools of Vedanta are based on Upanishads, a set of over two hundred texts which Hindu commentators have traditionally considered divinely inspired wisdom.

_Upanishads_ as a system of knowledge explores the relationship of the individual soul to the universal soul. It is a philosophy of non-dualistic monism systematically formulated around 800 A.D. by Shankara.

The central crux of the argument is that material world is created by spiritual energy which emanates from universal soul. The Brahma as God knows that the created world in his object and only Ishwara is the true reality. Illusion (maya) is manifested when the impermanent divine object is perceived as the real which is not. It is something like Hegelian scheme of thought in which the only thing permanent and immanent is the 'Giest' and its manifestation in the lived experienced of life. This is also an attempt at mystifying human history, a metaphysical argument which covers the objective reality of human social existence.

---

The process of acquiring knowledge is discussed in details. Jnana (knowledge) of the truth is achieved through meditation. Meditation is preceded by correct observance of dharma. Moral perfection and religious devotion enable the seeker after truth to perform his worldly obligations with detachment and humility, the psychic state required for the search or enlightenment. This doctrine was developed during the discourse between Lord Krishna and Arjuna in the Bhagwad Gita, Krishna informs Arjuna that an act performed without thought to its consequences, i.e., 'Nishkama Karma' hence it leaves no 'karmic' bonds that link the soul to a future of material existence.\(^3^3\)

The traditional Hindu social structure suggests three genetic codes: (a) Satva (clarity), (b) Rajas (activity, and (c) Tamas (darkness). These genetic codes are something inbuilt in human nature. Naturally, these codes are determinant of individuals' talent. In the conventional Hindu practice, Dharma is that set of obligations observed by the Jati. The 'jati' is a community into which a person is born, lives and dies. Therefore, the location of individual is fixed by the Hindu social belief system. The individuals are to contribute to the well being of the national body in a way that does not result in conflict between its constituent parts. Such a person is referred to as 'Karmayogin'. In its most developed form Karma-yoga is combined with a form of Bhakti-yoga.

Deification of Rashtra

The Hindu Rashtra (Hindu nation) is equated with Goddess which is almighty. It is the Bhakti-yoga, as a philosophy that leads to the deification of 'Nation'. The nation is equated with God and Goddess. Here is the attempt by the Sangh Parivar to redefine Indian nationalism in terms of Hindu nationalism and equate the concept with God and Goddess. Hindu nationalism is identified with living God, Jagamata, Adishakti, Mahamaya, Mahadurga, Matribhumi, Dharmabhumi, Mokshbhumi etc. In this scheme of Hindu nationalism, the primary goal is to prepare the mind of individuals to act in detached manner for the well-being of the divine object, the 'Hindu nation'. Here, the mental progression of individuals is seen as bursting through a set of circles of attachment. Here, the individual is expected to experience a greater loyalty to the nation than to any other lower form of attachment.

The metaphor of 'Divine Mother' is used to describe both the nation and the sacred geography where the nation resides. The nation and its sacred geography are considered to be the material emanations from the 'shakti' (power). The Goddess may have benign and negative aspects as creator, sustainer and destroyer. The mother image informs feeling for the homeland that piece of earth which was nourished and sustained the people. Throughout, the 1980s and 1990s the BJP, RSS and VHP combine has used the symbolic expression of mother Goddess in mass campaigns to inspire loyalty to their version of nation-state with specific purpose in mind to capture the power.
The concept of 'sacred geography' is one of the most important aspects of Hindu nationalism. It consists of an impressive amount of real estate. M.S. Golwalkar made a powerful argument in favour of a 'sacred geography' of mother India. For him, "Extending from Iran in the West to the Malay peninsular in East – India is one." In fact, the whole area is the part of Bharat Mata (mother India), which could be brought together into some kind of political relationship. It is the unification of all these geographical territories that will create 'Brihatar Bharat'. In addition to an ambitious sacred geography and the dilemma of bourgeois communal politics, the nation is said to have a soul – defined as 'chiti' in classical Hindu mythology. Chiti is a kind of higher law that takes precedence over any political institution or man made rules. It determines the social frameworks within which Dharma is worked out. The concept of national soul is strongly based on the assumption that the cultural heritage of India is desired from a common source.

M.S. Golwalkar emphasizes the commonality of sources of 'Hindu Rashtra'. He says, the philosophy of life, the same goal, the same supremacy of the inner spirit over the outer gross things of matter, the same faith in rebirth, the same adoration of certain qualities like 'Brahmacharya', 'Satya', the same holy Sanskars (rituals) are some of the common sources of Hindu Rashtra.

34 Golwalkar, No.6, p.140.
Finally, the same blood flowed through all these limbs of our society. Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar makes sweeping generalizations comes to the conclusion that the people in the South were always considered to be as much Aryan as those in the North and that source of inspiration for all those Dravidian languages has been that queen of languages, the language of God – 'Sanskrit'.

Only the people of great insight, the sages are considered to be most legitimate interpreters of the 'national soul'. In fact, they are commentators on the higher law of the Hindu society. They are beyond the laws of ordinary men. They speak for higher authority. If that is the case it would be an argument entirely against the concept of people's democracy public opinion and democratic process of people's participation in decision making body. The ultimate authority of interpretation of human laws is with the traditional sages.

On the contrary, the post-renaissance phase of human history in a nation-state is the assertion of human rights and authority as well as the total rejection of metaphysical, supernatural entity. Modern philosophy is the philosophy of this world, a philosophy of 'here' and 'now', a philosophy of human dignity and assertion, as a maker of his own destiny. Therefore, it is a serious attempt with vested interest to mystify the human history of a nation-state in terms of 'Hindu Rashtra'.

---

35 Upadhyay, No.25, p.52.
The Hindu Self and Others

The politics of Hindu Nationalism is based upon majoritarianism of a particular religious community. It has its own specificity and the context. It has two major aspects: (i) the self and (ii) others. The attempt of defining 'self' has never been something new to India. Although, under the alien rule, the context and content both were different. Christophe Jaffrelot is right when he says, "the attempt of defining the 'self' and tradition of Hindu nationalism has a long history going back to the 19th century. Hindu nationalism as a concept was evolved and constructed as a powerful ideology between the 1870s and the 1920s."

Hindu nationalism has been derived from socio-religious movements initiated by high caste Hindus. The Arya Samaj was established in 1875. Most of the socio-religious organizations were set up in reaction against the British colonial state and 'Christian missions'. The central concern of these socio-cultural and religious movements was to maintain the essential elements of the traditional social order and culture of the Hindus. There was also an attempt to adopt Indian tradition and mould it in the context of changing western society and its impact.

The tension between cultural preservation and modernization was solved temporarily through the invention of a distant 'Golden Age', which was claimed to be both indigenous and in accordance with modern values. The

---

idea of the 'Golden Age' was to become one of the cornerstones of Hindu nationalism.

The specificity of this 'golden age' lies in the creation of Hindu majority community. Moreover, the communal politics of today draws its sustenance from history, from its interpretations, reinterpretations and selective appropriation. It seeks to construct an imagined past in order to legitimize its view of the present.\(^37\) The Hindu nationalists seek to justify everything by history, 'they invoke and instrumentally use myths only when history fails them, and they absolutize history in a way that abridge and delegitimize the open hermeneutics of myths, legends and epics of Indian civilization.'\(^38\)

Finally, they claim, it may not be a history or scientific truth but it is a matter of faith (particularly Ramjanma Bhoomi and Babri Masjid Controversy). The term 'faith' is itself unquestionable something equal to uncaus-cause God, Himself. It becomes pure, sacred, beyond logical reasoning and does not come under the realm of modern physics rather metaphysics.

National Movement, Hindu Nationalism and the Politics of Communalism

Hindus and Muslims had fought together in the revolt of 1857. The clash of interests of Hindus and Muslims was by and large non-existent in the press during the 1860s. The identity that the North Indian newspapers


\(^{38}\) For details, Ashis Nandy, Mayaram Trivedy and Yagnik (eds.), *Creating a Nationality* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.61.
emphasized was that of the *Hindustanees* especially vis-à-vis Europeans or British rulers.\(^{39}\)

It was during the liberal phase of national movement that communalism had come into existence. Objecting the Congress demand for democratic elections, Syed Ahmad said, that this would mean that Muslims would not be able to guard their interests for 'it would be like a game of dice in which one man had four dices and the other only one.' He further expressed his fear, "any system of elections... would lead to Muslims falling into a condition of utmost degradation and the ring of slavery being put on them by Hindus."\(^{40}\)

It was not only the sense of insecurity of the minority community but the British conspiracy succeeded in creating the communal divide. Therefore, Syed Ahmad Khan and others were opposed to the demand for the democratic elections in 1887. Dufferin, the Viceroy and A. Colvin the Lieutenant-Governor of U.P., launched a frontal public attack on the Indian National Congress, once its anti-imperialist edge became clear. At the same time anti-democratic elements say, feudal, bureaucratic, conscious of its status in society were also getting their act together. They criticized the


Congress for basing itself on the principle of social equality among the 'lowly' and 'highly' born. \(^{41}\)

It was in this atmosphere that communal organizations both of the Hindu as a majority community and the Muslim as a minority community came into existence. All India Muslim League was founded in 1907 by a group of big zamindars, ex-bureaucrats and other upper class. Muslims like the Aga Khan, the Nawab of Dacca and Nawab of Mohsin-ul-Mulk, one of its supporters Viaar-ul-Mulk said, "God forbid, if the British Rule disappears from India, Hindus will lord it over it; and we will be in constant danger of our life, property and honour, the minority will lose its identity." \(^{42}\) This statement is firstly in the interest of a particular class above the communal affiliation of minority community. Secondly, there is a sense of insecurity and the fear of domination by the majority community. Therefore, its activities are not primarily directed against the alien regime. For them self-preservation was more important.

The class interest of Hindu-Zamindars, money-lenders, middle class professionals made them think of their own organizations. They fully accepted the colonial view of Indian history. They talked of 'tyrannical' Muslim rule in the medieval period and 'liberating' role of the British in 'saving'

---

\(^{41}\) Bipan Chandra and others (eds.), op. cit., p.242.

Hindus from 'Muslim oppression'.\textsuperscript{43} Urdu as the language of Muslims and Hindi as the language of Hindus, became the communal question in U.P. and Bihar – anti-cow slaughter propaganda was undertaken in the early 1890s, the Hindu communalists also carried on a regular agitation for a Hindu share of seats in legislatures and in government services.

Under this political atmosphere, the Punjab Hindu Sabha was founded in 1909. Its leaders, U.K. Mukherjee and Lal Chand were to lay down the foundations of Hindu communal ideology and politics. They directed their anger primarily against the Indian National Congress for trying to unite Indians into a single nation and for 'sacrificing Hindu interests' to appease Muslims. "A Hindu, Lal Chand declared, should not only believe but make it a part and parcel of his organism, of his life and his conduct, that he is a Hindu first and an Indian after."\textsuperscript{44}

In 1915, the first session of the All India Hindu Mahasabha was held under the presidentship of the Maharaja of Kasim Bazar. The two main leaders during the 1920s were Lajpat Rai and Madan Mohan Malviya. After these leaders, under the leadership of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, the Hindu Mahasabha took a sharp turn toward communalism. The RSS was founded by Keshav Baliram Hedgewar and Savarkar warned Hindus of the dangers of being dominated by Muslims. He said, "Muslims want to brand the forehead

\textsuperscript{43} Bipan Chandra et. al. (eds.), op. cit., p.417.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., p.418.
of Hindudom with a stamp of 'self-humiliation and domination' and to reduce the Hindus to the position of helots in their own land'. Again, in 1938, he repeated, "We Hindus are (already) reduced to be veritable helots throughout our land."  

It was in 1937, when Vinayak Damodar Savarkar became the President of Hindu Mahasabha. Under his leadership, the Hindu Mahasabha was projected as an alternative to the Congress and the Muslim League. Despite its interest in elections and party politics, it failed to make a major breakthrough. In the post independence India, it existed only as provincial Hindu Sabha and strongly identified with upper caste and socially conservative views.  

The militant organization of Hindu Rashtra, the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS) was founded in 1925. Its first leader was Keshav Baliram Hedgewar. He was succeeded by Madhav Rao Sadashiv Golwalkar (1940). He contributed to the development of the organization's philosophy. The Swayam Sevaks (volunteers) were encouraged to think of himself as a brotherhood. They were asked to dedicate themselves to the improvement of

---


Hindu society and to the eventual creation of a 'Hindu Rashtra' (Hindu Nation). The then head of RSS, M.S. Golwalkar, codified the RSS doctrine in his booklet, 'We'. In 1939, he declared if minority demands were accepted, 'Hindu national life runs the risk of being shattered.'

It was the same philosophy of 'Hindu Rashtra' which was accepted at the time of the formation of Bharatiya Jan Sangh. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee had raised the idea of a new party in 1951. He met Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar, the then RSS leader. Mukherjee told him that the new party could not be made subservient to any other organization. It was said that Hindu Mahasabha was "communal in as much as it believed in Hindu Rashtra". M.S. Golwalkar categorically said, "We of the RSS had equal, if not more emphatic belief in the Bharatiya Rashtra being 'Hindu Rashtra' and as such RSS would be for him equally deserving to be kept at arm's length. Mukherjee had to agree to this proposal and only them, Golwalkar assisted him in the formation of Bharatiya Jan Sangh (BJS). Finally, Golwalkar chose some of his colleagues, 'staunch and tried workers', to help in establishing new party.

47 Golwalkar, no.4, p.58.

48 B.D. Graham, Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1990), p.49.

During emergency Bharatiya Jan Sangh merged with the Janata Party and the party that came to power after emergency had inevitable split on the highly controversial issue of dual membership, i.e. the membership of the Janata Party as well as RSS/Bharatiya Jan Sangh. Therefore, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is the new incarnation of Bharatiya Jan Sangh which came into existence in 1980. Presently, the BJP led coalition is in power at the centre and its Prime Minister openly says, "my soul is in RSS"\(^{50}\) and the unfulfilled task of Ayodhya is the "expression of national sentiment".\(^{51}\) The idea of "Hindu Rashtra" is in the suspended animation and the national agenda of governance is the convenient policy and tactical move to stay in power.

**HINDU NATIONALISM AND DEMOCRACY**

The philosophy of Hindutva or Hindu nationalism is based on majoritarianism. The attempt is at the translation of the religious majority into a political majority. Hindu nationalists argue that the state should favour the interests of Hindus over those of Muslims because Hinduism is more tolerant than Islam.\(^{52}\) They argue that the nation-state of India treats Hindus and Muslims unequally in effect, proposes the denial of minority rights and religious liberty for Muslims. Consequently, it explains the BJP's opposition to

---

\(^{50}\) *The Hindu* (New Delhi), 12 September 2000, p.12.

\(^{51}\) Ibid.

the National Minorities Commission and its desire to abrogate Article 370 of the Constitution, which accords a special status to Kashmir. Amrita Basu says, "By opposing the state's attempt to protect minority interests, the BJP seeks to redefine democracy as majority rule, and minority rights as a matter of special bargaining. In the process it has transformed the universe of political discourse."53

This debate on secularism and nationalism, majority rule/minority rights has been explained by Rajeev Bhargav and he argues, "Words integral to the established vocabulary of democratic and liberal discourse were gradually detached from it, evacuated of their original meanings and recast, indeed hijacked for a new brand of extremist politics."54

In fact, democracy is a way of life, a humanitarian value which stands for the egalitarian approach towards the society. Rajeev Bhargav argues that Hindu nationalists conflate democracy with power ensconced in a permanent majority. "Democracy means neither the rule of the majority nor of a minority, but primarily the acceptance of a common framework that prevents the concentration of power in either. Since democracy is a central value of our constitution and majority rule is inimical to proper democratic functioning,

53 Ibid.
equating democracy with majority rule is neither fully democratic nor properly constitutional.65

CONCLUSION

The original texts of 'Hindu Nationalism' make references to five essential elements of 'Hindu Rashtra'. Veer Damodar Savarkar, Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar and Pandeet Deen Dayal Upadhyay unanimously agreed to the proposition of 'Hindu Nationalism' as the nation of Hindus. M.S. Golwalkar, in his book, We or Our Nationhood Defined, said, "we repeat, in Hindusthan, the land of Hindus, lives and should live the Hindu nation – satisfying all the five essential requirements of the scientific nation concept of the modern world. The five essential component of Hindu Nationalism as described by Golwalkar are: (1) Land (Hindusthan), (2) Race (Hindu Race), (3) Religion (Hindu Religion), (4) Culture (Hindu culture) and (5) Language (Hindu language). All these elements have been discussed in this chapter in details by making frequent references to the original texts. Therefore, there is no need to repeat the whole theme.

Taking the cue from its mentors of the RSS and proponents of 'Hindu Rashtra' – the BJP has projected the majoritarian identity as 'cultural nationalism' of India. The concept of 'Hindu Rashtra' (Hindu Nation) is regarded as ideal, one, unified, monolithic, based on socio-cultural identity of a particular religious majority community. This religious majority has to be

65 Ibid., p.69.
transformed into a political majority. Historically and in its practice facts speak for themselves. The Hindu society is completely fractured, fragmented, hierarchically organized with well defined status and role by the accident of birth, purity and impurity, high and low, touchables and untouchables faced against racial, ethnic, linguistic divisions and identities of their own are being ignored.

Over the decades several Hindu organizations have come up to organize and rally the majority community. The Hindu Mahasabha, the RSS (1925), the VHP (1964), Hindu Ekta Parishad and Shiv Sena are some of them. They have played their crucial role in promoting a sort of unification of the majority community. By appropriating the communal themes of these Hindu organizations the ruling party, Congress under the leadership of Smt. Indira Gandhi in the 1980s put unprecedented account of national security. The electronic and print media have their own major role in consolidating the sentimental appeal. Every night the message of a threat to 'Mother India' is beamed on the television.

The legitimacy was sought on the basis of a strong national identity. The paramount importance was given to the unity and integrity which in turn strengthened the process of centralization of political power. The excessive institutional centralization was based on the hope that this would promote an enduring cohesion and assimilation. Therefore, the powerful argument in favour of a federal structure with strong centralizing tendency has always found support and legitimacy. The Congress party used all these techniques.
to remain in power. Faced with the legitimacy crisis, and formidable challenge of the rightist forces, it made a sharp move towards pragmatic communalism in the 1980s with the promise of 'Ram Rajya', and did allow the 'Shila puja' at Ayodhya with the opening up the gate of (the most controversial structure) Babri mosque. Meanwhile, the crisis of governability and the corruption charges were being utilized to rally the masses against the then ruling party, i.e., the Congress in 1989.