The Political Economy of Religion and Politics in India

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Abstract. The paper will examine the dramatic rise of the right-wing Hindu organisations in India, especially since the 1990s. Most prominent among these organisations are RSS, BJP, VHP, Bajang Dal and Shiv Sena. However, they all work together under the philosophy of *Hindutva* (i.e. Hindu-ness) and are rabidly anti-minority in their stance. They appear to need an 'enemy' in the form of a religious minority to unite Hindus and consolidate their support. This study is important because RSS is too politically significant to be ignored. Since the BJP (BhartiyaJanta Party) came to power in May 2014, its ministers and senior party leaders have been coming out in support of *Hindutva*. Attacks against Muslims have risen sharply. Cultural issues such as cow slaughter and the building of the Ram temple at Ayodhya have been raised again by the RSS as a means of dividing communities and keeping Muslims in a state of constant fear and insecurity. This study argues that the failure of India's economic development to remove socio-economic constraints leading to slow and uneven development has intensified rivalry between castes and religious communities. Under such conditions, it became possible for extremist Hindu organisations to target people on the basis of religion.

Keywords. India, Hindus, Muslims, RSS, BJP, Hindutva, Communalism, and Violence.
JEL. N30, N35, N40.

1. Introduction

T his article examines the socio-economic basis of right-wing activism by Hindus in India. Most prominent among these organisations are RSS, BJP, VHP, Bajang Dal and Shiv Sena. However, all of them work together under the philosophy of Hindutva (i.e. Hindu-ness) and are rabidly anti-minority in their stance. Since the BJP (BhartiyaJanta Party) came to power, its ministers and senior party leaders have been coming out in support of the *Hindu rastra* (Hindu nation). They have stepped up their campaign against mixed-marriage with Muslims and have sought to rewrite textbooks to reflect the ideas of the RSS (RastriyaSevak Sangh, literally the Association of National Volunteers) (Sen, 2015). This study intends to analyse the ideas and philosophy of the RSS on the basis of the organisation's publications and public statements made by its leader.

The BJP is the political front of the RSS and most of the BJP leaders, including the Prime Minister Modi, have been members of the RSS. Even before becoming Prime Minister, Modi had reaffirmed his commitment to Hindutva: "The nation and Hindus are one. Only if Hindus develop will the nation develop. Unity of Hindus will strengthen the nation" (*Organiser* February 11, 2007 cited in Noorani,

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2015). BJP and RSS are fully committed to the ideology of Hindutva, which is deeply rooted in hatred of India's religious minorities, particularly Muslims and Christians. At present, the RSS has millions of members spread throughout most parts of India with more than 50,000 *shakhas* (branches). It also runs thousands of schools where young minds are poisoned with hate against Muslims. In Uttar Pradesh State alone, there are some 20,000 RSS-controlled *shishumandir* schools which teach that the Muslims and Christians are unreliable people stirring up hatred against both Muslims and Christians, with children being taught that both these groups are foreigners and outsiders. (Oza, 2007)

This study is important because the RSS is too politically significant to be ignored and since its political wing has come to power i.e. the BJP attacks against Muslims have risen sharply. Cultural issues such as cow slaughter and the building of a Ram temple at Ayodhya have been raised again by the RSS as a means of dividing communities and keeping Muslims in a state of constant fear and insecurity. The RSS/BJP also claims that mosques at *Kashi* (also known as Varanasi) and *Mathura* are disputed places of worship.

Since the BJP came to power in May 2014, religious minorities have begun to feel more insecure and vulnerable. Even government ministers and members of parliament have openly aired communalist sentiments, making hate speeches and inciting violence against minorities. In a recent public meeting, the BJP MP SakshiMaharaj is reported to have said that "Good days have come; now those with four wives and 40 children should not be allowed in the country" (cited in Vijayan & Gabriel, 2015: 22). The BJP leaders continue to spread false information about Muslims. They are also threatening to launch a *ghar-wapsi* (return home) programme, i.e. enforced conversion of religious minorities back to Hinduism. As The Economist (2015:71) commented: "The BJP's election victory last year was attributed to its promise of competence and good governance. It persuaded enough voters that the Hindu-nationalist part of its agenda and the shadow over […] past allegations of his [Modi's] complicity in anti-Muslim violence in the State of Gujarat in 2002 were marginal. Now many worry that Hindu nationalism is a pillar of Mr Modi's vision, after all".

The problem of communalism in India can be understood as a problem of community relation between Hindus and the Muslim minority. Prejudice and violence amongst India's religious communities did not decline after the creation of Pakistan and independence. (Siddiqui, 2013) If anything, the task of reassessing this situation and looking for a deeper understanding of it is even more important than it was previously. In the Indian context, communalism is defined as the 'political use' of religion. The paper seeks to examine why religious identity in India became so politicised in the late 1980s. Communalism is very much a ruling class politics, as it reflects an underlying relationship between class and power relations. The struggle against communalism should be linked with a much wider struggle against the existing social order, as Singh (1990:19) stresses that, "Communalism in contemporary India, as ideology and practice, is above all an aspect of the politics of the ruling classes in a society with a massive feudal-colonial inheritance, deep religious divisions, and undergoing its own, historically specific form of capitalist development".

Also we should not ignore the fact that since the 1980s socio-economic changes have taken place in the northern Indian cities, where a sizeable Muslim population live and work in handicrafts and small-scale industries. Some members of this community have migrated to the Middle East where the demand for their products has increased since the oil boom in that region. These developments have disturbed traditional patterns in which Muslim artisans were dependent on Hindu traders, both to sell their finished products and to provide them with the capital they

needed. The fact that some Muslim artisans have become independent entrepreneurs certainly exacerbated the antagonism between Hindus and Muslims. The local Hindu elites saw this changing situation as a threat and religion was used as a convenient tool with which to mobilise people. (Hasan, 1988)

However, despite these economic improvements for some Muslims in a few urban centres, socio-economic conditions for the vast majority of Muslims have deteriorated. For example, the Justice Sachar Committee Report found that socio-economic conditions for the Muslim community in India are abysmally low, marginally above that of Dalits and worse than backward castes. The Report particularly highlighted the under-representation of Muslims in government administrative services, police, and education, and their low levels of access to health facilities. (Noorani, 2014) This under-representation seems to be a conscious effort by the government to deprive them and exclude them from the government's beneficial social and economic policies fearing that Hindu extremists might see this as appeasement of Muslims. (Oza, 2007)

At present, India faces an immense threat from fascism in the guise of Hindu nationalism. The ideology of Hindutva has received widespread coverage in the press in recent years, but it is a crude attempt to camouflage upper-caste Hindu groups, who have used religion as a tool to maintain their hegemony over the vast majority of the Indian people. In terms of their everyday experience, there is virtually nothing which would be common to all Hindus and to talk about one single 'Hindu community' is misleading. Most Buddhists were converted to Hinduism and yet we are told that Hinduism is very tolerant religion. During British rule, in the census the tribal peoples were put into a separate category as following an 'animistic' religion; however, after independence this category disappeared from government records by the time of the 1951 census, and tribal peoples who had not converted to Christianity were recorded by the government as Hindus (Singh, 2015).

2. Economic Crisis and Neoliberal Reforms

When India gained independence, the industrial bourgeoisie supported the Bombay Plan as a blueprint for India's modernisation with active state intervention in the economy, especially in key areas such as infrastructure and education. Public investments were also seen necessary to build irrigation, electricity, and steel industries, a policy known as 'import-substitution industrialisation'. However, the deepening crisis in the late 1960s in the form of slowing growth rates, rising deficits and external debts (see Figure 1) led to the progressive de-regulation of the Indian economy with the aim of spurring growth and expanding the narrow growth market.

The 1980s witnessed the coming to maturity of India's bourgeoisie, who was initially sceptical towards foreign capital and competition. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Indian ruling elites also started to look for closer integration with global capitalism. By the late 1980s levels of public debts rose to unprecedented levels (see Figure 1) and also India experienced then sharp decline in exports and balance of payments crisis. To resolve it, the government decided to approach international financial institutions including IMF. (Siddiqui, 2015a) An IMF loan was sought in 1991 and, in return, India was asked to make changes to its economic policy and the economy was opened up, imports were liberalised and taxes on capital were reduced. As a result, in the period from 1991 to 2001 GDP growth increased by 5.7% annually (See Figure 2), which shows no significant increase over that of 1980s. With the adoption of neoliberal economic reforms, the inflows of foreign capital have rapidly increased in India as shown in the Figure 3.

The rate of inflation has also been higher until 2010 and since then it has declined (see Figure 4). More disturbing is that since 1997, the agriculture and manufacturing sectors, which account for more than four-fifths of India's workforce, have only grown 2.3% and 4.5% respectively, compared to the 11.5% increase in the financial services per year (Siddiqui, 2015b). Neoliberalism can be said to follow specific economic policies that may not be in the interest of the majority of the Indian people, but in the interests of finance capital (Siddiqui, 2012).

Series : External debt stocks, total (DOD, current US$)
Source: World Development Indicators
Created on: 07/20/2015
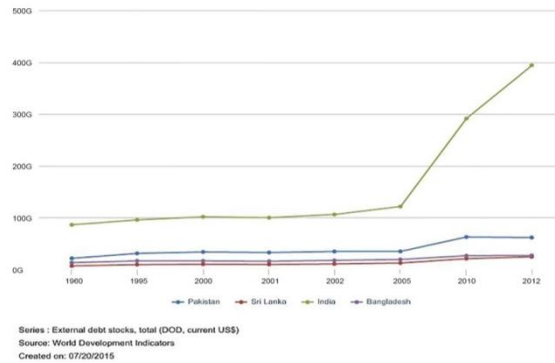
Figure 1. *External Debt Stocks, (current $ US)*
Source: World Development Indicator (2015) The World Bank.

Series : GDP growth (annual %)
Source: World Development Indicators
Created on: 07/20/2015

Figure 2. *GDP growth (annual %)*
Source: World Development Indicator (2015) The World Bank

Series : Foreign direct investment, net inflows (BoP, current US$)
Source: World Development Indicators
Created on: 07/20/2015
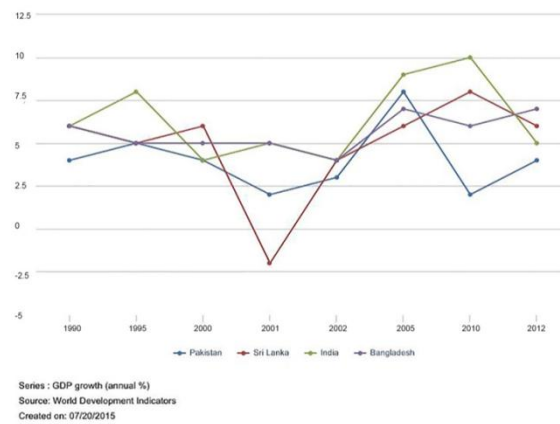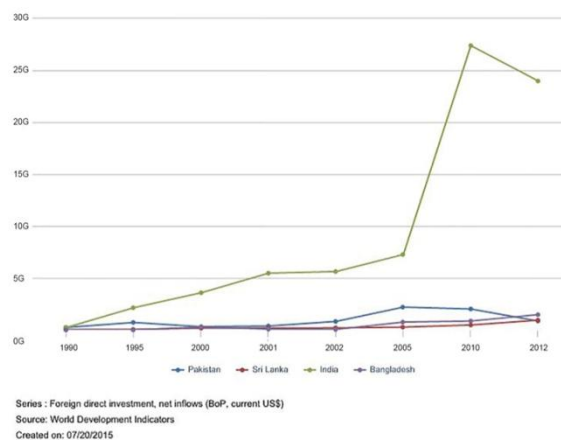
Figure 3. *Foreign Direct Investment, net inflows (Bop, current US$)*
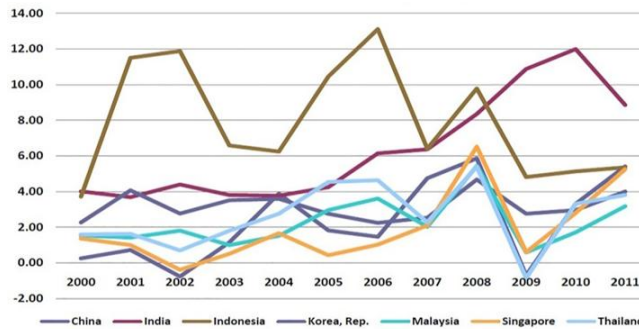**Source:** World Development Indicator (2015) The World Bank,

Figure 4. *Inflation, consumer prices (annual %)*
Source: IMF, national sources

The government has not paid much attention in recent decades to demand-side constraints, mainly focusing on supply-side constraints to alter the slow rate of industrialisation on the recommendations of the IMF and World Bank. We should not ignore the changing nature of the composition of both Indian and foreign markets. The reasons for the slow growth of industries could also explain lack of job creation. The sectoral shift in favour of services and economic liberalisation means the further opening up of Indian markets has led to the increase in imports of goods especially for the richer sections of society. Increased reliance on exports would mean Indian industries have to produce goods that are in demand on the world market, manufactured using modern technology, which is often labour-saving. Increasing reliance on MNCs, which employ capital saving technology and high import intensity of domestic manufacturing, reduces the employment elasticity of growth.

Neoliberalism insists on cutting fiscal deficits because it wants to reduce the capital expenditure of the state. This is based on the deeply flawed premise that the private sector will take the burden off the state, especially in a developing economy like India. Under neoliberalism, the market is assigned the supreme role and the state abdicates responsibility especially for tackling the enormous growing inequalities and making economic policies subservient to international finance capital. (Girdner & Siddiqui, 2008) Development is defined merely as an increase in growth rates achieved by "encouraging" inflow of foreign capital by multinational companies. Such pro-foreign business policy also requires facilitating corporate takeovers of domestic businesses, lands and mineral resources from rural people. (Siddiqui, 2014a)

During the second term of the Congress Party government, the economic crisis increased. At an aggregate level, the GDP growth rates sharply declined from 8.6% per annum in 2009-2010 to 4.7% in 2013-14. (Siddiqui, 2014b) The fiscal deficit also rose to new heights. In addition, the rate of inflation remained at very high levels of over 10% per annum for the period 2010-2014 whilst unemployment also remained high. Moreover, a large number of financial scams linked to the Commonwealth Games, 2G frequency allocations, and the coal scams further tarnished the government's image. Since the adoption of neoliberal reforms, India has undergone substantial transformation. The nature of exploitation has changed and some sections of society have become relatively affluent, while many others have faced dispossession and joblessness. The right-wing Hindu organisations were able to channel this discontent among the people and as a result the BJP led by Modi came to power in May 2014.

In the name of economic reforms, Modi's government strategy seems to be to cut subsidies, increase regressive taxes and capital expenditure and privatise public sector banks and state-owned enterprises such as the Indian Railways. It has also

undertaken capital expenditure projects such as setting up smart cities. All these measures will certainly accelerate the process of handing the Indian economy over to the big corporations, who financed him and supported his rise to power.

However, neoliberal policies to deliver growth are already exhausted. Providing a further dose will hardly provide any new impetus. In the recent past i.e. in 2008 with the advent of the global financial crisis, a number of measures helped to restore growth temporarily, including the provision of loans for housing and consumer goods to boost middle-class demand. (Siddiqui, 2014c) But this has its own limitations bringing the risk of credit bubbles and balance of payments difficulties given the high import content of middle-class consumption.

3. Religious Rivalry in the Colonial Period

Communalism is often viewed as the product of religion when in reality it is the product of competitive politics. It would be unfair to simply place all the blame for religious violence on British colonial rulers. However, divisions between Hindus and Muslims were aggravated during the colonial period when Muslims constituted about 25% of India's population. During the 1930s, difficulties arose regarding how to share political power in provincial governments and government jobs between Hindus and Muslims. This could not be resolved to the satisfaction of these two communities and as a result differences and tensions between the two communities widened. Religious issues such as cow slaughter and playing music in front of mosques became important conflict issues. This was deliberately done by the Hindu extremists to antagonise Muslims. (Engineer, 1995; Chandra, 1984)

The anti-colonial movement was massive in terms of popular participation, in the hopes of a more egalitarian society, but in practice did not go far enough to resolve caste and class contradictions. Instead it found it convenient to mobilise people on the basis of caste and religious identities. Episodes of religious violence were not witnessed in the pre-colonial period in India, only during British rule, and their intensity increased during partition in 1947. Moreover, the colonial government manipulated religious sentiments to their own advantage, as Chandra (1984:40-41)notes: "Communalism was an expression of and deeply rooted in the interests, aspirations, outlook and attitude and psychology and point of view of the middle classes in a social situation characterised by economic stagnation and the absence of a vigorous struggle to transform society–the communal question was a petty bourgeois question par excellence".

British rule had proved to be oppressive for both Hindus and Muslims. Moreover, British colonialism had impacted on Indian people in various ways. For instance the poverty, misery and indebtedness of the peasantry were increased. Dadabhai Naoroji estimated and examined the causes of poverty in the last decade of the 19th century in India. His findings were used by Indian nationalist leaders as an economic critique of British rule in India. Naoroji attempted to demonstrate statistically that poverty of India was attributed to specific imperial institutions and policies (Siddiqui, 1990). Summarising Naoroji's conclusions, Sarkar (2008:433-434) argues that this 'drain of wealth' to Britain was the result of the "remittances of government funds and profits of private British capitalists, excessive revenue pressures, an alleged destruction of indigenous handicrafts, hindrances to nascent Indian industries etc."

After India had been occupied, the British colonial rulers introduced three major changes in the land revenue policy of the earlier rulers such Alauddin Khiljee and Akbar. Under the Mughal rulers, if a peasant had access to, say, 100 acres but only cultivated only 50 acres, he was then only asked to pay revenue on the actual amount cultivated i.e. 50 acres. However, the British colonial rulers drastically

changed the basis of levying revenue from the land cultivated to the land owned. Under the British, peasants had to pay for the entire 100 acres of land, whether it is cultivated or not, and revenue was collected on the basis of land owned. (Bagchi, 2010)

Another difference witnessed was that under the Mughal system, revenue was collected from the peasantry after the crop was harvested, but whereas the British changed this to before the harvest, which meant that peasants were forced to borrow money in order to pay their rent. By introducing these changes the British were able to raise revenue, but indebtedness among the peasantry increased. Another major policy change which occurred was that under the Mughals, concessions were available in the case of crop failure, but the British discontinued such practices. In addition the Mughals re-invested some part of the collected revenue in the community, but under the British the entire revenue was either used to finance colonial wars taking place elsewhere or was repatriated to Britain. (Bagchi, 2010) As a result impoverishment increased, leading to increased inter-religious rivalry among people.

During the Mughal period, only peasants could acquire the land of another peasant. But this practice was changed by the British, who allowed anyone who had the money to do so to buy land and displace peasants. As a result, due to rising indebtedness, large amounts of land passed into the hands of money lenders and traders. Later on de-industrialisation took place in India, which led to the de-urbanisation of India's cities and as a result of India's declining textile exports, the urban population moved to the villages and thus agriculture was overburdened (Siddiqui, 1990). Moreover, the British colonial government played an important role in promoting sectarian consciousness and communalism in order to 'divide and rule', especially after the 1857 Mutiny. Then the colonial government began dealing with the two communities i.e. Hindus and Muslims separately. Hasan (1982:26) notes: "The introduction of separate electorates was one of such favours. It was also seen as a counterpoise to the growing strength of the anti-colonial movement. The principle of communal representation inevitably leads to the creation of political camps organised against each other and teaches men to think as partisans and not citizens".

It seems useful to briefly discuss the development of modern businesses in India, especially in the 20th century. Indian businesses are embodiments of pre-industrial forms of capital accumulation through money lending and trading. During the two World Wars and the Great Depression they had more freedom in the sense of setting up industries and had capital accumulation including black marketing and swindling in government contracts. British interests were more diverted towards railways, engineering, jute and tea plantations (Tyabji, 2015). Levkovsky (1966) also argues that development of businesses in India under British rule was very different from that in West European countries. Unlike in Western Europe, in India, the emergence of industries did not follow a transition from independent artisans to manually operated manufacturers to modern power-driven factories. In India, manufacturers were closely linked with the merchants' and usurers' capital. For a relatively long period, manufacturers continued to engage in money lending and trading along with industrial operations (Levkovsky, 1966).

In fact, merchant and usury capital and industrial capital are distinct forms of capital that employ different methods of accumulation. Merchant capital generates profits through buying and selling commodities, usury capital makes profits through the interest on loans advanced by money lenders, while industrial capital on the other hand makes profits by buying raw materials and employing workers and producing manufactured products and innovations of new products. In the

West European countries, with the expansion of industries the importance of industrial capital increased over time, while the merchant capital operation declined relatively. The usury role also declined over time with the decline of peasant-based agriculture. However, contrary to this, in India it did not happen, as Tyabji (2015:102) observed,"the existence of a class of businessmen does not automatically mean the existence of a group of industrially oriented entrepreneurs, because the development of industries is not necessarily the only money-making activity available to these businessmen…In the Indian case, colonialism and 'arrested development' formed the context within which emerged the group of businessmen responsible for managing industrial ventures after independence. They were part of an imperfectly formed group of industrialists possessing characteristics that reflected their background of engagement in non-industrial activities; activities which they continued to be involved, even as they acquired control over industrial companies".

4. The Ideology and Philosophy of the RSS

The RSS was founded by K.B. Hedgewar in Nagpur in 1925 and B.S. Moonje was also among its founder. (Noorani, 2000) All founders of the RSS were from the Brahmin castes of the Maharashtra. It is very interesting to mention here that in mid-1920 in Nagpur town a minor conflict took place between Muslims and Hindus due to the playing of loud music in front of a mosque. On this incident, Hedgewar and Moonje,who were both member of *Hindu Mahasbha*, actively participated and held protests on this issue. This is how the incident was described in Hedgewar's biography, "Because of the in-built fear of Muslims among the Hindus, the band troupes sometimes shirked to play before the mosque. On such occasions Hedgewar himself would take over the drums and rouse the dormant manliness of Hindus". (Despande & Ramswamy, 1981:71 cited in Bhatt, 2001:117)

Hindu Mahasabha (hence *Mahasabha*) is another rabid anti-Muslim organisation which has been working closely with the RSS. V.D. Savarkar was the president of the Mahasabha in 1937-42. He tried to define nationalism on the basis of identity through stigmatisation and 'threatening others'. The RSS is firmly established as an anti-minorities political group viewing the Muslim community in particular as 'threatening others'. According to him, Hindutva rests on three attributes:namely, geographical unity, racial features and common culture. His social and cultural characteristics stemmed from the mythical reconstruction of the so-called Vedic Golden Age. Savarkar wanted to see Muslims and Christian living in India as subordinates as according to him they represented 'others', who had converted few generations ago and he suggested they should be made to convert back to Hinduism (Savarkar, 1989).

Members of Mahasbha began as a pressure group within the Congress party. As a result of differences, its members were excluded from the Congress party in 1937 on accounts of communalist activities, but some important Mahasabha leaders continued to be part of Congress Party as Madan Mohan Malviyaalso happened to be also the founder of Banaras Hindu University.P. Tandon, who was the leader of the Congress Party in UP state, openly opposed to providing any recognition or preservation of a specificallyMuslim Indian identity. He said, "They [Muslim] should accept Indian culture. One culture and one language will pave the way for real unity. Urdu symbolises a foreign culture. Hindi alone can be the unifying factor for the diverse forces in the country". (Nation Herald, 15 June, 1948, p.7, cited in Jaffrelot, 1996:97)

Savarkar's ideas on religious minorities initially influenced the RSS. On Hindus, Savarkar (1989: 92) argues: "Hindus are bound together not only by the

ties of the love we to bear for a common fatherland and by common blood […] but also by the tie of the common homage we pay to our great civilisation – our Hindu culture, […] 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".

According to Savarkar, Muslims and Christians are not part of his concept of 'nation' because of their cultural differences. "Their [Muslims and Christians] holy land is far off in Arabia and Palestine. Their mythology and Prophets ideas and heroes are not the children of this soil. Consequently their names and their outlook smack of foreign origin" (Savarkar, 1989:113) When Savarkar took over as president of the *Hindu Mahasbha*, further close cooperation were developed between the two organisations i.e. RSS and *Mahasbha*. Even before him from 1926 to 1931 Hedgewar had been secretary of the *Hindu Mahasbha*. In 1939 at the 21st session of the *Hindu Mahasbha*, Savarkar compared the Muslim question in India with the Jewish 'problem' in Germany: "…the Muslims are on the whole more inclined to identify themselves and their interests with Muslims outside India than Hindus who live next door, like Jews in Germany". (*Bombay Chronicle*, 29 December 1939, cited in Casolari, 2000:224)

Golwalkar took over leadership of the RSS in 1940 and remained head of the organisation until his death some three decades later. Golwalkar said that only one 'race' (i.e. Hindus) constituted the nation in India. Golwalkar's book was published before the Muslim League Lahore Resolution (1940) in acceptance of two-nation theory (Golwalkar, 1939). He always emphasised that Hindus alone, as the privileged community in India, should rule the country. He did not approve of democracy which he thought of as being alien to the Hindu ethos and extolled the *code of Manu*, whom he admires 'as the first greatest and the wisest law giver of mankind'. On the question of non-Hindus, Golwalkar declared: "The non-Hindu in Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu religion […] or may stay in the country wholly subordinate to the Hindu nation claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment, not even citizen's rights". According to him: "in Hindustan exists and must needs exist [sic] the ancient Hindu nation and nothing else but the Hindu nation. All those not belonging to the national, i.e. Hindu race, religion, culture and language, naturally beyond the pale of real 'National' life… so long, however, as they maintain their racial, religion and cultural differences, they [minorities] cannot but be only foreigners". (Golwalkar, 1939:45-46)

Furthermore, the British colonial officials never considered the RSS to be working against their interests. Neither Hedgewar nor Golwalkar joined the anti-colonial movement, opting instead in favour of 'character building' tasks. (Bhatt, 2001; Anderson & Shridhar, 1987) Also L.K. Advani, leader of the BJP, narrates: "I joined [RSS] about the same time [1942] as the 'quit India' movement. I joined a couple of months earlier but my motivation was the conviction that India would neverattain independence by the methods the Congress was commanding. Much more was needed and the RSS approach used to be that unless we first build, form a nucleus of people willing to sacrifice their life for the country India would not become independent". (Interview with Advani on 11 February 1994, cited in Jafferlot, 1996:72)

Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy in the 1930's inspired the RSS leaders especially their dream to build an authoritarian and disciplined organisation as the Nazis had done. While supporting Nazi Germany for racial purity and national building, Golwalkar (1939:37) said: "To keep up the purity of the race and its culture, Germany shocked the world by her purging their country of the Semitic race – the Jews. Race pride is its highest has been manifested here. Germany has shown how well-nigh impossible it is for the 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 was strongly influenced by J.K Bluntschili's works namely the theory of the state. Bluntschili argues that there is an advantage to having one single nationality: "The contacts between fascism and Hindu Nationalism were the attempt to militarise Hindu society and to create a militant Hindu mentality among Hindus […] At an ideological level, the most meaningful effect of the fascist influence is represented by the way in which Hindu nationalism developed its own concept of diversity, transforming 'diverse' people into enemies. Of course, the concept of the internal enemy is already implicitly contained in Savarkar's *Hindutva*. Nevertheless, the continuous reference to German racial policy and the comparison of the Jewish problem in Germany with the Muslim question in India reveals the evolution of the concept of the 'internal enemy' along explicitly fascist lines". (Casolari, 2000:227)

There is clear evidence that the Hindu extremist organisations had links with the fascist parties in Europe. (Casolari, 2000) B.S. Moonje visited Italy in 1930, where he met Mussolini; other *Mahasbha* leaders such as S.P. Mookerjee also established contact with Italian academic institutions. The RSS leader Golwalkar himself used the definition of nation put forward by German Nazi writer J.K. Bluntschili, namely: "It is a union of masses of men of different occupation and social status, in a hereditary society of common spirit, feeling and race bound together especially by a language and customs in a common civilisation which gives them a sense of unity and distinction from all foreigners, quite apart from the bond of the state". (Golwalkar, 1939:19)

On the question of authoritarian and secrecy within the RSS organisation Bhatt (2001:116) notes, "The RSS organisation structures promote an authoritarian institutional secrecy that conceal the internal workings of the organisation and conflict and dissension within it, particularly conflict among its leaders… The RSS literature is also deeply imbued with a dense, carefully cultivated ideological language that inscribes its own political imaginary onto the realities it is ostensibly claiming to describe. One other factor relates to the RSS's description of itself as a 'non-political' organisation, an appellation that has permeated relatively objective studies of the RSS… for not participating in the anti-colonial movement and the conditions related to the lifting of ban on the organisation in the immediate post-independence period… [Despite that] the RSS has not refrained from active political interventions from its inception".

The RSS has always claimed that it is not a political but cultural and social organisation (Anderson & Shridhar, 1987). However, BJP leader and former Chief Minister of UP state Kalyan Singh contradicted, the above claim and he said: "I have spent a greater part of my life in this organisation [RSS] and I can say the right from the distribution of election tickets [to candidates] in BJP to selecting cabinet ministers, it is only the RSS which calls the shots. What else is political activity?" (Noorani, 2000:12).

5. Views on Historical Events

The communalist and sectarian views on past historical events are defined by the RSS as true nationalism. It emphasises that India belongs to the majority community and has been formed by their history, religion and culture alone. Due to the differences with Mahatma Gandhi on these very issues Savarkar dismissed him as a 'pseudo nationalist' (Savarkar, 1989). The RSS uses religious consciousness to mobilise Hindus for their narrow political ends.

Hindu communalist ideology is derived from historical and political assumptions and is thus unable to stand up to scrutiny on the basis of logic and rationality. Therefore, it is important to discuss some important historical facts. It is very important to understand history on the basis of facts, and a rational and logical explanation of history and any distortion of these facts may lead to wholly misunderstanding past events in India. Communalism in India draws its sustenance from a selective interpretation of history seeking to construct an 'imagined' past to support its views. As Panikkar (1997:73) explains, "The Hindu view highlights the glory of the ancient past and tries to appropriate its heritage, ignoring at the same time the rich contribution of the medieval period to the making of the composite culture of India." Furthermore, on the notion of Hinduism as a homogeneous religion, Panikkar (1997: 73-74) writes: "Did Hinduism as a coherent religion exist from ancient times? The early sources indicate that it did not; it was encompassed in a series of parallel systems, consisting of a large number of independent sects. These sects did not have a single source of origin. […] The historicity of Hinduism is a relatively recent construction, undertaken in the 19th century as a part of reformist-revivalist movements".

Similar points have been made by Romila Thapar. According to her, Hinduism has been practised in many ways, and the consolidation of this religion occurred after the Christian missionaries came to India, and Hindu reform movements began to consolidate against new challenges and tried to unify Hindus into one community. (Thapar, 1989)

Hindu extremists have been misleading the people on the issue of beef eating. They choose to forget that beef eating was common in ancient India, as Swami Vivekananda said on 2nd February 1900 in his talk on 'Buddhist India' in California, USA that 'Hindus on ceremonial and special occasions sacrificed bull and ate it. Beef eating was common among Aryans, during the Vedic period'. On the question of beef eating *Manusmriti*(Hindu religious book) in Chapter V provides details of different kinds of animals to be consumed. B.R. Ambedkar also wrote a paper titled 'Did the Hindus Never Eat Beef?' where he quoted from the ancient Hindu scriptures that beef eating was prevalent in ancient India or Vedic India. He concludes that "the Aryans of the Rig Veda did kill cows for purposes of food and ate beef".This is abundantly clear from the Rig Veda itself, as Rig Veda (X.91.14) narrates that 'sacrificed horses, bulls, oxen, barren cows and rams…[were] killed with a sword or axe" (Ambedkar, 1990:323).

The RSS assumes that Hindu culture and Indian nationalism is Hindu nationalism. The selective approach to looking at the past and only taking into consideration the Hindu experience denies the composite culture and traditions of India. Therefore, the RSS's interpretation of India's past is incorrect. Such an approach ignores the complex historical processes by which composite culture developed in India. Cultural development must embrace various sources which have come from different religions such as Buddhism and Jainism and also from religious influences which came from outside such as Islam and Christianity. As Panikkar emphasises that, "Whether India developed as a melting pot of cultures or only remained a salad bowl is no more the issue. The crucial question is whether Indian culture is conceived as a static phenomenon, tracing its identity to a single unchanging source, or a dynamic phenomenon, critically and creatively interrogating all that is new." (K.N. Panikkar cited by Hamid Ansari, April 2, 2016).

Looking at India's history through the religion of its rulers emerged during the British colonial period, when for the first time James Mill divided Indian history into three periods: the Hindu, the Muslim and the British. Such interpretations suited British colonial rulers, who were keen to hold on their power on the basis of

'divide and rule'. This religious-centred interpretation of history is wrong. To communalise historical events and characterise ruling class wars as religious strife is absolutely false. For example, the battle between Akbar and Maharana Pratap was purely for political power. There was no strictly religious division in the struggle, as both sides had the support of both Muslims and Hindus. The RajputHindu elites supported Akbar for territorial and political expansion. Similarly the battle between the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb and Shivaji and that between Tipu Sultan and Malabar local elites were the same; these were never considered religious wars. As Panikkar (1997:75) observes: "The Raja of Amber [who was a Hindu Rajput] sided with [Mughal emperor] Akbar against Maharana Pratap. Sultan Mahmud Lodi and Hasan Khan Mewati assisted Rana Sanga against Babur; and the Sultan of Jaunpur joined forces with a Hindu chieftain to fight against the Muslim rulers of Kapila. The history of India abounds with such examples. It should be obvious that medieval monarchs were influenced more by political compulsions than by religious considerations". Mughal emperors had Hindu generals in their army and as advisors. Among the nine distinguished advisors of the Mughal emperor Akbar, most were Hindus. (Chandra, 1984; Kosambi, 1962)

During the medieval period Hindu-Muslim relations were harmonious, not ones of strife and confrontation, as claimed by the Hindu extremists. Both communities lived together peacefully without inter-community violence and bitterness. The integration between the two communities can be seen on the tombs of the Sufis i.e. *khanqas*. The Sufis provided a means of incorporating Hindu religious customs and beliefs into their mass prayers. However, such positive messages and practices have been conveniently ignored by the RSS and its affiliated organisations.

The RSS claims that in 1528 the Mughal King Babur destroyed a Hindu temple to build a mosque. This was based on a mythical story without any archaeological evidence to support the existence of a temple on the site of the Babri mosque. In 1949 after an idol of Ram was placed in the mosque, the district authorities found that some local Hindu extremists had been responsible. Soon after, the District Magistrate K.K. Nair was told by the provincial government to remove the idol. Nair ignored the government order leaving the administration shortly after to join the RSS. He was later elected in to the state legislative assembly on the BJP ticket. (Gopal, 1991)

However, there is no mention in any historical text from that period of the destruction of a Hindu temple. For example, Abu Fazal in his book *Ain-i-Akbari* did not mention of any destruction of a temple of Ram at Ayodhya. Tulsidas the well-known devotee of Lord Ram and author of the holy book *Ramayana* who lived during the Babur period, did not mention any such incident. It mentioned for first time by P. Carnegy, a colonial administrator, in his book in 1870. His main source was a local Hindu priest, who told him about the construction of Babri mosque on the temple of Ram. A few years later, this story was again narrated by another colonial district administrator H.R. Neville, whose source was Carnegy.

Sarkar (1999) suggests that RSS claims of peaceful ancient Hindu rulers are far from historically accurate. Commenting on the so-called peaceful expansion, Sarkar (1999:1693) observes: "Brahminical Hindu rituals, beliefs and caste disciplines have spread across the sub-continent and penetrated and sought to transform communities with initially very different practices and faiths. It has somehow become conventional to describe the processes here by anodyne terms like 'Sanskritisation' or 'cultural integration' but they really amount nevertheless what with other religious traditions would have been termed 'conversion'".

Lack of unity amongst Hindus has been highlighted, as according to Dube (1965:423): "[Hindu religious textbooks] provide not one model but many models

of Hindu religion […] what we call Hindu philosophy is not just one school of thought, it is compendium of many systems of thought, recognising and advocating many divergent images of society and many different schemes of values".

There is rather a constant effort at identification with religious community, as well as, for Hindu majoritarian communalists, with nationalism. Consider for instance the very term 'Hindutva', which literally means no more than 'Hindu-ness', but has come to be a self-description, from the mid-1920s onwards, of a much more specific and narrow ideology.According to R.S. Sharma (1990:3-4): "The advent of such religions as Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam helped to reform and reorganise society and economy on healthier lines… But it has to be understood that every religion is the product of a certain type of social milieu […] Buddhism emphasis on the protection of all beings in general and the cows in particular helped to promote agriculture".

On the issue of plundering Hindu temples, Sharma emphasises that the causes of such actions must be explained. He further says: "In general the temples were relatively far wealthier than the mosques. In the early 11th century the Somnath temple had 500 devadasis, 300 barbers and numerous priests. It was endowed with as many as 10,000 villages. […] It is because of accumulation of wealth in the temples that some Hindu rulers appointed special officers for destroying idols made of precious metal and seizing wealth for the treasury. Such was the case with Harsha who ruled in Kashmir at the end of the 11th century, and had appointed an officer whose function was concerned with that of uprooting of idols (devotpatana). The appointment of such officers and the measures recommended in the Arthashastra of Kautilya to raise money from the credulous people by superstitious devices will dispel the idea that members of the Hindu ruling class have been consistently tolerant towards their subjects". (Sharma, 1990:8)

On the question of religious tolerance Kosambi argues that attitudes towards religious tolerance or otherwise in both ancient and medieval India were to a certain extent related to the availability of resources. A tolerant or eclectic attitude would become pronounced during a period of comparative prosperity but it would tend to recede into the background in a situation of scarcity and fall in revenues. As Kosambi (1962:29) observes, "With the Mughal prosperity at its height Akbar could dream of a synthetic Din-i-Ilahi; Aurangzeb could only augment his falling revenues by increased religious persecution in the Jizya tax on unbelievers".

In the Mughal period, tolerance was seen to a prudent policy of governance and under the umbrella of *Sulh-i-Kul*, i.e. 'absolute peace'. It was proclaimed that the King, like God, must favour all without discrimination. Not only Akbar but even Aurangzeb used it to win Rajput support. Recent research shows that the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb had issued jagirs and cash gifts for the maintenance of famous temples, namely, Somesh war Nath Mahadev temple located at Allahabad; Mahakaleshwara temple situated at Ujjain; Balajitemple at Chitrakut; Uman and a temple at Gauhati; the Jain temple of Shatrunjal; and other temples and gurudwaras scattered over northern India. Pande found that Aurangzeb ordered destruction of temples and mosques, for example, the Vishvanathtemple at Varanasi and the mosque at Golkunda. The reasons have to be examined in proper historical perspective. The temple had become the centre of conspiracy against the state and similarly with the mosque. Pande concluded that Aurangzeb had ordered to raid the temple to rescue women members of the family of a Minister of Rajasthan who had gone there on pilgrimage. In Golkunda state, a Muslim ruler, after collecting revenue of the state, did not pay his dues to the Imperial Authority at Delhi. He had buried wealth (gold and silver) and erected a Mosque over it. When Aurangzeb came to know about it, he ordered the demolition of the mosque. Recent researchers have refuted the charge against Aurangzeb that he was an anti-Hindu

monarch and established that Aurangzeb did not make any distinction between temples and mosques so far as state administration was concerned. (Panikkar et al., 2002; Pande, 2006)

However, anti-colonial movements under the Congress Party had severe limitations. Its leaders were closely identified with narrow sectarian religious issues and were involved in cow protection societies and were also active in sectarian religious societies such as Arya Samaj and Mahasabha. The Congress Party also used religious symbols and consciousness to mobilise the people. In Maharashtra its leader Tilak employed Shivaji to mobilise the people and in Uttar Pradesh and Bengal the traders and landlords who formed the leadership of the Congress Party, took an active part in campaigns against cow slaughter and also encouraged revivalist thinking and came out strongly in favour of a social system based on the principles of Hinduism.

On 30th January 1948 Mahatma Gandhi was murdered by Nathuram Goodse, a former member of the RSS who nonetheless maintained very close links with the organisation. After Gandhi's assassination, India's Home Minister Sardar Patel told the RSS leaders that in order to lift the ban on the RSS, they must have a written constitution, be committed to democratic procedures to renounce violence, and accept the constitution of India and the Indian flag (Jaffrelot, 1996). Patel wrote to S.P. Mookerjee on 18 July 1948: "As regards the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha the case relating to Gandhiji's murder is sub judice and I should not like to say anything about the participation of the two organisations, but our reports do confirm that, as a result of the activities of these two bodies, particularly the former, an atmosphere was created in the country in which such a ghastly tragedy became possible". (Sardar Patel's Correspondence, vol. 6:323, cited in Noorani, 2015)

After independence, the weaknesses in the implementation of the land reforms and also failures to curtail the socio-economic powers of the landlords and money lenders gave further opportunities to obstructionist forces. Moreover, the reliance on traders and big land owners for political support compelled the government to compromise with the divisive communalist forces. (Siddiqui, 1997) The deepening of economic crisis in the post-independent period created conditions in which community, caste and class rivalry and competition were aggravated. As Hasan (1982:30) notes: "Economic development in the post-independent period was retarded and slow; consequently, politics and mobilisation took place around individuals, factions, and communities rather than on issues of development and reforms. Hindus and Muslims have been interlocked in a competition for survival and advancement magnified against the backdrop of underdevelopment".

During elections the Congress Party extended patronage to powerful individuals. This was seen as being convenient because Muslim electoral support has depended on addressing their grievances and all efforts were sought to gain support of conservative elements such as the Imams for delivering votes. Unfortunately more than six decades of democratic process have not only failed to undermine religious and caste solidarity, but in fact in recent years such tendencies have strengthened.

6. The Rise of the BJP

Prior to the 1980s, the predecessor of the BJP, Jana Sangh, had very little popular support. The BJP party had initially drawn its support mainly from upper-caste Hindus. V.D. Savarkar's and Golwalkar's elaboration of Hindutva provided the foundation for the RSS, which was later on transformed into the political party, which is now known as BJP. (Corbridge & Harris, 2000; Graham, 1990)

The BJP rose to power at a remarkable pace; the two seats it had in 1989 had risen to 119 by 1996. It was then still a minority party in the lower house of the Indian parliament which has 543 members in total. (Vanaik, 2001) The BJP benefitted from a political and ideological vacuum, situating itself as an alternative to the Congress Party, at a time when people were disillusioned with the Congress party as the government was consistently facing accusations of corruption. At a time of economic crisis and uncertainty, the concept of Hindu unity functioned as a means of social stabilisation. The BJP put itself forward as the defender of "Hindu society" and continued with its use of offensive propaganda against the Muslim community. A central element in this re-orientation was the Shah Bano case and the Ayodhya campaign. As Ahmed has observed regarding communalism, "as an aggressive kind of rightist nationalism [...] it takes advantage of the misery of the masses". (Ahmed, 2004:23)

The Supreme Court of India took a decision on the Shah Bano case which concerned maintenance for a divorced Muslim wife in her favour. This was seen by Muslim organisations as interference in *Shariah Law*, which being a divine, they believe is ordained by God and not to be changed. Without realising long term consequences, Muslim organisations organised protests and Rajiv Gandhi's government amended the law in their favour (Engineer, 1995) On February 25 1986, the Muslim Women's Bill was moved in Parliament to override the Supreme Court's ruling in the Shah Bano case. This provided new ammunition for right-wing Hindu organisations, who referred to this as 'appeasement' of Muslims and they mobilised Hindus against it. Under pressure to tackle Hindu grievances, Rajiv Gandhi's government opened the doors of Babri mosque at Ayodhya for Hindus to worship there. (Girdner & Siddiqui, 1990)

Right-wing Hindu organisations appealed to those who had enough of the Congress Party's corruption, nepotism and inefficiency and were looking for an alternative. These organisations carefully projected themselves as the alternative to Congress misrule presenting themselves as being principled, honest and disciplined. They even denied their communalist and fascist character, but not for long. In the late 1990s they projected Vajpayee as a 'moderate' and liberal leader. But he later admitted that this liberal stance had been dictated by political expediency.

In August 1990, the then Prime Minister V.P. Singh announced his government's decision to implement the Mandal Commission Report which recommended that 27% of government jobs to should be reserved for other 'backward castes'. The fear of losing the support of upper-caste Hindus, due to the Mandal Commission proposals These two above reasons seemed to be important reasons for the BJP's decision to mobilise Hindus and campaign to build Ram temple at Ayodhya. The BJP's political force remained confined to the north and western Indian states until the mid-1990s. As Jaffrelot (1996:7) observes: "Largely due to the stress it put on a *Sanskritised* culture, an upper caste (largely Brahminical) ethos which was more prevalent in North India and an anti-Muslim attitude to which South India was less receptive given the greater integration of Islam in this region…Up to the 1980s, in effect Hindu nationalism recruited most of its supporters among the urban upper caste, middle caste and the landed elite of North India".

Moreover, state-owned television aired weekly instalments of a serialisation of the *Ramayana* which glorified the past. This strengthened Hindus' religious sentiments and beliefs (Corbridge & Harris, 2000). People's frustration and grievances were fully exploited by the right-wing Hindu organisations and they were successful in exploiting the disillusionment of the people.

If anything can be learnt from the past experiences and policies then, it seems that Congress Party had been peddling soft Hindutva whilst the BJP peddled a hard-core version. The Congress Party felt if it antagonised both Muslims and Hindu right-wing extremists then it would not be able to win elections. The Congress Party did not have the will and determination to take on Hindu extremists and punish them for the crimes against minorities. Therefore, it appears to have put winning elections before its principles.

V.P. Singh's National Front coalition government came to power in 1989 and adopted an ambivalent policy towards Babri mosque. In order to consolidate his power and its electoral victory he showed his intention to implement the Mandel Commission's recommendations, which was supposed to increase the representation of lower castes in government jobs, traditionally the domain of the Hindu upper castes. As a reaction to this in August 1990 L.K. Advani launched his rath yatra (literally, chariot procession) through the northern Indian states, starting from Somnath temple in Gujarat and to end ending at the Babri mosque in Ayodhya. In each town that his procession passed through, communal riots and violence against Muslims flared up and community relations worsened, culminating in the demolition of the Babri mosque in 1992 (Vanaik, 2001; Graham, 1990), an act of destruction for which no one was prosecuted. As Bhatt (2001:170) observes: "The emergence in 1984 of an organised mass campaign by VHP for the building of a Ram temple on the site of the medieval Babri mosque in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh; secular protest against a Hindu nationalist defence of the self-immolation of the widow RoopKanwar in Rajasthan in 1987, […] 'Communal violence', directed against Muslim and Sikh communities, increased dramatically in India during the 1980s".

The parliamentary election of 1996 was one of the most dramatic in the political history of India when Hindu communalist organisations led by BJP and Shiv Sena emerged as the largest single bloc in the Indian parliament. With this campaign the party mobilised all corners of India with the aim of uniting Hindus, although it inflamed violence and undermined the harmony among the different communities (Siddiqui, 2009a) However, the BJP gained politically and won 161 seats in 1996 and then 182 seats in 1999. The RSS is the organisational strength of the BJP. The BJP senior leaders pledged their allegiance to the RSS. The relationship between BJP and the RSS was very close and as stated by former BJP leader Mr. A.B Vajpayee in 1997: "The post [of Prime Minister] may go tomorrow, but I will always remain a humble swayamasevak [RSS volunteer/activist]" (Noorani, 2000:4).

7. Communalist Attacks against Minorities

The socio-economic crisis worsened in India in the 1960s with the Sino-India war in 1962 and the India-Pakistan war in 1965. As a result, there was further slowing down of growth rates and food shortages, and the tensions between Hindus and Muslims re-emerged in the late 1960s. It is well known that in India communalist violence did not occur spontaneously and was rarely caused by religious animosity. Cultural and religious differences rarely led to the kind of organised attacks and large scale violence seen in recent years. Such differences may be exploited and heightened at the behest of political groups. In large urban areas the Muslim presence is resented not for religious reasons but becomes a source of tension due to competition in the job market. The limited opportunities caused by slow growth in the economy and higher levels of competition among communities can lead to increased frustration.

Right-wing Hindu organisations take advantage of this situation to create an environment of fear and jealousy among social groups. As Hasan (1982:33) observes: "The relative success and prosperity of Muslim businessmen in recent years was the cause of much antagonism in Moradabad. In the brassware trade, in particular, Muslims received extensive orders from West Asia which were perceived as an impetus to their trade and industry […] now had sufficient capital to purchase sophisticated tools, to own property, to spend on education, and to initiate new ventures. All this generated hostility among Hindu traders".

In 1962 during the Jabalpur riot, Congress Party local leaders were directly involved in the attack against Muslims but no action was taken against them. The 1969 violence between Hindus and Muslims also took place in Gujarat. A year later in Bhivandi riots some 300 Muslims were killed. The Justice Madan Commission Report clearly implicated Shiv Sena in taking part in attacking Muslims and burning their property while police quietly looked on or encouraged the attackers but no action was taken on the basis of the judicial report. The Ahmedabad Commission of Inquiry into the 1969 communalist violence led by Justice P. Jagmohan Reddy from the Supreme Court, notes: "The agitation has received the blessing of the local Jana Sangh workers […] calling to sever all economic and social relations with the community that has attacked their religion viz. the Muslims". The report by the Justice Vithayathil Commission of Inquiry on the Tellicherry disturbances in 1971 concluded: "I have no doubt that the RSS had taken an active part in rousing up anti-Muslim feeling among the Hindus of Tellicherry and in preparing the background for the disturbances". Justice D.P. Madan, who led the Commission of Inquiry into the violent disturbances in Bhiwandi concluded: "the guiding spirit was Dr. Vyas [local Jana Sangh leader]". (cited in Noorani, 2000:38)

Justice P. Venugopal who led the Commission of inquiry into the communalist violence in Kanyakumari in 1982, wrote: "The RSS adopts a militant and aggressive attitude and sets itself up as the champion of what it considers to be the rights of Hindus against minorities". (Cited in Engineer, 1995)

Since the mid-1980s, there has been a qualitative change in the nature of communalist threats and violence. There is a large body of evidence pointing to the fact that the RSS and its affiliated organisations have consistently played a leading role in organising and inciting communalist hatred and violence. Various Judicial Commissions of inquiry on communalist violence have pointed towards the RRS. For instance, the Judicial Commissions on violence in Tellicherry (1971), Aligarh (1978), Moradabad (1980), Sambhal (1980) blames the RSS for inciting violence towards Muslims. These towns have witnessed some improvements in conditions; the Hindu traders resented any small improvements in the living conditions of the local Muslims and RSS involvement worsened the situation among the communities. Moreover, in many instances, community bias among the district administration and police seems to be evident from most accounts which highlight that they not only aided and abetted the rumours against Muslims but also perpetuated atrocities against them. The bias could be seen in refusing the stop the mobs from looting and killing. There seem to be lack of will to uphold the law as the state government has often failed to pursue matters and take any action against those involved.

In Ferozabad, the bangle industries were owned by Hindus, while Muslims worked largely as craftsmen. However, a small minority among the Muslims began setting up as independent producers, and became seen as business competitors and a threat by the Hindu traders; in 1972 riots took place which led to the burning of businesses owned by the Muslim community. Here it seems that class conflicts were concealed as Hindu-Muslim religious conflict.

After the demolition of the Babri mosque, a number of incidents of communalist violence took place between Hindus and Muslims in most parts of India. In cities such as Bombay, the police supported by BJP and Shiv Sena actively took part in attacking Muslims (Srikrishna Commission, 1998). The RSS and BJP succeeded in stirring up hatred amongst the people of Gujarat. The tribals, Dalits and low caste Hindus traditionally supported the Congress Party, but the BJP worked among these groups in introducing a number of welfare programmes to gain their trust and support. The BJP was able to successfully construct a unified Hindu identity and make them feel proud of being a Hindu.

The violence unleashed in the post-Godhra riots on 28th February 2002, after the burning alive of 58 innocent people on a train coach made common knowledge the complicity of state administration and police involvement in the attacks against the Muslim community. The violence continued for more than two months, with more than 2,000 Muslims losing their lives (Engineer, 2002). The worst attack against the Muslim community took place in 2002 in Gujarat in Naroda-Patia, which was a slum most of whose inhabitants were Muslims. In a mob attack by Hindus more than 100 Muslims were burnt alive in full view of the state police force. Women were raped before being burnt alive. Even pregnant women were not spared. In one particularly gruesome case a pregnant Muslim woman had her womb opened and the foetus was extracted and then burnt before she herself was burnt. (Engineer, 2002) Narendra Modi was then Gujarat's chief minister was a by-stander while his close party associates took an active part in planning and carrying out the attacks on Muslims. In 2002, the BJP also ruled the Central government with Vajpayee as Prime Minister, and rather than taking action, he blamed the victims for this heinous crimes, despite his image as the soft face of Hindutva as required in such a diverse country as India. In fact, he never got rid of his RSS roots, as Vajpayee has said at a VHP meeting in Straten Island in New York: "RSS is my soul". (Engineer, 2002)

The Gujarat pogrom in 2002 represented a new departure from previous attacks on Muslims in the state because of the extensive evidence of a large-scale pre-planned attack by the Hindu Right and of close collaboration amongst right-wing Hindu organisations, politicians and the police. This extensive planning and execution indicate that this was an attempt to annihilate Muslim businesses from the state. As Oza (2007:164-65) observes: "This extreme planning could only have been happened were this information collected and made available to Sangh [...] In the days after the most intensive violence was over, cities and towns emerged with completely destroyed homes, shops, and restaurants that often stood adjacent to places left untouched". In Gujarat state, the Muslim minority were overwhelmingly the victims of pillage, murder and terror, resulting in the deaths of more than 2,000 men, women and children. Women, in particular, were subjected to brutal acts of violence and were left largely unprotected by the security forces.

The Congress government failed to act decisively against communalists and despite regular occurrences of riots and attacks against minorities, especially Muslims over the course of nearly seven decades, no action has ever been taken against the perpetrators. The Government did set up Judicial Commissions whenever major violence riots took place to determine the causes and initiators of the riots. However, the government completely failed to implement the findings of these Commissions. Neither the Congress nor any other government has ever punished those who were guilty for these communal riots, despite them having been identified by the Judicial Commissions. There seems to be lack of will on the government side to protect minorities and side with the victims. This was also the case during the anti-Sikh riots which took place in November 1984 after the assassination of Indira Gandhi when more than 4,000 Sikhs were massacred. These

attacks on the Sikh community were led by Congress leaders in Delhi and other Indian cities (Singh, 2015).

8. Institutional Bias

Regarding the issue of protection of religious minorities against discrimination and existing mechanism for accountability Singh (2015:51) has argued: "The National Commission for Minorities constituted as late as 1993 – more than 43 years after the formation of the Indian Republic in 1950 – remains a mere paper tiger without the power and institutional infrastructure to track systematic inbuilt bias against religion minorities […] Hindu majoritarian bias, pervades the Indian constitution, bureaucracy, security forces, parliamentary institutions, judiciary, prison, academic institutions, health services, media and cultural and art organisations".

Further, on the question of institutional communalism Singh (2015:52) observes that: "Institutional communalism became evident in the Supreme Court decision to award the death sentence to Mohammed Afzal Guru, a Kashmiri militant who was secretly hanged on 9th February 2013. The bench deciding his case said that the death sentence was necessary in order to satisfy 'the national conscience', which is a surrender of legal reasoning to a structure of bias".

Manisha Sethi (2013) also finds systematic bias in the workings of the intelligence agency and police in their dealings with members of the religious minority communities, particularly Muslims, who have found to be the victims of these government agencies during Hindu mob attacks: "In the case of terror attacks or communalist riots, if the police go after the perpetrators of violence, and they happen to be mostly Muslims, you cannot, in the name of secularism, expect the police to act in proportion of their population". (M.N. Singh, former Commissioner of Police, Mumbai, cited in Sethi, 2013)

Virnda Grover notes that evidence collected shows there was clear Hindu bias in the working of the police and judiciary during the anti-Sikhs riots in 1984 in Delhi. The Congress government had protected the perpetrators of the violence and mass murders. The investigating agencies such as police, prosecutors and judiciary all collaborated to undermine justice (Singh, 2015). Further example of such bias could be seen in statements made by members of the judiciary, namely justice Sodhi, former Chief Justice of Allahabad High Court, revealed in the public meeting in Chandigarh that "no Sikh judge was trusted to deal with the Sikh terrorist cases". (Tribune, 2008, cited in Singh, 2015: 52)

Police bias in Maharashtra state is not an isolated case. As Noorani (2014) notes: "A remarkable feature of the major riots which erupted in Uttar Pradesh state in 1972-73 was that they were not conflicts between the communities but cases of the PAC assaulting Muslims. Three of the riots – in Aligarh, Ferozabad and Varanasi during June 1972 – were due entirely to the Muslim protests on the AMU [Aligarh Muslim University] Amendment Act. Unchecked, the riots spread. In Nonari [a village in Azamgarh district] 72 Muslim homes were burnt down on November 15, 1972; in Sajni on December 12, about 100 Muslim were looted and 43 were burnt. Some of the worst riots in Uttar Pradesh took place in 1972 when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi held the Home portfolio".

Amnesty International drew attention to extra judicial killings carried out by the PAC in 1987: "On 22nd May several hundred men from the Hashimpura area of Meerut were seen being taken away in several trucks by PAC members. Witnesses said most were taken to local police stations but several dozen in the first two or three trucks were reportedly taken to the bank of the Upper Ganga canal near Muradnagar, shot and their bodies thrown in the water… eyewitnesses said the

bodies had been thrown in the canal by armed men in uniform". (Cited in Noorani, 2014)

Justice B.N. Srikrishna's report on the Mumbai riots in 1992-93 notes the role played by the police: "The bias of policemen was seen in the active connivance of police constables with the rioting Hindu mobs on occasions, with their adopting the role of passive onlookers on occasions… This general apathy appears to be the outcome of the built-in prejudice in the mind of an average policeman that every Muslim is prone to crime". (Srikrishna, cited in Noorani, 2014)

A number of studies have been done on genocide in Gujarat and have recounted how Muslims were subjected to bloodshed, arson, rape and destruction to of their property whilst the law enforcement agencies, headed by then Chief Minister Narendra Modi, not only allowed such atrocities to take place but, in fact, advised the police not to attempt to stop the Hindu mob attacking Muslims. The former Congress MP Ehsan Jafri and some 69 Muslim women and children were attacked by a Hindu mob in the Gulberg Society massacre (Engineer, 2002; Siddiqui, 2009b). To subvert justice public prosecutors were appointed to the investigation, who were known supporters of the RSS/BJP whilst judicial witnesses were pressurised not to give evidence. Fake encounter cases were also common in which Muslim youths were cold-bloodedly killed on fabricated charges. Under Mr Modi's watch things have been worse. And there has been no rehabilitation of the riot victims worth the name. (Lokhande, 2015)

As Harsh Mander (2016) points out about the bias in the India's legal system: "We have studied the aftermath of many communal massacres since Independence, and what binds them all is the pattern that few, if any, are punished for these crimes. This is the outcome of the communal bias or apathy of all arms of the criminal justice system: The police, prosecution, and courts; and the political, social and economic powerlessness of the victims of communal crimes. Among the survivors of these crimes - many of whom fight epic and hopeless battles for justice like the widows of the 1984 Sikh massacre or the survivors of the 2002 Gujarat massacre… The selectivity of or popular outrage and the application of the majesty of the legal system reveals a very troubling underlying majoritarian bias in society and law. A majority of those charged with terror crimes are religious minorities. While a majority of those charged with communal crimes are from the majority Hindu community, its victims are mostly religious minorities. If law and social outrage apply so differently when the minority is charged with hate crimes from when they are the paramount victims of mass hate crimes, then the promises of a secular Constitution - of equal treatment of all before the law - stands exposed, in tatters".

Since assuming power in May 2014, Narendra Modi's government and his BJP politicians have created an atmosphere of intolerance and hatred in India that has surpassed the worst expectations of his many critics. (Siddiqui, 2014c) There has been an escalation of violence against Muslims and Christians, including the brutal lynching of a Muslim man in Dadri on suspicion of consuming beef. These events represent a direct assault on constitutionally protected freedom of speech and expression, and freedom of religion and belief. Intellectuals such as M. Kalburgi, G. Pansare and N. Dabholkar have recently been murdered in India. As a result, more than 50 writers have returned literary awards protest against the growing "intolerance" and to condemn the government's silence in the face of such (The Guardian, 2015) Moreover, as Amartya Sen emphasises, under Modi, government intervention in the nation's institutions "is more extensive, politically organised and connected with Hindutva movement [...] Often enough, the person chosen for heading institutions of national importance has been exceptionally dedicated to promoting Hindutva priorities" (Sen, 2015, cited in Noorani, 2015).

9. Conclusion

This study finds that the ideology of the RSS is based on hatred of religious minorities, particularly Muslims using this 'enemy', as a means to unite Hindus. Since independence in 1947 whenever the massacre of Muslims has taken place, the name of the RSS has been mentioned either in creating tension and disharmony among Hindus and Muslims, and/or taking part in these attacks on Muslims. Economic indicators highlight the plight and deterioration of the socio-economic conditions of Muslims in India. However, the RSS and its affiliate continue to oppose any policy measures to address these issues and to move towards inclusive development. As Dr. Ambedkar noted seven decades ago that, "If Hindu Raj does become a fact, it will, no doubt be the greatest calamity for this country. No matter what the Hindus say, Hinduism is a menace to liberty, equality and fraternity. On that account it is incompatible with democracy. Hindu raj must be prevented at any cost…they take every move to exclude the lower classes of Hindus from wealth, education and power…This attitude of keeping education, wealth and power as a close preserve for themselves and refusing to share it, which the high caste Hindus have developed in their relation with lower classes of Hindus, is sought to be extended by them to the Muslims. They want to exclude the Muslims from place and power, as they have done to the lower class Hindus". (Cited in Salam, 2016)

The process of uneven development and deepening socio-economic crisis has created conditions of backwardness and poverty, which in turn had created an opportunity for right-wing Hindu organisations to organise people on the basis of religion. The study finds that with the adoption of neoliberal economic policy, India is surrendering its sovereignty to global finance capital.

Indian Muslims have not been involved in Jehadi movements, as London based *The Economist*(2014) explains that Indian Muslims have remained moderate in spite of "reasons for some gloom: they endure lower levels of education, income, political representation or government jobs than the majority Hindus." It suggested that a shared history of over a 1,000 years, a tradition of Sufi Islam and a recourse to a democratic framework along with a watchful State have kept Muslims moderate. However, the RSS/BJP is trying to divide the society along religious lines. This will shake the foundations of India's pluralistic character. These trends are dangerous, self-defeating and threaten India's security and well-being.

The study suggests that in order to preserve the secular and democratic basis of India's constitution and pluralistic culture of society, it is important to unite all left and progressive forces to combat these fascist forces. Ensuring the safety of religious minorities and other underprivileged classes falls to left and progressive forces. Given that the overwhelming majority of people are poor and marginalised in India, it seems surprising that left-wing organisations are weak and unable to reach out to those people to whom their programmes and policies should prove most attractive.

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