

Hindutva: the ideology, the impact and the implications

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Introduction

India is a secular country comprising various ethnic people, races belonging to the different religions, socio-political and cultural backgrounds. However, with the coming of BJP in power the country saw an un-precedent growth of communalism in India with the rise of Hindutva at the peak. It appears that the survival of the secular edifice of the state is under threat. In several parts of India, there is an intensified and systematic campaign by the Sangh parivar, the proponents of Hindutva, against religious minorities in general and Christian communities and Christian missions in particular.

This paper will look into the understanding Hindutva and its ideologies (1), the development of Hindutva and its ideology during Nineteenth Century by three well known Indian scholar and the development of contemporary Hindutva Ideology (2), it will also deal on the ideologies and various activities of Hindutva (4), and its impact on the Indian society (5), and will conclude with the methodological issues (6).

1. Understanding Hindutva and its Ideology

The term 'Hindutva' is derived from the two terms *Hindu* and *Tattva*, which literally mean 'Hindu principles.'¹ Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883-1966) was the proponent of Hindutva ideology.² According to Savarkar "Hinduness embrace all the department of thought and activity of the whole being of our Hindu race."³ He considered the majority Hindus as the only or true nation and the minorities a totally different race. It is an indirect assertion that Hindus alone are the true sons of the soil. It advocated the elimination of flexibility and pluralism, which were fundamental in the earlier constructs of Hinduism. Hindutva aimed to achieve great hegemony over society by asserting that majority Hindus alone constitutes the true Indian nation.⁴

Madhav Sadhashiv Golwalkar (1906-1973) who became the RSS chief in 1940 gave the following advice, "The Non-Hindu people in Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion..., or may stay in this

¹ Aleyama Zachariah, *Modern Religious and Secular Movement in India* (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 1992), 188.

² Mathew Thomas, "Christian Missions in the Pluralistic Context of India-The Relevance of Gandhian Approach," (P. hd thesis, Mahatma Gandhi University Kottayam, 2002), 119.

³ P. L. John Panicker, *Gandhi on Pluralism and communalism* (Delhi: ISPCCK, 2006), 57.

⁴ Mathew Thomas, "Christian Missions...", 120.

country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment-not even citizens right.”⁵

The followers of Hindutva are nostalgic about their supposedly golden civilization which is now lost. They glorify their ancestral land as pure, holy, sacred, and consider those Indians who do not belong to the Hindutva ideology as aliens and even as enemies. They wish to get rid of them and attempt to enforce uniform civil codes and code of conduct. They propagate religious hatred against Islam and Christianity. The proponents of *Hindutva* believe that “Hinduism is superior to any other faith, that Hindus are the original and only creators of Indian culture and are, exclusively, the Indian Nation”. Anti-Muslim and anti-Christian sentiments are consistently used to project a political ideology of Hindu dominance.⁶

They do not draw back from defiling non-Sanskritic place of worship. They persuade the lawmakers to impose national policies that limit religious freedom, freedom of conscience. Now the Hindu fundamentalists want the Indian Christians and Muslims to give up what they unilaterally characterize as either their extra-territorial loyalty or their lack of territorial loyalty and merge into what they call the Hindu race.⁷ Thus, anybody that refuses their ideology is subjected to persecutions. These measures undertaken by the powerful Hindutva-followers threaten the secular and democratic fabric of Indian society.⁸

Daniel Jeyaraj writes, “The ideology of *Hindutva* is of recent origin. It represents an organized attempt to view the totality of Indian life - land, people, history, civilization, culture, language, religion, philosophy, and customs – from the particular viewpoints of the Sanskritic religions.”⁹ According to Hindutva, to be an Indian, is defined by one’s religion. To be Indian is to be Hindu.¹⁰

⁵ P. Moses Manohar, “Hindutva-Indian Nationalism on the Threshold of the Third Millennium,” in *Challenges and responses: Church’s Ministry in the Third Millennium: Implication for Theological Education*, edited by Gnana Robinson (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2000): 139.

⁶ Michael, Thomas D’sa, editor, *The Church in India in the Emerging Third Millennium*; (Bangalore: N.B.C.L.C, 2005), 229

⁷ Mathew Thomas, “Christian Missions...,” 121.

⁸ C.V. Matthew, “Hindutva: A Christian Response,” *Mission Mandate II*, edited by Ezra Sargunam (Chennai: Mission Educational Books, 2006), 175.

⁹ Daniel Jeyaraj, “Christian Missions in the context of Hindutva – Personal Reflection,” *Dharma Deepika* Vol 8/2 (July -December 2004): 39.

¹⁰ Michael, Thomas D’sa, editor, *The Church...*, 229

Their ideology is based on three Hs, “*Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan,*” and its members had to share a common language, common religion and a common origin. Religiously, it has come to extent of alienating other religions from the mainstream by oppressing, demonizing the other and denying the right of existence through the tactics of stigmatizing, demolition and destruction of the worship place and many other unprecedented demonstrations. Politically, it has come to the level of capturing power in the central government; and culturally, it is isolating the minorities as outsiders who do not share the Hindu culture and hence, they are considered as aliens and they have no right to live in India.¹¹

2. Development of Hindutva Ideology during Nineteenth Century

Hindutva is political shaped by Hindu fundamentalists. The rise of Hindutva ideology and its implementation has sparked off clashes in the whole country with an anti-western, dogmatic, and sometimes-violent cultural and religious assertions. It is in the sense of a highly structured belief system involving the interpretation of the past, an analysis of the present, and a set of precepts and imperatives for future conduct.¹² Three persons developed the ideology of Hindutva in three different periods.

2.1 Vinayak Diamodar Savarkar (1883-1966)

V D Savarkar was born in 1883 into a Brahmin family at Nasik in Maharashtra. He penned his most famous work entitled ‘Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?’ published in 1923. It is recognized as social and political doctrine of Hindutva.¹³ He says that an Indian is true Indian citizen only if he has the following four essentials.¹⁴

1. Birth growth in India territory (One who born in Indian land).
2. Belonging to the India race i.e., possessing Hindu blood.

¹¹ Ravi Tiwari, “Religious Fundamentalism and Nationalism: Reflections on Hindu perspective,” *National Council of Churches Review* Vol. CXX/10 (November 2000): 998.

¹² Sumanta Banerjee, “Hindutva ideology and social psychology,” *Economics and Political Weekly* (January, 1991): 97.

¹³ Panicker, *Gandhi on Pluralism...*, 56.

¹⁴ F. Naappan, “Hindutva and minorities: Communalism and Discipleship,” *Mission Today* 5/3 (July-September, 2003): 205.

3. Appreciation of all the customs and tradition of Hindu Sanskriti and acceptance of India alone as one's fatherland and holy land, its heroes as persons of veneration, as well as Sanskrit as the common language.

4. Allegiance to one of the religious tradition that emerged from India, such as Hinduism or Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, all considered as offshoots of Hinduism.

Savarkar claimed that the Indian nation has to be necessarily a Hindu nation and the Hindus alone are the sons of the soil. He considered the majority, which is the Hindus, as the only nation, and the minorities' as totally different race.¹⁵

2.2 Keshav Baliram Hedgewar (1890-1940)

Much like Savarkar, Hedgewar's remedy also focuses on reawaking Hindutva in Hindus. To this end he made his contribution: he sought to regenerate Hindu society by founding of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), in 1925. Through the RSS, he provided the Hindu nationalist movement with a 'Hybrid' institutional structure. It combines features such as militant and ascetic sects of medieval and early modern India with the European forms of disciplines, drill and corporate spirit.¹⁶ He developed the RSS by attracting recruits mainly from his Maharashtrian middle class Brahmin background who readily identified with the RSS belief and practices.¹⁷

2.3. Madhav Sadhashiv Golwalkar (1906-1973)

From 1940 to 1973 Golwalkar was the head of the RSS. His philosophy, thinking and guidance helped the RSS to blossom into the well-knit national organization that it is today. Golwalkar spelt out the RSS goal thus: "Our supreme goal is to bring to life the all round glory and greatness of our Hindu Rashtra". They differentiate the religious communities in India as insiders and outsiders.¹⁸ This resulted in deepening cleavage between the Hindus on the one side and the minority religions on the other. The expression used by the RSS is that the Hindu Rashtra faces a

¹⁵ V. F. Vineeth, "The Human as Religious and Secular," *Journal of Dharma* 29/1 (January-march, 2004): 51.

¹⁶ Prasad Lankapalli, "Revisiting Hindutva: An Indian Christian Theological Response," *Vidyajyathi* 71/16 (June, 2007): 450.

¹⁷ Lankapalli, "Revisiting Hindutva...", 450.

¹⁸ Mathew Thomas, "Christian Missions...", 128.

twofold threat to its existences; one from external enemies-mainly Pakistan- and the other from internal enemies—the minority religious groups particularly the Muslims and Christians.

The ideology of BJP has its origin in the writing of Savarkar and Golwalkar.¹⁹ Thus, Hindutva or cultural nationalism is the basic ideology of the Hindu nationalist today, which is visualizing the concepts into reality. It seems to achieve a great hegemony over the society by asserting that Hindu alone constitutes the Indian nation. The present practices of Hindutva are aggressive and are terrorizing the minor sections of the society.

3. The Development of Contemporary Hindutva Ideology

The last decade of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century marked a revival of Hinduism. Hinduism began to rediscover many of the treasures of her own past and brought them into common use. Many Hindu leaders became extremely anxious about the landslide of the lower section of the Hindu society to Christianity, weakening not only social bonds but also the solidarity of society. They tried to prevent this by whatever means possible. Thus various neo-Hindu movements began to take place in different parts of India.²⁰ The Arya Samaj (1875), Hindu Mahasabha (1915), Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (1925), and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (1964) etc..., are some of the outcome of the movements.²¹

3.1 The Arya Samaj (1875)

During the later part of the nineteenth century several movements arose to reform the Hinduism. Swami Dayananda Saraswati (1824-1883) founded Arya Samaj to defend and reform Hinduism. His watch-word was “back to Vedas” and his emphasis was “India for Indians”. He was against Christianity and Islam, and wanted to remove them from India. His aim was to make Hinduism the only religion of India superseding Christianity and Islam.²² This movement was also called as the ‘Origin of the Hindu Dharma’. Arya Samaj has been offering service for the procedures of conversion to Hinduism with the introduction of Vedic purification ceremony called shuddhi karma. It involves performing a homam, a ritual conducted in front of fire and chanting Vedic

¹⁹ P.L. John Panicker, “Marginalisation of Minorities: Anti-conversion Bill,” in *Inter-Play of Religion, Politics and Communalism*, edited by Samson Prabhakar (Bangalore: BTESSC/SATHRI, 2004), 62

²⁰ kunjappan C. Varghese, “The Religious Reformed Movements in India During the first half of the twentieth century,” *Kerala Theological Journal*, Vol. 3 No. 1 (Feb, 2011), 7.

²¹ P.L. John Panicker, “Marginalisation...,” 55.

²² kunjappan C. Varghese, “The Religious ...,” 7.

hymns directed by a priest. Once this 90 minutes long ceremony is completed a certificate of Conversion to Hinduism is issued by Arya Samaj.²³

3.2 Hindu Mahasabha (1915),

In reaction to the formation of the All India Muslim League in 1906 and the British India government's creation of separate Muslim electorate under the Morley-Minto reforms²⁴ of 1909 Hindu Mahasabha was formed in 1915.²⁵

Although the Hindu Mahasabha did not call for the exclusion of other religious communities from government, it identified India as a Hindu Rashtra (Hindu Nation) and believed in the primacy of Hindu culture, religion and heritage. The Mahasabha advocates that Sikhs, Jains and Buddhist are also Hindu in terms of national and political identity. It argues that Islam and Christianity are foreign religions, with their holy places being in Arabia, Palestine and Rome and that Indian Muslims and Christians are simply descendants of Hindus who were converted by force, coercion and bribery. At various points in its history, the party called for the re-conversion of Muslims and Christians to Hinduism. The Hindu Mahasabha stridently opposes Westernization which it regards as a decadent influence on Indian youth and culture. It calls for a revival of the Sanskrit language and the primacy of Hindi. The Mahasabha opposed socialism and communism as decadent foreign ideologies that do not represent India's indigenous needs and conditions.²⁶

3.3 Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS- 1925)

The only organization which has consistently geared itself into micro level politics, getting into almost every sphere of activity which influences social and political life is RSS.²⁷ It was founded by Keshav Baliram Hedgewar in 1925. From the beginning, RSS had wrong conceptions about

²³ Giri K, "Ghar Wapsi and Christian Response," *Renewing and Enriching Life: Revive*, Vol. 08, Issue No. 7 (July, 2015):15.

²⁴ The Indian Councils Act 1909 or Morley-Minto Reforms or Minto-Morley Reforms was passed by British Parliament in 1909 in an attempt to widen the scope of legislative councils, placate the demands of moderates in Indian National Congress and to increase the participation of Indians the governance. This act got royal assent on 25 May 1909.

²⁵ M.T. Cherian, *Hindutva Agenda and Minority Rights: A Christian Response* (Bangalore: Centre for Contemporary Christianity, 2007), 175.

²⁶ Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Mahasabha, Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, [http:// en. Wikipedia.En.org](http://en.Wikipedia.En.org) (Oct 25 2016).

²⁷ M.T. Cherian, *Hindutva...*, 187.

other religious communities to the extent of suspecting their patriotism.²⁸ The ultimate aim of the RSS is Hindu political domination of India through cultural homogenization. It aims at organizing all Hindus into one political community. Savarkar and his ideological successors defined Indian nationalism on the basis of the Hindutva principles.²⁹ One of their strategies to achieve the realization of their objectives is to campaign against minority religious groups particularly Christians and Muslims by characterizing them as anti-nationals and invaders. The substance of their arguments is that India is Hindu nation; the Muslims and Christians are the foreign aggressors. Its main agenda is to divide people on the ground of religions in order to capture the political power.³⁰

3.4 Vishwa Hindu Parishad (1964)

The VHP was founded in 1964 by the same leaders of the RSS. It is a Hindu organization that is trying to bring all Hindu sects and groups under one banner.³¹ VHP's goal is to consolidate and strengthen the Hindu society to protect and promote ethical values of Hindus and to establish contact with the Hindus all over the world. The VHP runs³² schools, hostels, temples and medical centers. It may be called the missionary wing of the Sangh. It also seeks re-admission to all those Hindus who embraced Christianity or Islam in the past and are now willing to come back into the fold of Hinduism. It is an ideological ally of the RSS and works in close co-operation with the Sangh. VHP president Ashok Singhal has clearly stated that VHP is furthering Golwalkar's ideology that is cultural nationalism and minorities must adapt to the culture of the majority. He is specifically of the view that Bible and Quran should be taught and interpreted according to Indian culture.

The VHP does not oppose Islamic or Christian worship. According to its leaders the organization is only opposed to Christian and Muslim fanatics who adopted an anti Hindu attitude and reject the culture and traditions of India. The main accusations of VHP against Christians are that they are anti-nationals, threat to the Hindu nation, and missionaries are militants. The solution

²⁸ S. Robertson, *Freedom of Religion: A Human Right Issue* (Bangalore: BTESSC, 2011), 109.

²⁹ Mathew Thomas, "Christian Missions...", 127.

³⁰ S. Robertson, *Freedom...*, 115.

³¹ M.T. Cherian, *Hindutva...*, 205.

³² Mathew Thomas, "Christian Missions...", 131.

proposed by VHP is that they should remain loyal to Indian ethos instead to foreign ideologies.³³ Now this is a real issue that every Christians in India need to ponder upon. Therefore, if the Indian Christians want the people of India to be accepted then, they must express themselves in an Indian way and identify themselves as the Children of India in every possible ways.³⁴

4. The Ideologies and Activities of Hindutva

The ultimate goal of Hindutva is to create a Hindu Rashtra (nation) in India and its essence consists in conceiving India as *one race, one nation, one culture and one religion, namely Hinduism*. They opposed secularism, cultural, religious pluralism and democracy and pictured these minority religions as foreigners who have no right to live in India.³⁵ The fundamental rights guaranteed under section III of the Indian Constitution is very important from the point of religious freedom, preservation of languages, cultures and maintenance of minority institution. It is considered as the best document on human rights in India.³⁶ However, the situation in India today is that the majority religion more emphatically situates its claims of majoritarianism and the rights to rule over the minorities. They claim themselves to be true nationalist and patriots. It dumps the minorities as aliens, and anti nationals, thereby harrowing any attempts of the adherents of the minority religion to live and to peacefully exercise religious liberty.³⁷ This affirms that the ideology of Hindutva is violence.³⁸ Although Hindu cultural Nationalism was developed as an ideology in the later part of the nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth century's, it assumed a definite ideological shape and contents in the 1920s. Savarker played a crucial role in providing Hindutva ideology. He traced that Hindutva is not a world but a history.³⁹ Hindutva as a social and religious movement, Hindu Nationalists soon set out to transform their movement into a political force in opposition to the Congress party and Muslim League. Thus, it resulted in the institutionalization of Hindu Nationalism with the establishment

³³ Mathew Thomas, "Christian Missions...", 132.

³⁴ Dasan Jeyaraj, "Wise as a serpent – Bearing witness in the midst of challenges," A paper presented at COTRTS, Vishakhapatnam (December, 2016).

³⁵ J. Kuruvachira, "Hindutva Widens its Net in Assam," *Indian Currents* XX/47 (17-23 November, 2008): 39.

³⁶ S. Robertson, *Freedom...*, 38.

³⁷ M.T. Cherian, *Hindutva...*, 289.

³⁸ Valson Thampu, *Religion and Politics* (Delhi: Media House, 1999), 311- 312.

³⁹ Prasad Lankapalli, "Revisiting...": 448.

of the RSS and the BJP.⁴⁰ The ideology of the Bharatiya Janata Party is undoubtedly encompassed with Hindutva. These ideologies uphold that, Indian government should be a Hindu government, with Sanskrit as the State literature and Hindi as the day-to-day language.⁴¹

4.1 Babri-Masjid replaced by Ram temple

Babri-Masjid was a Muslim mosque dating back to the sixteenth century which was replaced by a Hindu Temple. The RSS, BJP, and VHP stirred up a controversy that the mosque was built on the site of the birth of the Hindu god Ram. The Hindu right demanded the mosque be removed, and a temple commemorating the birth of Ram be built in its place. The campaign was succeeded by thousands of supporters and the demands for the destruction were fulfilled where a mob destroyed the Mosque on 6th December, 1992. As a result, massive communal riots took place around the country where thousands were killed.⁴²

4.2 The importance of celebrating Ganesh festival

Ganesh festival is celebrated on the fourth of the bright half of the month between August/September to commemorate the birth of Ganesa. The festivals begin with the devotees bringing the idols of Ganesa, symbolizing his visit. On the tenth day the idols are immersed in river or the seas, with the shouts, “Ganesa come back soon next year”.⁴³ The elephant head symbolizes Ganesa’s cunning and his elephant like ability to remove obstacles by great strength. They celebrate this as national festival in order to bridge the gap between the Brahmins and non-Brahmins and find an appropriate context of unity from the grassroots among them.⁴⁴ Thus, the Hindus give more importance to Ganesh festival among all festivals.

4.3 The Pushing of Sanskrit language and using Hindi all over India (Sanskrit week celebration)

Sanskrit is the language which bound the whole Aryan race together as one nation. Therefore, Hindu fundamentals insist that, it should be the language of India. However, like Savarkar, there is a concession given that Hindi could be the national language because it is the offspring of true

⁴⁰ Prem Anand Mishra, “Idea of Hindutva: A Thematic Exploration in Savarkar’s Political writing,” *A Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* 1/ 8 (November, 2012): 1.

⁴¹ V.D. Mahajan, *Political Theory* (New Delhi: S. Chand & Company Ltd., 2011), 27-29.

⁴² Reji Varughese, *Religious Violence and Christian Mission* (Kerala: NHMI Publications, 2011), 56-57.

⁴³ O.M. Matthew Oruvattithara, *Introduction to World Religions* (Bangalore: CISRS, 2012), 40.

⁴⁴ John B. Noss, *Man’s Religion* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc, 1980), 200.

Aryan tongue Sanskrit. “In this country, Hindustan, the Hindu race with its Hindu culture, Hindu religion and Hindu language, (the natural family of Sanskrit and her offspring) complete the nation concept; that, exists and must needs exist the Hindu nation,” Thus, the Hindus pushed the Sanskrit language and at the same time encourages to used Hindi all over India.⁴⁵ The government announced all the schools and colleges to celebrate Sanskrit week from August 7-14. Among million of people less than lakh of people knows Sanskrit. The BJP leader Rajnath Singh was quoted saying that English had caused a great loss to the country. Therefore they are trying to take steps in an attempt to bring Sanskrit into daily usage, like raising their children in Sanskrit.⁴⁶

4.4 Change of teacher’s day to Guru Utsav

The major controversy today is Modi Government’s new move to change teacher’s day as Guru Utsav. Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD) had recently issued a directive to all the schools of the country, ordering them to make proper arrangements so that students could hear out Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the occasion of Guru Utsav. The Directorate of Education (DoE) of Delhi government issued a notification to all schools, ordering them to make arrangements for a broadcast of the Prime Minister's address on September 5. The Centre has now changed it to ‘Guru Utsav’ through a government order.⁴⁷ This also indicate the dominance of the saffron parties over the government of India in manipulating the nation for their political gains and to oppress the minorities.

4.5 The confusion over the term Hindu and Indian

There is a great confusion over the term Hindu and India. The word Hinduism is not of Indian origin. It was given by the Persians. The term is derived from the name of the river Sindhu in the present day of Punjab. The Persians called this river the Hindu river and the people living beyond its eastern bank, the ‘Hindus and their religion ‘Hinduism’. So another name for this religion is ‘Sanatana Dharma’, meaning ‘eternal religion’. This religion has no founder.⁴⁸ The

⁴⁵ M.T. Cherian, *Hindutva Agenda ...*, 198.

⁴⁶<http://forumforhinduawakening.org/dharma/news/2014/06/18/hindu-nationalists-renew-push-sanskrit/>.(23 November 2016)

⁴⁷<http://www.oneindia.com/feature/is-guru-utsav-another-bjp-s-ploy-propagate-hindi-hindu-1513133.html>, (23 November 2016).

⁴⁸ O.M. Matthew Oruvattithara, *Introduction...*, 1.

word India too is derived from ‘Sindhu’ and means ‘the land of the Indus’.⁴⁹ However, India is the name of the country whereas Hindu is a religion. But the interests of the nation called India were identified with the interests of Hinduism. This promoted the idea that India as Hindustan, the land or abode of Hindus, and Hindus are the true sons of the soil.⁵⁰

4.6 The importance to Ganga

The Hindus give importance to Ganga River because it is claimed to be the most sacred and holiest river. It is also known as Mother Ganga. The Ganges is the site of a sacred bathing festival at the beginning of the year. They go to wash away their sins. The pilgrims who enter this territory are often overcome with joy at the sight of its temple towers at the distance that they prostrate themselves and pour the dust of the ground on their heads as a sign of their spiritual submission. They proceed joyfully to the bathing ghats (steps) along the river and are purified by immersion in the cleansing waters of sacred mother Ganga. And when they finally turn homeward, it is with the joyous conviction that all past sins have been atoned for and the future is made secure.⁵¹

4.7 The push over the practice of yoga and safforinization of education

Yoga is considered as a philosophical school in Hinduism. Yoga, in this context, is one of the six ‘astika’⁵² schools of Hinduism (those which accept the Vedas as source of knowledge). However, Human Resources Development Minister Smriti Irani released the syllabus and course material for the students of government schools in the month of June 2015.⁵³

While the BJP government’s efforts to seize on yoga have the chests of Hindu nationalists swelling with pride, others are clearly uncomfortable at these new developments. Muslim organizations in particular have objected to the Surya Namaskar (a set of yoga exercises), which requires a person to bow to the Sun God. Amina Begum, a mother of two school-going girls

⁴⁹Christopher Augustus Bixel Tirkey, *Major Religions of India* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2003), 17.

⁵⁰C.V. Matthew, “Hindutva: ...”: 171-172.

⁵¹John B. Noss, *Man’s...*, 208.

⁵²Hindu philosophy refers to a group of darśanas (philosophies, world views, teachings that emerged in ancient India. The mainstream Hindu philosophy includes six systems (ṣaḍdarśana) – Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Mimamsa and Vedanta. These are also called the Astika (orthodox) philosophical traditions and are those that accept the Vedas as authoritative, important source of knowledge.

⁵³“Yoga to be a compulsory subject in govt schools: Here's what the plan is,” *F. INDIA* (Jun 23, 2015), <http://www.firstpost.com> (Nov 25, 2016).

based in New Delhi, “Islam being a monotheistic religion doesn’t allow followers to bow before anyone except Allah. We don’t like our kids following this routine in their schools. Surely, there are other neutral forms of exercises which can benefit children?” Many others feel that the imposition is tantamount to curbing personal freedoms. The government claims that it is promoting yoga for its health benefits.⁵⁴ However, it can be noted that all these activities are pro-Hindu agendas. A Hindu tradition being enforced on others, clearly sit uneasily with the secular and liberal credentials of the world’s largest democracy like India.

4.8 The Gaushala movement

The gaushala movement is synonymous with the protection of cows and cattle wealth of the country. Being practiced for the last five thousand years or so, its origin can be traced in the Vedic period when social customs and rules laid great emphasis on protection, preservation and development of cows for home, and oxen for agriculture-fields. According to Vedic concepts, cows were considered as spiritual assets of the people of the country. At that time, possession of herds of cows was the yardstick for measuring economic esteem and prosperity of an individual. Thus ‘Shatagu’ was the owner of hundred cows. One who possessed one thousand cows was referred to as ‘Sahastragu’ with honour. ‘Rigveda’ refers to cow as ‘Aghnya’ - or one which must never be killed. ‘Yajurveda’ states- ‘Go matra Na Vidyate’ – which means that there is no parallel to the cow in this world. ‘Atharva Veda’ considers cow as the ‘house of prosperity’- ‘Dhenu Sadanam rayinam’. The Rishies (Ascetics) maintained Asharam Gaushalas, with hundreds of milking cows. It was the milk and milk products from these Gaushalas, which helped them to offer hospitality to visitors. Cow being the backbone of rural life and economy in India, care was taken for their well-being and uplift. People used to donate their lands to Gaushalas on auspicious occasions so that cows may have sufficient land for grazing. Thus the entire culture of ancient India was ‘Go-Sanskriti’ or Culture based on cow.⁵⁵ According to the BJP, it was Hindu priests’ threat to go on a hunger strike in 2001 unless cow slaughter was

⁵⁴ Neeta Lal, “The Politics of Yoga,” *The Diplomat* (April 04, 2016), <http://the diplomat.com> (Nov 25, 2016).

⁵⁵<http://dahd.nic.in/ch6/chap6.htm> (28 Oct 2016)

banned. Hindutva groups support the proposed ban saying it demonstrates respect for Hindu sensitivities.⁵⁶

4.9 The change of christmas as ‘Good Governance Day’

Good Governance Day was established in 2014 to honor former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee (born in 1924) by fostering awareness among the Indian people of accountability in government. In keeping with this principle, the Government of India has decreed Good Governance Day to be a working day for the government which falls on 25th December a Christmas day for the Christian. It can be noted that, the good governance day idea comes at a time when there appears to be a concerted attempt being made by a section of the Sangh parivar to demonize the Christian community by raising the bogey of conversions and insist on so-called ‘ghar wapsi’. Surely, there cannot be a more inopportune moment to almost force a minority group to accept that one of their most holy days, celebrated as a national holiday for centuries, must now be seen as part of a state sponsored good governance programme. Parliamentary affairs minister Venkaiah Naidu has said that “what can we do if Atalji was born on December 25”.⁵⁷ This development can be purely seen as an extreme step taken to oppress the freedom of minorities in India. Such move can be described as discriminatory acts against the minorities. It can be seen as a design of the Bharatiya Janata Party and its ideological source Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) to promote communal agenda.

4.10 The role of RSS in BJP and the sowing of divisive spirit

The majority-minority divide has become an integral component of communal politics in India.⁵⁸ The RSS is the biggest Hindu organization in India, which works for the Hindutva agenda and political purposes of BJP. It is not a political organization, but influences through political infiltration, it claims to be only a social and cultural organization.⁵⁹ After BJP came to power at the centre, the RSS is growing rapidly under the BJP rules it becomes a threat to the minority

⁵⁶ Abraham Christdhas, *Contemporary Religious Movement* (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 2005), 288.

⁵⁷ Rajdeep Sardesai, “Good Governance Day sends wrong message on Xmas,” *Hindustan Times* (Dec 26, 2014) <http://www.hindustantimes.com> (24 Nov 2016).

⁵⁸ George Mathew Nalunnalakkal, “Marginalization of Minorities: Christian Perspective,” in *Inter-Play of Religion, Politics and Communalism*, edited by Samson Prabhakar (Bangalore: BTESSC/SATHRI, 2004),

⁵⁹ Aleyamma Zachariah, *Modern...*, 176.

groups. The RSS gave way to BJP with the ideas to spread Hindu culture.⁶⁰ Thus, the BJP is the political wing of RSS to work for the Hindutva ideologies.⁶¹ The RSS have been pushed by BJP to the back burner keeping an eye on elections and aiming at winning majority in the parliament and realizing its impracticality.⁶²

4.11 The attack on modern India

For the Hindu fundamentals everything that is related to the west is evil and unpatriotic in nature thus, they tend to attack on the modern development of India.

4.11.1 Dress code of women

India's tourism minister has said foreign women should not wear skirts or walk alone at night in the country's small towns and cities. He added: "For their own safety, women foreign tourists should not wear short dresses and skirts ..., Indian culture is different from the western."

Kumari said the remarks reflected "the syndrome of blaming women" for what they wore and where they were. She said: "But the problem is men and boys in India. They go for all kinds of misogyny and sexual acts, rapes and gang-rapes. It's important for [Sharma] to have said how to punish the perpetrators of crime and stop the nonsense of ogling women and following them. Why should any girls come to India when it is becoming famous for not being safe to girls?"

4.11.2 Valentine's day

Valentine's Day has recently become hugely popular in India but public shows of affection are still considered taboo by many. However, the Valentine's Day in India has been marred by a spate of attacks on young couples as Hindu radicals battle what they claim are foreign influences corrupting Indian culture. Hindu mobs were not the only ones targeting couples on Valentine's Day. A policeman in the northern state of Haryana was caught on camera attacking a female college student accused of being "involved in immoral activities". The graphic video showed the

⁶⁰ M.T. Cherian, *Hindutva...*, 201.

⁶¹ Peter Ronald De Souza and E. Sridharan, *India Political Parties* (New Delhi: Sage, 2006), 156.

⁶² Abraham Christdhas, *Contemporary...*, 288.

officer, Molla Ram, repeatedly spinning a woman around by the hair. He was later suspended. Hindu fanatics show no sign of dropping their opposition to Valentine's Day.⁶³

Shiv Sena leader Uddhav Thackeray has called it an attack of the west on Indian culture and it is attracting youth for commercial gain. Shiv Sena leader said that people not wanting violence on the day should not celebrate it. He has also called the festival shameless and contrary to Indian culture.⁶⁴

4.12 The undermining of atrocities on Dalits and minorities

Dalit is the name, the Sudras and outcaste indigenous people of India⁶⁵ they chose to call themselves as Dalits.⁶⁶ The term has been derived from the Sanskrit which means the oppressed, the broken, to split or crack open.⁶⁷ It thus refers to a poor, weak, helpless, oppressed and downtrodden people.⁶⁸ Beside its common use, the term 'Dalit' today is specially used for those people who, on basis of caste distinction, which have been considered as outcaste.⁶⁹

Throughout the history of India, the Dalits have been treated as the object and not the subject of history. The traditional (Hindu) Indian society is structured according to four varnas or castes and the Dalits were put under the Sudras (outcaste).⁷⁰ More than 90% Dalits lives in villages and vast majority depends on agriculture survivals. They contribute disproportionately to the landless agriculture laborers. Their labor is exploited, their women are abused. They continue to be the most disadvantage group of the Indian society till today.⁷¹ Despite the fact that untouchabilities was abolished under India's constitution in 1950, the practice of untouchabilities, the imposition

⁶³ "Hindus in Valentine's Day attack on lovers," *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Feb 16 2009) <http://www.smh.com.au/world/hindus-in-valentines-day-attack-on-lovers-20090215-884e.html> (Nov 20 2016).

⁶⁴ "Valentine's day in India," the free encyclopedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valentine's_Day_in_India (Nov 20 2016)

⁶⁵ Abraham Christdas, *Contemporary Religious Movements: In Theological, Psychological and Sociological perspectives* (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 2005), 253.

⁶⁶ Ambrose Selva Raj, *Christian Mission and Social Transformation* (Chennai: Mission Education Books, 2010), 13.

⁶⁷ M. R. Arulraja, *Jesus the Dalit: liberation theology by victims of untouchabilities, an Indian version of apartheid* (Secunderabad: Jeevan institute, 1996), 3.

⁶⁸ A. P. Nirmal, "A Dialogue with Dalit Literature," in *Towards a Dalit Theology*, edited by M.E. Prabhakar (Delhi: ISPCK, 1988), 66.

⁶⁹ James Massey, *Dalits in India* (Delhi: Monohar Publishers and Distributors, 1995), 15-16.

⁷⁰ Robert W. Brown, *Dalit and the Church, Centre for Dalit/subaltern Studies 2006* (Delhi: Press and process, 2006), 8-9.

⁷¹ V.S Lalrinewma, *Missiological Issues Facing the Contemporary Church in India* (Bangalore: Centre For Contemporary Christianity, 2011), 154-155.

of social disabilities on persons by reason of their birth in certain castes remains very much a part of rural India till today. The caste system continues to be one of the key drivers of poverty and inequality in India.⁷²

The Dalits in India are powerless and most of them are bonded slaves. They are voiceless against any atrocities. They are not allowed to cross the lands and house of the high caste people. The temples are practically closed even now. When the Dalits are attacked, even the police simply close their eyes. Historians have ignored the contributions of the Dalits in the independence struggle and their roles in the social transformation have been simply forgotten.⁷³ Hence, the violence against the Dalits continues to increase day by day which is a great challenge for the Christian mission today.

5. The Impacts of Hindutva in the Society

Some of the impact of Hindutva can be seen as:

5.1 The growth of communalism and fundamentalism

Fundamentalism usually has a religious connotation that indicates unwavering attachment to a set of irreducible beliefs. The religious violence that India faces today is largely attributed to the religious fundamentalism which comes under the garb of Hindutva.⁷⁴ A common nation, a common race or origin and a common culture are the fundamentals of the Hindutva, and that constitutes Hindutva. Savarkar went on to say that, getting independence was not merely of geographical independence, however it meant safeguarding and promoting Hindutva- Hindu religious, racial, and cultural identity. Indian nation has to be necessarily a Hindu nation and the Hindus alone are the true sons of the soil.⁷⁵ He further goes on saying that the non- Hindus are a menace and the growth of the non-Hindu groups would be of hatred to those who propound the ideology.⁷⁶ It is an attitude and action which emphasize the claim of primacy and exclusiveness

⁷² Jasmine Rao, *The Caste System: Effects on Poverty in India, Nepal and Sri Lanka*, 97 Global Majority E-Journal, Vol. 1, No. 2 (December 2010): 97.

⁷³ M. Stephen, *Post-Colonialism Subalterns and Community* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company PVT. LTD., 2015), 54-55.

⁷⁴ Anthony Kalliath, "A Theology of Violence! Engaging: Christian Mission in a Violent World," in *Christian Mission in the Midst of Violence*, edited by Siga Arles and Joy Thomas, (Bangalore: FOIM and CFCC), 10.

⁷⁵ C.V. Mathew. "Hindutva: ..": 173.

⁷⁶ C.V. Mathew. "Hindutva: ...": 173.

of a communal group delimited by religion, region, race and demands solidarity of its members in thinking and doing.⁷⁷ It purposefully undermines secularism by means of which it promotes violence in the society and destroys the very presence of harmony.⁷⁸ This communalism is masterminded and manipulated by a group of upper castes Hindus who are largely from urban middle class. It is characterized not by a sudden or accidental outburst of ill-will, but is the expression of malicious objectives and pre-planned and well-organized strategies.⁷⁹ Communal ideology often results in communal riots and violence.⁸⁰ The growth of communalism has brought inter-religious disharmony, violence, bloodshed, national disintegration and suffering to the millions of innocent people that affects the secularism. The rise of fundamentalism is related to the question of meaning, identity, power, dignity and self-esteem. It can be noted that fundamentalism is an on-going movement in religions, which by nature are reactionary, exclusivist, separatist, intolerant, oppositional, politically motivated, and claiming to be agents of a true community.⁸¹ It is a movement which denies the very concept of equality of all human beings by challenging the right to hold on to one's faith.⁸² Hence, Hindu fundamentalism in India has influenced the conscience of the people in such a way that it poses threat for the very existence to minority.

5.2 Caste system

The caste system continues to be one of the key drivers of poverty and inequality in India. In India, the caste system has been a large part of society and still remains, The caste system is basically a way of dividing people into different social classes, beginning with Brahmins as the highest (Priests and teachers), Kshatriyas (warriors and rulers), Vaisyas (farmers, merchants, and artisans), and Sudras (laborers or Untouchables, also known as Harijans or Dalits, fall outside of the caste system all together).⁸³ The caste system that was established in India forced many people who belong to the lower castes into poverty. The caste system survived for centuries because the religious leaders transmitted the Hindu scriptures to the common people and

⁷⁷Somen Das, *Christian Ethics and Indian Ethos* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1994), 52-56.

⁷⁸V.S. Lalrinawma, *Missiological Issues ...*, 191.

⁷⁹Roger Gaikwad, "Forces of Communalism in India," *Inter-play of Religion Politics and Communalism*, edited by Samson Prabhakar (Bangalore: BTESSC/SATHRI, 2004), 30.

⁸⁰Gabriel Dietrich and Bas Wielenga, *Towards understanding Indian Society* (Tiruvalla: CSS, 2003), 183.

⁸¹M.T. Cherian, *Hindutva...*, 156.

⁸²Lalrinawma, *Missiological Issues...*, 198, 199.

⁸³Jasmine Rao, *The Caste ...*: 97.

attributed the caste system to divine ordinance. Any breaking of this system, individually or collectively, is considered as breaking the divine law. Today Brahmins are controlling Hinduism than any other castes. They are always trying to hold their authority in the military group in the Hindu society. Their duty is to protect their society, religion and their country. Hindu religion always gives importance to protect their religious community through military power.⁸⁴

5.3 Threat to minorities

According to RSS view point: India is witnessing a kind of democracy in which the minorities have been given more powers and right than the majority.⁸⁵ However, in reality the minorities are facing an identity crisis in which their identity is threatened by the Hindu majority.⁸⁶ For instance, India has a tribal identity of about 84.3 million (2011 census). There are 466 ethnic groups identified as schedule tribe by the government of India. However, including also some sub-tribal ethnic groups there are estimated to be 635 of whom some of them have got lost or extinct.⁸⁷ They are being manipulated through certain way such as:

- Change of identity with the change of faith.⁸⁸
- Another serious concern is when a person accepts Christianity they lose their government privileges.

Another matter that bothers the minority is that the Hindutva forces always attempt to interrupt the good intention of the government plans to improve the status of the minorities. For the sake of power, the Hindu communal and fundamentals forces have taken many courses to weaken other religious communities. The religious minority community is also often accused of disrespecting Hindu religion, culture, nation, religious heroes etc....⁸⁹ When such biased views are justified the fear is further increased. This leads to mutual mistrust and provokes retaliation. Among the minority there is a fear of murder, rape, theft, etc....⁹⁰

⁸⁴Reji Varughese, *Religious...*, 13-14.

⁸⁵T.K John, "Pluralism under Assault," *Integral Liberation* 6/3 (September, 2002): 156.

⁸⁶M.T. Cherian, *Hindutva...*, 270-271.

⁸⁷A.S. Hemrom, "Empowerment of Adivasis/Tribals in India," in *Critical Issues in Mission Among Tribals*, edited by, Awala Longkumer (Kashmere gate, Delhi: ISPCK, 2011), 4.

⁸⁸A.S. Hemrom, "Empowerment...", 6.

⁸⁹S. Robertson, *Freedom...*, 11.

⁹⁰Joshva Raja, "Alternative Media for Harmony and Reconciliation," in *The Church in India in the Emerging Third Millennium*, edited by Thomas D'sa (Bangalore: N.B.C.L.C., 2005), 578.

6. Methodological Issues in Mission

Today all the Christians need to have a clear understanding about their purpose of their mission in the contemporary society. All the Christians need to know the struggles of people and response to the need of the people around them. There are various ways in which the Christians can do mission in the midst of violence in a pluralistic context.

6.1 Commitment to the Humanistic Nationalism and Nation

The Christian should strengthen the humanistic nationalism. They must shows concern for the weak and marginalized, which is the characteristic of Christian life. The Christian approach to nationalism should start with an active involvement in the struggle for democracy without partiality.⁹¹ Christians have to be convinced that participating in the civic and political life is an essential expression of Christian faith.⁹² All the Christians need to love the nation and need to do the best for the upliftment of the nation.

6.2 Establishing a Just Society

For the Christians, proclamation of the gospel is the service in which the church can render to every individual and to all humanity. Service is the basis of Christian mission and justice is its primary concern. God is just, so the mission of the church is not only to preach the word of God, but to bring justice and peace. Jesus denounced oppression but always loved the oppressors. Likewise the Christians mission is to fight against all kind of oppressive structures and establish righteousness.⁹³

6.3 Getting Into the Politics

Hindutva is a religious ideology, but it is used in India to achieve political ends.⁹⁴ The church therefore, should co-operate with any group, both religious and secular, to raise social consciousness among the people. The church should not be churchy, dealing only with the pious activities within the church compound, but they must be conscious about the things going on

⁹¹Felix Wilfred, *Asian Dreams...*, 39.

⁹²Felix Wilfred, *Asian Dreams...*, 39.

⁹³Felix Wilfred, *Asian Dreams...*, 40.

⁹⁴Emmanuel E. James, "The Issues and Challenges Facing Christians in India," *TBT Journal Vol.6* (Bangalore: TBT, 2004), 13-14.

around them.⁹⁵ The Christians must cooperate with the politicians, government etc..., to eradicate the evil of religious violence.

6.4 Answer to Violence

Hindutva is also the ideology of religious violence. As an ideology of violence, it needs a hate-object to keep itself through aggression. So for them Christians and Muslims are hated objects. Thus, the church as a whole should not look into their threats, but should stand against it and continue the option for justice even amidst suffering.⁹⁶

6.5 Having an Inter Faith Dialogue

Dialogue with other faiths is the characteristics mode of the church.⁹⁷ It will help people from other faiths to develop positive attitude in the society by giving importance to religious harmony and peace. By maintaining a proper dialogue there will be mutual understanding between different religions.

6.6 Using of Proper Terms like Conversion

The term conversion often leads to misunderstanding in the context of religious pluralism. Therefore, Christian conversion needs to be reconsidered and interpreted in the light of recent developments in pluralism. The reason behind Christian mission is to transform the lives of the people not simply to convert them into new religion or doctrine. The Christians must not have an aggressive attitude towards non- Christians or convert the people by force. Rather the Christians need to think openly from the standpoint of religious faith and response positively to the claims of others in the pluralistic socio- religious context of multi- faiths.⁹⁸

6.7 Maintaining Indian Identity

The Christian identity should not be mixed with that of west. A Christian Indian identity needs to be developed in India. Infact, Christians do participate in the life of the nation along with the people of other faiths. But it is important to assert their Indian identity. They must be acquainted

⁹⁵Emmanuel E. James, "The Issues ...", 13-14.

⁹⁶Emmanuel E. James, "The Issues...", 13-14.

⁹⁷Padinjarekuttu, "Religions and Violence," *Janadeepa* 5/2 (July-2002): 28.

⁹⁸T. Swami Raju, *Christian Responses to Plurality of Religion* (Bangalore: BTESSC, 2006), 113- 115.

with the culture. They must heal it and preserve it. They must develop it according to modern conditions and finally perfect it in Christ.⁹⁹

Conclusion

Hindutva and its ideology reflect the threat to Indian society. The promoters of Hindutva have intensified their efforts to change the country into a monolithic Hindutva mould. Their efforts have resulted in innumerable atrocities being inflicted on religious minorities. Such acts of violence and the ideology that legitimizes them, threaten to destroy the very democratic, secular, and civilizational fabric of the Indian society. It erases the pluralism that underpins the unity of the nation. It recognized the serious danger posed by the resurgent Hindutva forces to the principles of freedom, equality, and justice, as well as to the multi-religious and plural-cultural, nature and heritage of Indian society. Therefore, it needs to respond with utmost cautious and alertness.

⁹⁹J.W. Gladstone, "Indigenisation of Christianity," *Doing Mission in Context*, edited by Sunand Sumithra and F. Hranghkuma (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 1995), 25.

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