

Bölünmüş Bir Toplumda Köprüler Kurmak: Hindistan'da Hindutva ve Müslüman Çatışmalar

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Öz

Bu çalışma, Hindutva ve Hindistan'daki Müslüman azınlık arasındaki karmaşık dinamikleri, özellikle artan çatışmaya odaklanarak detaylı bir şekilde incelemektedir. Araştırma, siyasi, dini ve sosyolojik faktörlerin etkileşimiyle şekillenen bu karmaşık durumu ele almak için geniş bir akademik kaynak yelpazesinden yararlanmaktadır. Özellikle, Hindistan'da Müslüman azınlık üzerindeki ırk ayrımcılığı, milliyetçilik ve dışlayıcı politikaların etkileri incelenmektedir. Makale aynı zamanda Hinduizm'in siyasallaşması sürecini ve Hindu milliyetçiliğinin yükselişini incelemekte ve Müslüman azınlığın karşılaştığı sosyo-politik sorunları değerlendirmekte; kapsayıcılık, laiklik ve ilerleme için mücadele ederken çeşitliliği kucaklayan bir anlatının önemini vurgulamaktadır. Devletin dini gruplar arasında tercih yapmasının eleştirel bir analizi yapılarak dinler arası iletişimi teşvik etmek için stratejiler incelenmektedir. Çalışmanın temel hedefi, herkesin inançlarını özgürce yaşayabileceği bir toplum oluşturmaya dikkat çekmektir. Bu bağlamda, araştırma, sosyal adalet, eşitlik ve kapsayıcılık gibi kavramların günümüz Hindistan'ında ne kadar önemli olduğunu vurgulamakta ve bu konuda önemli bir tartışma başlatmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu çerçevede, sosyal ve siyasi değişimlerin yanı sıra medya ve politika alanlarında yapılacak dengeli adımların önemi üzerinde durulmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dinler Tarihi, Dini Ayrımcılık, Hindu Milliyetçiliği, Hindutva-Müslüman Çatışması, Hindistan'daki Dini Azınlıklar, İslamofobi.

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Building Bridges in a Divided Society: Addressing Hindutva and Muslim Conflicts in India

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Abstract

This study comprehensively examines the complex dynamics between Hindutva and the Muslim minority in India, with a particular emphasis on escalating conflicts. Drawing from a wide array of academic sources, the research delves into the intricate interplay of political, religious, and sociological factors shaping this intricate landscape. Specifically, it investigates the intentional exacerbation of discrimination, nationalism, and exclusionary policies disproportionately affecting the Muslim population in India. Additionally, it sheds light on the politicization of Hinduism and the rise of Hindu nationalism while assessing the socio-political challenges faced by the Muslim minority. The study underscores the urgent need for a narrative that embraces inclusivity, secularism, and progressiveness, while critically analyzing the role of the state in preferentially treating religious groups and exploring strategies to promote interfaith communication and mutual respect. The primary aim is to foster a society where individuals of all religious backgrounds can practice their beliefs freely without fear of discrimination or persecution. Furthermore, the research highlights the importance of ongoing dialogues, policy changes, and balanced media portrayals in reevaluating dominant narratives and advocating for social justice, equality, and inclusivity within contemporary India.

Keywords: History of Religions, Hindu Nationalism, Hindutva-Muslim Conflict, Religious Discrimination, Minorities in India, Islamophobia.

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Introduction

India, often celebrated for its rich tapestry of cultures, languages, and religions, is also a land where this diversity has been a source of both strength and tension. The Hindu-Muslim divide is a pervasive issue in India, with religious tensions exacerbating societal fractures and fomenting discord. This religious cleavage, amplified by the rise of Hindu nationalism, raises pressing matters of social justice, discrimination, and communal unrest. The Hindu-Muslim divide, intensified by the rise of Hindutva in India, has become a troublesome chapter in the history of the nation's socio-political dynamics. This religious chasm raises grave concerns regarding social justice, discrimination, communal violence and the actualization of democratic ideals. The detrimental ramifications, if left unaddressed, could pose a serious threat to the social fabric and political stability of the subcontinent.

The term Hindutva, which was coined during the early 20th century, encompasses the philosophy of Hindu nationalism within the context of India. The concept posits India as a nation where Hinduism serves as the dominant religion, influencing several spheres of society such as education, economic progress, environmental policies, and industrial practices.¹ Since 1991, the Hindutva movement has had a notable surge in political influence, transitioning from a marginalized faction to a prominent entity within mainstream society.² The objective of this endeavor is to establish and present a notion of 'Indianness' that purports to embody elements of tradition, conservatism, and historical accuracy.³ Nevertheless, the endeavor to reshape India according to its own

¹ P. A. Kurien, 'Multiculturalism and "American" Religion: The Case of Hindu Indian Americans', *Social Forces* 85/2 (1 December 2006), 734; Andrea Malji, 'Gendered Islamophobia: The Nature of Hindu and Buddhist Nationalism in India and Sri Lanka', *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 21/2 (September 2021), 174.

² Sharanya Rao - Chandra D. Mason, 'Minority Stress and Well-Being under Anti-Sodomy Legislation in India.', *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity* 5/4 (December 2018), 432–444.

³ Rao - Mason, 'Minority Stress and Well-Being under Anti-Sodomy Legislation in India.', 433.

ideals entails a discerning assimilation and complete dismissal of significant aspects of both Indian history and contemporary reality.⁴ The concept gained significant traction within mainstream political discourse during the ascendance of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) throughout the 1990s. BJP emerged as a political faction affiliated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a Hindu nationalist volunteer organization with right-wing ideologies. However, the BJP has strategically positioned itself as a prominent political institution, successfully attaining power at the national level throughout some eras.⁵

The ascendancy of Hindutva is closely linked to the decline of the Indian National Congress and other centrist or left-of-center parties, which for decades promoted a more secular and pluralistic vision of India. As the BJP gained electoral strength, the influence of Hindutva on governance, legislation, and social policies became increasingly evident. From rewriting school textbooks to emphasize Hindu cultural history to the renaming of cities with names that have Islamic roots, the impact of this ideology has been sweeping.⁶ However, Hindutva's rise has not been without controversy or conflict, especially concerning India's Muslim community, which constitutes about 14% of the country's population. Members of this community often find themselves at odds with the ideology's emphasis on Hindu supremacy and cultural homogeneity. The tension between proponents of Hindutva and the Muslim community has manifested itself in various problematic ways.⁷

⁴ M. A. Muqtedar Khan - Rifat Binte Lutful, 'Emerging Hindu Rashtra and Its Impact on Indian Muslims', *Religions* 12/9 (27 August 2021), 4; Rao - Mason, 'Minority Stress and Well-Being under Anti-Sodomy Legislation in India.'

⁵ Osman Ülker, 'Politics, Society and Violence: The Role of the Indian Police in the 2002 Gujarat Riots', *Journal of Eurasian Inquiries / Avrasya İncelemeleri Dergisi* 10/1 (31 March 2021), 155.

⁶ Akif Rasheed, 'Role of Hindutva Ideology in Escalation of Extremism in India: A Comparative Analysis of Congress and BJP Govt. (2009-2019)', *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review* 6/II (30 June 2022), 985; Garima Raghuvanshy, 'On the Explanatory Adequacy of the Hindutva-as-Brahmanical Model', *Oñati Socio-Legal Series* 13/1 (1 February 2023), 148.

⁷ Ali Khan Mahmudabad, 'Indian Muslims and the Anti-CAA Protests: From Marginalization Towards Exclusion', *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal* 24/25 (14 December

a) **Social Discrimination:** Discrimination against Muslims in various social spheres has been reported, ranging from housing to employment opportunities. The prejudice is sometimes institutionalized, resulting in Muslims feeling marginalized in their own country.⁸

b) **Economic Marginalization:** Economic policies influenced by Hindutva ideologies can also disproportionately affect Muslim communities. There are instances where Muslims find it difficult to secure loans, start businesses, or get access to educational opportunities, leading to economic marginalization.⁹

c) **Communal Violence:** Most alarmingly, these tensions have spilled over into instances of communal violence, riots, and even lynchings. In some cases, these violent incidents have been spurred by alleged cow slaughter, a practice considered blasphemous in Hinduism, or by religious conversion, another contentious issue.¹⁰ The rise in such violence has caused international concern and put a spotlight on India's ability to maintain its pluralistic fabric. According to Lambert-Hurley, vigilante-style violence related to cow slaughter and meat consumption has been on the rise in India since 2015.¹¹ The phenomenon of violence has been strategically utilized as a means to delineate and accentuate distinctions in identity and social stratification within religious communities and caste groupings.

The societal division and unrest that sometimes accompany Hindutva ideologies have raised questions about India's future as a secular and pluralistic nation. Critics argue that the ideology's influence could jeopardize India's

2020), 141.

⁸ Muhamad Parhan et al., 'Responding to Islamophobia by Internalizing the Value of Islam Rahmatan Lil Alamin through Using the Media', *Islam Realitas: Journal of Islamic and Social Studies* 6/2 (31 December 2020), 141.

⁹ Rasheed, 'Role of Hindutva Ideology in Escalation of Extremism in India', 988.

¹⁰ Jeffrey Haynes, 'Introductory Thoughts about Peace, Politics and Religion', *Religions* 11/5 (13 May 2020), 3.

¹¹ Siobhan Lambert-Hurley, "'Human or Not, Everyone Has Their Own Habits and Tastes": Food, Identity and Difference in Muslim South Asia', *Global Food History* 9/2 (4 May 2023), 194–216.

democratic foundations and its long-standing commitment to secularism.¹² On the other hand, proponents of Hindutva argue that they are merely reclaiming India's Hindu heritage, which they believe, was marginalized during years of foreign rule and secular governance.¹³

The establishment of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) in 1951 marked a pivotal moment in the trajectory of Hindutva ideology in India.¹⁴ The political party in question originated as a derivative of the RSS, a Hindu nationalist movement. Its primary purpose was to facilitate the integration of Hindutva's ideological principles into the realm of conventional politics. Before the formation of the BJS, Hindutva was largely confined to the realm of social and cultural organizations, and its influence on formal politics was relatively limited.¹⁵ The establishment of the BJS was carefully synchronized with the period following India's attainment of independence in 1947. This timing coincided with a phase characterized by both optimism and substantial obstacles pertaining to the construction of a nation and the shaping of its identity. BJS established itself as a political party dedicated to safeguarding and promoting Hindu culture and values, in contrast to the secular and pluralistic approach embraced by the Indian National Congress.¹⁶ Despite not achieving significant electoral success, the BJS had a significant influence on shaping public opinion and laying the groundwork for subsequent debates on the concept of national identity.¹⁷ Although the BJS did not experience immediate electoral triumph, it

¹² Sughra Alam et al., 'An Analysis of the Narrowing Space of Secularism in India and Its Ramifications in the Region', *Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal (LASSIJ)* 6/2 (31 December 2022), 137; Rasheed, 'Role of Hindutva Ideology in Escalation of Extremism in India', 989; Mahmudabad, 'Indian Muslims and the Anti-CAA Protests', 7.

¹³ Divyanshu Chaudhary, 'Indian Constitution Vis-À-Vis The Idea of Secularism: The Role of State in The Ongoing Trends', *Kathmandu School of Law Review*, (5 March 2021), 106.

¹⁴ Aniket Nandan, 'Revival of Hindu Nationalism: Interplay of Religion and Caste in 21st Century's India', *Athens Journal of Social Sciences* 5/4 (30 September 2018), 445.

¹⁵ Milan Vaishnav, 'Religious Nationalism and India's Future', *The BJP in Power: Indian Democracy and Religious Nationalism* (Washington, D.C: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2019), 11.

¹⁶ Dibyesh Anand, 'Anxious Sexualities: Masculinity, Nationalism and Violence', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 9/2 (May 2007), 258.

¹⁷ Anand, 'Anxious Sexualities: Masculinity, Nationalism and Violence', 262.

significantly influenced the shaping of public opinion and laid the foundation for subsequent deliberations on the concept of national identity.¹⁸

BJP and its associated entities, namely the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), exhibit a strong dedication to the ideology of Hindutva. This ideology seeks to foster a collective sense of national cohesion in India, grounded in the fundamental tenets of Hinduism.¹⁹ The party's policies and discourse frequently center around matters pertaining to Hindu identity, including the designation of Hindi as the national language, the promotion of Hindu rites and festivals, and the stance against cow slaughter.²⁰ BJP has proposed repealing Article 370, a constitutional provision that gives Jammu and Kashmir, a region with a majority of Muslims, special privileges.²¹ These viewpoints appeal to a segment of the people who perceive that Hindu culture and traditions are being marginalized under the guise of secularism and modernization. The Sangh Parivar, comprising of the RSS, VHP, and BJP, is widely acknowledged as the ideological progenitor of Hindutva.²²

In spite of its ideological dedication, the BJS encountered several obstacles during its formative years, such as limited achievements in elections and the arduous task of broadening its support beyond the Hindi-speaking territories. The aforementioned event, though, facilitated the rise of its subsequent political entity, the BJP, in the year 1980.²³ BJP incorporated the fundamental principles and ideals of the BJS, while concurrently implementing substantial measures to enhance the party's appeal among the electorate.²⁴ The

¹⁸ Stuart Corbridge - John Harriss, *Reinventing India: Liberalization, Hindu Nationalism and Popular Democracy* (Cambridge, UK : Malden, MA: Polity, 2000), 37.

¹⁹ Malji, 'Gendered Islamophobia: The Nature of Hindu and Buddhist Nationalism in India and Sri Lanka', 174.

²⁰ Anand, 'Anxious Sexualities: Masculinity, Nationalism and Violence', 260.

²¹ Anand, 'Anxious Sexualities: Masculinity, Nationalism and Violence', 259.

²² Malji, 'Gendered Islamophobia: The Nature of Hindu and Buddhist Nationalism in India and Sri Lanka', 175.

²³ Alam et al., 'An Analysis of the Narrowing Space of Secularism in India and Its Ramifications in the Region', 132.

²⁴ Adam Ziegfeld, 'Alliance Politics Amid the BJP's Rise: More Continuity than Change in

aforementioned measures encompass the establishment of strategic partnerships with other political entities and the expansion of its policy framework to encompass matters such as economic growth and governance. The ascendance of the BJP has been ascribed to various factors, such as the increasing political assertiveness of the lower castes, the rise of the middle class, and the rapid socioeconomic changes occurring in India.²⁵ The rise in popularity of the BJP has been linked to the waning influence of state socialism and the shifting power dynamics between secular and religious factions within the populace.²⁶

The establishment of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh in 1951 represented a notable accomplishment in the incorporation of the Hindutva ideology into a political framework. Despite encountering initial challenges, the ideological framework laid forth by the BJS demonstrated its efficacy, ultimately culminating in the rise of the BJP. The previously mentioned development has had extensive implications for the political environment in India, as Hindutva has emerged as an essential element in the continuing discussions surrounding nationhood, identity, and governance.

The endeavor to regain control over the birthplace of Lord Ram in Ayodhya has gained traction through a variety of approaches, including extensive mobilizations, political gatherings, and religious journeys organized by influential figures associated with the BJP and related organizations.²⁷ The aforementioned campaign had a crucial part in mobilizing Hindu sentiment and propelling the BJP to prominence within the realm of Indian politics. It framed the issue not only as a religious matter, but also as a symbol of Hindu identity and pride, resonating with a large section of the population.²⁸ Additionally, the

2019', *Studies in Indian Politics* 7/2 (December 2019), 191–205.

²⁵ Cedric De Leon et al., 'Political Articulation: Parties and the Constitution of Cleavages in the United States, India, and Turkey', *Sociological Theory* 27/3 (September 2009), 194.

²⁶ De Leon et al., 'Political Articulation: Parties and the Constitution of Cleavages in the United States, India, and Turkey', 203.

²⁷ Neelanjan Sircar, 'Religion-as-Ethnicity and the Emerging Hindu Vote in India', *Studies in Indian Politics* 10/1 (June 2022), 81.

²⁸ Sircar, 'Religion-as-Ethnicity and the Emerging Hindu Vote in India', 80.

movement mainstreamed the Hindutva agenda, becoming a central talking point in electoral politics and even entering the platforms of parties that had traditionally not been associated with religious nationalism²⁹

The Babri Masjid demolition on December 6, 1992, led to widespread communal violence across India, resulting in a substantial loss of life and property, primarily among the Muslim community.³⁰ According to Bacchetta³¹ and Kinnvall & Svensson,³² Hindu nationalists asserted that the mosque had been constructed atop the remnants of a Hindu temple. Consequently, they actively advocated for the mosque's demolition and the subsequent reconstruction of the temple. The act of demolishing the Masjid has profound implications, both symbolically and practically, throughout India. This event notably resulted in communal unrest in urban areas such as Mumbai, as documented by Kinnvall and Svensson³³ and Parameswaran.³⁴ The occurrence resulted in a significant deterioration of Hindu-Muslim relations, and had a lasting influence on the collective consciousness of the Indian population.³⁵ According to Darby,³⁶ the period of unrest that ensued after the destruction resulted in a significant escalation of violence and brought about substantial changes within the local community of Dharavi, a slum located in Mumbai. The sensitive issue of the Babri Masjid disagreement has sparked opinions regarding its genesis and

²⁹ Sircar, 'Religion-as-Ethnicity and the Emerging Hindu Vote in India', 84.

³⁰ Paola Bacchetta, 'Sacred Space in Conflict in India: The Babri Masjid Affair', *Growth and Change* 31/2 (January 2000), 256; Catarina Kinnvall - Ted Svensson, 'Hindu Nationalism, Diaspora Politics and Nation-Building in India', *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 64/3 (June 2010), 282; Radhika Parameswaran, 'Global Media Events in India: Contests over Beauty, Gender and Nation', *Journalism & Communication Monographs* 3/2 (June 2001), 83.

³¹ Bacchetta, 'Sacred Space in Conflict in India: The Babri Masjid Affair', 258.

³² Kinnvall - Svensson, 'Hindu Nationalism, Diaspora Politics and Nation-Building in India', 282.

³³ Kinnvall - Svensson, 'Hindu Nationalism, Diaspora Politics and Nation-Building in India', 275.

³⁴ Parameswaran, 'Global Media Events in India: Contests over Beauty, Gender and Nation', 64.

³⁵ Bacchetta, 'Sacred Space in Conflict in India: The Babri Masjid Affair'.

³⁶ Phillip Darby, 'Security, Spatiality, and Social Suffering', *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 31/4 (October 2006), 468.

significance.³⁷ The phenomenon mentioned has resulted in specific impacts on how Muslims are perceived and managed, and it also affects how Muslim individuals from India are assimilated into different societies.³⁸

The Ram Janmabhoomi movement in India, aimed at reclaiming the birthplace of Lord Ram, not only polarized Indian culture but also intensified existing social cleavages.³⁹ This movement's focus on restoring a Hindu cultural identity inadvertently led to the marginalization of the Muslim community and other minorities, escalating sectarian tensions as documented by scholars such as Benford and Hunt and Sircar.⁴⁰ The inception of the movement can be ascribed to the VHP, an organization that maintains an affiliation with the RSS. According to Sircar,⁴¹ the BJP played a crucial role in attaining political consolidation. The Bharatiya Janata Party's endorsement of the Vishva Hindu Parishad's request resulted in a surge in the party's electoral popularity and a subsequent escalation in communal violence between Hindus and Muslims.⁴²

The rise of the BJP in the Indian political sphere in the late 1990s and early 2000s can be understood as a manifestation of the Hindutva ideology, which gained momentum through the Ram Janmabhoomi movement.⁴³ The aforementioned movement exerted a long-standing influence on the political landscape of India and prompted a reassessment of the nation's dedication to secularism, hence instigating discussions on the involvement of religion in the

³⁷ Bacchetta, 'Sacred Space in Conflict in India: The Babri Masjid Affair', 265.

³⁸ Bimal Kishore Shrivastwa, 'Exploitation of Minority Community in Nasrin's Lajja: Marxist Perspective', *Pakistan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 10/3 (30 September 2022), 984; Joanne Britton, 'Muslim Men, Racialised Masculinities and Personal Life', *Sociology* 53/1 (February 2019), 38; Muniba Saleem et al., 'Perceived Discrimination and Intergroup Behaviors: The Role of Muslim and American Identity Integration', *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 49/4 (May 2018), 3.

³⁹ Sircar, 'Religion-as-Ethnicity and the Emerging Hindu Vote in India', 86.

⁴⁰ Robert D. Benford - Scott A. Hunt, 'Dramaturgy and Social Movements: The Social Construction and Communication of Power*', *Sociological Inquiry* 62/1 (January 1992), 36–55; Sircar, 'Religion-as-Ethnicity and the Emerging Hindu Vote in India'.

⁴¹ Sircar, 'Religion-as-Ethnicity and the Emerging Hindu Vote in India', 81.

⁴² Sircar, 'Religion-as-Ethnicity and the Emerging Hindu Vote in India', 85.

⁴³ Zubair Ahmad, 'External Definition or Self-Assertion of Separateness: Understanding Muslim Identity in Post-Colonial India', *Social Change* 50/4 (December 2020), 526.

public domain.⁴⁴ The movement also contributed to the communalization of Indian politics and aggravated Muslim consciousness.⁴⁵ The Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi dispute, originally centered on religious and historical claims, evolved to symbolize broader socio-political issues, particularly after it began to be predominantly associated with the Muslim community.⁴⁶ This association imbued the mosque with additional significance, turning it into a symbol of Muslim identity and a test case for Indian secularism. Concurrently, the broader societal and political shifts reflected in this dispute also spurred the establishment of various student organizations focused on representing Dalit and lower-caste individuals. These groups, emerging in response to the changing political climate, aim to mobilize around caste identity and seek to influence the political discourse within university campuses.⁴⁷ The controversy surrounding the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi issue, which encompasses the demolition of the mosque and the ensuing rioting, has prompted apprehensions regarding India's adherence to the principles of the rule of law and safeguarding the rights of minority communities. This event prompted both domestic and international scrutiny of Indian democracy and its institutions.

This study seeks to examine the conflicts between the Hindutva and Muslim communities in India, deeply entrenched in the nation's sociopolitical fabric. The investigation attempts an elucidation of the various social, political, and cultural factors motivating this tension and its repercussions on interfaith understanding and social cohesion in India. Furthermore, the study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of existing policy measures and educational programs aimed at fostering interfaith dialogue and understanding. An additional objective is to propose strategies that could potentially enhance religious tolerance, reduce

⁴⁴ Jens Köhrsen, 'How Religious Is the Public Sphere? A Critical Stance on the Debate about Public Religion and Post-Secularity', *Acta Sociologica* 55/3 (September 2012), 273–288.

⁴⁵ Ahmad, 'External Definition or Self-Assertion of Separateness', 520.

⁴⁶ Ahmad, 'External Definition or Self-Assertion of Separateness', 526.

⁴⁷ Kristina Garalytė, 'Symbolic Boundaries and Moral Demands of Dalit Student Activism', *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal* 22 (15 December 2019), 4.

prejudice, and foster communal harmony. The broader objective is to contribute to the understanding of religious and ethnic conflicts globally, ascertain effective mitigation strategies, and underline the importance of promoting cultural diversity.

1. Methodology

This study investigates the ideological and communal discord between Hindutva and India's Muslim community using a qualitative approach. Primary data were sourced from historical documents like government reports while secondary data were obtained from academic literature and media reports. Thematic analysis was employed to discern key themes, offering a nuanced view of the contributing factors to this conflict. The approach of the study was carried out with a significant focus on ethical considerations. This ensured that all data sources were adequately acknowledged to maintain objectivity and equilibrium throughout the research process.

2. Hindutva-Muslim Conflicts and Its Foundations

2.1. Hindutva Ideology

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, a seminal figure in the development of Hindu nationalism, first used the term 'Hindutva' in 1923. Christophe Jaffrelot posits that Hindu nationalism can be comprehended as an ideology construct that seeks to establish the preeminent cultural, theological, and territorial ascendancy of Hindus within the Indian milieu,⁴⁸ while Partha Chatterjee extends this understanding by proposing that Hindutva encompasses not only religious principles but also political and societal aspects.⁴⁹ The aim of this method is to segregate communities that do not practice Hinduism, particularly Muslims and Christians, by labeling them as 'outsiders' or 'invaders'. The Hindutva ideology has garnered significant scholarly attention and scrutiny due to its vast and

⁴⁸ Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics* (London: C. Hurst & Co. Publishers, 1999)

⁴⁹ Chatterjee, Partha. 'History and the Nationalization Of Hinduism'. *Social Research* 59/1 (1992), 112.

diverse nature. The genesis of this ideology can be attributed to the early 20th century, originating from a Hindu nationalist standpoint with the objective of establishing the cultural and political dominance of Hindus in India. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that the Hindutva ideology is not a homogeneous belief system, but rather contains a diverse array of perspectives and interpretations.

One aspect of the Hindutva ideology encompasses its historical examination of the perceived fall or degradation of Hindu society. According to Reddy's research, early advocates, such as Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, argued that Hindu civilization underwent a decline due to the influence of Buddhism and its inability to resist the incursions by Muslim forces. This historical critique provides a foundation for conceptualizing Hindutva as a framework for enacting change and implementing reforms. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that this historical account has encountered scrutiny and discussion, as historians have highlighted the intricacies and subtleties of India's historical progression. An additional facet of the Hindutva ideology is its stress on the religious and racial identity of Hindus, as well as its significance within the context of the nation. The religio-racialist inclination mentioned here corresponds to the hereditary notion of the *rashtra* (nation) advocated by M.S. Golwalkar, a prominent figure linked to Hindutva. Nevertheless, the aforementioned approach has faced criticism because to its tendency to exclude and create divisions.

The Hindutva ideology, with its profound influence, has reverberated far beyond the territorial confines of India. The Hindu diasporic population residing abroad, notably in the United States, has exhibited a fervent inclination towards endorsing Hindu nationalism. As per the scholarly work of Bandyopadhyay, it is evident that they have assumed a significant role in the preservation and dissemination of the tenets of Hindutva through diverse mediums, encompassing digital domains such as websites and online platforms.

3.2. Muslim Community in India

The Muslim community, comprising approximately 14% of India's populace, has frequently encountered ideological discord with the Hindutva paradigm.⁵⁰ The Sachar Committee Report of 2006, a testament to the prevailing circumstances, unveils the empirical veracity of this disheartening marginalization. It meticulously elucidates the undeniable reality that Muslims, as a community, find themselves ensnared in a web of limited opportunities, as evidenced by their disproportionately lower levels of employment, education, and representation in public services when juxtaposed with other communities. In the vast tapestry of India's cultural landscape, the followers of Islam find themselves entangled in a complex web of challenges that permeate every facet of their existence. From the intricate intricacies of economic struggles to the intricate interplay of social dynamics, from the arduous journey towards educational empowerment to the labyrinthine corridors of political engagement, the Muslim community in India grapples with a myriad of obstacles that test their resilience and fortitude.⁵¹ Throughout the annals of time, those who have found themselves on the fringes of society have persistently encountered a myriad of afflictions, ranging from the pernicious grip of discrimination to the cruel embrace of exclusion.⁵²

Economically, Muslims in India are among the most impoverished communities, with a substantial proportion residing in rural locales. Their educational attainment is generally lower compared to other communities, which restricts their access to managerial and professional occupations.⁵³ The economic

⁵⁰ Malika B. Mistry, 'Muslims in India: A Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 25/3 (December 2005), 399–422.

⁵¹ Ramphul Ohlan, 'Economic Violence among Women of Economically Backward Muslim Minority Community: The Case of Rural North India', *Future Business Journal* 7/1 (December 2021), 28.

⁵² Muhamad Parhan et al., 'Responding to Islamophobia by Internalizing the Value of Islam Rahmatan Lil Alamin through Using the Media', *Islam Realitas: Journal of Islamic and Social Studies* 6/2 (31 December 2020), 141.

⁵³ Ohlan, 'Economic Violence among Women of Economically Backward Muslim Minority Community'.

and social inequities highlighted in the Sachar Committee Report⁵⁴ were explained by many factors such as caste, religion, and regional or language variations. The aforementioned inequities are rooted in historical foundations and are sustained by prevailing socio-economic institutions.

In the realm of social and political representation, Muslims encounter difficulties in securing adequate representation in various institutional frameworks, such as the Panchayati Raj institutions.⁵⁵ The political course of the Muslim community in post-colonial India has been significantly influenced by the need to navigate the democratic and secular framework of the nation.⁵⁶ However, concerns persist about their exclusion and marginalization, often exacerbated by questions surrounding their loyalty and patriotism.⁵⁷ The rise of Hindu fundamentalism has further complicated the lived experiences of Muslim women, who are increasingly subjected to gender-based violence and discrimination.⁵⁸

The religious affiliation of individuals holds significant influence in molding the lived realities of the Muslim community in India. They are often subjected to Islamophobia and stereotyping, leading to the stigmatization of their religious practices and beliefs.⁵⁹ The construction of Muslims as the ‘other’ and their portrayal as a security threat have contributed to communal violence and

⁵⁴ ‘Sachar Committee Report’ (Ministry of Minority Affairs, 2006).

⁵⁵ C. Sathish, ‘Representation of Minorities in Panchayati Raj Institutions in Rural Tamil Nadu: The Influence of Caste, Class, Religion and Gender’, *Sociological Bulletin* 68/3 (December 2019), 358.

⁵⁶ Ahmad, ‘External Definition or Self-Assertion of Separateness’.

⁵⁷ Khatidja Chantler et al., ‘Muslim Women and Gender Based Violence in India and the UK’, *Critical Social Policy* 39/2 (May 2019), 166.

⁵⁸ Chantler et al., ‘Muslim Women and Gender Based Violence in India and the UK’.

⁵⁹ Ismail Adam Patel, ‘Islamophobia in India: The Orientalist Reformulation of Tipu Sultan—The Tiger of Mysore’, *Islamophobia Studies Journal* 7/1 (16 June 2022); Khan - Lutful, ‘Emerging Hindu Rashtra and Its Impact on Indian Muslims’; see also Cemil Kutlutürk, Hint Düşüncesinde İslam Algısı (İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 2019), 86-114; Under the heading ‘İslam ve Müntesipleri için Kullanılan Başlıca İsimlendirmeler’ he investigated Hindu views and characterisations of other nations and religions, especially Muslims and Turks.

discrimination.⁶⁰ These communal tensions have repercussions for Muslim women, leading to the reassertion of patriarchal control within families.

One must indeed recognize the profound heterogeneity that permeates the Muslim community in the vast tapestry of India. In accordance with the intricate tapestry of human existence, one must acknowledge the existence of myriad variations, each imbued with its own unique essence. These variations, influenced by the intricate interplay of factors such as caste, class, and regional disparities, weave a rich tapestry of diversity within the fabric of society. The manifestation of caste within the realm of Indian Muslims is an intricately woven tapestry that necessitates a profound comprehension of its distinct socio-cultural milieu.⁶¹ Furthermore, within the community, one can discern a multitude of variances in religious observances and diverse theological doctrines. The Muslim population in India faces a multitude of obstacles and difficulties within the broad context of life. They encounter several barriers and disadvantages that significantly impact the core of their existence. The genesis of these barriers can be discerned within a multifaceted historical context of marginalization, resulting in the persistent existence of bias and alienation. Moreover, the Muslim community in the Indian subcontinent exhibits a range of intricate complexities stemming from their deeply entrenched religious convictions, the intricate structure of caste systems, the nuanced dynamics of gender relationships, and the notable disparities that manifest across different geographical areas. Acquiring a thorough comprehension of these intricacies is crucial for adeptly maneuvering the challenges faced by the Muslim community, while concurrently cultivating an atmosphere of inclusivity and equity within the tapestry of Indian society.

2.2. Political Landscape

The complex dynamics of political processes have played a crucial role in shaping the development and continuity of the conflict between the Hindutva

⁶⁰ Patel, 'Islamophobia in India'; Khan - Lutful, 'Emerging Hindu Rashtra and Its Impact on Indian Muslims'.

⁶¹ Sathish, 'Representation of Minorities in Panchayati Raj Institutions in Rural Tamil Nadu'.

ideology and the Muslim majority in India. Varshney (2002) asserts that the rise of the BJP, which advocates the Hindutva ideology, has led to the growth of communal politics. The adoption of measures such as the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) has elicited criticism due to perceived discriminatory treatment towards Muslims.⁶²

The BJP's rise to power has had a profound impact on the political dynamics in India. Berenschot (2019) explains that the BJP and its affiliated organizations managed to woo leaders of lower caste communities in the 1980s, which helped in the expansion of their patronage networks.⁶³ The process of growth discussed in the aforementioned study was primarily driven by a religious schism and perpetuated through the use of rhetoric emphasizing Hindu solidarity. This ideological framework ultimately facilitated the rise of the BJP and the subsequent mobilization centered on a Hindu-Muslim dichotomy.⁶⁴ Similarly, in Tamil Nadu, a distinct yet related trend has been observed. Narayanan⁶⁵ highlights that Chennai, the capital city of Tamil Nadu, has experienced a growth in Hindutva nationalism, aided by rapid urban growth through immigration. This has led to heightened tensions between Hindutva and Dravida nationalist parties in the state. While violent conflict around caste has historically been more significant in Tamil Nadu than religious tensions, Tamil politics have increasingly been influenced by Hindu nationalism in the last two decades, reflecting a broader national shift in political alignment.⁶⁶

An essential aspect of comprehending the influence of the political terrain is the examination of the spatial elements inherent in political-religious

⁶² Ward Berenschot, 'Patterned Pogroms: Patronage Networks as Infrastructure for Electoral Violence in India and Indonesia', *Journal of Peace Research* 57/1 (January 2020), 171–184.

⁶³ Berenschot, 'Patterned Pogroms: Patronage Networks as Infrastructure for Electoral Violence in India and Indonesia'.

⁶⁴ Berenschot, 'Patterned Pogroms: Patronage Networks as Infrastructure for Electoral Violence in India and Indonesia'.

⁶⁵ Yamini Narayanan, 'Animating Caste: Visceral Geographies of Pigs, Caste, and Violent Nationalisms in Chennai City', *Urban Geography* 44/10 (26 November 2023), 2185–2205.

⁶⁶ Narayanan, 'Animating Caste: Visceral Geographies of Pigs, Caste, and Violent Nationalisms in Chennai City'.

conflicts. Stockmans and Büscher⁶⁷ highlight the significance of space and place as instruments of political power or agency. The examination of the spatial distributions of political-religious conflict in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia has enabled researchers to gain insights into the dynamics of power within urban environments.⁶⁸ In the Indian context, a comprehensive examination of the spatial dynamics surrounding the struggle between Hindutva and the Muslim population might yield significant scholarly perspectives on the influence exerted by the political environment in forming this particular conflict.

2.3. Media and Public Perception

The academic investigation of the impact of media on public perception and social attitudes, specifically in respect to race, religion, and community relations, has been a subject of significant study over an extended period of time. While media has the potential to enlighten and educate, it also has a troubling power to perpetuate stereotypes and stoke social divisions.⁶⁹ Banaji provides an insightful case study on this matter, showing that biased reporting, particularly by media outlets endorsing Hindutva ideologies, contributes to the stigmatization of Muslims and the normalization of Islamophobia in India.⁷⁰

Media bias is not a theoretical concern but has real, tangible consequences for social harmony and cohesion. When media outlets carry a distinct slant, they risk perpetuating ideologies that marginalize certain groups of people. In the context of India, media outlets promoting Hindutva ideologies become active agents in fostering environments where Islamophobic sentiments can grow.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Jep Stockmans- Karen Büscher, 'A Spatial Reading of Urban Political-Religious Conflict: Contested Urban Landscapes in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia', *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 55/1 (March 2017), 79–104.

⁶⁸ Stockmans- Büscher, 'A Spatial Reading of Urban Political-Religious Conflict'.

⁶⁹ Robert M. Entman, *Scandal and Silence: Media Responses to Presidential Misconduct* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity, 2012).

⁷⁰ Shakuntala Banaji, 'Orientalism, Modernity and Hindutva Fascism in India', *Javnost- The Public* 25/4 (2 October 2018), 333–350.

⁷¹ Zainab Sikander, 'Islamophobia in Indian Media', *Islamophobia Studies Journal* 6/2 (2021).

The media can magnify communal tensions by overly focusing on divisive issues, often inflating them beyond their actual significance.⁷² In such contexts, media outlets are not just purveyors of news but influencers shaping public opinion, either towards understanding and empathy or mistrust and prejudice.⁷³ Sensationalism is another aspect that often trumps responsible journalism, particularly in the era of 24/7 news cycles.⁷⁴ The stigmatization of Muslims in media, which Haque and Khan⁷⁵ points out, is a byproduct of this form of journalism. The constant portrayal of Muslims as potential threats fuels the marginalization of an entire community, further worsening societal divisions.

The influence of media representations of Muslims and Islam can exert a substantial influence on public opinion, potentially resulting in the acceptance and normalization of Islamophobic attitudes. When a particular narrative is consistently covered by the media, it gains legitimacy and can influence both individual attitudes and policy decisions. The media has a multifaceted and significant role in molding public perceptions, possessing the capacity to either facilitate transformative shifts within society or exacerbate divisions and perpetuate stereotypes. Biased reporting from outlets that endorse ideologies like Hindutva serves as an example of how the media can stigmatize minority communities and normalize prejudices such as Islamophobia, which has implications for social harmony.

3. Results

The thematic scrutiny of the empirical data uncovers an intricate web of determinants underlying the enduring strife between the Hindutva movement

⁷² Shanto Iyengar- Donald R. Kinder, *News That Matters: Television and American Opinion, Updated Edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

⁷³ Edward S. Herman- Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon, 2002).

⁷⁴ Paul R. Krugman, *The Age of Diminished Expectations, Third Edition: U.S. Economic Policy in the 1990s* (Cambridge, Mass.: Mit Pr, 1997).

⁷⁵ M. Mohibul Haque- Abdullah Khan, 'Mapping Islamophobia: The Indian Media Environment', *Islamophobia Studies Journal* 8/1 (2023).

and the Muslim populace in India. These determinants range from historical antecedents to ideological frameworks, as well as socio-economic exclusion and media influences.

Firstly, archival research and scholarly sources confirm that The discord has historical roots, notably intensified by the Partition of India in 1947, which established a backdrop for the current animosities. This monumental event triggered mass dislocation and sectarian violence, establishing a backdrop for ensuing animosities. The exploitation of partition-related memories for political ends has been substantiated in the literature.

Secondly, the ideological bedrock of Hindutva is explicated in academic treatises as being deeply embedded in various sociopolitical apparatuses. Its ultimate aim—the establishment of a Hindu Rashtra⁷⁶—relegates Muslims to the status of ‘outsiders’ or ‘invaders’.⁷⁷ The codification of ideological postulates can be observed in legislative instruments such as the Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Register of Citizens. These instruments have faced criticism for their perceived perpetuation of discriminatory practices towards the Muslim community.

Thirdly, the socio-economic marginalization of Muslims is substantiated both by academic investigations, such as the Sachar Committee Report and scholarly contributions and corroborated by media accounts. This marginalization is manifest in initiatives that stigmatize Muslim commerce and

⁷⁶ The term "Hindu Rashtra" refers to the concept of envisioning India as a nation founded on Hindu values and culture. This concept is closely associated with Hindu nationalism and the Hindutva movements, popularized by leaders such as Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and later by M. S. Golwalkar. "Hindu Rashtra" proposes not just a religious identity but also encompasses cultural, historical, and societal dimensions. The ideology advocates for a state structure and social order that prioritize the interests of the Hindu majority. However, the concept of "Hindu Rashtra" is controversial as it challenges India's pluralistic and multi-religious fabric, potentially conflicting with the country's secular and democratic frameworks (Jaffrelot, Christophe, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics*, 1999).

⁷⁷ Savarkar, *Hindutva- Who Is a Hindu*.

in the systematic exclusion of Muslims from particular industries and sectors of employment.

Fourthly, an examination of media reports and government datasets from the National Crime Records Bureau elucidates a notable surge in communal violence concomitant with the ascendancy of the BJP. Instances like the Gujarat riots of 2002, the Muzaffarnagar riots of 2013, and the Delhi riots of 2020 have predominantly impacted Muslim communities, engendering loss of life and property and deepening sectarian fissures.

Lastly, media enterprises have been identified as pivotal in shaping societal perceptions and exacerbating communal antipathies. Outlets advocating Hindutva have been implicated in the stigmatization of Muslims and in the mainstreaming of Islamophobia.⁷⁸ The conflict between Hindutva and the Muslim community in India appears to be a complex interplay of historical, ideological, socio-economic, and media-induced factors, all of which are exacerbated by divisive political maneuvering and media narratives.

4. Discussion

The present study furnishes a multifaceted comprehension of the discord between Hindutva proponents and the Muslim community within the Indian subcontinent, substantiating that the conflict transcends mere religious discordance to inculcate historical, political, and socio-cultural dimensions.

One salient observation is the positive correlation between the periods of political governance by the BJP and an uptick in incidents of communal violence. Data gleaned from the National Crime Records Bureau corroborates a significant escalation in such incidents concomitant with BJP leadership tenures. For instance, a 28% increment in communal strife was recorded in the year succeeding the BJP's 2014 ascension, relative to the antecedent year under a non-BJP regime. This pattern bears a temporal correspondence to earlier surges in

⁷⁸ Haque- Khan, 'Mapping Islamophobia: The Indian Media Environment'.

communal violence during BJP governance in the early 2000s. Scholarly work by Varshney⁷⁹ and media reports substantiate the role of incendiary political rhetoric as a precursor to violent outbreaks, as exemplified by the 2002 Gujarat and 2013 Muzaffarnagar riots. Research conducted by Nagarwal⁸⁰ further affirms a causal linkage between vitriolic political discourse and ensuing violence against the Muslim community.

Historical antecedents, notably the 1947 Partition, serve as a foundational stratum for the extant tensions. The deliberate invocation of these historical events for political expediency perpetuates a culture of animosity, as elaborated in academic literature.⁸¹ The ideological matrix of Hindutva has been institutionalized through various sociopolitical channels. It seeks to alienate Muslims, categorizing them as ‘outsiders,’ and this marginalizing philosophy has been codified via legislative tools such as the Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Register of Citizens. Socio-economic disenfranchisement of Muslims, corroborated by the Sachar Committee Report and scholarly articles has been further exacerbated by the ascendancy of Hindutva ideology. Such marginalization manifests in tangible repercussions, detrimentally impacting the livelihoods and societal status of a significant portion of India’s Muslim community.

Finally, the role of media as an amplifier of communal tensions cannot be disregarded. Especially pernicious is the bias displayed by outlets endorsing Hindutva, contributing to Muslim stigmatization and the normalization of Islamophobia. The proliferation of communal violence and societal divisions appears to be inextricably intertwined with the prevailing political climate, particularly under regimes endorsing Hindutva ideology. The study’s findings

⁷⁹ Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

⁸⁰ Narender Nagarwal, ‘The Citizenship Amendment Act 2019: An Insight through Constitutional and Secularism Perspective’, *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 57/8 (December 2022), 1562–1576.

⁸¹ Ian Talbot-Gurharpal Singh, *The Partition of India* (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

illuminate the complex interplay of historical, ideological, socio-economic, and media-induced factors, accentuating the need for a multifaceted approach to understanding and potentially mitigating this ongoing conflict.

5. Implications

The research outcomes underscore the grave implications for both the societal coherence and democratic trajectory of India, thereby mandating immediate and comprehensive policy interventions. The situation's urgency dictates a multipronged approach that incorporates legislative, socio-economic, educational, and media reforms, as well as specific measures to address religious issues. Legislatively, the enhancement of hate speech laws is of immediate concern, particularly for those aimed at public figures whose rhetoric bears a demonstrable incendiary potential. A revision of existing laws to impose more severe penalties could serve as a deterrent against political manipulation of religious and communal tensions. Addressing religious issues requires nuanced dialogues and measures to foster mutual understanding between religious communities. Interfaith dialogue initiatives, religious education reforms, and community outreach programs can contribute to a more inclusive understanding of religious diversity and coexistence, thereby mitigating religious intolerance. On the socio-economic front, targeted policies aimed at the upliftment of marginalized communities, specifically Muslims, require prioritization. Initiatives might include specialized employment schemes, academic scholarships, and skill development programs designed to reduce economic disparities, thus undermining conditions that engender communal unrest. Educational interventions are pivotal in a well-rounded strategy. The curriculum should incorporate modules focusing on communal harmony, the historical context of religious diversity in India, and the multi-sectoral contributions of various communities. Such educational initiatives have the potential to shape the perspectives of younger generations and contribute to social cohesion. In the media landscape, heightened regulatory oversight is crucial, given the media's role in shaping public opinion and intensifying communal conflicts. Regulatory

bodies should be empowered to monitor and penalize media outlets engaging in biased reporting or the dissemination of hate speech, which contributes to the marginalization and stigmatization of minority communities. The imperative for these policy interventions is accentuated by the potentially severe consequences of neglecting to address the escalating tensions between Hindutva and the Muslim community. The ensuing failure could profoundly destabilize India's social fabric and impair its democratic evolution. Consequently, an inclusive approach involving policymakers, academicians, and civil society is indispensable for effectively countering the extremist ideologies that fuel these divisions.

Conclusion

The current research aims to disentangle the intricate relationship between the ideological construct of Hindutva and India's Muslim community, set against a backdrop of escalating socio-political tension. The implications of this endeavor extend beyond mere scholarly discourse, offering substantive contributions to communal dialogue, policymaking, and conflict resolution both within India and on a global scale. This investigation reveals the multifaceted manifestations of the conflict, encompassing not only religious but also social, economic, and political dimensions. The tension is deeply rooted in historical contexts and impacts diverse communities within India, thereby necessitating a broad-spectrum approach for its resolution. Legislation such as the Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Register of Citizens, coupled with skewed media narratives, have exacerbated existing divisions and merit further scrutiny.

The research findings reveal that the conflict transcends religious boundaries to influence the broader socio-political fabric of India, implicating not only Muslims but also other minority groups like Christians and Sikhs. Such findings necessitate multi-pronged policy interventions, ranging from robust hate speech laws to socioeconomic development programs and media ethics reforms.

The significance of this study lies not merely in its domestic context. Comparative global conflicts, including Sunni-Shia relations in the Middle East, Christian-Muslim tensions in the Central African Republic, and Buddhist-Muslim discord in Myanmar, all exhibit characteristics—such as social marginalization, communal violence, and legislative discrimination—that resonate with the patterns observed in the Hindutva-Muslim tension in India. Such international cases exemplify the broader theoretical constructs that inform this research and highlight the global relevance of the issues under investigation. Given these findings, various levels of engagement and intervention are advocated. On a state level, there is an urgent need for legislative reform, particularly a reevaluation of divisive policies like the CAA and the NRC. In educational institutions, curricular innovations that prioritize the teaching of religious diversity could serve as a preventative measure against ignorance and bias. At the individual level, civic participation in the form of community service or advocacy can contribute meaningfully to a more harmonious society.

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