

HINDUTVA: MYTHS AND REALITY

[This essay is in response to demand from friends across the globe to make available a concise primer on the toxic ideology of Hindutva based on its own archives for ready reference.]

Introduction

The term Hindutva took birth with the appearance of VD Savarkar's book titled *Hindutva* in 1923. Savarkar's *Hindutva* was declared to be the Holy Book of Hindu *Sangathan* or organization. M. S. Golwalkar, who headed the RSS after K. B. Hedgewar, too regarded Savarkar's *Hindutva* as a great scientific book which fulfilled the need of a text-book on Hindu nationalism.¹ According to a biography of founder of RSS, Hedgewar published by the RSS, "Savarkar's inspiring and brilliant exposition of the concept of Hindutva marked by incontestable logic and clarity, struck the cord of Doctorji's [Hedgewar's] heart".²

Despite such statements glorifying *Hindutva* as priceless contribution in defence of Hindu nationalism, the contents of the book did not attract many Hindu leaders and remained beyond the comprehension of common Hindus. In fact, even the title of the book seemed to have been an afterthought. A perusal of the original edition (1923) will show that the booklet was printed with the title *Hinduism* but subsequently a separate piece of paper on which *Hindutva* was printed was pasted on the title page of the book. Since the term remained alien even to the Savarkarites, by the 4th edition *Hindutva* as title was dropped and it was published under a new title *Who Is A Hindu?* In 1963 Maharashtra Provincial Hindusabha published it as part of Savarkar's collected works with the title *Essentials of Hindutva*. Another notable fact about this book was that it was published under the pen name 'A Maratha' signifying a regional identity of the author where as book stressed only the Hindu identity of the country and its inhabitants.

¹ Dhananjay Keer, *Veer Savarkar*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1988, p. 527.

² H. V. Seshadri, *Dr. Hedgewar: The Epoch-Maker*, Sahitya Sindhu, Bangalore, 1981, p. 65.

Savarkar admitted at the outset that the ‘term Hindutva defies all attempts at analysis’.³ He began by trying to make a clear-cut distinction between his theory of Hindutva and religion Hinduism. But few pages later it became clear that Hindutva was nothing else but political Hinduism. According to his definition a Hindu

"is he who looks upon the land that extends from *Sindhu* to *Sindhu*, from the Indus to the Seas, as the land of his forefathers—his *pitribhu*, who inherits the blood of that race whose first discernible source could be traced to the Vedic *Saptasindhs* [seven holy rivers] and which on its onward march, assimilating much that was incorporated and ennobling much that was assimilated, has come to be known as the Hindu people, who has inherited and claims as his own the culture of that race as expressed chiefly in their common classical language *Sanskrit* and represented by a common history, a common literature, art and architecture, law and jurisprudence, rites and rituals, ceremonies and sacraments, fairs and festivals...These are the essentials of *Hindutva*—a common *rashtra* [nation] a common *Jati* [race] and a common *Sanskriti* [culture, though in latter editions it is translated as civilization]."⁴

According to Savarkar, these were the Hindus with Aryan blood who established the Hindu nation the day

"when the Horse of Victory returned to Ayodhya unchallenged and unchallengeable, the great white Umbrella of Sovereignty was unfurled over that, Imperial throne of Ramchandra the brave, Ramchandra the good, and a loving allegiance to him was sworn, not only by the Princes of the Aryan blood but Hanuman—Sugriva—Bibhishana from the south— that day was the real birthday of our Hindu people."⁵

³ A. Maratha [V. D. Savarkar], *Hindutva*, V. V. Kelkar, Nagpur, 1923, p. 3.

⁴ A. Maratha [V. D. Savarkar], *Hindutva*, V. V. Kelkar, Nagpur, 1923, pp. 102-103.

⁵ . Maratha [V. D. Savarkar], *Hindutva*, V. V. Kelkar, Nagpur, 1923, p. 11.

Savarkar's book *Hindutva* was haphazard, confused, incoherent, monotonous, contradictory and repetitive in comparison to other works of Savarkar. In fact in *Hindutva*, propagated as the primer of the Hindu nationalism less than one quarter of the space was devoted to the theme. Major parts of the book contained repetitive discussions over the origin of nomenclature like Hindu/Hindusthan, folk literature, evils in Buddhism, how Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists were Hindus and description of perpetually continuously raging conflicts between Vedic and non-Vedic sects in Hinduism.

The concept of Hindu Nation as elaborated in *Hindutva* remained a fringe thought despite the fact that Savarkar while presiding over the 19th session of Hindu Mahasabha at Ahmedabad in December 1937 declared it to be the goal of Hindu Mahasabha, there were not many takers for the book. The dismal reach of the book can be gauged by the fact that after the publication of its first edition in 1923, the second edition could appear only in 1942. With the last edition appearing in 2003, only seven editions of the book came out in more than eight decades.

However, with the ascendancy of the RSS-BJP in the Indian parliamentary politics in late 1990s idolizing of Savarkar began. While renaming the Port Blair airport after V. D. Savarkar on May 4, 2002, the then Home Minister L. K. Advani declared that **“Hindutva propounded by Savarkar was an all-encompassing ideology with its roots in the country's heritage”**. The glorification of the prophet of Hindutva did not stop there. On February 26, 2003, a portrait of Savarkar was unveiled at Parliament. Savarkar thus came to share the eminence accorded to Gandhi and other prominent leaders of the freedom struggle in the Central Hall of Parliament. However, we need to have a convincing answer to the question that if Savarkar with his eternal love for the two-nation theory and his conscious aloofness from the Indian freedom struggle can be glorified as an Indian nationalist and patriot, then who can stop Mohammed Ali Jinnah from claiming this status?

The present RSS-BJP rulers led by PM Modi keep on declaring publically that they are committed to usher India into a Savarkarite model of Hindu nation. We will evaluate the claims made on behalf of flag-bearers of Hindutva in the following.

Myth 1: Hindutva (Hinduness) and Hindu nation are primordial/Sanatan/eternal

MS Golwalkar, echoing this popular claim amongst the Hindu nationalists said:

Long before the West had learnt to eat roast meat instead of raw! And we were one Nation--Over all the land from sea to sea one kingdom!"⁶

Reality:

Ancient Hindu scriptures like Vedas, Purans, Upanishads do not mention these terms. Moreover, many great Indian thinkers, most of them being Hindus, too, dismissed the idea of antiquity of the Hindu nation

Vivekananda:

"This word 'Hindu' was the name that the ancient Persians used to apply to the river Sindhu. Whenever in Sanskrit there is an 's', in ancient Persian it changes into 'h', so that 'Sindhu' became 'Hindu'...for all the people that live on this side of the Indus no longer belong to one religion."⁷

Rabindranath Tagore, Bipin Chandra Pal and RC Majumdar who was regarded as a true 'Bhartiye' historian by the Hindutva fraternity all

⁶ MS Golwalkar, *We Or Our Nationhood Defined*, Bharat Publications, Nagpur, 1939, p. 9.

⁷ Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 3, Advait Ashram, Calcutta, 1997, p. 228.]

agreed that the word nation did not occur in 'our' language and one and half century back 'our' ancestors were not familiar with this term.

Dr. BR Ambedkar who closely witnessed the twilight days of the British rule in India and played a great role in the formation of polity of an independent Indian nation, was also a non-believer in the antiquity of the Indian nation. According to him, "The Hindu provinces have no common traditions and no interests to bind them."⁸

It is a modern construct: In fact, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in his Bengali work, *Anandmath* (1881-82) created the idea of MOTHER INDIA. The concept of Hindu nation was propounded by Bengali high Caste intellectuals in the aftermath of the failure of 1857 Rebellion.⁹

Myth 2: Hindutva unites Hindus

Reality:

(a) Hindutva being synonymous with Casteism decrees a Hindu society where inequality would be the law of nature.

Casteism was a natural integral part of Hinduism. In fact, Golwalkar went to the extent of declaring that Casteism was synonymous with the Hindu nation. According to him, the Hindu people are none else but

**“The Virat Purusha, the Almighty manifesting himself...
Brahmin is the head, Kshatriya the hands, Vaishya the
thighs and Shudra the feet. This means that the people
who have this fourfold arrangement, i.e., the Hindu**

⁸ B. R. Ambedkar, *Pakistan or the Partition of India* (Bombay: Government of Maharashtra, 1990), 13. Reprint of the 1940 edition of the same book published by Thackers, Bombay.]

⁹ For detailed study of the origin and development of the two-nation theory look at the following link:
<http://southasiajournal.net/guilty-men-of-the-two-nation-theory-a-hindu-nationalist-project-borrowed-by-jinnah/>

People, is [sic] our God. This supreme vision of Godhead is the very core of our concept of 'nation' and has permeated our thinking and given rise to various unique concepts of our cultural heritage.”¹⁰

Golwalkar as an ideologue of Hindutva was also a bigoted Casteist. For him Varna system was the essence of Hindu society and nation. His sermon to the faculty and students of the School of Social Science of Gujarat University in 1960 in which he enlightened the audience with his cross-breeding theory for Kerala Hindus, he was unequivocal in defending the Varna system. He declared:

"Today we try to run down the Varna system through ignorance. But it was through this system that a great effort to control possessiveness could be made...In society some people are intellectuals, some are expert in production and earning of wealth and some have the capacity to labour. Our ancestors saw these four broad divisions in the society. The Varna system means nothing else but a proper co-ordination of these divisions and an enabling of the individual to serve the society to the best of his ability through a hereditary development of the functions for which he is best suited.”¹¹

(b) Hindutva is nothing but justification of Untouchability

The RSS and its brother organizations who want to enforce a Hindutva rule in India hated the Constitution of India which was drafted under the guidance of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. The Constituent Assembly of India finalized the Constitution on November 26, 1949. RSS was very angry,

¹⁰ MS Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, Sahitya Sindhu, Bangalore, 1996, pp. 36-37.]

¹¹ M. S. Golwalkar cited in *Organizer*, January 2, 1961, pp. 5 & 16.

4 days later its English organ, *Organizer* in an editorial on November 30, 1949, complained:

“But in our constitution there is no mention of the unique constitutional development in ancient Bharat. Manu’s Laws were written long before Lycurgus of Sparta or Solon of Persia. To this day his laws as enunciated in the Manusmriti excite the admiration of the world and elicit spontaneous obedience and conformity. But to our constitutional pundits that means nothing.”

The originator of the idea Hindutva, Savarkar remained a great protagonist of Casteism and worshipper of *Manusmriti* throughout his life. The institutions of Casteism and Untouchability were the outcome of Manu’s thought about which Savarkar said the following:

“Manusmriti is that scripture which is most worshipable after Vedas for our Hindu Nation and which from ancient times has become the basis of our culture-customs, thought and practice...Even today the rules which are followed by crores of Hindus in their lives and practice are based on Manusmriti. Today Manusmriti is Hindu Law.”¹²

What kind of civilization the RSS and Hindutva camp want to build by enforcing the laws of Manu, can be known by having a glimpse of the laws prescribed by Manu for the lower castes/Untouchables and women. Some of these dehumanizing and degenerate laws, which are presented here, are self-explanatory.

(c) Laws of Manu concerning Dalits/Untouchables¹³

¹² VD Savarkar, ‘Women in Manusmriti’ in Savarkar Samagar (collection of Savarkar’s writings in Hindi) volume IV, Prabhat, Delhi, 2000, p. 416.

¹³ This selection of Manu’s Codes is from F. Max Muller, *Laws of Manu* (Delhi: LP Publications, 1996; first published in 1886). The bracket after each code incorporates number of chapter/number of code according to the above edition.

1. For the sake of the prosperity of the worlds (the divine one) caused the Brahmana, the Kshatriya, the Vaisya, and the Sudra to proceed from his mouth, his arm, his thighs and his feet. (I/31)
2. One occupation only the lord prescribed to the Sudras, to serve meekly even these (other) three castes. (I/91)
3. Once-born man (a Sudra), who insults a twice-born man with gross invective, shall have his tongue cut out; for he is of low origin. (VIII/270)
4. If he mentions the names and castes (jati) of the (twice-born) with contumely, an iron nail, ten fingers long, shall be thrust red-hot into his mouth. (VIII/271)
- 5- If he arrogantly teaches Brahmanas their duty, the king shall cause hot oil to be poured into his mouth and into his ears. (VIII/272)
6. With whatever limb a man of a low caste does hurt to (a man of the three) highest (castes), even that limb shall be cut off; that is the teaching of Manu. (VIII/279)
7. He who raises his hand or a stick, shall have his hand cut off; he who in anger kicks with his foot, shall have his foot cut off. (VIII/280)
8. A low-caste man who tries to place himself on the same seat with a man of a high caste, shall be branded on his hip and be banished, or (the king) shall cause his buttock to be gashed. (VIII/281)

As per the Manu Code if Sudras are to be given most stringent punishments for even petty violations/actions, the same Code of Manu is very lenient towards Brahmins. Shloka 380 in Chapter VIII bestowing profound love on Brahmins decrees:

“Let him never slay a Brahmana, though he have committed all (possible) crimes; let him banish such an (offender), leaving all his property (to him) and (his body) unhurt.”

(d) Laws of Manu concerning women

1. Day and night woman must be kept in dependence by the males (of) their (families), and, if they attach themselves to sensual enjoyments, they must be kept under one's control. (IX/2)
2. Her father protects (her) in childhood, her husband protects (her) in youth, and her sons protect (her) in old age; a woman is never fit for independence. (IX/3)
3. Women must particularly be guarded against evil inclinations, however trifling (they may appear); for, if they are not guarded, they will bring sorrow on two families. (IX/5)
4. Considering that the highest duty of all castes, even weak husbands (must) strive to guard their wives. (IX/6)
5. No man can completely guard women by force; but they can be guarded by the employment of the (following) expedients:
6. Let the (husband) employ his (wife) in the collection and expenditure of his wealth, in keeping (everything) clean, in (the fulfilment of) religious duties, in the preparation of his food, and in looking after the household utensils.
7. Women, confined in the house under trustworthy and obedient servants, are not (well) guarded; but those who of their own accord keep guard over themselves, are well guarded. (IX/12)
8. Women do not care for beauty, nor is their attention fixed on age; (thinking), '(It is enough that) he is a man,' they give themselves to the handsome and to the ugly. (IX/14)
9. Through their passion for men, through their mutable temper, through their natural heartlessness, they become disloyal towards their husbands, however carefully they may be guarded in this (world). (IX/15)
10. (When creating them) Manu allotted to women (a love of their) bed, (of their) seat and (of) ornament, impure desires, wrath,

dishonesty, malice, and bad conduct. (IX/17)

11. For women no (sacramental) rite (is performed) with sacred texts, thus the law is settled; women (who are) destitute of strength and destitute of (the knowledge of) Vedic texts, (are as impure as) falsehood (itself), that is a fixed rule. (IX/18)

The Code of Manu story is not a matter of bye-gone days. The RSS book stores stock and sale title like *How to lead a Household Life* by Swami Ramsukhdas which openly preach violence. This title is part of low priced anti-woman literature published by Geeta Press. Here is a glimpse from this book which is in the question-answer form and available in English, Hindi and other regional Indian languages.¹⁴

“Question: - What should the wife do if her husband beats her and troubles her?

Answer: - The wife should think that she is paying her debt of her previous life and thus her sins are being destroyed and she is becoming pure. When her parents come to know this, they can take her to their own house because they have not given their daughter training to face this sort of bad behaviour.

Question: - What should she do if her parents don't take her to their own house?

Answer: - Under such circumstances what can the helpless wife do? She should reap the fruit of her past actions. She should patiently bear the beatings of her husband. By bearing them she will be freed from her sins and it is possible that her husband may start loving her.”

There is blatant preaching in favour of the inhuman Sati as we will see in the following:

¹⁴ Swami Ramsukhdas, *How To Lead A Household Life*, Gita Press, Gorakhpur, 1999, p.43. (Gita Press has more than 15 titles denigrating women in many Indian languages including English. Some of the titles openly preach Sati and violence against women which are serious crimes under the Indian Penal Code.)

“Question: - Is ‘Sati Pratha’ (viz., the tradition of the wife being cremated with the dead body of the husband on the funeral pyre) proper or improper?”

Answer: - A wife’s cremation with the dead body of her husband on the funeral pyre is not a tradition. She, in whose mind truth and enthusiasm come, burns even without fire and she does not suffer any pain while she burns. This is not a tradition that she should do so, but this is her truth, righteousness and faith in scriptural decorum.”

It is to be noted here that a copy of Manusmriti was burnt as a protest in the presence of Dr. BR Ambedkar during historic Mahad agitation on December 25, 1927. It was also decided that this day would be commemorated as '*Manusmriti dahan divas*'; *Manusmriti* to be set on fire day, in future.

(e) According to the Hindutva South Indian Hindus belong to an inferior Race

The most prominent ideologue of RSS, Golwalkar was invited to address the students of the School of Social Science of Gujarat University on December 17, 1960. In this address, while underlying his firm belief in the Race Theory, he touched upon the issue of cross-breeding of human beings in the Indian society in history. He said:

"Now let us see the experiments our ancestors made in this sphere. In an effort to better the human species through cross-breeding the Namboodri Brahamanas of the North were settled in Kerala and a rule was laid down that the eldest son of a Namboodri family could marry only the daughter of Vaishya, Kashtriya or Shudra communities of Kerala. Another still more courageous rule was that the first off-spring of a married woman of any class must be fathered by a Namboodri Brahman and then she could beget children by her husband. Today this

experiment will be called adultery but it was not so, as it was limited to the first child."¹⁵

The above statement of Golwalkar is highly worrying in many respects. Firstly, it proves that Golwalkar believed that Indian Hindus were divided into a superior Race or breed and also an inferior Race which needed to be improved through cross-breeding. Secondly, a more worrying aspect was his belief that Brahmans of the North (India) and specially Namboodri Brahamans, belonged to a superior Race. Due to this quality, Namboodri Brahamanas were sent from the North to Kerala to improve the breed of inferior Hindus there. Interestingly, this was being argued by a person who claimed to uphold the unity of Hindus world over. Thirdly, Golwalkar as a male chauvinist believed that a Namboodri Brahman male belonging to a superior Race from the North only could improve the inferior human Race from South. For him wombs of Kerala's Hindu women enjoyed no sanctity and were simply objects of improving breed through intercourse with Namboodri Brahamanas who in no way were related to them. Thus, Golwalkar was, in fact, confirming the allegation that in the past male dominated high caste society forced newly-wedded women of other castes to pass their first nights by sleeping with superior caste males.

Myth 3: Hindutva ideology keeps India united

Reality:

(a) It is a toxic formula to undo democratic-secular India

Importantly, the RSS organ *Organizer* in its issue on the very eve of Independence, dated 14 August, 1947, rejected the whole concept of a composite nation (under the editorial title 'Whither?'):

"Let us no longer allow ourselves to be influenced by false notions of nationhood. Much of the mental

¹⁵ M. S. Golwalkar cited in *Organizer*, January 2, 1961, p. 5.

confusion and the present and future troubles can be removed by the ready recognition of the simple fact that in Hindusthan only the Hindus form the nation and the national structure must be built on that safe and sound foundation...the nation itself must be built up of Hindus, on Hindu traditions, culture, ideas and aspirations”.

(b) Muslims and Christians not part of Hindu nation

According to the proponent of Hindutva, Savarkar, Muslims and Christians remained out of this nationhood because they did not assimilate into Hindu cultural heritage or adopt Hindu religion. Savarkar decreed:

"Christians and Mohamedan [sic] communities, who were but very recently Hindus...cannot be recognized as Hindus; as since their adoption of the new cult they had ceased to own Hindu *Sanskriti* [culture] as a whole. They belong, or feel that they belong, to a cultural unit altogether different from the Hindu one. Their heroes and their hero-worship, their fairs and their festivals, their ideals and their outlook on-life, have now ceased to be common with ours."¹⁶

Concurring with Savarkar's Hindutva definition of the Indian nation, Golwalkar declared:

"thus applying the modern understanding of 'Nation' to our present conditions, the conclusion is unquestionably forced upon us that in this country, Hindusthan, the Hindu Race with its Hindu Religion, Hindu Culture and Hindu Language (the

¹⁶ A Maratha [V. D. Savarkar], *Hindutva*, VV Kelkar, Nagpur, 1923, p. 88.

natural family of Sanskrit and her off-springs) complete the Nation concept..."¹⁷

(c) Muslims and Christians as 'Internal Threat'

The holy book for the RSS cadres, *Bunch of Thoughts*, the compilation of the writings of MS Golwalkar, the ideologue of the RSS, has a long chapter titled, '**Internal Threats**', in which the Muslims and Christians are described as threats number one and two respectively. The Communists get the honour of being 'Internal Threat' number three. While treating the Muslims as hostile element number one, he goes on to elaborate,

"Even to this day there are so many who say, 'Now there is no Muslim problem at all. All those riotous elements who supported Pakistan have gone away once for all. The remaining Muslims are devoted to our country. After all, they have no other place to go and they are bound to remain loyal'...It would be suicidal to delude ourselves into believing that they have turned patriots overnight after the creation of Pakistan. On the contrary, the Muslim menace has increased a hundredfold by the creation of Pakistan, which has become a springboard for all their future aggressive designs on our country.'"¹⁸

While deliberating on the 'Internal Threat' number two, he says,

"such is the role of the Christian gentlemen residing in our land today, out to demolish not only the religious and social fabric of our life but also to establish political domination in various pockets and if possible all over the land."¹⁹

¹⁷ MS Golwalkar, *We Or Our Nationhood Defined*, Bharat Publications, Nagpur, 1939, p. 43.

¹⁸ *Bunch of Thoughts*, pp. 177-178.

¹⁹ *Bunch of Thoughts*, p. 193.

So led by this ideology of hatred, the RSS cadres are working overtime to exterminate minorities like Muslims and Christians. What dangerous direction democratic-secular India was taking under Modi rule was made clear within one year of RSS/BJP government's coming to power by none other than Julio Ribeiro. Julio Ribeiro a retired senior police officer, former Mumbai police commissioner, director general of police Gujarat and Punjab and former Indian ambassador to Romania in a signed piece on March 17, 2015 expressed his anguish in the following words:

"Today, in my 86th year, I feel threatened, not wanted, reduced to a stranger in my own country...I am not an Indian anymore, at least in the eyes of the proponents of the Hindu Rashtra. Is it coincidence or a well-thought-out plan that the systematic targeting of a small and peaceful community should begin only after the BJP government of Narendra Modi came to power last May? 'Ghar wapsi', the declaration of Christmas as 'Good-Governance Day', the attack on Christian churches and schools in Delhi, all added to a sense of siege that now afflicts these peaceful people...It is tragic that these extremists have been emboldened beyond permissible limits by an atmosphere of hate and distrust. The Christian population, a mere 2 per cent of the total populace, has been subjected to a series of well-directed body blows. If these extremists later turn their attention to Muslims, which seems to be their goal, they will invite consequences that this writer dreads to imagine."²⁰

²⁰ Julio Ribeiro, 'As a Christian, suddenly I am a stranger in my own country', 17 March, 2015, *The Indian Express*, Delhi.

Myth 4: Hindutva believes in Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam/world is one family

Reality:

Hindutva believes in cleansing of non-Aryans as done by Hitler and Mussolini

The RSS as flag-bearer of Hindu nationalism always believed in the superiority of the Aryan race like Hitler and the Nazis. Racism is the common tie, which binds them. Hindus happened to be Aryans belonging to the National race whereas Muslims and Christians were foreigners because they followed religions, which took birth in non-Aryan foreign lands. **The RSS divided religions professed in India into two categories, Indian and foreign. Interestingly, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism were declared to be of the Indian variety but were not accorded the status of independent religions.** These were simply treated as part of Hinduism. Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar (1906-1973), the most prominent ideologue of the RSS who came to head the organization after Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, naturally, inherited deep love for Fascism and Nazism from his seniors and stood for cleansing of the followers of religions which originated in foreign lands. He idealized the Nazi cultural nationalism of Hitler, which was nothing else but ‘ethnic cleansing’ of non-Aryans, in the following words which appeared in his book *We or Our Nationhood Defined* (1939); a book which became *Geeta* of the Hindutva politics:

To keep up the purity of the race and its culture, Germany shocked the world by her purging the country of the Semitic races-the Jews. Race pride at its highest has been manifested here. Germany has also shown how well-nigh impossible it is for races and cultures, having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindusthan [*sic*] to

learn and profit by.²¹

While outlining the constituent elements of the Hindu Nation Golwalkar raised a significant question,

“If, as is indisputably proved, Hindusthan, is the land of Hindus and is the *terra firma* for the Hindu nation alone to flourish upon, what is to be the fate of all those, who, today, happen to live upon the land, though not belonging to the Hindu Race, Religion or culture?”²²

He answered to his own query in the following words:

“can have no place in the national life, unless they abandon their differences, adopt the religion, culture and language of the Nation and completely merge themselves in the National Race.”²³

Golwalkar unhesitatingly glorified the Aryan Race theory propagated by Hitler and Mussolini and subsequent cleansing of non-Aryans or minorities. According to him both Muslims and Christians who were 'foreign elements',

"There are only two courses open to the foreign elements, either to merge themselves in the national race and adopt its culture, or to live at its mercy so long as the national race may allow them to do so and to quit the country at the sweet will of the national race. That is the only sound view on the minorities [*sic*] problem.”²⁴

Golwalkar as the most important ideologue of the RSS and *Hindutva* brand of politics forcefully argued for adopting the models of Hitler and Mussolini for getting rid of minorities from Hindu nation in the following words:

"the foreign races in Hindusthan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and

²¹ MS Golwalkar, *We Or Our Nationhood Defined*, Bharat Publications, Nagpur, 1939, pp. 34-35.

²² MS Golwalkar, *We Or Our Nationhood Defined*, Bharat Publications, Nagpur, 1939, p. 45.

²³ MS Golwalkar, *We Or Our Nationhood Defined*, Bharat Publications, Nagpur, 1939, p. 45.

²⁴ MS Golwalkar, *We Or Our Nationhood Defined*, Bharat Publications, Nagpur, 1939, p. 47.

hold in reverence the Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but those of the glorification of the Hindu race and culture, i.e., of the Hindu nation and must lose their separate existence to merge in the Hindu race, or may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu Nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment, not even citizen's rights."²⁵

Myth 5: Hindutva organizations are loyal to India

Reality: Bharat Mata of Hindutva gang is not our democratic-secular India

(a) Against Secularism

The RSS demands total loyalty to the Indian Nation from minorities. It is another thing that it does not feel it proper to be loyal to the constitutional-legal set up of this very Nation. The study of Prarthana (prayer) and Pratigya (oath) as practiced in the shakhas of the RSS is an example of how the Indian nationalism has been equated with Hinduism, in the same way as the Muslim League had combined Islam with nationality. Significantly, both Prarthana and Pratigya are in direct contravention to the existence of an Indian Secular State which is an important 'Basic' feature of the Constitution of India. Just imagine PM Modi and most of his ruler colleagues who took oath to uphold the integrity of a democratic and secular India were also committed to the task of creating a Hindu Rashtra as per the texts of the Prayer and Oath as essential for the RSS cadres.

(b) RSS Prayer:

"Affectionate Motherland, I eternally bow to you/O Land of Hindus, you have reared me in comfort/O Sacred Land, the Great Creator of Good, may this body of mine be dedicated to you/I again and again bow before You/O God almighty, we the integral part of the Hindu Rashtra salute you in reverence/For Your cause have we girded up our loins/Give us Your Blessings for its accomplishment."²⁶

(c) RSS Oath:

²⁵ MS Golwalkar, *We Or Our Nationhood Defined*, Bharat Publications, Nagpur, 1939, pp. 47-48.

²⁶ *Shakha Darshikha*, Gyan Ganga, Jaipur, 1997, p. 1

"Before the all powerful God and my ancestors, I most solemnly take this oath, that I become a member of the RSS in order to achieve all round greatness of Bharatvarsha by fostering the growth of my sacred Hindu religion, Hindu society, and Hindu culture. I shall perform the work of the Sangh honestly, disinterestedly, with my heart and soul, and I shall adhere to this goal all my life. Bharat Mata Ki Jai."²⁷

Thus they were not faithful to the Indian Nation as it existed as a legal entity but wanted to subvert it into a theocratic state like Muslim League which created Pakistan in the name of Islam.

(d) Against Democracy

The RSS contrary to the principles of democracy has been constantly demanding India to be ruled under a totalitarian regime. Golwalkar while delivering a speech before the 1350 top level cadres of the RSS in 1940 declared,

"RSS inspired by one flag, one leader and one ideology is lighting the flame of Hindutva in each and every corner of this great land."²⁸

This slogan of one flag, one leader and one ideology has directly been borrowed from the programmes of Nazi and Fascist parties of Europe.

(e) Denigration of the Tricolour; our national flag

The Tri-colour is our National Flag which represents a Democratic-Secular India. Shockingly, just on the eve of independence when Indian Constituent Assembly adopted Tricolour as its National Flag, the English organ of the RSS, *Organiser*, in its issue dated August 14, 1947, denigrated this choice in the following words:

"The people who have come to power by the kick of fate may give in our hands the Tricolour but it will never be respected and owned by Hindus. The word three is in itself an evil, and a flag having three colours will certainly produce a very bad

²⁷ *Shakha Darshikha*, Gyan Ganga, Jaipur, 1997, p. 66.

²⁸ MS Golwalkar, *Shri Guruji Samagar Darshan* (collected works of Golwalkar in Hindi), Bhartiya Vichar Sadhna, Nagpur, nd., vol. I, p. 11.

psychological effect and is injurious to a country."

The RSS and its Hindutva gang denigrate the National Flag in such foul language but want to pose as custodian of Indian Nation often threatening minorities for being disloyal to the Tricolour.

The bitter reality is that Hindutva is nothing but an ideology which stands for totalitarianism, Casteism and injustice. We must remember the following prophetic words of **Dr Ambedkar** about the critical danger which Hindutva politics poses to our country. According to him:

"If Hindu Raj does become a fact, it will no doubt, be the greatest calamity for this country...It is a menace to liberty, equality and fraternity. On that account it is incompatible with democracy. Hindu Raj must be prevented at any cost."²⁹

What is the way out?

The way out was suggested by one of the greatest martyrs for the cause of secularism and multi-culturalism in the Indian sub-continent, a dear friend, **Dr John Joseph, Bishop of Faisalabad** (Jhang, Pakistan). Six days before he sacrificed his life at the altar of bigotry being indulged in the name of Islam in Pakistan, Dr John Joseph wrote an open letter to his friends world over. **He shot himself to death on May 6, 1998, while leading a protest march against Blasphemy Laws in the Sahiwal (Montgomery) town of Pakistan. His letter titled, "The challenge of religious fundamentalism and violence to social harmony"** was a well-researched paper on religious sectarianism in Pakistan and how to

²⁹ B. R. Ambedkar, *Pakistan or the Partition of India*, Government of Maharashtra, Bombay, 1990 (reprint of 1940 edition), p.

confront it.³⁰ With India turning to the Hindutva route under Modi, the issues which he raised in it are of significance not only for Pakistan, but also for India.

According to him, the main characteristics of religious fundamentalism are; rejection of rationality, human co-existence, and the absolute belief that only one particular religious sect or group is on the divine path. The Bishop also finds that the fundamentalists have an unending supply of cadres because they control school education. He described the majoritarian religious bigots as "**ruthless violent power mongers**". In his letter, the Bishop highlighted the fact that the

“first victims of the fundamentalist parties are the religious minorities. They direct their full wrath on these minorities and depict them as dangerous to society and country. The second victims are women. They believe women are inferior to men, root of evil, weak and stupid. The third victims are those people who have secular, liberal and enlightened outlook, specially the intellectuals and human rights activists.”

As if talking about the present India he wrote:

“Under the fundamentalist influence publication of religious books increases and secular literature rapidly decreases. It also greatly affects music, painting, sculpture, and dancing, and also as a whole, the society loses its glamour, and violence and dullness reign supreme.”

30

Bishop Joseph's letter is important in another sense. He did not believe in responding to communal challenge in the same sectarian way but also warned that we should not

"close our eyes and think that the blood thirsty cult of religious violence will go away by itself. No, each one of us has to get involved and play our role..."

He concluded his letter with the following words:

“At the end, I appeal to all my brothers and sisters in the name of Christ, please let us leave our places and position of safety and comfort and go to the people. I shall count myself extremely fortunate, if in this mission of breaking the barriers, our Lord accepts the sacrifice of my blood for the benefit of His people. This is the only effective response to the ever growing phenomena of violence around us. Are we ready to take up this challenge and follow Him carrying the Cross on our own shoulders?”

The wisdom of Bishop John Joseph and story of his sacrifice hold great significance for us in India where despite a democratic-secular polity India the Hindutva juggernaut is running amok. We must learn about the phenomena of Hindutva in depth as has been attempted in this paper, and respond by fighting for saving the Preamble of our Constitution. In this scenario, Bishop Joseph does not become martyr of the cause of secularism in Pakistan alone, but of the entire Indian sub-continent. Moreover, his analysis of the majoritarian religious bigotry and suggestions for confronting it remain fundamental to our fight against Hindutva fascism too.

Shamsul Islam

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Link for some of S. Islam's writings in English, Hindi, Urdu, Marathi, Malayalam, Kannada, Bengali, Punjabi, Gujarati and video interviews/debates:

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