

Tracing the Genealogy of ‘Muslim Other’ in India

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Abstract

India is known as a multi-religious, multi-ethnic country in which Hindus are a majority, and Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains are minorities. India's Constitution, adopted in 1950, departed from the existing norms of secularism in Europe and elsewhere, which suggested a strict separation of religion and state. With its distinct model of secularism and special provisions for religious minorities, India's social cohesion arrangement needs special attention. This article examines the Hindutvaization of Indian culture and politics and Otherization of Indian Muslims. The article contrasts the status of Muslims in the presumed secular and democratic constitution of India with the rather marginalized reality of Muslims since the rise of Hindu nationalism. The article argues that successive electoral victories by Hindu nationalist party, the Bhartiya Janata Party, has precipitated political events, generated policies, and passed new laws that are eroding the democratic nature of India and undermining its religious freedoms. The article documents few recent events that are expediting the emergence of the Hindu state in India and consequently exposes the world's largest religious minority to an intolerant form of majoritarian governance.

1.0 Introduction:

Ever since the beginning, there has been a constant grading of social spectrum on the basis of religious, political or ideological principles in the human societies. The formation of human groups is determined by attraction and repulsion of all these phenomena, which may be said to be produced by fields of religion and politics. Since the identity of interests of all types of social groups has not been achieved, the majority–minority dichotomy is greatly contested. It is most useful to think of majority–minority relations as an ongoing social function, characterized by varying degrees of repressive measures underlined by overt and covert hostilities. The objects of competition may range from political power and opportunities for education to economic power. Therefore, there is an inevitable conflict of interests in consequence. This sets in the process of conflict seeking rewards by the demand for eliminating or weakening the competitors; attention shifts from the contest itself to an effort to eliminate rivals. In this regard, examples of native Americans and Blacks in the USA, the Protestants in Spain and Latin America, the French in Canada, the Japanese in Brazil and the Muslims in India can be cited as some of the classic examples of minority groups. Due to the psychology of ethnocentrism, people are harassed in varying degrees from complete social isolation to compromise or persecution.¹

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¹ (Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences, 1992, p. 139)

The general effects of a minority position² is that the minority groups are held in lower esteem and are objects of contempt, ridicule and violence; they are specially segregated and socially isolated; they are victims of unequal access to education, employment and professions; they may suffer from restricted property rights; they may be deprived of the right to suffrage and public office; Generally speaking, a minority is “a group of people differentiated from others in the same society by race, nationality, religion and language—who think of themselves as a differentiated group and are thought of by others as a differentiated group with negative connotations.”³ It is a distinct ethnic group or community with certain characteristics, ethnic, linguistic, cultural or religious, living together, within an alien civilization and are objects of collective discrimination. Differentiation is not an inevitable or natural process – it has to be culturally set before being defined as such. There are mainly five functional characteristics in a minority position as comprehensively defined and attempted by UNESCO conference: A minority is subordinate segment of the population with special physical and cultural traits and possessed of self-consciousness bound by some special traits and disabilities whose membership is compulsorily transmitted by a rule of descent.⁴ In India, although its Constitution proclaims the state to be secular, yet an insight at the last six decades shows that Indian secularism, works invariably in favour of the Hindu (Majority).⁵ The Muslims are looked upon with suspicion and hostility. They find it difficult to get into government service. Trade and industry rarely employ them and economically they have been ruined and the deterioration gets more severe after every passing day. Culturally, and historically, like Golwarkar’s assertion and Hindutva’s political demands, it is expected from Muslims to be assimilated into the general Hindu milieu. They are often described as a community with no present, no future and no hope. Every day the Indian Muslims suffer from communal wave of persecution.

2.0 Social marginalization of Muslims

According to 2011 Census, Muslims constitute about 14.2 percent of India’s total population. The biggest Muslim concentration of about 47% to the India’s total Muslim population reside in three states viz. West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar comprising 25%, 18.5% and 16.5% respectively and in the states like Assam (31%), West Bengal (25%) and Kerala (24.7%), high concentrations of Muslims reside. Beside the Muslims, many other religious minorities e.g. Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Zoroastrians, Jews, Animists and Others whose religion has not been stated have been living in coincidence in various parts in varied proportion of this subcontinent. Again among those people Muslims are the largest and principal minority group who bears the traits of Islamic great tradition as well as local little tradition playing an important role in the development of Indian society and civilization.

² Hamilton Charles, V., *Minority Groups* (15 April 1993). Proceedings of Academy of Political Science, published in *Fridan Times*, Lahore. P. 7

³ Wagley and Harris (1958). *Minorities in the New World*, New York: Columbia University press. P. 16

⁴ Ashworth, 1968). *World minorities* (London: Quarter Maine House. P. 13

⁵ Aurora, G., (1999). *Communal Strife in Hindustan*, New York: Natural History Press. P. 172-173

While Muslims constitute one of the major minorities in India, they are stratified into different social groups. According to Mondal, Muslims in India do not form a community in sociological terms; they belong to different groups and subgroups based on ethnic, social and cultural grounds.⁶ Nevertheless, marginalization of the Muslim community binds them into one ethnic group.⁷ Besides their marginalization, Muslim community is facing various atrocities. Hate crimes are increasing day by day against Muslims which in result increase their social marginalization. Due to these problems, Muslim ethnic groups have started the struggle for increasing their empowerment and self-development. However, the struggle for self-development and empowerment is not viewed positively by both the Indian government and majority of the Hindus.⁸ Muslims are about 14% of the total population in India. They have consensus in terms of their monolithic religious ideology. Muslim monolithic religious ideology is totally different from the religious ideology of the majority Hindus.⁹ In addition, the struggle for power has been the central point in terms of Muslim-Hindu antagonism which turned them into hostile groups towards each other. Historical struggle and differences in religious ideologies gave birth to Islamophobia in sub-continent after partition.¹⁰ In addition, Muslims struggle for empowerment added fuel to the fire and the majority of Hindus started systematic tactics to suppress minority Muslim community. On the other side, it has been argued that the Muslims represent a single community which is monolithic and homogeneous not only politically but socially too. Historically speaking, hate crimes and Islamophobia increased in India after the struggle of the Muslim community for their separate homeland based on their belief system which clearly differentiates Muslims and Hindus as two nations.¹¹

When the Indian polity was on the way of democratization and processes of development, various official reports and surveys highlighted the socio-economic backwardness of the Muslim community such as, Panel on Minorities and Weaker Sections headed by Gopal Singh (1983), the 43rd round of the National Sample Survey (1987-88), the Programme of Action, the New Education Policy, 1986 and the Planning Commission Survey of 1987-88. According to New Education Policy, 1986 “the Muslims along with neo-Bodhs are the most backward component of the Indian population today, in the field of education they are far behind the other sections of society”. After analysing the 43rd round of the National Sample Survey (1987-88) data on a comparative inter-religion study, Abu Saleh Shariff concluded, “the Muslims are relatively worse-off than the majority of Hindus which

⁶ Mondal, S. R. (2003). *Social Structure, OBCs and Muslims*. Economic and Political Weekly, 4892-4897.

⁷ Sachar, R., Hamid, S., Oommen, T. K., Basith, M. A., Basant, R., Majeed, A., & Shariff, A. (2006). *Social, economic and educational status of the Muslim community of India* (No. 22136). East Asian Bureau of Economic Research

⁸ Robinson, R. (2007). *Indian Muslims: The varied dimensions of marginality*. Economic and Political Weekly, 839-843.

⁹ Bandyopadhyay, D. (2002). *Madrassa education and the condition of Indian Muslims*. Economic and Political Weekly, 1481-1484.

¹⁰ Shah, G. (2007). *The condition of Muslims*. Economic and political weekly, 836- 839.

¹¹ Mondal, S. R. (2003). *Social Structure, OBCs and Muslims*. Economic and Political Weekly, 4892-4897.

include the STs, SCs, and Christian population in both the rural and urban areas in India.” In fact, Muslims are poorly represented in public employment, occupying only six per cent of state government jobs, four per cent in the central government, three per cent in the Indian Administrative Services and less than one per cent in senior bureaucratic posts.¹² These empirical surveys and data depict how Muslims as a religious minority have been marginalized in the history of Indian formation.

This portrays that the Muslim community is often discontented and dismayed with such a process of marginalization as it deprives them of many opportunities in life. They face unfair treatment in terms of employment opportunities, business opportunities, educational opportunities and housing among various others. Such processes further moulds into inequality that creates distinct feelings of being left out or being exploited. It is also worth mentioning that a parallel process also takes place alongside marginalization. Cultural chauvinism or religious bigotry intensifies the former process. Cultural chauvinists tend to promote their own culture or religious bigots promote their own religion against the other culture or religion in such a manner that the other feels threatened and fails to find enough space to mutually exist in the society. In such circumstances, the women of the community become extremely important symbols. The incidents of unprecedented wave of communal riots of 1990s, the Gujarat pogrom of 2002 and contemporary issues (recent Dadri lynching of 2015) have seriously destroyed/undermined the fabric of the Indian state’s secular and democratic credentials. In the communal–ridden society of India, most of the employers, industrialists and middlemen are Hindus, whereas most Muslims work as employees, workers and artisans.¹³ This ominous development has posed a great threat to the Indian Muslims and quest of survival.

2.1 Spatial Marginality: Ghettoization of Muslims

One of the most striking feature and element of marginalization of Muslim community in India is the influence of space itself, i.e., ghettoization of Muslims. Gradually, the creation of ‘otherness’ plays a determining role in the process of ghettoization of Muslims and quest for identity. This ‘otherness’ is being created not only by society but also by the state. The labelling of Muslims as ‘terrorist’ has been one of the vital factor for their physical estrangement while producing housing market and sentiment of insecurity fostered by communal riots. The explanation of the spatial dimension of marginality is primarily based on physical location and distance from centres of development, lying at the edge of or poorly integrated into system.¹⁴ But one must study, why this ghetto is formed? Is it important to be accumulated spatially to counter physical as well as cultural insecurity posed by government

¹² Jai Gopal Tiwari, “R.S.S Policy Towards Indian Muslims: Origins and Development”, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1987, pp. 79–87.

¹³ Singh, Tavleen Communal dilemma in India (29 November 1989). *Indian Express*, New Delhi, p. 3

¹⁴ Larsen, J. E. 2002b, ‘*Who Cares about and for Marginal People?*’ Danish Social Science
Leimgruber, W., 2004, ‘*Between Global and Local: Marginality and Marginal Regions in the Context of Globalization and Deregulation*’, Ashgate Publishing Limited, Gower House, England.

or any other groups of the society? This has become a matter of concern and quest for identity for deteriorating the conditions and deprivation of already marginalized Muslim community. An ambitious effort has been made in order to present an untold story of Muslim ghettos in Indian cities by Laurent Gayer and Christophe Jaffrelot in their book “*Muslims in Indian Cities: Trajectories of Marginalization*.”¹⁵ This book supplements an ethnographic approach to Muslims providing a different angle and insightful vision into a little familiar but highly consequential subject. While examining the ‘ghettoization thesis’, this book tries to look into the Muslim localities and the way they relate to the wider reality of their city. In this book, Gayer, in his excellent study of Abul Fazal Enclave in Delhi, highlights the ambiguity of choice in situations where individuals are bound by multiple constraints. In the perception of physical security and residential security, this area represents the case of self-segregation rather than ghettoization. But it is evident from case studies of other Indian cities that due to increasing communal violence incidents evoke the issue of security in wider context of the experience of risk. The ‘choiceless’ nature of choice compels Muslims while making their housing decisions. Since the increasing ghettoization of Indian Muslims is a hotly debated but poorly understood subject is one of the constructed ingredients for the marginalization of Indian Muslim in terms of economic deprivation aggravated by physical insecurity and their increasing socio-spatial segregation. The story of backwardness and under-representation of Muslims in various spheres of life add to the dynamics of marginalization and social inequality of Muslim community.

Another influencing and impressive work has been done by Sameera Khan in her excellent piece titled “*Negotiating the Mohalla: Exclusion, Identity and Muslim Women in Mumbai*”.¹⁶ By using ethnographic and historical data and analysing interviews with Muslim women across Mumbai city, the essay inquires specific areas of concern– whether living in ‘mohallas’ (neighbourhoods) dominated by their own community has a bearing on Muslim women’s spatial mobility; if the controls wielded by neo-fundamentalist groups limit their participation in public space; if wearing the veil in fact facilitates movement; how the issue of civic safety is framed in the context of Muslim women whose entire community’s safety is often at risk; and finally, in what way does their community’s growing exclusion from the everyday civic and political life of the city impact them. To sum up, she concludes that the larger discourse that perceives Muslim women as being oppressed by their own culture (and male relatives) obscures the fact that this same discourse exacerbates the restrictions that Muslim women experience. It also obscures the fact that Muslim men as much as Muslim women are excluded from public space. Therefore, it shows that how ghettoization plays a key role in the processes of marginalization with adverse social, psychological and political consequences. As noted by Vora and Palshikar (2003) since groups such as Muslims and

¹⁵ Christophe Jaffrelot, (1996) *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*, Columbia University Press. P. 54

¹⁶ Khan, S. (2007). *Negotiating the Mohalla: Exclusion, identity and Muslim women in Mumbai. Economic and political weekly*, 1527-1533, p. 65

Dalits often live in localities that are imprisoned either by spatial or community location, their social existence results in political ineffectiveness.¹⁷ On the other hand, Panikkar (2006) suggests that it reinforces tendencies of minorityism which promotes a genre of politics based on internal consolidation of the community and also militancy.

The above mentioned case studies demonstrate that spatial marginality or topographical divide based on religion persist in the process of marginalization of Muslims. Here, one can question if this spatial discrimination create/cause marginalization then how it can be and why is it so? An emerging & prominent argument can put forward in this regard is known as ‘surveillance’. Because the physical watching has implications for inequality and for justice, surveillance studies also have a policy and a political dimension, says David Lyon. Since surveillance is associated with some objective/purpose and this objective is inextricably linked with social exclusion of Indian Muslims. They are excluded by both society and state as well. In fact, they are excluded by the society that’s why they are surveilled by the state which is further creating exclusion for that specific community. Therefore, they are feeling insecurity not only from society but also by state, thereby, creating a kind of political exclusion and social exclusion as well.

3.0 The Hindutva Movement:

The scholarship on the emergence and political theology of Hindutva ideology is vast and interdisciplinary. Scholars have been studying the origins of Hindutva ideology, its role in the emergence of India, and its steady rise since India’s independence.¹⁸ For roughly 500 years before British rule became direct in 1857, the Asian Subcontinent had been dominated by Muslims politically. Many Hindu nationalists, along with some historians, assert that Hindu traditions and institutions were suppressed during this period. As the Indian independence movement grew in the early twentieth century, some were energized to “correct” this historic trend. Secularism became a more-or-less enshrined value for the independent Indian state, although its conception in both theory and practice varies widely. The hatred for Muslims because of Mughal Rule in India and the assassination of the founder of the Indian nation, Mahatma Gandhi, later brought special attention to the Hindu nationalist movement and the ideologues who shaped its vision and ideas.¹⁹ With the growth of the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS, National Volunteer Organization)—a religio-political revivalist movement that seeks to make Hinduism the dominant and exclusive source of Indian culture and identity—Hindutva ideology has received more attention from scholars who study contemporary India. There has been a plethora of scholarship since devoted to the

¹⁷ Vora, R. (2003). Decline of Caste Majoritarianism in Indian Politics. *Indian Democracy: Meanings and Practices*. Sage Publications, New Delhi. P. 56

¹⁸ Anderson, Walter, and Shridhar Damle. 2019. *The Brotherhood in Saffron: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism*. New Delhi: Penguin Random House India Private Limited.

¹⁹ Mukherjee, Aditya, Mridula Mukherjee, and Sucheta Mahajan. 2008. *RSS, School Texts and the Murder of Mahatma Gandhi: The Hindu Communal Project*. New Delhi: SAGE Publications India.

rise of Hindu nationalism.²⁰ Muslims, who are about two hundred million of India's population (15%), constitute the biggest barrier to the Hinduization of India, and hence any and every study of Hindu nationalism inevitably explores the status of Indian Muslims and their future. Behind the recent development of Hindu militant chauvinism, which has manifested itself in the demolition of the historical Babri Masjid in Ayodhya and the Muslim genocide in Gujarat, is the "Hindutva" movement promoted by RSS; its militant wing, VHP; and its political arm, BJP. It can be called a religio-political movement that aims to establish Hindu Rashtra (Hindu State) in India. The term "Hindutva" has a historical and philosophical meaning and its strong exponents were Vir Savarkar and M. S. Golwalkar.²¹ Savarkar, in his pamphlet entitled "Hindutva: Who is a Hindu"? (1923), argues that "Hindutva" is different from Hinduism. Hindutva embraces all aspects of life and thought, including the political aspect. Hindutva also emphasizes the superiority of the Hindu race. Savarkar believes that all Hindus have the blood of a superior race. By Hindu race, he actually means Aryan race. A "Hindu" for him is one who follows a definite religion, Hinduism, and who regards the land of Bharatvarsha from Indus to the seas not only as a fatherland but also a holy land.²² For this reason, followers of Hindutva look at Muslims, Christians and others as ideological and political enemies of Hindus.

Because Hinduism does not have a specific sacred text to which conformity can be demanded, "Hindu fundamentalist" is not an accurate term to describe a purveyor of "Hindutva" or "Hinduness."²³ Moreover, as conveyed by one scholar, "India's diversity along linguistic, regional, and caste line means defining a 'Hindu culture' is problematic."²⁴ For political parties such as the BJP and its antecedents, Hinduism as a concept is almost always concurrent with nationalism, the core belief being that India is an inherently Hindu nation, even if establishment of a strictly Hindu state is not a goal. In this regard, it is the proselytizing religions—Islam and Christianity, in particular—that can be characterized as representing a threat to the "Hindu nation."²⁵ In simple terms, the key tenets of the Hindutva ideology are three: (1) Hindus are the rightful rulers of India, which is a Hindu nation; (2) the Christian and, especially, Muslim minorities are viewed with ambivalence because their religious allegiances are not indigenous to India (in a way that those of Sikhs, Buddhists, and

²⁰ Chatterji, Angana P. 2019. *Remaking the Hindu/Nation: Terror and Impunity in Uttar Pradesh*. In *Majoritarian State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 397–418.

²¹ N. Jamal Ansari, (2002) "Hindu Rashtra in Bharat Under Constitution Perspectives", *Radiance Views Weekly*, Vol. 37, No. 41, p. 13.

²² Patel, Aaker. 2020. *Our Hindu Rashtra: What It Is. How We Got Here*. India: Westland. P. 87

²³ The word "Hindutva" was coined in 1923 by pro-independence Indian politician V.D. Savarkar, who wanted a term that distinguished from "Hindu-ness": "Hindutva is not a word but a history. Not only the spiritual or religious history of our people as at times it is mistaken to be ... but a history in full. Hinduism is only a derivative, a fraction, a part of Hindutva.... Hindutva embraces all the departments of thought and activity of the whole Being of our Hindu race" (see V.D. Savarkar, *Essentials of Hindutva*, http://demo.bharatiweb.in/www.savarkar.org/content/pdfs/en/essentials_of_hindutva.v001.pdf).

²⁴ Arun Swamy, (2018) "*Hindu Nationalism in India a Century in the Making*," East Asia Forum, p. 65

²⁵ See Christophe Jaffrelot, (1996) *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*, Columbia University Press; Arun Swamy, (2003) "*Hindu Nationalism—What's Religion Got to Do with It?*," Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies. P. 54

Jains are); and (3) caste divisions undermine Hindu unity. Golwalkar further elaborated the ideas of Savarkar. He asserts that the Hindu race is the only race worthy of being dominant in the world. The culture of the Hindu race is the noblest culture in the world.²⁶ Golwalkar, in his work *We or Our Nationhood Defined*, makes it very clear that non-Hindu communities would have no place in the national life of India. In his other work, *Bunch of Thoughts*, Golwalkar asserts that non-Hindus should come out from their mental complexion and incorporate themselves in the main national stream.²⁷ Thus Hindutvawadis join not only the religion and nation together but they also create in Hindus enmity towards other religions. According to Seshadri, Hinduism is not the name of a religious faith. It denotes a national way of life. This can be more clearly understood through L. K. Advani's statement that he would like to see the word "Hindu" used not in a religious but national connotation. For him, Hindu Rashtra means an ancient country. He posed the question, "if there is an Arya Samaji Hindu, a Sanatani Hindu, then why cannot there be a Mohammadi Hindu or a Christian Hindu? It is important to note that Hindutva leaders have expressed admiration for Musolini and Hitler and asserted that Germany has every right to resort to Nazism and Italy to Fascism.²⁸ B. S. Moonge, Savarker and the present leaders of the Hindutva ideology like Pravin Togadia hold the opinion that Nazi and Fascist movements can be very well introduced in India.²⁹ From their various writings and declarations it is evident that Hindutva militants proudly justify not only the demolition of the Babri Mosque and the Muslim genocide in Gujarat but also aspire for "Hindu Rashtra" in India and hold the view that they should take over Pakistan.³⁰ After the emergence of the Bhartiya Janata party, which has close ties to RSS and is seen as its political wing, as a dominant political force with electoral victories in 2014 and 2019 national elections, the possibility of India becoming a Hindu Rashtra (Hindu state) has become real.

The literature on the electoral success of BJP records how, after gaining power, it normalized bigotry and violence against the Muslim minority by encouraging and even protecting Hindu extremists and vigilantes who indulge in violence against Muslims.³¹ The

²⁶ Rajagopal, Arvind. 2001. *Politics After Television: Hindu Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Public in India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 34.

²⁷ Shani, Giorgio. 2021. Towards a Hindu Rashtra: Hindutva, Religion, and Nationalism in India. *Religion, State & Society* 49: 264–80.

²⁸ N. Jamal Ansari, "Contain Togadia", *Radiance Views Weekly*, Vol. 38, No. 29, 2003, p. 12.

²⁹ To get an overall view of the Communalistic and Fascistic politics of Saffron Leadership or Hindutvadis in connection with Babri Masjid and the massacre and burning of Muslims in Gujarat, see these articles in *Radiance Views Weekly*: S. Ausaf Saied Vasfi, "Disinvestment and Intolerance Further Lowering the Image", Vol. 37, No. 31, 2002, pp. 6–8; S. Ausaf Saied Vasfi, "The Plot Thickens", Vol. 38, No. 4, 2003, pp. 6–7; Sikandar Azam, "PM Reveals the (Un) Hidden Agenda", Vol. 30, No. 46, 2000, pp. 6–8; N. Jamal Ansari, "Fundamental Rights and Duties vis-à-vis Fascism", Vol. 38, No. 4, 2003, p. 12; Kuldip Nayar, "The Nation a Hostage to Parochialism and Communalism", Vol. 37, No. 31, 2002, p. 9; Ubaudur Rahman, "Hindutva's Another Face", Vol. 37, No. 31, 2002, p. 11; Hanif Mohammad, "Gujarat: the Undercurrent of Communalism is Running Deep", Vol. 37, No. 29, 2002, pp. 10–71.

³⁰ Anand and Setalvad, *Communalism Combat*, op. cit., pp. 7 – 8; quoted by F. A. A. Rehmaney, "Parochial Behavior that Qualities Sangh Leaders", *Radiance Views Weekly*, Vol. 36, No. 3, 2001, p. 18.

³¹ Sajjad, Muhammad Waqas. 2018. Examining the State of Muslim Minority Under Modi's BJP since 2014. *Strategic Studies* 38: 19–36.

BJP makes India more Islamophobic with its Hindu nationalist agenda. It considered Muslims as “the other” of Indian society and uses a narrative that paints Muslims as a security threat to the country.³² Hindutva ideologues suggest that only the Hindu people of the country are authentic Indians and are presenting Hindu scriptures as history and not mythology.³³ They consider the pre-Muslim domination period as the golden era of Hindu civilization. The Hindutva narrative suggests that there were a series of historical wars between “indigenous Hindus and barbaric foreign Muslims”.³⁴ This narrative portrays Muslim rule in India as a foreign invasion. The ideologues argue that since Muslim rulers were barbaric, Islam can only extend through barbarism. This narrative clearly posits Muslims as the opposition or enemies of Hindus. These views about Muslims have fostered growing intolerance and discriminatory practices against Muslims.³⁵ Some of the controversial actions taken by the BJP government include supporting cow vigilantism, stripping the semi-autonomous status of Jammu and Kashmir, imposing a lockdown on Jammu and Kashmir, imposing the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), introducing the National Register of Citizen (NRC), adopting anti-conversion laws, and promoting a Hindu temple on the land where the Babri Mosque stood until it was destroyed by Hindu extremists.³⁶ These policies have caused Muslims to experience alienation in society and discrimination in the private and government job sectors.

3.1 Hindutva as Governance Policy

In the general elections of 2014, the Hindu nationalist party came to power, and it heralded the beginning of an era of state-sponsored Islamophobia in India.³⁷ Hindutva is an ideology that equates Indianness with being exclusively Hindu. It seeks to subvert the secular and pluralistic aspirations of India and is trying to set it on a path that will eventually make it a Hindu state with the Hindu ethos as the dominant feature of the national culture. Hindu nationalists have a relatively short, but long-standing list of political goals. Many of these are found in the BJP’s 2014 election manifesto.³⁸ RSS leaders were mostly disappointed by the BJP-led government that ruled India from 1999 to 2004, in large part because then-Prime Minister Vajpayee and his lieutenants were not seen to be taking up core RSS issues. While out of power in the latter half of the 2000s, the RSS and BJP suffered a degree of mutual

³² Hayat, Muhammad Umer, Nida Khan, and Saira Nawaz Abbasi. 2021. Rise of Hindutva Mind-Set and Saffronisation of Indian Society. *International Review of Social Sciences* 9: 9–21.

³³ Truschke, Audrey. 2020. Hindutva’s Dangerous Rewriting of History. *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal* 24/25: 1–15. Uddin, Asma T. 2017. A Legal Analysis of Ahmadi Persecution in Pakistan. In *State Responses to Minority Religions*. London: Routledge, pp. 81–97.

³⁴ Waikar, Prashant. 2018. Reading Islamophobia in Hindutva: An Analysis of Narendra Modi’s Political Discourse. *Islamophobia Studies Journal* 4: 161–80. [CrossRef]

³⁵ Goel, Sita Ram. 1994. *Heroic Hindu Resistance to Muslim Invaders*. New Delhi: Voice of India.

³⁶ Singh, Gurharpal. 2019. Hindu Nationalism in Power: Making Sense of Modi and the BJP-Led National Democratic Alliance Government, 2014–19. *Sikh Formations* 15: 314–31. [CrossRef]

³⁷ Khan, Muqtedar. 2020. India could Become the Next Breeding Ground for Radicalism. *The National Interest*. Available online: <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/india-could-become-next-breeding-ground-radicalism-111736> (accessed on 18 August 2021).

³⁸ See Bharatiya Janata Party, Election Manifesto 2014, <http://www.bjp.org/manifesto2014>.

alienation; at one point in 2010 the then-RSS chief suggested that the BJP be dissolved and replaced by a new party. Yet the organization's leaders appeared to view the BJP victory in 2014 as crucial to the very existence of the RSS. Its leaders thus threw the full weight of their organization behind Modi's campaign while enjoying a correlate spike in participation in 2014.³⁹ Islam is the second largest religion of India with over 200 million adherents, and Muslim culture has deep historical roots and is profusely embedded in India's heritage. Its existence remains a barrier to the Hinduization of India, and the *Sangh Parivar* (family or cluster of *Hindutva*-advocating organizations, movements, and parties) are determined to erase or at least marginalize Islam. After gaining majority in the parliament in the 2014 elections, the political branch of the *Hindutva* family, the BJP, began an accelerated process of alienating Muslims and adopted three strategies to this end: (1) undermining the legal framework that protects Muslims, (2) encouraging non-state actors to use violence against Muslims, and (3) pushing forward an agenda of cultural erasure.

Leading *Hindutva* and widely-held RSS aspirations include scaling back laws and government programs designed to benefit the religious minorities, Muslims in particular; and establishing a Uniform Civil Code (to replace current personal law based on religious customs and thus standardizing all national laws regarding such topics as marriage, divorce, and inheritance). Repealing Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, which grants limited autonomy to the state of Jammu and Kashmir (a step that would, if implemented, allow citizens from other states to buy property in Jammu and Kashmir, see "The Kashmir Dispute," below). Redrafting public school textbooks to remove what are alleged to be insults to Hindu gods and excessive praise of the subcontinent's past Muslim rulers; constructing a Ram temple on the Ayodhya site of the Babri Mosque that was razed in 1992; and preventing cow slaughter through legislation (cows are revered animals in Hinduism).⁴⁰

4.0 Indian Communalism and Rousing Chauvinism against Muslim Minority

To understand communal violence in India, one must understand the basic foundation of a community in India. Communities can be viewed as a "relational" concept made possible through "a series of mediated relationships".⁴¹ People in a community have a common goal which binds them together and this distinguishes them from other communities. However, it is not necessary that members of a community always share the same goals and values. This creates room for discrimination —an emotion described as "being in a boundary within which members [of a community] are supposed to act".⁴² This creates a consciousness

³⁹ "RSS Steps in to Work For Modi's Victory and Its Own Survival," Business Standard (Mumbai), March 5, 2014; "Narendra Modi Effect: 2,000-Odd RSS Shakhas Spout in Three Months," Economic Times (Mumbai), April 13, 2014.

⁴⁰ For expanded discussion, see the case studies in Walter Andersen and Shridhar Damle, (2018) *The RSS: A View to the Inside*, Penguin. P. 56

⁴¹ Suranjan Das, "Towards an Understanding of Communal Violence in Twentieth Century Bengal", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 23, No. 35, 1988, pp. 1804–1808.

⁴² Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, Long Grove: Waveland Press, 1969, pp. 9–38.

among members who work towards living within those boundaries. Through construction of symbols to communicate, members of a community are able to relay messages and thoughts to each other.⁴³ Islamophobia is arguably also the biggest factor at play in communal violence and rise of Hindutva in India. The persecution of Muslims in India has been on a steady rise over the last few decades.⁴⁴ The creation of Pakistan as an Islamic Republic has posed severe problems to Indian Muslims. While the partition reduced the number of Muslims in India from 25% to 10%, the aftermath has resulted in Hindu nationalists portraying Muslims as anti-national and traitors.⁴⁵ The rise of Islamophobia occurred simultaneously with a rise in Hindu nationalism. Hindu nationalism began substituting liberal values, and policies by the government began targeting minorities. For instance, a majority of Indians who underwent forced sterilization during the Emergency followed Islam.

The Hindu–Muslim communal views of their respective history, its interpretation and its appropriation for sharpening the edges of communalism, were mostly developed during the course of pre-colonial rule in India. This reconstruction of colonial history is employed as a powerful instrument for creating communal solidarity and hatred at the same time. Prior to independence, the Congress–Muslim league quest for freedom essentially represented the economic, political and cultural aspirations of both Muslims and Hindus. The major cause of communal conflict, before the advent of free India, was thus the struggle between the Hindus and the Muslim and their respective elite for political power and control of economic resources. Needless to say, the Muslims of the sub-continent, despairing of a fair deal, sought their salvation in a separate homeland. In the post-partition period, the Indian Muslim masses left behind in India found them in an awkward situation and were unable to react meaningfully to the hostile and dominating politico-economic attitude of their rival Hindu citizens. The partition riots continued up to 1948 and occasional skirmishes here and there took place till 1950.⁴⁶ In the decade between 1950 and 1960, the events of communal violence were marginal. However, after the frenzy of 1947-48, the communal bloodbath was again witnessed in 1961 in Jabalpur in the state of Madhya Pradesh.⁴⁷ Later rioting erupted in various parts of East-India like Calcutta, Jamshedpur, Rourkela and Ranchi. In 1968-69 communal aggressions caused a chain reaction in the Southern part of India as the state of Gujarat saw intensive and widespread killing incidents.⁴⁸ In Ahmadabad also, massacre, arson, looting and slaughter of thousands of Muslims continued for a week. The communal violence in Ahmadabad had its repercussions elsewhere, in Baroda, Bharuch, Nadiad Anand, Jamnagar, Bhuj, Veravel, Junagarh, etc. The riots in Aligarh, Ahmedabad and Moradabad

⁴³ Ghanshyam Shah, “*Identity, Communal Consciousness and Politics*”, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 29, No. 19, 1994, pp. 1133–1140.

⁴⁴ “*Muslims-India*”, Minority Rights Group, 2011, <https://minorityrights.org/minorities/muslims-2/> (accessed 5 October 2020).

⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 76

⁴⁶ Bhagwant, R. P. (2001). *The growing cult of communal violence*, The Hindu, New Delhi,

⁴⁷ Shakir, Moin (1989). *Politics of Minorities: Some perspectives*, New Delhi: O.U.P. p. 192

⁴⁸ Sudheer Gupta, (1970). *Riots in Gujrat, Bombay: Sangam Books. P. 102-104*

turned into a clash between Muslims and the predominantly Hindu police force, with latter mercilessly beating up the Muslims and indulging in violence.⁴⁹ By 1970, the number of districts affected by the communal virus rose to 216 representing 70 percent of the Indian basic administrative set-up. Out of the total of 525 serious communal riots in 1986, 96 were reported in Gujarat, 65 in Bihar, 61 in West Bengal, 51 in Maharashtra, 48 in Karnataka, 45 in Andhra Pradesh, 41 in Uttar Pradesh, 31 in Madhya Pradesh, 24 in Rajasthan, 21 in Kerala, 14 in Tamil Nadu, 10 in Orisa, 8 in the Indian-held Kashmir, 7 in Assam and 3 in Delhi.⁵⁰ The ugliest incident of Hindu fanaticism since 1947 took place on 6, December 1992 when the historic Babri mosque in Ayodhya was razed to the ground. Hindu communalism, drawing its sustenance from hate, prejudice and bigotry towards the Muslim minority and its cynical refusal to accept the pluralistic nature of Indian society, blackened its own face by destroying the mosque in the name of Ram.⁵¹

The uncivilized act of demolition of the historic mosque was carried out in the presence of the top Brass of BJP-VHP-RSS combine and contrary to the assurances of the state government given to the Supreme Court of India. Since 1992, the tragic happenings during the communal contentions have deepened the sense of horror and misery of the Muslim minority. In the recent past, Modi's state of Gujarat broke the previous records of Anti-Muslim atrocities, when stray cases of assault, murder, stabbing and rape went on unabated and unchecked for a week. The overall picture is that the loss of lives, injured or disabled, loss of moveable or immovable properties, missing persons and honours is incalculable. Indian governments whether the "so-called progressive" or conservatives have evidently failed to protect the Muslim minority from an organized vandalism. The Indian Muslims are punished for not merging their religious, cultural and philosophical entity into a "uniform secular nation" which is actually the creed of Sangh Parivar. Although communalism is a means to gain political power and assert a community's place in society, one cannot discount the role religion plays in directing the discourse. The 1980s witnessed the worst degree of communal violence in India. The "MinakshiPuram conversion" incident—a mass religious conversion which occurred in Tamil Nadu—was exploited by the then-government to mobilize upper and middle-class Hindu to support their religion and stay in power. This resulted in escalation of communal tensions which culminated in communal riots in Hyderabad, Bhiwandi, Meerut and Bhagalpur. Of these four, Meerut and Bhagalpur are considered precursors to the Babri Masjid demolition.⁵²

The United Progressive Alliance—a coalition headed by INC which formed the Central government in 2004—saw some of the worst riots of century. Some of these communal riots include Aligarh riots (2006), Dhule riots (2008), Deganga riots (2010),

⁴⁹ Sadiq Tauseef Agha, (1988). *Communalism Exposes Hindu Bias*, Calcutta: Chatterjee Publications, p. 51

⁵⁰ Chaudhry, Kamal. (1989). *Indian Moslems*, New Delhi: Chanakya Publishers, p. 333

⁵¹ Achin Vanaik, (1997) *Communalism: Contested Religion, Modernity and Secularization*, New Delhi: Vistar Publications. 56.

⁵² Warisha Farasat, "The Forgotten Carnage of Bhagalpur", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 48, No. 3, 2013, pp. 34–39.

Bharatpur riots (2011), Assam riots (2012) and Muzaffarnagar riots (2013). Between the six riots, an average of 26 people were killed, most of whom were Muslims or other minorities.⁵³ Historical data has also proved that minorities are worst affected. According to Paul Brass, Home Ministry data recorded 3949 incidents of communal violence between 1968 and 1980. Within this period, 530 Hindus, 1598 Muslims, 159 others and police personnel were murdered during the riots.⁵⁴ Even after the rise of BJP in power in 2014, Communal violence under the Modi regime has seen an increase in number of cases by 17%.⁵⁵ In 2015, communal incidents were 751 incidents were recorded. Two years later, the NDA government recorded a 28% hike in 2017. However, this is still short of UPA's decadal high which stood at 943 in 2008.⁵⁶ BJP has prided itself saying no major riots were caused under its regime, but data reflects smaller skirmishes have made up for big riots. In 2017, 2384 people were injured in communal conflicts. This is the second highest since 2009 where 2461 people were injured.⁵⁷

4.1 Cow Slaughter Vigilantism and Citizenship Act

The Indian Constitution and 21 of India's 29 state governments significantly restrict or ban the killing of cow which considered a sacred animal in the Hindu religion. Such restrictions—which can lead to prison sentences of 6 months to 14 years, if violated—were found constitutional by India's Supreme Court in 2005. According to the Indian Agriculture Ministry's 2002 National Commission on Cattle report, “the cow has always had a very special place in the social fabric of the country,”⁵⁸ and it suggests that cow protection laws are not incompatible with a secular society. Cow protection through vigilante action largely is a new phenomenon in India. The RSS has called for a nationwide ban on cow slaughter. In May 2017, the federal government issued new rules banning sale of cows for slaughter, a decree taken by some observers as imposition of an indirect ban on beef. Several state governments expressed opposition; those in West Bengal and Kerala said they would not follow the “arbitrary” order, which subsequently was struck down by the Supreme Court in a ruling that emphasized the bans' potential to adversely impact the livelihoods of those (largely Muslims) engaged in the country's beef and leather industries.⁵⁹

⁵³ Apoorva Rao, “6 Worst Communal Riots under UPA Government”, DNA India, 2014, <https://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-6-worst-communal-riots-under-upa-government-1984678>.

⁵⁴ Paul Brass, “The Body as Symbol in the Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence”, in *Religion, Violence and Political Mobilisation in South Asia*, ed. Ravinder Kaur, New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2005, p. 49.

⁵⁵ Aman Sharma, “Communal Riots up 17% in 2015 under NDA”, *Economic Times*, 2015. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/communal-riots-up-17-in-2015-undernda/articleshow/51130192.cms?from=mdr> (accessed 18 October 2020).

⁵⁶ Chaitanya Mallapur, “Communal Violence up 28% under Modi Govt but Short of UPA's Decadal High”, *Business Standard*, 2018. https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/communal-violence-increases-28-under-modi-govt-yet-short-of-upa-high-118020900128_1.html (accessed 18 October 2020).

⁵⁷ Ministry of Home Affairs, “Annexure in Reply to Parts (a) & (b) of the Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 2545 for 10.8.2010 Regarding ‘Communal Violence’”, Parliament Library, 2010, http://164.100.47.193/Annexure_New/lsq15/5/au2545.htm (accessed 18 October 2021).

⁵⁸ See “‘Cow Vigilantism’ in India,” *Economist*, February 15, 2018.

⁵⁹ India States Oppose Cow Slaughter Ban,” *BBC News*, May 30, 2017; “Is India's Ban on Cattle Slaughter ‘Food Fascism?’”, *BBC News*, June 2, 2018; “India's Supreme Court Suspends Ban on Sales of Cows for Slaughter,” *Reuters*, July 11, 2017.

According to USCIRF, enforcement of such provisions economically marginalizes Muslims and Dalits, who adhere to various religious faiths, and even mere accusations of violations have led to violence. According to Human Rights Watch, “Mob attacks by extremist Hindu groups affiliated with the ruling BJP against minority communities, especially Muslims,” continued throughout 2017 and, “Instead of taking prompt legal action against the attackers, police frequently filed complaints against the victims under laws banning cow slaughter,” suggesting official sympathy toward the attackers.⁶⁰ A 2017 investigative report by Reuters uncovered how ‘Cow protection’ turned out to be lucrative for the BJP party. The report offered the “first in-depth look at how the actions of cow vigilantes are also leading to further economic marginalization of the country’s Muslim minority.”⁶¹ It uncovered that Hindu nationalist *gau rakshaks* seize cows after they stop and beat farmers that transport them, as in Pehlu Khan’s case. The *gau rakshaks* steal the cows from the farmers, who are generally Muslim or Dalit, and then redistribute their wealth in the form of a cow, through BJP led gaushalas (cow shelters) where “the stolen cows are being given to Hindu farmers.”⁶² The widely reported 2015 lynching of a Muslim man in Uttar Pradesh after (unfounded) rumours that his family had killed and eaten a cow during the Muslim Eid holiday was half-heartedly condemned by Prime Minister Modi, and after an eight-day delay. The incident sparked a nationwide debate on religious intolerance and brought the Modi government under considerable criticism for its alleged inattention, with one commentator arguing that Modi cared “more about the killing of cows than he does about the killing of Muslims.”⁶³ The 2017 seating of a hardline Hindu cleric as chief minister of India’s largest state sparked a spate of “cow protection” vigilantism in Uttar Pradesh, and the shuttering of dozens of slaughterhouses and some 50,000 meat-selling shops, reportedly contributing to a 15% drop in India’s multi-billion dollar beef export industry, among the world’s largest.⁶⁴

The biggest step that the Hindu nationalist government took to undermine the status of Indian Muslims was in December 2019 when it passed the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). The nation has come under the spotlight for its religious based discriminatory actions that are disproportionately affecting Muslims. One such action is the passage of the

⁶⁰ “India States Oppose Cow Slaughter Ban,” BBC News, May 30, 2017; “Is India’s Ban on Cattle Slaughter ‘Food Fascism?’”, BBC News, June 2, 2018; “India’s Supreme Court Suspends Ban on Sales of Cows for Slaughter,” Reuters, July 11, 2017.

⁶¹ Special Report, “In Modi’s India, Cow Vigilantes Deny Muslim Farmers Their Livelihood,” *Reuters*, Thomson Reuters, November 6, 2017, www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/india-Politics-Religion

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ See <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/india>. In the assessment of one Indian outlet based on Western media reports, from 2010 to 2017, the majority of victims of cow-related violence were Muslim, including 21 of the 25 killed in 60 such incidents. Notably, “As many of 97% of these attacks were reported after Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government came to power” (“84% Dead in Cow-Related Violence Since 2010 Are Muslim; 97% of Attacks Since 2014,” *IndiaSpend* (online, Mumbai), June 28, 2017).

⁶⁴ “Cows Are Sacred to India’s Hindu Majority,” *Washington Post*, July 15, 2018.

⁷⁸ See Human Rights Watch, “India: Events of 2017,” <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/india>.

Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019. The passage of this Act has India's secular values under fire as the country questions what true Indian identity constitutes. The ruling party of India, the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) has endorsed the Citizenship Amendment Act as a response to the ever narrowing Indian identity debate.⁶⁵ This amendment is seen as the first legal provision that makes India a homeland for Hindus.⁶⁶ Ever since the birth of India, a Hindu nationalistic movement is on the rise. The BJP manifests itself to be a right-wing group that does not hesitate to take actions against the minority Muslim community in India.⁶⁷ Therefore, the passage of the Citizenship Amendment Act is seen as acutely detrimental to the religious freedom and secular values of India. The law basically provides a pathway to refugees from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan who are not Muslim; by prioritizing non-Muslims, it discriminates against Muslims on religious grounds. The lawmakers argue that the said countries are Muslim nations with a record of discrimination against their non-Muslim minorities, and hence, India should provide refuge to them, especially the Hindu refugees. Yet these countries also violate the rights of Muslim groups. The case of discrimination against Ahmadiyya Muslims in Pakistan is well known.⁶⁸ While on face value, it appears that this law only discriminates against Muslims of neighbouring nations, experts have argued and journalists have documented that, in fact, the CAA in combination with the National Register of Citizenship (NRC) would render millions of Indian Muslims stateless.⁶⁹ In Northeast India where the NRC has been applied, 2 million people have been left stateless. So, when the CAA is applied in conjunction with the NRC, all the people unable to prove citizenship will be declared stateless and everyone—except Muslims—would be given a pathway to citizenship as refugees. This move has been seen as a major assault on India's Muslims and it triggered sustained nationwide protests. As can be seen from the above, the first six months of the second term of Narendra Modi's government was one assault after another on Indian Muslims' constitutional status and heritage.

4.2 'Love jihad' and Islamophobia

The 'love jihad' conspiracy argues that Muslim men are waging Jihad in India by luring Hindu women into marriages through trickery, in order to convert them to Islam.⁷⁰ Proponents of 'love jihad' claim that these young men are waging war the capture of innocent Hindu women's hearts, referred to as 'Love Romeos'. This vicious crusade against interfaith

⁶⁵ Jeffrey Gettleman and Suhasini Raj, *Indian Parliament Passes Divisive Citizenship Bill, Moving It Closer to Law*, N.Y. Times (Dec. 17, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/11/world/asia/india-muslims-citizenship-narendramodi.html>

⁶⁶ Joanna Slatter, Why Protests are erupting over India's new citizenship law, Wash. Post (Dec. 19, 2019), https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/why-indias-citizenship-law-is-so-contentious/2019/12/17/35d75996-2042-11ea-b034-de7dc2b5199b_story.html

⁶⁸ Uddin, Asma T. 2017. A Legal Analysis of Ahmadi Persecution in Pakistan. In *State Responses to Minority Religions*. London: Routledge, pp. 81–97.

⁶⁹ Sur, Priyali. 2020. A Year After Rendering Millions Stateless, India has Yet to Hear a Single Appeal. *Foreign Policy*. Available online: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/09/10/2-million-people-india-assam-stateless-year-nrc/> (accessed on 4 June 2021).

⁷⁰ Gupta, C. (2016). Allegories of "Love Jihad" and Ghar Vāpasī: Interlocking the Socio-Religious with the Political. *Archiv Orientalni*, 84(2).

marriage, and demonization of Muslim men has further intensified the marginalization of Muslims in India and exacerbated a hostile, anti-Muslim political and social climate. As reflected in the preceding sections of this report, the increased mobilization and political focus on ‘love jihad’ in the last decade must be understood within the longstanding and fruitful history of anxieties about Muslims out-growing Hindu populations, which can be traced to as early as 1909 when N. Mukherji wrote the book ‘*Hindus: A Dying Race*’, and more pronounced connection to ‘love jihad’ can be traced to similar “abduction” and conversion campaigns launched by Arya Samaj and other Hindu revivalist bodies in the 1920s, as well as tensions around the recovery of Muslim and Hindu women from opposing parties in the 1947 partition of India and Pakistan.⁷¹ Right-wing nationalists in particular, construct ‘love jihad’ as a strategy employed by Muslim fundamentalists to boost population numbers in a supposed ongoing demographic war to outnumber Hindus in India. Hindutva groups and forces have consistently expressed a “fear” that Hindu women are being converted to Islam in the name of “false love”.⁷² The first public appearance of the term ‘love jihad’ can be traced to around 2009, mainly in the southern states of Kerala and Karnataka. It’s formulation, while originating in the early twentieth century, combines contemporary anxieties around loss of identity and conversion with stereotypes linking Muslims with terrorism and extremism. Gupta summarizes that “‘love jihad’, which is actually a jihad against love, is a ‘delicious’ political fantasy, a lethal mobilisation strategy, a vicious crusade, and an emotive mythical campaign. It is an attempt by Hindutva forces for political and communal mobilisation in the name of women.”⁷³ Love jihad’ utilizes exclusionary principles for political and communal mobilization through the creation of a common “enemy other” in the name of ‘protecting’ Hindu women. Far-right Hindu nationalists have constructed ‘love jihad’ as an organized conspiracy, whereby Muslim men are aggressively converting vulnerable Hindu women to Islam through trickery and marriage. In actual practice, however, there is a lack of evidence supporting the legitimacy of ‘love jihad’. Propaganda against ‘love jihad’ has thus been a mere lethal mobilization strategy against love, for political gains in elections.⁷⁴

First appearing in 2009 in political and public discourse, the term ‘love jihad’ has gained more momentum since 2014, to the advantage of far right-wing nationalists. As exemplified in the previous paragraphs of this section, ‘love jihad’ has built traction by exacerbating the ongoing fears of ‘breeding Muslims’ set to overtake Hindu population in India. This is complimented by a highly patriarchal nationhood of violence against women, that simultaneously constructs reproductive women’s bodies a site of communal anxiety

⁷¹ Gupta, C. (2001). Hindu Women, Muslim Men. In *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community* (pp. 268-320). Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

⁷² Ibid., p. 54

⁷³ Charu Gupta, “When Society Is Threatened by Love”, *The Tribune*, 2014, 9, http://www.academia.edu/10306613/When_Soci-ety_is_threatened_by_love.

⁷⁴ Gupta, “Allegories of love Jihad”, 298.

about the future of the Hindu race, in a demographic war against other minorities.⁷⁵ This ultra-Hindu nationalism and emphasis on the dominance of a Hindu population is also inseparable to anti-conversion laws and the *ghar vāpasī* (returning home) program which restricts the ability for Hindus to convert to other religions, while simultaneously advancing and encouraging the conversion, often forced conversions of other religious groups, to Hinduism. As emphasized by Gupta, “a common thread that links both ‘love jihad’ and *ghar vāpasī* is the obsession with the numerical strength of Hindus. The numbers game, and constructed fears around it, has been central to the modern politics of Hindutva”.⁷⁶ More deeply, Gupta brings attention to the inextricable link between ‘love jihad’, *ghar vāpasī* and rising Hindu Nationalism in India, ultimately reflecting the national “shift in electoral politics to the right.”⁷⁷

The hostile anxieties and opposition to Hindu conversion to Islam, particularly from women who are responsible for the reproduction of Hindu children, thus manifests via the ‘love jihad’ propaganda and initiatives detailed in this report. As Gupta highlights: “the twin strategies of anti-conversion/reconversion can also be seen as an attempt to harden religious identities and boundaries, while undermining syncretic cultural practices and religious pluralities in our everyday life. The anxieties of the Hindu Right and a section of Hindu men have coalesced around threatened religious collectivities as well as intimate matters of family and the individual”.⁷⁸ Most importantly, “campaigns such as ‘love jihad’ and *ghar vāpasī* signify a shift in electoral politics to the right, and the marginalization of non-communal forces, whereby discourses of religious “othering” and hatred have persisted and gained a new lease of life”.⁷⁹ Cases and events around ‘love jihad’ in 2017 in particular, reflect the impact of this electoral politics, evident in the fortification of propaganda and public fears around the issues. Such rhetoric is materialized in educational awareness campaigns warning students against ‘love jihad’, political commitment to forming ‘Romeo Squads’ that fight against ‘love jihad’, and various attacks against interfaith couples and any individuals suspect of facilitating such unions. In particular, the controversial and widely broadcasted case of Hadiya, which captured nationwide interest, reinforces the false and mythical nature of the ‘love jihad’ campaign, and that the concerning degree to which Hindu women are stripped of their agency or free-will to choose who to love, and what religion to follow in their daily life. Notably, the impact of ‘love jihad’ campaigns and initiatives is most significant in heightening Islamophobia and intensifying anti-Muslim sentiment across the nation. Indeed, ‘love jihad’ is predicated on exclusionary principles, and reproduces historical references to the aggressive and libidinal energies of the Muslim male, thus creating a common “enemy other.” ‘Love jihad’ has not only resulted in hostile communal tensions but also results in

⁷⁵ Mohan, “Love Jihad and demographic fears.”

⁷⁶ Gupta, “Allegories of love Jihad”, 306.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 310.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 307.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 310.

experiences of structural, as well as everyday discrimination among Muslims in their neighbourhoods and daily life. The ultra-nationalist right-wing Hindutva war against supposed ‘love jihad’ has led to the displacement of some Muslim communities, built fear and insecurity and led to the intensified and increased securitization, policing and community vigilantism against Muslims in India.

5.0 Muslims as the Antagonistic Other

The Indian society is highly infested with a caste system (based on a particular theological construct) that places the religious clergy (Brahmins) at the top and renders millions outside the caste system as untouchables. This intra-Hindu set up, known as the *Varna* system, grades people according to the hierarchy they enjoy by the fate of their birth. Thus high caste people have more rights and privileges than those belonging to lower castes. The inter-community relationship was much more about practicing apartheid on religious grounds. The untouchables (Dalits) embraced Islam to escape the persecution from brutal repressive caste system, thus to Brahmins the Muslims were *Mlechhas* (impure untouchables) too. The proselytization process was subsequently followed by Muslim rule. During the Muslim rule caste rigidity was eased to a large extent and an alternative social system did threaten the social and religious status of upper caste Hindus.⁸⁰ Hence the Brahminic construction of the Muslim history and contribution to Indian civilization is rife with references to desecration of Hindu temples hurting their religious sentiments because of dietary habits particularly eating beef.⁸¹ The history and politics of beef eating in India is contested and variegated. According to some historians the origins of cow slaughter can be traced back to British colonizers while others hold that beef eating in India was prevalent in India before the advent of Islam.⁸² The invocation of Muslim rulers as invaders and plunderers, including the drawing the analogy of Muslim rule being synonymous with Hindu persecution helped in the construction of Muslim image as the ‘other’.⁸³

Hindutva imaginary frames Muslims as antagonistic to Hindu India in a number of ways. As has been mentioned briefly, the period of Muslim predominance (Mughal Era) is viewed as a foreign invasion. Hindutva narrations of historical wars that occurred between different kingdoms tend to be amputated from their spatio-temporal contexts and become reframed as an Orientalist tropes between heroic indigenous Hindus and barbaric foreign Muslims. It has been noted that Hindutva regards the period preceding Muslim predominance as the golden era of Hindu civilization. In the context of Hindutva, colonial definitions of “Hindu” and “Muslim” became and remain foundational to an ethno-nationalist vision of a distinctly Hindu India. Hindutva actors have appropriated the problematic notion that Ancient India was a coherent and cohesive Hindu civilization to argue that Hindu predominance over

⁸⁰ Troll, C. W. (1982). *Islam in India: Studies and Commentaries Vol 1*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd.

⁸¹ Thapar, R. (2008). *Somanatha: The Many Voices of a History*. New Delhi: Penguin. 34

⁸² Jha, D. N. (2010). *The Myth of the Holy Cow*. New Delhi: Navayana. 12

⁸³ Eaton, R. M. (2003). *Essays on Islam and Indian History*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. 66.

the region coincided with India's golden era—as global leaders in political innovation, economic development, and the creative arts.⁸⁴ The golden era came to an end after what is deemed to be the Muslim invasion of Hindu India. The BJP's outline of a Hindutva vision of India characterizes the decline of the country with the arrival of the “Islamic sword,” and indeed, refers to the “era of Islamic invasions” as “the bloodiest period in the history of mankind” (Bharatiya Janata Party n.d.) Hindus were thus deemed to have been trapped in a state of “enslavement” since the commencement of Muslim rule.⁸⁵ By labelling Muslims as invaders—thus, fundamentally foreign to the region— Hindutva actors (1) assume the historical people and polities of South Asia to have been held together by a collective consciousness of shared Hinduness,⁸⁶ (2) imagine the contemporary nation-state of India as possessing an essential relationship with those polities (Sharma 2011), and thus (3) characterize contemporary Hindus as the natural “inheritors of the past and claimants to dominance in the present” because, to them, India has *always* been Hindu.⁸⁷

Beyond the political, economic, and cultural achievements of Hindu kingdoms, it appears that Hindutva conceives of Hindu civilization as glorious because of the absence of a significant number of Muslims in the region. Consequently, the numerical growth of Muslims is regarded with suspicion. Since Muslim rulers were regarded as barbaric and wicked, the implication was that Islam could only spread through barbarism and wickedness. Thus, Hindutva rationalizes the numerical growth of Islam and Muslims to be a function of conversions enforced *en masse* by ruthless Muslim rulers—though this too is an ahistorical account.⁸⁸ It has been empirically demonstrated that Islam spread gradually, over a period of some 400 years, because of geological changes (e.g. the way rivers flow) and the resultant economic contingencies (e.g. implications for irrigation and agriculture),⁸⁹ rather than in a sudden massive wave that Hindutva actors claim. Nonetheless, the origins of the 500 million or so Muslims in South Asia today (India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh) are treated to be a product of a vicious Medieval Muslim policy: convert or die. The logic of Hindutva dictates that (1) Muslims only became Muslims out of fear, (2) all Muslims in the region were originally Hindu, and thus (3) Muslims today can and should be reconverted to Hinduism since their Hindu ancestors only became Muslim as the alternative was death.⁹⁰

⁸⁴ Flåten, L. T. 2016. *Hindu Nationalism, History and Identity in India: Narrating a Hindu Past Under the BJP*. Oxon: Routledge. 87.

⁸⁵ Sharma, J. 2009. “Digesting the ‘Other’: Hindu Nationalism and the Muslims in India.” In *Political Hinduism: The Religious Imagination in Public Spheres*, edited by V. Lal, p. 152. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

⁸⁶ Mahmood, C. K. 1993. “Rethinking Indian Communalism: Culture and Counter-Culture.” *Asian Survey* 33 (7): 722–37.

⁸⁷ Thapar, R. 1989. “Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and the Modern Search for a Hindu Identity.” *Modern Asian Studies* 23 (2): 209–31.

⁸⁸ Eaton, R. M. 1985. “Approaches to the Study of Conversion to Islam in India.” In *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies*, edited by R. C. Martin, 106–23. London: Oneworld Publications.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 78

⁹⁰ Eshwar, R. 2009. “Extract from Raj Eshwar, Parvatan (Back to Hinduism): Why and How.” In *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader*, edited by C. Jaffrelot, 244–54. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Hindutva also characterizes Muslims as bandits for having (1) stolen land and dividing Hindustan into India and Pakistan, and (2) robbing India of secularism and religious equality. While Pakistan's founder Muhammad Ali Jinnah arguably intended for the country to be a secular Muslim-majority state,⁹¹ Pakistan has often been subsumed by polarizing and repressive Islamist influences—perhaps most notably under the dictatorship of General Zia-ul-Haq.⁹² The prevalence of Islamism, as well as the fact that Pakistan has lagged behind India considerably on most development indicators,⁹³ has arguably provided the factual and logical foundation necessary for Hindutva to characterize Pakistan as a poorly governed territory. That it was nonetheless carved out for Muslims at the expense of a unified India, the birth-right of the Hindus as it were, only exasperates the frustration Hindutva articulates toward the very existence of Pakistan. As such, Pakistan embodies both the failure of contemporary Muslim-majority rule and the detrimental effect of losing land to them—because an India free of Muslim-majoritarianisms outranks Pakistan in terms of political maturity and economic development. Within India, the fact that Muslims maintain religious laws to govern personal affairs (e.g. marriage, divorce, inheritance) is perceived as a violation of the secular foundations of the Indian Constitution.⁹⁴ The establishment of a separate Muslim Personal Law is perceived as an unfair concession to Muslims—a peculiar accusation given that Hindus too have a set of personal laws under the Hindu Code Bill.⁹⁵

That said, the notoriety of the 1985 Shah Bano Case, the debate over the constitutionality of triple *talaq*, and the concomitant demand for the government to stay out of issues concerning Muslim Personal Law by (extremely) vocal conservative clerics who managed to mobilize popular support in favour of their anti-government stand has arguably rendered Muslim Personal Law more visible than any other religious laws in Indian media discourse. This has made it easy to gloss over the fact that religious laws in India are not exclusive to Muslims—which would render *all* religious groups in technical violation of Hindutva's apparent desire for secularism. In this context, Muslims are framed not only as barbaric, wicked, and demonic, but as bandits for having stolen land and secularism. Hindus occupy the role of the courageous, righteous, and Godly victims of Muslim thievery. Islamophobia is thus a function of Hindu–Muslim antagonisms in India, and indeed, operate through the racial hierarchy which mandates that Muslims be subordinate to Hindus in a plethora of ways. As shall be demonstrated, Modi's narratives resemble these antagonisms and hierarchies, albeit more subtly.

⁹¹ Ahmar, M. 2012. "Vision for a Secular Pakistan?" *Strategic Analysis* 36 (2): 217–28.

⁹² Nasr, V. 2004. "Military Rule, Islamism and Democracy in Pakistan." *The Middle East Journal* 58 (2): 195–209.

⁹³ Central Intelligence Agency. 2018a. "The World Factbook: South Asia—India." January 3. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/in.html>.

⁹⁴ Ogden, C. 2010. "Norms, Indian Foreign Policy and the 1998–2004 National Democratic Alliance." *The Round Table* 99 (408): 303–15.

⁹⁵ Kumar, K. 2017. "Indian Constitution: The Vision of B.R. Ambedkar." *Intellectual Resonance* 3 (5): 144–57.

Conclusion:

As we discussed in this paper, Otherization of Muslims in India is part of a larger unfolding of Hindu theological genealogy. According to the above empirical data and case studies, it is evident that issues of discrimination, exclusion and marginalization of Muslims is complex but a serious matter of concern. Islamophobia is not only institutionalized, but also spatialized through communal violence, attacks and contestations over the right for Muslim neighbourhoods and places of worship to exist in the Indian national space. Historically, India has suffered various outbreaks of large- scale politically-stoked violence against religious minorities, particularly against Muslims that remain unresolved years later. In documenting cases from 2017 onwards, it is exemplified that the BJP victory and subsequent implementation ultra-right-wing nationalist discourse and policies have intensified such attacks against Muslim sites, neighbourhoods and places of worship. Most concerning, is the direct impact of such violence on patterns of segregation and the ghettoization of Muslims, further limiting their socio-economic opportunities for growth out of dire situations of poverty. This paper has critically examined the impacts of communal violence on Muslim displacement, and subsequent patterns of ghettoization and segregation sustained through discriminatory policies that further restrict the social and spatial mobility of Muslims in India. While imparting education to all Muslims is very much required, the causes and consequences of spatial marginality reflects the negative image of the society, which needs to be assessed and examined. It all leads to their severely stigmatised and extremely excluded conditions. Since Otherization is an integral part of the development of strategies for exclusivist politics, it is important to seek effective measures to improve the conditions of Muslims. Marginalization and peripheralization foster a relational approach to inequalities among marginalized groups. Therefore, an effective and inclusive policy is urgently needed to open up various platforms for absorbing religiously marginalized minority communities to develop a more democratic and secular India. Since it is clearly visible that Muslim Indians share an economic and educational predicament with their vulnerable non-Muslim fellow citizens, therefore, economic and educational welfare are the predominant concerns in the process of democratization of Muslims. However we should look at the growing consciousness, democratization, assertiveness and political mobilization of Muslims in order to examine the politics, programmes and broader agendas that advocates of this new identity seek to put forward on behalf of a large section of India's Muslim population. It is essential to understand the changing dynamics of Muslim politics discourse and how the 'politics of inclusion' is at play in the arena of this dynamics. As such there is no sufficient work on untouchability among Muslims but different forms of discrimination, stigma, social distance and structure of domination faced by lower caste Muslims depicts the harsh reality.
