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Hindutva - A Hindi Book by - Savarkar - हिन्दुत्व ...

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Hindutva

For the book by Veer Savarkar, see [Hindutva \(book\)](#).

Hindutva, a word coined by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in his 1923 pamphlet *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?*, is the prominent set of movements advocating Hindu nationalism in India.

An umbrella of organizations, called the Sangh Parivar, champions the concept of Hindutva. The sangh parivar comprises organizations such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Bharatiya Janata Party, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Bajrang Dal and others.

1 Definition



Ancient Hindu flag with two pennants.

According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, “Hindutva (‘Hindu-ness’), [is] an ideology that sought to define Indian culture in terms of Hindu values”.^[1]

In a 1995 judgment, the Supreme Court of India ruled that “Ordinarily, Hindutva is understood as a way of life or a state of mind and is not to be equated with or understood as religious Hindu fundamentalism ... it is a fallacy and an error of law to proceed on the assumption ... that the use of words Hindutva or Hinduism per se depicts an attitude hostile to all persons practising any religion other than the Hindu religion ... It may well be that these words are used in a speech to promote secularism or to emphasise the way of life of the Indian people and the Indian culture or ethos, or to criticise the policy of any political party as discriminatory or intolerant.”^[2]

According to Veer Savarkar, Hindutva is an inclusive term of everything Indic. He makes it clear by saying:

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 being confounded with the other cognate term

Hinduism, 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.^[3]

2 History

This ideology has existed since the early 20th century, forged by Savarkar, but came to prominence in Indian politics in the late 1980s, when three distinct events attracted a large number of Hindus to the movement. The first of these events was the Rajiv Gandhi government’s use of its large Parliamentary majority to overturn the Supreme Court’s decision in the Shah Bano case. Many Muslims were angered by the court’s ruling, which concerned the granting of alimony to a Muslim woman. The second was the dispute over the 16th century Mughal Babri Mosque in Ayodhya, claimed to have been built by Babur after the destruction of a Hindu temple and claimed in nineteenth century to be the birthplace of Shri Ram, one of the main Indian Vaishnavite gods. The Babri Mosque was destroyed by hardline Hindu activists during a political rally, which turned into a riot on 6 December 1992. A subsequent land title case was lodged in the Allahabad High Court, the verdict of which was pronounced on 30 September 2010. In the landmark hearing, the three judges of The Allahabad High Court ruled that the 2.77 acres (1.12 ha) of Ayodhya land be divided into 3 parts, with 1/3 going to the Ram Lalla or Infant Lord Rama represented by the Hindu Maha Sabha for the construction of the Ram temple, 1/3 going to the Islamic Sunni Waqf Board and the remaining 1/3 going to a Hindu religious denomination Nirmohi Akhara. While the three-judge bench was not unanimous that the disputed structure was constructed after demolition of a temple, it did agree that a temple or a temple structure predated the mosque at the same site.^[4] The excavations by the Archaeological Survey of India were heavily used as evidence by the court that the predated structure was a massive Hindu religious building.^[5] The third was the Gujarat violence of 2002.

3 Central concepts

3.1 Cultural nationalism

According to this, the natives of India share a common culture, history and ancestry.

M S Golwalkar, one of the main proponents of Hindutva, believed that India's diversity in terms of customs, traditions and ways of worship was its uniqueness and that this diversity was not without the strong underlying cultural basis which was essentially native. He believed that the Hindu natives with all their diversity, shared among other things "the same philosophy of life", "the same values" and "the same aspirations" which formed a strong cultural and a civilizational basis for a nation.^[6]

Savarkar similarly believed that the Indian subcontinent (which includes the area south of the Himalaya and the Hindu Kush or Akhand Bharat (*undivided India*, अखण्ड भारत) is the homeland of the Hindus. He considered "Hindus" as those who consider India (*Bharat*, भारत) to be their motherland (*matrubhumi*), fatherland (*pitrubhumi*, पितृभूमि) as well as their holy land (*punyabhumi*, पुण्यभूमि), hence describing it purely in cultural terms.^[7]

RSS, one of the main votaries of Hindutva has stated that it believes in a cultural connotation of the term *Hindu*. "The term Hindu in the conviction as well as in the constitution of the RSS is a cultural and civilizational concept and not a political or religious dogma. The term as a cultural concept will include and did always include all including Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains. The cultural nationality of India, in the conviction of the RSS, is Hindu and it was inclusive of all who are born and who have adopted Bharat as their Motherland, including Muslims, Christians and Parsis. The answering association submit that it is not just a matter of RSS conviction, but a fact borne out by history that the Muslims, Christians and Parsis too are Hindus by culture although as religions they are not so."^[8]

3.2 Decolonization

Emphasizing historical "oppression" of Hindus by colonial invaders like the Muslims (see Muslim conquests on the Indian subcontinent) and the Christians and the call to "reverse" the cultural influence resulting from these intrusions.^[6]

3.3 Social justice

Adherents believe Hindu social structure "is ridden with castes and communities", and that this has led to "barriers and segregation" and condemnation of "obnoxious vice of social inequality" and "untouchability".^[9] The supporters of Hindutva have a positive outlook towards the Dalit community, which they claim to aim to bring to leadership positions in their organizations.^[10]

3.4 Uniform Civil Code

Main article: Uniform civil code of India

Leaders subscribing to Hindutva have been known for their demands for a Uniform Civil Code for all the citizens of India. They believe that differential laws based on religion violate Article 44 of the Indian Constitution and have sowed the seeds of divisiveness between different religious communities.^[11]

The advocates of Hindutva often use the term *pseudo-secularism* to refer to policies which they believe are unduly favorable towards the Muslims and Christians. They oppose what they see as a 'separate-but-equal' system; some supporters of Hindutva see it as the Indian National Congress party's effort to woo the sizable minority vote bank at the expense of true equality.^[12] The subject of a Uniform Civil Code, which would remove special religion-based provisions for different religions (Hindus, Muslims, Christians, etc.) from the Indian Constitution, is thus one of the main agendas of Hindutva organizations.^[13] The Uniform Civil Code is opposed by Muslims^[14] and political parties like the Indian National Congress and The Communist Party of India (Marxist)^[15]

Followers of Hindutva have questioned differential religious laws in India which allows polygamy and triple talaq among Muslims and thereby compromises on the status of Muslim women and "marginalizes" them.^[16]

The passing of the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986 by the Rajiv Gandhi government, under pressure from conservative Muslims, to dilute the secular judgment of the Supreme Court, was opposed by Hindutva organisations. The new act, in tune with the Shariat, denied even utterly destitute Muslim divorcees the right to alimony from their former husbands.^[17]

3.5 Protection of Hindu interests

The followers of Hindutva are known for their criticism of the Indian government as too passive with regard to the carnage of Kashmiri Hindus^{[18][19]} by Kashmiri Muslim separatists and advocates of Hindutva wish a harder stance in Jammu and Kashmir.^[20]

They have called for the protection of native Hindu traditions,^[21] holy structures, rivers^[22] and the animals.^[23]

Hindu nationalists have the stated aim of uniting the Hindu society.

4 Views on other faiths

The votaries of Hindutva believe that the way Muslims and Hindus have treated each other in the past is a *one-way compromise* and they intend on making society more balanced and fair towards the majority Hindu population.^[24] The BJP has also invited Muslims to be a part of this new society and work with the Hindus, Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs for a better India.^[25] Even more parties such as the Shiv Sena have invited Muslims to join and the party leader declared after the Babri Mosque incident,

“We must look after the Muslims and treat them as part of us.”^[26]

Hindutva groups are supportive of the Jewish State of Israel, including Savarkar himself, who supported Israel during its formation.^[27] The RSS is politically pro-Israel and actively praised the efforts of Ariel Sharon when he visited India.^{[28][29]} RSS spokesperson Ram Madhav recently expressed support for Israel.^[30]

5 Views on Indian history

The Hindu organisations like the RSS believe that the history of India was written by the British with a condescending attitude towards the native people and their culture. M S Golwalkar writes that the history of ancient India was summed up as "Tanglewood Tales". Similar concerns were raised by Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore in his essay, "The History of Bharatvarsha", in 1903. He calls the history books "nightmarish account of India". He writes "while the lands of the aliens existed, there also existed the indigenous country" meaning the latter was grossly being neglected. He adds that the British accounts of Indian history "throw a beam of artificial light on such a spot that in our own eyes the very profile of our country is made dark".^[31]

M S Golwalkar argues that it was a deliberate British strategy to teach Indians a wrong version of history.^[6] In this context, the writings of Lord Macaulay, "the brain behind the system of English education", are referred to as an indication of this.^[6]

Senior RSS leader H V Sheshadri refers to this attitude of "White man's burden" which he believes shaped the English education system in India and British version of Indian history.^[32]

Further information: Indigenous Aryans and Indo-Aryan migration

6 Organizations

Main article: Sangh Parivar

Hindutva is commonly identified as the guiding ideology of the Sangh Parivar, a family of Hindu Nationalist organizations, and of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh in particular. In general, *Hindutvavadis* (followers of Hindutva) believe that they represent the well-being of Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Ayyavazhi, Jainism and all other religions prominent in India.

Most nationalists are organized into political, cultural and social organizations - using the concept of Hindutva as a political tool. The first Hindutva organisation formed was the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), founded in 1925. A prominent Indian political party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) (BJP) is closely associated with a group of organisations that advocate Hindutva. They collectively refer to themselves as the "Sangh Parivar" or family of associations, and include the RSS, Bajrang Dal and the Vishva Hindu Parishad. Other organisations include:

- Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh - overseas branch of the RSS
- Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh - a worker's union
- Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad - a student's union
- Bharatiya Kisan Sangh - a farmers' organisation

The major political wing is the BJP which was in power in India's Central Government for six years from 1998 to 2004 and is currently the ruling party of India with Narendra Modi as the Prime Minister. As of June 2013 it is in power in the states of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. It is an alliance partner in the states of Punjab, and Goa. BJP ended its alliance with JDU in Bihar in June, 2013.

Political parties pertaining to the Hindutva ideology are not limited to the Sangh Parivar. Examples of political parties independent from the Sangh's influence but espouse the Hindutva ideology include Prafull Goradia's Akhil Bharatiya Jana Sangh,^[33] Subramanian Swamy's Janata Party^[34] and the Marathi nationalist Shiv Sena.^[35] The Shiromani Akali Dal is a Sikh religious party, but maintains ties with Hindutva organisations, as they also represent Sikhism.^[36]

Rajeev Menon, National President of the Hindu Mahasabha is active in South Indian States like Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

7 Criticism and support

The opponents of Hindutva philosophy consider Hindutva ideology as a euphemistic effort to conceal communal beliefs and practices.

Many Indian social scientists have described the Hindutva movement as fascist in classical sense, in its ideology and class support specially targeting the concept of homogenised majority and **cultural hegemony**.^[37] The Hindutva movement on the other hand terms such description as coming from the **far left**.^{[38][39]}

Critics^[40] have used the political epithets of “Indian fascism” and “Hindu fascism” to describe the ideology of the Sangh Parivar. For example, Marxist social scientist Prabhat Patnaik has written that the Hindutva movement as it has emerged is “classically fascist in class support, methods and programme.”^[41] Patnaik bases this argument on the following “ingredients” of classical fascism present in Hindutva: the attempt to create a unified homogenous majority under the concept of “the Hindus”; a sense of grievance against past injustice; a sense of cultural superiority; an interpretation of history according to this grievance and superiority; a rejection of rational arguments against this interpretation; and an appeal to the majority based on race and masculinity.^[41]

The description of Hindutva as fascist has been condemned by pro-Hindutva authors such as **Koenraad Elst** who claim that the ideology of Hindutva meets none of the characteristics of fascist ideologies. Claims that Hindutva social service organisations such as the **Rashtriya Swamsevak Sangh** are “fascist” have been disputed by academics such as **Vincent Kundukulam**.^[42]

Academics **Chetan Bhatt** and **Parita Mukta** reject the identification of Hindutva with fascism, because of Hindutva’s embrace of cultural rather than racial nationalism, because of its “distinctively Indian” character, and because of “the RSS’s disavowal of the seizure of state power in preference for long-term cultural labour in civil society.” They instead describe Hindutva as a form of “revolutionary conservatism” or “ethnic absolutism”.^[43] **Mohan Bhagwat**, the head of RSS, said, “The country should have a Prime Minister who propounds Hindutva.”^[44] **Nobel Laureate V.S. Naipaul** also rejects these allegations and views the rise of Hindutva as a welcome, broader civilizational resurgence of India.^[45]

8 See also

- Hindu nationalist parties
- Indian nationalism
- Saffron terror

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11 External links

- Veer Savarkar Website

11.1 Videos

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